Introdution to 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 which has emerged in 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 a field of studies, but rather a theoretical addition to cultural history. This matters all the more for studies of the European Middle Ages, which can practically not encompass more than half of the planet if you consider 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 migration should be one major field within these studies.[1] Migration is here understood as an enduring if not permanent change of residence (the distinction between forced and voluntary migrations has proven overestimated for the question of cultural interaction).[2] 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 their degree of "assimilation", seeing community success mainly based on the integration of immigrants into a defining culture.[3] By the 1960s, in reaction to that older model and to recent social developments in the U.S., such as ethnic minorities' growing assertiveness, the concept of multiculturalism was brought up. Multiculturalism understands society as an interaction of different, heterogeneous ethnic and cultural groups, considering it successful when immigrants had the chance to draw permanently on the "authentic culture" of their own ethnic group.[4]

But none of these politically motivated models for the 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

[1] Bentley 1996: 752.
[2] Han 2005: 7; Eltis 2002.
[3] Park/Burgess 1921: According to Park 1950: 150, the process of assimilation "is apparently *progressive* and *irreversible*".
[4] Glazer/Moynihan 1963.

consider ‘cultures’ clearly ascribable attributes to individuals and their social groups, attributes that make the group homogeneous within itself and distinct from others.[5] 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 as disputable today. Both “assimilation” and “ethnic pluralism” obstruct our theoretical view on the actual processes of acculturation as consequences of immigration. When 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, cultures as described by scholars have to be recognized as constructs; we instead 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 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. 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 quantifiable, 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[6] as well as explicitly as parts of social and church history[7]. Only recently has one scholar (A. Ekonomou) tried to address the cultural history of a part of these migrations. But the

[5] Sökefeld 2007: 45f.
[6] Diehl 1888, Hartmann 1889; Brown 1984.
[7] Sansterre 1983.

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.[8]

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 the 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 come 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, which differs greatly between generations. For example, an "ethnic crisis"[9] (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.[10] 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 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

[8] Cf. Sansterre 1983: 198: „Dans l'ensemble, leur niveau culturel (i.e. of Rome's Greek-speaking monks) restait sans doute supérieur à celui des Romains."
[9] Steinberg 1989.
[10] Portes/Rumbaut 2001: 281-284.

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.[11]

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.[12]

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.[13] 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 when taken together they may also help us to understand the acculturation of Byzantine immigrants and the Roman society in the Early Middle Ages.

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[11] On the first monasteries founded cf. Sansterre 1983: 9-31; on the ‚Greek‘ popes cf. Ekonomou 2007; and on Byzantine rule over Rome: Bavant 1979.

[12] On monastic communities: Geertman 1975, Sansterre 1983; Noble 1984; on translations: Noble 1985; on diaconiae: Hermes 1996.

[13] Cf. Herbers 1996: 224-227.

I would now like to illustrate my general considerations, using the history of the monastery of SS Boniface and Alexius on the Aventine Hill as an example. This case demonstrates primarily three aspects: First, that different waves of immigration were not accidentally (locally and socially) connected to each other; second, that places of repeated accommodation of immigrants had a relatively high 'cross-cultural potential'; and third, why cross-cultural interaction (not only, but here, in the case of immigrants) is best described as social interaction.

The history of the SS Boniface and Alexius begins with an act of immigration. The church under discussion here was founded in the seventh century and dedicated to Saint Boniface of Tarsus in Kilika (Asia Minor). The saint is said to have been a migrant himself: According to the legendary Life of Boniface, he was born in Rome in the 3rd century AD and later went to Anatolia to collect relics of eastern saints. There, it is said, he suffered martyrdom under the emperor Galerius; his own relics were later brought back to his hometown. But, as Louis Duchesne has painstakingly proved, there had never been such a translation of relics from Tarsus to Rome[14]: It was the legend of Boniface that created his alleged origin, not vice versa.

This legend was written in Greek and entered the Roman church in the 6th or 7th century, when many Greek-speaking immigrants came to the city (s. above). Our monastery's ostensibly Roman patron saint was thus really imported from the Greek Eastern Mediterranean; indeed, his legend was translated into Latin considerably later and then aligned to the new Roman circumstances of his cult. For example, the Latin version of Saint Boniface's Life already knows of the church on the Aventine, which the pre-7th century Greek Life obviously could not.

