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International Workshop

IDEOLOGIES & IDENTITIES
IN THE MEDIEVAL BYZANTINE WORLD

Dave Pearson, Sailing to Byzantium study h.38cm x w.74cm; gouache and ink

PROGRAM & ABSTRACTS

Vienna, April 16-17, 2015
Seminar rooms of the Austrian Academy of Sciences
Wohllebengasse 12-14, 1040
THURSDAY 16

Registration – Coffee 9.30-10.00

10.00–11.00
Introductory session:
Welcoming Addresses

**Johannes Koder**
Perceptions of imperial war and peace policies among the Byzantine social strata: Introductory remarks

**Yannis Stouraitis**
Byzantium between ideology and identity: *Instead of an introduction*

*Coffee Break 11.00-11.30*

11.30-13.00
Session 1: Ideological frameworks of imperial power
(Chair: Claudia Rapp)

**Olof Heilo**
Disruptions and diversity: epistemological frameworks of ideological re-orientation in the early Middle-Byzantine era

**Kostis Smyrlis**
The demosion and the common good: Byzantine ideas regarding taxation and the use of public wealth (10th-14th c.)

*Respondent: John Haldon – Discussion*

13.00-14.30 Lunch at the Wohllebengasse

14.30-16.00
Session 2: Ethnicity, provincial identity, and the imperial body politic
(Chair: John Haldon)

**Jean-Claude Cheynet**
Les rébellions provinciales comme révélateur de «l’identité» byzantine (Xe-XIIe s.)

**Alicia Simpson**
Ethnic/Provincial separatism in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries: A case of power relations or disparate identities?

*Respondent: Yannis Stouraitis – Discussion*

*Coffee Break 16.00-16.30*

16.30-18.30
Session 3: Text-based ideals and authorial identities
(Chair: Dionysios Stathakopoulos)

**Theodora Antonopoulou**
Beyond religion: Homilies as conveyor of political ideology in Middle Byzantium

**Stratis Papaioanou**
Modes of self-representation in Byzantine literature

**Panagiotis Agapitos**
“Lower middle-class” ideology of education and language and the “bookish” identity of John Tzetzes

*Respondent: Alex Riehle – Discussion*

18.30 Reception at the Wohllebengasse
FRIDAY 17

9.00-10.30
Session 4: Community and solidarity
(Chair: Yannis Stouraitis)
Leslie Brubaker
Gender, status and cult
Fotini Kondyli
Community building and collective identity in Middle Byzantine Athens
Respondent: Olof Heilo – Discussion

Coffee Break 10.30-11.00

11.00-12.30
Session 5: Identities and Identifications on the margins of the empire
(Chair: Veronika Wieser)
Judith Herrin
Ideologies and Identities in early medieval Italy
Francesco Borri
The lagoons as a distant mirror: Narrating Byzantium in Venice and in the Adriatic arc (800–1000)
Respondent: Walter Pohl – Discussion
12.30-14.00 Lunch at the Wohllebengasse

14.00-15.30
Session 6: Ideological impact beyond the limits of the empire
(Chair: Stratis Papaioannou)
Jonathan Shepard
Adjustable imperial image-projection and the Greco-Roman repertoire: their reception among outsiders and longer-stay visitors
Annick Peters-Custot
Cultural policy and political ideology: How imperial was the Norman realm of Sicily?
Respondent: Andreas Rhoby – Discussion

Coffee Break 15.30-16.00

16.00-17.30
Session 7: Identity politics vs. the empire
(Chair: Panagiotis Agapitos)
Dionysios Statathopoulos
Racism in the Crusades: ethnic and religious identities between conquest and negotiation
Vlada Stanković
Changes in identity and changes of ideology in the Byzantine world in the second half of the twelfth century. The case of Serbia
Respondent: Johannes Preiser-Kapeller – Discussion

17.30–18.30
Session 8: Conclusions
(Chair: Johannes Koder)
Claudia Rapp, John Haldon – Final discussion

