International Medieval Congress in Leeds 2017
(3-6 July 2017)

“Moving Byzantium” Sessions
Tuesday, 4 July

Papers are allocated 20 minutes, followed by 30-minute discussion for each session.

Organizer: Prof. Dr. Claudia Rapp (Project Leader, Moving Byzantium Project, University of Vienna / Austrian Academy of Sciences)

Team: Nicholas J. B. Evans (Austrian Academy of Sciences), Emilio Bonfiglio (University of Vienna), Ekaterini Mitsiou (University of Vienna), Johannes Preiser-Kapeller (Austrian Academy of Sciences), Yannis Stouraitis (Austrian Academy of Sciences), Paraskevi Sykopetritou (University of Vienna)

Sponsor:
The Wittgenstein-Prize Project ‘Mobility, Microstructures and Personal Agency’ of the FWF (Austrian National Research Foundation). W: http://rapp.univie.ac.at/

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Session 509, 09:00-10:30

Moving Byzantium I: Infrastructure and Material Culture

The project “Moving Byzantium” highlights the role of Byzantium as a global culture and analyses the internal flexibility of Byzantine society. It aims to contribute to a re-evaluation of a society and culture that has traditionally been depicted as stiff, rigid and encumbered by its own tradition. This will be achieved by the exploration of issues of mobility, microstructures and personal agency. In this session, routes, roads and bridges as infrastructure to mobility within and beyond Byzantium as well as the archaeological evidence for transcultural exchange will be discussed, integrating new approaches of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and archaeometry.

Moderator: Claudia RAPP (Project Leader, Moving Byzantium Project, University of Vienna, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna)
Between the 12th and 13th centuries, Cappadocia formed the heart of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm, representing a pivotal area in the wide spreading of culture between East and West of the medieval world. All this was mainly due to its strategic position within the Anatolian peninsula, at the crossroads of some of the major routes of the period, linking Constantinople to Syria and the Middle-East, as well as the Black Sea to the Mediterranean.

But, to what extent can the Seljuks be considered to have marked a break with the past or to have represented a continuity? Was such a ‘centrality’ so evident only during the Seljuk period? Did Cappadocia play that same role in previous ages?

Even if within the framework of a history that still has to be investigated, some suggestions could be proposed by considering one of the most distinctive elements of the medieval Anatolian landscape: the caravanserais. Indeed, analysing their distribution and localisation in respect to the road system developed during the Roman and Byzantine periods, it will be possible to evaluate the logistic/territorial choices adopted by the Seljuks and the continuity/discontinuity between the caravanserais’ network and the preceding communication systems. 2.5D GIS analyses, exploiting the potential of Cost Surfaces (raster maps defining the cost of movement on the basis of environmental and anthropic factors) will be applied. Applying a postdictive approach, the resulting Cost Pathways will be compared to historic/archaeological-proved routes in order to understand which factors could have played a major role in the definition of the layout of those routes.

Such a comparison will allow for the determination of the existence of the so called ‘Route inertia’ (Wilkinson 2014) and of the persistence of traditional corridors of movement (Massa 2014) within Anatolia, through time and even under the control of different political actors.
Ceramic Cooking Pots and Glazed Bowls at Frankish Thebes, Boeotia: Tracing Tastes and Customs Beyond Political Frontiers

This paper explores the diffusion patterns of glazed pottery products and aesthetic standards with regard to political organization in the Late Medieval Mediterranean. It based on the recent discovery of ceramic kitchenwares and glazed tablewares from the first half of the 14th century on Ismenion Hill, at Thebes: our combined petrographic and typo-stylistic analysis of this assemblage reveals production and supply strategies that do not match the regional distribution of political supremacy. Explanations involving diversified lifestyles among the Theban population - with, notably, an unexpected influence of Venetian customs and fashion - are explored.

After the division of the Byzantine Empire into a mosaic of feudal territories, Francs (1204), then Catalans (1311) took possession of the wealthy city of Thebes. In the meantime, 40 km to the east, the Euboean harbor of Chalkida, through which Thebes had been conducting trade with Venice and other Mediterranean cities during Middle Byzantine times, becomes a Venetian colony. Owing to warfare between Catalan and Venetian settlers in central Greece, one would expect the early 14th century to be a critical juncture in the evolution of trade, cuisine and artistic tastes at Thebes.

Earlier archaeometric scholarship does indicate the new development of glazed tableware workshops at Thebes after 1204, which succeeds to an import activity from Byzantine Chalkida. However, our analysis suggests that the main specialized output of these new workshops display some stylistic influence from Venice. This local production is complemented by imports from the Late Byzantine Empire, Frankish territories of Greece, and northern Italian cities, thereby suggesting highly diversified demands.