Again, the beginning was marked by the arrival of the Greek legend in Rome, and while texts and books seldom travel without men carrying them we have to address two questions raised by Duchesne's findings: Who brought the legend to Rome – which implies further: Who founded the church –, and under which circumstances, in which surrounding was it possible to establish the legend of Boniface in Rome and to apply the tradition of his cult to the city? I will not try to answer these questions fully here, but rather give some hints that help us to understand the context in which the new monastery and its patron saint are to be seen: A forged charter from the 10th century describes the monastery as situated "*in loco qui dicitur Balcerna*"[15]. Several scholars have tried to explain this toponym as a reference to the former presence of a pagan temple to Jupiter-Baal-Dolichenus in the same place, but what seems more convincing to me is to understand it as an allusion to the *Blachaernae* district of Constantinople. However, as the 10th century monks themselves did not come from Constantinople, this place name must be older, maybe as old as the first church of Saint Boniface itself. But in fact, it is not the only Roman toponym of Eastern origin: Some 500 meters away lies the church of Santa Maria in Cosmedin, probably named after the *Kosmedion* square in

[14] Cf. Duchesne 1890: 231-233.
[15] Charter # 1 in Monaci 1904: 363.

Constantinople, while we know that this section of the banks of the Tiber was called "*ripa graeca*" or "*schola greaca*". Obviously, this was the Greek district of early medieval Rome, as it seems to have been in ancient times. Thus, the church of Saint Boniface was founded in the Greek quarter, a quarter in which shortly afterward several *diaconiae*, or charitable monasteries, of Eastern origin were established. Even S. Boniface itself later became a *monasterium diaconiae*. This is the context in which the church/monastery of S Boniface has to be seen in its first centuries. It will be a fruitful field of research to further elucidate and reconstruct this Greek quarter topographically as a network of churches, monasteries, and *diaconiae*, but also of workshops, trading posts and residential buildings; in a second step, then, it will be possible to study the cross-cultural interaction within it as well as between it and the surrounding city.

At the end of the 10th century, Greek monasteries were mostly given to Latin communities, apparently because of the lack of further novices from Greek-speaking families; spiritual impulses were now coming from Gorze or Cluny rather than from Palestine or the Bosporus. Our monastery on the Aventine Hill, too, was affected by these general developments, according to Peter Damiani, who calls it "*basilicam sacerdotalibus pene offitiis destitutam*"[16]. But this is a history of subsequent migrations, as I have mentioned above; and indeed, at the end of the 10th century – more precisely, in the fall of 977 – there was another migration of Easterners to the Aventine. It was then that the metropolitan Sergius of Damascus, already 70 years old at his arrival, came to Rome, surely not alone but accompanied by his entourage. We don't know for sure his reasons for seeking refuge in Rome – some assume anti-Melkite prosecutions after the Byzantine reconquest of Syria – , but these reasons were grave enough to make the elderly bishop leave his diocese. Obviously, he came with no other perspective than to stay in Rome for the rest of his days; indeed, he died four years later. Nonetheless, the outcome of his immigration is highly interesting and had long-term effects: Sergius had been granted by Benedict VII the almost abandoned church of Saint Boniface together with the buildings of the adjacent *diaconia*. Here he founded a monastery of Saint Benedict. This needs to be explained particularly, as the metropolitan and his men were certainly not observing the Benedictine rule. But a spectacular explanation is offered in Bruno of Querfurt, who wrote on the soon flourishing monastery: "*Graeci optimi veniunt, Latini similes veniunt. Superioribuis* […] *pius Basilius, inferioribus magnus Benedictus dux sive rex erat*."[17] That means that at the end of the 10th century there were two communities – a Greek and a Latin one – in one house, under one abbot, but under two monastic rules. We'll have a look at the cross-cultural potential of this constellation in a moment.

