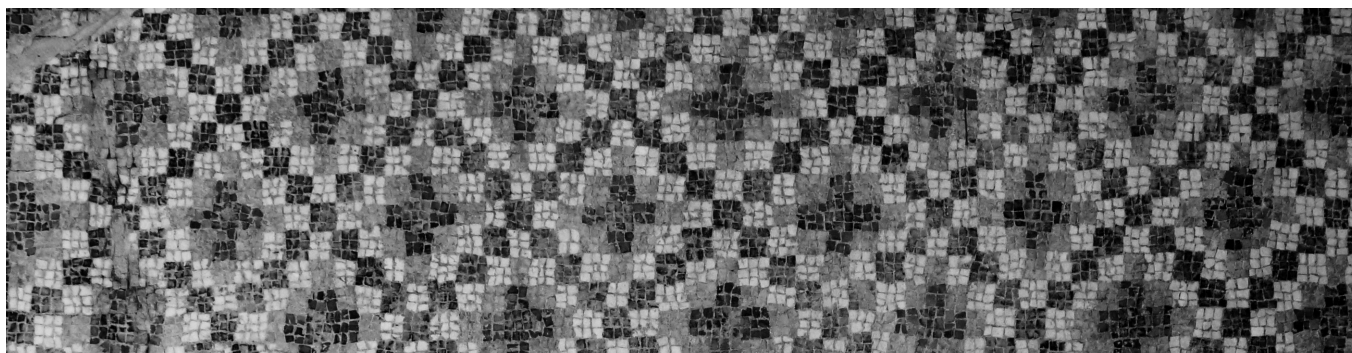




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The Byzantinist

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
OXFORD BYZANTINE SOCIETY



A Message from the Editor

It is an honour for me to present the second issue of the *Byzantinist*, the newsletter of the Oxford Byzantine Society. It was conceived as a platform to showcase the ongoing projects of the graduate students at the University of Oxford who work in all disciplines connected with the late antique or Byzantine worlds. This year has been very successful for Byzantine studies at Oxford and we have a lot to highlight: Exeter College successfully hosted the SPBS annual Spring Symposium; the graduate body grew with a record matriculating class; and the Society's own annual conference was the largest yet. This newsletter contains a selection of the best of this community's output this year, a snapshot of a dynamic group of scholars. The current contributors represent a wide sampling within that community, from first-year master's to final-year doctoral students.

Once again, Oxford's graduate students have outdone themselves in their submissions. As was the case in the newsletter's first issue, the articles are meant to discuss a small, contained aspect of research, presented with a non-expert academic readership in mind. The writings display an interest in the gamut of 'Byzantine' studies from late antiquity through the Palaiologan era and embrace multi-disciplinary approaches to the field. The newsletter also contains a pair of book reviews and profiles of a current student and

a recent alumnus. While the profile sections can only ever present a small sample of the graduate population, I think that Yaman and Elizabeth are brilliant examples of the wildly diverse community of Byzantine scholars both here at Oxford and around the world. In addition to these, there is a special interview with Professor Dame Averil Cameron, who shares some insights into some of her recent projects, as well as her thoughts both on the current state of Byzantine studies and academia as a field at large. In an era when academic careers – indeed, most careers in general – offer less and less certainty, the interview and the student profiles present different views of the same world, a world characterized as much by its exciting growth and potential as by its relative obscurity and daunting prospects.

As with the first edition of the *Byzantinist*, the website, the annual graduate conference, and the weekly emails, this issue seeks to continue the Oxford Byzantine Society's overall goal of promoting graduate community and fostering networks among its members, present, past, and future. This newsletter will be available for a limited period in print and will remain archived on the Society's website, free for you to download and cherish again and again. Effusive thanks must be given to the contributors, both for their articles and for their patience with the editorial process.

Thanks also to the senior members of the Interfaculty Committee of Late Antique and Byzantine Studies, whose support for the society and its projects has been steadfast. The newsletter, as you see it before you, exists solely through the skilled efforts of its graphic designer, Jesse Simon, and the editorial élan of Alexis Gorby, Ed Coghill, and Bethany Dearlove. What has emerged is the fruit of your collective work, which I humbly present back to you.

Douglas Whalin
PRESIDENT

OXFORD BYZANTINE SOCIETY

THE BYZANTINIST

— is published by —

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Between Aries and Orion: STARS, PLANETS, AND SIGNS IN THE *ALEXANDER ROMANCE*

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There's some ill planet reigns: I must be patient till the heavens look with an aspect more favourable.' These are Hermione's words in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. They could also be any astrologer's words when predicting the birth of a child. In the legendary *Alexander Romance*, these words are also spoken by Nectanebus II, pharaoh of Egypt and astrologer, to Olympias, the mother of Alexander the Great, when she gives birth to Alexander. In all the versions of this text, from its origin as early as the third century BCE to versions from the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, Alexander's life is marked by stars, planets, and signs.

Not only do stars, planets, and signs figure large in the *Alexander Romance*, the first person Alexander contacts is an astrologer. The legend transmitted by Pseudo-Callisthenes reports that Alexander's true father is not Philip II, but the last Egyptian pharaoh, Nectanebus II. The first thing the *Alexander Romance* tells us about this historical character is that he is an astrologer, a ruler of people who 'calculated the ordering of the stars of heaven'. His great ability is to win battles without even lining up an army: he creates clay images of his enemies' ships, puts them in a water basin, and then destroys them. However, his magic suddenly

can no longer save him, for the gods turn against him, and he flees Egypt. He goes to Macedonia where he begins his career as an astrologer. His fame grows and Olympias goes to ask him about her future, as she has not yet borne a son and is afraid Philip will repudiate her.

Nectanebus falls in love with Olympias, and decides she must be his. His first act is to clearly explain the different types of judging the κρίσις: there are *ὄνειροκρίται* (dream interpreters), *σημειολύται* (portents interpreters), *ὀρνεοσκόποι* (augurs), *μάντις* (diviners), *ἄμμουμάντις* (meaning either *ἄμμουμάντις*, diviners by sand, or *Ἀμμώνος μάντις*, diviners of Ammon), *γενεθλιαλόγοι* (caster of nativities), *μάγοι* (enchanters), *ἀστρολόγοι* (astrologers). The Latin translation of the *Alexander Romance*, attributed to Julius Valerius (fourth century CE?), offers only *interpretes somniorum et astrici*, while the Armenian version (fifth century CE) has 'dream tellers, omen solvers, dream judges, the seers of Ammon, basin gazers, birth readers, fortune tellers, fate tellers who are called magi, and in their power rest all scientific matters'. The Syriac version (tenth century CE) describes them in different words: 'the interpreters of dreams are of many kinds, and the knowers of signs, those who understand divination, Chaldeans or

augurs, and caster of nativities; the Greek call the signs of the Zodiac 'sorcerers'; and others are counters of the stars'. In any case, Nectanebus is an expert of every kind of divination, and his instruments, as described in the text, are supported by archaeological evidence.

The second great astrological moment in the *Alexander Romance* is the birth of Alexander. Nectanebus disguises himself using his magical powers and appears to Olympias, firstly as a mature man with white hair and ram horns on his head, Ammon, and then as a snake that becomes horned. At the moment of Alexander's birth, it is Nectanebus who stands with the queen, and here there is an incredible text, Alexander the Great's horoscope. It is a very corrupted passage, and there exists only one manuscript in Greek for this version (*Rom. Alex*, α, I.12).

Many have tried to divine Alexander's date of birth from this passage. However it is important to remember that this is a fictional text, and the horoscope is probably one of the many passages which have come into the text at an early stage. One scholar has dated it to 149 CE based on astronomical calculations, but to date the first version to this period, on just this piece of evidence, is probably an overestimation. In any case,

this passage is very corrupted, but what can be understood is that Alexander was born during a full moon, with the Sun in Scorpio, Moon in Taurus, Saturn in Cancer, Jupiter in Aries, Mars in Leo, Venus in Sagittarius, and Mercury in Capricorn, while Jupiter was culminating. The horoscope is present only in the Greek and Syriac versions, appearing longer and more detailed in the latter.

This horoscope is similar to many found in papyri, but it is the only known one related to Alexander. Whether or not the interpretation of these lines are correct – the text itself is a mystery, and in order to understand it properly it would be necessary to have a great knowledge of astrology – the main point is: ‘Zeus lover of young girls [...] is now clearly at the centre of the sky and has become Ammon the ram’. The central focus seems to be his birth under Zeus, the Greek king of gods, and Ammon, the Egyptian king. In Alexander’s propaganda these were both his parents and both signs of power. In the same way, the *Alexander Romance*’s retelling of when Alexander was born should not be treated as historical fact. He was born under the new moon of the month of Tybi (more or less March-April) at dawn, not only because dawn and the ascendant would correspond (which does not happen in the horoscope), but also because the new moon at the raising of the sign is a clear metaphorical way to indicate the beginning. In the fifth-century β version the month of Alexander’s birth is January, always at the new moon; intriguingly, the first new moon of 356 BCE was the first of January. In symmetry with this, Alexander’s death is set at sunset.

In the successive versions of the *Alexander Romance*, no zodiacal signs can be found. This is not the result of censorship as seen in other moments of the text, particularly the relationship between Alexander and the pagan gods, but because this horoscope was hardly comprehensible. It is full of mythological references and astrological complexities. Although the scene is the same – Nectanebus keeping Olympias from giving birth – the reasons are explained in a simpler way than through the complicated horoscope results; she would give birth to a war prisoner: less than a slave, a monster, or an eunuch.

