

Centre for Advanced Studies

Polycentricity and Plurality of Premodern Christianities (POLY)

Bishops

Leaders and Ministers, Judges and Diplomats,
Scholars and Saints



Variations on a Global Institution in the Middle Ages

Online Workshop, February 24–25, 2022

Organized by

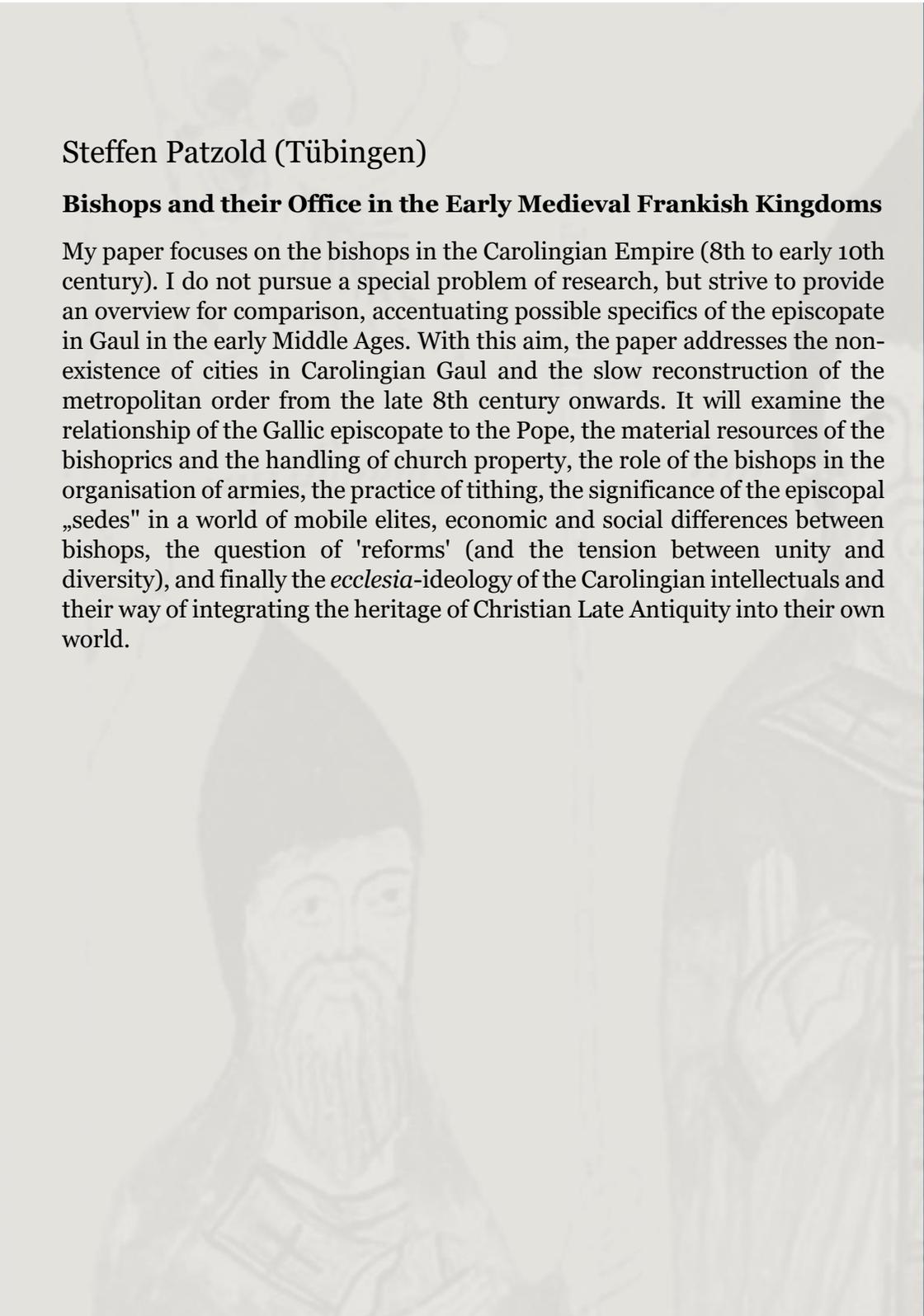
Dorothea Weltecke

Ralph Barczok

Bernd Andreas Vest

The episcopal office is a shared feature of Christianities around the globe. This of course also holds true for medieval times. Although the office originates from a common set of sources, the duties and the tasks of the bishop vary greatly in scope. The reasons for such variation include the actual political situation, the social and cultural interactions, and the regional as well as religious background. What power did bishops wield as political agents, as judges, or as counsellors? How and with whom did they interact, and for which purposes? What was expected of a newly elected bishop and which were the categories by which individuals were deemed good candidates for the episcopacy? How did that change the actual form of the office? For whom was the episcopal office desirable at all, and