MOBILITY AND MIGRATION IN BYZANTIUM: IN SEARCH OF THE SOURCES[1]

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Migration studies have offered us a set of new questions to approach historical periods. Since the 1970s, the academic study of migrations developed into a sub-discipline with its own methodology and toolbox, leading to the establishment of entire research infrastructures, in the form of projects, conferences, publication series, institutes, centers, and joint scholarly enterprises.[2] The dialogue between those who study present-day migrations as sociologists, political scientists, or economists and those who, as historians, turn their attention to migrations that occurred in the past can be mutually enriching, as this conference has amply demonstrated. This exchange of ideas and observations serves as a reminder to those concerned with the present that migrations have always been part of human existence, while it can help those who study the more or less distant past to fill the gaps in their evidence by analogies with more recent experiences.[3]

Within the historical discipline, migration studies are following the same trajectory as women's studies. The 1970s and 1980s were the forceful early phase when the first pioneers of women's history drew attention to the fact that women (except for empresses and queens) have been largely missing from historical inquiries. This was the beginning of an extensive phase of studies that *discovered* women by re-reading well-known sources with a more attentive eye or by exploring previously neglected historical source material, resulting in encyclopedic works such as *Women in the Middle Ages* or *Women and the Bible*.[4] This initial work of restoring women to the historical record has led to further developments where the focus of inquiry moved to a new level, namely gender studies. Within this framework, more complex questions have been raised about the construction of male and female identity —and other forms of sexual identity and sexual poli-

tics— in different historical and societal contexts. Today, I like to think, the approach that was initially the exclusive domain of women's studies has been mainstreamed and integrated into the teaching and research of all aspects of history and society. Women have become part of the story that scholars of history are telling ever anew, and gender has become an established category of inquiry within the historical discipline.

There may well be an analogous development in the historical study of migration and mobility. The first phase consists in drawing attention to the sources that can yield relevant information, if we only ask the right questions and read them with an attentive eye. In a secondary development, migration and mobility can then be increasingly integrated into the historical discipline, as one of several possible ways to understand processes and developments across time and space.

In the study of Byzantium, too, migration and mobility have the potential to introduce a new dynamism. Byzantium was one of the few Empires that lasted over a millennium, from the foundation in 330 of its capital by Emperor Constantine which then carried his name *Constantinople* to the capture of the city by the Ottomans in 1453, and its subsequent re-naming as Istanbul. At a first glance, Byzantium represents a long-lasting tradition of Emperors that continued the Roman imperial tradition —the Byzantines called themselves *Romans* (*Rhomaioi*)—, and represents a stable culture based on a unique and powerful blend of the linguistic and literary tradition of ancient Greece, the Roman imperial system and the Christian religion, a synthesis of such cultural appeal that it was eagerly emulated in those regions that adopted orthodox Christianity well beyond the borders of Byzantium, in Russia, Serbia, and Romania.

But that first glance is deceptive. Consider the imperial system, which is not as stable as it would seem at first. In fact, comparative studies have shown that among Christian medieval societies, Byzantium had the greatest instability of rulership. Only about half the emperors died a peaceful death. The others lost their lives on the battlefield, or —more often— as a result of a revolution. Roughly one third of Byzantine rulers came to power in this way. Many of those who strove to gain the throne for themselves were military men who had accumulated loyal manpower and financial wealth in the provinces. In other words, they hailed

2. For an introduction, see Dirk Hoerder, Christine Harzig, and Donna Gabaccia, *What is Migration History?* Cambridge and Malden, Polity, 2009.

3. The two case studies below will draw on comparisons with migration experiences from other periods.

4. See for example, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber *et al.*, *A History of Women in the West*, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992-1994, 5 vols.

from a professional background that made them highly mobile.[5]

Or consider the territorial situation of the Byzantine Empire. What began in the fourth century as the eastern half of the Roman Empire, was over time reduced to a few scattered and small territories that were able to maintain their political independence. This extreme fluctuation in the territory of the Byzantine empire is the result of migratory movements. Over the centuries, new peoples arrived at the borders of Byzantium: Avars, Slavs, and Bulgars in the north; Sasanians, Arabs, Seljuqs, Mongols and Ottomans in the East, while Armenians and Georgians from the Caucasus frequently were involved in Byzantine politics in the borderlands, either as allies or as foes.

