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Upcoming Events

Byzantine Gifts: The Byzantine Empire's Influence in World Civilization

On Sunday, October 11, 2026, Hellenic Link–Midwest will present professor Dionysios Skentzis, in a live lecture titled *"Byzantine Gifts: The Byzantine Empire's Influence in World Civilization."* The event will take place at 3 pm, at Four Points by Sheraton Hotel, 10249 West Irving Park Road at Schiller Park, Illinois (southeast corner of Irving Park Road and Mannheim Road). Admission is free.

The Byzantine Empire, lasting more than a thousand years, left a profound and enduring influence on global civilization. This presentation will explore how Byzantium served as a bridge between the ancient and modern worlds, preserving classical knowledge while shaping emerging cultural, religious, legal, architectural, and political traditions. For instance, the Byzantine codification of law codes still provides legal foundations for many modern judicial systems. In addition, Byzantine missionaries spread Christianity and literacy to the Slavic world while Byzantium survives in the theology and religious art of the Orthodox Church. Byzantine diplomacy is still studied today by geopolitical analysts and Byzantium for centuries shielded Western Europe from invaders. Holidays such as Christmas and current fashion trends also show Byzantine influence. A special focus will also be placed on Byzantine intellectual contributions to the Italian Renaissance. On the other hand, in the Western world the word "Byzantine" often evokes complexity, duplicity, or corruption rather than the Hagia Sophia or intellectual thought. This presentation will examine the reasons why Byzantine contributions are often ignored or downplayed in the writing of history and popular culture. Why has such a vast, powerful empire that lasted for so long has been largely forgotten? The presentation will detail the many ways in which the legacy of Byzantium survives in the world today. The Byzantine state may have fallen in the fifteenth century, but Byzantium still lives on throughout the world today by the vast inheritance it left behind.

Dionysios "Dennis" Skentzis teaches American History, World Civilization, and International Relations at Truman College. He is a member of Pi Sigma Alpha, the National Political Science Honor Society and Kappa Gamma Pi, the National Catholic College Honor Society. In addition, he was a frequent panelist for the WYCC-TV 20 Professors

television show. Professor Skentzis has presented at the Salzburg Global Seminar in Salzburg, Austria as well as made numerous special presentations at Truman on a variety of historical topics ranging from the Byzantine Empire, Thanksgiving, Piracy, Dracula, etc. Professor Skentzis was the Chair of Truman's Social & Behavioral Sciences Department from the Fall of 2014 to the Summer of 2020 and has taught at Truman since 2004. He has a Masters in History and 60 graduate credits beyond a Master's degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Professor Skentzis has also studied at the Polytech University of Crete at Hania, Greece.

Living in Exile: The Greek Refugee Community in Tashkent, Uzbekistan

On Sunday, November 15, 2026, Hellenic Link–Midwest will present Professor Constantine Danopoulos, in a lecture titled *"Living in Exile: The Greek Refugee Community in Tashkent, Uzbekistan."* The event will take place at 3 pm, at Four Points by Sheraton Hotel, 10249 West Irving Park Road at Schiller Park, Illinois (southeast corner of Irving Park Road and Mannheim Road). Admission is free. This lecture is supported by Hellenic Foundation Chicago.

The bloody Greek Civil War (1946-49) between the US supported government forces and the Communist-led insurgents ended in August 1949 with the defeat of the left. As a result, anywhere between 56 to 100 thousand mostly uneducated Greek citizens were stripped of their citizenship rights and were forced to seek sanctuary in Eastern Bloc countries, including the USSR. The ranks of the refugees included fighters of the insurgent Democratic Army of Greece (DAG), leftist sympathizers, as well as unarmed and helpless civilians caught in the conflict. The largest group of them (about 12,000)—mainly DAG men and women soldiers—ended up in distant Tashkent. But as more refugees arrived, separated families were reunited, and children were born, the Tashkent refugee community eventually (mid-1970s) reached an estimated 35–40,000 souls. The Tashkent community emerged as the most important, most dynamic, and the locus of developments in the entire refugee population (or refugee land). In the relatively friendly but nevertheless totally foreign environment, the refugees faced a plethora of immense social, economic, language, psychological, adjustment, and other difficulties, not to mention the heavy hand of the beaten but still overbearing Greek Communist Party (KKE), which operated as nothing more than an appendage of the Soviet authorities. This talk will make an effort to provide a

synoptic view of the life of the Greek refugee community in Tashkent, explore the issues they faced, assess the development of the community over the years, and discuss the state of what is left of the refugee land since repatriation began in the mid-1970s.