19.00 Dinner for speakers, chairs and respondents – Restaurant Sperl
ABSTRACTS

Panagiotis A. Agapitos
“Lower middle-class” ideology of education and language and the “bookish” identity of John Tzetzes

The paper will explore the theme of the symposium by examining notions of educational ideology and linguistic identity expressed in the works of John Tzetzes (ca. 1110-ca. 1170). Using Tzetzes’ letter collection as a starting point, three areas of ideology and identity in the twelfth century shall be described: (i) Tzetzes’ approach to the middle and lower strata of society in relation to his education and linguistic skills (epp. 55, 57, 104), (ii) his understanding of identity both in terms of his family lineage and of his professional lineage (epp. 6, 75), (iii) his use of colloquial discourse as a means of projecting a “conservative” ideology aligned with his extensive reading of Aristophanes (epp. 14, 46). These texts will be compared to other works of his (Historiae, varius iambic poems, Theogony, commentaries on Aristophanes and scholia to Thucydides), wherein Tzetzes expresses comparable views on his sociocultural ideology and individual identity. As a specific case study, the paper will look into the (in)famous but also “obscure” episode in Tzetzes’ youth, when he was serving as secretary the governor of Berroia Isaak, and the way he writes about this episode in his philological works (exegesis to the Iliad, allegories to the Iliad, Carmina Iliaca, exegesis to Porphyry’s Eisagoge). The paper proposes that, through his “bookish” identity, Tzetzes was able to express without inhibitions his “lower middle-class” ideology of a “genuine Hellenic” identity defining his place and role in society as a conscientious teacher and strict admonisher.

Theodora Antonopoulou
Beyond religion: Homilies as conveyor of political ideology in Middle Byzantium. Some considerations

The paper focuses on a specific group of religious literary texts, namely homilies, in order to investigate whether they transmitted political ideology. In particular, it deals with Middle Byzantine homilies from just before the beginning of Iconoclasm to 1204. This is not an exhaustive study of such a vast subject, but an examination of certain aspects of it. Following some preliminary remarks, the issues under consideration are:
1. The expression of criticism of or opposition to the emperor, whether explicit or ex silentio.
2. The positive expression of political, more specifically imperial ideology on the basis of a few significant homiletic examples from the Byzantine capital at the highest level of church and state.
3. Homilies in the Byzantine tradition as a medium of political-ideological correctness outside of the empire (the case of Philagathos Kerameus).
4. The exploration of a literary and ideological line that leads from the ninth to the twelfth century, from Constantinople to the Norman Panormos.
5. The analysis of a homily that bridges the two worlds, the Byzantine and the Norman, in another way, by presenting Norman political ideology from the point of view of a Byzantine preacher.
Francesco Borri
The lagoons as a distant mirror: Narrating Byzantium in Venice and in the Adriatic Arc (800 – 1000)

The shores of the Northern Adriatic were a receptive region to the ideology of Byzantium in the early and high Middle Ages. Political allegiances rooted back to the Roman past. Yet, since the sixth century, Byzantium lost hegemony in the region. Barbarian identities spread from the inland regions to the coasts, challenging the empire and its conception of power. Imperial authority gradually retired to small enclaves. Since the seventh century, the aristocracies linked to Constantinople spread like a leopard pattern in a region dominated by Barbarian polities. This tense social field granted the attestation of Byzantine praxis and habits in a periphery many decades after their extinction in other Mediterranean corners. Anthroponomy, institutions and myth of origins echoing a Roman past and a Byzantine present became characteristic of some Adriatic societies. These imperial habits turned, in some regions, to be identifiers for communities facing neighbours that they perceived as barbarian. Moreover, these identifiers became often disjointed, from the actual byzantine rule, or in conflict with it. From this landscape new discourses of power and identity developed, leaving clues in historical narratives such as Agnellus’ book and the History of the Venetians by John the Deacon.

