Round Table:

TRANSFORMATION PROCESSES BETWEEN BYZANTIUM AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD

Conveners: **Alexander Beihammer**, **Johannes Pahlitzsch**

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The "ByzantinePoems" (ar-rūmiyyāt) of Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī and Sulaymān al-Ġazzī

Alexander Beihammer

(Nicosia)

Johannes Pahlitzsch

(Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz)

Introduction

In this round table, we want to discuss the transformation processes which evolved during the different conflicts between Byzantium and the Islamic world. In the 7th and 8th century, major parts of the Byzantine empire were occupied by the Arabs and Syria and Egypt were culturally-religiously Islamized as well as linguistically Arabized. In the 10th century, northern Syria and Iraq were reconquered by the Byzantines, and in the 11th century the Turkish expansion into Anatolia set in, which in the end led to the conquest of Byzantium by the Ottomans. The relations between Byzantium and the Islamic world were characterized by various political, cultural, and social transformation processes which will be analyzed in the panel by taking into account selected historic events and examples. We will focus on two regions, Northern Syria/Mesopotamia and Anatolia. Thus, the regional differences in the developments are taken into account.

In the region of Northern Syria, we will discuss to what extent the Byzantine reconquest in the 10th century led to new transformations in this area. We are especially interested in the question how the Byzantines reintegrated into their state the mixed population on their border, which had been living under Islamic rule for centuries.

Concerning Asia Minor, we will discuss changes resulting from Turkification and Islamization processes on the one hand and the simultaneous continuity of Byzantine-Christian population and cultural substrate on the other hand.

Zachary Chitwood
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Orthodoxy or Empire? Nikon of the Black Mountain
and the Construction of Orthodox Identity in the Monasteries of Northern Syria

The Byzantine reconquest of northern Syria involved not only the integration of peoples who had long lived under Islamic rule into the basic structure of the state (taxation, law, etc.), but also the reconstruction of the imperial church via the patriarchate of Antioch. Concurrent with rebuilding the official church was an attempt to make Antioch and its vicinity one of the centers of Byzantine monasticism once more. Unlike all the other major centers of Middle Byzantine monasticism such as Constantinople and the Holy Mountains (Athos, Ganos, Latros and Olympos), the monasteries of Northern Syria in the tenth and eleventh centuries during the period of Byzantine rule were populated by a cornucopia of confessional and ethnic communities outside of the Greeks themselves, including: Armenians (both pro- and anti-Chalcedonian), Georgians and various Aramaic- and Arabic-speaking Christians.

The copious writings of Nikon of the Black Mountain, including a just-published edition of his *Taktikon*, attest to the monastic reformer's attempts to navigate this variegated confessional and linguistic landscape in the last half of the eleventh century. The withering and then collapse of imperial rule in Northern Syria on the eve of the First Crusade meant that the region's Orthodox monastic community, whose dominance had hitherto been at best tenuous, had to contend with the loss of the local support of the state. In this context Nikon's works, in which he often dealt with questions of cultural conflict within the monastic communities of the Antiochene hinterland (e.g. could Armenians and Georgians be orthodox), show an attempt to construct a local Orthodox identity capable of accommodating the various cultural and ethnic groups inhabiting this border region. While recent attempts at defining Byzantine identity (notably Anthony Kaldellis' *Hellenism in Byzantium*) have underlined the role of state allegiance in its construction, Nikon's writings provide a powerful counterpoint to this theory. By drawing on Late Antique precedents from Palestine and Syria (particularly that of St. Symeon the Younger), Nikon developed an expansive version of Orthodox identity centered around the history and traditions of Late Antique north Syrian monasticism, which downplayed the prominent role elsewhere of Hellenic culture and language. In addition, unlike other roughly contemporary monastic leaders (Athanasios of Athos, Christodoulos of Patmos), Nikon did not actively seek state patronage (imperial or otherwise), and only grudgingly cooperated with the local church authorities.

Asa Eger
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Reassessing a Lost Century:
Archaeological Evidence during the Byzantine Reconquest of North Syria, 950-1050 C.E.