Unluckily, there is no horoscope in the Byzantine version, but there is something different. In all the versions, Alexander believes

his father is Philip, and Olympias believes he is the son of Ammon. Philip is suspicious, but Nectanebus has him visited by dreams. The most famous and important of these is the birth of a little snake from an egg fallen from the sky, the snake surrounds the egg, and then dies. A dream interpreter explains that the snake is a royal being, and the egg is the world. The snake, having surrounded it, will die without being able to return back to his country. In addition, Nectanebus turns himself into a snake and shows himself kissing the queen, in front of everybody, so as to show that the rumours about the conception of Alexander are right.

Alexander grows up and Nectanebus teaches him astronomy and astrology. In all the versions, this teaching culminates when Alexander asks Nectanebus to go outside for a lesson and suddenly throws him into a gorge, speaking as a new servant to Thales, ‘You try to know the things of the sky, but you don’t know the things of the earth’. In this moment, Nectanebus shows himself as Alexander’s father: ‘the stars were right, they said I had to be killed by my son’. In the Byzantine version ε one finds a very important addition: Nectanebus uses an astrolabe (ἀστρολάβιον) which imitates the movement of the stars. This astrolabe is very similar to the one used by the original Nectanebus, but it is not the same thing: there is the Sun, the Moon, the five planets, and τὰ τούτοις παρανατέλλοντα, those that surround them. In particular there is Pleiades, Orion, Arcturus, some ἑσπερίαι (obviously corrupted), Andromeda, Ursa Major, and the constellation of the Dragon.

Typically this σπεραία is interpreted as a corruption for Sirius. This is a possibility, for in the manuscript there is the little sign over the word, which throughout the manuscript indicates a name. But it could be that this σπεραία is simply an ἀστέρα, linked with the preceding Arcturus, the only effective star in this list, and ἀστὴρ has the meaning of a single star not a constellation. Therefore, it would be possible to identify it with Arcturus. There are also stones representing the planets: the Sun made of garnet, the Moon of crystal, Jupiter of ‘hyacinth’, a blue stone, Saturn of emerald, Mars of a precious red stone, Venus of pearl, and Mercury of selenite. Although the stones are not exactly the same, the description is very similar to the astrological tablet Nectanebus uses in the first version to cast Alexander’s horoscope.

Additionally, these stones could have physical and mystic values. For example, the garnet secures from peril everything that it touches; the diamond is not only the brightest but also the most resistant, and in the *lapidaria* its force chases away nightmares and fear; the hyacinth has a strengthening power that drives away grief and suspicions; the emerald makes persuasive words fly from the mouth; and the selenite prevents old age.

The mention of certain constellations or stars over others is probably due to their importance in the sky. The Dragon is enormous, and in the ancient times it was the location of the old ‘north pole’ flowing between the Ursas. The Ursa Major is the constellation present in every season, fundamental in identifying the Polar Star. Andromeda, at the feet of Pegasus, even if not a large constellation, hosts another galaxy. Arcturus is the third most luminous star in the sky. The Pleiades are an unmistakable concentration of stars. And finally, Orion is probably, after the Ursa Major, the most important constellation in the sky, not only for its easily recognizable form but also because of its rising. The rising of Sirius right under it indicated the beginning of the hot season. But this is not the only reason for Orion’s importance. While for us Orion is a B-series character, of whom nothing much is said in Greek mythology, in the East much more consideration was given to these stars. The Orion constellation was associated with the Egyptian god Osiris, god of light, and the Babylonian king Gilgamesh. This was a kingly constellation, and the same constellation that would be appear again at the end of version ε, at the death of Alexander.

Seeing the constellation of Orion rising carried by two eagles during Alexander’s death was a miraculous event, since Alexander died in the summer and Orion is not a summer constellation. Only a real miracle would be possible for the death of such a hero. Alexander, the son of an adulterer, even becomes a star in the some of the versions of the *Alexander Romance*. It doesn’t matter if he is or is not the son of a God, Alexander becomes a God himself, and after having been bound to the stars when born, he now bounds the star themselves, making even Orion rise.



Hard and Soft Power on the Eastern Frontier:

A ROMAN FORTLET BETWEEN DARA AND NISIBIS, MESOPOTAMIA, TURKEY, PROKOPIOS' MINDOUOS?



Chris Lillington-Martin
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This paper considers historical perspectives on recently discovered archaeological evidence in what was the sixth-century Roman-Persian frontier region. I will consider a site, located by satellite image prospection, near two ancient published quarries, and argue for its identification as a Roman, perhaps sixth-century, fortlet. Historical evidence will be presented which suggests the fortlet may be identified as Mindouos, recorded by Prokopios.

The topographical evidence can be viewed via Google Earth with the coordinates provided. I field-walked the area in October 2007 and May 2011. It is located between the hamlets of Kasriahmethayro and Guneyli, approximately 40 km south-east of Mardin and 20 km west of Nusaybin (Nisibis) on the Ego road and 2 km north of the border with Syria. The possible fortlet is within sight of the sixth-century Roman fortress of Dara (Oğuz) and Nisibis, a Persian city in the sixth century. The area is watered by several tributaries of the Tur Abdin and the potential fortlet site is located at the base of a limestone spur with superb views overlooking the Syrian alluvial plain of approximately 500 m elevation. Cereal crops are grown today in the local alluvium. The underlying geology is of limestone, which is visible in the hills from the edge of the plain.

Nicholson visited the two quarries, which are difficult to date, in 1973 that were relocated in 2007 at 37° 8'25.60"N, 40°59'56.07"E and at 37° 8'29.03"N, 41° 0'4.49"E. Both resemble those on the western edge of Dara, which provided limestone for the construction and

improvement of that fortress in the early sixth century and the size and proportions of the stone cut marks also resemble those just west of Dara. The location of the quarries is consistent with a border fort or watch-post strikingly sited, perched nearby at the base of a limestone spur with controlling views overlooking the Syrian plain: north-westwards to Dara (6.3 km) and Ambar church (5.6 km); south-westwards towards Ammodios (7.5 km) and south-eastwards to the frontier zone and Nisibis (19.7 km). The feature which may be the foundation of a 19 m x 26 m Roman border fortlet is just 700 m south-east of the quarries at 37° 8'09.56"N, 41° 0'18.25"E.

Its foundations resemble those of other structures, which have been identified as Roman frontier fortifications. These include Rujm el-Faridiyyeh, Al-Kerak, Jordan (30° 57'N, 32° 42'E) and one of the towers at Tunainir, Hasakeh, Syria (36° 24'N, 40° 53'E), 80 km south (Kennedy and Riley 1990). The tower outside the extensive site of Tunainir is particularly relevant because Poidebard correctly identified it in 1934 as a sixth-century Justinianic tower (36°25'23.79"N 40°51'41.52"E) across the bridge over the River Khabour, opposite Tunainir (Thannourios), as described by Prokopios in *Buildings*, II.6.13-16. Other foundations, which resemble ours and have been identified as Roman fortifications include: 'En Boqeq and Upper Zohar in Israel (Pringle 1998). These latter two have additional external corner turrets but are of similar size, 20 m x 20 m. Our fortlet appears to face south-west, with limestone bedrock on three sides. The line of the northern wall's interior edge is the best preserved.

From satellite imagery, it is possible to see a distinctive triangular-shaped field to the south-west containing many large pieces of limestone which may have been associated with a structure at the site.

Dating and identifying the quarries and fortlet foundation would require a full archaeological survey to be confirmed. The quarries may have been cut in the sixth century like those of Dara and the site could be that of a fortlet. To assist with dating and identification of the quarries and fortlet, I turn to historical evidence. The relationship between textual and material evidence is problematic. However, in addition to Poidebard's work (above), analysis of satellite imagery has convincingly located a Roman fort 30 km east of Nisibis tentatively identified as Ammianus Marcellinus' fourth-century Roman *Castra Maurorum* (Wood 2004). Furthermore, the battlefield of Dara in 530 was located at 2-3 km south of Dara (Lillington-Martin 2007).

Regarding the quarries, Nicholson suggests that stone may have been extracted, 'for use close to the quarry, perhaps to build a watch-tower' which 'could have made use of the superb view across the Mesopotamian plain' but 'it does seem safe to deduce... that it was not exploited to the full extent of its potential... cut blocks left... plenty of indications... to guide further work' (Nicholson 1985). Therefore it is likely that the quarries were cut to provide construction materials for a structure such as a fortlet or watch-tower nearby to take advantage of the strategic position. As the quarries were not fully exploited, something happened which stopped construction and stone extraction. Nicholson's

interpretation of the reason for cutting the quarries to construct a fortlet (and their not being fully exploited) is consistent with the historical evidence provided by Prokopios.

Prokopios was legal adviser to general Belisarios whom he accompanied on military campaigns, c. 527–42. He wrote a published history, *Wars*, an unpublished record, *Anekdotai* (or *Secret History*), and *Buildings*, a record of the emperor Justinian's architecture. There were numerous Roman-Persian conflicts in 527 (at Nisibis, Beth Arabaye, Thebatha, Thannourios, and Melabasa), in Arzanene and Mesopotamia. In 528, Roman strategy included strengthening the position of Dara by attempting to construct several forts close to the Persian border (e.g. at Thannourios and Mindouos). In 528, the Persian military responded to the Roman building work at Mindouos, which led to a Roman defeat in battle. There were negotiations in 529 but these broke down and led to major campaigns in 530 and 531 (Greatrex and Lieu 2002). Prokopios includes details about the attempted construction of a frontier fortification, which he names Mindouos. Both this site's location, near Dara, and its name are disputed: it is also referred to as Minduos, Mindonos and Mindon (Palmer 1990).

