

Report of the
Commission for the Historical Geography and Spatial Analysis of Byzantium
at the Association Internationale des Etudes Byzantines (AIEB)

Years 2016–2022

The proposal for the foundation of a *Commission for the Historical Geography and Spatial Analysis of Byzantium* was submitted officially with a letter to the Presidency of the AIEB on 16 December 2015 by the Austrian Society for Byzantine Studies through its President Prof. Dr. Claudia Rapp based on the initiative of Prof. Dr. Andreas Külzer and Doz. Dr. Mihailo Popović (both Project-Leaders of the *Tabula Imperii Byzantini* of the Austrian Academy of Sciences).

The Commission comprises 17 members from 12 countries. A complete list of its members is published on the website of the AIEB (<http://aiebnet.gr/commissions/#1486389731376-856a14a2-3995>) as well as on the homepage of the Long-Term Project *Tabula Imperii Byzantini* (<https://tib.oeaw.ac.at/aieb>). Its chair is Mihailo Popović, who was elected by the members of the Commission in January 2017 and will fulfil this task until the election of a new chair in autumn 2022.

The **Commission's main aim** is to focus on the “classic” Historical Geography as well as on emerging tools coming from the fields of GeoSciences and GeoCommunication. The Commission is eager to unite its members in joint scholarly endeavours. A successful example is the *Festschrift*, which was edited by Andreas Külzer and Mihailo Popović on the occasion of the 75th birthday of Professor Dr. Johannes Koder, former President of the *AIEB*, with a foreword by the current President Prof. Dr. John Haldon. The editors invited 21 renowned scholars from the academic fields of Historical Geography, Archaeology, Geography and Cartography to write contributions. The result is a *Festschrift* entitled “Space, Landscapes and Settlements in Byzantium. Studies in Historical Geography of the Eastern Mediterranean”. It has been published as volume number 1 of the series “Studies in Historical Geography and Cultural Heritage” (<https://histgeo.oeaw.ac.at/>). This series was founded by Mihailo Popović and is edited by Mihailo Popović and Andreas Külzer in order to innovate the historical-geographical research in Byzantine Studies. The series is printed by the publishing house Akademska Knjiga in Novi Sad. In the meantime, three volumes have been published, while two are in preparation.

Moreover, **members of the Commission** have promoted Historical Geography through manifold scholarly publications in the last six years. Prof. Dr. Georgi Nikolov published a book on tsar Samuil and an article on the Bulgars in Central Europe and along the Lower Danube in the Early Middle Ages, Prof. Dr. Toni Filiposki two articles on the ethnicity and/or social category of the Vlachs in the medieval Balkans and the *Via Egnatia* during the First Crusade, Dr. Anastasia Yangaki articles on Archaeology, especially pottery, in Olympia, Crete and in Thessaly, Dr. Myrto Veikou articles on space in texts and space as text, ports and

harbours as heterotopic entities in Byzantine literary texts, ‘telling spaces’ in Byzantium and literary spaces and human agencies in Byzantine Smyrna and Dr. Kirił Marinow an edited volume on “The Bulgarian State in 927-969. The Epoch of Tsar Peter I” as well as articles on the Haimos mountains in the context of Byzantine cultural and economic influences and Târnovgrad viewed by the others.

Scholarly projects, which are of remarkable relevance for the Commission are, amongst others, “**The Onomasticon of Iudaea, Palaestina and Arabia in the Greek and Latin Sources**” of **Dr. Leah Di Segni**. The Onomasticon is a comprehensive collection of literary and documentary sources from the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods originally written in Greek and Latin, even if preserved only in other languages, that mention names of settlements, geographical entities (such as regions, mountains and rivers), administrative units (provinces and districts) and ethnic entities (nations, tribes and clans) within the geographical and chronological limits of the research. It was initiated by the late Prof. Michael Avi-Yonah (1904–1974), and carried out for decades by Prof. Yoram Tsafir (who passed away in 2016), and by Dr. Leah Di Segni, who serves now as the sole academic director and Principal Investigator (PI) of the project. A Digital Application was devised in early 2018. Its objectives are to serve as a platform for insertion all data, to enable efficient communication between the PI and her assistants and ease regular inspection on their work. In due course it will present all data to the public via the internet in a user-friendly manner. The database is entirely searchable.

At the **Institute of Historical Research, National Hellenic Research Foundation**, two relevant projects are conducted: “Imported Pottery in the Peloponnese and in Crete (4th-16th c.)” (<https://aegean-pottery.anavathmis.eu/map/?lang=en>) and “Raw Materials, Natural Resources and Agricultural Products. Evidence on the Peloponnese (4th-15th c.)” (<https://material-resources-products.anavathmis.eu/anazhthsh/#>). Both use digital mapping to gather published evidence – from historical and archaeological sources – and touch upon specific aspects of Historical Geography.

Prof. Dr. Mustafa Sayar and his PhD students are conducting research on the harbours of Theodosius and Propohorion in Istanbul. Moreover, he is excavating and publishing finds from the excavation of a palace at the lake of Küçüküçekmece. Both scholarly endeavours are going to enrich our knowledge on the Historical Geography of Constantinople and its environs. Prof. Sayar plans to start researching three sites of monasteries in Cilicia in the near future.

Prof. Dr. Richard J. A. Talbert has announced that the Ancient World Mapping Center has accomplished one of its mapping initiatives by putting a map and documented gazetteer for Hierokles, Synekdemos online (<http://awmc.unc.edu/wordpress/free-maps/maps-for-texts/>). The Center’s single, interactive web map follows the text of Hierokles, Synekdemos in Ernst Honigmann’s edition (Brussels, 1939), and aims to supersede his four maps.

