Византолошки институт Српске академије наука и уметности

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Who is to blame? Culprits and heroes in the Byzantine narratives about the battle of Manzikert (1071)



Предавање ће одржати др Роман Шљахтин, Универзитет Сент Ендруз

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MEMANZ

University of St Andrews

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The battle of Manzikert (1071) is a pivotal event in the history of the medieval Mediterranean. The conflict between the Eastern Roman emperor Romanos Diogenes (r. 1068–1071) and the Great Seljuk sultan Alp Arslan (r. 1063–1072) generated diverse responses across the medieval Mediterranean. For the Byzantines, the battle was a humiliating defeat that led to the collapse to the imperial power in the Eastern Mediterranean and the memory of which remain painful for many years to come.

The presentation will analyze the Byzantine narratives on the battle of Manzikert and investigate the attitude of different authors towards different characters of the story. Beginning with the well-known accounts of Michael Psellos and Michael Attaleiates, the presentation will turn to the less familiar narratives of Kekaumenos and the Skylitzes Continuatus. It will then focus on the accounts produced by the sons and daughters of survivors and contemporaries of the battle, particularly Anna Komnene and her husband Nikephoros Bryennios the Younger.

Finally, it will examine the presence — and striking absence — of Manzikert in the narratives of Kinnamos and Choniates. For each narrative, the presentation will ask how the author explains the defeat, whom they identify as responsible, and how these culprits — and heroes — change over time. The result will be a history of the changing image of a battle: a story that continued the Byzantine genre of "defeat narratives" and influenced the construction of similar memories in the (post-)Byzantine states of the medieval Mediterranean.

The presentation is part of the dissemination part of MSCA MEMANZ: Memorializing Manzikert: Triumph, Loss and Making Sense of a Battle in the Twelfth-Century Mediterranean (Grant Agreement: 101209364). The project is exercised by Dr. Roman Shliakhtin at the University of St. Andrews.