

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

Years 2016–2018

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/index.php?seite=aieb>). Its chair is Mihailo Popović, who was elected by the members of the Commission in January 2017.

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”. This series was founded by Mihailo Popović and is edited by Andreas Külzer and Mihailo Popović in order to innovate the historical-geographical research in Byzantine Studies. The series is printed by the publishing house Akademiska Knjiga in Novi Sad. Volumes number 2 and 3 of the series are already in preparation.

Moreover, **members of the Commission** have promoted Historical Geography through manifold scholarly publications in the last two 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 six articles on Archaeology, especially pottery, in Olympia, Crete and in Thessaly, Dr. Myrto Veikou six 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.

Ongoing 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 Tsafrir (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. So far (as for March 2018), two volumes already appeared in print: Volume I, containing an annotated list of sources and 70 major texts, and Volume II dedicated to toponyms starting with the letter A. Volume I also provides a list of all toponyms to be included in future volumes of the Onomasticon and separate lists of Sacred Places identified by individual names: churches, monasteries, synagogues, temples, funerary monuments etc. Volume III, dedicated to toponyms beginning with the letter B, is ready to be submitted to print. The work on Volume IV, dedicated to Sacred Places, and Volume V, dedicated to the letter C, is in progress. 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 present the application is operative only for editorial work.

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 Küçükçekmece. 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 recent mapping initiatives by putting a map and documented gazetteer for Hierokles, Synekdemios online (<http://awmc.unc.edu/wordpress/free-maps/maps-for-texts/>). The Center’s single, interactive web map follows the text of Hierokles, Synekdemios in Ernst Honigsmann’s edition (Brussels, 1939), and aims to supersede his four maps.

Since 2017 Dr. Anastasia Yangaki is responsible for the study of the Byzantine pottery from rescue excavations in the island of Tinos.

Dr. Myrto Veikou is, amongst others, conducting an International Groundwork Research Project on Byzantine Historical Geography, History, and Archaeology, in collaboration with Prof. Dr. Alexander Beihammer (University Notre Dame), here on Byzantine Smyrna from the 4th to the 15th century, and she is preparing a new International Research Project on Byzantine Urban Studies together with Prof. Dr. Ingela Nilsson (Uppsala University), here on Constantinople / Istanbul: the diachronicity of spaces versus modern conceptions of the Borders of Europe.

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/>) will take 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 will unite 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, will be published in spring 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. Therefore, the *Digital Tabula Imperii Byzantini (Dig-TIB)*; <https://tib.oeaw.ac.at/index.php?seite=digitib>) has created an online alphabetical gazetteer, which is based on all published *TIB* volumes (starting with *TIB* 1) by extracting the indices of places and by listing the toponyms documented within the respective volumes in alphabetical order. Due to the fact that the older volumes of the *TIB* were not written with word processing programs, but typeset, the majority of the indices had to be OCR scanned and manually corrected. The respective list has been completed, is accessible via <https://tib.oeaw.ac.at/index.php?seite=digitib> and will be augmented gradually with indices of future *TIB* volumes. In one of the next project-related steps the online alphabetical gazetteer will be furnished with Unique Identifiers. Thus, the users have the opportunity to view and compare data of the *TIB* with other digital projects within the field of Historical Geography. In autumn 2018 the Commission will release its Mission Statement, which is in preparation at the moment. Additionally, the project *TIB* will launch a Newsletter called “**HistGeo-Newsletter**” with January 2019, which will be officially announced in the Newsletter of the AIEB in autumn of 2018 and will include news from the field of Historical Geography of the Byzantine Commonwealth, and especially from members of the Commission. Thus, it will rely heavily on regular contributions / input from members of the Commission for the Historical Geography and Spatial Analysis of Byzantium.

These measures will step up the Commission’s joint scholarly and administrative efforts, which will help to testify to the vividness of the scholarly field of Historical Geography worldwide. This approach is additionally emphasised by the fact that the Commission has submitted a proposal for a **Round Table entitled “Historical Geography of Byzantium in a Digital Age: Chances and Risks”** at the 24th International Byzantine Studies Congress in **Istanbul** (23-28 August 2021) to the AIEB via the Austrian National Committee.

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Mihailo St. Popović, Chair m. p.