Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c.680–850: A History, by Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2011; pp. 918. £100).

Although the title refers to the period between 680 and 850 as the 'Iconoclast era', the main aim of this book is to demonstrate that previous scholarship has exaggerated the importance of the controversy about religious images. The authors argue, firstly, that Iconoclasm was only one aspect in a much broader process of transformation, and secondly, that Iconoclasm itself was less significant than Iconophile sources would have us believe. The book is clearly intended to be a comprehensive treatment of the period. Owing to the specialisations of the two authors, the focus is on art history and on social, economic and administrative history, whereas literature is barely mentioned.

Chapter One describes the changes that Byzantium experienced in the seventh century in order to provide a framework for the later developments. Here the authors first discuss broader social and economic trends before homing in on the cult of saints, their relics and their images. This section begins with the statement that 'the structure of iconoclasm depends on belief in two inter-related concepts, hierarchy and intercession', and then shows how these concepts developed between the fourth and the seventh centuries. This overview gives the impression that the cult of saints was universally accepted. The authors make no reference to the sixth-century treatise *De statu animarum post mortem*, whose author, Eustratius, was confronted with adversaries who claimed that the souls of the saints are inactive after death and can therefore neither appear to the living nor intercede for them with God. This oversight is all the more striking as this text has been analysed in detail by Jean Gouillard in his article 'Léthargie des âmes'. If opposition to the cult of saints existed in the previous centuries, one will need to ask whether it was not also found during Iconoclasm. When the authors speak about 'the structure of iconoclasm' they evidently refer to the decisions of the Council of Hieria, which affirmed the belief in saints and their intercession. However, in later Iconophile sources Constantine V is credited with having rejected the cult of saints. The authors dismiss such claims, with the argument that the emperor would not have gone against the decisions of his own council. However, one can ask whether such a cavalier treatment of a substantial corpus of texts can be justified—in particular since Gouillard could show that a similar controversy erupted in the eleventh century, with arguments that are strikingly similar to the alleged views of Constantine.

Turning to the specific topic of icon worship, the authors claim that, while the veneration of *acheiropoieta* had already begun in the sixth century, the cult of manufactured images only started in the late seventh century, and that Iconoclasm was therefore a response to a recent development. In order to substantiate their hypothesis, they reproduce Paul Speck's argument that virtually all early Eastern textual evidence concerning the role of images in Christian worship, whether discursive or narrative, is either entirely forged or interpolated into existing texts. By contrast, Western evidence for the adoration of images is dismissed as irrelevant for the Eastern development. Curiously, however, not all Western sources are discussed. The authors briefly mention the letter of Gregory the Great to Salvian of Marseilles but make no reference to the fact that Gregory set out this view in response to Salvian's destruction of images which had been venerated by his congregation, although later in the book they claim to have done so (p. 86).

Chapters Two to Five trace the development of Iconoclasm from its beginnings to the final restitution of icon worship in 843. The authors discuss the controversy in conjunction with political history. One consequence of this disposition is an overwhelming focus on 'imperial' iconoclasm. For example, the authors start with a discussion of Leo III's alleged measures and only then turn to the correspondence of Patriarch Germanus. Moreover, there is a tendency radically to question the credibility and significance of the sources; and, even when the authors concede that some of the information given in a source is reliable, they tend to focus on the elements that they consider fictitious. For example, the authors accept that in 730 Germanus and Pope Gregory II were asked to sign an official document which was critical of icons, but emphasise much more that no edict was issued ordering their removal. Moreover, they strive to dissociate the actions of the main players from the issue of icon worship. For example, they argue that Pope Gregory II may have been opposed to Leo III because the emperor had imposed a heavier taxation on ecclesiastical estates, and then infer that, since such taxation is likely to have been introduced in the East as well, Patriarch Germanus, too, may have abdicated for this reason and not primarily because of Iconoclasm. In the detailed discussions of the evidence there is a tendency to qualify all statements through addition of adverbs such as 'presumably' or 'allegedly', so that the reader is not entirely sure whether the more definite summaries reflect the authors' opinions.

