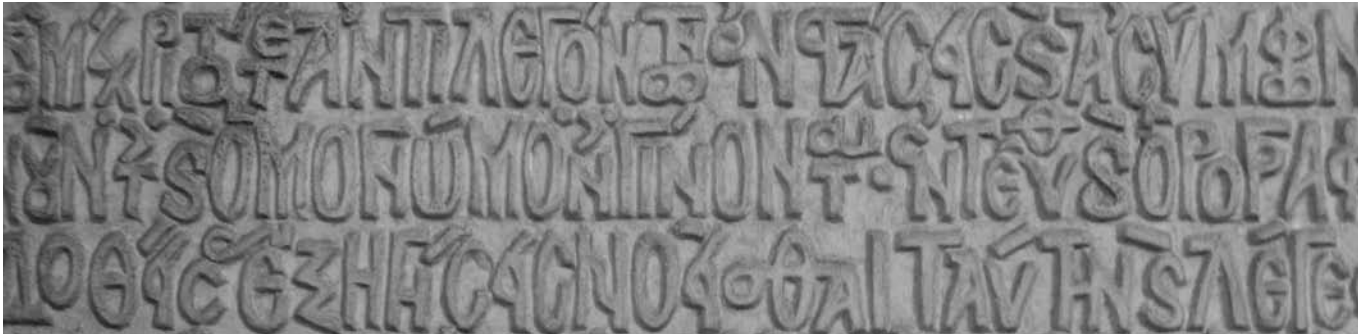




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# The Byzantinist

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE  
OXFORD BYZANTINE SOCIETY



## A Message from the Editor

It gives me inestimable pleasure to present to you the first issue of *The Byzantinist*. This newsletter is the latest in the Oxford Byzantine Society's ongoing endeavour to represent the interests of graduate students of Late Antique and Byzantine Studies at Oxford, to provide them with platforms for the sharing of ideas and information, and to showcase their exciting and varied academic output. The unique and world-renowned reputation of the University of Oxford as a hub of research into Late Antiquity and Byzantium attracts some of the brightest and most motivated graduate students from across the globe. It is entirely fitting that this newsletter is being launched in a year in which a record number of students have commenced graduate studies in Late Antique and Byzantine Studies at Oxford. Three of the five articles in this inaugural issue have been submitted by first-year Master of Studies students.

Apart from harnessing new talent, this newsletter also attempts to represent the broad spectrum of disciplines and time periods that inform graduate research at the university. The late antique, middle and late periods are all represented, as are the fields of art and architecture, archaeology, history and literature. The brief to all contributors of articles was to discuss a small, contained aspect of their research in such a way that the non-expert (though academic) reader

would be able to gain new insights into the subject. In addition to five scholarly articles, the newsletter also includes a fascinating interview with James Howard-Johnston about his new book and an opportunity to read about the personal and academic trajectory that has brought one of our new graduate students to us this year.

Finally, as current students consider their futures after the degree, one hopes that the newsletter shall, in times to come, provide an indication of the possible career paths in their chosen field. We have made a start in this issue, with a profile of a recent graduate and news from four more graduates who have recently completed their doctorates. Every future issue of the newsletter can build on this, providing current students and students to come with news from the growing ranks of alumni. As we grapple with an unprecedented crisis in higher education, building networks that link current and former students can only have a positive impact on academic and professional outcomes. The Oxford Byzantine Society has always considered the publicising of funding and academic opportunities an issue of absolute primacy and has addressed this through our regular emails and website updates. The experiences of former students are a welcome addition to this corpus of resources.

After its modest print run is distributed, an electronic version of the newsletter will

live on through the OBS website and will, in time, be joined by others. This project would not have got off the ground without the enthusiastic participation of the contributors and the encouragement of senior members of the Interfaculty Committee of Late Antique and Byzantine Studies. The present form of the newsletter could not have been realised without the design skills of Jesse Simon and the eagle editorial eye of Sean Leatherbury. All that remains for me to say is that it is a singular privilege for me to present to you the combined efforts of your colleagues and students.

*Prerona Prasad*

PRESIDENT  
OXFORD BYZANTINE SOCIETY

### THE BYZANTINIST

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# Ammianus and the elephants

## ROMAN-PERSIAN SIEGE WARFARE IN THE FOURTH CENTURY

Ammianus Marcellinus provides the most enthralling account of military affairs available for the fourth century. His narrative covers the crucial battles and campaigns during the reigns of the emperors from Constantius I to Valens and the disaster of Adrianople in 378. Though Ammianus provides more descriptions of the pitched battles of the period, sieges are events of major significance; the strategic importance of each site, the terror of the civilian population, the tactical ingenuity needed to unlock the defences and the heroic deeds of the defenders, heighten the drama and tension of a siege in the set piece events of Ammianus's account. The truly epic description of the siege of Amida provides one of the most memorable and detailed description in the account, told by a narrator who combines the roles of an eye witness and a military expert. In most scholarly works dealing with Ammianus and his military accounts, the ability of Roman and Persian forces to capture fortified strongholds receives at least some attention, concentrating mostly upon technology, literary features of Ammianus or the narrative history of the period. In this paper I wish to briefly examine how much of a part technological capabilities really played in the

investment of strongholds during the fourth-century wars between Rome and Persia, and what part was played by that seldom mentioned weapon of the age, the elephant.

What I have just said suggests I should, as briefly as my modest ability permits, give a concise description of engines of this kind for those who are unacquainted with them. (XXIII.4.1)

At the time of Ammianus, siege technology was not significantly different to that of the late classical period. Rams, hurling machines, mobile towers were still the dominant weapons available to a besieging army. Ammianus' digression on the siege weapons of his day gives an insight into the approaches taken for reducing fortified positions on the Roman-Persian border. What is telling in the account Ammianus provides, however, is that these weapons, especially the ever present *onager*, were not used to attack the walls of cities or bring down fortifications, but to attack the personnel inside the defences. Equally, weapons we would identify as siege machines such as the *onager* were used by defenders to foil the schemes of the enemy to take the walls, as well as anti-personnel weaponry, which appears to have been devastatingly effective – 'There was

Michael Stawpert ST JOHN'S COLLEGE



much shattering of heads under the crushing weight of stones hurled by our engines.' (XIX.19.4). Siege towers and rams were by far the most common methods of approaching fortifications, and against these Ammianus shows many successful defences – the use of scorpions and *onagers* by defenders to bring down towers, hand-thrown projectiles against rams as well as methods to ignite the siege engines. The relationship between artillery and the regular army, however, was radically different in Late Antiquity compared to the principate. Traditionally, artillery detachments were assigned to each legion, providing firepower for the marching camps or garrisoned positions. By Late Antiquity, a specialised artillery corps existed for the Roman army, which, like engineers, performed a specific function for the garrisoned troops of the empire. Rather than viewing this as evidence for the diminished role of artillery, as its presence was no longer ubiquitous, this should perhaps be seen as a recognition of the crucial and specialised role for war machines in late antique warfare, which is attested by the role of the Gallic legions at Amida, who were 'admirably suited to fighting in open country, but quite useless, indeed a positive nuisance, in the kind of warfare to which we were

restricted. They were no help in working the artillery or constructing defensive works.' (XIX.5.4) It is worth mentioning, however, that the Romans enjoyed no advantage in defensive technology; the Persians appear equally armed when defending their fortresses as at Pirisabora during the Persian campaign. (XXIV.2)

The greatest danger for defenders seems to have been the chance that the enemy might construct a tower higher than the walls, from which fire could be directed against the defenders on the walls; this is a feature of several of the most dramatic sieges in Ammianus' narrative, and in one instance in Julian's campaign into Persia, it is merely the threat that the Romans may have a tower capable of overlooking the walls, that prompts the surrender of the town. At Amida, the Persian towers were not only 'armoured' but also 'on the high tops of these were pieces of artillery, which threw into confusion those who were active in defence at the lower level.' (XIX) Frontal assault however appears to be a relatively rare occurrence at this time; that Ammianus devotes attention to the instances of assault, should indicate the unusual nature of these events, as the historian is concerned with the remarkable events of the age rather than the ordinary. Other tactics, such as undermining, form an important part of the besiegers arsenal, though on many occasions, it appears that the defenders were equally adept at subterranean warfare – perhaps an indication that the engineering corps of the Roman army was still an efficient and well organised force.

These last were accompanied by lines of elephants, wrinkled monsters of enormous height, which advanced slowly loaded with armed men, a sight more dreadful than any other form of horror, as I have often declared. (XIX.19.2)

Though the use of war elephants has a long and well documented history in the classical and antique ages, very little is made of their use under the Sassanians. The supply of elephants for war was clearly dependent on diplomatic relations between the Sassanians and the neighbouring peoples who could supply the beasts for the Shah's armies. That they feature in Ammianus perhaps reveals something about the strategic situation on the Eastern

frontier of the Sassanian world. What is most significant about Ammianus' report of the use of elephants in war, however, are the armies of which they are a feature. In the two instances in which Ammianus reports the use of war elephants – once in siege at Amida and once in the field against Julian – they are part of the royal army, under the personal command of the Shah. Clearly these beasts, slow moving and ill tempered as they are known to be, carried significant prestige; not only for their exotic image (one need only imagine the feelings of a Gallic legionary when confronted by a full armoured war elephant, Ammianus's views can be seen above) but for the conspicuous expense that they signified. To cover an elephant in a suit of chain mail was no mean feat. Similarly, mounting archers in towers atop the elephant would have added to their monstrous size and their intimidating effect upon the enemy.

The impact of elephants in the field is well understood, but what use could an elephant be in a siege assault, particularly against sophisticated defences? The very presence of elephants at a siege, and the evidence of their use from Ammianus, is revealing about the scale of the defences of Eastern cities in Late Antiquity. Ammianus describes how the Persians constructed towers on the backs of the elephants, of sufficient height to allow the Persian archers to attack the Roman troops on the battlements (XIX.7). The average height of Indian elephants stands at 7m. With the materials available to the Persians, it is unlikely that a tower could be built to stand more than the height of the elephant itself; most likely the tower was significantly smaller, taking the total height of elephant and tower to under 14m high. That this height was sufficient for Persian archers to fire into the city could be seen as evidence for fortification of Eastern towns and cities being much smaller than is sometimes assumed. That relatively small scale defences could create such problems for the technologically sophisticated Persians, as to make outright storming impossible, while methods of tower construction and undermining were frequently undone, is revealing about the capacity of armies to attack defended positions in Late Antiquity. Clearly the use of elephants was a form of psychological warfare; these beasts play only a supporting role in the Persian assault on Amida, appearing after more

conventional methods have been employed. However, Amida was clearly an exceptional case, housing three legions and being an integral part of the Roman frontier. The campaign which brought the Persians to Amida was one in which Roman towns by and large paid off the invaders for security, and in which the Persians were more than happy to accept payment and move on to maximise the profits of the season. The ease of the Persian advance and the readiness of the Roman populace to pay off the invaders may be better understood if the accompanying elephants were put in their role as 'the most frightful objects the human mind can conceive' (XIX.7.3).

