

Summary of Philipp Winterhager's PhD dissertation project:
"Greek-speaking immigrants in Early Medieval Rome (7th to 10th centuries).
Cultural entanglement and social integration"

In my dissertation I study the acculturation processes between Greek-speaking immigrants in Rome and the surrounding 'Latin' society in the Early Middle Ages (7th - 10th centuries).

This topic contributes to the broader field of medieval global history emerging over the last years. 'Global history' means not only and not so much an expansion of the historian's view on (potentially) the whole earth as field of studies, but rather a theoretical addition to cultural history. This matters all the more for studies in the European Middle Ages, which can practically not encompass more than half of the planet, dealing with the medieval *orbis* of Asia, Europe and Africa. But one can nevertheless profit from the theoretical contributions and concepts of global history: It can be understood as a history which deals primarily with contact and interaction between civilizations, and can be distinguished from world history (meaning the histories of different civilizations with a focus on comparison between them).

Global history is therefore the history of cultural interaction between distant societies. It is obvious that migrations should be one major field within these studies. Migration is here understood as an enduring if not permanent change of residence (the distinction between forced and voluntary migrations have proved overestimated for the question of cultural interaction). It has existed from the beginnings of human history and seems to be one of the basic conditions of human life.

My work, however, does not so much encompass the general motivations, patterns, and circumstances of human migration but rather its cultural impact. Sociologists have found different answers to the question of what happens when immigrant and established groups converge as a consequence of migration. In the first half of the 20th century, North American scholars developed the model of the "melting pot" and judged immigrant societies by the degree of "assimilation" with seeing community success mainly based on the integration of immigrants into a defining culture. By the 1960s, reacting to that older model and to recent social developments in the U.S., like ethnic minorities' growing assertiveness, the concept of multiculturalism was brought up understanding society being geared to the interaction of different ethnic and cultural groups and considering it successful when immigrants had the chance to draw permanently on the "authentic culture" of their own ethnic group.

But none of these politically motivated models for social success of immigrant societies can be satisfactory when one aims to describe the cultural consequences of immigration. There is a common reason for that which can be traced in both approaches, even if they seem to be quite different: Both consider "cultures" clearly ascribable attributes to individuals and their social groups, attributes that make the group homogeneous within itself and distinct from others. This understanding of "cultures" as homogeneous units (which basically derives from an 18th -century ideal of nation states, like Herder's) is more and more regarded disputable today. Both "assimilation" and "ethnic pluralism" obstruct our theoretical view on the actual processes of acculturation as consequences of immigration. Considering migration a constant

condition of human history, it becomes clear that “cultures” are in constant exchange with each other – and have always been. Therefore, scholarly described cultures have to be recognized as constructs; we rather have to think of permanent processes of entanglement, integration and disintegration between these cultural ideals of civilizations. Culture, then, is a sphere of human life and one that is only conceivable in permanent interaction with other individuals and, therefore, in change. It becomes doubtful in how far we can talk about “cultures” in plural at all; the character of culture is hybridity.

My dissertation contributes to the history of relationships between Latin Western Europe and Byzantium. But such research runs the risk of arguing circularly and of merely corroborating its own premises if it draws on traditional boundaries (state, nation, religion etc.) as supposition for the description and explanation of cultural contacts. However, if one aims to regard migration and contacts between Latin Europe and Byzantium as part of the aforementioned transcultural interaction of societies, groups and individuals, such simplifying concepts of “cultures” have to be scrutinized critically. According to the claim of ‘Dynamic Middle Ages’, these interactions have to be studied with respect to the potential, modes, and constraints of acculturation.

The cultural history of Early Medieval Greek-speaking immigrants in Rome seems an appropriate field for such studies. From the 6th through the 9th centuries, continuous immigration from Greece, Asia Minor and the Levant to Rome can be found following the Byzantine *reconquista* of Italy (until 552) that led soldiers and officials into the province, the Arab conquest of larger parts of the empire from the 630s on, and dogmatic affairs like the disputes on monotheletism and iconoclasm. These different factors led to the establishment in Rome of a military official ruling class and especially the accommodation of several Greek-speaking monastic communities. The fact that their houses could recruit novices well into the 9th century shows that also a lay ‘Greek’ community of the city, albeit hardly enumerable, existed there over the centuries, with ongoing immigration of both laymen and clerics.