The Theban cookingware production follows a different fate with the perpetuation of Byzantine standards. However, a connection existed with Venetian Euboea, with the import of vessels which, given their distinctive shapes and fabrics, were possibly intended for specific cooking conditions and stuffs.
Galina FINGAROVA (University of Vienna - Austria)

*Bridging Byzantium*

In point of fact, no other architectural structure in human history has ever achieved the importance of the bridge for connecting people and cultures. In its long history, the bridge has been associated with all human areas of life: as an integral part of the infrastructure it has an enormous economic, military and social significance; as an architectural structure it incorporates the achievements of engineering and is also a work of art. Like other representative buildings, a bridge also demonstrates the political and economic power of its builder. Furthermore, the bridge as a place of transition embodies sacral and mythological power; metaphorically and symbolically it defines a place between life and death, the sacred and the profane, the world of gods and humans. This definition shows how important the investigation of bridges is for the understanding of crucial aspects of the society that created and used them.

Drawing upon archaeological evidence as well as written and iconographical sources, this paper aims to discuss the peculiarities of bridges built during the fourth to fifteenth centuries CE on territories under imperial Byzantine rule following two lines of enquiry: 1) their significance in the context of architectural history, analyzing the structural and technical innovations of the preserved monuments; and 2) as sources for cultural history, namely the political, symbolic and metaphorical meanings of bridges within the society that produced them.

Thus, the discussion of Byzantine bridges will demonstrate how an integrated study of a particular class of monuments is capable of creating new insights on the socioeconomic connectivity and mobility within the Byzantine empire and its relation to neighbouring cultures and will emphasize their role as monuments bridging the Empire on different levels.
Moving Byzantium II: Changes and Risks of Social Mobility

The project “Moving Byzantium” highlights the role of Byzantium as a global culture and analyses the internal flexibility of Byzantine society. It aims to contribute to a re-evaluation of a society and culture that has traditionally been depicted as stiff, rigid and encumbered by its own tradition. This will be achieved by the exploration of issues of mobility, microstructures and personal agency. This session will be devoted to the interplay between geographical and social mobility and its impacts on society in middle and late Byzantium, taking a new look on written evidence from the perspectives of historiography, military history and criminology.

Moderator: Paraskevi SYKOPETRITOU (Coordinator, Moving Byzantium Project, University of Vienna)

Papers:

Ekaterini MITSIOU (University of Vienna - Austria)

Mobile Criminals: Crime and Punishment in 13th Century Byzantine Epirus

The period after the conquest of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204 in the Byzantine sphere is marked by the (social) mobility of individuals and groups in search of security in an insecure world. Many of them found shelter in the three Greek States formed in the periphery of the former Byzantine Empire (Nicaea, Epirus and Trebizond). However, the presence of newcomers created a new -often negative- dynamic inside the local societies. A high number of murders attested in the first half of the 13th century may be indicative of this tendency.

In Medieval Studies, murder and crimes of violence have been studied from a legal and socio-cultural perspective. However, further explanatory models and ideas deriving from Criminology can be applied in order to understand better violent behaviour as the aggressive expression of personal agency. In a previous paper, we have applied such ideas in order to understand criminal behaviour inside Byzantine monastic communities.
The present paper aims at analysing from a criminological perspective cases of murder and their punishment as registered in 13th century Epirus (Western Greece). However, emphasis will be given on the geographical mobility of victims and murderers which actually consists a crucial parameter for the analysis of every criminal act. The same holds true for the legal procedure leading up to the punishment of the guilty party.

Main sources are the decisions of ecclesiastic courts and officials such as of the Archbishop of Ohrid, Demetrios Chomatenos, and the Metropolitan of Naupaktos, John Apokaukos. Although the Church officials were more interested in penitential aspects, the narrations of events allow for the reconstruction of the committed crimes. At the same time, they offer us a fascinating glimpse into the motives, actions and ways of thinking of the murderers prior and after their actions.

Eleonora KOUNTOURA GALAKI (Institute of Historical Research (Athens), The National Hellenic Research Foundation - Greece)

Realities and Criticism on Peoples’ Mobility in Byzantium According to George Pachymeres

The 13th and 14th centuries were a time of epoch-making realignments from the perspective of mobility in Byzantium with far reaching consequences in its geographical space, society and politics. It was an era marked by the mobility of people towards the Byzantine territory but also within it. The historian of the time George Pachymeres using rich terminology concerning mobility and with his known distinct manneristic literary style depicted vividly this particular situation, which the Byzantine state had to face.