Dr. Constantine P. Danopoulos, a native of Greece, is Professor Emeritus at San Jose State University (SJSU). He received his primary and secondary education in Greece and his college education in the US. He taught at SJSU for more than 30 years, and was visiting professor in a number of countries, including France, S. Korea, Argentina, and Chile. Dr. Danopoulos served as chair of the Political Science department at SJSU. He has written or edited 11 books, dozens of articles and book chapters, as well as numerous conference papers. His publications deal with civil-military relations, national security, poverty, bureaucracy, democratization, and the quality of democracy. He served as election observer in Bosnia (1996) and editor of the *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*. In addition, he served as the West Coast associate editor of *Mediterranean Quarterly* as well as on the editorial board of *Armed Forces and Society*, *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, and the *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*. From 1993 to 1999 he served as president/chair of the Research Committee on Armed Forces and Society of the International Political Science Association, and Fulbright Scholar to Greece. He is the recipient of the coveted President's Scholar Award, the Warburton Award of Excellence in Research, and trice Pi Sigma Alpha Professor of the year.

In Brief

Discovery of Molecule in Space that Hints at Origin of Life

According to an article in CNN, scientists have discovered the largest organic molecule containing sulfur—a key ingredient for life — ever identified in interstellar space. The researchers called the discovery a “missing link” in understanding the cosmic origins of life’s chemistry. Sulfur is the 10th most abundant element in the universe and a critical component of amino acids, proteins and enzymes on Earth. While researchers had previously found sulfur-bearing molecules similar to the newly discovered one in comets and meteorites, there was a lack of large molecules including sulfur in interstellar space—the vast region between stars that is scattered with clouds of dust and gas.

Mitsunori Araki, a scientist at the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics in Germany and lead author of a study on the discovery, said “*Sulfur came to Earth from space long, long ago. However, we have only found a very limited amount of sulfur-bearing molecules in space, which is strange. It should exist in huge amounts, but it’s very difficult to find. This is the largest sulfur-bearing molecule ever found in space, at 13 atoms. Before this one, the largest only had nine atoms, but it was already a rare case, because*

most detected sulfur-bearing molecules only had three, four or five atoms.”

Finding larger molecules is important because it helps to fill an existing gap between simple chemistry found in space and the more complex building blocks of life that have been discovered in comets and meteorites.

The molecule found, which also contains carbon and hydrogen, adds to a growing catalog of over 300 molecules observed in space so far. It was found within a molecular cloud about 27,000 light years from Earth, near the center of our galaxy. Molecular clouds are cold and dense concentrations of dust and gas that allow for the formation of molecules. They act as stellar nurseries as gravity creates clumps that eventually become baby stars. Some of these clouds will lead to the formation of planetary systems like our own solar system.

Researchers first synthesized the molecule by applying an electric discharge to a substance called thiophenol — a foul-smelling liquid containing sulfur, carbon and hydrogen. They then obtained an extremely precise “radio fingerprint” of the molecule that they compared with existing telescope data from the observation of the cloud, collected by the IRAM-30m and the Yebes radio telescopes in Spain.

Scientists believe that one of the possible origins of life on Earth is through collisions and impacts of small body systems like comets and meteorites with our planet in the past, that probably brought complex molecules, including ones containing sulfur. Meteorites are known to have large and complex sulfur compounds, and they likely delivered many of them to Earth to help set the stage for the chemistry of life.

Sulfur is one of only six elements essential to life on Earth and may have been a critical ingredient in the earliest life on Earth, providing vital fuel to ancient microbes. The presence of complex organic molecules in the center of our Milky Way implies that biologically important materials may be everywhere in space.

From Our History

Excerpts from the monumental work of the Byzantine historian, Speros Vryonis:

“The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century”

POLITICAL AND MILITARY COLLAPSE Interrelation of Byzantine Decline and Turkish Pressure (1042-1071) (Manzikert (1071)—Continuation from the previous issue)

Thus, Sulayman changed sides, and accompanied the insurgent to the shores of the Bosphorus, where he probably had his first sight of the city destined to become the center of Turkish might almost four centuries later. As Botaniates had been short of troops, even after incorporating the troops

of Nicaea into his armies, he had embodied the Turks of Sulayman in his forces. Subsequently many of the Turks were posted as guards to hold the various cities through which Botaniates passed—Nicaea, Chalcedon, Pylae, Chrysopolis, Praenetus, Nicomedia, Ruphinianae, and Cyzicus.

