

Critical and illuminating, at times even revisionist, *Literary Territories* is a scholarly contribution of fundamental importance. Beyond Late Antique specialists, it will appeal to classicists, medievalists, as well as historical geographers, map historians, and anyone interested in pre-modern perceptions of space.

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Anthony Kaldellis, *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium*, Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019. Pp. xv, 373.  
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Anthony Kaldellis' latest book, *Romanland*, is the sum of a great deal of scholarship; it challenges many of the commonly accepted 'truths' about Byzantium. Drawing in part on his own earlier work, K. presents a revisionist view of the multi-ethnic character of Byzantium, highlighting the inappropriate use of the word 'empire' to describe the remnants of Eastern Rome; discussing the ethnic make-up of the medieval *Romaioi*; and tracing the development of Byzantium into an actual empire in the late tenth and eleventh centuries. The book's agenda is provocative and ambitious, and the author's argumentation is, for the most part, highly persuasive.

K.'s forte is the deconstruction of scholarship that he finds wanting. In *Romanland*, he turns his critical attention to works that have denied, sidelined, or minimized the Roman character of the Byzantine Empire and its citizens. With exemplary control and use of primary sources to demonstrate or reinforce his points, K. helps the reader to follow often highly complex arguments.

The first chapter outlines the problem perceived by K. He introduces the reader to primary texts that specifically highlight the Roman character of the people whom scholars generally call 'Byzantines'. The chapter provides a detailed account of errors made by previous scholars in their various understandings of Byzantium's Roman

character (pp.11–32). Some big names in the field find themselves firmly in K.'s sights, and not without just cause. Arguably K.'s most convincing contention is that the attitudes of other Byzantinists are based on medieval western attitudes towards those they call the 'Greeks'. Claims that Byzantium's government was 'Greek in character' (p.18), or that the claims of Roman continuity were a 'deception' (p.24), deserve to be roundly challenged, and K. gives no quarter to those he perceives as living in an echo chamber. K. himself (or rather his previous scholarship) is not invulnerable to scrutiny. Views and interpretations can change over time, and where previously K. had argued that Byzantium was a civic rather than an ethnic society (p.48), *Romanland* contends that ethnicity does not have to be based on shared ancestry: subjective understandings and formulations of identity also come into play.

The book's claim that the Romans of Byzantium were a homogenous ethnic group is not as far-fetched as it may at first appear. The ways in which the 'Greeks' of Byzantium have been discussed in other scholarship resemble ways of referring to an ethnic group; the difference here is the replacement of the label imposed by modern scholarship with one that was actually used by the medieval authors themselves. K. is correct in his observation that Byzantine studies often exists in isolation from wider academia, and that using the tools of other disciplines (sociology and historical anthropology, in this case, to study ethnicity) can yield greater insight into our understanding of the Byzantine *genos*. But the evidence for how this ethnicity was postulated in the written records is somewhat stretched: much of it is based on the works of fifth and sixth-century authors, only loosely supported by later writers.

K. is on surer ground when challenging the ways in which Byzantine identity has been understood by previous scholars, an issue that continues to bedevil the discipline to this day. Previous arguments that focused on the linguistic or religious elements of Byzantium do not stand up well to scrutiny, especially when the primary sources only view these as individual constructs of a wider identity in combination with socio-political manifestations such as customs. K. argues that by drawing together these strands into the single concept of *Romanization* modern scholars can gain a more effective understanding of how the Byzantines understood themselves, their homeland, and their history. Although the author's analysis is once again heavily dependent on sources from late antiquity in its investigation of Roman ethnogenesis, he makes it clear that without the context of the fifth through seventh centuries, many of the questions surrounding the Roman identity of the Byzantines in the middle period would be irrelevant.

The book goes on to discuss Roman assimilation, as K. guides the reader through what he sees as a natural transition from the Roman empire of antiquity through to Byzantium. There is a great deal of scholarship to support this and it is on the whole very convincing. The harder part is producing a structurally sound investigation into how the process, or processes, actually worked and for whom. Chapter 4 presents a survey of ethnic groups living in the empire and the varied success they had in

becoming fully assimilated Romans. The fact that the Armenians were singled out (Chapter 5) as an example of successful integration is telling, but further questions remain. The question of assimilation into Byzantium is not new, but, as K. suggests, deserves fuller investigation. Indeed, the study of Armenians in Byzantium has been ripe for reappraisal for some time, with the traditional readings of Adontz and Charanis going unchallenged for much of the last century. K. may at times seem dismissive of the depth and influence that Armenians had within Byzantium, especially the strength of ancestral descent in certain individuals, but he correctly identifies a lack of relevant historical investigation and precision. One of the questions that remain unanswered is why the Armenians, paragons of successful assimilation in earlier centuries, were resistant to this process in the eleventh century.

*Romanland* sets out to achieve a great deal in reforming the way in which the field acknowledges and understands the identity of the Byzantines, and it is largely successful. Traditionalist voices may decry such revisionism, but perhaps it is time to abandon the blanket term 'Byzantines' and finally acknowledge who they really were: medieval Romans.

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Kostas Yiavis, *Imperios and Margarona. The Rhymed Version. Critical Edition with Introduction, Commentary and Index–Glossary*. Athens: MIET 2019. Pp. 523 + 31 plates.  
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The rhymed version of *Imperios and Margarona*, which Kostas Yiavis publishes in the book under review, is an adaptation of an earlier unrhymed verse romance, which in its turn is an adaptation of a French prose romance, *Pierre de Provence et la belle Maguelonne*. The oldest version of the French source text is datable to around 1430 and was a huge success throughout Europe with numerous translations into other languages. The unrhymed Greek version has come down to us in five manuscripts (with quite a few differences between them), the oldest of which, Neap. gr. III B 27, probably dates from the second half of the fifteenth century, making the Greek adaptation among the earliest renderings of the story into another language.

The romance tells the love story of Imperios, prince of Provence and Margarona, princess of Naples, following the popular motifs of boy-meets-girl, boy-loses-girl, boy-and-girl-reunited-after-various-adventures. But even though the plot in the French and the Greek versions is broadly the same, there are significant differences. One of the most striking differences is that in the French text, the two lovers elope and thus fear the wrath of Margarona's father, whereas in the Greek text, they get married and then run away, still in fear of her father's wrath. This begs the question whether the Greek version is a direct adaptation of the French version, or whether there is a different source. As the oldest manuscript has an untranslated hemistich in dialectal