In North Syria between 950-1050, the Byzantine reconquest, political and economic fragmentation of the northern regions with the ʿAbbasid central authority leading to the rise of local dynasties, and the shift towards nomadism with the influx of Turkic and Arabian tribes has led to an observable decline in the settlement and material evidence of the region. Some scholars have argued that these trends echoed throughout the Islamic Near East, amounting to a "Lost Century." However, variations on a sub-regional level show that not all areas experienced an decline, rather, specific areas witnessed economic development into the twelfth century and later. This paper will compare settlement patterns from surveys including the Amuq, Syrian Jibāl (Dead Cities), Kahramanmaraş, Balikh, and Middle Euphrates - all regions that show a significant discontinuity of sites with earlier periods. Archaeological invisibility of camp sites and poorly understood key ceramic types of this period will be considered in efforts to overcome some generalities in the data. Yet, excavation evidence from Tüpraş Field/Ḥiṣn al-Tīnāt on the Mediterranean coast, Anṭākiya/Antioch, and recent evidence from the Nahr Quwayq hinterland of Ḥalab/Aleppo shows increased commercial vitality and local manufacture during this "lost century." This paper will suggest that certain political-economic changes with the brief period of Byzantine reconquest after 956, establishment of Little Armenia, rise of local dynasties like the Ḥamdānids, and commercial influence from the Faṭimids in the south forged trans-frontier and maritime strategies that helped to override the more observable decline of landscape and successfully develop specific economic corridors

Dimitri Korobeinikov
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Byzantine despoinas in the Mongol world: marriage as a diplomatic tool

After the reconquest Constantinople in 1261 Byzantium sought to establish new relations with her eastern neighbours. Of these, the most important were the relations with the Ilkhanid state, the chief guarantor for safety of the Byzantine eastern borders. What lies behind the unusual Byzantine reverence towards the Īlkhāns? Was that just a recognition of the international and cultural prestige of Iran, or were there closer political ties that served as a springboard for Pachymeres's laudatory prose when he described the reforms of the Ilkhan Ghazan (1295-1304)? After the battle at Sultanhanı in 1256, when the Seljuk army was destroyed by the Mongols, both Michael Palaiologos and ʿIzz al-Dīn Kay-Kāwūs II fled to the Nicaean territory. When ʿIzz al-Dīn Kay-Kāwūs II was still in Nicaea during the winter-spring of 1256-7, a Mongol embassy, sent by Hülegü, arrived. Emperor Theodore II managed to use the embassy to the Nicaean profit, and advanced the project of a marriage between the Īlkhān and the Nicean ruling dynasty. It was the new Emperor, Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259-1282), the participant of the Sultanhanı battle, who finally concluded the marriage. Towards the end of 1264 - beginning of 1265 his illegitimate daughter Maria, the future Lady of the Mongols, went to marry the Īlkhān Abaqa. All the primary sources noted the exceptional opulence of her arrival.

A reevaluation of an important evidence of Stepʿannos Orbēlean concerning Maria Palaiologina strongly suggests that her lingering in Tabriz, the Ilkhanid capital city, lasted longer than it is usually believed. The traditional date of her departure for Constantinople is thought to have taken place sometime after the death of her husband Abaqa in 1282, but the evidence in Orbēlean shows that she personally eyewitnessed the struggle between the Ilkhans Baydu and Ghazan in March-September 1295.

An examination of her court titles in the extant Byzantine documentary sources and the mosaics in the church of the Holy Savior in Chora (Kariye Cami) suggests that the position she enjoyed in Constantinople, when she returned from Tabriz, was not the one of a noble Byzantine lady but rather of a plenipotentiary foreign ruler. She truly was a representative of the Īlkhāns in Constantinople.

Moreover, she established a new tradition for the Byzantine princesses married to the Mongol rulers, who now received a new title of *daspina-khātūn*, a vivid combination of the Byzantine and Mongol court practices. It was Maria, who managed to conclude a matrimonial alliance with the Ilkhan Öljeitü. According to Qāshānī, a certain Tesbina-khātūn, dukhtar-i qayṣar-i Qusṭanṭiniyya ('despoina-khātūn, daughter of the Emperor of Constantinople') was the twelfth wife of the Īlkhān. The new bride received the same unique title *daspina-khātūn* as Maria Palaiologina before her. Maria's legacy outlived her in the Empire of Trebizond, which created the chain of the alliances with the petty Muslim emirates along the Empire's southern border in the fourteenth century. Maria, sister of the emperor Alexios III (1349-1390) of Trebizond, married Qutlū Beg of the Aq-qoyunlu (c. 1360-1389) in 1352. She received the same title *despoina-khātūn* as the Byzantine wives of the Īlkhāns before her. It might have been that the powerful Theodora Grand Komnena, the ulu hatun ('chief wife') of Uzun Hasan of the Aq-qoyunlu (1457-1478), also enjoyed the same title.