Especially the movements of Muslim peoples from the East have led scholars of older generations to characterize Byzantium as a *buffer state* that absorbed the worst impact of these invasions and thus protected Western Europe from a similar fate. The traces of this view of the world that pitches the Muslim East (*them*) against the Christian West (*us*) are still present in cultural and geopolitics today, despite the fact that in recent scholarship this paradigm of confrontation has been augmented by more nuanced views of accommodation and collaboration. The exploration of the many forms of interaction between the local population and the newcomers, especially in the Byzantine borderlands has shown that, over several generations, violent confrontation eventually gives way to multiple forms of accommodation between the victors and the vanquished, in political, economic, demographic terms, that could also bring about creative new forms of cultural expression that draw on traditions from both sides.[6]

It is indeed possible to write an entire history of Byzantium based on its interaction with its neighbors, and there have been significant advances in this field in the last decades as a result of a greater attention to non-Greek sources. The immediate impact of these in-migrations was often brutal and marked by extreme violence. The aim was to gain territory for settlement and to make booty, often in the form of taking men, women and children captive as prisoners of war. Enslaved people were sold to distant regions on the slave market, resulting in further movement away from their original regions. Those who were lucky were later bought back for ransom, enabling them to return home.[7]

Pressure on Byzantium's borders resulted not only in the in-migration of new peoples, and their eventual settlement and some degree of assimilation over two or three generations, and in the forced out-migration of slaves, but also in the out-migration of refugees, who were forced by circumstances to seek a better life elsewhere. In the course of the seventh century, monks and clerics from the Levante fled the Sasanians and a few decades later the Arabs, and settled in Italy, thus ringing in the period of the *Greek* popes that lasted for almost a century.[8] In a second East-to-West exodus in the 14th and 15th centuries caused by the Ottoman invasions, members of the intellectual elite of Byzantium —authors, teachers, scribes— sought refuge in Italy, where their presence led to a renewed appreciation of the culture of ancient Greece and its language in the Renaissance.[9]

In addition to these largely involuntary migrations in and out of the empire as the result of external political pressures, there were forced migrations within the empire imposed by the emperors in the form of forcible re-settlement from one region to another. The emperors' aim was to populate and cultivate border regions that had been abandoned as a result of warfare, or —more rarely— the creation of a *scorched earth* policy by creating a de-populated buffer zone that re-

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5. Ralph-Johannes Lilie, «Der Kaiser in der Statistik», in Christos Stavrakos, Alexandra-Kyriaki Wassiliou and Mesrob K. Krikorian (eds.), *Hypermachos. Studien zu Byzantinistik, Armenologie und Georgistik. Festschrift für Werner Seibt zum 65. Geburtstag*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2008, p. 211-233. There are many overview histories of Byzantium. One that is brief and easily accessible is Timothy Gregory, *A History of Byzantium*, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

6. A fine example is a recent work that explores the history of the local Christian population in the Levante under the first two centuries of Muslim rule. Jack Tannous, *The Making of the Middle East: Religion, Society, and Simple Believers*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2018. For later centuries, the study of Crusader art is particularly relevant. See, for example, Jaroslav Folda, *Crusader Art: The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land, 1099-1291*, Aldershot, Lund Humphries, 2008. For Asia Minor, see Spyridon Vryonis, *The Decline of Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*, Berkeley and London, University of California Press, 1971; and Alexander Beihammer, *Byzantium and the Emergence of Muslim-Turkish Anatolia, ca. 1040-1130*, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2017.

7. Johannes Pahlitzsch, «Byzanz», in Michael Borgolte and Joseph Lemberg (eds.), *Migrationen im Mittelalter. Ein Handbuch*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2014, p. 93-106; Ralph-Johannes Lilie, «Demographie: Sprache, Ethnien, Migration», in Falko Daim (ed.), *Byzanz. Historisch-Kulturwissenschaftliches Handbuch*, Stuttgart, J.B. Metzler Verlag, 2016, p. 357-368; Youval Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery and the Mediterranean World*, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, Harvard University Press, 2009.

