

Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, *Warriors, Martyrs, and Dervishes – moving frontiers, shifting identities in the land of Rome (13th-15th centuries)*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2020. Pp. xii, 259.
DOI:10.1017/byz.2022.32

The timing of this book's appearance, at the start of the third decade of the twenty-first century, could not have been better for Byzantine studies. The previous two decades had witnessed an initially hesitant, yet as it proved decisive, paradigm shift expressed as significantly increased openness towards and integration of broader interdisciplinary concerns. This shift generated an expansion of academic interests as well as a certain confusion and instability: many researchers vacillated between the security of traditional institutional and disciplinary boundaries and the challenge of disregarding these so as to discover new research areas and create new interpretations. The present work by KB helps to resolve such dilemmas by offering a meticulous example of cross- and transdisciplinary research within joint historical, spatial and literary studies. This works against fragmentation and furnishes a juster representation of a historical society marked by political and cultural complexity and osmosis.

KB focuses on the society of the Byzantine and Turkish Muslim frontiers at a critical time: the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. During this period, the interaction among groups and individuals of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds was greatly affected by economic and political negotiations over a culturally diverse, multi-layered territory. KB does justice to the subject of her investigation, undertaking a difficult intradisciplinary task and making a careful selection of multilingual material: her literary sources consist of Turkish Muslim epics, Byzantine martyria and dervish *vitas*. A particular advantage of this work is KB's innovative approach: instead of a purely cultural perspective, she employs a spatio-cultural one. Warriors, martyrs, and dervishes are approached through what they have in common, what they lay claim to or negotiate – all this at the heart of the composition of such texts in the first place. They are approached, that is, through the land and the space, the story-worlds of their texts. A broadly conceived notion of territory as geopolitical, social and cultural space, is thus set by KB at the heart of her inquiry. This sort of analysis leads to a comprehension of ways in which this geopolitical, social and cultural space, the *land of Rome*, is imagined and its appropriation historicized by its rival inhabitants, the Byzantines and the Turkish Muslims.

Through this distinctive particular theoretical approach, *Warriors, Martyrs, and Dervishes* constitutes a path-breaking work in Byzantine spatial studies: it offers an insight into distinctive medieval practices of placemaking in the Eastern Mediterranean, elaborated in connection with their cultural references and with identity formation. As it deserves, placemaking is linked to dialectic identity formations as a response to iterative definitions of otherness. KB's discussion revolves around four axial themes (the land of Rome; frontiers; us; them) and one recurrent theme, the city. Embodied and gendered social practices (related to sex, food, martyrdom) inform this discussion. The underlying question, whether ethnic/religious identities are more geopolitical than religious, is answered by recourse to the more


accurate, inclusive, and powerful, cultural imaginary: the (Byzantine) Christian Roman Oikoumene vs the Turkish Muslim ‘Roman/Rumi’. Through the spatial concept of placemaking, collective identities – whether social or ethnic – are explicated as referring to ‘imagined communities which come to be attached to an imagined place’ (p. 18). An observation: although women’s role is highlighted as appropriate throughout, a separate discussion of gender identity formations through placemaking practices might, case by case, add to the theoretical argument.

Many other virtues of this work deserve highlighting. These include ample competence in both Greek and Turkish language and literature, as well as in the extensive related scholarship (there is a 40-page bibliography); good knowledge of historiographic issues and anthropological debates; just as importantly, ten maps. One specific virtue demonstrates KB’s capacity to address a broad readership inside and outside academia: the avoidance of theorization for its own sake. The author’s theoretical stance clearly runs through every decision made in this work, yet it is understated. It remains latent in the selection of material and perspective, the themes and concepts discussed, and the research questions asked, until it finally manifests itself openly only in the concluding paragraph:

“A nuanced vertical reading—involving analysis of the patron/author-reader relationship, literary and historical considerations, and inter-textual allusions—along with a horizontal reading—focusing on the movements, attitudes, actions, and self-identification of the characters—of the Turkish Muslim epics, late Byzantine martyria, and dervish *vitas* reflect that as the frontiers of the land of Rome moved, imagined communities come to be attached to imagined places, as some of the displaced created new homelands and others clustered around remembered or imagined homelands, places, and communities. A dialectic identity formation takes place whereby the newcomers transform the physical, social, and cultural space in an inclusive manner as they themselves are transformed, and the ‘natives’ reformulate their identity in a vast and vaguely defined space in a highly exclusive fashion” (pp. 193–4).

KB’s remarkable accomplishment is to provide, not merely a juxtaposition or comparison Byzantine and Turkish voices, but an account of their reciprocity and interaction. This is just what the fascinating historical context, the late medieval Eastern Mediterranean, deserved. This work will serve as landmark study for future generations, not only for its manifold contributions to Byzantine and Turkish studies, or even for its introduction of a successful, novel, transdisciplinary and holistic perspective. It will remain so for its fulfilment of a real desideratum for scholarship and indeed society: the creation of bridges. This work creates bridges over a series of scientific divides: between bodies of scholarship, between academic cultures, between perceptions of ethnicity, between traditions and future exigencies. Research of this

kind constitutes a persuasive counter-discourse to contemporary narratives of ethnic and social division. A fresh, masterly, and pioneering contribution to historical, literary and spatial studies, which all Byzantinists should read.

Myrto Veikou 
Uppsala University

Georgia Gotsi and Despina Provata (eds.), *Languages, Identities and Cultural Transfers. Modern Greeks in the Press (1850–1900)*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021, Pp. 270.
DOI:[10.1017/byz.2022.33](https://doi.org/10.1017/byz.2022.33)

2021 marked the bicentenary of the beginning of the Greek struggle for independence. Beyond the timeliness of its publication, this book offers readers far more than a celebratory history. This volume of essays brings together studies on aspects of language, identity, and cultural transfer in the context of encounters between different European literary traditions, exploring modalities of reception, the mediation process, and the roles and motives of the actors involved, whether individuals, groups, institutions, or the print media. It thus offers new perspectives in the field of cultural history.

Cultural circulation has long been regarded as a fruitful area of investigation, not least in assessing how cultural transfers have contributed to the construction of national identity and its depiction in the public sphere. In the Greek case, philhellenism, defined historically as either a political or a transcultural movement, together with its resilience over time, has been much discussed in conferences, workshops and research projects. These have typically addressed definitions and dynamics of philhellenism, from different perspectives, such as European perceptions of the modern Greeks, Greece's relationship with Europe and with European cultural production, and the impact of all this on the formation of Greece's national image. This volume approaches the subject from a different viewpoint: 'the image(s) of Greece emerging through the pages of [the European] press' (p.15). Whilst print media, and in particular periodicals with their potential to reach wider readerships, have emerged as effective cultural mediators and facilitators for the transmission of ideas to various social and national entities, the question of how the European press stood in relation to Greece has not been sufficiently addressed to date, and, as the editors point out, this collection of essays seeks to address this very issue.¹

1 Cf. the Chrysallis project that focused on the nineteenth-century Greek periodical press and its role in shaping the national character, and related publications: *Ελληνικότητα και ετερότητα: Πολιτισμικές διαμεσολαβήσεις και 'εθνικός χαρακτήρας' στον 19ο αιώνα* ed. A. Tabaki and O. Polycandrioti, 2 vols