

# Mobility and Migration in Byzantium: The Perspective of Material Culture

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## Abstracts:

### Friday, 20 January

#### KEYNOTE LECTURES:

**KISLINGER Ewald**, University of Vienna

#### *Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Kommunikation in Byzanz. Bemerkungen zu Verkehrswegen und –mitteln*

Byzanz übernahm vom antiken Rom ein strukturiertes Wegenetz zu Lande und verfügte über das durch Thalassokratie abgesicherte Fachwissen, die Seerouten zu nutzen. Geopolitische Veränderungen, beginnend mit der Völkerwanderung, vollendet durch die arabisch-islamische Expansion, ließen allerdings die Einheit des Mittelmeerraums zerbrechen, das Reisen über längere Distanzen wurde schwierig bis gefahrvoll. Die politischen Notwendigkeiten, der Anreiz lukrativen Handels fanden aber doch Auswege, um – gewiß auf niedrigerem Niveau als zuvor - überregional in Kontakt zu bleiben. Das Referat strebt einen Überblick zu den Faktoren des Prozesses an, will die Infrastruktur zu Wasser und zu Land im Überblick präsentieren und die mentalen Veränderungen bis hin in die Kreuzfahrerzeit ansprechen.

**DAIM Falko**, Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, Mainz

#### *Das Lesen von Gegenständen / Reading Objects*

Archaeological remains are the results of human activities, based on decisions and culturally determined conventions. A reconstruction of the factors that combined to

create archaeological remains allows us access to the daily life, the thought processes and the mentalities of people in the past.

Selecting and interpreting information from archaeological find spots and objects poses its challenges—analogous to the interpretation of the textual transmission. Especially during the last four generations a variety of theories and methods has been developed to extract as much information from the material as possible. The foundation of all historical interpretation is – of course – the classification of findings and their dating. Already in the 19th century scholars began with observations of stratigraphy, the typology of objects and their combination in archaeological complexes. At the same time, the first steps of anthropology and bioarchaeology were taken. These were soon augmented by highly sophisticated methods like dendrochronology, chemical analyses of substances and 14C-dating came up.

During the last 50 years the archaeological tool box has increased enormously. Every year new approaches and scientific methods are developed. Airborne laserscanning of entire landscapes, geophysical prospection, brand new documentation techniques, the use of isotopes in material evaluation, DNA analysis: they all help to explain past human behaviour and the social regulations and cultural values behind it.

The paper will give an overview of scientific methods in current archaeology on the basis of examples from current research projects esp. in Mainz and Vienna, with particular focus on Byzantium.

Moderator:

**MAGDALINO, Paul** - University of St. Andrews (em.)

#### THEMATIC SESSIONS:

**REUTER Anna Elena**, Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, Mainz

*Food Security Strategies as a Reaction on Migration in Times of Crisis in the Early Byzantine Balkans between Caričin Grad and the Lower Danube – The Archaeobotanical Evidence*

Like almost no other region the Early Byzantine Balkans suffered from the invasions of different tribes which were pressing over the Danube Limes.

With the invasions and settlement by Goths and Huns in the 4th to 5th century the Roman villa system goes down in the Balkans. But it is not until the early 7th century that the imperial rule collapses in the face of the Avar and Slav invasions. Late antique life in the Balkans seems to have continued exclusively behind walls that protected the inhabitants from invasions by different peoples.

Besides the archaeobotanical analysis of the site Caričin Grad in southern Serbia the materials of 14 other 5th and 6th century sites from Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania mostly with an urban character are taken into account in this talk. Especially from the cereal material various agricultural practices become visible, which bolster the idea that the inhabitants of the Balkans explored different strategies to enhance food security in unstable times of war and conflict.

Respondent:

**POPOVIC, Mihailo**, Austrian Academy of Sciences

**MORRISSON Cécile**, CNRS-UMR 8167. Orient et Méditerranée, Paris

***Travellers and Invaders: Coin Finds and Other Evidence for Mobility and Migration***

This paper will consider monetary evidence with a dual approach concerning people's mobility beyond the limits of the Empire and that of people coming within these limits, i.e. the migrations which brought foreign communities with different organisation, standard of life, religion and a different relationship with money into the Byzantine world.

Monetary evidence for outward mobility consists in the scattered finds or hoards of coins attested as far as the British Isles and Scandinavia (ultima Thule) to the far West or the Far East (India and China). The wide influence of Byzantine coin types on iconography in the same regions also bears witness to the fact that at some point, the local issuers or engravers must have been in contact with them. So either they had travelled to Byzantium or the coins had been brought to their cognizance. And determining the identity of their travelling carriers, merchants, diplomats, clerics, pilgrims etc. is hypothetical and must be checked or combined with other archaeological evidence, that of ceramics in the first place. A further caveat comes from the fact that we are never certain that the dissemination of coins, e.g. in Central

and Eastern Europe, occurred by direct relation and not often, as it appears, through several exchange tiers.

The evidence for the Migration of the Peoples ('Völkerwanderung') of Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages or later invasions and inroads is first and foremost that of texts. But the number of emergency deposits of savings of all kinds, from valuable gold hoards to small purses of copper minimi, illustrates waves of panic the invaders triggered and allow to map their different itineraries. At a further stage, the emergence of pseudo-imperial coinages in the West, in Central Europe, and in the Near East for a while testifies to the settlement and acculturation of the Barbarians, while in the Balkans for instance the long break of coin use highlights the demise of the previous fiscal and economic pattern and the settlement of 'unmonetized' communities.

The paper will stress throughout the need for the integration of the coin documentation with that of other sources.