8. The foundational work is Jean-Marie Sansterre, *Les moines grecs et orientaux à Rome aux époques byzantine et carolingienne (milieu du VIe s.-fin du IXe s.)*, Brussels, Palais des Académies, 1983.

9. See, for example, Deno John Geanakopolos, *Interaction of the «Sibling» Byzantine and Western Cultures in the Middle Ages and Italian Renaissance (330-1600)*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1976; John Monfasani, *Byzantine Scholars in Renaissance Italy: Cardinal Bessarion and Other Emigrés. Selected Essays*, Aldershot, Variorum, 1995.

moved all incentives for pillaging and looting. The success of such measures was limited.[10]

The Moving Byzantium Project in Vienna

Since 2015, thanks to the award of the Wittgenstein-Prize of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), it has been possible to develop a research agenda on «Mobility, Microstructures and Personal Agency», in short «Moving Byzantium», both at the University of Vienna and at the Austrian Academy of Sciences.[11] The aim is to explore the role of Byzantium as a global culture that is connected and entangled with others, and to analyze the internal flexibility of Byzantine society through the lens of mobility and migration. In this way, the project aims to contribute to a re-evaluation of Byzantine society and culture that has traditionally been depicted as stiff, rigid and encumbered by its own tradition.

A team of highly qualified scholars at various stages after their doctorate have been involved in the project, some of whom have since found employment elsewhere and have remained affiliates of the project.[12] Team members bring their own skills and interests to the project and pursue research that enhances their scholarly profile in order to build their academic future: nomadic tribes in the Caucasus; the movement of scholars between Byzantium and Armenia; cultural connections between Southern Italy and the Sinai; Byzantium's entanglement in global networks; women's' political agency; horizontal networks in Byzantine society as a pathway to upward social (and hence regional) mobility, to name but a few.

We have chosen to conduct our inquiry with the distinct approach of pursuing history *from below*, which has been the hallmark of Byzantine Studies in Vienna for the last two generations. This has meant combining the study of geographical movement with an emphasis on its social motivations and ramifications. Hence the combination of migration studies with mobility studies and the additional emphasis on personal agency, networks and other forms of microstructures. The rationale behind this is simple: people make choices. This is also true in the context of migrations, even when these movements occur under pressure and duress: who moves, the entire family or individuals? Where exactly do they move? What do they bring along? People who are moving depend on support systems and networks, at their place of origin, along the way, and at their new destination. Are these always the same kinds of networks —family and clan, friends, professional associates, people who speak the same language or dialect, diaspora communities— or do they change according to circumstances and necessity?

Looking for the evidence

Once we take movement and mobility in Byzantium for granted, the challenge consists in gaining a clearer understanding of the phenomenon. A helpful classification was published by Yannis Stouraitis in a volume that has emerged from our initiative: *Migration Histories of the Medieval Afroeurasian Transition Zone*.[13] He distinguishes between voluntary migration for reasons that may be characterized as educational, professional, economic, or religious, on the one hand, and involuntary or coerced movement due to war, state coercion (especially forced settlements) and natural catastrophes, with its own subgroups, on the other.[14] As with all classifications, real life is of course more complex than a diagram on the page. What about the family that faces another bad harvest after years of severe drought and decides to move to a new location? Is this movement economic and voluntary, or due to natural catastrophe and hence involuntary?

