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Editorial

In this third volume of the Scandinavian Journal of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, we are happy to welcome a guest-editor, Dr AnnaLinden Weller, who has edited five articles from a conference that she organized at Uppsala University in 2016 within the frame of the 'Text and Narrative in Byzantium' research network. The articles are written by Baukje van den Berg, Stanislas Kuttner-Homs, Markéta Kulhánková, Jonas J. H. Christensen and Jakov Đorđević, provided with an introduction by AnnaLinden Weller. In addition, the journal includes two more articles – one by David Konstan, based on his 2016 lecture in memory of Professor Lennart Rydén, and one by Adam Goldwyn – and two book reviews.

In October 2018, Modern Greek Studies in Lund will organise the 6th European Congress of Modern Greek Studies, and according to the number of submitted abstracts it promises to be an interesting event for scholars from many countries around the globe to come together.

The journal is open for unpublished articles and book reviews related to Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies in the fields of philology, linguistics, history and literature. It is published in collaboration with Greek and Byzantine Studies at Uppsala University and we welcome contributions not only from Scandinavian colleagues, but from scholars all around the world.

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Instructions for contributors to

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SJBMGS encourages scholarly contributions within Byzantine and Modern Greek philology and history.

Manuscripts of articles to be considered for publication should be sent to Marianna.Smaragdi@klass.lu.se or Marianna Smaragdi, Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University, Box 201, 22100 Lund, Sweden.

Your article will be refereed. If it is accepted for publication, you will be asked to supply a final version on e-mail. Authors will receive five copies of the journal volume.

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Olof Heilo, *Eastern Rome and the Rise of Islam, History and Prophecy*. London and New York: Routledge, 2016.

In its general outline, Olof Heilo's book is a study of the apocalyptic expectations that found fertile ground in the seventh and eighth centuries, a transition period from the well-established late antique world of the late Romans and Sassanids to the new medieval order of the Byzantine and Abbasid empires. He studies the apocalyptic element in the rise and expansion of Islam in relationship to Jewish and Christian apocalyptic readings of the period, and claims that individuals as extraordinary political figures, holy men, and warrior saints came to the fore in this period of open horizons, to be replaced by the hegemony of the majority that took the form of institutions. Focusing on the tension between apocalyptic beliefs and imperial ambitions, as well as between adventurous individuals and institutionalized practices in the early Middle Ages, Heilo attempts, at the same time, to problematize the *modern* dichotomy between prophecy and history as two explanatory paradigms for the rise of Islam. Refusing to take these two fields of perception as mutually exclusive, he explains how, through the medium of human agency, religious truths are given meaning in the context of social, cultural, and economic realities while past, present, and future events are interpreted continuously in the light of divine messages.

Heilo's assessment of the rise of Islam in the late antique context follows a general tendency in the modern scholarship that is in the process of becoming conventional wisdom. He shows the reader that a post-Roman world continued to thrive with decentralizing and segregating tendencies apparent in the Islamic, Byzantine, and western European realms; and echoing the works of Andrea Giardina, Peter Brown, Hugh Kennedy, Peter Sarris, and Glen Warren Bowersock, he treats the Umayyad period as part of the "extended" late antiquity. Secondly, in his argument that the Umayyads attempted to create a terrestrial paradise by combining the ideals of political and monotheistic universalism, he follows in the footsteps of Garth Fowden and Almut Höfert.

At the base of Heilo's exposition lies the apocalyptic anticipations of the seventh century and the role they played both in the rise of Islam

