

Byzantium

Clothing and Armour - A Pictorial Reference

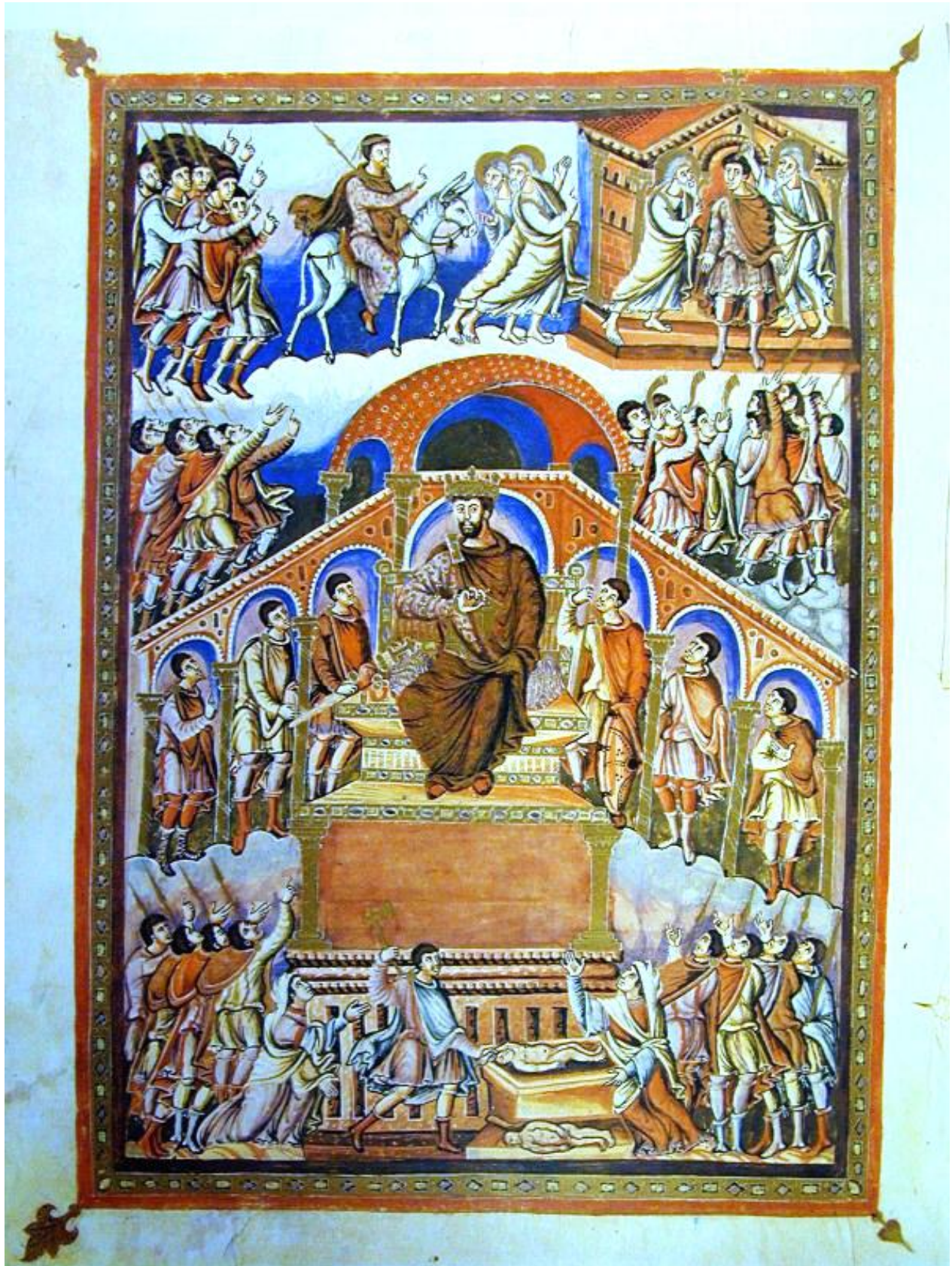
Designed for use with the NVG

Covering periods between the 9th – 13th centuries

Compiled by Kelly Birch

2005

Every attempt has been made to include references to the current location or to document current known information on each art piece.
At the very least dates have been referenced.