Sima Meziridou
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Change and continuity in the city of Trebizond after 1461

The empire of Trebizond in 1461 faced the same fate as Constantinople in 1453, when the last emperor, David, surrendered the city to the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II. Following this takeover, Mehmed sent many Turkish settlers to this area, made a clear division between the Christian and Muslim population, causing thus demographical changes.

The integration of the Muslim population in the city followed the transformation of the city's topography. Churches were converted to mosques, common public spaces reorganized for administrative purposes and Muslim foundations were established to fulfil the needs of the newcomer population. Consequently, the fall of the city and its integration to the Ottoman Empire caused many socio-political changes to the former capital. These changes reordered the functional and symbolic aspects of the city's topography in the process of its conversion from a byzantine city to an ottoman one.

The city of Trebizond was adapting to this new reality and its new status quo in the new empire. This adaptation process reformed the urban space, and the city went through a noticeable transition, which is well recorded in the archaeological material. Although the city went through many reforms, some aspects of it remained unaltered. The church continued its previous deed and in addition to that, new institutions appeared, which served the needs of the remaining Christian population, such as the charity institutions. Furthermore, the city as a commercial and trading centre remained so, due to its geostrategic location on the southern coast of the Black Sea and its connection to the Silk Road. Finally, the city of Trebizond never lost its political significance. From the capital of the byzantine empire of Trebizond it ended up as a capital of the Vilayeti of Trebizond under the Ottoman rule.

This paper will deal with the transition of Trebizond from a Christian Byzantine capital to an Ottoman Muslim provincial capital. The consequences of the new adjustments, namely the division between the Christian and Muslim population, the removal of indigenous population, the installation of new groups from outside along with the new foundations, and the transformation of the city's topography, will be analysed through the examination of the archaeological material and the study of the written sources. An interdisciplinary approach offers a more historically accurate image of the city before and after its siege, as well as a better understanding of the social and political factors that reformed the order of Trebizond's urban space.

Alexander Beihammer

(University of Notre Dame)

Some Thoughts Towards a New Interpretation of Manzikert (1071)

In Byzantine history the battle of Manzikert is considered one of the biggest military setbacks between the Islamic conquests of the seventh century and the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Large parts of Asia Minor, which according to modern Greek continuity concepts are perceived as deeply Hellenized regions, permeated by the Christian-Orthodox faith and Constantinopolitan cultural values, were irreversibly lost to barbarian enemies. In the historical discourse of the Republic of Turkey, Manzikert stands for the beginning of the Turkification and Islamization of Asia Minor. In this paper I will concentrate on two crucial questions, which seem to have been only superficially discussed in the scholarly literature: How does the battle of Manzikert fit into the broader context of the Turkish penetration of Asia Minor and the Byzantine defensive strategy? It is more or less commonly held that Emperor Romanos IV sallied forth to rout Sultan Alp Arslān's army in order to restore Byzantine control over the eastern provinces. But was this really the case? No source claims that the imperial government would have been able to regain the borderland through a pitched battle; nor is there any evidence indicating that the emperor intended to directly attack the sultan or vice versa. The second question is related to the battle's symbolic and ideological dimension. What were the original ideas Byzantine, Eastern Christian, and Muslims authors wished to convey to their audience with respect to the battle's outcome? In this way we can point out some glaring discrepancies between medieval and modern interpretations of the battle.

Christian Sahner
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Why did the Melkites commemorate new martyrs in the early Islamic period and other Christians did not?

During the Umayyad and early 'Abbasid periods, the Melkites of greater Syria produced a large number of new martyrologies. These commemorated the execution of Christian saints at the hands of the Muslim authorities, including martyrs killed for apostasy and blasphemy. Among the most important were Peter of Capitolias (d. 715), a priest from the Decapolis who publically disparaged the Prophet Muhammad; Elias of Helioupolis (d. 779), a young layman who allegedly converted from Christianity to Islam and back; Bacchus (d. 786), the child of a religiously mixed family in Palestine who chose his mother's Christianity over his father's Islam; the Twenty Martyrs of Mar Saba (d. 788/97), a group of monks massacred during a Bedouin raid on their monastery; and Anthony al-Qurashi (d. 799), a Muslim aristocrat from Damascus who reportedly converted to Christianity and was executed by Harun al-Rashid. There are many other accounts of Melkite martyrs preserved in Greek, Arabic, and Georgian texts, ranging from saints' lives to liturgical books.

