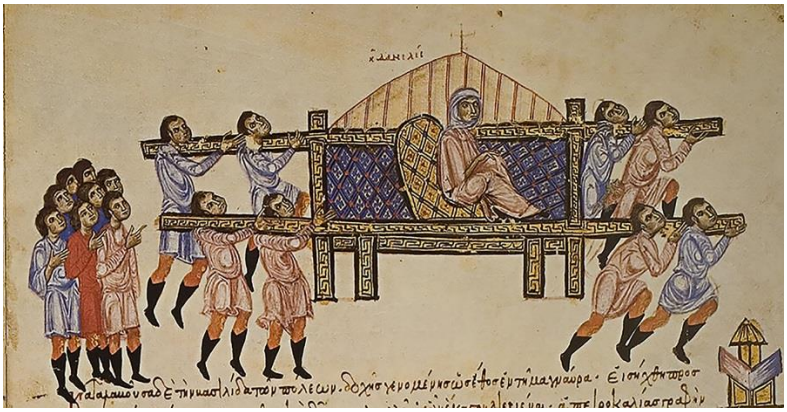

Wittgenstein-Prize Project
Mobility, Microstructures and Personal Agency in Byzantium

Moving Byzantium Sessions at the IMC Leeds, 4 -7 July 2022

ABSTRACTS

Session 513, Tuesday 5 July 2022: 09.00-10.30

Eleonora Kountoura Galaki, National Hellenic Research Foundation, Athens

Mobility and its terminology in the Byzantine sources

This paper aims at presenting the variety of terms Byzantine sources apply in order to refer to the movement of people and to any kind of concept connected to it (*κινοῦμαι, ἀπανίσταμαι, ἀφίστημι, ἐγκαταλείπω, μετακίνηση, ζητῶ καταφυγήν,* etc.). Such references relate to the type of but also to the effects mobility has on a macro- and micro-level, i.e. the Byzantine society and the personal life of individuals. This fact on its turn determines the way Byzantine sources state and understand the notion of movement. In addition, the mobility terminology in Byzantium strongly depends on the typology of the sources (historiography, Saints' Life, Letters). Finally, the paper will take into consideration the fact that source references to mobility are sometimes interwoven with specific information about the framework of travel and its implications for people and society.

Katerina B. Korré, Department of History & Archeology, University of Crete/ Hellenic Open University

Institutional syncretism and institutional reformulation in the Middle Ages: the case of the byzantine *megadux*

In addition to its geographical, cultural and social dimension, the concept of mobility could be attributed to the institutions, thus creating new interpretive models in the history of law as well as in social history. How do institutions emerge from needs, current realities and lived experience? In what level and extent do they integrate elements from other jurisdictions and domains, lend their own to others or re-integrate, with varying degrees of alteration, the very elements they have previously lent elsewhere?

The central idea of this study is based on the example of a Byzantine institution, that of the megas ducas (megadux). Established during the late Byzantine period, the institution of megadux is examined from its birth and monitored while evolving, in terms of its basic characteristics and the expediencies of its creation.

Closely linked to the foreign element in the Byzantine Empire from the beginning, it continued to evolve mutating until 1453. But already, before the fall, it seems that it has crossed the borders; "Transplanted" to the West, it has taken on other characteristics and was preserved for a long time; eventually, to return to the territories of the former empire, which is now under Latin occupation, disguised and having taken on new dimensions.

We follow in the footsteps of these transitions, changes, loans and reformulations through the persons behind the institution; persons who belonged to prominent aristocratic Byzantine families, such as those of Laskari, Palaiologi or Eudemonioianni, and sought refuge to the West after the Fall of 1453.

The study is based on Byzantine and western sources as well as unpublished archival material.