Searching for historical sources for mobility and migration may involve either finding new evidence in previously neglected source material, or re-reading well-known sources with a keen attentiveness to these

10. Peter Charanis, «The Transfer of Population as a Policy in the Byzantine Empire», *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (Cambridge), vol. 3, No. 2 (1961), p. 140-154 (reprinted in Peter Charanis, *Studies on the Demography of the Byzantine Empire*, London, Variorum Reprints, 1972); Hans Ditten, *Ethnische Verschiebungen zwischen der Balkanhalbinsel und Kleinasien vom Ende des 6. bis zur zweiten Hälfte des 9. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1993; Claudia Rapp, «Zwangsmigration in Byzanz: kurzer Überblick mit einer Fallstudie aus dem 11. Jahrhundert», in Thomas Ertl (ed.), *Erzwungene Exile. Umsiedlung und Vertreibung in der Vormoderne (500-850)*, Frankfurt am Main and New York, Campus Verlag, 2017, p. 59-79; Yannis Stouraitis, «Migrating in the Medieval East Roman World, ca. 600-1204», in Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, Lucian Reinfandt and Yannis Stouraitis (eds.), *Migration Histories of the Medieval Afroeurasian Transition Zone. Aspects of Mobility between Africa, Asia and Europe, 300-1500 C.E.*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2020, p. 141-165.

11. FWF (Austrian Science Fund) Project Z 288-G25. *Mobility, Microstructures and Personal Agency in Byzantium* (online), Vienna, Universität Wien, 2015 (2021), <https://rapp.univie.ac.at> (accessed: December 30, 2020).

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13. Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, Lucian Reinfandt and Yannis Stouraitis (eds.), *Migration Histories of the Medieval Afroeurasian Transition Zone. Aspects of Mobility between Africa, Asia and Europe, 300-1500 C.E.*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2020.

14. Yannis Stouraitis, «Migrating in the Medieval…», p. 141-165.

issues. In the following, I present a reading of two well-known stories, both composed within the orbit of the imperial court, as examples of migration history for which modern migration studies can offer additional texture and context, before moving on to general observations in the concluding part of this contribution.

Case Study One: Voluntary Migration for the Sake of Social Mobility

The story of Basil I (r. 867-886) is a prime example of the Byzantine version of the *American dream* of moving from rags to riches. Basil, a peasant from the provinces, was to become the founder of the Macedonian Dynasty that would continue to rule until 1056. His ascent to power and his subsequent reign was recorded at the behest of his grandson Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos as a way to legitimize the origins of the Macedonian Dynasty.[15] Basil's colorful trajectory is often invoked to illustrate the peculiarity of the Byzantine system of rulership: an absolute monarchy tempered by the constant possibility of a revolution. But it can also be told as a story of migrant experience.

Basil came from a long line of Armenian nobles, reaching back to the late fifth century, who had been given land to settle by Byzantine rulers in northern Greece. Their descendants must have kept to themselves for centuries. In the seventh century, Emperor Herakleios moved them to Adrianople,

> ostensibly to offer them superior living conditions and status. Finding that that place suited them well, they banded together into a clan and tribe of their own, as it were; multiplied, and became quite prosperous. They also preserved the purity of their ancestral stock by keeping it free from any admixture.[16]

When Basil was still a baby, the Bulgarian ruler Khan Krum laid siege to Adrianople and transferred all the inhabitants, including his parents and their baby son, to Bulgaria. There, the deportees engaged in Christian missionary activity and many were martyred as punishment. After a successful Byzantine campaign, these people were able to return to their homes. Already at the beginning of the narration, we have at least two forced migrations as a result of warfare, as

well as a perfect lineage for Basil: he came from a family of noble stock who even had produced Christian martyrs.

The next movement is Basil's own decision, as a young man, to seek his fortune in the capital of Constantinople. Labor migration is always —then and now— driven by the quest for upward social mobility. He is endowed with personal tenacity, good looks and physical strength, so that he soon attracts the patronage of powerful men in the church and at court. Through them, Basil gains access to networks that help him further along his way, until he comes to the attention of Emperor Michael III, also known as *the party boy* (in Greek: *Drunkard*). He joins the *hetairia*, the posse of handsome and athletic men, that Emperor Michael gathers around himself for entertainment and company.[17] There is also a side story of male-male bonding, as Basil concludes *adelphopoiesis* (ritual brotherhood) in a church ceremony with John, the son of Danelis, a fabulously wealthy woman from the Peloponnese who would later put her wealth at Basil's disposal.[18] The most important associations, however, that helped Basil as he climbed up the social ladder were those with fellow-Armenians.[19] Migrants always depend on networks, then and now. In the absence of financial capital, it is their networks that substitute as the social capital of migrants. And the most readily available networks are those that have deep roots in a shared origin, shared language, shared traditions.