Leslie Brubaker
Gender, status and cult

Gender and status are key markers of identity in any society, and Byzantium is no exception. How gender and status intersected with religious practice, and particularly with practice not specifically tied to the institutional church, has however been little studied within the parameters of the Byzantine Empire. This paper focuses on what extra-liturgical devotional practice celebrating the Virgin Mary (arguably the most important figure involved in such practice) tells us about the formation and expression of ideologies and identities in the medieval Byzantine world. These are thrown into sharp relief through comparison with activities associated with honouring Mary in the medieval Christian west and in Islam, and approximately half of this paper is devoted to such a comparative evaluation. The remainder examines the impact of status and gender in Byzantine veneration of the Virgin, with particular attention to processions.

Jean Claude Cheynet
Les rébellions provinciales comme révélateur de « l’identité » byzantine (Xe-XIIe s.)

Les provinciaux ordinaires se rendent rarement à Constantinople où ils pourraient prendre la mesure de la grandeur impériale romaine. Seules les élites visitaient éventuellement la capitale, où une carrière s’accélérerait parfois spectaculairement grâce à la faveur impériale, mais on pouvait porter l’honorable dignité de protospathaire vers
1059, sans connaître la mégalopole (Eustathe Boïlas). Les habitants des provinces, en très grande majorité des ruraux, plus encore qu'à l'époque romaine, ne connaissaient du pouvoir central, que l'effigie des empereurs sur les monnaies, les administrateurs et parfois les régiments de l'armée. Sachant qu'une partie de la population n'est pas hellénophone, les rapports entre les souverains et le peuple passaient souvent par le truchement des notables locaux. Nous ne disposons d'aucun sondage d'opinion qui nous donnerait les raisons pour lesquels les sujets du basileus se sentaient appartenir à la communauté des « Romains ». Cependant nous pouvons analyser leur réaction lorsqu'une rébellion éclatait en province. Ces révoltes étaient très diverses, certaines éclataient près de la capitale, qui devenait un objectif immédiat, d'autres aux frontières, certaines, appuyées sur l'armée, visaient à renverser l'empereur, d'autres seulement à corriger une fiscalité jugée excessive, certaines étaient conduites par des Grecs de langue, d'autres par des ethnikoi. Les divergences religieuses semblent jouer un rôle mineur, sauf à donner une raison supplémentaire d'hostilité au basileus.

Les luttes pour le pouvoir, lorsqu'il semble que Constantinople ne soit pas l'objectif final, sont aussi à prendre en compte pour évaluer les motivations des opposants pour refuser « la maison commune » des Romains.

Olof Heilo
Disruptions and diversity: epistemological frameworks of ideological re-orientation in the early Middle-Byzantine era

History knows many examples of religious and political ideologies that have managed to strike a breach in the boundaries that otherwise define families, ethnicities, cultures and political entities. This is also a main reason to why their rise can be marred by political conflicts that have less to do with the ideas or even practices they promote than with the extent to which they empower individuals with decisions beyond the reach of their societies. Few ideologies, however, manage to prevail in such a state of fragility: in order to sustain themselves on a wider scale or over a longer period of time they are usually forced to adapt to a reality in which relations, hierarchies and loyalties create more durable frameworks of coexistence. If the religious and political movements that percolated the margins and lower strata of Byzantine Empire had attracted adherents solely by ideological means, it would have been difficult to define or even presume the existence of the epistemological horizon that kept them together.

This said, a period usually perceived to mark an era of disruptions and diversity in the history of the Byzantine Empire – the seventh and eighth centuries – raise important questions about the extent to which a relative openness and
diversity on the local level – particularly in Anatolia – could have increased the impact of individual convictions even to the point where later historiographers found it problematic to contextualise and narrate. This is where the issue of ideology becomes urgent, as it is wound up with current discussions on the rise of the “Empires of Faith” (Sarris 2011) or the transition from “Empire to Commonwealth” (Fowden 1993 and 2014). Although the written sources offer few direct clues, the contradictions of the main historiographers in the subsequent era and Constantinople imply a social and ideological diversity that did indeed burst the epistemological frameworks of the reconsolidating Byzantine state.