While the Melkites enthusiastically commemorated new martyrs in the early Middle Ages, other Christian communities did not. There is only martyr of the period closely tied to the Syrian Orthodox church: Cyrus of Harran (d. 769), another Christian who allegedly converted to Islam and returned to Christianity, whose life appears in the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*. Nestorian Christians in Iraq and Iran did not commemorate new martyrs at all, which is striking given that they had produced so many martyrologies during the Sasanian Period, recording tensions with the Zoroastrian ruling elite.

What accounts for this imbalance among the Melkites, Syrian Orthodox, and Nestorians? Did these communities experience different levels of violence under the Umayyads and 'Abbasids, and therefore, commemorate different numbers of new martyrs? Or does the disparity reflect differing strategies of identity formation in the face of early Muslim rule, with the Melkites most enthusiastically seizing on martyrdom as a core part of their new worldview.

This paper seeks to explain why the Melkites turned to martyrologies as a literary response to the rise of Islam, especially during the eighth and ninth centuries. It will consider whether the Melkites' ongoing connections to the Byzantine Empire made them suspect in the eyes of the Muslim authorities, and more importantly, whether these connections made it harder for them to make peace with their new subordinate status under the *shari'a*. The core message of the martyrologies – namely, resistance to Muslim faith and Arabic culture -- uniquely suited the Melkites as they attempted to live as imperial Christians in a post-imperial, post-Byzantine world.

Roman Shliakhtin
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Evolution of the barbarian?
Changing Image of Kaykhusraw of Ikonion
in different versions of Niketas Choniates' History

The Seljuk rulers of Ikonion praised Ghiyath al-Din Kaykhusraw I (1192-1196, 1205-1211) as a "martyr" in their inscriptions. According to the present consensus, this sultan died near the walls of Antioch-on-the-Meander in 1211 in the battle with Theodore I Laskaris. Interestingly, "martyr" sultan Kaykhusraw enjoyed good reputation not only among his descendants, but also with the Byzantines. Prominent among those was Niketas Choniates, who praised the sultan in his *History*.

The primary aim of the present paper is to trace the changes in the image of Kaykhusraw in the different version of Niketas Choniates. In the first version of the *History* (written before 1204) Choniates depicted the sultan as a failed son of a successful father, powerful Kılıç Arslan II of Ikonion (r. 1165-1192). According to Choniates, after Kaykhusraw I came to Constantinople to beg Alexios III Angelos for help, he received some assistance but did not manage to capture the throne back. Same image is present in the redaction of the *History* that dates back to 1204. However, in the last edition of his work, Choniates altered the image of Kaykhusraw I significantly. The writer pronounced that the sultan of Ikonion was a Christian by mother and just ruler. In *History*, Kaykhusraw cared for his Byzantine prisoners and cut wood for the captives during a harsh travel through the winter hills of Anatolia. According to Choniates, Kaykhusraw settled the prisoners in Philomelion, provided them with tax exemption for five years and was benevolent towards his Christian subjects.

The paper argues that the profound change in the image of Kaykhusraw can be explained in connection with other changes in the later version of *History* of Niketas Choniates. As Alicia Simpson proved, Choniates altered his History after 1204 to put more blame for the Byzantine decline on Alexios III Angelos. It seems likely that the positive features of Kaykhusraw allowed Choniates to contrast him with the negative qualities of the despised emperor. At the same time, Choniates might have had another reason to alter the image of Kaykhusraw in the last version of *History*. After the fall of Constantinople Niketas found refuge in Nicaea of Theodore Laskaris. When Choniates corrected the image of sultan in the last version of his *History*, he probably knew about the new balance of power in Western Asia Minor that Theodore I Laskaris and Kaykā'ūs of Ikonion established after the death of Kaykhusraw.