why? Were there other offices that took over episcopal duties by force or necessity? In times of political unrest, bishops assumed political leadership in their residential cities, such as in early medieval Gaul and in the Middle East after the Muslim conquest. They even participated in military activities. As physicians, scholars, and diplomats, they became influential agents in the courts of rulers. In certain regions they acted as judges within their own parish even in secular cases. But in other instances their importance was overshadowed by that of mighty abbots or powerful rulers so that bishops found themselves reduced to liturgical functions. At times the title of bishop was even taken up by other institutions and stripped of all religious meanings.

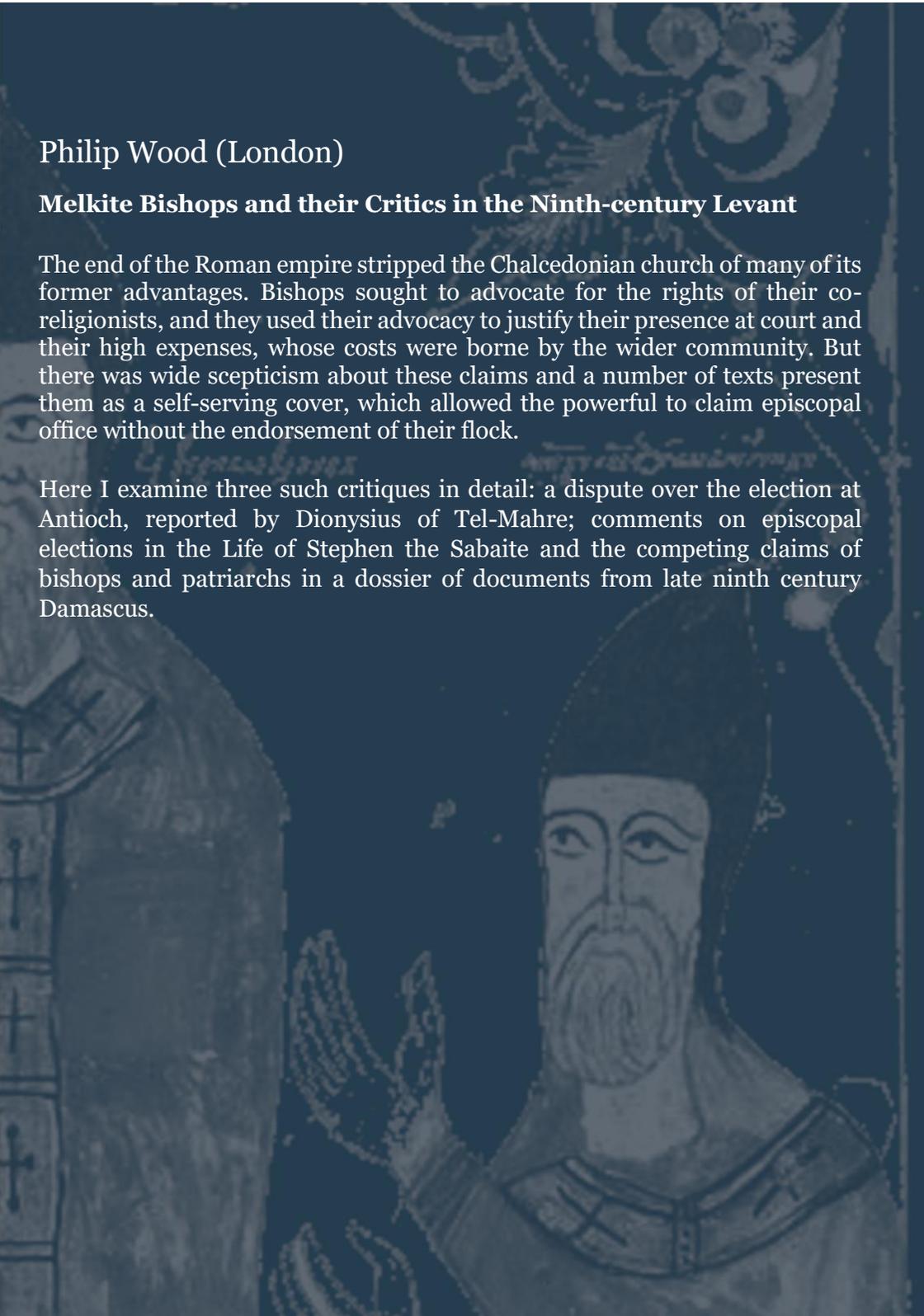
The workshop in Frankfurt from February 24–25, 2022 will focus on the many faces the episcopal office could assume in the course of the Middle Ages (ca. 700–1400) beyond the traditional theological and canonical interpretation of the transmitted sources. It seeks to cover a broad geographical area, ranging from al-Andalus to Iraq and from the Caucasus to Ethiopia.