Judith Herrin
Ideologies and Identities in early medieval Italy

The Italian territories that became the exarchate of Ravenna, some time after the reconquest concluded by the Pragmatic Sanction of 553, constituted an unusual element within the imperial realm, a distant fragment of Constantinople’s administration. Like North Africa, which had been reoccupied in an earlier and easier campaign, forces at variance with Constantinople’s rule persisted. But unlike the exarchate based on Carthage, Ravenna inherited a particular identity from the period of Ostrogothic rule (493-540), which had sustained more cooperative relations between Roman and non-Roman groups. Within Italy, however, the old imperial capital of Rome had lost its traditional powerbase and was fast becoming an episcopal centre. While coastal cities that maintained maritime contact with the East Mediterranean had closer relations with Constantinople, inland settlements were often quite cut off. In these very mixed circumstances, many ideologies and identities flourished. The dominant imperial ideology that Constantinople wished to impose singled out loyalty to the ruling emperor in the East as the chief duty of every citizen. Payment of taxes in coin that bore the emperor’s portrait and obedience to imperial laws were key features. In addition, all rulers wanted their subjects to practise Christianity as defined in Constantinople, and this gave rise to numerous disagreements. In Ravenna the bishop was often obliged to comply, but the bishop of Rome refused to observe the regulations proposed in the East. The patriarch of Aquileia/Grado also retained an independent interpretation of Christian doctrine that provoked divisions within the West.

In addition, the regions brought together under the exarch’s control maintained their own local characters, distinguishing the region at the north of the Adriatic from Liguria on the west coast or the central areas of the Apennines. This may have contributed to the success of the Lombard invasions from 568 onwards which seriously restricted Ravenna’s authority. In this context I will examine the conflicting ideologies and identities in northern Italy from the sixth to the eighth century.

Fotini Kondyli
Community building and collective identity in Middle Byzantine Athens

Byzantine scholars have discussed political ideology and particular imperial propaganda as the key to political and cultural unity, offering thus a top down approach to
Byzantium’s modus operandi. I argue that it is people’s membership in local communities forged by common experiences and shared responsibilities that lies in the heart of Byzantine identity and consequently of Byzantium itself. Each community internalized and articulated differently its membership to Byzantium, filtering its connection and role within the Empire through local histories, lived experiences and membership in local communities. I thus explore how collective identities were shaped and negotiated in a local context. I further consider how that collectiveness can in different contexts translate to membership in the Byzantine Empire or become a vehicle of opposition and differentiation between periphery and Capital as well as between elites and lower social strata.

Using Middle Byzantine Athens as a case study, I consider three aspects in the life of the city: architecture and urban planning, the development of local cults and the management and administration of the city. These three domains require the participation of different social groups from non-elites to local aristocrats, clergy and imperial officials. They are also associated with communal action, shared experiences and even shared responsibility. For example, from my preliminary results in the study of the Byzantine settlement in the Athenian Agora, the architectural development of the city cannot be understood without acknowledging the share role of ordinary people, elites and officials in decisions of what is public and private, in maintaining public spaces and amenities and in mapping their social affiliations in the function and spatial relation among buildings. I argue that such collective actions conditioned the experience of urban living in the Byzantine periphery, enhanced a sense of belonging and informed the relations of local communities with the Capital and the Imperial court.

**Stratis Papaioannou**

Modes of self-representation in Byzantine literature

This paper revisits rhetorical theories and literary practices of self-representation during the middle Byzantine period. Expanding on earlier and recent work on Byzantine autobiography, this paper will survey a wide set of texts and discourses that delineated frames for the construction of persons as well as personas within the nexus of individual choices and a limited palette of communal identities in Byzantium.

**Annick Peters-Custot**

Cultural policy and political ideology: How imperial was the Norman realm of Sicily?

