

# Byzantium on Arno

## Background Notes

*Dr Antonia Whitley – 10 December 2014*



During the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the art of the Eastern (Orthodox) Christian church infused with that of the Western (Catholic) church, resulting in a Byzantine style in Italy. This holy image, painted by Montano d'Arezzo, is an example of this merging. The panel represents Mary, Mother of God as Queen of Heaven. She holds the Christ child on her lap. This is a **Hodegetria** type of Madonna, in which she directs the attention of the faithful to Christ, thus pointing the way to salvation

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## **Florence Baptistery – the dome mosaics (late 13C/early 14C)**

One of two cultures beyond the borders of western Christendom was influential in the development of Romanesque and Renaissance art in Italy: that of Byzantium. The other was Islam - perhaps a topic for another day? Italian contact with Byzantine culture increased during the Middle Ages, through trade partnerships; the spread of the mendicant orders and the crossing of extensive areas of the Byzantine empire by western armies taking part in the Crusades.







This holy image, painted on panel, currently in the church of **Santa Maria Maggiore** in Florence, is of the **Nikopoia** type (Bringer of Victory), another genre that was assimilated into Italian art from Byzantine icons. In such images, the Mother of God holds the sitting or standing Christ child on her lap, while He blesses with his right hand and holds a scroll with the other. Attribution and dating of this image is problematic, we will discuss it today!