The last obstacle on Basil's way to the throne is removed with the murder of Michael III who was asleep in his bedroom. This is executed so efficiently, or at least so efficiently hushed up, that our sources refrain from suggesting any implication of Basil himself in this heinous act. As soon as Basil was in power, he showed his recognition for his supporters: the murderers of Michael were rewarded with positions at the court and his *ritual brother* John was called to live with him. John's mother Danelis came to visit and showered him with generous gifts, in a scene reminiscent of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon. And this in turn enabled him, as his biography puts it, to «set up his relatives in considerable opulence».[20] Basil's actions are typical of migrants

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15. The story of over 170 pages in length is integrated into the anonymous historical work known as *Theophanes continuatus*, preserved in a single manuscript of the early 11th century (BAV, Vat. gr. 167). It was published (posthumously) by Ihor Sevcenko with a translation and commentary: *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur Liber quo Vita Basilii Imperatoris amplectitur*, ed. Ihor Sevcenko, Berlin and Boston, De Gruyter, 2011.

16. *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati...*, p. 15.

17. Hans-Georg Beck, «Byzantinisches Gefolgschaftswesen», *Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse. Sitzungsberichte 1965/5*, Munich, Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1965.

18. Claudia Rapp, *Brother-Making in Late Antiquity and Byzantium. Monks, Laymen, and Christian Ritual*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 201-210.

19. Peter Charanis, «The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire», *Byzantinoslavica* (Prague), vol. 22 (1961), p. 196-240, online: <http://www.attalus.org/armenian/chartoc.html> (accessed: January 3, 2021).

20. *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati...*, p. 47.

who achieve economic and social success: they send remittances back to their community of origin, or find other ways of rewarding those who had formed their original network of supporters.

Basil may have gained the throne through irregular means, but he became a very successful emperor: he ruled for nineteen years, significantly longer than the average reign of a Byzantine emperor which was only twelve years. During his reign, Byzantium began to emerge from the inward-looking contraction brought on by the Arab invasions of the seventh century and to pursue an active policy of expansion by military and cultural means. Basil was also involved in migration politics in the Balkans. His successor and son Leo VI in his *Taktika* reports Basil's successful settlement of Slavs on the Balkans, who were otherwise known as a people who fiercely held on to their own ways. The emperor, it is said,

> persuaded these people to abandon their ancient ways and, having made them Greek (*graikôsas*), subjected them to rulers according to the Roman model, and having graced them with baptism, he liberated them from slavery to their own rulers and trained them to take part in warfare against those nations warring against the Romans.[21]

This is a description of forced assimilation which involves three measures: inclusion into an administrative system on the Byzantine model, baptism as incorporation into the church, and military training to enable them to serve in the foreign auxiliary troops. This passage in the *Taktika* is one of the few instances where we hear that Byzantine emperors pursued a deliberate policy of assimilation, through integration in administrative and religious terms. But this integration has its limits. The men who are trained to serve in the military, presumably to cover the Northern frontier, do so in special units reserved for foreigners, not in the core army.

The *Life of Basil* thus illustrates how geographical mobility is motivated by social mobility. It also shows the importance of networks along this trajectory. If we want to do history *from bottom up* as it were, and not from top down, it is these two aspects that should call for our attention: the formation of networks (we might also call them *microstructures*) and the personal initiative or *agency* that people develop to pursue this path.

Case Study Two: Involuntary Migration as a Result of Imperial Politics

For the migration experience of individual women, the only detailed evidence that exists relates to marriage migration at the highest echelon of society. Decisions about the selection of the future husband and the time of marriage were guided by political considerations, without regard for the bride's own intentions. Since the bride acts as a social and cultural broker between aristocratic families or —in the case of foreign marriages— between countries, her ability to be equally conversant in her context of origin and in her destination culture is of the highest importance.