Steffen Patzold (Tübingen)

Bishops and their Office in the Early Medieval Frankish Kingdoms

My paper focuses on the bishops in the Carolingian Empire (8th to early 10th century). I do not pursue a special problem of research, but strive to provide an overview for comparison, accentuating possible specifics of the episcopate in Gaul in the early Middle Ages. With this aim, the paper addresses the non-existence of cities in Carolingian Gaul and the slow reconstruction of the metropolitan order from the late 8th century onwards. It will examine the relationship of the Gallic episcopate to the Pope, the material resources of the bishoprics and the handling of church property, the role of the bishops in the organisation of armies, the practice of tithing, the significance of the episcopal „sedes" in a world of mobile elites, economic and social differences between bishops, the question of 'reforms' (and the tension between unity and diversity), and finally the *ecclesia*-ideology of the Carolingian intellectuals and their way of integrating the heritage of Christian Late Antiquity into their own world.



Philip Wood (London)

Melkite Bishops and their Critics in the Ninth-century Levant

The end of the Roman empire stripped the Chalcedonian church of many of its former advantages. Bishops sought to advocate for the rights of their co-religionists, and they used their advocacy to justify their presence at court and their high expenses, whose costs were borne by the wider community. But there was wide scepticism about these claims and a number of texts present them as a self-serving cover, which allowed the powerful to claim episcopal office without the endorsement of their flock.

Here I examine three such critiques in detail: a dispute over the election at Antioch, reported by Dionysius of Tel-Mahre; comments on episcopal elections in the Life of Stephen the Sabaite and the competing claims of bishops and patriarchs in a dossier of documents from late ninth century Damascus.

Marianna Mazzola (Jerusalem)

Dhimmi Bishops in a Muslim Polity: Syrian Orthodox Ecclesiastical Leadership and the Changing Dynamics of Power in the Omayyad and Early Abbasid Period (7th–9th c.)

The establishment of a Christian political order in the Byzantine Empire ultimately brought about the expansion of episcopal responsibilities to civil and administrative duties. Based on the conceptual ground of an ideal harmony between emperor and priesthood, the administrative structures of the Church functioned in a symbiotic relation with the imperial authority, even though other sources of powers existed such as popular support, lay elites, rival clergy and monks. When the Arab army annexed major portions of the Byzantine Empire into the nascent Islamic Empire, many indigenous Christian communities found themselves in the unprecedented condition of living under a permanent non-Christian rule. This raises the question as to whether the new political and religious order prompted any significant changes in the episcopal office of such communities.