Prokopios explains Belisarios' unsuccessful attempt to build a fort on the frontier at Mindouos in *Wars* I.XIII.1–8. Perhaps to diminish the significance of this defeat, he places his short account, immediately before that of the significant Roman victory at Dara in 530 in *Wars* I.XIII.9 ff. Prokopios' account of the attempted construction of a fort at Mindouos in 528 includes:

... Justinian commanded Belisarios to build a 'phrourion' ('fort' or 'watch-post') in a place called Mindouos, which is over against the very boundary of Persia on the left as one goes to Nisibis. ... the 'ochyroma' ('rampart' or 'stronghold') was already rising to a considerable height by reason of the great number of artisans. But the Persians forbade them to build any further ... [so] the emperor ... ordered another army to go thither, ... both armies ... came in full force to the scene of the building operations, the Persians ... to hinder the work ... the Romans to defend the labourers. ... fierce battle took place in which the Romans were defeated, ... as for the 'phrourion', since

no one defended it any longer, they razed what had been built to the ground.

Wars, I.xiii.1–8
trans. Dewing (1914: 103)

Previously, in *Wars* I.x.14, Prokopios describes the relative location of Dara and the frontier as 'Dara...distant from... the boundary line ... about twenty-eight (stades)'. In *Wars* I.xiii.2 he states the 'place called Mindouos...is over against the very boundary of Persia, on the left as one goes to Nisibis'. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue for Mindouos' location as approximately 28 stades (6 km) from Dara en route towards Nisibis. The surviving archaeology described above is 6 km south-east of Dara en route to Nisibis. It offers suggestive evidence for relevant structural remains in the area located on what was the sixth-century Roman-Persian frontier.

Prokopios' use of the words *phrourion* ('fort' or 'watch-post') and *ochyroma* ('rampart' or 'stronghold') about a fort in a frontier location suggests a somewhat small and relatively quickly constructed building. As the *phrourion* was 'razed ... to the ground' only foundations and building debris could be expected to remain as discussed above and any source of building material (such as a quarry) would not have been fully used, which is consistent with Nicholson's conclusions. The location of the material evidence is consistent with the historical evidence provided by Prokopios.

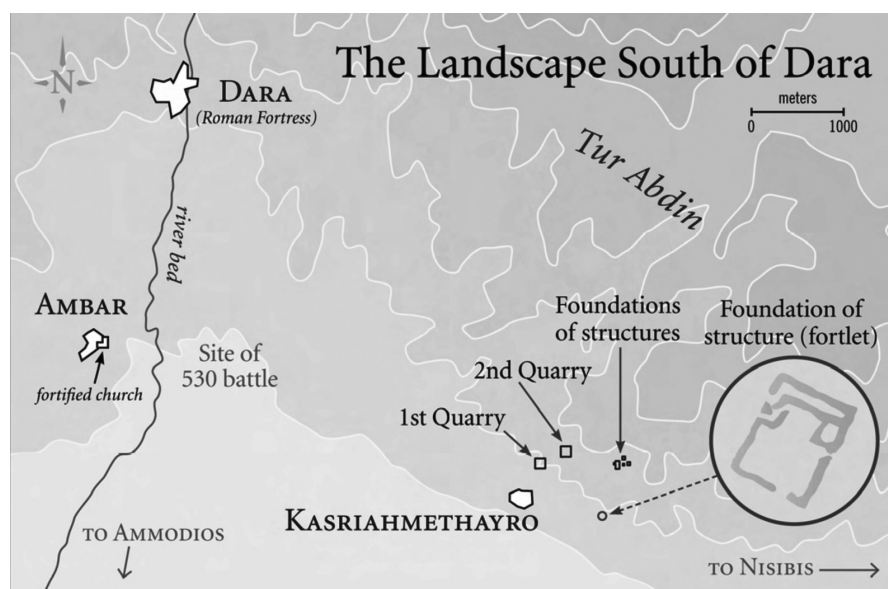
Whitby cites *Wars* I.xvi.7 to support his view that Mindouos was north of Persian Nisibis (Whitby 1988). However, the material evidence described and discussed above suggests Mindouos was located to the west of Nisibis. Given its destruction, it is unsurprising that Mindouos is not mentioned anywhere in Prokopios' *Buildings*.

This paper has analysed material and textual evidence to evaluate the extent to which archaeological evidence suggests a frontier fortification and whether it is perhaps evidenced in a historical text. Our potential fortlet site has a foundation outline that is similar in size to other Roman forts, noted above in Kennedy and Riley and Pringle. It is not possible to reach a definitive conclusion on the basis of satellite imagery, field-walking, and photographic recording alone. However, until an archaeological survey is undertaken, the hypothesis can be advanced that the foundations revealed in satellite imagery between the hamlets of Kasriahmethayro and Guneyli are those of a border fortlet, possibly Mindouos as described by Prokopios.

I would like to acknowledge the support I have received from Dr. Roger Palmer (Aerial Archaeology Research Group, Cambridge) and to thank the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara (BIAA) which granted me funds to revisit SE Turkey in October 2007. Dr. Deniz Beyazit's excellent translation skills facilitated my visit.



Locations of evidence for structures near the Roman-Persian frontier
(© Andrew Brozyna, ajbdesign.com)

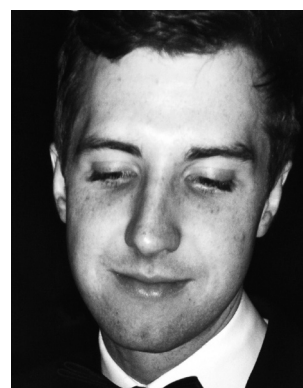


An Age of Orthopraxy?:

CYRIL OF SCYTHOPOLIS AND JUSTINIAN'S MONASTIC MISSION

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The preface to the emperor Justinian's *Novel CXXXIII* boldly states that 'there is nothing to which a government should not pay attention, since it has received from God the general supervision of all men.' In this one sentence it reveals the regulatory passion of the man who issued it. Famously consolidating the codification of Roman law, Justinian and his legal officials depicted the emperor's judicial jurisdiction as all-encompassing and uncompromising. Though imperial legislation had routinely justified itself in similar terms, it is clear that this particular ruler intended to turn hubris into reality. Justinian's personal legislation, the *Novels* or 'new laws' passed as individual additions to the earlier legal tradition collected in the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, betrays a desire to extend the State's controlling grasp further than it had dared go before by delving decisively into the fraught and complex world of the monks and 'holy men' who inhabited the fringes of the contemporary Christian world. Having largely overcome the Christological crises which had constrained the contents of Book XVI of the Theodosian Code, the Eastern empire now matched an expansionist policy against the successor kingdoms of the fallen West with a spirited challenge to the monastic fifth column which had so debilitated it in the preceding era. Justinian's principle weapon in this fight, bribery, would prove more effective than 150 years of ill-advised and punitive force. In exploiting the poverty, which unsurprisingly characterised the early Byzantine ascetic experience, it achieved greater compliance with imperial diktats on the correct behaviour, or orthopraxy, of monks than may often be imagined.

It is hard to deny that monks, ascetics, and their affairs, mattered in Late Antiquity. It surely comes as no surprise to note that these affairs were the source of

frequent conflict, both between monastic groups, and with neighbouring laymen. As Daniel Caner convincingly showed in his book, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, the dissolute actions of roaming religious orders had an impressive ability to annoy the fourth-century Roman elite. One remarkable symptom of this was their ability to unite the otherwise unlikely trio of Basil of Caesarea, Libanius, and the Emperor Julian in angry condemnation. Looking forward to the fifty years before the 451 Council of Chalcedon, we can if anything observe an escalation in violence committed by ascetics, both wandering and sedentary, against religious rivals. Ostensibly, these unpleasant episodes were about doctrine. But the nastiness which culminated in the 449 'Robber Council' of Ephesus, where Patriarch Flavian of Constantinople was effectively beaten to death for voicing the wrong Christological opinion, had reached an unsustainable peak that seemed insensible to appeals for rational discussion. The response was a state-sponsored, paralegal process, where the ecclesiastical authorities of the empire were summoned to Chalcedon to agree on a definition of Christ's nature so that armed ascetic mobs could no longer use it as an excuse to fight one another. In the medium term, at least, it was partly successful.

In spite of the extreme bloodletting which immediately followed the Council in Egypt and Palestine, both eventually reached an effective status quo. In Egypt, this entailed the tacit admission of the imperial authorities, even before the reign of Anastasius, that the Coptic, non-Chalcedonian Church ruled the roost outside Alexandria. The Roman army had already ensured that insufficient numbers of rebellious monks survived in Palestine after 453 to form a viable opposition to the reinstalled orthodox Jerusalemite Patriarch Juvenal. But, as the wide-ranging nature of Justinian's

monastic legislation shows, the State's fear of renewed disorder had never really gone away. The contents of the laws themselves make it difficult to think otherwise.

Starting with *Novel V* in 535 and ending with *Novel CXXXVII* in March 565, Justinian's rulings on ascetic life were a preoccupation that persisted until months before his death. In general, they prescribed draconian limits on monks' freedoms. Among other things, restrictions were placed on entry into the ascetic life, the format of monks' daily timetables, their sleeping arrangements, and the preferred layout of their monastery buildings. Monks should not be allowed to travel, we are told. In fact, they should even be discouraged from leaving their cells to attend each other's funerals. According to Justinian, the ideal monastery was one with a strong wall around it and a gate guarded at all times by a senior member charged with preventing his brothers from interacting with the world around them. This, we are assured, is necessary to ensure the 'purity' of the ascetic population and through it, the continued good fortune of the empire. It is not hard, of course, to imagine other reasons why the Eastern Roman State might have wished to keep as many monks locked away for as much time as possible.