Mobility in Byzantium at the time had many aspects from the social point of view. Among other instances (they will be further examined), I refer to a typical one, the mobility concerning the Byzantine population of Asia Minor that abandoned their place of origin. It was a classical type of forced mobility associated both with the internal policy of the central government and the prolonged armed struggle with the Muslims in the eastern borders. In a disapproving way George Pachymeres indicated the faults of the Palaiologan emperors’ policy on the issue of internal mobility by making references to earlier emperors who had faced the same problem, but with the seriousness required by the circumstances. As an eyewitness the historian conveyed authentic images of the
moving population of Asia Minor towards specific areas and mainly the Byzantine capital, which received the main mass of this “human uncontrolled river”. Pondering the set of conditions Pachymeres depicted with realism but also with a strong dose of bitterness the results of this large movement of population that altered the social web of the existing Byzantine cities as well as the physiognomy of Asia Minor.

Christos G. MAKRYPOULIAS (University of Athens - Greece)

_Ranks to Riches: Infantry Officers and Social Mobility in the Middle Byzantine Period_

Upward social mobility in Byzantium is viewed either as a rags-to-riches story, one of formerly unknown individuals exercising their personal agency in order to climb the ladder of a highly stratified society, or as a less romantic affair involving groups of people taking advantage of the usual networks of family and kinship. Whichever side researchers take, however, they tend to focus mainly on studying the careers of court officials and high-ranking commanders. The latter were mostly landed magnates who had risen from the ranks of the cavalry arm, since tagmatic and thematic horsemen were the cutting edge of the Middle Byzantine army. Nevertheless, one of the main characteristics of the Eastern Roman Empire’s military organisation from the middle of the tenth to the end of the eleventh century was a resurgence of organised infantry units. Modern scholars have adequately studied the military reforms of the 960s and the consequent renewed importance of infantry within the framework of Byzantine military history, yet little attention has been paid to the position of infantry commanders in social hierarchy. The aim of this paper is to present some tentative results of an ongoing investigation into this particular officer corps. Although the sources are not new (narrative texts, documents, and a few specimens from an ever-expanding corpus of published lead seals), the angle of approach differs. Instead of the well-established Byzantine families whose progenitors had distinguished themselves as cavalry commanders in the eighth and ninth centuries, I propose to study social mobility from the point of view of the lowly infantryman, of the officers and men (mainly of Armenian or Armeno-Georgian extraction) who tried to use their service in the infantry of the later Macedonian era as a stepping stone to promotion, social advancement, and integration.
Session 709, 14:15-15:45

Moving Byzantium III: Religious and Political Crisis as Tickers for Mobility

The project “Moving Byzantium” highlights the role of Byzantium as a global culture and analyses the internal flexibility of Byzantine society. It aims to contribute to a re-evaluation of a society and culture that has traditionally been depicted as stiff, rigid and encumbered by its own tradition. This will be achieved by the exploration of issues of mobility, microstructures and personal agency. In this session, religious communities and theological conflict as well as political crisis as background and motives for mobility will be discussed on the basis of known and new documentary evidence from the middle and late Byzantine period.

Moderator: Ekaterini Mitsiou (Team Member, Moving Byzantium Project, University of Vienna)

Papers:

Philipp Winterhager (Humboldt University, Berlin - Germany)

Moving Byzantium from Rome? Comparing 8th and 9th Century Anti-iconoclast Migration

Migration, besides other forms of mobility, is a field of study in pre-modern global history, which is, in turn, necessarily based on such spatial movement. Thus, global history is studying not so much ‘civilisations’ as such than rather concrete interaction as an interplay of cultural practice with local social situations (this perspective sometimes labelled ‘glocal’). Rome, seen as ‘the other end’ of the empire, was, between 7th and 9th century at least, the destination of manifold Eastern Mediterranean migrants; hence it offers a case for such global history.

Greek-speaking (or -writing) monastic immigrants become visible in our sources in the iconoclast periods, inter alia. My paper looks at them in a ‘glocal’ perspective. That means, it does not so much concentrate on the (theological and cultural) contents of their utterings on the image controversy as rather on their ‘situatedness’ in Rome and their interdependency with its local society.
For this, migrants’ texts from the 740s–760s and the 810s are presented in comparison. Mid-8th-century texts, in their warning in the face of iconoclasm, connect Eastern Mediterranean influences with several hints to a self-positioning in the local Roman society.

In early 9th century, a letter allegedly by pope Paschal I stands out. It can be shown by comparison of language to be indeed the product of a single immigrant, Methodios. His migration history and social surrounding in Rome, at the same time, reveal a very limited degree of self-positioning in the local society.