This paper has outlined some of the stratagems employed by both the Romans and the Persians, as related by Ammianus, in siege warfare. What has become clear is the strategic difficulty sieges posed in Late Antiquity, for though minor settlements could be overcome, the time required to achieve this, and the sheer density of fortified positions in the zone of conflict between the two empires, made the reduction of these positions impractical and time-consuming. Equally notable, from even the brief discussion of Ammianus given here, is the enormity of the supplies required by an army engaged in siege warfare at this time. The prestige campaigns which both empires pursued were vastly expensive affairs and would have needed huge amounts of material. Although this could be occasionally pillaged from the enemy (as the Persian artillery at Amida had been from Singara), one must assume that much of this was carried by an army. To commit to a siege would obviously consume much of that material and required highly developed corps of engineers, capable of building an armoured siege tower with firing platforms which, in the most impressive instances, could be wheeled up to the enemy fortifications, while a ram battered at the enemy walls. To begin the investment of a siege was clearly a last resort for an invader. Rather, by alternating between assurances of mercy and threats of destruction, it was vastly more efficient to compel minor settlements, even with garrisons, to surrender. To this end, the Persians possessed what must be considered the greatest terror weapon of their age: elephants.



# Echoes of the Fourth-century *Apostoleion* in Late Antique *Italia Annonaria*



John Lansdowne ST CROSS COLLEGE

The Church of the Holy Apostles (*Apostoleion*) was among Byzantium's most celebrated buildings. First established by Constantine the Great and dedicated under Constantius II, it was hailed by Procopius as Constantinople's 'second church' upon its re-construction under Justinian in 550 (*De Aedificiis* I.IV.18). The significance of the *Apostoleion* in medieval cultural politics ensured its emulation. Modern and historical observers have long noted the more prominent Justinianic structure's influence on the sixth-century Church of St. John in Ephesus and eleventh-century San Marco in Venice. Considerably less has been acknowledged concerning the impact of the *Apostoleion* in its fourth-century Constantinian manifestation. The first *Apostoleion* stood out as perhaps the most famous Constantinopolitan church amongst Christians in the West and as a premier pilgrimage destination in the city that became New Jerusalem.

Replication was a medieval architectural phenomenon, most notably showcased in the scores of structures echoing the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. In his seminal, 1942 attempt at establishing an 'Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture,' Richard Krautheimer observed that the layout of medieval buildings oftentimes relied, above all, upon a prestigious and iconic architectural precedent. This article journeys earlier into late antique/Byzantine history to offer Constantinople's original Church of the Holy Apostles as the prototype for apostles' church foundations in late antique Northern Italy, specifically, the Diocese of *Italia Annonaria*.

## Constantinople

Apostolicity—pertaining to or being contemporaneous with the Apostles in character

or origin—conveyed considerable authority in Christianity's first millennium. The early Church hierarchy adopted the imperial administrative model and its *synoecistic* framework was formalized at Nicaea in 325. Bishops were 'sent out' to major urban centers to establish metropolitan sees—one metropolitan (*ἐπαρχία*) per Roman province; one *vicarius* per *dioecesis*. A see able to trace its foundation to Christ's apostles was dubbed *apostolic*. In his *Historia Ecclesiae* of ca. 324/5, Eusebius of Caesarea traced the see of Jerusalem to James of Antioch, of Rome to Peter, and of Alexandria to Mark.

By the mid-fourth century, Constantinople remained the sole major metropolitan incapable of boasting apostolic foundation. With what Cyril Mango has named a 'vacuum in holiness' undermining their *basileia*, Eastern emperors presumed to counter Roman primacy by importing apostles' relics. In 356-7, Constantius ordered the *corpora sepulta* of SS. Andrew in Patras, Timothy in Ephesus, and Luke in Thebes to be disinterred, translated to Constantinople, and relocated at the new *Apostoleion*, Constantinople's first apostles' church. The church was situated north of the Mese in the city's suburban Region XI. Nichephoras Callistus dubiously alleged it was built upon an Altar of the Twelve Gods (*Hist. eccl.* VIII.55).

Gregory Nazianzen, Archbishop of Constantinople, portrayed the *Apostoleion* as follows: '...μεγάλανυχον ἔδος Χριστοῦ μαθητῶν / πλευραῖς σταυροτύποις τέτραχα τεμνόμενον' [...the seat of Christ's disciples / having been hewn into four parts'] (*Carmen de insomnia Anastasiae* 59-60). This and other poetic descriptions have been interpreted as that of a Greek cross, perhaps with elongated entrance arm, and *tambour* (δωμάτιον) rising in a conical roof

over the crossing. The plan emphasized and expanded the cruciform shape of traditional, appended or subterranean martyrs' chapels—including the Constantinian Old St. Peter's in Rome or original Holy Sepulchre—to fashion for the *Apostoleion* a *synecdochic* core structure with the cross as its main feature. As Krautheimer noted, 'a new type of *martyrium* ha[d] sprung up, a self-sufficient structure centered on the focus of veneration.'

Competing traditions concerning the church's original foundation are subjects of scholarly debate. Krautheimer and Cyril Mango concluded that the church was built by Constantine but, following earthquake damage in 358, renovated by Constantius and officially consecrated on Easter Sunday, 370. Confusion stems from ambiguous terminology. Constantius' *Apostoleion* was preceded by Constantine's *mausoleum*. This mausoleum was begun, if not finished, during Constantine's lifetime, yet incorporated into the *Apostoleion*'s superstructure—due east of and on axis with the central nave—during the renovation sponsored by Constantius ca. 359. Eusebius' description of the mausoleum from *De Vita Constantini* states:

... [Constantine] built up the whole shrine to an unimaginable height, and made it glint with various stones of every kind, facing it from the ground up to the roof. He divided the ceiling into delicate coffers and plated the whole with gold. Up above this on the roof itself he provided copper instead of tiling to protect the building securely against rain. Round this too glittered much gold, so that by reflecting back the rays of the sun it sent dazzling light to those who looked from afar. Trellised relief-work wrought in bronze and gold went

right around the building (IV.58-9, trans. A. Cameron).

Mango interpreted this description as an octagonal *váος* with rotunda of ‘unimaginable height’ complete with relief-work (*ἀναγλυφοί*) and coffered ceiling with walls plastered in colored marble revetment.

The *Apostoleion*, with its imported apostles’ relics, boosted Byzantine prestige, and explicitly linked the *caesaropapist* Byzantine regime with Christ’s apostles. In his mid-fifth-century *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Sozomen stated:

From this period in time, it became custom [in the city of Constantine] to deposit the remains of subsequent Christian emperors in the [*Apostoleion*]; and here bishops, likewise, were buried; for the hierarchical dignity is not only equal in honor to imperial power, but, in sacred places, even takes the ascendancy (*Hist. eccl.* II.XXXIV.93, trans. E. Walford).

Constantine became regarded as a saint and was given the epithet *ισαπόστολος*. St. John Chrysostom—whose relics were eventually enshrined at the *Apostoleion*—dubbed Constantinople ‘*πόλις τῶν ἀποστόλων*’ in his *Homilia contra ludos et theatra*, delivered 3 July 399.

## Mediolanum

The *Apostoleion* was barely a decade into its official history when the Second Ecumenical Council convened at Constantinople in 381. At this critical moment for the Church in the East, St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (Mediolanum) who Francis Dvornik deemed ‘initiator of [the] cult of the apostles in Northern Italy,’ emerged as the most dynamic ecclesiastical figure in the West.

Diocletian had split Italy into two dioceses—Rome and Milan—in 297. Thus, Milan, capital city of *Dioecesis Italiae Annonariae* (and, until 402, capital of the Western Roman Empire), competed with Rome for ecclesiastical jurisdiction and authority. In recognition of the successful Constantinopolitan power play, Ambrose employed a similar formula in dedicating the *Basilica Sanctorum Apostolorum* in Milan. Surveying the *Apostoleion*’s first filiation, Otto Demus remarked, ‘The model of Constantinople was copied by Ambrose of Milan in order to give to the favorite residence of the emperors and co-emperors

of the West the fitting distinction of apostolic protection and even that of apostolic foundation.’

Consecrated *ca.* 382, when the Diocese of Milan fought Rome’s *sedes apostolica* to become the spiritual center of the Western Empire, the basilica’s dedication read:

Ambrose founded the shrine and he dedicated it to the Lord | In the apostolic name, by his duty, and with the relics as a gift; | In the form of a cross, the temple is temple of the Victory of Christ; | With holiness, his triumphant image marks the place.

Since no precedent existed in the West, Constantinople’s *Apostoleion* must have been the prototype for the name, concept, and design of the Milanese apostles’ church.

The *Basilica Sanctorum Apostolorum*, presently San Nazaro Maggiore, was a converted cruciform structure dominated by a longitudinal hall approx. 56 m. long from apse vertex to narthex, and flanked by protruding arms, each 18.55 m., altogether 51.3 m. from north to south. Its central bay was sectioned off by triple arcades to north and south and supported at the corners by 6.1 by 1.22 m. masonry piers. Central to this space rose the altar, beneath which were deposited relics of John, Andrew, Thomas, and Luke in a silver casket. The *Apostoleion*’s Greek cross plan likewise emphasized the central bay as the focus of commemoration, where ‘having set up an altar-table in the middle...[Constantine] erected here twelve coffins (*θήκαι*)...in honor and remembrance of the apostolic choir’ (*Vita Constantini* IV.60; translation by Cameron). ‘*De munere*’ in Ambrose’s dedicatory inscription implies that the relics were brought to Milan as gifts—likely from Constantinople and possibly from Theodosius.

A few meters east of Ambrose’s Basilica was the octagonal satellite *martyrium* of St. Victor. Lewis saw precedent in Constantine’s detached mausoleum and in other Constantinian *mausolea* in Rome—e.g. St. Helena’s mausoleum adjacent to SS. Peter and Marcellinus and Santa Costanza aside Sant’Agnese *fuori le mura*. Ambrose was buried beneath the main altar at the *Basilica Martyrum*, now his eponymous Basilica di Sant’Ambrogio, on the city’s western edge. Yet Milanese Bishops Venerius, Marolus, Glicerius, and Lazarus were buried in succession at the basilica from late fourth to mid-fifth centuries.

Both churches were focal points for religious processions, situated on major arteries—the *Apostoleion* on the *Mese*, the *Basilica Sanctorum Apostolorum* on the *Via Romana*—in suburban regions outside their respective city centers. The *Basilica Sanctorum Apostolorum* included distinctive features of Roman *basilicae*. Its elongated (+4.7 m.) western arm culminated in a colonnaded atrium and portico. A hemispherical apse capped its eastern end. Still, its dominant cruciform configuration, amalgamating basilical and *martyrium* architectural elements, implies direct allusion to Constantinople’s *Apostoleion*.

## Basilicae Sanctorum Apostolorum

Ambrose’s foundations succeeded in making Milan the ‘new custodian of the apostolic mission in the West.’ St. Basil, Bishop of Caesarea, deemed Milan ‘*τὴν καθέδραν τῶν ἀποστόλων*’ in a late fourth-century letter to Ambrose. The *Basilica Sanctorum Apostolorum* became an important prototype—a ‘trendsetter’—for apostles’ churches in what Neil McLynn has called Ambrose’s ‘sacred hinterland’ in *Italia Annonaria*. Included amongst these early foundations were the *Apostoleum* in Laus Pompeia (Lòdi); St. Andrew in Concordia, founded between 385 and 397; SS. Andrew, Luke, John, and Thomas in Aquileia, founded between 388 and 397; the *Basilica Concilium Sanctorum* in Brescia, established around 400; and *Basilicae Apostolorum* at Verona and Como dated to *ca.* 385 and the early fifth century, respectively.