The Byzantine Empire left an important legacy to the political entities that developed in the aftermath of Byzantine rule – above all in the Mediterranean world – and in particular in the Norman Realm of Sicily. This complex and multifaceted kingdom conceived and identified, certainly inappropriately, as “Norman”, actually inherited a legacy stemming from three monotheisms, the two main spheres of Christianity, an Islamic State, two Empires (the Ottonian and the Eastern ones) and different kingdoms.

While the status and situation of the Medieval Mediterranean communities are most often studied through a perspective of juridical determinism, both in theory and in practice, this is
not the case for the Norman Realm of Sicily. There, the “Mezzogiorno” is considered as a laboratory for the analysis of medieval Mediterranean communities (Norman ethnogenesis, Greek identity and communities, Sicilian ‘Mozarabs’ and Sicilian Arab-speaking Jews) and for the notions of identity and of community. In particular, recent studies have pointed out the importance of political construction and ideological determinism to explain the situation of the different minorities in the kingdom of Sicily. Consequently, the analysis of the Hauteville policy towards the minorities and its handling of cultural diversity may shed new light on the political ideology of the Hauteville kingdom. In this contribution, I would like to go beyond the juridical criterion and describe how a Western Monarchy, that of the Norman Realm of Sicily, reflected the existence and use of an imperial ideology based upon the Byzantine model: the Norman ideology was an imperial one without the name and evidence of this can be found in the image of the King as a unifier of the various identities of his subjects.

Jonathan Shepard
Adjustable imperial image-projection and the Greco-Roman repertoire: their reception among outsiders and longer-stay visitors

This paper will explore the Byzantine state’s formal projection of its character and situation towards external powers and peoples, their reception of it over time, and the repercussions this may eventually have had on Byzantium’s own projection of its self-image. In the early middle ages, when communications between Byzantium and distant powers were often fraught with difficulty, outsiders’ up-to-date information about conditions and culture in Constantinople was liable to be sparse and inaccurate. In these circumstances, Byzantine emperors were able to take advantage, and, paradoxically, drastically to vary their image-projection without lasting damage to credibility. Examples for the ninth century will illustrate this point. From the second half of the tenth century, a more consistent image of imperial Roman triumphalism was projected, at a time when communications between Byzantium and western and northern peoples were easing, and when large numbers of warriors were enlisted from among them to serve with the imperial armed forces. Travellers and mercenaries were exposed to the formally-projected Roman image but also, importantly, to the broader Greco-Roman culture and cults of ‘middlebrow’ officers of the armed forces. Hints of their reception of this will be noted, with special reference to the Normans. By the mid-eleventh century, for reasons partly registering their closer contacts with Byzantium, members of their political elites showed marked ‘classicizing’ tendencies, and those installing themselves in Italy emulated ancient Greek as well as Roman heroes. The eastern empire’s monopoly of access both to Greco-Roman culture and to imperial Roman-ness was now under challenge, and this at a time of unexpected, spectacular military setbacks. Imperial image-projection towards outsiders during the early Komnenian era will be reviewed in the light of these developments, alongside the involvement of leading Normans (and other Westerners) in Byzantine political culture.
Alicia Simpson
Ethnic/provincial separatism in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries: A case of power relations or disparate identities?

The period 1180–1204 in Byzantine history witnessed an unprecedented spate of ethnic/provincial separatist movements that resulted in the creation of independent polities in the empire’s outlying territories and in autonomous provincial centers in its core regions. The phenomenon played little or no part in the events that led up to the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204 but had long-lasting consequences for the future of Byzantium and, indeed, for the entire region of Southeastern Europe. Although the issue remains contentious, it has generally been understood in terms of a crisis or breakdown in the relations between center and periphery. In this context, the collapse of the ‘Komnenian system’ of government in the final decades of the twelfth century is said to have resulted in the weakening of central authority and the territorial fragmentation of the empire as local potentates and provincial elites discovered that there was more to be gained from opposition than from service to Constantinople. This interpretation, though perfectly valid for the failure of the political system, does not take into account the geopolitical transformations and ideological shifts occurring in the wider region of Southeastern Europe. Revisionist work on the developments in the northern Balkans, for example, suggests that something more substantial than centrifugal trends arising from imperial weakness or maladministration was behind the creation of independent polities in the empire’s frontier regions. Likewise, recent research on the provinces challenges the picture of tension between the dominant center and the discontented periphery that has long been considered instrumental in the separatist movements occurring in the core regions of the empire. These new readings allow us to revisit the issue and attempt an alternative explanatory model.