870 CE - Bible of S Paolo fuori le Mura Frontispiece to Proverbs 188(clxxxv)v



870 CE - Bible of S Paolo fuori le Mura Frontispiece to Deuteronomy 50(Ixviii)v



Plaque with Saint John the Evangelist, early 9th century; Early Medieval

Carolingian; Made in Aachen, Lotharingia

The Cloisters Collection, 1977 (1977.421)

Until 1977, when it appeared at a London auction, this ivory from the Carolingian "Renaissance" was unknown. Carved in high relief, the frontally enthroned Evangelist displays his Gospel with the opening phrase *IN PRINCIPIO ERAT VERBUM* ("In the beginning was the Word" [John 1:1]).

The arch, with its rich acanthus decoration, is supported by elaborate columns and encloses John's symbol, the eagle, which is directly above him. The entire composition is framed by a simple inscribed border.

The text of this inscription is based on a line from the "Carmen Paschale," a poem by the fifth-century Christian writer Sedulius.

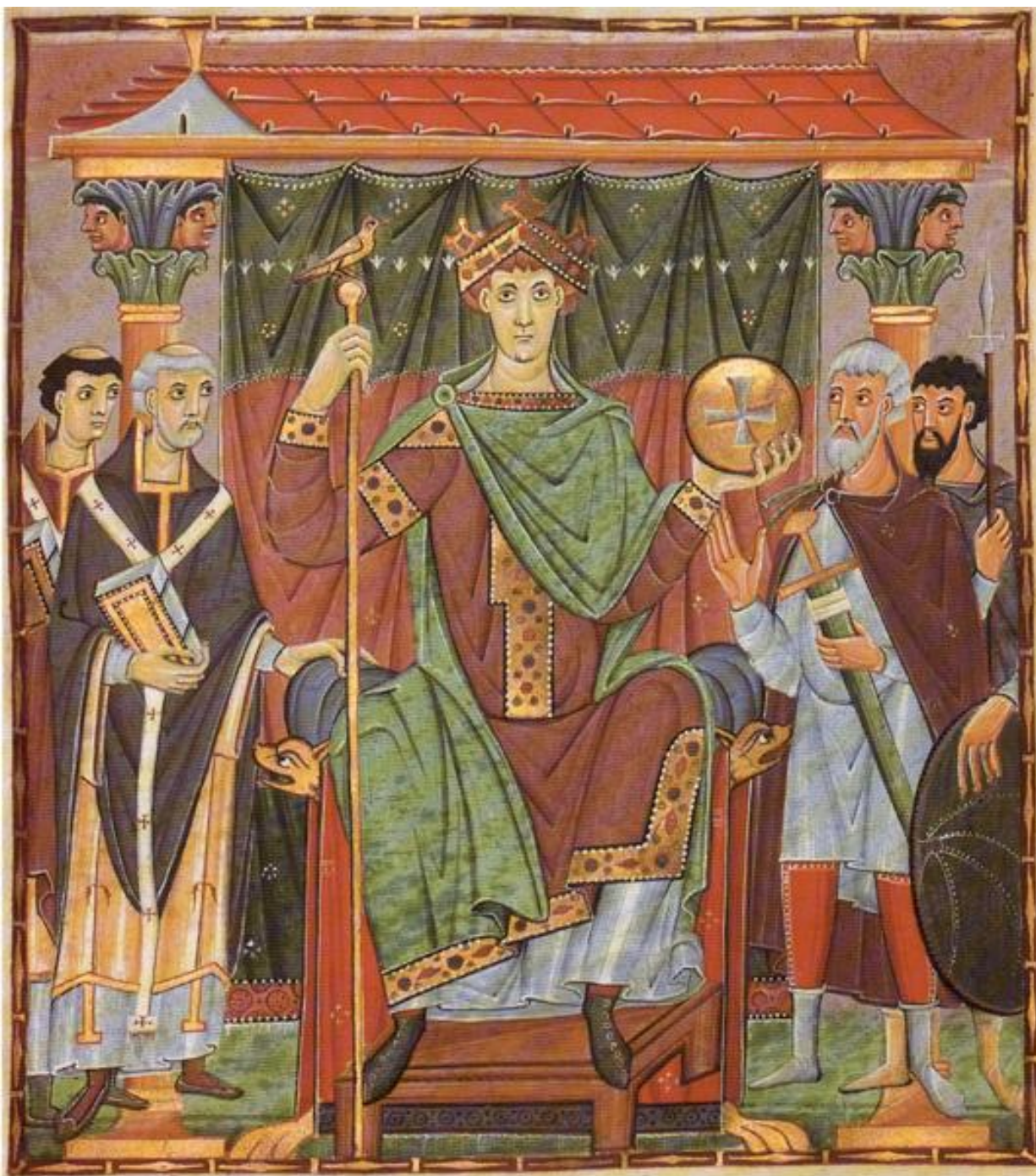
Among the remarkable features of this ivory are John's loose, classical pallium and mantle, whose calligraphic treatment and plasticity verge on pure fantasy. This tendency toward a sumptuous ornamental effect, in which the abundant drapery patterns and textures take on a life of their own, becomes a characteristic of several ivories of the Court School of Charlemagne (r. 768–814).