But first, there is yet another innovation in this phase that was just as influential: the legend of Saint Alexius, to whom the church was now 'co-dedicated'. His Life is known in three different versions, a very early Syriac one, a Greek, and a Latin one, the latter being written in Rome only after Sergius' arrival. The

[16] Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani, ed. K. Reindel, in: MGH Briefe d. dt. Kaiserzeit 4,2: 362.
[17] Brunonis Vita S. Adalberti, ed. G. H. Pertz, in: MGH SS VI: 603.

saint, although born in Rome according to the legend, was unknown in the West until the metropolitan and his men arrived on the Aventine. Alexius is said to have left Rome for Edessa in the 4th/early 5th century and to have led his life there as a beggar until a storm drove him back to Rome. After his death in Rome, his relics were venerated on the Aventine Hill at the very place of Saint Boniface's church. If we take a closer look at the Latin version of the saint's Life, we soon recognize it as legitimist: An urban topography of Alexius' life, death and veneration is interpolated in a way that earlier, non-Roman authors simply could not have managed (and did not manage) to draw. In addition to this creation of a more precise topography of a presumed cult of Alexius before the 10th century (which, as we recall, did not exist), there is the aforementioned forged charter which dates the foundation of SS Boniface and Alexius to the beginning of the 5th century. Both documents give a history to the new monastic community's church and its possessions, which indeed were later reconfirmed by emperor Otto III.

All this is not hard to see; more interesting is the Greek version of Saint Alexius' Legend, because here – surely before 977 – we already find some parallels to the Life of S Boniface in the names and historical settings. So the legend of the new community's patron saint had close connections to the original patron of the Aventine church. Were these parallels known to Sergius of Damascus? Was it the cult of Saint Boniface that brought him to Rome? Or vice versa – are there hints that the Roman legend of Alexius was adjusted to the older one of Boniface? We don't know yet. But what we can see is that Sergius of Damascus and his fellow clerics found in Rome in 977 a more or less abandoned church with strong ties to a saint who connected Rome with their Syro-Anatolian home; and furthermore a church which already had a potential monastic building (the former *diaconia*). The whole situation, even after centuries, was formed by the immigrant *milieu* of the 7th to 9th centuries, a situation to which the newly arrived Easterners adapted themselves quickly. Good evidence for this kind of adaption is given by the legendary Life of S. Alexius, of which the monks were maybe reminded by the pre-existing cult of S. Boniface on the Aventine Hill and that, therefore, was an obvious and successful 'import' from their old Syrian homeland.

The church of S. Boniface was also the most obvious place for Benedict VII to accommodate the new Eastern immigrants: I suppose that precisely because the quarter around the Aventine – the *ripa graeca* – had its specific demography and cult topography, Sergius and his fellow monks settled nowhere else than exactly on this hill.

One generation later, in the 990s, the monastery received many privileges and donations from the hands of the emperors Otto II., Otto III., his mother Theophanu, the popes and several Roman nobles, who were also buried here in increasing number. There is some evidence that social and ethnic origin played a certain role in the donations. Among the first known donors to our church is a certain "*Ioannes eminentissimus consulus* [sic!] *et dux, Demetrii quondam bone memorie fiilius, una cum Boniza et Theodora nobile femine, germane*

mee"[18]. Although we have to be very careful when identifying personal names with certain origins, even more so at a date as late as 987, the connection of these names with a 'Greek' monastery is an interesting finding: John, Demetrius and Theodora are of definite Eastern origin, and perhaps Boniza too can be found favored among the descendants of former Eastern immigrants[19]. Even more appealing is the appearance of the titles of traditional urban offices (*consul*, *dux*) in the hands of such an interesting family as the one presented here. Other charters, though, seem to suggest that the family was also linked through marriage to Frankish/Latin nobles in the city.[20] This is and remains a basic difficulty in observing the process of immigrant integration: The closer we get in the source material to our field of interest, the more the humans concerned elude our view.