Kostis Smyrlis
The demosion and the common good: Byzantine ideas regarding taxation and the use of public wealth (10th-14th c.)

Based on evidence coming from literary, legal, and documentary sources, the paper analyses the main notions regarding taxation and the administration of public resources in Byzantium. It examines the arguments used in order to justify or contest taxation and the other fiscal demands as well as the discourse regarding the regulation by the state of social and economic relations. The paper also explores the ideas put forward concerning the imposition of taxes by the emperor, the granting of exemptions, and the practice of tax collection. It concludes by examining the debate on the way tax money and the other state resources ought to be used by the emperor.
Vlada Stanković
Changes in identity and changes of ideology in the Byzantine world in the second half of the twelfth century. The case of Serbia

Looking back from the time of the pinnacle of medieval Serbian state in the 14th century, the questions of the formation of Serbian identity in the Middle Ages and its main characteristics may seem easily answerable or even self-evident, with Orthodoxy, the concept of the holy dynasty and the political and cultural reliance on the rich Byzantine 'heritage' as its main features.

But, defining Serbia in the Middle Ages includes sets of complex, understudied or even completely ignored problems, from identity and self-perception to finding models of development applicable for understanding a dramatic change that occurred in the course of no more than four generations, from the mid 12th century to the year 1218. That change had transformed ‘Serbia’ from territorially, politically, ideologically and – maybe most important – religiously undefined group of polities to a stable, completely rounded medieval state with clearly defined self-perception of its rulers.

I will argue that the process of essential transformation of medieval Serbia, whose effects are felt strongly to this day, stemmed from the internal developments within Byzantium and the changes in the functioning of Byzantine elite that added diversity to the consistency of Byzantine political, ideological and cultural influence in the region. Both in the case of Manuel Komnenos's decisive actions in the years 1150-1172 and the more compromising but surprisingly politically efficient approach of the Angeloi brothers in the last fifteen years of the 12th century, a series of unequivocal, ritual transformation took place in the core Serbian lands which resulted in an unwavering, long-term political and spiritual orientation of Serbia toward Byzantine world.

Dionysios Stathakopoulos
Racism in the Crusades: ethnic and religious identities between conquest and negotiation

In a recent book Francisco Bethencourt assigned to the period of the Crusades an important role in the history of racism, which he defines as ‘prejudice concerning ethnic descent coupled with discriminatory action’. In this paper I will look into the dynamic relations on the ground between Crusaders, Byzantines, Muslims, Jews and Oriental Christians between the late 1090s and 1204 in order to test the relevance and usefulness of racism as an analytical tool.

Yannis Stouraitis
Byzantium between ideology and identity: Instead of an introduction

The term ‘Byzantine Empire’ is not historical but analytical. Historians of the medieval East Roman world use this label for reasons of periodization, even though they often disagree with each other as to the beginnings of the Byzantine era or, for that matter, the Byzantine Empire. This is a paradox that is rarely discussed. Why a term intended to facilitate periodization ends up causing a dispute over it? Is it perhaps because the term was initially not invented to serve the
analytical needs that modern historians usually have in mind when they employ it?
In a workshop on the content and function of various ideologies and identities in the medieval Byzantine world, I think it is proper to begin by posing the question about the construction of the research object’s ideologized identity in an era when historical teleology reached its climax. Considering that labels are often intended to attribute an identity that will serve the needs of a rigid worldview, it is useful to discuss in what way the labelling of a historical society may carry with it the ideological burden of an out-dated historical teleology and its spatial-cultural prerogative. Not least, because the latter may still subconsciously impinge upon our efforts to approach the history of the medieval East Roman Empire as an open and not a closed process.