The State Between Liminality, Transition & Transformation in Late Antiquity & Byzantium

HISTORY FACULTY OXFORD
28-29 FEBRUARY 2020

OXFORD Centre for LATE ANTIQUITY
OXFORD Centre for BYZANTINE RESEARCH
The State Between:
Liminality, Transition and Transformation in Late Antiquity and Byzantium

For many centuries, Byzantium was characterised in historiographical narratives as a transitional state: a retrospective bridge between antiquity and modernity. However, while Byzantium undoubtedly acted as an intermediary between these worlds and eras, it is important to recognise the creativity, originality, and vitality which characterised this empire and its population. Much as Late Antiquity has been reframed recently as a period of evolution rather than decline, so too can the Byzantine world be viewed in a new light through the lens of liminality. This conference aims to explore the fluid and the unfixed, periods of transition and ambiguity; the state of being ‘betwixt and between’.

There are many cases in which liminality can be applied effectively as a historiographical tool to understand aspects of the Late Antique and Byzantine world. For instance, the lives of individuals were shaped by liminal experiences, in both secular and religious spheres. From the experience of widowhood to that of a novice entering monastic life, Byzantine lives were marked by the transition from one social status and identity to another: the middle phase in which liminal personae are simultaneously ‘no longer’ and ‘not yet’, existing between positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial. Liminal spaces permeated societies in the broader Byzantine world, from local landscapes, to religious buildings, to household interiors. As such, liminality provides a constructive framework with which to approach the transition and transformation of the Late Roman city to Medieval Islamic urbanism. On a larger scale, polities formerly on the periphery of the Byzantine world (the peoples of the Arabian Peninsula, the Steppe, the Slavic oecumene) often came suddenly to the foreground of the political landscape, resulting in the formation of new cultural networks and the shaping of identities.

Liminality is often defined in spatial terms, but it is also about process. For the cultural anthropologist Victor Turner, a ‘liminal phase’ can be an event or process which involves the disruption of existing hierarchies and power-structures. This definition of liminality as an inter-structural phase not only applies to political and economic change, but also may be extended to the subjunctive world of ideas and philosophical thought: the realm of what is possible and what may be.

Including contributions on political, social, literary, architectural and artistic history, and covering geographical areas throughout the central and eastern Mediterranean and beyond, this conference aims to provide an interdisciplinary and kaleidoscopic view of the Late Antique and Byzantine world.
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<tr>
<td>09:00</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:30</td>
<td>Opening Remarks by Daniel Gallaher (OUBS President)</td>
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<td>10:00</td>
<td>Sessions 1a &amp; 1b</td>
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| 1a           | Liminality in Middle Byzantine Literature  
Chair: Josh Hitt
Vasily Zagrebin
(Lomonosov Moscow State University)
Apollonios of Tyana in Middle Byzantine Literature
Yan Zaripov
(St Hilda’s College, Oxford)
Theodore Prodromos between Christian Piety and Classical Learning
Alberto Ravani
(Exeter College, Oxford)
‘And Also Others Have Written “Iliads”: The Boundaries of the ‘Iliad’ in 12th-century Byzantine Literature
Bogdan Draghici
(Wolfson College, Oxford)
‘How Can a Son Raise against His Father?’ Cultural, Theological and Artistic Mutations at the Outskirts of the Empire
Daria Jedrzejewska
(Adam Mickiewicz University)
The ‘Tale of Euphemia and the Goth’ and the Shaping of Local Identity in Edessa within the 5th-century Roman Empire
Nicholas Ttofis
(King’s College London)
Chrysostom on Marriage: Syriac Ideas Transformed in an Antiochene Context
| 1b           | The Syriac Frontier  
Chair: William Bunce
| 11:30        | Coffee Break                                                                     |
| 12:00        | Sessions 2a & 2b                                                                  |
| 2a           | Settlements in Transformation  
Chair: Katerina Vavaliou
Vasiliki Arkoumani
(National Technical University of Athens)
The Transformation of the Urban Character of Cydonia (Chania) under Venetian Rule
Jonathan Query
(Durham University)
Halkynys: A Fortification in Transition
Robert Hayes
(St Hilda’s College, Oxford)
Between Public and Private Space in the Aristocratic Residences at Mystras
Nikita Bogachev
(Central European University)
Symeon the New Theologian
Matthew Hassall
(University of Cambridge)
Intertextual Political Debate in Justinian’s Constantinople
James Cogbill
(Worcester College, Oxford)
The Liminality of Imperial Kinship by Choice in Late Byzantium
David Williams
(Royal Holloway)
 Hagia Sophia as Built by Muhammad and al-Khādir
Mathilde Sauquet
(Independent researcher)
Islamic Influences in Norman-Sicilian Art after Roger II
Alessandro Carabia
(University of Birmingham)
Dying on a Frontier Region: Reassessing the Contribution of Necropoleis in the Study of Late Antique and Byzantine Liguria (5th-7th centuries)
| 2b           | Overlapping Authorities  
Chair: Chloé Agar
| 3a           | Negotiating Space  
Chair: Robert Hayes
| 12:15        | Coffee Break                                                                     |
| 13:50        | Coffee Break                                                                     |
| 14:30        | Sessions 3a & 3b                                                                  |
| 3a           | Negotiating Space  
Chair: Robert Hayes
| 3b           | The Literary and the Liminal  
Chair: Alberto Ravani
Anna Trento
(University degli Studi di Padova)
Literary Sources on Monastic Settlements in Palestine and Sinai in the 6th-7th centuries
Chloé Agar
(St Cross College, Oxford)
Transition and Transformation in Coptic Hagiography
Ekaterina Rybakova
(Lomonosov Moscow State University)
‘Pneuma’: Between Body, Soul and Mind
4a           | The Eastern Frontier  
Chair: Callan Meynell
George Robert Luff
(Independent researcher)
Liminality in Politics and Identity on the Eastern Frontier of Byzantium, c.969-1071
Eric Medawar
(Princeton University)
Bilingual Arab-Greek Seals and the Lives of Arabs in 10th and 11th century Byzantium
Joaquin Serrano del Pozo
(University of Edinburgh)
Between Medieval Legend and Byzantine History: Emperor Heraclius’ Single Combat
4b           | The Slavic World  
Chair: Sofia Simões Coelho
Angus Russell
(University of Cambridge)
‘Tamga’, ‘Myt’ and the Politics of Muscovite Fiscal Appropriation
Benjamin Gray
(Balliol College, Oxford)
‘The Buried People’: Novgorod and the Baltic Finns
| 16:00        | Coffee Break                                                                     |
| 16:30        | Sessions 4a & 4b                                                                  |
| 4a           | The Eastern Frontier  
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| 18:00        | Wine Reception                                                                     
... Followed by Informal Dinner
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The Oxford University Byzantine Society’s 22nd International Graduate Conference
28th - 29th February 2020
History Faculty, Oxford