The practicalities of forcibly implementing Justinian's monastic model, though, were surely beyond the resources of the early Byzantine state. Whilst it had proven itself capable of liquidating religious rebellion through the occasional use of indiscriminate violence, any serious attempt to accommodate the persistent monastic tradition safely and permanently within the rhythms of the empire would have required the carrot, rather than the stick. Luckily for Justinian, the intense competition which characterised life in the largely-unregulated world of monks and 'holy men' made them eager

recipients of imperial economic patronage. Able to exploit the material needs of groups who inhabited barren regions as an occupational hazard, he appears to have struck upon an important realisation. If new monastic laws included or accompanied a parallel offer of financial support to those willing to follow them, their regulatory aims could be easily realised, as monks competed to attract the emperor's favour. Evidence for this process in action can be seen in Prokopios' *Buildings*, and in the writings of a contemporary Palestinian hagiographer whose work demonstrates the limited appeal of narrative honesty in the face of such incentives.

Cyril of Scythopolis was the author of a collection of at least seven saints' lives recording the exploits of his ascetic forebears in the harsh monastic micro-society of the Judean desert. Claiming to cover the vast period of 405-558, these works end with their author's death and are dominated by the startling ascetic careers of Saints Euthymius and Sabas. As the son of the senior financial official of a Northern-Palestinian diocese, Cyril was a monk keenly aware of the economic aspect of contemporary religious life, writing during the largest influx of imperial finance for local ascetic causes since that related in Eusebios' *Life of Constantine*. He was also, as implied above, more than willing to lie in the interests of his 'Sabaite' order. His tall tales were told so effectively that for the duration of the twentieth century he was admired as a rare commodity in Late Antique literature—a hagiographer whose work contains credible historical information.

Unfortunately for Cyril, his latter-day career has been effectively ended in a recent book by Daniel Hombergen. In it, the account of the shadowy 'Second Origenist Controversy' in the *Life of Sabas* was shown to have been a work of fiction. The 'Origenists' in question were a break-away ascetic group who had abandoned Sabas to found their own monastery, led by one Nonnus, and the shadowy Leontius of Byzantium. They primarily appear in a series of scenes set at the court of Justinian in Constantinople, where their representatives clash with Sabas' envoys for imperial attention. In these constructed episodes, the impression is very much one of two neighbouring religious orders attempting to outmanoeuvre one another in the pursuit of

imperial largesse. That this is exactly what it was, however, has only recently been confirmed. Reanalysing the extant works of Leontius and assessing each of Cyril's descriptions of the 'Origenists' beliefs in turn, Hombergen was able to show that the entire 'controversy' was grossly misrepresented in the *Life of Sabas* and the accompanying *Life of Cyriacus*. The inhabitants of the 'New Monastery', it appears, had virtually identical beliefs to those of the Sabaites in every respect; their crime was to challenge the authority of their former brethren in the cutthroat ascetic economy, two sects from the Judea's desolate Kidron valley both fighting for Justinian's patronage. Certainly, their interpretation of Christian theology bore no relation to that of the third century philosopher whose name they bore. We can only feel sorry for Leontius, his abbot Nonnus, and the remainder of the 'Origenist' order that Cyril's side's unfounded allegations of heresy caused the emperor to finally decide against them. When we next hear of the inmates of the New Monastery, they are being relieved from starvation by a smug Sabas and his followers, the fate of their movement effectively sealed by a prohibition on official patronage to them. The banning of Origenism in all its forms at the 553 Council of Constantinople marked the culmination of a persecutory process contributed to by Cyril and his order, who played on the emperor's twitchy attitude toward religious discord to remove their rivals.

If nothing else, Cyril's ruthless streak displays a dogged determination to endear his order of monks to the emperor. It is in this context that the question first arises of whether a campaign for patronage could have involved a relationship between his hagiographies and the Novels in which Justinian details his ideal monastic community. Excitingly, evidence quickly mounts to support the idea that Cyril both had some knowledge of the laws and displayed it to an imperial audience as proof of his orthodoxy. This is something which might have been a widespread phenomenon, following work on a similar relationship between the Novels and the Rule of the monastery of Seridos at Gaza. The clearest parallels to Justinian's monastic legislation in the *Life of Sabas* occur in two scenes where the saint travels to Constantinople, to the respective courts of Justinian and Anastasius. In the

former, the constructed behaviour and conversations of 'Sabas' and 'Justinian' closely follow the language of *Novel CXXXIII*. The saint arrives asking for tax relief for his province following the destructive Samaritan Revolt of 529. When it is granted, however, the emperor seems to quote his own laws, before having his opinions parroted back by his guest. Justinian had spoken in *Novel CXXXIII* of the need for an effective divine 'division of labour' between monks whose task it was to pray for the welfare of the Roman State, and a government whose job it was to control them. Cyril has him give the same view in the *Life*, before describing Sabas' elaborate support for it. In the fifth chapter of the above law, the emperor had described how the expected result of ascetic cooperation with his legislation was that the 'fruits of the earth' and 'wealth of the sea' would bring renewed prosperity to a 'victorious' empire of 'well-governed cities'. Cyril correspondingly describes how, because Justinian had granted Sabas' request for financial assistance to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, he had come to rule over 'the half part of the land and sea', scoring 'two victories such as had never been achieved by his predecessors'.

All this occurs, of course, in one section of one of Cyril's lives. But elsewhere, the Justinianic character of his work is confirmed by the ascetic teachings expounded by Sabas and his predecessor Euthymius, where everything from the novitiate and the appropriate daily activities of the monks, to the architecture of the order's monastic complex, is described in line with the Novels' provisions. The Sabaites, described to the emperor as 'those praying for your piety,' are consistently presented as the perfect ascetic order described in his legislation. In a scene where Sabas visits the Miaphysite Anastasius, Cyril leaves little doubt as to what his followers expected from the State in return for their conformity to its rulings, however notional. Leaving Constantinople weighed down with imperial gold, the saint's visit to a heretic emperor in one sense makes an unambiguous amendment to Justinian's painting of imperial-monastic relations: the emperor may have the right to govern monasteries by virtue of his office, but that office also now obliged him to pay for them.



Revisiting Lips Monastery:

THE INSCRIPTION ON THE THEOTOKOS CHURCH, ONCE MORE

Foteini Spingou KEBLE COLLEGE



Istanbul, late afternoon of March 24th, 2010. After a long day we, a group of twenty-one Byzantinists, participants in the Late Antique and Byzantine Studies tour organized by Drs Lucas Schachner and Georgi Parpulov, arrived at the Fenari İsa Camii (Lips Monastery). Working on epigrams myself, I stood dumbstruck in front of the famous inscription on the Theotokos Church. It was my first visit to the monument. At the beginning of this year, and thanks to the hospitality and help of the former member of OBS Dr Efthymis Rizos, I had the chance to visit the *περικαλλέα ναόν* again. The specific purpose of the second visit was to understand the spatial arrangement and the significance of the inscription.

The consecration of the Theotokos Church was celebrated in June 907. The church was the core of a monastic settlement. Nothing is known about the monastery or the church until the very late thirteenth century, when Theodora Palaiologina, widow of Michael VIII, restored and expanded the monastery. At this point, a church dedicated to St. John the Forerunner was attached to the Theotokos Church. Almost contemporaneously, a long exonarthex was added to both churches. The complex remained in Christian hands until after 1460, when it was turned into a *mescid* (small mosque without a pulpit) without any major alterations. In 1633, the complex was seriously affected by a fire that destroyed half of the city. Three years later it became a regular mosque, at which time radical changes were made to the structure. Finally, the building was damaged by conflagrations in 1782 and 1917.

The latter allowed the first systematic investigation of the monument by Theodore Macridy in 1929. In the 1960s the building was again studied during restoration work and today is a fully functioning mosque.

The archaeological report by Macridy was translated and edited by Cyril Mango in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 18 (1964), pp. 253-77. The 1960s survey, along with remarks and findings by Arthur Megaw, Cyril Mango, and Ernest Hawkins, was published in the aforementioned volume in pp. 279-315 and in *DOP* 22 (1968), pp. 177-84. In 2004, Vasileios Marinis completed his PhD thesis, *The Monastery tou Libos: Architecture, Sculpture, and Liturgical Planning in Middle and Late Byzantine Constantinople* at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The inscription I was so taken by is found on the east façade of the Theotokos Church, and dates to the tenth century. Much of the text is missing, but the remaining inscription reads:

[...] [ε]κ ποθοῦ + μητρι θεοιο νεων περικαλλέα
κωνσταντίνος | [...] ον ολβιον εργον |
ουρανιων φαων οικητορα και πολιορχον | τον
δειξον παναχραντε προαιρεσιν αντιμετρουσα
| + | ναος το δωρον ω μαθηται τ[...]
[...] from affection. Constantine [offers] to
the mother of God a gorgeous church [...] blessed deed; measuring his [pious] disposition, show him, oh *Panachrade* [most pure Lady], to be inhabitant and citizen of the heavenly splendour [Paradise]. My gift is a church, oh Disciples [of Christ] [...]

The inscription consists of three epigrams. The epigrams are separated by crosses, while the verses are separated by three dots. There are no spelling mistakes. The first epigram is written in dodecasyllables; the use of the word *πόθος* is typical for and indicative of dedicatory epigrams. The second epigram is written in impeccable hexameters. The appearance of the word *Πανάχραντε* led some scholars to believe that the church was named *Παναγία Πανάχραντος*. However, the modifier *Panachrantos* is very common in

relation to the Virgin Mary. In this epigram's third verse, Constantine asks Mary to grant him a place in Paradise. The word *πολιοῦχος* is usually used for the patron saint or the Virgin, however in this case it has its literal meaning: dweller of the city. Then the patron asks Mary to weigh his *προαίρεσις*; interestingly, an epigram in Hagia Sophia from 869 puts the term *προαίρεσις* in a similar context to our epigram. Finally, the beginning of the third poem clearly indicates that the epigram was written in dodecasyllables. Most probably it is another dedicatory epigram since the act of the donation is mentioned (*δῶρον*).