Manolis Marudis Ulbricht
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Coranus Graecus – *Transformation of Religious Knowledge in Byzantine Syria*

The Byzantine Translation of the Qur'an, dating back at least to the 9th century or maybe even before, is a prime example of a process of transformation between Byzantium and the early Islamic world. Since the rise of Islam, Orthodox Christians and Muslims entered into intercultural contact and, thus, interreligious dialogue about the right faith. While earlier apologetics, like John of Damascus, Theodor Abū Qurrah, and Theophanes Confessor, concentrated on the picture of Islam and its teachings in a more general way, we find a very accurate and detailed engagement with the Muslims' holy scripture in the anonymous Greek translation of the Qur'an.

This translation was transmitted only indirectly and fragmentarily and, furthermore, in a very tendentious source, namely the polemics of Nicetas of Byzantium against the Qur'an «Ἀνατροπὴ τοῦ Κορανίου». It is the oldest and main witness of the, as it seems, very first translation of the Qur'an ever, preserved in a single manuscript now in the Vatican Library. However, as Nicetas is quoting large parts of the Qur'an in Greek we are able to reconstruct this translation up to a certain extent.

The philological-theological analysis of the translation and the comparison with the Arabic text shed light on different aspects of the knowledge transfer between the Byzantine and Islamic worlds regarding their 'revelation knowledge' ('Offenbarungswissen') of the respective other religion. It became clear that the Greek translation of the Qur'an, made by an anonymous author, is a result of several steps of transformation on an intellectual level at the borders of Byzantium. While generally very accurate, the translation contains some textually subtle, but theologically highly important differences with respect to the Arabic text. It seems, thus, to be the outcome of a Christian hermeneutical reading of the Qur'an inserted into the Muslim text by an Eastern Christian of the Greater Syrian region (*bilad ash-Sham*).

The paper aims to interpret the results of the textual analysis within the historical framework in Middle Byzantine times in the Eastern parts of the Empire. The research is related to Byzantine and Qur'anic studies as well as Christian and Muslim theology and the philologies of Greek and Arabic languages. It presents the different steps of knowledge transfer between Byzantium's Christians and their direct neighbors, the Muslim Arabs, through the example of the Greek translation of the Qur'an by examining the various transformation processes and contextualizing them with the intellectual-religious life of that time and the Byzantine cultural-political exchange with the Islamic world.

Johannes Pahlitzsch

(Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz)

Byzantium in the 10th and 11th Century Arabic Poetry: The "ByzantinePoems" (ar-rūmiyyāt) of Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī and Sulaymān al-Ġazzī

In this paper the image of Byzantium in the writings of two Arabic poets of 10th and 11th century Syria and Palestine will be discussed. Abū Firās al-Ḥamḍānī (320/932-357/968), the cousin of the Ḥamdānid ruler of Aleppo Saif ad-Dawla, is one of the most famous Arab poets of the 10th century. He is especially renowned for his so called "Byzantine Poems" (*ar-rūmiyyāt*), which he wrote during the four years that he spent in captivity in Constantinople. Although he also regularly refers in his other poems to his frequent campaigns against the Byzantines, the *rūmiyyāt* provide us with specific information about his attitude to the Byzantines, his encounters with Nikephoros II Phokas, his situation as a captive and his relations with his relatives. Indeed, it seems he also had Byzantine uncles, as his mother was a former slave of Byzantine origin.

Much less known is Sulaymān al-Ghazzī. From his work we learn that he was a Melkite and lived in Palestine in the first half of the 11th century. At an advanced age he became bishop of a see somewhere in Palestine, probably Gaza. While he wrote several theological treatises, his most original work however is the *diwān*, his collection of 79 religious poems. In these poems he presents the Melkite community with descriptions of their Orthodox faith in a way that was meant to enhance their understanding of it. Rituals and feasts are described in the poems, as well as many impressions of the religious life of the Melkite Christians are given. Especially notable is Sulaymān's particular concern for the Christian sacred geography of Palestine. Furthermore, he refers to persecutions endured by Palestinian Christians during this period. Sulaymān also shows a certain allegiance to Byzantium. He praises the virtues of the emperors and explicitly attributes the decay of Palestine to the fact that the land has lost its true rulers, namely the emperors.

Byzantium's increasing cultural influence in Northern Syria in the course of the Byzantine conquest of this area can be detected for example in an extensive effort to translate Greek works into Arabic and vice versa. But also beyond its borders Byzantium was prominent as an enemy or as protecting power for the Oriental Christians under Muslim rule not only in historiography but also in Arabic poetry.