In both cases, anti-iconoclasm is a claim by certain migrant groups; but while local social dynamics lead to opportunities of interaction in the first case (and, eventually, resonance for the migrants’ case), this resonance is missing in the second, shaped by lacking self-positioning in local groups.

The comparative approach shows that migration does not automatically lead to ‘exchange’, but the latter is shaped by contingent local circumstances. The case, more broadly, suggests to study ‘otherness’, being the basis of grand narratives such as ‘the parting of Byzantium and the West’, in its local peculiarities.

Saskia DÖNITZ (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main - Germany)

Byzantine Jewry Between East and West – Shemarya from Negroponte and his Scholarly Network

The Byzantine Jewish community belongs to the multifaceted picture of social variety in Byzantium. Although in general Jewish authors and their writings from the Late Byzantine period are rarely known, a small corpus produced by a Jewish scholar living in Negroponte was preserved. From the oeuvre of Shemarya ben Elija, also called ha-Ikriti (the Cretan), it is possible to reconstruct the complex cultural profile of Jews in 14th-century Byzantium, a community that was formed by the Hellenistic tradition, an influx of knowledge from the West (especially after the Fourth Crusade), the Christian-Orthodox surrounding, and the ongoing intra-Jewish discourse between Rabbanites and
Karaites. Although Shemarya probably spent most of his life in Negroponte, he argued with his Jewish contemporaries in Byzantium and around the Mediterranean. His writings show his participation in a Jewish network of scholars spanning from Spain and the Provence over Italy through Constantinople to Palestine and Egypt. By sketching the intellectual cosmos of Shemarya as a microstructure this lecture will open up a new perspective on Byzantium as a hub of discourse among Jewish scholarly communities from various geographical areas on the one hand. On the other, Shemarya was involved in a vivid debate with his Byzantine Karaite fellows about the authority of Scripture. Last but not least of course, he was influenced by the Byzantine and Latin Christian environment. Thus, the mobility of ideas within various social-religious groups in Byzantium but also among Jews on a “transmediterranean” level - which was facilitated by Byzantium’s role as an economic and cultural node during the Palaeologuean period - can be demonstrated.

Dejan DŽELEBDŽIĆ (Institute for Byzantine Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade - Serbia)

Moving Society: The Byzantine Balkans in the First Half of the Thirteenth Century

The most important sources for this research are the court records and letters by Demetrios Chomatenos and John Apokaukos, but also the letters of Michael Choniates, some diplomatic material and two Serbian Lives of Saint Sabbas. The striking feature of the society that reveals through these sources is its mobility. The most obvious kind of mobility are movements of population that were directly caused by the changes that had been taking place after the dissolution of the Byzantine Empire, but there are also movements that are characteristic for regular everyday life. Among individuals who travel are high ranking ecclesiastics, an embassy of the Serbian ruler and Ragusan merchants, but more usual are the ordinary people who travel from their home town to Ohrid, in order to state their case and receive the opinion (γνώμη) from the Archbishopric court. We also come across male and female individuals who for whatever reason leave their home town and settle elsewhere. There is also evidence about social mobility
upwards – we encounter local aristocrats starving to get a good position at the court of Nicaean or Epirotic rulers, a cleric who becomes bishop and ordinary people who try to give proper education to their children, hoping that it will secure their prosperity. In this paper I shall investigate whether all those kinds of mobility caused important changes in the Byzantine provincial society or the forces of social stability were strong enough to prevent them.
Moving Byzantium, IV: Scales of Mobility in Early Byzantium

The project “Moving Byzantium” highlights the role of Byzantium as a global culture and analyses the internal flexibility of Byzantine society. It aims to contribute to a re-evaluation of a society and culture that has traditionally been depicted as stiff, rigid and encumbered by its own tradition. This will be achieved by the exploration of issues of mobility, microstructures and personal agency. This session will discuss novel approaches towards mobility in early Byzantium from the regional to the global level, integrating new concepts of migration and imperial history as well as tools of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and network analysis.