The reference to at least two different dedications should be explained on the basis of the architectural plan. The main church is dedicated to the Theotokos but the building comprises six more chapels: two at the sides of the main church and four on the upper storey. The dedications of the chapels are unknown. The north chapel of the ground floor, as the inscription indicates, was probably dedicated to the Holy Apostles. Perhaps the south chapel was dedicated to St Eirene, as Palaiologina's *Typikon* denotes. The rest of the chapels remain unidentified. It can tentatively be suggested that one of them was dedicated to St. Stephen the Younger, since his relics could be found there. The *pastophoria* were probably not consecrated.

Unfortunately, little of the original church remains. The lavish decoration is missing and the impressive findings of the archaeological surveys are now in Istanbul's archaeological museum. Most importantly, except for a part of the eastern façade and a tiny fragment of the northern one, the original façades have been fundamentally altered. The southern façade was adjusted in order to fit the Palaiologina's plan, the western one was changed dramatically when the exonarthex was built; chapel B, in the north, is now in ruins.

The cornices on which the inscription could have been written may have continued around the building. The walls are separated into three registers by the cornices with the inscription written on the upper cornices. Regrettably, this level is covered by new constructions at the south and north façades. The remnants of the original north façade suggest that the cornices originally continued, and the east façade of the southern chapel also indicates such a continuation of the cornices. Photographs before the restoration show that the two churches were connected at that point by a Turkish construction, which fitted perfectly the Palaiologan structure. It is possible that the cornices were demolished at the time of the construction of the Palaiologan church in order to accommodate the new plan. Nowadays, the level of the cornices is evidently missing. Therefore, what evidence there is suggests that the cornices ran around the building. This view is corroborated by comparing the Theotokos Church to the Myrelaion (Bodrum Camii), where the cornices encircle the church.

Questions remain as to how much of the epigram is actually missing. Fragments from the dedicatory inscription for three of the seven dedications of the building have been preserved. There is no reason to assume that they were limited to the cornices of the pastophoria and the main apse, since the rest of the cornices are missing. According to Arthur Megaw's plan the second epigram (the only surviving inscription with a start and an end) runs along the central apse for 6.67 metres. If the length of all the epigrams was approximately the same (four verses), then a sum of approximately forty-seven metres can be calculated. However, it is equally possible that each epigram ran for just two or three verses, although the evidence from the dodecasyllabic epigrams suggests that they did run for at least two verses, with one verse probably mentioning the donation and the second being an invocation for the donor. Moreover, the epigrams could not have run for more than four verses each, as that is the length of the main dedication. Therefore, if the remaining six epigrams had three verses each the total length of the inscription could have been around thirty-seven metres, while if they consisted of two verses the inscription could have measured around twenty-seven metres. Given these numbers, it seems

impossible that the epigram ran right around the building, which has a perimeter of 85.5 metres. Arguably, the epigram on the cornices at the fourteenth-century chapel next to the Pammakaristos church runs only on the west and south façades, while the cornices continue also at the east side.

The east façade of the Theotokos Church measures 21.78 metres and thus the inscription most probably covered the whole façade. Furthermore, the inscription perhaps borrowed some space from the north and south façades. It could have run for 34.2 metres if it covered just the external façades of the chapels; if it ran to just before the narthex, this adds up to 54.18 metres. If the latter hypothesis is correct then the inscription would encircle the most sacred part of the building and reach up a level to the apses of chapels three and four.

Unfortunately, since so much is missing from the original building, it is not possible to determine the exact spatial arrangement with certainty. Nonetheless, what is suggested by the inscription itself is a linear arrangement, which reinforces the idea of the oral performance of the inscribed epigram. In other words, the tenth-century viewer was able to walk around the building reading the epigram aloud. This way he re-enacted the prayers for Constantine Lips. In contrast to what has been recently suggested elsewhere, I found the inscription perfectly legible. In the tenth century it must have been even easier to read, since the letters were originally inlaid with lead. As expected for an inscription before the year 1000, there are no abbreviations or ligatures diminishing the readability of the text. Moreover, the inscription stands at a height of about seven metres and is at a good angle with letters nine centimetres tall.

The literacy level of the audience is a crucial issue: a high level of education

would have been necessary to understand the elaborate epigram. The church was established at the time of the Macedonian Renaissance by a high court official. Symeon the Logothete mentions that the emperor himself visited the monastery for the occasion of its consecration. The monastery had a high status, since it was from the beginning under the direct jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople. Consequently, the intended immediate audience (the imperial court) was able at least to read the inscription. Unfortunately, nothing is known about the tenth-century convent and the literacy of the nuns or monks. Also, it is not known whether pilgrims could visit the church. At any rate, the very existence of the highly sophisticated inscription would add to the importance of the foundation.

My final point is that the multiple epigrams, which correspond to the multiple dedications of the church, have a special role relating to the salvation of the donor. Each saint is basically asked to pray separately for Constantine. It seems likely that the hexametric inscription covers the full length of the central apse of the church, i.e. the place nearest the altar. This was a deliberate choice: the final cross is accompanied by three dots, so that the inscription reaches the end of the side of the apse. The inscription has the role of a constant and, given its placement, immediate invocation to the Theotokos. Additionally, when the pilgrim entered the central nave, he would read on the lintel: Theotokos, help your servant Constantine (Θεοτόκε βοήθει τῷ σῷ δούλῳ Κωνσταντίνῳ). The whole building and its spectators were to pray for the salvation of the donor (who perhaps was buried there); each saint, the members of the convent, and the pilgrim are thus placed into an intercessory role on behalf of Constantine.



The East façade (2012)

The Image of the Heroine in Three Palaeologan Romances

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Byzantine literature, particularly romances and poetry as opposed to chronicles and letters, has long had a very negative image. Accused of being uninventive until influenced by Western vernacular literature and merely a poor copy of ancient novels it is often read for the information it can provide on daily life including trade, clothing, and food, rather than for any literary merit. This attitude is beginning to change. The literature tells us much about Byzantine ideas and attitudes towards more abstract concepts, such as beauty, art, and nature, aside from the more practical evidence. The Palaeologan romances are no exception. Written during a time of economic decline when the Empire was little more than Constantinople itself and many Greek speakers lived in Latin-held lands, the romances are part of the decadent art that flourished despite these conditions. Like their twelfth-century counterparts, these works play on the ancient novel. However, unlike the twelfth-century romances, the Palaeologan tales are in vernacular Greek and have developed certain formulaic aspects that allow us to better identify significant themes and motifs.

I will focus on three romances, *Velthandros and Chrysandza*, *Kallimachos and Chrysorroï*, and *Livistros and Rodamni*. There remains much debate surrounding the exact dating of these romances as well as the extent to which they followed a Greek tradition, but they are considered to be dateable to the Palaiologan period, the fourteenth century. All are anonymous with the possible exception of *Kallimachos and Chrysorroï* which, in an *ekphrasis* which describes a tale that shares some similarities with this romance, has been attributed

to Andronikos Palaiologos, a member of the imperial family. The stories share a very similar structure; the hero has an adventure, falls in love, under either direct or implicit influence of Eros, lives with the heroine, who is later kidnapped by a rival, retrieves the heroine, and lives happily ever after. While the basic plot is therefore quite formulaic, the romances themselves are far more complex in their use of language and imagery. The motifs which relate to the heroines of these three romances, as regards to their appearance, are a good example of this complexity.

Velthandros and Chrysandza, *Kallimachos and Chrysorroï*, and *Livistros and Rodamni* contain relatively long descriptions of their heroines and are not directly mimicking Western stories or reworking classical tales in plot or style. The *ekphrasis* of the heroine usually come shortly after an *ekphrasis* of a garden and they share similar imagery. The garden plays an important role as a setting for the heroine. The gardens described are enclosed and their enclosure sets the heroines apart in beauty and importance, as well as keeping her separate from male society. The gardens are the most common setting for the initial meeting between hero and heroine, in reality or within a dream. The hero, being worthy of doing so, is able to enter the garden, usually by invitation. *Velthandros* only dares to enter *Chrysandza's* garden after hearing her say that she loves him, despite Eros' intervention two years previously. Similarly, *Livistros* can only meet *Rodamni* after having convinced her of his love through letters. Thus the garden is the domain of the heroine, a place in which she is not only enclosed from society but in which she can, to a degree, choose

whom to see. Several scholars, including Ingella Nilsson and Charles Barber, have looked at the garden and its relation to the heroine in a more erotic sense suggesting that its enclosed nature reflects the chastity and virginity of the heroine. There is some suggestion that the style of the garden reflects the level to which the above statement is true. A well-tended and neat garden indicates acceptable affection, and the more sensual the description the more passionate the relationship, hence the heavily scented flowers round the bathhouse in the *Dragon's Castle* and the subsequent fire of *Chrysorroï's* emotions. Entrance into the garden of the lady therefore creates a deeper connection between them. Although not married in any official sense, once entering the garden, the question of a sexual relationship appears resolved. Within this setting, the hero and heroine can behave as though married with no fear of the consequences.

While the heroine has a degree of control in the garden she is also depicted as tended by her 'gardener' lover:

You are the ruler of the plants and I am the protector of the garden. When you go to bed as queen you will have your labourer to protect and defend you. He will also pick your roses and tend your plants.