The authors claim that the subsequent development of Iconoclasm was discontinuous because there is no evidence for official actions against images between 730 and the run-up to the Council of Hieria in 754. They come to this conclusion because they date the two texts that could be taken as evidence for the spread of Iconoclasm in the intervening years, Patriarch Germanus' letter to Thomas of Claudiopolis and John of Damascus' discourses on images, to the late 740s and early 750s. In order to explain why Constantine V chose to resurrect the dormant policy, they claim that the emperor (who had until then not cared greatly about the issue of images) was jolted into action by the plague epidemic of the late 740s, just as his father had reacted to a volcanic eruption. Such an interpretation suggests that Iconoclast measures were only taken if the emperors actively encouraged them, and rules out the possibility that the movement had a dynamic of its own.

In order to support their interpretation, the authors point out that the official policy was changed twice without much opposition, emphasising that the monks played no role in the First Iconoclasm and were a marginal group in the Second. They further claim that there is no evidence for strong personal convictions in the cases of Irene and Leo V and that the abolition and subsequent reintroduction of Iconoclasm were motivated by political concerns, such as the wish to test the loyalty of the élite.

Chapters Six to Eleven focus on society, economy, and administration, and give an account of the dramatic changes that Byzantium experienced between the late sixth and the ninth centuries. The authors accept the general picture of economic contraction and impoverishment but they are at pains to emphasise the more positive features. They argue that, despite the contraction in coin production, the Byzantine economy was not entirely de-monetised and that soldiers deployed in the provinces could at times receive their salaries in bronze coinage. Likewise, they accept the centrality of state-organised revenue extraction and distribution but also highlight the

evidence for market exchange. The decline of cities is seen as less dramatic than in other recent publications, partly owing to new archaeological evidence from Amorium. The authors accord a central role to the emperors and to the capital, and maintain that the primary marker for élite status was imperial office. However, they also make the case for the existence of a shadowy group of lower functionaries whose social networks were of a more regional nature. The continuing existence of large estates is stressed, despite the disruptions caused by Arab raids. Furthermore, it is claimed that, with the disappearance of cities and circus factions, the armies became the only 'voice' of the provinces because large gatherings of soldiers provided an opportunity for shaping and expressing public opinion. Finally, fiscal and military organisation is discussed, with particular focus on the role of the *kommerkiarioi* and on the transition from the Roman provincial to the thematic system, which, it is argued, was only concluded in the early ninth century.

In their conclusion, the authors argue that both the rejection of sacred images and their veneration were responses to the defeat by the Arabs. Moreover, they highlight the concerns of the Byzantine establishment over the use of manufactured images. They claim that even members of the élite who approved of icon worship sought to control it through recourse to the concept of relational worship. However, they then stress that one should not overemphasise the importance of the theological discourse because even theologians accepted the real presence of the saints in their images in their non-theological writings. As an explanation for the failure of Iconoclasm, they point out that it did not provide people with ready access to the divine. The last part of the conclusion is a summary of the second part of the book, followed by the claim that there was no mass popular opposition to Iconoclasm and that the picture created by later Iconophiles is almost entirely fictitious.

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The Landscape Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England, ed. Nicholas J. Higham and Martin J. Ryan (Woodbridge: The Boydell P., 2010; pp. 231. £60).

Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies (MANCASS) conferences have been very productive, drawing together and publishing new research on Anglo-Saxon England; the 2007 conference, however, was exceptional, resulting in two volumes on the Anglo-Saxon landscape: the first (this one) devoted to archaeological and art-historical approaches, and the second including analyses of texts and place-names. Nicholas Higham opens the first of these collections with a valuable overview of the present state of research. Scholars have long attributed important developments in the landscape to the Anglo-Saxon period. What his historiographical review establishes is how many revisions to our understanding of this landscape exist, crossing several disciplines and awaiting a suitable synthesis. In the meantime, his summary of literature on woodland exploitation, villages and farms, and the formation of open fields, will be an excellent starting-point for students and scholars. He hopes this volume will mark a new stage in the development of our understanding of that landscape, open up new research questions and provide a platform for future research.