The latter two churches were decidedly cruciform in shape, with apse replacing eastern headpiece. Ruins of Como’s *apostoleum* were uncovered during restorations at the Church of Sant’Abbondio in 1863. Excavations revealed hybrid-cross elements with a curved apse and an 11.19 by 23.1 m. aisle-less nave, significantly wider than its projecting arms. Altogether, the transept measured 23.89 m. Como’s *forma crucis* was evident only from the interior. Porticoes blocked its west façade and rectangular rooms flanked the nave on either side. Still, the devotional experience would have remained true to the formula. Less is known about Verona’s *Apostoleum*, partly uncovered 2.07 m. beneath the Romanesque

*Continued on Page 15*

# You cannot deny that you are my son this time, Alexander; you would not have died if you had been Ammon's

## ALEXANDER'S DEATH IN ANTIQUITY



Caterina Franchi EXETER COLLEGE

According to the royal ephemerides reported by Plutarch and Arrian, Alexander died on the 28th day of the month of Daisius, namely 10 June, 323 BC. All the greatest tragic deaths of Antiquity, all the virtuous passings of Homeric style, were not replicated on that day in Babylon and, because of this, the ancient historians always treated the Conqueror's death as a sort of mystery, an incomprehensible tragedy and an impossible end to such a life.

Before the death, every historian reports that there were portents and premonitions. There are four great portents in particular that are referred to by the historians: first of all, the missing lobe of a sacrificial victim (Plutarch and Arrian); the tale of an ordinary soldier, jumping into the water of the Euphrates to retrieve the crown of the king that had fallen from his head (Arrian and Diodorus); the killing of a lion, symbol of regality, by a simple donkey and finally, the episode of a fool possessed by a *μαγία* who, without any reason and not knowing what he was doing, sat on Alexander's throne. The last is the most common portent, for it was referred to by all the historians except Curtius. After the portents, the tragedy actually occurred. All the historians are in agreement when discussing the last feast Alexander attended. Around the end of May, a certain Medius of Larissa, a man of

the fleet, invited Alexander to a drinking party. Alexander, all the historians report, accepted the invitation to this drinking party and, after few hours, he drank from the cup of Heracles (an immense amount of wine) after which he suddenly shouted as if a spear had pierced him in his liver. Alexander's last days were spent fighting against a very high fever, trying to continue with the plans to invade Arabia, sacrificing to the gods and searching for a cool place where to rest, until it became impossible for him to move or even to speak. Understanding that the end was coming, he asked for his bed to be placed in the center of a great hall, and for his soldiers to pass in line near him. He couldn't speak, but, it is said, he made a sign with his eyes at each one. On the tenth of June, he died without leaving a legitimate male son to inherit his realm or any instructions as to who was to succeed him.

For historians, ancient and modern, Alexander's death is a mystery: it is not heroic, it is not exemplary and it is not a *pulchra mors*. Arrian and Plutarch provide a physiological narration of the development of an illness. For Diodorus, it is an extraordinary event, foretold by portents and a prophecy of all the wars that were about to break out. For Curtius, it is the apocalyptic and dramatic end of a wonderful and memorable life, where the last words of this king as cried out by his

soldiers show despair at the tragedy of an uncertain succession. In the modern era, many attempts have been made to explain Alexander's death. It has been attributed to a degenerative type of scoliosis, or to acute pancreatitis, pyrogenic spondylitis, meningitis, typhoid fever, hellebore overdose and even syphilis. One of the most incredible ideas put forward has blamed the West Nile virus for his death.

However, antique thought could not accept the death of such a king by illness alone, and all the great theories about poisoning are wonderfully shown in the so-called *Alexander Romance*. What is the *Alexander Romance*? Surely not a canonical Greek novel; there is no bucolic or mythical past, no love at the centre of the story, no feminine figure in whom the main character finds his equal, and, most importantly, no imaginary hero. Indeed the work's present and somewhat misleading title is not original, but derives from a twelfth-century poetical French adaptation, the famous *Roman d'Alexandre*. The story has its origins in Greece, and it is possible to list at least six versions (or recensions) in Greek, related to one another, but at the same time, very much distinct, as well as about a dozen translations into different languages. A text such as this could not be satisfied with an underlying illness and a protracted descent to death and would prefer poisoning as the cause of Alexander's death.



The following is the story in the first version  $\alpha$  from the third century. Antipater, in Macedonia, cannot countenance Olympias anymore, for she is always spreading rumours about him, and reports this to Alexander, who believes his mother's version of events and sends Craterus to replace Antipater. The Macedonian regent, afraid of the king, decides to murder him; he finds a terrible poison and sends his son Cassander to Babylon to execute the murder itself. Cassander's brother is Iollas, the cupbearer of the king, and, at Medius' party, Iollas pours the poison in Alexander's wine. Alexander cries out as if hit by a spear, and understands he is doomed. He had already received signs from the gods: a child was born, half man half beast, with the human part dead at birth, a portent warning of his mortal life coming to an end. Furthermore, all the beasts around him had begun to fight one against the other for the kingdom. Knowing he is going to die, Alexander prays to Zeus to welcome him to Eleusis as the third of the humans, after Dionysus and Heracles, to be thus honoured and tries to commit suicide, so as to disappear from earth in a divine way, but is stopped by his wife. He then writes his will and lets all his soldiers come and see him. He hands over the reign to the  $\kappa\rho\acute{\alpha}\tau\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ , and dies. The earth trembles, the sky darkens and the statue of Zeus in Babylon moves. A big star appears and it, along with a great eagle, plunges into the sea. Both of them suddenly reappear, bringing another star with them: Alexander is a god now.

This is Alexander's death in the first version,  $\alpha$ . It is not difficult to find the analogies with the evangelical account of Christ's death, and it was not difficult for the ancients as well: the prayer a new Gethsemane, the bitter cup Alexander accepts, the ascent to Heaven. All the other versions offer the same tale, and all of them show a clearly Christological model in Alexander's cup, but their differences are more important than their similarities. In version  $\beta$  of the fifth century, all hints to the assumption of Alexander and of his prayer to Zeus are eliminated; in this version, in fact, Alexander is the *exemplum* of the Greek king, with Greek virtues, and even his religiosity is less and less underlined. In a Christian milieu, it was more difficult to present someone, although a

king, as having distinctly Christ-like characteristics, and it is possible to find a strong element of censorship in this version's description of both the divine Alexander and pagan religion; for instance, he is never made to insist on his hypothetical descent from Ammon, and the name of Zeus is mentioned eleven times as opposed to the twenty-eight times in  $\alpha$ .

Recension  $\epsilon$  is the only version of *Alexander Romance* that differs significantly from the others. Commonly dated to the seventh-eighth century, it represents the *really* Byzantine version of the story. In it, Alexander is not a Hellenic king, but the ideal Byzantine emperor, with the qualities of a *basileus kosmokrator*, a righteous ruler of a kingdom where the sun never sets; even his clothes, ornaments, and rituals are those of the Emperor. Nor is he presented in the image of Christ, but is instead portrayed as the intermediary between Christ and men. Here, his murder is not plotted by his courtiers, but by a slave possessed by a  $\delta\alpha\iota\mu\omicron\nu\kappa\acute{\eta}\ \mu\alpha\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha$ . Alexander, who now does not cry out in pain, is sorry for the future of his soldiers. 'You will never more ride with me, nor will hear my voice', he says, while the soldiers cry out loud and the sky darkens. He tries to commit suicide, but not in search of some divine status; he seems only a desperate man who doesn't want to die in the way that he finally did. Alexander writes a letter to his mother, a hymn to the *vanitas mundi*, a *résumé* of his life, extolling the importance of his ambition to create an universal empire and a hope that the project continues. Here again, he shows himself as a tender child, but, most of all, as a man who is afraid of dying. And again, he speaks to his companions, and especially to his horse and to Charmis, his best friend. He who conquered the whole world cannot flee from his destiny, and his death is not glorious, but brought by a  $\kappa\acute{\upsilon}\lambda\iota\zeta\ \pi\iota\kappa\rho\acute{\alpha}\nu$  and a poison. Bucephalus kills his master's murderer, and then dies in Alexander's arms. Alexander smiles and dies. He does not stop smiling and seems still alive, redolent of a hagiographical trope that places him in the imagery of the Byzantine emperor as the intermediary between God and men – a saint.

Recension  $\gamma$  is the last version and also the most difficult to date. It represents the union of recensions  $\beta$  and  $\epsilon$  in a unique

text, and where the same episode appeared in both the versions, the most pathetic or the most adventurous one was chosen. However, this decision does not always lead to a coherent result. For instance, in its final passages, the story of the death of Alexander begins with the homicidal conspiracy of Antipater, his son Cassander and Iollas, the cupbearer of Alexander. However, these characters abruptly vanish and the murderous servant of  $\epsilon$  emerges, without ever before having been mentioned, only to be killed by Bucephalus (who, in reality, was already dead at this point of the story), who recognizes him as his master's assassin. We can therefore give a *terminus post quem* for this version, circa the seventh-eighth century, and a *terminus ante quem*, as the oldest of its manuscripts dates from the fourteenth century. The great difference consists in the sentiment of mournful *memento mori* that fills the last words of Alexander's death. Alexander cries for his fate and does not even smile in his last moments in a realistic death that doesn't share anything with the hagiographical death of  $\epsilon$ .

Alexander has always been a legend, a symbolic figure of history, moral and myth. His death, which was not easily comprehensible due to its lack of *grandeur* and *exemplum*, is one of the great dramas of Antiquity. How does one write about such an unedifying passing? Is it due to a simple illness, a murder or a portent in itself? Should we say, like Lucian makes Philip say to his son in the *Dialogue of the Dead*, 'You cannot deny that you are my son this time, Alexander; you would not have died if you had been Ammon's'? Should we believe the medical hypotheses, which inevitably have to trust, as their sources, the authors who lived centuries after Alexander? Or should we just read all the different tales, all the different versions, and treat them as what they are: reactions to a terrible and sudden death that left the world astonished and that destroyed the dream of universal supremacy that had guided Alexander in his life?



# The Battle of Beroia:

## A BYZANTINE 'FACE OF BATTLE'

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It was by reading John Keegan's *Face of Battle* that I discovered that it was possible to write military history that was both intellectually rigorous and engaging to read. Though he opens by saying he has no idea what a battle is truly like, through his examination of sources and comparisons with similar battles, he manages to realise as much of his chosen battles as it is possible to do. This not only appeals to the armchair-general in many historians, but, through this thorough exploration of what he calls the 'face of battle', we can then delve further into the nature of the protagonists and the world they lived in, and gain insight into the operational practices of armies by engaging with their *raison d'être* – warfare. In this short study, I will conform to Keegan's methodology by presenting the Campaign, the Battle, and the Will to Combat. This outline should enable the reader to see the implications that the study of any Byzantine battle raises, and appreciate the account of the battle itself.