A particularly interesting document in this regard is preserved in a late Byzantine manuscript[22] which is made up of four bifolia, but was originally longer. It contains the partial text of a verse *epithalamion* or *eisitêrion*, that is a poem written to accompany a wedding procession or the arrival of the bride in a new place, and is illustrated with seven richly executed illuminations. The poem and illuminations have been examined as historical documents in their own right. They were probably produced for Agnes, the nine-year old daughter of King Louis VII of France, on the occasion of her marriage, in 1179, to the ten-year old Emperor Alexios II Komnenos. An alternative dating places the manuscript and the wedding in the 14th century.[23]

As a gift to welcome a young princess from a foreign country to Constantinople —she is addressed in the second person by the voice of the author—, the poem and its illustrations can also be regarded as a story of geographical migration in combination with social mobility. The illustrations show the progression of the young bride on her way to Constantinople. With increasing distance to her homeland, she is being made ready for her arrival in Constantinople and her integration into the female side of the imperial court. Her future husband is nowhere in sight. What matters is

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21. George Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo* VI, Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, 2010, p. 470-471 (chapter 18.95). See also Shaun Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI (886-912): Politics and People*, Leiden, Brill, 1997.

22. BAV, Vat. gr. 1815.

23. The text and description of the illuminations were first published by Joseph Strzygowski, «Das Epithalamion des Paläologen Andronikos II. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Ceremonialbildes», *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* (Berlin), vol. 10 (1901), p. 546-567. The most recent scholarly treatment is Cecily J. Hilsdale, «Constructing a Byzantine Augusta: A Greek Book for a French Bride», *Art Bulletin* (New York), vol. 87, No. 3 (2005), p. 458-483. See also Cecily Hennessy, *Images of Children in Byzantium*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007, p. 174-176, who accepts the later date. For a discussion of the poem, see Michael Jeffreys, «The Vernacular *eisitêrioi* for Agnes of France», in Elizabeth Jeffreys, Michael Jeffreys and Ann Moffatt (eds.), *Byzantine Papers: Proceedings of the First Australian Byzantine Studies Conference, Canberra, 17-19 May 1978*, Canberra, Humanities Research Centre and Australian National University, 1981. A new facsimile edition and study is in preparation by Peter Schreiner and András Németh.

how she joins the group of female courtiers who will be her future companions.

Folio 3 *recto* shows the scene in which the bride with her entourage has reached Constantinople by boat and they are formally welcomed by a delegation that has gone out to meet them outside the city walls. According to the accompanying poem, the delegation consists of about seventy young female members of the imperial family, who are the daughters of high dignitaries and members of the imperial family. The Emperor had selected one of them, who was a close relation and enjoyed his trust, to approach the young bride with the changing her into *Roman* clothes befitting her new status as future empress. Only then does the imperial bride appear to the other members of the welcoming committee so that they can pay obeisance to her. On the following folios, she enters the city and approaches the palace, where she is welcomed by her future sister-in-law, whose position at court she will now eclipse, as the poet hints in florid language.

The bride's visible transformation into a *Roman* is necessary before she may be seen by the ladies of the court and the population of the city. It is significant that those whom she first meets are those who are likely to become her closest contacts at court and thus her future personal network of associates: the female relatives of the emperor, all of a younger generation, we should assume, and thus close in age to their new family member. The unnamed female who greets her first will probably continue to act as her coach as she settles into the customs of the Byzantine court.

Of course, the young bride must have brought some attendants of her own, but they are not mentioned. For the Byzantine poet, what mattered most was the pre-arranged nature of the entire process: from the marriage proposal to the journey to the welcome at court. The extent of preparation raises high expectations about the foreign bride and her ability to immerse herself into the Byzantine way of doing things —all under public scrutiny. Just like the she had no choice in her marriage partner, she had no other choice but to make herself at home in the ready-made network of women of the court that was awaiting her at her arrival. In the telling of this story, the focus is not on the agency of its main character even as an enormous effort of geographical, cultural and social mobility is expected of her, and at quite a young age. Quite to the contrary, this manuscript with its poem and illumination is a propaganda document produced by the destination culture that lays out the pathway to successful integration that the young girl is expected to follow.