James Cogbill, University of Oxford

Social Mobility in Nicaea and Late Byzantium through Imperial 'Kinship by Choice'

According to Alexander P. Kazhdan and Ann Wharton Epstein (1985), proximity to the emperor was always 'the essence of power' in the Byzantine Empire. From the Komnenian period onwards, familial proximity to the emperor increasingly determined status. Demographic increase in the size of imperial families, beginning in the late eleventh century, resulted in emperors becoming tied by blood and marriage to great aristocratic families, who in turn monopolised the most senior positions within the polity. Although we might question the extent to which this monopolisation was an entirely new phenomenon, it certainly reached unprecedented levels after 1081. Given this positioning of kinship at the heart of government, it is significant that several Nicaean and Late Byzantine emperors repeatedly referred to certain non-family members using kinship terms such as αὐτάδελφος, ἀδελφός, τέκνον and υἱός in both personal correspondence and official documents. Although the liberal application of kinship terms was an epistolary convention in this period, it is possible to discern at least three cases in which such usage appears to have had more than a simply rhetorical purpose. Despite not appearing to have entered into a ritualised brotherhood, each 'kinsman by choice' was elevated, along with his relatives, to a unique position within society, above other elite figures and adjacent to imperial 'kinsmen by blood'. In this paper, I will explore these figures and their descendants as liminal personae – 'threshold people' who 'slip through the network of classifications that normally locate status and positions in cultural space' (Victor W. Turner, 1969) – whose acquired status removed them from their original social group, yet whose position among and within the

imperial kinship group was unstable. Such figures were 'neither one thing nor another', or perhaps 'both', disrupting social hierarchies in a polity that prided itself on adherence to traditional norms.

Anastasia Kontogiannopoulou
Research Centre for Medieval and Modern Hellenism, Academy of Athens

Population movements in Late Byzantium (mid-13th – late 14th century): Involuntary migrations

Migrations in Byzantium during the Palaiologan era (mid-13th – mid-15th century) have not been studied in detail, so far. The conquest of the Byzantine Empire by the Crusaders in 1204, and the consequent fragmentation of its territory into a number of successor minor states, led to such a rearrangement of the geopolitical map of the Eastern Mediterranean, that the recovery of Constantinople by the Byzantines in 1261 could barely affect. The empire under the Palaiologan rule, undermined by external enemies and internal rivalries, was gradually reduced in size. Byzantine territory in the second half of the 13th century extended from the Western Asia Minor to the Dalmatian coast in Adriatic Sea, including a part of Thessaly, Peloponnese and some islands of the Aegean Sea, but it was restricted by the end of the 14th century only in the hinterland of some cities in Macedonia and Thrace, part of the Peloponnese and few islands.

The aim of this paper is the research of the involuntary or forced migrations of Byzantine populations that took place within the borders of the Byzantine State from 1261 until the end of the 14th century, when intense population movements within the remaining territory of the Empire occurred· migrations due to military operations, those imposed by political initiative in order to address demographic, economic and military needs, migration of citizens who fell into disgrace because of their political or religious ideas, the movements forced by natural disasters. Additionally, the paper focuses not only on the factors that dictated the involuntary mobility, and the immediate implications of that mobility, but also on the qualitative characteristics of the movements, such as the social position of migrants, and their professional and economic status. Finally, the position of the migrants in the host societies, as well as their political role, is investigated, although the written sources do not provide many details.

Session 613, Tuesday 5 July 2022: 11.15-12.45

Yana Tchekhanovets
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Reconstructing the (inter)national community: Peter the Iberian and his monasteries

The paper aims to present the archaeological perspective on the activity of Peter the Iberian (ca. 411-491), an eminent Palestinian church authority of Georgian ancestry, and his circle in the frame of early monastic movement of the Holy Land. The saint's *vita* describes him as a restless man, an eternal pilgrim, and establisher of numerous monasteries. Born in the Caucasus, raised in Constantinople, as a young man, he comes to Jerusalem.

Soon after taking his vows, he organized a monastery on Mount Zion, with a shelter for poor pilgrims, and another near the Jordan River. Living Jerusalem for Gaza, he later becomes the bishop of Maïouma. After many journeys to Egypt, Arabia, Phoenicia, and around Palestine, and active participation in all the ecclesiastical and political controversies of the time, Peter died in Jamnia, surrounded by his disciples, and was buried in Maïouma. Like other vital figures of early Palestinian monasticism, Peter the Iberian's role was never confined to the Georgian religious community.

Few attempts were made to relate the material evidence of the Georgians in the Holy Land to the activity of Peter the Iberian and his circle in Jerusalem, Judean Desert, and Gaza. Until today, only the existence of certain Georgian establishments in the vicinity of the Tower of David in Jerusalem has been verified by epigraphic finds discovered elsewhere. It seems that the obtained archaeological material from Jerusalem and the southern region of the Holy Land testifies to the extreme cultural mobility of monasteries' multiethnic brethren.