When it comes to battles of the Byzantine period, we have fewer sources compared to those Keegan had for his analysis. This is true both of primary sources, where on many occasions we have only a single source for a battle, and of secondary sources. Eric McGeer has stated that most studies in Byzantine military history seem to focus on 'what the army *was* rather than that what it *did*', that is to say, most studies are of the institutional history of the army rather than its operational history, and battles are often considered as events in a bigger picture rather than as a central human experience.

Using Keegan's methodology of investigating primary sources, and cross-referencing with what we know from other battles, this study will deduce what we can about the battle of Beroia in 1122 AD. I have chosen Beroia, firstly, because of my research interest in the reign of John II Komnenos, for whom this was a great victory, in commemoration of which he established a day of thanksgiving. Niketas Choniates attests the feast was

still celebrated almost a century later, making Beroia as important to Byzantium as Trafalgar was to Britain. Secondly, the battle heralded the end of the Pechenegs as an independent force and forced their disappearance from history. Moreover, a number of elucidating parallels can be made with previous battles. Finally, there are two differing accounts of this battle.

The two principal sources for the reign of John II are chroniclers John Kinnamos and Niketas Choniates. Kinnamos was secretary to Manuel I, John's son, and wrote approximately fifty years after the events. Choniates was an important official in the government of the Angeloi, and wrote his *History* at the court in exile in Nicaea after the capture of Constantinople in 1204, approximately eighty years after the events. Kinnamos states that he only records John's reign in summary as he was not a witness, but it can be assumed that he gained his information from those who were active in the reign. He also accompanied Manuel on campaign and is therefore likely to have been familiar with those who were at Beroia. Choniates's history is temporally removed enough for it to be considered less partisan.

The other major source is Anna Komnena's *Alexiad*, in which she describes the battle of Dristra (1087 AD). This battle and Beroia have many common characteristics, although Alexios was defeated at Dristra. Furthermore, Anna wrote during the reigns of John and Manuel, and some of the soldiers she consulted, such as George Paleologos and Gregory Katakalon, could have been at both battles.

### The Campaign

The Pechenegs, a steppe people like many who had troubled the empire before, crossed the Danube into imperial lands in force in August of either 1122 or 23. John responded by bringing his veteran campaign army to meet them, wintering near Beroia, the capital of the theme. Kinnamos says he

did this 'partly to make ready for war, but more because he wished to win over some of their chieftains'. Choniates elucidates this diplomacy, noting that John sent Pecheneg-speaking envoys who set 'sumptuous feasts before them and charmed them with silk garments and silver cups and basins'. There is some disagreement as Kinnamos says that some 'came over to' John, whereas Choniates seems to suggest that John attacked before they had decided, as the Pechenegs 'were confident that they would be victorious in battle, as they had always been in the past'. Thus, the exercise may have been simply to divide their councils.

Alexios had defeated the Pechenegs at the battle of Levounion in 1091 with the aid of the Cumans, therefore if the Pechenegs felt secure enough to believe defeat was impossible, they must have had an advantage at Beroia that they did not have at Levounion. This must have been the 'covered wagons' that will be discussed later. Due to the subsequent destruction of the Pechenegs as an independent force, we must therefore assume that the bulk of the remaining Pecheneg nation was gathered near Beroia, explaining the multiple references to women and children. Whether or not John was successful in 'luring away' any chieftains, both chroniclers note the ferocity of the battle and that it was 'in the balance' for some time. Though John triumphed, his strategy did not greatly affect the nature of the battle itself by giving him any particular advantage in numbers or cohesion. With preliminaries over, we are told John wished to decide matters by force; to attempt to end the Pecheneg threat forever.

### The Battle

John drew up his forces 'in the morning twilight', and yet none of the chroniclers note this as one of his 'stratagems'. Therefore, it was probably not a surprise attack. What is likely is that the vast Pecheneg encampment would have been woken early by their



lookouts to the sight of the Byzantine army arrayed before it.

The Pechenegs immediately attacked in this first phase of the battle with 'cavalry charges, discharge of missiles and war cries'. According to Choniates, John's army stood firm and there appears to have been a prolonged exchange of fire and close combat. Choniates also describes the Byzantines being in a 'phalanx'. This could be a classifying term, but might also suggest that the Byzantines actually formed an anti-cavalry formation, similar to a Napoleonic infantry square. During the battle of Dristra, Anna notes that Alexios 'linked the infantry and cavalry squadrons (and) gave instructions that no soldier was to advance in front of the line', which successfully resisted the Pecheneg skirmishing. We know from Kinnamos that John's *doryphoroi* (lance-bearing cavalry) at the siege of Sozopolis also used the bow, and that they performed a feigned retreat before turning and attacking the Turks – a hugely difficult battlefield manoeuvre which showed the calibre of John's army. Unlike the Pechenegs, the Byzantines would also have had heavy cavalry in the form of either Macedonians or Latin mercenaries. Therefore, there is likely to have been some cavalry close combat followed by a disciplined withdrawal back behind lines of infantry, which was probably composed of *peltasts* (light missile infantry) in tight formation. Thus, the Byzantines would have had the advantage in cavalry vs. cavalry warfare, as well as in infantry vs. cavalry skirmishing.

The fixed formation of the Byzantines is also suggested by the fact that John was riding up and down the lines with his bodyguard of Varangians (axe-bearing heavy infantry from Britain, who in this and other battles seem to have acted like dragoons in that they dismounted for combat), providing 'assistance all the while to his beleaguered troops' like Caesar at Alesia. Kinnamos says that, for a while, the battle hung 'in the balance', particularly when John himself was shot in the leg, but discipline held and the Pechenegs were forced to withdraw behind their wagon *laager*, just as they had at Dristra.

The second phase of this battle was different. All three sources describe the wagons as being like fortresses or palisades, and Choniates describes them as having oblique passageways for the Pechenegs to retreat. This had been the turning point in Alexios' battle at Dristra, when, as Anna

mentions, Adrian Komnenos charged the wagons in force and returned with only seven survivors. Following this, Pecheneg reinforcements appeared and Alexios was forced to flee the field.

John Birkenmeier has noted that this account presents historiographical problems, as it perfectly mirrors the battle of Adrianople in AD 476, where the Goths' war wagons defeated the Emperor Valens. Birkenmeier suggests that Anna's knowledge of the classics caused her to write her account of Dristra in this way so that, despite the defeat, Alexios 'would gain some amount of reflexive glory from the allusive comparison of his deeds with those of Valens, an emperor from a time of greater imperial power'. This is very unlikely as no Emperor would want to be equated with the loser of Adrianople. Thus I will treat Anna's account, which blames Alexios' army's failure to breach the wagon *laager* for the defeat, as being largely truthful.

John, by contrast, acted decisively and ordered a direct assault upon the wagon *laager*, which was performed by the Varangian guard who used their 'long shields and single-edged axes' to break through the wagons. Despite his injury, John is said to have accompanied them personally on foot, and 'like an unbreakable wall' they demolished the wagons and defeated the remaining Pechenegs in hand-to-hand combat. The wall may refer to a Saxon shield wall of the type used in pre-Norman English armies, which would have protected them from missile fire long enough to start breaking the wagons. This agrees with other battles we know of involving wagon *laagers*, such as in the Hussite wars, the American West or the Boer war. In these cases, the German, Native American and British horsemen could not breach the circle of wagons (known as a *wagenburg*, corral or *laager* respectively), as it required heavy infantry such as *Landsknechts* or pioneer units.

### The Will to Combat

Though further analysis will be beyond the scope of this study, I wish to note some peculiarities with the 'Will to Combat' – why the men at Beroia fought and did not break and run. The Pechenegs were fighting for survival, which is why they ran only when the wagon *laager* was breached and all hope was lost. For the Byzantines the will to fight was more complex. Firstly, though this army was

multi-national, it was Christian and united in faith. Though there is no note of services before battle (and only the briefest mention of 'thanksgiving' afterwards), or of the battle cries of *Κόριε ἐλέησον* that are given in the technical manuals, we do hear of John's personal piety. Choniates says, 'whenever the Roman phalanxes were hard pressed by the enemy falling furiously around them, he would look upon the icon of the Θεοτόκος, wailing loudly and gesturing pitifully, and shed tears hotter than the sweat of battle'. The Christian belief in the power of the chosen empire would have been reinforced by the army's experience. Not only had John already used this army for the successful Sozopolis campaign, but many of his troops had probably fought under Alexios as well.

There is, however, one incident during the battle that shows a slight wavering of this will to fight and could have meant a repeat of Dristra. When John ordered the assault upon the *laager*, Kinnamos notes that 'the Romans did not agree to this' and that therefore John 'ordered the axe-bearers round him (of) ... /the British nation' and went himself. Meanwhile, Choniates praises John for not only giving cunning orders, but also being the first to carry them out. Historians such as Paul Stephenson have accused Kinnamos of showing John in a bad light so as to emphasise the glory of Manuel. This might explain why Kinnamos shows John carelessly going into battle when wiser emperors such as Manuel (and indeed Alexios who also wisely withdrew from Dristra) would have acted differently. If Kinnamos is correct, we can imagine the scene of the army commanders, relieved that they had weathered the Pecheneg storm, who were then ordered to attack the invulnerable wagon-fortress by an Emperor being treated for an arrow wound. They might have, understandably, disobeyed his orders. Therefore, John could only pursue the battle personally with his bodyguard if he wished to truly win the day. Fortunately, heavy infantry armed with axes was exactly what was required to breach the *laager* and, with their fortress gone, the will of the Pechenegs broke.

This study hopes to have highlighted how much can be gained from the study of battles, how the Byzantines experienced the *face of battle* and how they conveyed it in their accounts.



# It was predicted

## PROPHECIES USED AS EXPLANATIONS FOR THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE IN 1453

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The accounts of the fall of Constantinople bring us one step closer to understanding fifteenth-century beliefs and attitudes. Regardless of the origins and backgrounds of their authors, they contain numerous references to prophecies about the end of the Byzantine capital. Constantinople was in fact more than a capital: it played an eschatological role (Alexander, 151–184). However, in 1453, reality contrasted harshly with Byzantine apocalyptic traditions and questioned their validity. Was this the end of the world? Or had the City been ‘cast out’ from the divine plan? We can shed more light on this by reading how the authors of the accounts of the fall perceived the situation – and what they intended to convey to their readers while trying to share the mental shock of the fall with them.

This article will examine how prophecies and premonitions were used in the accounts of the fall of Constantinople to explain its causes. I will discuss accounts by ‘Byzantine’ authors in the widest sense of the term – including Italian authors who I have reason to suggest were sufficiently connected to a ‘Byzantine’ sphere of thought. I will describe prophecies related to traditions predating the fall of Constantinople and beliefs unknown in sources which predate the accounts of the fall. I will suggest that pre-existing traditions were re-interpreted and new ones sprung up so that an established set of beliefs about the invincibility of the Byzantine capital would not be proven wrong by its defeat. Reading between the lines of apparent blame on the Constantinopolitans for the loss of their city, it is possible to find attempts by authors to comfort and reassure the readers of such accounts. The prophecies insist that, despite the fall of the city to the Ottomans, it was ultimately invincible and any defeat would only be temporary. Based on this reading, such a message even appears to have

transcended boundaries between pro- and anti-Unionist affiliations.