Artistically, these ivories are very close to the manuscripts produced in Aachen for the court of Charlemagne; this resemblance suggests that they probably were carved there. Some scholars have maintained that some of these ivories may date into the reign of his successor, Louis the Pious (814–840).



10th Century – The Betrayal of Jesus

Soldiers in various types of Byzantine armour
From left; lamellar, padded kabadion, scale and mail;
From a portrayal of the Betrayal of Jesus in a church in Cyprus



10th Century

Otto III enthroned and Receiving Homage of Four Parts of the Empire

Part of a 2-page spread in Gospel Book of Otto III, Germany, c. 997-1000, fol. 24



10th Century

Women bringing homage to Otto III

Part of a 2-page spread in Gospel Book of Otto III, Germany, c. 997-1000, fol. 24

Icon with Saint Demetrios

Byzantine, second half of the 10th century

Ivory

7 3/4 x 4 3/4 (19.6 x 12.2 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, New York, N.Y. (1970.324.3)



The animated figure of this military saint vigorously confronts the viewer. He dominates the space; his halo and the tip of his broken spear even transgress the borders of the frame. The saint is shown in a waist-length corselet made of small plates of iron or horn laced together or fastened to a leather backing. From this protective vest are suspended strips or scales of metal or leather that form a short skirt. His tunic protrudes from below his armor. A mantle is slung over his left shoulder and fastened on his right. He wears guards on his arms and greaves on his legs. These were generally made of iron splints cushioned with wool or cotton padding. He carries a spear in his right hand; with his left he steadies his ornamented shield, which is suspended from a strap over his arm. The sword that protrudes from behind his torso is suspended from a baldric.

Saint Demetrios is believed to have been a deacon who was killed in Serbia in the late third century while preaching the Christian gospel. His legend grew in the East. During the Middle Byzantine period he began to be represented in military dress, literally as a soldier of Christ. He is known as the patron saint of both the city of Thessalonike, Greece, and the church of Constantinople.

Originally, the plaque may have been fastened by nails to a wooden panel as one of a group of saints on an icon or an iconostasis. At some point the area between the saint's feet was cut out, probably so that the plaque could be attached to a pole and carried in procession as an icon.



Above

Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence, ca. 1175–1180; Romanesque English; Made in Canterbury, Kent

Pot-metal glass, vitreous paint; 25 9/16 x 12 5/8 in. (65 x 32 cm)
The Cloisters Collection, 1984 (1984.232)