The civil strife in the empire did not cease with Botaniates' accession to the throne for he still had to deal with the rebellion of Bryennius in the west. Alexius Comnenus was sent to face Bryennius, but as he was drastically short of troops, he was in the end forced to rely upon 2,000 Turkish horsemen furnished by Sulayman and Mansur who at this time were still in Nicaea. Once the rebellion of Bryennius was stifled, another broke out, that of Basilacius. When Alexius rebelled (1081) the armies of the east and west were marched toward the Bosphorus, and for yet one more time the provinces were left unprotected. Alexius Comnenus, at the head of the western armies, succeeded in removing Botaniates from the throne, but not before the rebellion of Alexius' brother-in-law Nicephorus Melissenus complicated the chaos, now long rampant, in Anatolia. As the Turks were the military masters, he sought and obtained their alliance, opening large numbers of towns of western Anatolia to them. These cities opened their gates to Melissenus when he appeared as emperor, and then he turned them over to his Turkish allies.

In the rapid disintegration that followed the battle of Manzikert and during the course of the subsequent civil war, separatist political movements began to crystallize in Asia Minor. The most spectacular of these attempts to found a state on Anatolian soil was that of the mercenary leader Roussel of Bailleul, who found conditions in the peninsula ripe for his attempt to establish a new Normandy in southern climes. Of all the mercenaries in Byzantine service, the descendants of the Norsemen had the most highly developed political instinct, with traditions going back 200 years and extending to Russia, Sicily, and England. While the Turkish flood poured into the whole of Anatolia, Michael VII was forced to send Isaac Comnenus with an army in an effort to halt their ravages (1073), but on route he had occasion to punish one of the Normans for mistreating a local inhabitant. Roussel used this incident as a pretext to rebel, taking his 400 Normans and marching northward toward his estates in the Armeniacon. Actually, the punishment of his soldier was only an excuse, for Roussel had no doubt been planning his rebellion for some time. He began to besiege, plunder, and subject the cities and towns of the regions of Galatia and Lycaonia, forcing them to pay him tribute. It soon became clear in Constantinople that this was not the customary mercenary rebellion, and the emperor with his advisers feared that given the state of imperial impotence in the

province Roussel would succeed in establishing a new state. The Caesar John and Nicephorus Botaniates were dispatched with military forces to put down Roussel before he could consolidate his position, but in the battle fought at the Sangarius River, Roussel and his Franks were victorious; the Byzantine army suffered a crushing defeat and the Caesar was taken captive.

There seemed to be no way to stop Roussel after this victory. The Franks, upon hearing of his rebellion, had flocked to his standards to the number of 2,700 to 3,000. Roussel, profiting from his victory over the Caesar, subjected all the towns in the region of the Sangarius River to his authority, and marched through Bithynia to the Bosphorus where he burned Chrysopolis. The rebellion took on even more serious overtones as Roussel proceeded to acclaim the Caesar John emperor, hoping thus to obtain the allegiance of the remaining Byzantine soldiery in Anatolia and also to collect the taxes from the cities. Defenseless before the victorious progress of Roussel, Michael VII enlisted the services of the emir Artuk who had appeared in the regions of the Bithynian fortress of Metabole with a large contingent of Turks. Roussel was defeated and both he and the Caesar were captured and held for ransom. But once more Roussel escaped the imperial authorities, having been ransomed from the Turks by his wife before the imperial envoys could reach the Turkish camp. Nevertheless, the court had moved hastily to ransom the Caesar for fear that the Turks would utilize him as Roussel had planned to do, and thus enter the towns and collect moneys. Having renounced his more grandiose scheme, Roussel withdrew to Armeniacon where he drove out the Turks, and raiding Amaseia, Neocaesarea, and other towns, forced the urban centers to pay their taxes to him. Here he hoped to found a more modest state.

The government in Constantinople was no nearer to the solution of its Norman dilemma, and so sent Nicephorus Palacologus to the Caucasus to raise a new army of mercenaries. On his return to Pontus with a force of 6,000 Alans, Nicephorus was unable to pay their salaries and most of the Alans simply abandoned him and returned to their homes. Roussel easily defeated and dispersed those few who remained. The desperation of the government in this situation is reflected in the final victory that it achieved over Roussel (1074). In a last attempt the government dispatched the future emperor Alexius Comnenus to Amaseia to cope with the rebel, and he arrived there without soldiers or money! Thanks to his cunning, energy, and above all to Turkish aid, he succeeded in purchasing his enemy from the Turks by bribing the latter to betray Roussel. Though Alexius once more brought the cities under imperial control, he had succeeded only because he had appealed to a Turkish emir in the area, in this case a certain Tutuch.