Saturday, 29th February 2020

09:00 Registration and Coffee

10:00 Sessions 5a & 5b

5a Experiencing the Liminal
Chair: Miranda Gronow
Shandra Lamaute
(Kellogg College, Oxford)
The Kelsey Pendant: The Performative and Sensorial Experience of an Early Byzantine Amulet

Julian Wood
(University College, Oxford)
Between ‘Chroma’ and Christology: The Role and Function of Colour in the ‘Three Treatises’ of John of Damascus

Alexis Gorby
(St John’s College, Oxford)
Transformation of the Crossing of the Red Sea Sarcophagi

5b Intercultural Dialogues
Chair: Lorenzo Saccon
Carmelo Nicolò Benvenuto
(Università degli Studi della Basilicata, Potenza)
Byzantine Dialogues with the Latins during the Comnenian Age

John-Francis Martin
(Oriel College, Oxford)
Neither Greek nor Latin: Cardinal Bessarion’s Encyclical to the Greeks and the Plight of the Byzantine Pro-Unionists

Sofia Simões Coelho
(University College, Oxford)
Holy Fools in Byzantine and Persian Sources: Liminal Behaviours and Urban Environments

11:30 Coffee Break

12:00 Sessions 6a & 6b

6a Thresholds of the Divine
Chair: Julian Wood
Natalia Turabidze
(Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University)
Personification in Medieval Georgian Monumental Painting:
Murals of the Ishkhani Cathedral

Zarifa Alikperova
(Wolfson College, Oxford)
‘Alam al-Dīn Qaysar and His Shrine for Rūmī

Ivan Alekseev
(Russian State University of the Humanities)
A Cycle of Apostolic Suffering in a Chapel of the Hagia Sophia in Ohrid

6b Between Armenia and Byzantium
Chair: Daniel Gallaher
Lewis Read
(University of St Andrews)
The Aşxarhac’oyc’ and the Construction of Armenian Geo-political Space in the 7th century

Lucas McMahon
(Princeton University)
Mleh the Armenian between Constantinople and the Byzantine-Abbasid Frontier

Stephanie Forrest
(University of Cambridge)
‘Liminal’ Byzantium in the 7th and 8th centuries Viewed through Armenian Eyes

13:30 Lunch

14:30 Sessions 7a & 7b

7a Boundaries and Transgression
Chair: Rebekah Wahnon-Pym
Danili Pleshak
(Saint Petersburg University)
Patriarchal Drag: Disempowerment and Changing Roles in George of Pisidia’s ‘Bellum Avaricum’

Krisztina Ilko
(University of Cambridge)
The Cult of Saint Marina between Constantinople and Venice

Lora Webb
(Stanford University)
The Patron and Moses in the Bible of Leo the Sakellarios

7b Beyond the Frontier
Chair: James Cogbill
Benjamin Sharkey
(Magdalen College, Oxford)
Christian Conversion among Turkic Nomads

16:00 Coffee Break

16:30 Sessions 8a & 8b

8a A World Transformed
Chair: John-Francis Martin
Isabella Heinemann
(St Hilda’s College, Oxford)
Mehmed II as Roman Emperor: Kritovoulos’ ‘History’ Contextualised

Sima Meziridou
(University of Cyprus)
Cosmopolitan Trebizond: the City of Cross-cultural Entanglements

LorenzoSaccon
(Wolfson College, Oxford)
Between Turks and Latins: Liminal Aspects of Greek Captivity and Their Centrality in 14th-century History

8b Reframing Belief
Chair: Raymond Ngoh
William Bunce
(Wadham College, Oxford)
Miaphysitism on Trial in the Courts of Justin II

Ben Kybett
(University of Cambridge)
Claudian and Christianisation: Fighting Religious Transformation at the Late Antique Court

Wojciech Nadobnik
(Adam Mickiewicz University)
Pagan as a Liminal Status in the Letters of Theodoret of Cyrrhus

18:00 Closing Remarks

18:30 Wine Reception

20:00 Conference Dinner