Kallimachos and Chrysorroï
trans. Betts (1995: 78)

Kallimachos takes on the role of gardener within the palace where *Chrysorroï* is confined in order to regain her from her kidnapper. This portrayal of *Kallimachos* as gardener, both in occupation and love, adds to the symbolic act of 'watering' *Chrysorroï*, extending the connection of the heroine

to the garden through vegetal imagery. Kallimachos is changed from Chrysorroi's prince to her servant, comparable to the Western romances portrayal of lovers as the vassals of their ladies.

From Ovid's description of Corinna in his *Amores* to the classic Disney character Snow White, ideas of beauty have often been described using illustrations drawn from nature. The *ekphrasis* of the heroines from later Byzantine romances are no exception. The heroines of these romances, as with Corinna and Snow White, are illustrated with reference to flowers. Lips, cheeks and skin are white or rose-coloured. If the hair is mentioned, its imagery draws from nature with respect to descriptions of form and colour. Chrysorroi is a good example:

Her hair flowed down in rivers of lovely curls and shone on her head with a gleam which surpassed the golden rays of the sun. Her body, which was whiter than crystal, beguiled the sight with its beauty as it seemed to blend the charm of roses with its colour.

Kallimachos and Chrysorroi
trans. Betts (1995: 53)

But it is not simply the colour which is invoked. When Velthandros describes Chrysandza to Eros as the winner of the beauty contest he says:

Her cheeks are rose-red, her lips have the colour of nature. Certainly, her mouth is perfumed.

Velthandros and Chrysandza
trans. Betts (1995: 18)

The *ekphrasis* of Rodamni is no less full of allusions to the beauty of nature and in common with the others, the rose is central to her image:

Her lips were red and thin, like a rose when it opens at dawn to receive the dew.

Livistros and Rodamni
trans. Betts (1995: 145)

The rose has long been a symbol of love and beauty and was sacred to, and symbolic of, Aphrodite in classical literature, although not specifically of Eros, the personification of love in these romances. The colour, texture, and scent of roses

made them central to descriptions of beauty in Western and Persian literature. In Persian love lyrics the rose's thorns also signify the hardships a man must suffer to pursue his love. As well as the associations with colour, the depictions of the heroines contain the idea of scent and sweet taste. Roses and other flowers were often used in cooking and as medicinal aids to the four humours, which were believed to control a person's health. The much-described rain of violets and roses petals for the guests of the Roman emperors such as Elagabalus was for health reasons as well as aesthetic ones. This practice of using flowers with food would seem to have continued into the later Byzantine period, although perhaps less extravagantly. Thus, as well as being perfumed and pleasing, the heroines and their love have an almost medicinal role for the heroes, either saving them from the tyranny of Eros and unrequited love, or by completing their characters in the sense of providing what was missing from their life experience.

The heroines' figures are afforded little description beyond their grace, but when expanded they are depicted similarly to the trees around them so that they are 'lithe as a cypress twig.' Chrysandza's neck is described as 'from a lathe', as were the trees Velthandros saw in Eros' garden. This suggested connection between art and nature is a significant theme of the romances. Both the heroines and the gardens have artistic features. In the case of gardens these include artificial trees of gold and jewels, statues, and automata. For the heroines, their eyebrows and noses, or more generally their beauty, is referred to as a work of art. Art as a personification is praised for creating these features of the heroines, as are the Muses and, inevitably, man, who is also praised for his role in creating the garden. There is additionally an implication that Eros, or perhaps God, was ultimately involved in the creation of both people and gardens.

The heroine is as beautiful and pure, or sensual, as nature, more so when described in terms of the tended artifice of the garden. The garden reflects her personality and appearance, being her natural setting or literal home, and her lover functions within this sphere as the gardener who protects and nourishes her. Conversely, the only other women who appear in these tales beside the heroines and their

servants are witches, and are connected with the untended wilderness. While less overt than the use of woodland in Western romances such as those by Chrétien de Troyes, the wild landscape is still concomitant with the more feral and violent aspects of society. Thus in *Kallimachos and Chrysorroi*, although we first encounter the witch at the palace of the foreign king, her main role occurs in the landscape surrounding the Dragon's Castle, specifically the woodland close to the small island garden. This correlates with Western romances where the monstrous and supernatural are often connected with the forest. More dramatically, the witch in *Livistros and Rodamni*, although initially encountered in a meadow, tells her story to Livistros and Klitovon in 'a lonely place on the coast with some fearsome crags' where she had been left by Verderichos, the prince of Egypt who had used her to capture Rodamni. Black and naked as the landscape around her, this unpleasant creature is made the more so due to her situation, and yet we are to feel little sympathy for her. The landscape is an *ekphrasis* of her personality.

Within these three romances the connection between art, nature, and beauty is a strong theme. Through a variety of vegetal imagery the authors can describe their heroines in well-developed terminology that conveys a sense of colour, form, texture, and scent. The motif of the garden is closely related to the heroine, arguably in an erotic sense, with her being 'tended' by her lover and opening her garden to him at the same time as allowing him access to her body. However, the natural imagery used also serves to unite the garden and the heroine in their beauty and status as being beyond the reach of normal society.



THE BYZANTINIST INTERVIEW

Averil Cameron

INTERVIEWED BY *Prerona Prasad*

Since retiring in 2011, Prof. Dame Averil Cameron has been a Visiting Scholar at Dumbarton Oaks (Washington D.C.) and has continued as Chair of the Oxford Centre for Byzantine Research (OCBR). She has also published an extended and thoroughly revised edition of *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity*, and a further edited volume on Late Antiquity on the eve of Islam is forthcoming. The Byzantinist caught up with her to ask about her latest project and her reflections on a long and illustrious career in Late Antique and Byzantine Studies.

THE BYZANTINIST: Your first year since retiring has been a very busy one. Apart from a full lecturing schedule, you have been engaged in your new project on the writing of dialogues in Late Antiquity and Byzantium. Could you tell us about this project?

AVERIL CAMERON: It is something I was interested in years ago, in the very early nineties. Then, with Larry Conrad, I was trying to do a handlist with information about sources for the Early Islamic period; the seventh and eighth centuries. That was overtaken, not least because Robert Hoyland published his *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*. The book never got off the ground, but I did collect a lot of material. I was looking for something to do after I retired – I've done rather a lot of general surveys and big lectures – and I just wanted to do something a bit more specialised and with texts.

This material starts in the early Christian period, and Christian writers start writing about theological matters in the form of a Platonic dialogue, or more or less Platonic. And if you actually look at it, this form continues to be used all the way to the end of Byzantium. I just wondered why that was so. Nobody has collected them and that is what I am doing at the moment with Alberto Rigolio, who is at St John's College. We are making a handlist – we have got more than 150 examples so far! So it's fun! It is about literary texts, but it is also about thought and philosophy. I am not a theologian, and it is not really a theological project but it

sits in the Theology Faculty, where I have a Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship.

I've given a set of lectures about this in Heidelberg last summer, as well as the concluding lecture at the Patristics conference in Oxford. I'm doing one soon at the Central European University in Budapest and I'm beginning to see how it might start fitting together.

BYZ: Is the literary dialogue a separate genre in itself? Are there certain internal rules that govern how these things are written?

AC: I don't know whether it's a genre, exactly – it's a form. For example, Methodius, bishop of Olympos in Lycia, just after 300 CE, wrote a rather famous one known as the *Symposium*. It is quite a strange example, but it has got a lot of Platonic references in it. Gregory of Nyssa wrote a dialogue on the soul as well, which is very Platonic. As we go a bit later, I think they start to be a bit less Platonic in a literary sense and, if anything, more dogmatic and more Aristotelian. They start having collections of citations – proof texts – added to them, or even syllogisms. That is one transition, but it isn't always like that. In Late Byzantium, there is a return to a more literary approach, though the subject matter tends to the theological or controversialist; disputes with the Latins, disputes with Muslims, and so on. I don't see myself, at this stage, writing a huge book about all these works – it is impossible – but I think it is a very interesting idea to bring them together and try and distinguish

some general trends. I would like to publish some kind of a list with basic bibliography and descriptions so that it's there and other people can take it up.

BYZ: That sounds like a very useful project, both for the scope and the sheer variety of texts.

AC: I have limited it. There are other kinds of Byzantine dialogues, like the satirical verse dialogues – there is a dialogue on the war between cats and mice, for example. They have been written about and they are rather different. I am also not writing about questions and answers, on which other people are working. They are related perhaps, but not so literary. It may be artificial, but I need to find a kernel that I can build on, rather than try and do everything.

BYZ: What was the audience for these texts? How were they received?

AC: It is very disputed and it varies, of course. A lot of scholars have tried to decide whether this or that dialogue is real or literary. Did the discussion really happen? Very often you can't really tell – it is impossible to know. So, if it is literary, then it would have the usual issues of literary circulation. One theory is that they were written as a theological teaching aid, but some of them are too specialised for that. So they must have had an educated audience of the same sort of people as the actual writer. There is also a background of real, public debates going on.

Linking the dialogues to them is difficult, but that is part of the general story.

I should perhaps say that I got going on this because I was so cross about a book edited by Simon Goldhill, called *The End of Dialogue in Antiquity*, which argues that, once Christians arrived on the scene, all serious dialogue ended. I thought: this is not true! Now I have grown up a little bit [laughs] and realise that there are several more interesting questions over and above showing that it didn't actually end.

Byz: You're part of this quite small but prodigiously versatile group of Byzantinists who have worked across time periods and who defy the boundaries of discipline. Do you think that this is something unique to Byzantine Studies?