in the early seventh century and in the Umayyad consolidation of power in the later seventh and early eighth centuries. He implies that Islam was born as an apocalyptic movement into an era of anxieties and expectations caused by Byzantine-Sassanid confrontation, but Islam's apocalyptic nature was compromised by the necessity of running a worldly kingdom under the Umayyads. The Umayyad dynasty, threatened by the apocalyptic messages of the Kharijites, ibn al-Zubayr, and the followers of ʿAlī, was replaced by the reign of the Abbasids, in which apocalyptic movements abated if not vanished. Heilo's comparative approach to examining Jewish, Christian, and Muslim apocalyptic traditions as well as his study of how these traditions were reinterpreted in the light of new political developments is exciting, and offers new perspectives on the study of early Islam. However, there are a few problems in this narrative. Heilo simply assumes that the reader is already conversant with the strong apocalyptic nature of early Islam at the time of Islam's prophet and the first four caliphs (*al-Rāshidūn*). Studies of the apocalyptic anticipations in the Quran, as exemplified by the works of David Cook, Suliman Bashear, and Andew Rippin, are ignored, though their inclusion would consolidate Heilo's argument. On a related note, although he promises at the end of the prologue to study the motives of the early Muslim conquerors, he simply leaves the question unanswered since he does not engage in the necessary discussion of the first few decades of Islam. Moreover, while Heilo depicts the Umayyads as builders of a terrestrial empire à *la romaine*, he glosses over the apocalyptic elements in the Umayyad ideology, especially the position of ʿAbd al-Malik as a "renewer." Finally, the role that the apocalyptic messages played in the Abbasid period is not discussed at all. The messianic claims of the Abbasid house under al-Maʾmūn, as studied by Hayrettin Yücesoy, and local and tribal messianic revivals under the Abbasids contradict Heilo's neat picture of the declining role of the apocalyptic in the post-Umayyad world.

As part of his narrative on the rise of the individual in the period of transition from the late antique period to the Middles Ages, Heilo devotes a whole chapter to hermits, monks, and warrior saints in the Byzantine world and holy men and *ḏjihād* warriors on the Islamic side. He

contrasts political figures of revolutionary vision in this transitional period, such as Byzantine Emperor Leo III (r. 717-741) and Abū Muslim, the leader of the Abbasid movement, to the later rulers of the Abbasid period "whose power is reduced to his *persona*." However, this chapter appears to be the weakest part of his book due to chronological discrepancies and vague comparisons. Rather than being a period of centrifugal tendencies, the eighth century witnessed the Byzantine state's rather successful attempt to control holy men, monks, and icons. Furthermore, Heilo does not provide any proof for the heightened importance of warrior saints in the seventh and eighth centuries in comparison to previous and later periods. Also, it is very difficult to find a culture of holy men in the Umayyad Islamic world that would correspond to Byzantine saints and monks, and one has to be imaginative to draw parallels between Christian warrior saints in the Byzantine world and *ḏjihād* warriors. The whole idea of the rise of the individual against the majority appears to be an application of Peter Brown's late antique model, which posits the holy man replacing established institutions such as the temple or curial class, to the study of Byzantium and Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries.

One of the biggest drawbacks of the book is the style of language that Heilo chooses to convey his ideas. He sacrifices clarity for a convoluted style of expression characterized by unnecessarily complicated sentences and strange grammar choices such as "can be able of" (p.4) or "This begs the question of if" (p.98). These examples push English beyond its limits. Additionally, there are two minor issues with his translation of Greek terms. The epithet used in medieval Greek sources for Emperor Justinian II, Ῥινότμητος, means slit-nosed, not noseless. Secondly, the sentence "ἐποίησε δὲ καὶ ἐπιστολὴν δογματικὴν πρὸς Λέοντα τὸν βασιλέα οἰόμενος πείσειν αὐτὸν τοῦ μαγαρίσαι" , which Heilo translates as "He even wrote a dogmatic letter to the emperor Leo, believing it would make him "become *Magar*" (Muslim)" should be modified as follows: "He also wrote a doctrinal letter to the Emperor Leo thinking that he would persuade Leo to apostasize to Islam."

In short, *Eastern Rome and the Rise of Islam* is a welcome attempt to study early Islam in the context of late antiquity from the perspective of

apocalyptic expectations. Not only students of the history of early Islam, but also scholars working on Byzantine-Islamic relations and non-Muslim communities living under Islamic rule, will benefit from this book. Moreover, Heilo's problematization of the supposed dichotomy between historical evidence and revelation invites modern scholars to focus more on the commonalities between these two modes of thinking, as well as reminding us that such a dichotomy was not easily perceptible in the pre-modern mind.

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