The early period of Byzantine apocalyptic traditions has been studied by Paul Alexander (Alexander 1985) and Cyril Mango (Mango 1960). Accounts of the fall of Constantinople contain references to traditions that already appear in Byzantine literature in its early and middle periods, such as the oracles of Leo the Wise, attributed to the emperor Leo VI, the tradition of Methodius of Patras or Pseudo-Methodius, originating in a Syriac apocalypse, and the Visions of Daniel.

Leonard of Chios mentions in his letter an ‘oracle of Erythraea’, but he does not elaborate further, as it was only accessible ‘for those who can read it’ (Leonard, 15). This suggests that the oracle was not written in Greek. Dukas presents a popular legend of a poor man who receives a wooden sword from an angel descending from the sky and who will avenge the people of Constantinople (Dukas, 97). Donald Nicol explains that this prophecy was based on the Visions of Daniel (Nicol, 101). Dukas depicts popular belief in this legend vividly:

A number of people, believing that this was now about to happen, began running, and advised the rest to follow them. In so doing, the Greeks were putting into practice an idea which had occurred to them long before. ‘If we put the column of the Cross behind us, we shall escape the wrath which is coming.’ This was the reason why in their flight they went on and entered the Great Church. (Dukas 1972, 98)

Leonard presents an elaborate prophecy said to hail from Leo the Wise. He writes about a document lost and mysteriously found in the monastery of Mangana. It had a full list of patriarchs and a square for each crowned Byzantine emperor. Each square was filled, apart from the last one, which signified that the empire would end with the

emperor who filled it. This square was meant for Constantine XI, had he been officially crowned (Leonard, 14). Nestor Iskinder’s account, written after the fall, also mentions the traditions of Methodius and Leo the Wise. He portrays the Rus as future liberators of Constantinople and mentions one of the Visions of Daniel about the Great Philip saving the city (Pertusi, 1:296–298). In these accounts, Constantinople retains its eschatological role, but the interpretation of the legends shifts from the belief that the city will never fall into a belief in its future liberation.

Another source for prophecies is the Bible, especially the Old Testament. Laments of Isaiah are used by several authors. Leonard explains that the fall took place due to God’s wrath at the Constantinopolitans, who insincerely feigned the church union. He bemoans this with laments of Isaiah (Leonard, 15). Dukas uses laments of Isaiah extensively, dramatically weaving them into his account to create a sense of fatalism. He marks each key event in his narrative with an appropriate verse from Isaiah. Such an event is the positioning of the great cannon near the city wall, which fulfilled God’s prophecy to Jeremiah (Dukas, 86–87). Upon Giustiniani’s wounding, he recalls the prophecy to Zedekiah about God turning against his people (Dukas, 94). He also refers to Isaiah upon the breaking of church vessels (Dukas, 99–100). Nestor uses the same example, although he does not expressly refer to the Bible (Pertusi, 1:295). Dukas’ narrative culminates in an elaborate lament on the fall of the city, written to imitate the style of Isaiah’s laments (Dukas, 108–109). Isidor of Kiev grieves that the conquest was the greatest in history and compares it to the conquest of Jerusalem, claiming that the fate of Constantinople was still worse (Pertusi, 1:99).

However, some authors find a parallel to the defeat of Constantinople in mythology in the fall of Troy. Laonikos Chalkokondyles claims this to be a punishment against the Greeks for the sack

of Troy (Chalkokondyles, 54). Leonard begins his account by mentioning 'A storm of Troy' that 'arose and swallowed the city' (Leonard, 13). Dukas compares the turning point of the final battle, the wounding of Giustiniani, to Achilles (Dukas, 94).

The next group of prophecies does not clearly relate to any Byzantine apocalyptic traditions. These oracles appear to hail from contemporary Constantinopolitan popular culture as captured by our authors. Leonard gives a list of signs predicting the doom of Constantinople, which come from the Catholic tradition. He mentions a warning given by the Abbot Joachim in his *Papalista*: 'Woe to you, built on seven hills, with your hands chopped off, as if destitute of help.' (Leonard, 15). This could refer back to the tradition of oracles of Joachim of Fiori. A fifteenth-century manuscript written after the council of Florence is likely to have been accessible to Leonard and could be the one he is referring to. Unfortunately, this manuscript has yet to be studied. Thus, we can note the presence of Western apocalyptic tradition in the Byzantine world. Leonard mentions that Father [i.e. Pope] Nicholas I had in his bull '*Urgentis in senium saeculi corruptela*' pronounced an execration against the Greeks (Leonard, 14). According to him even Thomas Morosini, the first Latin Patriarch of Constantinople, had predicted the fall of the city to the Turks (Leonard, 14).

Dukas tells about a prophecy known to John Hunyadi, the Hungarian engineer who built the famous cannon used by the Ottomans. In Dukas' account, Hunyadi had been told that the destruction of Constantinople was necessary to save the fortunes of the Christians (Dukas, 14). Dukas also relates a personal premonition that he had heard as a child, about the simultaneous end of Palaiologan and Ottoman rule (Dukas, 115–116). Thus, he ends his account on a positive note, giving hope for the approaching fall of the Ottomans. Kritoboulos writes that soothsayers saw many preoccupying signs relating to the destruction of the city (Kritoboulos, 13). He says that even the Sultan looked at signs and omens and used soothsayers to calculate the opportune moment to attack the city (Kritoboulos, 23). Likewise, Isidor mentions that Mehmet had employed astrologers (who apparently followed him on campaign) (Pertusi, 1:75).

There were several prophecies related to SS Constantine and Helen. Constantine does not figure in early prophetic traditions, but he becomes important during the final years. Nestor mentions the fulfillment of the saying: '[Constantinople] was founded by Constantine and finished with Constantine' (Pertusi, 1:293). Niccolò Barbaro specifies that there was a prophecy which told that Constantinople would begin and end with Constantine son of Helen (Barbaro, 61). Incidentally, Helen was the name of both Constantine I's and Constantine XI's mother. Barbaro also mentions that a statue of Constantine had pointed out towards the direction from which the enemy – i.e. the Turks – came (Barbaro, 61). A third prophecy that Barbaro mentions was that the city would never be captured until the day the moon rose darkened. He writes that God and Jesus were acting in accordance with SS Constantine and Helen, and when all three prophecies had been fulfilled, God decided to end the city (Barbaro, 56). Finally, Isidor recalls an ancient prophecy 'which had long been consecrated in our stories' that said 'Woe to you, city of seven hills, when you are besieged by a youngster, because your very strong walls will be torn down' (Pertusi, 1:71).

It is not easy to tell how long such prophecies had been circulating in the city nor how widely they were known and believed in. However, their frequent occurrence reveals that the authors of these accounts felt a need to refer to such beliefs. The capture of the city either implied the end of the world or that God had changed his plans – both of which brought about insecurity. The reinterpretation of old apocalypses and the rediscovery and re-invention of new prophecies specifically referring to the end of Constantinople sought to explain this. The original significance of these apocalypses, with the importance of Constantinople at the end of times, still remains, as the capture by the Ottomans is explained away as another temporary period under foreign rule, an experience which Constantinople had experienced during the Latin empire. This tradition of liberation may well have nourished the rich folklore regarding the liberation of the city, still extant in Modern Greek literature, as analysed in Papayianni's article, which suggests that such beliefs were indeed circulating in popular lore (Papayianni 2010).

In this paper, I have discussed the use of prophecies and apocalyptic premonitions to explain the reasons for the fall of Constantinople. The accounts of the fall contain references to prophecies familiar from Byzantine literary tradition, such as those of Leo the Wise, Methodius of Patras or the Visions of Daniel. Moreover, new prophecies were added – some of these may have developed during the late Byzantine period and are not attested elsewhere, and others seem to be added from popular belief. The accounts may at first appear harsh and condemning, especially when they blame the fall of Constantinople on the sins of the citizens. However, I have presented an alternative reading and suggested that the intent of the writers was to fit the capture of Constantinople into existing eschatological beliefs, which would have been shaken by the occupation of the Byzantine capital, which was a crucial part of such beliefs. The authors of these accounts quoted prophecies known to them either from a previous literary tradition or from contemporary popular beliefs, thus maintaining their readers' belief in a re-conquest of the Queen of Cities. More importantly, they sought to assure their readers that God had not abandoned his people. The accounts of the final moments of Byzantine Constantinople convey that, despite the victory of Sultan Mehmet II, the 'Queen of Cities' will always prevail – which it indeed has.



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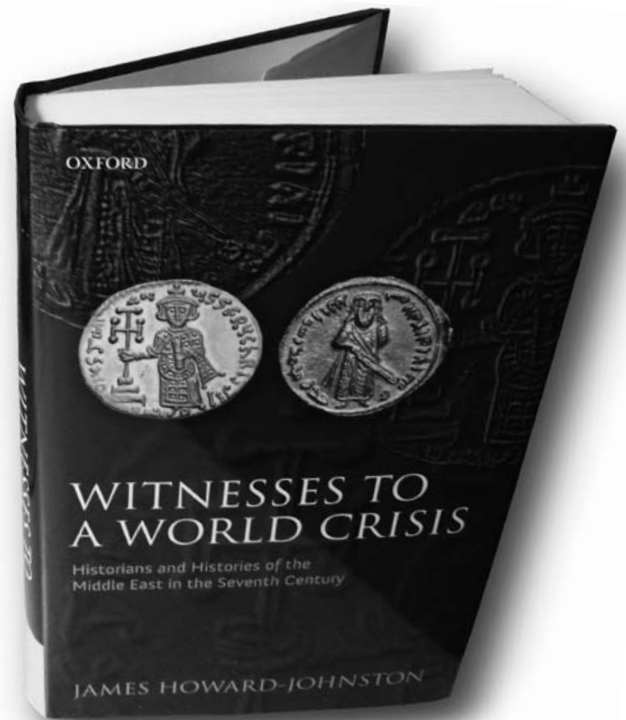
## THE BYZANTINIST INTERVIEW

# James Howard-Johnston

INTERVIEWED BY *Jesse Simon*

For the Oxford byzantinist, James Howard-Johnston should require little in the way of introduction. In his capacity as University Lecturer in Byzantine Studies he taught further and special subjects devoted to the late antique and middle Byzantine Near East, and as a supervisor he has guided many a graduate student through the vicissitudes of doctoral research. His decidedly un-occidental approach to Late Antiquity has inspired no small number of students to read Procopius, to give serious consideration to the Sassanian empire, to type the word 'Sogdian' into Google and, in many cases, pursue graduate-level investigations into the eastern Roman world.

Until recently, his approach to the world of Late Antiquity, and its eventual conclusion, was transmitted largely through lectures and seminar papers, as well as the occasional article. In 2010, however, the Oxford University Press published *Witnesses to a World Crisis*, a significant work examining sources for the collapse of the two late-antique superpowers and what he describes as 'the earthly equivalent of the big bang', the rise of Islam. *The Byzantinist* recently had the opportunity to catch up with Mr. Howard-Johnston at his office in the Ioannou Centre, where we discussed, among other things, the genesis of his book, the difficulties of seventh-century source material and the appropriate length for a footnote.