Moderator: Yannis STOURAITIS (Team Member, Moving Byzantium Project, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna)

Papers:

Johannes PREISER-KAPELLEL (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna)

Kinetic Empires: Nomadic Mobility, Environmental Change and Imperial Formations Between Byzantium and China (6th-9th cent. CE)

The mid-6th century CE was marked by increased political dynamics and mobility among nomadic groups in the Eurasian Steppes; the same time saw a period of dramatic environmental change (the “Late Antique Little Ice Age”, cf. Büntgen et al. 2016). These events initiated the emergence, expansion, fragmentation or collapse of a series of competing and succeeding imperial formations (Turks, Avars, Bulgars, Khazars, Uyghurs), which very much affected also the neighbouring “sedentary” empires of Byzantium, Iran (Sasanian Persia, Arab Caliphate) and China. Based on new palaeoenvironmental evidence as well as archaeological and historical data this paper analyses political, socioeconomic, cultural and religious change across the “nomadic”/”sedentary” divide. For this purpose, it adapts the framework of “kinetic empire” as “a flexible imperial organization that revolves around a set of mobile activities and relies on selective nodal control of key resources” (Hämäläinen 2013). Furthermore, tools of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) are used to survey the interplay of spatial and ecological dynamics,
while methods of network theory are applied to analyse the mobility of objects and people. Processes hereby illuminated include changes in the military practices and elite cultures due to confrontations and exchanges across the steppe, fostering the emergence of elements an “aristocratic koine” from Constantinople to Chang’an (Canepa 2010; Skaff 2012). Equally, the conversion of the Bulgars to Christianity, of the Khazars to Judaism or of the Uyghurs to Manichaeism has to be interpreted within the wider framework of “portable religions” along the “silk routes” and the establishment of “imperial monotheisms” (Höfert 2015). In the general, such a comparative macro-perspective allows for a comparative analysis how different “mobilities” challenged these societies and how all of them had to become “kinetic empires” in order to adapt.

Dorota DZIERZBICKA (University of Warsaw - Poland)

*Networks of Merchants in Byzantine Egypt: A Geographical Perspective*

The proposed paper focuses on patterns of trade and mobility in the world of traders. The author examines networks of merchants in Byzantine Egypt (4th-7th c AD) based on papyri and archaeological data. The presented research consists in analysing the geographic and chronological distribution of texts that refer to dealers in various foodstuffs and other commodities. Localities mentioned in these texts are mapped and the connections between them are traced and analysed on a regional and interregional level. The analysis also includes distinguishing the merchants’ bases and identifying activity patterns specific to different groups.

The study of the geographic connections of merchants is conducted with the aid of network analysis. Plotting locations on a map often proves problematic because aside from the well-known cities and archaeologically attested sites, the location of many villages and hamlets is unknown and even their names are sometimes uncertain. Instead, it is more useful to show these localities and the connections between them on visualisations produced using GEPHI network analysis software.

The resulting graphs are set against the backdrop of data on the production and distribution of goods obtained from archaeological evidence and documentary sources. The goal is to try to identify and explain patterns governing merchant activity by linking them to areas where production and consumption took place.
The author’s research on merchant networks is carried out within the cadre of a project entitled “The Egyptian Bazaar: trade networks in Egypt from the 1st century BC to the 7th century AD”. The project is carried out at the University of Warsaw, with funding from the National Science Centre Poland.

Ekaterina NECHAEVA (University of Bern - Switzerland)

‘Flight from Byzantium’. Attitudes Towards Emigration in Late Antiquity

It is well known that the Late Roman Empire was constantly facing waves of immigration. At the same time, the phenomenon of outgoing mobility was also present. How did the state and society perceive emigration? Was it troubled by the outflow of those leaving? The problem may be approached from three different perspectives – political, legal and social – offering different levels of reflection on perceptions of emigration.

The Roman state tended to perceive emigration, both military and civil, through the paradigm of flight, collaboration with enemies and, ultimately, treason. Roman legislation ordered most severe punishments for deserters. In international relations a state of alliance obliged the partners to extradite the fugitives. Sources often characterise emigration as the act of dissidence and disloyalty. However, a different framework, emphasizing the relativity of the very notion of one’s patria was also present in the public discourse. “In a corrupt polity… [one] ought to ask to be an exile from these incurable affairs, and, if indeed possible, he will go to another, better state”, (Semplic. In Ench. 32.186–19) states neoplatonist Simplicius of Cilicia, one of the seven Hellenic philosophers who fled the Roman Empire and sought asylum at the Persian court of Chosroes (Agath. 2.30).

The paper will aim to reveal how the ideas of cosmopolitanism were exploited by Late Antique authors in the context of outgoing mobility. It will also offer an analysis of both the subjective motives of acts of migration and the spectrum of society’s attitudes and responses to outgoing mobility thus shedding light on the complex relations between
personal agency and social structure in Late Antiquity. This scrutiny will offer a view on cohesion in, and on the points of disruption of, Late Roman society.

This paper is part of the ‘EX PATRIA’ research project investigating the causes, modes and social impact of emigration from the Later Roman Empire.

Concluding Discussion and Remarks

Please join us from 18:30 at the “Terrace Bar” (Leeds University Union) for a drink and further conversation!
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