(to be continued)

From the Riches of Our Cultural Heritage

Ποίηση Οδυσσέα Ελύτη

Του Αιγαίου

Ο έρωτας
Το αρχιπέλαγος
Κι η πρόρα των αφρών του
Κι οι γλάροι των ονείρων του
Στο πιο ψηλό κατάρτι του ο ναύτης ανεμίζει
Ένα τραγούδι
Ο έρωτας
Το τραγούδι του
Κι οι ορίζοντες του ταξιδιού του
Κι η ηχώ της νοσταλγίας του
Στον πιο βρεμένο βράχο της η αρραβωνιαστικιά προσμένει
Ένα καράβι

Ο έρωτας
Το καράβι του
Κι η αμεριμνησία των μελτεμιών του
Κι ο φλόκος της ελπίδας του
Στον πιο ελαφρό κυματισμό του ένα νησί λικνίζει
Τον ερχομό.

Παιχνίδια τα νερά
Στα σκιερά περάσματα
Λένε με τα φιλιά τους την αυγή
Που αρχίζει
Ορίζοντας –

Και τ' αγριοπερίστερα ήχο
Δονούνε στη σπηλιά τους
Ξύπνημα γαλανό μες στην πηγή
Της μέρας
Ήλιος –
Δίνει ο μαΐστρος το πανί
Στη θάλασσα
Τα χάδια των μαλλιών
Στην ξεγνοιασιά του ονείρου του
Δροσιά-
Κύμα στο φως
Ξαναγεννάει τα μάτια
Όπου η Ζωή αρμενίζει προς
Τ' αγνάντεμα
Ζωή –

Φλοίσβος φιλή στη χαϊδεμένη του άμμο – Έρωτας
Τη γαλανή του ελευθερία ο γλάρος
Δίνει στον ορίζοντα

Κύματα φεύγουν έρχονται
Αφρισμένη απόκριση στ' αυτιά των κοχυλιών
Ποιος πήρε την ολόξανθη και την ηλιοκαμένη;
Ο μπάτης με το διάφανό του φύσημα

Γέρνει πανί του ονείρου
Μακριά
Έρωτας την υπόσχεσή του μουρμουρίζει – Φλοίσβος

Ήλιος Πρώτος

Δεν ξέρω πια τη νύχτα φοβερή ανωνυμία θανάτου
Στον μυχό της ψυχής μου αράζει στόλος άστρων.
Έσπερε φρουρέ για να λάμψεις πλάι στο ουρανό
Αεράκι ενός νησιού που με ονειρεύεται
Ν' αναγγέλλω την αυγή από τα ψηλά του βράχια
Τα δυο μάτια μου αγκαλιά σε πλέουν με το άστρο
Της σωστής μου καρδιάς: Δεν ξέρω πια τη νύχτα.
Δεν ξέρω πια τα ονόματα ενός κόσμου που μ' αρνιέται
Καθαρά διαβάζω τα όστρακα τα φύλλα τ' άστρα
Η έχτρα μου είναι περιττή στους δρόμους τ' ουρανού
Εξόν κι αν είναι τ' όνειρο που με ξανακοιτάζει
Με δάκρυα να διαβαίνω της αθανασίας τη θάλασσα
Έσπερε κάτω απ' την καμπύλη της χρυσής φωτιάς σου
Τη νύχτα που είναι μόνο νύχτα δεν την ξέρω πια.

Ο Αύγουστος

Ο Αύγουστος ελούζονταν μες στην αστροφεγγιά
κι από τα γένια του έσταζαν άστρα και γιασεμιά

Αύγουστε μήνα και Θεέ σε σένανε ορκιζόμαστε
πάλι του χρόνου να μας βρεις στο βράχο να φιλιόμαστε

απ' την Παρθένο στον Σκορπιό χρυσή κλωστή να ράψουμε
κι έναν θαλασσινό σταυρό στη χάρη σου ν' ανάψουμε

Ο Αύγουστος ελούζονταν μες στην αστροφεγγιά
κι από τα γένια του έσταζαν άστρα και γιασεμιά.

Τα Ρώ του Ερωτα

Αρχή του κόσμου πράσινη
κι αγάπη μου θαλασσινή
Την κλωστή σου λίγο λίγο
τραγουδώ και ξετυλίγω

Διαβάζω μέσα στο νερό
το άλφα το βήτα και το ρω
Τα δυο γυμνά σου πόδια
τους κήπους με τα ρόδια

Σ' έκανα πουκάμισό μου
σε φορώ και περπατάω
Με το σώμα το μισό μου
στο δικό σου που κρατάω

Σου 'χτισα μια Σαντορίνη
με καμάρες και πορτιά
Να γυρνάς σαν το λυθρίνι
μες στη δροσερή φωτιά