These immigrations have been studied on various occasions, implicitly as part of the institutional, political, and social history of Byzantine Italy as well as explicitly as parts of social and church history. Only recently has one scholar (A. Ekonomou) tried to address the cultural history of a part of these migrations. But the cultural impact of Byzantine immigration has in all these works been described quite schematically. Often one gets the impression that scholars have been content with stating the coincidence of the presence of a Greek-speaking population and the emergence of “typically byzantine” cultural phenomena (liturgical, literary, artistic) in Rome. In addition, traditional scholarship seems to implicitly assume cultural levels with distinguishing lower from higher “levels” which constrains the examination of the actual ways of acculturation.

Our view on the cultural outcome of immigration from the Greek-speaking East to Rome therefore needs refinement and widening. I see two major points for such an adjustment that I seek to address in my work:

1. According to the aforementioned thoughts on the hybrid character of culture, the history of contacts between Byzantium and Latin Europe needs to be 'dynamized'. As a consequence we should distance ourselves from terms like "cultural level" as well as essentialist attributions ascribing "Latin" or "Greek character" to individuals or groups. In contrast, we should look at hybrid transitions between alleged "cultures". What follows inevitably is a regard to the reciprocity of cultural influences between immigrants and the surrounding societies. Both points are closely interrelated: It is necessary to get over schematic supposition of "cultures"; instead, one has to look at social interworking both within and between these supposed groups to open a view for hybrid forms of culture. Under what conditions, in which social positions did immigrants get in contact with the surrounding society? Which forms of contact, which media of hybridization can be found?

2. A "dynamization" seems necessary at a second point, too, insofar as a diachronic deepening is needed in the image we have from immigrants and their descendants. Until now it seems that scholars are satisfied with stating quite simply the coincidence of epochs in political or church history (Byzantine rule in Italy; dogmatic disputes) and the coming to Rome of Greek-speaking immigrants, and it seems to be 'state of the art' that immigrants disappeared soon after the middle of the 9th century. But we can learn from modern sociology about the more complex nature of immigrants' integration into societies, differing greatly between generations. For example, an 'ethnic crisis' (meaning a phase of cultural realignment) of today's lower class immigrants can often be found in the third generation, whereas the second and also later generations seem much more integrated. Higher class immigrants' children seem less frequently affected by this crisis. Can such or similar effects be observed in our case of medieval migration? What happens to immigrants and their descendants after the last larger wave of immigration? And in how far can generational concepts be applied to monastic communities?

The task of addressing these questions to the Greek immigration to Early Medieval Rome seems to me worthwhile and promising as it may help us to refine our view on medieval migrations and to deepen our understanding of the social and cultural processes that accompany the accommodation of immigrants. For that purpose I would like to study Roman lay and clerical groups of Eastern origin in three successive periods:

My first phase will be the period of about the century between 650 and 750 AD. In this period we find the foundations of the first 'Greek' monasteries in the city as well as the pontificates of the so-called 'Greek' popes from Theodor I. (642-649) to Zachary (741-752). It is a phase in which Rome still belongs to the Empire and is more or less under control of the Exarchate of Ravenna (until 751) while at the same time it sees Rome detaching itself more and more from Byzantium, with the popes becoming more powerful rulers of the city.

A second chapter will cover the time from c. 750 to c. 850 AD, when Byzantine supremacy over northern Italy is replaced by Frankish rule. From our sources we can see that the 'Greek' monasteries of Rome now become more prominent and are counted among the most prestigious ones of the city. This phase is also

characterized by the immigration of new Easterners (monks above all) as a result of the Byzantine iconoclast crisis. Numerous translations of religious literature between Latin and Greek languages including important Greek texts hitherto unknown to the West are produced in Rome in this period. Then again, for example, the *diaconiae* originally staffed by Greek-speaking monks come to be attended by Latin clerics.

A third chapter will critically revise the thesis that “Greek” immigrant culture ceased to exist after the end of the dogmatic disputes between Rome and Constantinople. With the above-mentioned questions in mind I will try to understand the integration of the 'last Greeks of Rome' in a diachronic perspective; I suppose that we should not talk of “disappearance” but rather of gradual entanglement and acculturation between both Latin and Greek groups. This task seems particularly difficult but appealing because 'Greek' and 'Latin' groups cannot be distinguished in the sources at first glance soon after the middle of the 9th century. Nevertheless one can find traces of preceding immigrant generations also by the second half of the century, for example in the rivaling noble parties of the city. This question has not been studied so far, obviously because of an inadequate image of “Greek” and “Latin” identities that has obstructed scholars' view on such processes of integration.

All these three phases have their own interior dynamics. Encompassing the aforementioned questions about social entanglement, cultural hybridization, and diachronic perspectives, these phases have to be studied separately, but also when taken together they may help us to understand the acculturation of Byzantine immigrants and the Roman society in the Early Middle Ages.