Dr. Anastasia Yangaki is responsible for the study of the Byzantine pottery from rescue excavations in the island of Tinos and studies specific pottery contexts from ancient Messene and Eleutherna (sector II). Since 2019 she is the co-director of the field project “Byzantine

and Latin-Dominated Tinos: Old and New Archaeological Data” (in collaboration with the Ephorate of Antiquities of the Cyclades), with the aim, through archaeological research, to procure information on the Historical Geography of particular areas of the island. Since 2019 she is research partner to the research project “Kotroni Archaeological Project” (KASP). Dr. Yangaki has published a monograph entitled “Ceramics in Plain Sight: The Bacini of the Churches of Crete. ‘Reflections’ of the Late Medieval and the Early Modern Material Culture of the Island. Volume I. The Regional Unit of Chania” in 2021 and also two edited volumes (Το Βυζάντιο χωρίς λάμψη. Τα ταπεινά αντικείμενα και η χρήση τους στον καθημερινό βίο των Βυζαντινών, eds. A. G. Yangaki, A. Panopoulou. Collective volume, editions of the Institute of Historical Research, National Hellenic Research Foundation, Athens 2018; Proceedings of the 12th AIECM3 Congress on Medieval and Modern Period Mediterranean Ceramics, vols I-II, eds. P. Petridis, A.G. Yangaki, N. Liaros, E.-E. Bia, IHR/NHRF Research Library 10, Athens 2021).

Dr. Myrto Veikou is, amongst others, cooperating with **Prof. Dr. Andreas Külzer** (Austrian Academy of Sciences) and Prof. Dr. Alexander Beihammer (University Notre Dame) in the FWF Project “Medieval Smyrna / İzmir: The Transformation of a City and its Hinterland from Byzantine to Ottoman Times” (https://tib.oeaw.ac.at/sub_projects/mesmy), which has begun on 15. January 2021 and will last until 2025. Moreover, she published a monograph “Spatial Paths to Holiness – Literary ‘Lived Spaces’ in Eleventh-Century Byzantine Saints’ Lives” (Uppsala 2022) and several articles, for example: Veikou, M., 2020. Encroachment, Subdivision, and Expansion: A Cultural Interpretation of Byzantine Spatial Transformation (6th–9th Centuries), in: Transformations of City and Countryside in Byzantium. Mainz 2020, 25-38.

Dr. Kiril Marinow published an edited volume as the first monograph in world literature devoted to Tsar Peter I (927-969), which was written by an international team of Bulgarian and Polish medievalists from Sofia and Łódź Universities. Thanks to a thorough analysis of all available sources, an in-depth knowledge and use of the secondary literature in the field, the authors constructed a comprehensive and balanced image, not only of his reign, but also a holistic view of the Bulgarian state of the period in consideration. Therefore, parts of the book written by Kiril Marinow are related to Historical Geography, particularly to the environmental and geopolitical issues of the 10th century Bulgarian lands and importance of the mountainous areas in the Bulgarians’ military activities and their perception as highlanders by the Byzantines (The Bulgarian State in 927-969. The Epoch of Tsar Peter I, eds. M.J. Leszka, K. Marinow, Byzantina Lodziensia XXXIV, Łódź, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego 2018, 686 pages, ISBN: 978-83-233-4545-9; 978-83-8142-115-7).

The concluding conference of the **Digital Cluster Project “Digitising Patterns of Power (DPP): Peripheral Mountains in the Medieval World”** (PI Mihailo Popović; <https://dpp.oeaw.ac.at/>) took place on 18-19 October 2018 at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna. Moreover, an edited volume of DPP with the title “Power in Landscape – Geographic and Digital Approaches on Historical Research”, which unites scholarly contributions of the DPP team as well as international scholars from the fields of Medieval History, Byzantine Studies, Historical Geography, Archaeology, Geography, Cartography, Geographical Information Science (GISc) and Software Engineering, was published in 2019.

The initiatives in the field of Digital Humanities at the **Austrian Academy of Sciences** in Vienna and also the related developments in Byzantine Studies in the last couple of years have encouraged the *TIB* to step up its efforts to provide a platform for the adequate presentation and sustainable usage of its data, which was and is published in respective *TIB* volumes. Please cf. on this: <https://tib.oeaw.ac.at/digtib>

Moreover, the *TIB* published an edited volume on its research and future research perspectives in 2020: A. Külzer, V. Polloczek, M. St. Popović, J. Koder, Raum und Geschichte: der historische Atlas „Tabula Imperii Byzantini“ an der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (*Studies in Historical Geography and Cultural Heritage* 3). Vienna–Novi Sad (Akademska knjiga) 2020, 239 pages, ISBN 978-86-6263-305-7.

In autumn 2018 the Commission released its Mission Statement (<https://tib.oeaw.ac.at/aieb>). In addition, Mihailo Popović has launched a **Newsletter** called “**HistGeo-Newsletter**” in January 2019, which includes news from the field of Historical Geography of the Byzantine Commonwealth, and especially from members of the Commission (<https://histgeo.oeaw.ac.at/newsletter/>).

These measures have stepped up the Commission’s joint scholarly and administrative efforts, which help to testify to the vividness of the scholarly field of Historical Geography worldwide. Unfortunately, the outbreak of the COVID pandemic in March 2020 has hampered our ongoing activities, but we still managed to continue our scholarly exchange via e-mail as well as via online meetings and conferences.

It is a pleasure indeed that we are able to stage a **Round Table** entitled “**Historical Geography of Byzantium in a Digital Age: Chances and Risks**” at the 24th International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Venice and Padua (22-27 August 2022), which is a strong sign of our Commission’s commitment.

Vienna, Austria, 14 September 2022

Mihailo St. Popović, Chair m. p.