**THE BYZANTINIST:** How did the idea for the book initially come about?

**JAMES HOWARD-JOHNSTON:** The absolute distant genesis was in the 1980s, fairly soon after I started teaching the undergraduate further subject 'The Near East in the Age of Justinian and Mohammed'. I realised that there was no modern and usable account of the last war between the East Romans and the Persians, so I produced a date list for circulation at an undergraduate class. The ultimate origin of the book is in that little summary of events.

Then I had a sabbatical in the years 1990 to 1991 and that's when I wrote about half of a book entitled 'The Last Great War of Antiquity'. It's a history of that war, beginning in 603 ending in 630, between the East Roman empire and the Sassanian Persian empire.

**BYZ:** How did the focus of the book change from the last war to the rise of Islam?

**JH-J:** A fair amount of space was devoted to historiography, so much so that, after another five or six years of writing in every spare vacation, the book had become rather large. The historiographical section

was already pretty large and the historical section was also rather large. I received advice to separate them – to pluck apart these two conjoined creatures, the historiography and the history – and to make the historiography a separate work.

What I had was a close analysis of the extant sources covering the last great war. But it would have been completely short-sighted not to extend my coverage to the rest of the seventh century, given that the sources which cover the first thirty years then go on to cover the rise of Islam; and the most contentious area of Islamic studies is the question of the degree of truthfulness, the amount of authentic material that exists in the Islamic sources. The original historiographical work thus developed into a forensic investigation of the seventh century.

**BYZ:** How invested were you in the history of Islam before starting on this book?

**JH-J:** When the great Peter Brown left Oxford in the mid 1970s, I was very hesitant about teaching the further subject [The Near East in the Age of Justinian and Mohammed]. Peter Brown and Dmitri Obolensky set up the subject – it had a different name then, it was Byzantium and its

Eastern and Northern neighbours: Eastern for Peter Brown, Northern for Dmitri Obolensky – but it was the same period: Justinian through to around 700.

Peter Brown was a giant figure, looming very large over the further subject, and at first I started teaching only the non-Islamic parts of it. Then – it must have been about 1980 – I ventured into the Islamic parts and once I started doing that with bright undergraduates, my interest in the origins of Islam, the prophet, the conquests, the organisation of empire and, above all, the historiographical questions just grew and grew.

**BYZ:** One doesn't necessarily think of Peter Brown as an Islamicist; did he teach the Islamic parts of the further subject as well?

**JH-J:** Yes, he taught the whole subject. But Peter Brown's view of the rise of Islam is very much the view of someone preoccupied with Late Antiquity. For him, Mohammed is a peculiar Arabian manifestation of the monotheist holy man.

**BYZ:** You mentioned the historiographical questions. When you were writing, did you conceive of the book as an introduction or a guide to some of the sources?

**JH-J:** I hadn't thought of it as a guide. I view the Islamic episode as the earthly equivalent of the big bang, so you'll find that the phrase 'history of a brief time' – which is modelled on Stephen Hawkins' *Brief History of Time* – surfaces in the introduction and the conclusion.

What was I trying to do was basically to carry out a forensic investigation of the evidence, going from really good evidence through to still-quite-good evidence, but where you have to demonstrate it by checking it against the really solid evidence. After ten chapters I had a fairly complete history of the seventh century which could be written from non-Islamic sources. But there was one huge void: you really can't expect the outside world – Armenian, Syrian, East Roman, Egyptian, Iranian – to say much about the genesis of the new religion within Arabia. So we don't hear much except a few brief remarks about the prophet, the Meccan background, the prophet's life before the Hijra, and the prophet's politics and campaigning after the Hijra – that's where you rely on Islamic sources.

So what one can do is test the worth of the Islamic sources where they overlap with the non-Islamic sources. And if they seem to be reasonably sound – and I think they are when it comes to the kernels of events and to the arrangement of those episodes in time – then one can fill in that gap.

Because Islamicists rely on the Islamic sources and don't bring in all the others I saw myself as writing a fundamental history of the rise of Islam, and trying to put this not-unimportant episode of human history on a sound evidential base.

**BYZ:** Given the rise of scholarly interest in Islam over the past few decades, it's kind of surprising that no one has thought to do that before.

**JH-J:** I'm not the first person to have thought of it. About thirty years ago Patricia Crone in her book *Hagarism*, started with quotations from four non-Islamic sources and she regarded them as superior to anything Islamic. She had a research pupil, Robert Hoyland, who did a comprehensive survey of the non-Islamic sources for the origins of Islam. What I've done is to slim it down so as to focus on, historically, the most forthcoming sources.

I'm trying to cover the flow of events through time from 600 to around 720 and

obviously I will have gone wrong. But in certain respects and on certain key points, I would be very surprised if I was completely wrong: one being on the importance of Mecca and its network of connections in explaining the extraordinary speed of expansion of the Muslim community; the other being on the question of the great crisis which developed in the caliphate in the later 670s which led to a ten year civil war – 682 to 692 – and how a great Byzantine naval victory induced that crisis. Were that to go, I'd be very sad.

**BYZ:** Had you always intended the book to be published by OUP?

**JH-J:** The projected work on the last great war of antiquity was offered to them and many years later, when this had taken shape, I naturally went to them in the first place. They've been wonderfully patient. And they've produced the book very well indeed.

**BYZ:** Now that the historiography is out of the way, is the book about the last great war going to see the light of day?

**JH-J:** I have got a complete text covering the events and background consideration for the war, going from AD 603 to 630. It needs an introduction and conclusion and there are one or two pieces to be added to the middle. I think it's got to be slimmed down. A lot of overlong footnotes have got to be shortened, because the thing I've finally understood, as you get older and more mature, the very very long footnote should shorten, until eventually the footnote simply refers the reader to a source. But I hope to have it finished within the year to give to the press.

**BYZ:** It's pretty good that you managed to get two books out of the original project.

**JH-J:** It's actually worse than having one project which turns into two. Because there's a third one. In the later 1990s I started writing the historical introduction to the last great war of antiquity. After a first long vacation I'd written four chapters: one set the scene getting from the rise of the Sassanians in the early third century through to the 470s. Then I had three chapters comparing the two empires in terms of their institutions, their ideologies and their armed forces. That was about forty thousand words.

The next long vacation I thought, 'well, I'm just going to get through to AD 602 in a single chapter'. Three chapters and another forty thousand words later, I'd got to AD 591 and the end of the penultimate war between the powers of Late Antiquity. So as far as I can see, there is another book – of which about half is in existence – which I think is going to have the title 'The End of the World: the breakdown of the ancient world order'.

But I'm having a nasty feeling that there are going to have to be two books: one which looks at the great powers in western Eurasia in later antiquity, and then an overview which brings in India, as well as China. Of course, what do I know about India at the moment? Very little. No one can know very much because there are no histories. It has to be pieced together from impressions written down or material evidence or charters. It might be worth writing something short about the world before the expansive phase of Latin Christendom which opened the way to the rise of Europe.

**BYZ:** So, four books then...

**JH-J:** This could be characterised as an example of Oblomovism, about which Goncharov wrote so well: Oblomov lying in his bed and the less he did the more grandiose became the schemes. So one step at a time.

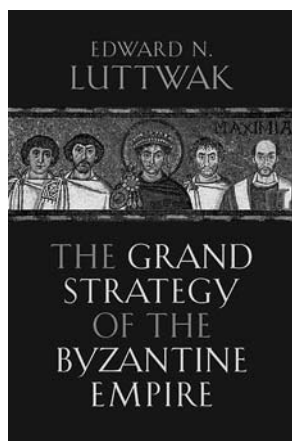
**BYZ:** Do you have any words of advice for young academics embarking on their own books?

**JH-J:** The absolutely central piece of advice is that when one is writing, of course one has got to concentrate on getting the data right and presenting the necessary data to argue a point; but the real work is done when, after presenting some data or giving a narrative, one pauses to recapitulate and then consider and reflect upon where one has got to. These pause paragraphs are when the young historian – or the older historian – really make their own input. Ultimately, I think a really great book is a book in which the data has been absorbed into the larger argument. So: the signpost paragraph. That's a bit of advice.



WITNESSES TO A WORLD CRISIS was published in 2010 by the Oxford University Press. It is available at Blackwells, the OUP bookshop and on Amazon.co.uk.

# Book Reviews



## *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire*

by Edward Luttwak  
Harvard University Press, 2009

The name of Luttwak has become synonymous with 'Grand Strategy' regarding Roman history since 1976, and it was only a matter of time before he continued his argument past the third century AD. To summarise the debate that arose from his first foray into Roman history, he posited that

the Romans had a coherent Grand Strategy for the empire which was divided into three phases: an early phase establishing zones of control and client states to protect the empire, a middle phase using the army and static fortifications to create a barrier round the empire, and a late phase using a strategy of defence in depth. These theories have since been applied to other, diverse, empires, and have received much criticism from Roman scholars, who seemed particularly riled that an outsider, a man who advises governments on strategy and has a book called *Coup d'état: A Practical Handbook* to his name, should intrude upon their subject. Nevertheless, the debate on strategy that he fostered has been beneficial to the discipline whatever one might think of his original book.

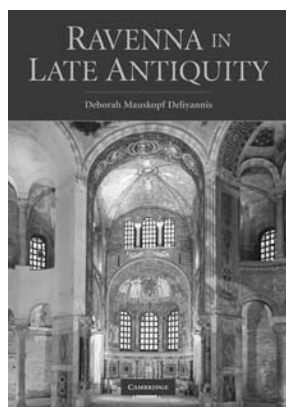
Even as a 'grand strategy sympathiser', one is slightly troubled, from a methodological standpoint if nothing else, by Luttwak's pronouncement that 'all states have a Grand Strategy whether they know it or not'. The new book seems to come across as a personal mission of Luttwak's, which might explain the somewhat idiosyncratic structure of his book. Where his first work was beautifully simple in its chronological structure, this one begins with the Huns and then ends with Herakleios defeating Persia, whilst barely touching on anything post 1204, or indeed after 1000, giving the

impression that Luttwak is very much picking the centuries and events that fit his idea of a Grand Strategy.

These ideas are neatly summarised in the first and last parts of the book. In the first part, he sets out the idea that what happened to the Romans at the hands of the Huns, where they were forced to rely more on diplomacy and non-traditional warfare (guerrilla tactics for example) to succeed, became the 'operational code' from that point onwards. In the last section, he outlines this operational code, and thus presents what should be the original ideas in this work. Much of it, however, contains elements familiar to a Byzantinist; Haldon's 'Blood and Ink' is an obvious influence on the diplomacy section, and Treadgold and McGeer's works for that on warfare. What he presents here is a 'code' that would seem to apply to the empire at various times. He divided the Roman Empire into phases; why is the much longer lasting Byzantine Empire generalised in this way? His work has a very well written section on Byzantine identity and its influence upon strategy in its blend of Hellenism and Christianity, and then barely mentions the Crusades and their effect on strategy. Iconoclasm is also not mentioned. Therefore, while this is a good collection of information, it is not a cohesive, informative study. For a well read Byzantinist, the conclusions will seem apparent, as these are the obvious conclusions to be made from collating previous works, rather than having the unique Luttwak twist that was present in his previous work.