Magdalena Garnczarska
Institute of Art History of the Jagiellonian University

Wandering Gold Whirling Discs from Sinai. On Transfer of an Art Technique

Gold nimbi and backgrounds covered with discs and rims distinguish some miniatures from the so-called Breslau Psalter (c. 1255–1267, MS 36–1950, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge). They are polished to such a high gloss that they distinctly stand out from the rest of the gilded surface and appear to spin. These images are related to associates of the Master of Giovanni da Gaibana. Researchers link some miniatures in the Seitenstetten Missal (c. 1260–1264, MS M. 855, The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York) with this artistic circle too. They contain these characteristic gold elements, and I argue that this uniquely decorative gold polishing technique derives from workshops of Saint Catherine's Monastery in Sinai. There, however, artists used to apply it to create icons.

Sinai icons with gold whirling discs constitute a group of about 120 paintings of various artistic qualities. They come from the second half of the 10th century to the end of the 13th century. Nevertheless, they are most symptomatic for the12th and 13th centuries. There was an active artistic milieu in Sinai at that time. It was especially relevant after 1204 when the Crusaders conquered Constantinople. The monastery treasures Byzantine and Crusader icons in its collection, which attest to close and lively artistic contacts between these circles. Therefore, I believe that these artists honed to perfection this specific method of gold burnishing. Then, around the mid-thirteenth century, this technique came to the West through Crusader artists, perhaps related to the Mendicant Orders. Hence, the indicated miniatures prove the rapid transfer of the art technique, which was possible only thanks to highly mobile artists. As in the Middle Ages, they easily crossed not only political but also cultural and artistic boundaries.

Peter F. Schadler
Department of Religion, Dickinson College/University of Vienna

Feigned Mobility in the Service of Religious Rapprochement?
The Curious Case of Paul of Antioch

In ‘A Letter to a Muslim Friend’, Paul of Antioch (fl. 13th) claims to have travelled widely in Byzantium and further west, interviewing the best intellectuals of his time in an effort to learn from them, as he says, about the Qur’an and Islam. Yet, our best evidence suggests Paul made no such trip, and fabricated the journey and the exchanges he had on it. Regardless of whether he made the trip or not, Paul’s reference to Byzantium as a definitive source for answers regarding inter-religious disputation and knowledge as part of his story tells us much of the Melkite view of Byzantium in the Near East, as well as Paul’s own environment. Despite having good reasons to think Melkites in the Near East were as well or better-informed than their Byzantine coreligionists further West, many continued to see Constantinople and the Byzantines as the source of the best available knowledge. This paper considers Paul’s stance in the context of perceptions of Byzantium from the provinces and the Near East, as well as the blending of fiction with fact to serve ulterior motives to protect Melkite identity, and possibly to promote greater religious tolerance.

Ilsee Cho

University of Korea

Little Romanland in the Far East: Comparing Political Culture of Chosŏn Korea (1392-1910) with that of the Byzantine and the Holy Roman Empire

To many living in medieval and early modern times, the Roman empire never went away. The predominantly Greek speakers of what is known today as the Byzantine empire claimed and believed that their country was *the* Roman empire. The primarily German speakers of what is known today as the Holy Roman Empire also thought that their country was *the* Roman empire. Such a notion of succession is indeed a widespread one, generating dozens of “Second Rome” in Europe and the Middle East. This paper locates such tradition of *translatio imperii* as a Eurasian or even global phenomenon by comparing the Greek and German cases with that of contemporaneous Korea. While existing as a largely independent state with self-rule for many centuries, the Koreans of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910) also claimed that they were legitimate inheritors of the ancient Chinese empire and civilization. This paper compares the German and Greek examples with that of the Koreans by locating both similarities and differences in their political cultures and discourses. The presentation focuses on creations and manipulations of myths, interpretations of ancient history, and how they saw themselves vis-à-vis the “competition”—other states that claimed the inheritance of the ancient politico-religious universalisms. Through such comparisons, this presentation displays how such notion of succession shaped the histories of distant and unrelated parts of Eurasia in similar-yet-different ways.