Respondent:

**WASSILIOU-SEIBT, Alexandra-Kyriaki**, Austrian Academy of Sciences

**KARAGIORGOU Olga**, Academy of Athens

***Persistent Mobility: Foodstuff Trade Routes on the Evidence of Amphorae and Related Evidence (4th-8th century)***

Scholarly advances on Amphorae Studies relating specifically to the provenance, typology, content, capacity and the dating of transport vessels, have enriched significantly our knowledge on the volume and direction of Byzantine regional and interregional economy and on the function of state (*annona civica, annona militaris*), as well as private, trade mechanisms. Particularly telling, in this respect, is the example of a group of six types of amphorae, all from diverse origins, which dominate the foodstuff trade in the Mediterranean within the period between the 4th and the 7th c. The present paper wishes to update the picture of this wide-scale (both in place and time) trade network and complement it with relevant finds from the archaeological record that testify to the factors that mobilized it and registered it in the collective memory as an economic model whose sustainability had to be maintained against all odds even beyond the 7th c.

Respondent:

**LADSTÄTTER, Sabine**, Austrian Archaeological Institute (OeAI)

**VROOM Joanita**, Leiden University

*A Tale of Four Cities: Core and Periphery in the Byzantine Empire*

The subject of this paper is the analysis of the material culture (especially pottery finds) from four Byzantine/Medieval urban centres in the eastern Mediterranean from a core-periphery approach. These four sites are, situated from west to east: Butrint in Albania, Athens in Greece, Ephesus and Tarsus from Turkey. The distribution of Byzantine, Medieval and Ottoman ceramic finds from these four coastal towns provides new information on patterns of production, trade and consumption, both in a geographical perspective (per settlement) and from a chronological point of view (over various periods). The analysis of the pottery types, shapes and technologies sheds thus light on the contacts that these four coastal towns maintained both with neighbouring sites in their hinterland as well as with other production and consumption centres around the Mediterranean and beyond.

Respondent:

**GASSNER**, Verena, University of Vienna

**Saturday, 21 January**

**BOSELNANN-RUICKBIE Antje**, Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz

*Mobility and Migration of Late Byzantine Goldsmiths' Works*

Mobility and migration is a particularly relevant topic for goldsmiths' works since these are, as a rule, mobile objects. Items, such as crosses, reliquaries, icon and book covers or – as rarer examples for secular objects – jewellery, were produced in goldsmiths' workshops and then distributed to their commissioners, who used them either for private devotion, or donated them, e.g. to a monastery, or gave them away as gifts on occasions ranging from diplomatic ventures to weddings. Late Byzantine goldsmiths' works of the 13th to 15th centuries are today mostly kept in monasteries and museums, thus, are often not in their place of production anymore. The main research questions relating to this are: firstly, where were they produced; and, secondly, what was their designated place of use – a church, a monastery, a private household, the imperial treasury?

This is one aspect of mobility and migration, but there is another level: their decoration. While the iconography is predominantly traditional, ornaments on Late Byzantine goldsmiths' works often draw their inspiration from different cultural spheres, sometimes on the same object. An example for this is the mid-14th-century cross in the Staurotheke of Cardinal Bessarion, today in Venice: the ornamental decoration was partly inspired by Western elements of Gothic tracery, partly by ornaments current in the Eastern Mediterranean and Egypt. Other objects can be related to Mongolian, Russian or Siculo-Arabic art of the 13th to 15th centuries.

Questions evolving from these observations concern the 'why' and the 'how' of mobility and migration. Since the place of production and ownership of Byzantine goldsmiths' works are rarely known, these questions are difficult to answer in general. However, case studies will provide some clues and help to understand that in the Post-Crusade period goldsmiths' works are formally traditional, especially when the objects are sacred, but at the same time reveal an interest in innovation with regard to their decoration, inspired by contemporary 'elite' cultures.

Respondent:

**RHOBY, Andreas**, Austrian Academy of Sciences

***Searching for the Actors in the Exchange of Exotic Objects Between the Eastern Mediterranean and Merovingian Gaul***

From the formation of the early Merovingian Kingdom during the last third of 5th century until the time around 700 AD a number of different object groups are known which were transported from Byzantium and the shores of the Eastern Mediterranean to the ports in the West and further to the regions in the North. Especially southern Gaul can be linked to Mediterranean networks by the imports of amphoras and their contents (wine, oil, garum) as well as fine wares and further typical Mediterranean commodities. By contrast, for Austrasia and its eastern parts artifact groups like cowrie shells, ivory objects, precious stones etc. are extant that sometimes have an origin even beyond the eastern Mediterranean.

The mobility of people is of course a precondition for the movement of goods, therefore the paper tries to focus on the actors that organized the exchange and executed the transport of these exotic objects with the aim to reconstruct networks of interaction.

Respondent:

**PREISER-KAPELLER, Johannes**, Austrian Academy of Sciences

**PARIBENI Andrea**, University of Urbino “Carlo Bo”

***Sailing Through Byzantium: Mobility of Materials, Artefacts and Men in the Marble Trade System of the Early Byzantine Era***

The ambitious building programs promoted in 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> A.D. by civil and ecclesiastical elites both in Constantinople and in the provinces of the byzantine empire asked for a steady and plentiful supply of marble; this precious and prestigious material, extracted from the quarries disseminated in the Aegean and Anatolian areas, reached its final destination in a state of full or partial finishing; this state was the result of a series of working operations that we are able to detect by literary sources as well as by some material evidences (waste in the workshop areas; shipwrecks of *naves lapidariae*; technical and stylistic analysis of the marble items). By the collection of these numerous even though fragmentary data it comes a nuanced picture of the *marmora*

*byzantina* production and trade system, where examples of shipping of flat-pack furniture stay alongside evidences of mobility of skilled masons called abroad to work quarry state marble.

Respondent:

**THEIS, Lioba**, University of Vienna