Luttwak's prose and use of modern terms does make the esoteric nature of Byzantine History easier to grasp for the uninitiated, which is likely why it has received such good reviews in the press. For the committed Byzantinist, this book is useful in parts (the sections on strategic manuals particularly) and it contains many good ideas and well-written passages. If nothing else, however, it should again inspire debate amongst scholars wishing to resolve its shortcomings, and in this respect Luttwak has performed another service to academic debate.

MAXIMILIAN LAU



## *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*

by Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis  
Cambridge University Press, 2010

Since Late Antiquity, the churches, chapels and baptisteries of Ravenna have captivated locals, visitors and scholars. Even today, the city is a major tourist attraction due to the numbers of glittering mosaics that survive from the fifth and sixth centuries AD. Italian and German

academics, especially F.W. Deichmann and his lengthy catalogues of the monuments of the city, have dominated the scholarship of

the late antique city up to today, which makes Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis' recent English-language work, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, a particularly necessary summary of the history of the city from its foundations through its waxings and wanings up to the ninth century.

Deliyannis is perhaps especially qualified to write the first major book about Ravenna in English due to her previous critical edition and commentary (published in 1994) and translation (published in 2004 as *The Book of Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna*) of the main textual source for the city in Late Antiquity, the *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis* written by the abbot Agnellus in the mid-ninth century as an ecclesiastical history of the church of the city. In her recent book, the author uses Agnellus as a source as well as a lens through which to view the churches of Ravenna, although she is careful to nuance and



sometimes challenge his views based upon archaeological or textual evidence or the context of the historical narrative: for example, she argues Agnellus incorrectly attributes the building of the city walls to Valentinian III (425-455), while the early fifth century political situation of the city as imperial administrative center for the West as well as mentions of the presence of walls by Zosimus and Sozomen which argue for wall construction c. 400. The book is organised by time periods—‘Roman Ravenna’, ‘Ravenna and the Western Emperors, AD 400-489’, etc.—and focuses on the later fourth, fifth and sixth centuries, the height of Ravenna’s political and religious prestige. Deliyannis begins each chapter with a summary of the historical events of the period covered, which provide useful information, although the summaries are difficult to process fully due to their denseness. The book is centered on the Christian monuments of the late antique city, and Deliyannis is at her best when gathering together previous work on the archaeological remains, materials and iconography of early Christian mosaics. The author has interesting points to make about *tubi fitilli*, hollow ceramic tubes used to construct the distinctive domes of Ravenna’s buildings, and effectively gathers together the evidence for and against interpretations of mosaics erected by the Ostrogothic ruler Theodoric as specifically Arian. However, one emerges from the discussions of particular monuments with the sense that though her summaries of previous scholarly interpretations of works are comprehensive, Deliyannis herself is perhaps not advancing as many

new points of substance about artworks as she could have. She does mention comparable church mosaic programs outside of Ravenna, particularly in Rome, but does not fully engage with external material to create a meaningful synthesis of late antique art or architecture, a danger of the form, a city-focused monograph. The work leaves the reader with the accurate sense that many fundamental questions about the city’s monuments remain unanswered, providing fertile ground for future scholarship, as seen in the recent article by Ellen Swift and Anne Alwis on the theological significance of stars in the vault mosaic of the ‘Mausoleum’ of Galla Placidia, published in the 2010 volume of the *Papers of the British School at Rome*.

The survival of many of its works of late antique art and architecture is one of the main reasons the city merits such special, continued attention. Deliyannis includes useful maps of the city in different periods in each chapter, but could have provided more images of comparable art or architectural examples within the text in order to contextualize her summaries of arguments about particular monuments. *Ravenna in Late Antiquity* is a necessary summary of previous work on the history of the city, both textual and archaeological, including Andrea Augenti’s recent excavations in Classe, and will be a fundamental text for the specialist interested in late antique art, architecture and history of Italy and the West, as well as for the general reader.

SEAN LEATHERBURY



## Echoes of the *Apostoleion* ... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Santa Teuteria in 1912. Reconstructions suggest a Greek cross plan, later including a curved apse 10 m. in diameter. The internal plan was centralized, with arcade vaults emphasizing the altar at its crossing.

Even Concordia’s miniature Church of St. Andrew was granted *apostoleum* status—evident in the sarcophagus inscription for Bishop Maurentius: ‘*iacet ante li / mina dominorum / Apostolorum in / propria sepultura / sanctus Mauren / tius presbiter*’ [‘St. Maurentius the Elder lies before the threshold of the lord Apostles in a special tomb’]. The original, fourth-century building was identified as the 8.7x7.3 m. *trichora* adjacent to the present church. As at Milan and Constantinople, a deep, cruciform trench beneath the central altar contained the church’s apostolic relics.

For *apostolea* with unknown or indefinite floor plans, dedications and relic donations divulge conscious efforts to emulate the Milanese and Constantinopolitan formulae. Addressing this phenomenon, F. Dvornik remarked, ‘Possession of apostles’ relics was held to be indispensable for the would-be metropolis of a national or state Church. The

model was, of course, Constantinople, the successor of Rome.’

At Aquileia, where Bishop Valerianus maintained close ties with Ambrose, the *apostoleum*’s dedication was facilitated *de munere Sanctorum*. Bassianus, Bishop of Laus Pompeia, invited Ambrose to help dedicate his church, ‘*quam condidit Apostolorum nomine*’ (Epist. IV.1). Gaudentius, Bishop of Brescia, who founded the *Concilium Sanctorum* at Ambrose’s suggestion, boasted in his dedicatory homily:

We have four blessed relics of them at hand...John in Sebastena, a city in the province of Palestine, Thomas from India, Andrew and Luke from Patras, a city of Achaia, they were brought back having been enshrined together.

As elsewhere in the Milanese hinterland, Brescia acquired relics through Ambrose, who, as mentioned above, acquired them from Constantinople.

### Conclusion

The import of apostles’ relics and the dedication of apostles’ churches granted emergent cities ecclesiastical authority,

which, in fourth- and fifth-century Italy, was linked explicitly to political clout. Via Ambrose’s Milanese persuasion and adaptation, ambitious urban centers echoed a Constantinopolitan formula in both the purpose and expanded-martyrium models of their own *apostolea*. The apostles’ church was of its own class of religious structure, instituted at critical junctures in civic histories. The prototype for this power-grabbing scheme was the original, fourth-century *Apostoleion* in Constantinople—Christendom’s premier relic repository at the self-proclaimed successor of Imperial Rome.

Admittedly, envisioning a veritable wonder (*θαύμα*) of Constantinople through description, epigraphy, and the ruined foundations of its replicas leaves the researcher discontented. Further archaeological investigation hopefully will allow for a more concrete understanding of the fourth-century *Apostoleion* and the scope of its impact in Northern Italy and beyond.



The author is indebted to the scholarship of many others who have not been mentioned due to space constraints and is happy to provide further citations on request

# Alumnus Profile

## Dr Philip Wood

SIDNEY SUSSEX COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

I did my graduate studies in St. John's, Oxford from 2003-7 following a BA in History at the other place. I did the old MPhil in Byzantine Studies, specialising in the late antique portions of the course. It allowed me to do general exam papers covering the periods of my interest – something that, I believe, suited me better than a coursework-heavy Master's programme. During my Master's, I did some Syriac with David Taylor, as well as Byzantine Greek, and I was able to do a paper on Syria 450-850, which has continued to be an important focus of my interests and research.

After a summer of 'casing the joint' in eastern Turkey, I was lucky enough to get AHRC funding and I returned to Oxford for the DPhil. This built on an MPhil thesis on attitudes to the barbarian in Late Antiquity, and two chapters of the Masters were incorporated into the doctorate: even though I made substantial changes, it was very useful to know the issues and the sources already, before I put pen to paper. I was lucky enough to be supervised by Averil Cameron, and she was always very good at forcing me to substantiate my ideas and pushing me into sub-disciplines that I thought I could get away without (especially Jewish studies).

My thesis was on *Civilisation and the Barbarian: Miaphysite Political Thought, AD 400-600*, but I decided to publish it under a different title: *We Have No King but Christ. Christian Political Thought in greater Syria on the eve of the Arab conquest, 400-580*, partly because

I only really used Syrian (rather than Egyptian) evidence. I had to write the text in two years because I was on AHRC funding, and I just made it within the deadline. Under the old guidelines, this also meant that I could apply for a British Academy Post-doctoral fellowship, which I was lucky enough to get and kept me at Oxford, this time at Corpus for 2007-10. I should mention that this was only after a stack of rejections for other JRF posts.

During my post-doc, I completed a second project on the Chronicle of Seert and Christian historiography in Iraq and published my DPhil (which has just come out). I also started learning Arabic, and spent about six months in Syria in the course of the post-doc, as well as a couple of months in Egypt, Jordan and Iran. Both the travelling and the language work have been very important for my new project, and I feel that I have had my best ideas by far, 'away from the books'. However, I do wish I had started Arabic earlier, and perhaps taken a year after my undergraduate degree to really do it properly – there seems to be less and less time to do such things every year.

I also ran a seminar series at Corpus and a small workshop under the auspices of the BA, whose proceedings are now under review as an edited volume. Oxford and the BA were also kind enough to allow me to take up a part-time lectureship in SOAS, which was great fun, and a very different working environment.

I am now a lecturer in Cambridge, teaching many of the courses I took as an undergraduate, but I do miss Oxford and its centre of excellence in the world of Late Antiquity, which nowhere else in Britain can really rival.

# Graduate Profile

## Annika Asp

EXETER COLLEGE

I was born in Finland and spent my early twenties moving from one country to another before deciding to become serious and get a career – as a Byzantinist. My destiny was sealed when I was working as a guide and my boss asked me to guide excursions to Byzantine sites – especially to Nessebar and Istanbul. The typical tourist would take plenty of photos of breathtakingly beautiful monuments, but not have any understanding of their history, apart from the funny anecdotes that my local guides provided me to 'spice up' my stories. However, almost every tourist would know about 'the Romans', 'the Greeks' and, of course, about 'the Vikings'. I felt this was an injustice to be battled, finished my guide career and enrolled at university.

I spent my undergraduate years at the School of Oriental and African Studies,

London, studying the medieval history of various countries, until I discovered myself again in the Bosphorus region. A beautiful place with a good climate and tasty food; I decided to stay on to study it, in the hope of sometimes getting a pretext to travel there again. I was still interested in a long list of topics, which I considered related to 'Byzantium': Greece, Turkey, the Caucasus, the Middle East and even Western Europe; all in the context of language, history and material culture. This was too much for most institutions, which all told me I needed to choose. Only Oxford understood me and my needs.