AC: Of course, I started out as a Classicist and an Ancient Historian, and I taught Greek and Roman history for quite a long time before I ever taught Byzantium. I've asked myself sometimes whether I have spread myself too thin, academically. But primarily I see myself as a historian and what most interest me are problems of historical approach and explanation, whatever the period. Lots of modern historians range very widely, and I don't really see why we should not do that as well. I suppose the problem is that we have to master technical source material, but so do they. I wanted to see if I could understand some of those wider issues about Byzantium. I have always been interested in theory. What kind of a society was Byzantium? How did it change? That's really what led me to move from one thing to another.

Byz: The other thing that strikes a reader of your work is that, apart from conducting your own research and teaching, you've also been very active in the promotion and defence of Byzantine Studies, and have re-evaluated the historiography of the subject. Have attitudes changed much since Gibbon, Bury, and Jenkins?

AC: Oh yes. There are lots of signs of change, but I think there is also quite a lot of that old idea still around. I think one of the big problems is that Byzantium is a marginal discipline. In Oxford it is spread across several faculties and, in many other universities, it only exists in a small way in

history, classics or art history. There are very few places where there is a critical mass of Byzantinists and I think that makes it quite difficult for us.

Also, is Byzantium an empire? That is another very important question. John Haldon among others has pointed out that it was only really an empire in certain periods of its history; if you define empire as a state which conquers others and brings them under its control. The interesting thing about Byzantium, however, is that you do have this continuity. You do have the imperial ideal, you do still have the language and you do still have the culture, which is maintained for centuries. I don't think that has been very well explained, even now.

We're so lucky in Oxford at the moment. The critical mass of graduate students and the level of interaction with scholars in related disciplines are quite extraordinary. The problem comes when we count how many posts there are in Byzantine Studies proper. In terms of the creative interchanges, it is absolutely wonderful. It is so easy for Byzantinists of any level in Oxford to mix with and learn about and have input into all these other fields, which is what the subject needs.

Byz: Having seen the changes in academia over several decades, could you recommend any strategies for early career scholars?

AC: I think it has always been hard, actually, in different ways – it was hard for women when I began, after all. On the whole, young scholars now have to wait longer until they get their first serious post and they have to be moveable and versatile and prepared to go from place to place in short term positions. It wasn't like that when I was starting out. I think what keeps people going is passionate interest in the subject. I am always struck by that. One of the bodies I am involved with is the International Classical Association (FIEC), and I am constantly struck by threats to close classics departments in this country and elsewhere, and how they often emerge and survive. It is because the people are really keen to keep them going.

Byz: With the loss of permanent or long-term posts, isn't a university's ability to supervise research also adversely affected?

AC: Absolutely. It is very hard to persuade

universities to invest in subjects that they don't see as central and mainstream. I wish I had a better answer. Another big change is the research grant culture. On the one hand that provides positions to young researchers, but it is not the same as having the core provision of people in post, which is absolutely needed for graduate supervision.

Byz: As a widely published author, is there any technical advice you can give to graduate students on how to present their work to the wider field?

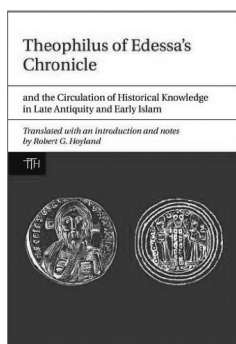
AC: I don't think I have been very good at it. I haven't been very strategic. But I think now one does have to be much more strategic about where to place things, if possible. If you're lucky enough to publish in one of the main journals, that makes a huge difference, career-wise. But there are also some new journals and you can also put your own material up on the web. And that is not a bad idea. Serious people are doing it more and more. People nowadays have to be technically very proficient and have to know how to promote themselves. When I first got a job at King's College as an Assistant Lecturer in Classics, my head of department told me that I didn't need to publish any more. He told me I'd done enough. Times have changed a very great deal!

Byz: Finally, how did you balance your academic life with being the Warden of Keble College for so many years?

AC: I'm spending a lot of time looking back at my life, wondering what I could have done better. I must say retiring was quite a big change. Being a head of house in Oxford is such a full on role. I certainly could have done more serious academic work had I not taken that role, but it was very rewarding. I am not sorry – in fact, I am very glad, and regard it as a privilege to have done it. I don't miss any of the committees or work or worries, but I do miss the people. What I miss most are the conversations. In college you are with academics and graduate students from all sorts of backgrounds, doing all sorts of subjects. It was a fascinating and stimulating environment and I really loved that.



Book Reviews



Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle and the Circulation of Historical Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam

Translated with an introduction and notes by Robert G. Hoyland
LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2011

Robert Hoyland has recently published *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle*, a welcome addition to the *Translated*

Texts for Historians series published by Liverpool University Press. The format of his book is much like other volumes in the series, with an introduction to the historical and literary background of the text, an English translation, and a collection of appendices and indices at the end.

What makes this project so interesting is that this is a translation of texts *derived from* the history of Theophilus of Edessa; there is no translation of his actual work, which no longer exists independently. Theophilus was a Christian polymath from Syria living during the eighth century, who is best known for a few surviving Greek handbooks on astronomy and divination. His accomplishments were well respected by his contemporaries, and secured him a position as chief astrologer for the Caliph al-Mahdi (r. 775-785 CE). In addition to this history, works attributed to him include a number of classical Greek texts translated into Syriac, which do not survive.

While now lost, the history was a source used by extant chronicles. The *Chronicle* of Agapius and the work of Dionysius of Telmahre (another lost source known only through its derivatives: the *Chronicle of 1234* and the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian) cite

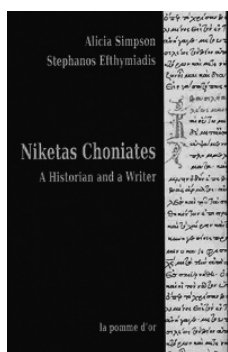
Theophilus explicitly. While the *Chronicle* of Theophanes Confessor does not clearly reference him, the presence of material from an 'eastern source' has long been identified in this work. In the present volume, Hoyland identifies all concurrencies between these four sources, and provides translations of these passages.

The result of this can occasionally be confusing. While the fact that these histories are dependent upon a common source is demonstrated by a consistent chronological order of the notices appearing in all four derivative sources, the detailed coverage can be widely different. The derivative chronicles regularly disagree as to the year of certain events, and all have additional material interspersed among the common materials.

This book is the first translation into English of these passages from Michael the Syrian and of notices in the *Chronicle of 1234* for events after 717 CE. It is also the first English translation of Agapius (almost in its entirety from the 590s through the 750s), with Appendix 3 also containing the first edited text of some previously illegible pages from the manuscript. For Theophanes, Mango and Scott's translation has been used. However, it would be very difficult to use this volume as one's primary translation of these four chronicles; the strength of its formatting lies in drawing parallels between the extant documents, not in providing a continuous translation of any one of them.

The mid-eighth century is a period with few trustworthy sources from the Roman and Arab east. In this sense, the current volume is of great value for the modern scholar by establishing the scope and nature of the work of an eighth-century contemporary. *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle* makes a significant contribution to illuminating an otherwise very dark century.

DOUGLAS WHALIN



Niketas Choniates: A Historian and a Writer

ed. by Alicia Simpson and Stephanos Efthymiadis
POMME D'OR, 2009

This collection of papers sets out to make a major contribution to scholarship on the *Χρονική Διήγησις* of Niketas Choniates, as well as hopefully stimulate interest and discussion on the history and its author. It

is also the first scholarly volume published on Choniates, but if the content of this work is anything to go by, many others will soon follow. Each of the authors evidence a passion for this overlooked Byzantine author, in fact Anthony Kaldellis goes so far as to begin his article on 'Paradox, Reversal and the Meaning of History' with a poetic extended metaphor that is worth quoting in full for the tone it sets:

Those who wish to study Niketas Choniates as both a historian and a sophisticated writer face a formidable challenge. The mountain to be climbed is tall and steep and there are no 'royal highways' to the top. It is possible no one has been there before. If the view promises to be spectacular, the ascent is sure to be treacherous. Niketas left no directions, despite the fact that he had crafted something new, something that he knew would confound the expectations of even the most seasoned climbers. Any place that we might pause might collapse beneath our feet; there are pits and deep caverns everywhere; or else, his grottos might be so charming that, like Siren songs, they entice us to linger and give up the ascent. Likewise we cannot afford to be dazzled by the spiralling chasms of irony and paradox.

Though not all the contributors are quite as poetic, what is common to all is the belief that Choniates should take his place amongst the other greats of not only classical literature but literature generally. Alicia Simpson begins the volume by quoting Umberto Eco's *Baudolino*, a modern novel framed as a dialogue between the

titular hero and Niketas amidst the sack on Constantinople in 1204, immediately hammering home Niketas' resonance as a historian today. Stephanos Efthymiadis begins his section of the introduction by saying that Choniates not only deserves to be placed alongside Prokopios, Michael Psellos, and Anna Komnene but may outshine them all. He then equates Choniates' work with James Joyce's *Ulysses* with reference to T.S. Elliot, Victor Hugo via Charles Baudelaire, and the modern Greek critic Zesimos Lorentzatos' words on the nineteenth-century Greek short story writer Alexandros Papadiamantes - delivering a litany of famous talents that he sees Choniates as being one of. Efthymiadis' paper, 'Greek and Biblical *Exempla* in the Service of the Artful Writer' and Roderick Saxey's paper, 'The Homeric Metamorphoses of Andronikos I Komnenos', as well as Kaldellis' continue this by cross-referencing Choniates with all the classical greats: Xenophon, Thucydides, Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Homer, and Plutarch to name a few. Though all Byzantine writers of any merit would quote these literary figures, it is the contributors' opinion that in Choniates their talents have been distilled, creating a work exemplifying all that was best about Greek literature and its development over the centuries.

