

Byzantine reliquaries, icons and sacred objects reached the West as diplomatic gifts or looted goods. They trace the mobility of pilgrims, crusaders or refugees, telling stories of loss, trauma, desire and recovery. The conference aims to read exilic identities and diasporic agencies of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the light of the striking account of Byzantine scholars who narrated themselves as »the relics of the Greeks«. Thus, in addition to the mobility of objects, images and motifs, the *translatio* of the textual tradition of the Greek East in Italy and the rest of Europe will be revisited and understood as a gesture of reverence and plunder, salvation and exploitation of relics.

In fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Western narratives, the intellectual and material culture produced or preserved in the Greek-speaking East embodies a complex antinomic appeal: desired, despised, fetishised, it becomes plunder, a treasure to be rescued, knowledge to be transmitted, or even a source to be exploited. We aim to examine the penetration of Greek culture into the West and the ways in which it was negotiated, re-signified and then absorbed (or rejected). Research in this area is dominated by the Western narrative of salvation through cultural appropriation, in which the arrival of Greek in the West is inextricably linked to the activities of a few intellectuals. We aspire to shift the focus to issues of diasporic agency, mobility and transformation, cultural exploitation, the rhetorics and narratives of trauma and exile, the micro-history of ideas and motifs in their local reworking, local differentiations of cultural agency as a result of political circumstances or ideological programmes.

The conference aims to broaden our view of a range of phenomena related to the contact between the West and Greek culture, especially in the context of cultural mobility and the intersection of textual and visual culture, agency and ideology, rhetorics and politics. We focus on networks and assemblages of people, texts and objects as events in processes that have contributed to the construction of a modern, European self-narrative. We pay particular attention to the movement of people, texts, objects, images, cultural forms, epistemic narratives, motifs, concepts and ideas; we examine their interconnectivity as a critical factor in their new functions and new meanings in a context of exile, diaspora, displacement and (cultural) mobility.

Cluster of Excellence »Temporal Communities:
Doing Literature in a Global Perspective«,
Research Area 1: »Competing Communities«

Organisation

Michail Leivadiotis (EXC 2020)

Further Information

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Location

Freie Universität Berlin
EXC 2020 »Temporal Communities«
Room 00.05 & 00.07
Otto-von-Simson-Straße 15
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www.temporal-communities.de

EXC 2020
»Temporal Communities:
Doing Literature in
a Global Perspective«

International
Conference
4–5 December
2025



Relics of Byzantium

Diasporic Agency of People,
Objects, Texts, and Images

Thursday, 4 December 2025

14:00–14:30

Welcoming

Michail Leivadiotis (EXC 2020)
Miltos Pechlivanos (Freie Universität Berlin,
Center for Modern Greece/EXC 2020)

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Translating the Relics of Byzantium

Michail Leivadiotis (EXC 2020)

14:30–15:15

George of Trebizond’s Translation of Eusebius of Caesarea’s
Praeparatio Evangelica in the Renaissance

John Monfasani (University at Albany – State University
of New York)

15:15–16:00

Circulation of the Work of Gregory of Nazianzus
in Sixteenth Century Europe

Natasha Constantinidou-Taylor (University of Cyprus)

16:00–16:15 *Coffee break*

16:15–17:00

The Afterlife of Laonikos Chalkokondyles in
Early Modern Europe

Han Lamers (Norwegian Institute in Rome, University of Oslo)

17:00–17:45

A Renaissance Spartan Reads Herodotus in Rome:
Demetrios Rhalles Kabakes’s Manuscript of Herodotus (BAV,
Vat. gr. 1359) and his Annotations on the Persian Wars

Anthony Ellis (University of Bern)

17:45–18:00 *Coffee break*

18:00–18:45

Spoken Greek in Venice during the 16th Century:
A Dialogue with the Ancient Greeks or Something Else?

Caterina Carpinato (Ca’ Foscari University of Venice)

18:45–19:30

Greekness in Early Modern Greek Texts: 16th Century
Venetian Imprints and their Reception in Latin Europe

Ulrich Moennig (University of Hamburg)

20:30 *Dinner*

Friday, 5 December 2025

10:15–11:00

Relics (and Reliquaries) of Byzantium in the West:
Patrons, Objects, and Agencies

Holger A. Klein (Columbia University)

11:00–11:45

Marble and Manuscripts: From Site-Specificity to the
Acquisition of Byzantine Heritage in Early Modern Europe

Armin Bergmeier (Leipzig University)

11:45–12:00 *Coffee break*

12:00–12:45

Giovanni Gemisto's Metapoetic Discourse in the
Protrepticon et Pronosticon

Vassilios Pappas (University of Ioannina)

12:45–13:30

Classical Bilingualism in the Renaissance (1397–1536):
Greek Humanists and Their Uses of Latin

Raf Van Rooy (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven)

13:30–14:45 *Lunch*

14:45–15:30

Transcultural Crossroads: Western Medals of Constantine,
Heraclius and John VIII (1402/1438)

Peter Bell (Marburg University)

15:30–16:15

Purchasing Byzantine History for Fuggers and Habsburgs
in 16th-Century Ottoman Constantinople: The Case of
Vienna, ÖNB, Hist. gr. 53

Julián Bértola (Ghent University)

16:15–16:30 *Coffee break*

16:30–17:15

Byzantium and the Corporation: The Medieval Foundations
of a Modern Institution

Roland Betancourt (University of California, Irvine /
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC)

17:15–18:00

Closing Remarks and Final Discussion