Yet, I had only seen the tip of the iceberg. My experience of Oxford has been overwhelming – in a positive way. I could easily make two calendars: one for all the lectures, seminars, talks and exhibitions taking place, one for my study schedule with everything I would like to include in

it, one for sightseeing and strolling around the beautiful city, one for college life ... oh wait, that was four calendars. So I spend my time picking and choosing and somehow absorbing large amounts of information in unbelievably short periods of time. A few years down the line, I see myself conducting research into the late Byzantine period, seeking to understand politics, diplomacy, trade and culture in Anatolia, reading unedited manuscripts in fascinating languages such as Armenian, Persian, Ottoman – and of course, Greek – and beholding monuments that rarely capture the imagination of historians, such as those in and around Trebizond. This is what I wanted to do as a Byzantinist and I cannot think of anything better, apart, perhaps, from standing one day in front of Hagia Sophia with a group of tourists, asking them if anyone knows about Justinian, and seeing enthusiastic hands raised.

# Alumni News



DR ELIF KESER-KAYAALP



DR SIMON DAVIES



DR EFTHYMIOS RIZOS



DR MEREDITH RIEDEL

## ***Dr Elif Keser-Kayaalp***

EXETER COLLEGE (2009)

Elif Keser-Kayaalp received her doctorate in 2009 with a thesis entitled *Church Architecture of Northern Mesopotamia, AD 300-800*. During the past academic year, she was a Senior Research Fellow at Koc University, Research Centre for Anatolian Civilisations, where she conducted research on monastic architecture in late antique Northern Mesopotamia to include in her forthcoming monograph. She is currently a research fellow at Wolfson College with grants from Turkey.



## ***Dr Simon Davies***

LINCOLN COLLEGE (2010)

Since defending my DPhil thesis (*The Production and Display of Monumental Figural Sculpture in Constantinople, AD 829-1204*) this time last year, I have been involved in a number of projects, both related and unrelated to my doctoral work. In view of the recent funding problems facing Higher Education, last July, I was commissioned to produce a small booklet (working title: *An Album of Byzantine Material Culture at Oxford, 1973-?*) aimed at helping to raise funds for the Lectureship(s) in Byzantine art and archaeology here at Oxford; this is due to appear either online or in hardcopy in the Spring. For much of last year, I also worked part-time for the Outreach Programme in the Classics Faculty; and between September and Christmas, I completed an internship in the Islamic Art Department at Christie's in London. As for my doctoral work, I am presently preparing a number of articles for publication, one of which will shortly appear in the proceedings of a conference held at the University of Thessaly, Volos, in June 2009 ('The Fountain-icon of the Virgin *Orans* in Berlin and the Peribleptos Monastery at Constantinople', *Relief Icons*, ed. I. Varalis, M. Vassilaki and A. Dina., University of Thessaly Press); I also intend to publish my thesis as a monograph in the not too distant future.



## ***Dr Efthymios Rizos***

KEBLE COLLEGE (2010)

Efthymios Rizos has just earned his doctorate with a thesis entitled *Cities, Architecture and Society in the Eastern and Central Balkans during Late Antiquity (ca AD 250-600)*. He is now preparing to settle in back in his native Greece, joining the archaeological service of the country as a field archaeologist. He will be participating in an excavation and site management project at the late Byzantine and Ottoman site of Siderokausia in east Chalkidike. Friends and colleagues most welcome to visit!



## ***Dr Meredith Riedel***

EXETER COLLEGE (2010)

Meredith Riedel received her doctorate in May 2010 with a thesis entitled *Fighting the Good Fight: The Taktika of Leo VI and its influence on Byzantine cultural identity*. She currently holds a post-doctoral research position at the Oriental Institute as part of a British Academy funded project led by Prof Sir Fergus Millar on narrative Syriac texts of the 4th-6th centuries. She also teaches ancient history at Royal Holloway University of London as well as Byzantine history for the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Oxford. Dr Riedel is delighted to have the privilege of pursuing fascinating research with an internationally distinguished scholar in tandem with the opportunity to teach. She is co-convenor of a seminar in Byzantine history and theology during Trinity Term 2011 here at Oxford, and she will be presenting papers related to her research in April at the 44th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies at Newcastle, and in August at the XXII International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Sofia, Bulgaria.



# Recent Publications

## IN LATE ANTIQUE AND BYZANTINE STUDIES

### *Recent Titles*

Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David Hunter (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (OUP, 2010)

Chryssi Bourbou, *Health and Disease in Byzantine Crete (7th-12th centuries AD)* (Ashgate, 2010)

Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c.680-850* (CUP, 2011)

Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity* (CUP, 2010)

Matthew Gabriele, *An Empire of Memory: The Legend of Charlemagne, the Franks and Jerusalem before the First Crusade* (OUP, 2011)

Nina G. Garsoïan, *Studies on the Formation of Christian Armenia* (Ashgate, 2010)

Peter Golden, *Central Asia in World History* (OUP, 2011)

Geoffrey Greatrex, Robert R. Phenix and Cornelia B. Horn (eds.), *Chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor: The Church and War in Late Antiquity* (LUP, 2010)

John Haldon (ed.), *Money, Power and Politics in Early Islamic Syria: A Review of Current Debates* (Ashgate, 2010)

Judith Herrin, *Identities and Allegiances in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204* (Ashgate, 2010)

James Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis* (OUP, 2010 – ppbk July 2011)

Walter E. Kaegi, *Muslim Expansion and Byzantine Collapse in North Africa* (CUP, 2010)

Benjamin Z. Kedar, Jonathan Phillips, Jonathan Riley-Smith and William Purkis (eds.), *Crusades: Volume 9* (Ashgate, 2010)

J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose and John Chrysostom* (OUP, 2011)

Graham A. Loud (tr.), *The Crusade of Frederick Barbarossa: The History of the Expedition of Emperor Frederick and Related Texts* (Ashgate, 2010)

Angeliki Lymberopoulou, *Images of the Byzantine World: Visions, Messages and Meanings* (Ashgate, 2011)

Ruth Macrides (ed.), *History as Literature in Byzantium* (Ashgate, 2010)

Thomas F. Madden, James L. Naus and Vincent Ryan (eds.), *Crusades – Medieval Worlds in Conflict* (Ashgate, 2010)

Ralph Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer, *Romans, Barbarians and the Transformation of the Roman World: Cultural Interaction and the Creation of Identity in Late Antiquity* (Ashgate, 2011)

Ian Morris and Walter Scheidel (eds.), *The Dynamic of Ancient Empires: State Power from Assyria to Byzantium* (OUP, 2010)

Arietta Papaconstantinou (ed.), *The Multilingual Experience in Egypt, from the Ptolemies to the Abbasids* (Ashgate, 2010)

Chris Schabel, *Greeks, Latins and the Church in Early Frankish Cyprus* (Ashgate, 2010)

Jonathan Shepard, *Emergent Elites and Byzantium in the Balkans and East-Central Europe* (Ashgate, 2010)

Diane H. Touliatos-Miles, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Musical Manuscript Collection of the National Library of Greece: Byzantine Chant and Other Music Repertory Recovered* (Ashgate, 2010)

Maria Vassilaki (ed.), *The Hand of Angelos: An Icon Painter in Venetian Crete* (Ashgate, 2010)

Philip Wood, *We have no king but Christ: Christian Political Thought in Greater Syria on the Eve of the Arab Conquest (c.400-585)* (OUP, 2010)

John Wortley (tr.), *John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811-1057* (CUP, 2010)

### *Forthcoming Titles*

Alessandro Bausi (ed.), *Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Ethiopian* (Ashgate, 2011)

André Binggeli (ed.), *Monastic Culture in Eastern Christianity, 300-1500* (Ashgate, June 2011)

Averil Cameron and Robert Hoyland (eds.), *Doctrine and Debate in the East Christian World, 300-1500* (Ashgate, Sept 2011)

Alexis Catsambis, Ben Ford and Donny L. Hamilton (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Maritime Archaeology* (OUP, May 2011)

Patricia A. Clark, *A Cretan Healer's Handbook in the Byzantine Tradition* (Ashgate, March 2011)

Muriel Debié and David Taylor (eds.), *Languages and Literatures of Eastern Christianity: Syriac (East)* (Ashgate, May 2011)

Greg Fisher, *Between Empires: Arabs, Romans and Sassanians in Late Antiquity* (OUP, April 2011)

Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (ed.), *Languages and Literature of Eastern Christianity: Greek, 300-800* (Ashgate, Aug 2011)

Tim Greenwood (e.), *Languages and Literatures of Eastern Christianity: Armenian* (Ashgate, Sept 2011)

John Haldon, *Church and State in the Eastern Christian Worlds, 300-1500* (Ashgate, April 2011)

Scott Johnson, *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity* (OUP, July 2011)

# Oxford Centre for BYZANTINE Research

www.ocbr.ox.ac.uk

## Grants and Prizes 2011

### 1. OCBR Undergraduate Prize in Byzantine Studies

A prize of £100 will be awarded in 2010-11 for the best performance in Final Honour Schools in either Special Subject 3 (Byzantium in the Age of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, 919-59) or Further Subject 2 (The Near East in the Age of Justinian and Muhammad, 527-c.700).

### 2. OCBR Graduate Prize in Byzantine Studies

A prize of £100 will be awarded in 2010-11 for the best performance in either the Master of Studies or Master of Philosophy Examinations.

### 3. OCBR Travel Grants

Four travel grants up to a value of £250 each will be awarded to undergraduates, graduates or senior researchers who are members of OCBR or are studying for a higher degree at Oxford University to assist with travel relating to work in the field of Late Antique & Byzantine Studies. Preference will be given to graduate students. The grants will not be awarded for travel to or from conferences, and are intended to relate in the first instance to field work, including visiting collections directly relating to original research. Applications

are considered at termly meetings of the Management Board and should be accompanied by a brief proposal of the intended travel plans. To download an application form, please visit the OCBR website.

### 4. OCBR Research Grants

A number of research grants will be available in 2010-11 to members of OCBR and to post-graduate students studying at Oxford for assistance with their research. Funds of up to £500 will be awarded to help cover costs of inviting guest speakers to Oxford or organising conferences during the course of this academic year. The grants will be awarded by the board of OCBR at its termly meetings. To download an application form, please visit the OCBR website.

### 5. The Harrison Fellowship

OCBR assists with the funding of The Harrison Fellowship, awarded each year in memory of the late Professor Martin Harrison, one of Oxford's most distinguished archaeologists. The Fellowships are designed to assist Turkish scholars working in any area of the archaeology of Anatolia, from Pre-history to the Ottoman period, to visit the United Kingdom and Oxford in connection with their research work. For further information, please visit the OCBR website.

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## Recent Publications ... CONTINUED FROM PAGE PREVIOUS PAGE

Arietta Papaconstantinou (ed.), *Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Coptic* (Ashgate, Oct 2011)

Marios Philippides, *The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453: Historiography, Topography and Military Studies* (Ashgate, April 2011)

Richard Price and Mary Whitby (eds.), *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils 400-700* (LUP, March 2011)

Stephen H. Rapp, Jr. (ed.), *Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Georgian* (Ashgate, Sept 2011)

David Taylor (ed.), *Languages and Literatures of Eastern Christianity: Syriac (West)* (Ashgate, June 2011)

David Thomas, *Arabicization and Islamization: Eastern Christianity and the Appeal of Islam* (Ashgate, July 2011)

Warren T. Woodfin, *The Embodied Icon: Liturgical Vestments and Sacramental Power in Byzantium* (OUP, October 2011)







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