In addition to these more broad literary portraits, a few of the 'enticing grottos' Kaldellis warns of are also focussed on

in thematic papers. Paul Magdalino focuses on the portrayal of 'Prophecy and Divination in the History'. John Davis has done a thorough analysis of the continuing readership of the History through close textual comparison in 'The History Metaphrased: Changing Readership in the Fourteenth Century'. Luciano Bossina focuses on 'Niketas Choniates the Theologian'. Titos Papamastorakis writes on the descriptions of statues and the significance of their destruction metaphorically in 'Interpreting the *De Signis* of Niketas Choniates', and Simpson establishes what we can tell about monuments and their social function in twelfth-century Constantinople in her focus on 'Narrative Images of Medieval Constantinople'.

As its contents show, this work thus has a wealth of information and opinion on Choniates that make it invaluable to anyone interested in twelfth-century Constantinople and Byzantine literature in general. More than that however, this work is a tribute to his work whose overarching argument is to convince its reader of Choniates' place alongside other literary greats of all languages and times. Though the work is far from a complete analysis of his work, it is a major step up Kaldellis' 'mountain', and if it is an indication of what is to come then the view may indeed be spectacular.

MAXIMILIAN LAU

Alumnus Profile



Yaman Dalanay
EXETER COLLEGE

Having completed an M.A. in Byzantine history at Bogazici University in Istanbul, I started my M.St at Oxford in Byzantine archaeology in October 2005 at Exeter College. I was lucky enough to be supervised by Dr Marlia Mango and, in addition to archaeology, took tutorials in

Byzantine numismatics, sigillography, and Byzantine Greek.

Following the completion of my M.St, I was fortunate to get a Clarendon scholarship and started a D.Phil in October 2006. In February this year I completed and successfully defended my D.Phil thesis, *An Archaeological and Documentary Investigation of Ephesus from the Middle Byzantine into the Ottoman Period*. I chose Ephesus as my D.Phil topic not only because I have spent a good deal of my childhood in the modern town of Selçuk only a few kilometres from the ancient ruins, but also because nothing has been done on this subject since the publication of Clive Foss' book about Byzantine and Turkish Ephesus, despite the new evidence (both archaeological and textual) that has become available in the last thirty years.

To be able to reveal the changes to the urban landscape of this famous classical city, I used all sorts of archaeological evidence, including coins, seals, pottery, architecture, inscriptions, and much more from both the Byzantine and the Turkish periods (c. eleventh-

sixteenth centuries). To complement the archaeological evidence, I made extensive use of the variety of textual sources from Byzantine saints' lives, to travellers' accounts, Venetian and Genoese trade contracts, Byzantine chronicles, and sailing manuals, just to name a few. These sources were in Byzantine Greek, Latin, Italian, Arabic, Russian, and German, which put my extensive language skills to good use.

More importantly I spent a good deal of time in the Ottoman archives in Istanbul, where I studied the land and tax registers of Ephesus from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These registers contained a great deal of information about the demography and economic life of the areas under Ottoman rule, which allowed me to reconstruct the history of Ephesus during this time period.

In the course of my D.Phil I joined a summer school on Byzantine numismatics and sigillography at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington D.C., which greatly aided my research in these fields. I also participated in excavations at Ephesus under the auspices of the Austrian Archaeological Institute, which allowed me to see firsthand the site, materials, and monuments that I study. The wonderful resources and support at Oxford enabled me to pursue the various avenues of research that interested me, research which I believe has shown the importance of combining archaeological and textual evidence and highlights the importance of Ottoman archival sources for the examination of former Byzantine territories.

In January 2012 I started working as a research assistant on a project with Dr Luke Treadwell and Dr Julian Baker, which aims to conduct die analysis on seventh and eighth-century Byzantine gold coins.

Graduate Student Profile



Elizabeth Buchanan

CHRIST CHURCH COLLEGE

In the summer of 2009 I was faced with the upcoming retirements of two people close to me, my husband and my boss. My husband was not only retiring but wanted to leave the Washington D.C. area, where we had lived for a number of years, because of the traffic and occasional chaos. I was at the top of my career, holding

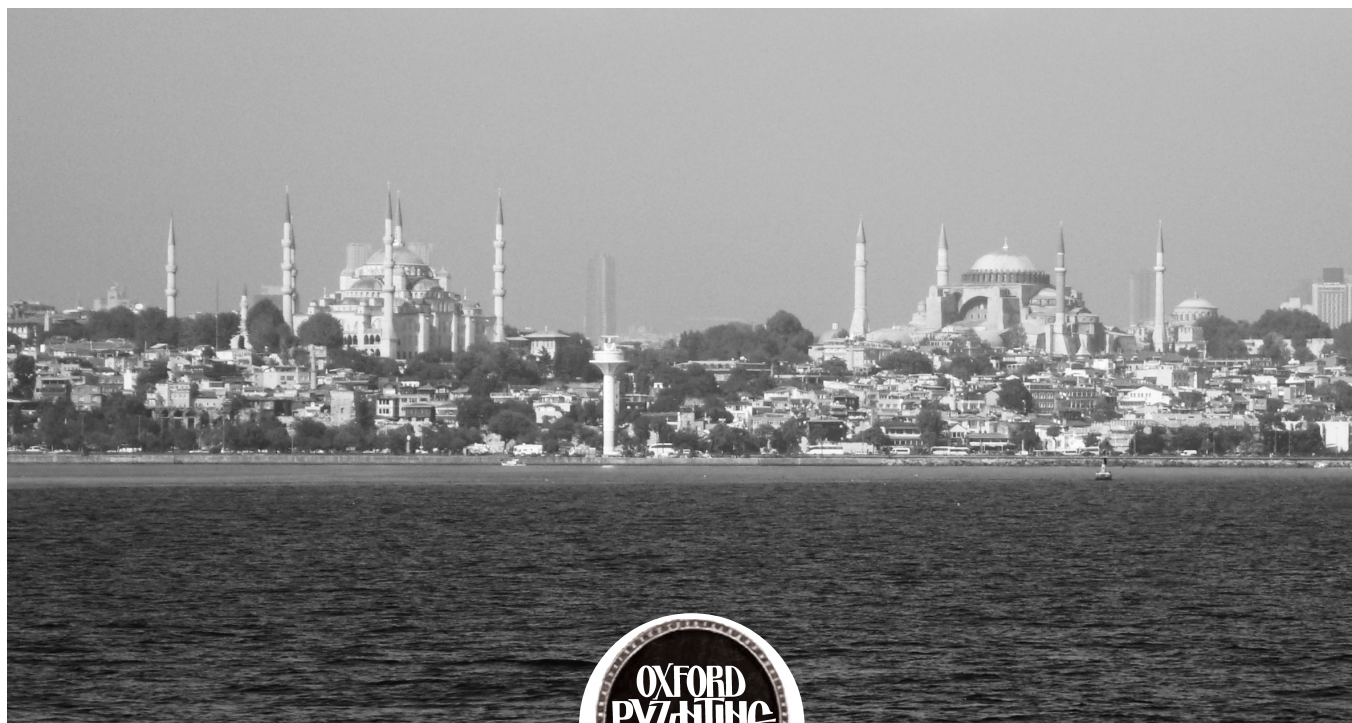
the position of Deputy Assistant Administrator for Personnel for the Transportation Security Administration, a long title that basically means the deputy personnel officer of a large American federal agency. I had held a number of senior and executive legal positions in the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security, when the head of my agency asked me to move over to personnel because there were some very challenging issues coming up, including the potential unionization of the security officers and a re-competition of a very important service contract. Although I had concerns about moving from a legal position, having been a practicing attorney for almost thirty years, to a purely managerial position, I made the move and I grew to love the people and the work. But in 2009, after several successful years, my boss, the chief personnel officer, announced his retirement.

These two retirements caused me to reconsider what I should do. Federal government positions at the higher levels outside of the Washington D.C. area are rare. I could stay where I was for a while, but there were people whom we had been training as successors who were ready to take over. I was eligible to retire and would have an adequate income if I did to do what I wanted within reasonable limits.

After a great deal of thought I decided that I had been granted a rare and unexpected gift: the gift to determine what I wanted to do with the remaining third or so of my life, with very few constraints. My children were grown and finished with university, so I no longer needed to worry about having sufficient money for their needs. There are probably a few things that I could not do – training for a professional life as a ballet dancer is not a realistic goal at my stage in life – but there were very few things that I could not consider. I knew that I wanted to continue to make a difference in the world. I have taught off and on for many years, both as an adjunct lecturer at the university level and for the Office of Personnel Management and the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security, and I very much enjoy teaching. I also enjoy travelling and writing, have always loved history, and have been fascinated by Rome and the Mediterranean during Late Antiquity since my university days. So I decided to obtain a doctorate in history with the goal of teaching and doing research.

Having made that decision, the next question was where. My husband, a retired Colonel in the U.S. Air Force, had taken some assignments with the Royal Air Force and loves the United Kingdom. He recommended Oxford or Cambridge, not only for their location but also because they are world-class institutions. We came over to the United Kingdom to look at the universities and I loved Oxford, so I applied and was accepted.

I am very happy here at Oxford. I enjoy the people, both my colleagues and my instructors. I love the challenges of learning new languages and new disciplines. Oxford has tremendous resources, and the confidence to permit its students to have great freedom in pursuing their interests. Thus far, I can say that I have no regrets and only great gratitude for the opportunity to learn and grow as a person in such a wonderful environment.



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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
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