The story of the peasant boy Basil who succeeds in becoming emperor and the story of the young bride who is brought from France to marry the emperor bring to the fore two aspects in the historical study of mobility and migration: the fact that geographical mo-

vement is often the precondition for upward social mobility, and the importance of individual peers and patrons, along with access to entire networks, as a source of information and support along the way. There is, in other words, a strong intrinsic nexus between geographical mobility and social history.

Most of all, these two episodes remind us of the importance of paying attention to the stories and the way in which they are told in the sources that are available to us. Basil's story is a product of the message control exercised by his successors in the Macedonian Dynasty, while the young bride was the passive recipient of a ready-made ceremonial protocol that she was expected to follow.

Towards a Sourcebook on Mobility and Migration in Byzantium

These two examples —one from historiography, one from poetry— illustrate how well-known stories can be effectively re-evaluated as migration events with many facets. But these are exceptionally detailed cases due to their involvement of protagonists from the imperial family. How can we even begin to take the full measure of mobility and migration in a medieval society, where the survival of sources over the centuries is desperately uneven, documentary sources and administrative archives are very scarce, and most of the historical narratives that survive are told by men of the educational, religious or administrative elite? When narrative sources dwell on stories of individual men and women, they usually focus on emperors and their household and members of the administrative apparatus; or on ambassadors, traders and other go-betweens; or on bishops, monks and nuns, holy men and women. The large numbers of people who were engaged in involuntary and forced migration, by contrast, remain nameless and are only mentioned summarily as part of larger narratives, it at all.

These are the challenges that our research team has been facing when we set ourselves the task of making mobility and migration in Byzantium more accessible to future generations of scholars by creating a volume that contains a representative sample of selected sources: *Mobility and Migration in Byzantium: A Sourcebook*. It was clear from the outset that any attempt to achieve a complete documentation of who moved in and out of Byzantium or within the empire, and when, would be futile and could in any case not be undertaken without extensive recourse to material culture and archaeology. What is possible at this time, however, is to draw attention to the topics of mobility and migration as they are present across all genres of the Byzantine written record.

As a consequence, we are following the same trajectory as that outlined at the beginning of this contribution for gender studies that followed in the footsteps of women's studies: we take for granted that mobility and migration were a fact of life in Byzantium, and instead ask about their literary construction. Due attention is therefore paid to the author and literary context of each text. The selection of texts for inclusion in the volume aims for a broad representation of mobility and migration in order to demonstrate that evidence can be found in a wide range of written texts, from ego-documents of travelers to court hearings, and from hagiography to chronicles. In tune with more recent trends in scholarship that argue for the importance of acknowledging the agency of those who move, even if under coercion, every effort has been made to also include sources that depict how individuals experience mobility and movement. The end result is a combination of well-known and often-cited source passages regarding (mostly forced) mobility with lesser-known texts that depict mobility in all its aspects.

Once we began looking, we found poems where the author, or rather the literary self, laments his eviction from his home and rejoices when the emperor allows him to move back;[24] we found in legal records the mention of women who walked on foot for a whole week in order to appear before a judge;[25] we found in saints' lives the description of desperate farmers driven to abandon their plots after droughts and famines;[26] we found in the testament of an aristocrat his proud reflection on how he and his family succeeded in moving and settling in a new environment;[27] we found in a monastic charter how the founder of the community in what is now Bulgaria, a nobleman from Georgia, expressed his relief at settling down after decades spent on military campaign in the service of the Byzantine emperor.[28] The array of sources where mobility and movement is not the ostensible topic, but only implicit, is disparate, varied and large. It is also largely untapped. It is here that much more work is needed if we want to tell the full story of the ubiquity and pervasiveness of mobility and migration in Byzantine society.

24. John Maropous, *The Poems of Christopher of Mytilene and John Mauropous*, trans. Floris Bernard and Christopher Livanos, Cambridge and London, Harvard University Press, 2018, p. 410-414 (poems 47 and 48).

25. Demetrios Chomatenos, *Demetrii Chomateni Ponemata Diaphora*, ed. Günter Prinzing, Berlin and New York, De Gruyter, 2002, p. 401.

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