For the ensuing decades, and therefore in a third phase of migration and cross-cultural interaction on the Aventine, it was important that the monastery had both the Great Benedict and the pious Basil as its patrons, as said above. The nearly symbiotic situation of Greeks and Latins under one abbot was an enormous innovation of Benedict VII and is singled out among his merits in his epitaph.[21] The newly founded and soon flourishing monastery attracted monks from the Greek-speaking parts of Southern Italy and Sicily who were fleeing from Arab raids and invasions. One of them was Saint Nilus the Younger from Rossano, who was a friend of the first abbots and was repeatedly a guest of SS Boniface and Alexius. But important Latin clerics also came here. The mixture of Benedictine and Basilian forms of monasticism that could only be found here seems to have been attractive for immigrants; the monastery became an important exponent of the spiritual and cultural life of Rome around AD 1000. There was a social network in and around our Aventine monastery which firmly connected people of different origins and languages. Among the immigrant monks of SS Boniface and Alexius the most prominent is probably Adalbert of Prague, who, together with his brother Radim/Gaudentius (the later archbishop of Gniezno), came to the Aventine twice, both times surely with the will to stay permanently. His monastic experiences are reflected in his foundation of the first Benedictine monastery of Bohemia in Břevnov – dedicated to Saints Benedict, Boniface, and Alexius![22] Furthermore the Roman monastery was after Adalbert's arrival a crucial place in the planning of the missionary activity in East-Central Europe. The vicinity of pope and emperor, but also of Adalbert, Radim and a bit later of Bruno of Querfurt, the missionary to Prussia (who chose as his second name Boniface precisely on the Aventine Hill!), seems to have been highly conducive to these plans.
Other well-known monks of SS Boniface and Alexius around 1000 were John Canaparus or Gregory of Cassano, another monk from the Italian *mezzogiorno* who became teacher and godfather to Otto III and

[18] Charter # 2 in Monaci 1904: 366.
[19] The name can be found only rarely and in different contexts, among which, however, there are some families of probable immigrant origin in Rome and Ravenna.
[20] Cf. Charter # 1in Fedele 1904: 38-40.
[21] Printed in MGH PP V, 335-336.
[22] Cf. the privilegue by pope John XV., in: Migne PL 137: 847-848.

later the first abbot of Burtscheid near Aachen. In the center, however, of this dense network there is yet another migrant: Theophanu, the wife of Otto II and mother of Otto III. The *imperatrix* had personal contacts with all of the monks of our monastery named in the sources. Without any attempt to properly reconstruct these interconnections here, one should recall the reasons that Theophanu was at the very center of this monastic network. On the one hand, there was the local neighborhood: The imperial *palatium* where the emperors stayed for months or even years during their visits to Rome was probably on the Aventine Hill, in immediate vicinity to SS Boniface and Alexius. On the other hand, Theophanu's own Eastern origin made her highly interested in Greek spirituality and the Hellenic education of her son. And, more generally, these reasons cannot be understood without the social situation of patronage – the promotion of monastic culture and learning by members of the highest social stratum. The example of Theophanu shows again that cross-cultural interaction cannot be understood without the social patterns beneath it, which have horizontal (who interacted with whom?) and vertical aspects (by which means and to which ends did people interact?) which shape a person's 'cross-cultural potential'.

Even at a first glance, without studying all the connections among the monks of the 10th century monastery of SS Boniface and Alexius and all their connections to the imperial court, we can assume that the specific Greek-Latin mixture of this Aventine monastery made it attractive to immigrants from different regions and not least for the Ottonian court. There are interesting cross-cultural prospects from the top of our Roman Hill: Further research should deal with the question of how this specific constellation of spiritual-monastic fervor, missionary plans and efforts created something new that spread far beyond Rome (namely to Aachen and Prussia). It will be important to keep in mind the social setting: Not merely 'Greek' and 'Latin' education or 'cultures', but certain persons in concrete urban circumstances were at the source of these innovations.

The example of SS Boniface and Alexius on the Aventine Hill shows that research in processes of acculturation and social networks should go hand in hand. Immigrant communities seem to me a particularly appealing field of study, and in the case of early medieval Rome also an enjoyable one. Using one Roman monastery as an example, I hope to have made clear that subsequent phases of immigration indeed were attached to one other, so that a *milieu* grew from previous immigrant communities in which later immigrants were accommodated. Further I hope to have shown that such communities can be understood as networks – social but also local ones. If we succeed in examining the social framework of cultural innovation, the examination of Greek immigrants in early medieval Rome will bring instructive insights in the cross-cultural potential of immigrant networks.

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