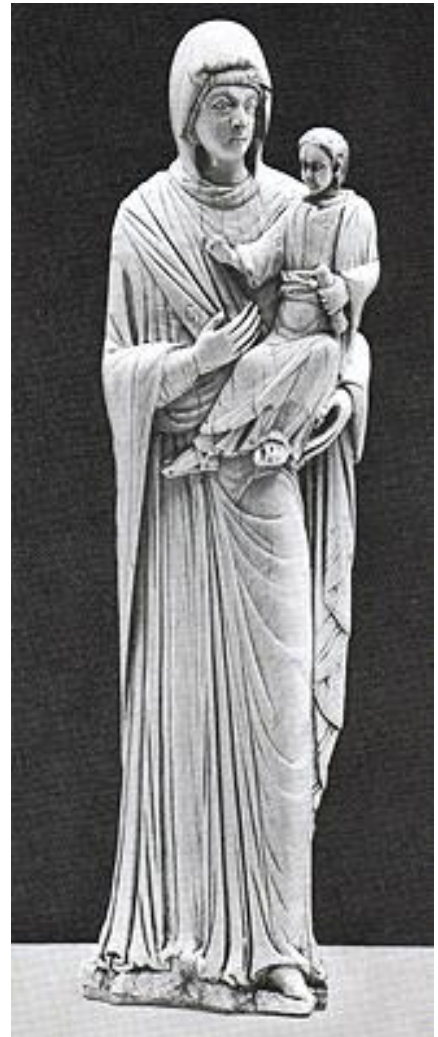
Contrary to iconographic convention, Saint Lawrence here appears in supplication, amid bands of fire, rather than stretched out on the grill. This representation reflects the writings of both saints Augustine and Ambrose, which relate that Lawrence conquered the fire without—shown here licking at his feet—with the three fires within: those inflamed by the ardor of faith, the love of Christ, and the true knowledge of God, which are represented here by the bands of fire at waist and shoulder level and by the column of fire above his head. The attribution of the panel to Canterbury is based largely on style; its precise location in the cathedral choir has not been determined. The bearded head is not that of Saint Lawrence but came from elsewhere in the same glazing program and was later inserted, probably in the nineteenth century; most of the inscription and much of the architectural framings are recent restorations to complete the panel.

Below

**Theotokos Hodegetria' (Virgin and Child)
11th - 12th Century**

Height 12 and 3/4 (32.5).
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

“The only free standing Byzantine ivory that has survived.”





Early 11th Century Nativity

Echternach Codex Aureus, at Nuremberg Germanisches Nationalmuseum,
annunciation /visitation /nativity /annunciation to shepherds /wise men from east

Enlargements can be seen on the next page





**Second Half of the 11th Century
Skylitzes Chronicle (fol. 26 V-a), The Synopsis Historiarum.**

The Famous Depiction of Varangian Guardsmen

The illustration features soldiers in various types of Byzantine armour including lamellar, padded kabadion, scale and mail.

The Synopsis Historiarum is a history covering the reigns of Emperors Michael I Rangabes to Constantine IX Monomachos (811 to 1055AD). It was written in the second half of the 11th century by John Skylitzes, a Byzantine court official. There is a single surviving copy, held by the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid. This copy, and the 574 illustrations it contains, is currently dated to the later 12th century, it was probably produced within the Norman-ruled area of the Mediterranean.

This particular illustration is one many people are familiar with. The scene is that of the deposition of Emperor Leo V ('the Armenian', assassinated in 820AD). The Emperor's body is being taken to the Hippodrome. The soldiers in the background amongst the palace buildings have been identified as Varangians by the long-shafted axes they carry. At the time of this event there were of course no Varangians in the Imperial service, but as is usual in medieval illustrations, the illustration is based on contemporary figures.



Skylitzes ms. fol.208 ⁸.

The woman slays the Varangian rapist. The other Varangians present her with his clothing.

Translation reads: 'A man of the Varangians who were scattered in winter quarters in the Thracian theme met a woman of the region in a private place and tempted her virtue; and when he could not get her to agree willingly he tried to rape her, but she got hold of the foreigner's sword and struck him with it through the heart, so that he died at once. When this deed became known through the neighbourhood the Varangians gathered together and honoured the woman by giving her all the possessions of the man who had attempted to rape her, and they threw his body away without burial, according to the law about suicides.'

This is apparently the earliest Byzantine reference to Varangians by this name, and indeed the Greek word for Varangians (Varangue) can be seen in the text below the feet of the second figure (from the left) in the group of men presenting clothing to the woman.

The full beards, large moustaches, and abundant (dark) hair are unique to this illustration of Varangians in the ms. The men are either bare-legged or are wearing purple-brown hose, as there is no sign of footwear. Their plain rather loose-fitting tunics are just short of knee-length, and are girded somehow at the waist. The tunics (including those being offered to the woman) are orange (two); scarlet (two); white (=parchment, two); greenish-grey (two); pale pink (two); and pale blue-grey (one). The Greek woman wears a plain pale pink full-length tunic girded at the waist; a pale blue *pallium* (wrap); and a red coif or head shawl. Her slippers are black.