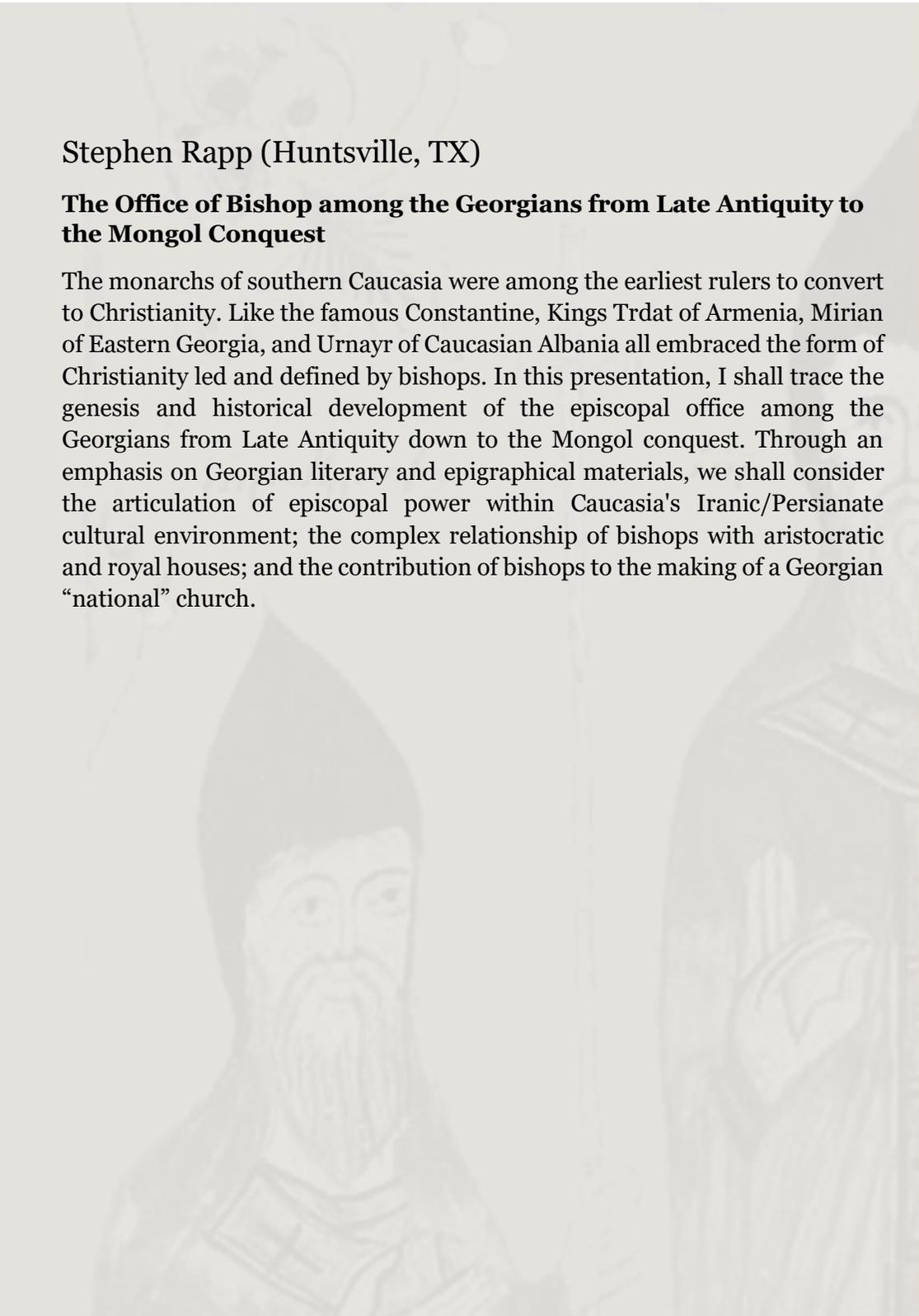
This paper will focus on the Syriac Orthodox church and will address elements of continuity, adaptation and/or disruption in a) the administrative tasks of the bishops vis à vis his their own community and the Islamic governors; b) the process of episcopal elections with particular reference to provenience, education and career of the candidates; c) contestation towards episcopal authority, the role of local rivalries and influence of lay elites had in it, patriarchal strategies to settle these disputes. Throughout this analysis I will try to determine to what extent these potential changes and/or continuities relate to the new Islamic political context. I will point out that in the context of a general stability in the Byzantine administrative patterns after the Islamic conquest, episcopal duties as negotiators and civil arbitrators seems to have been left untouched in the early Islamic period, while new roles as *jizya* collectors are introduced. As to patriarchal elections, I will argue that a relative continuity existed as to the monasteries from which candidates were selected. The Islamic period witnesses the outbreaks of numerous schisms: I will contend that patriarchs compensated the lack of a centralized Christian state with an unprecedented pragmatic attitude towards ecclesiastical disputes, making concessions to recalcitrant dioceses both on a theological and administrative level.

Klaus Peter Todt (Mainz)

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchs and Bishops in Syria and Palestine in the Period from the Arabic Conquest of the Near East to the First Crusade (ca. 635–1095)

After the Arab Muslim conquest of Syria and Cilicia in 635–638 the Greek Orthodox (Melkite) patriarchs of Antioch emigrated and resided for ca. hundred years in Constantinople. In 744 Umayyad caliph Hišām allowed the election of a Greek Orthodox patriarch in Antioch. We have only very limited information on the situation of the Greek Orthodox episcopacy in the patriarchates of the Near East. It is not always easy to reconstruct from the sources, how Melkite patriarchs and bishops were elected and how they could govern their dioceses in a Muslim-dominated world. Their situation was especially complicated because of the nearly permanent state of war between the Caliphs of Damascus and Bagdad and the Byzantine Emperors and because of the special relationship of the Melkites with the Eastern Roman Emperor and the Ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople. In Antioch since ca. 840 the Greek Orthodox notables participated in the election of the patriarch. During the Arab-Byzantine wars of the 10th century it was extremely difficult for the patriarchs and the bishops to move between the front lines and some of them became victims of the conflict, especially Christophoros of Antioch (960–969).

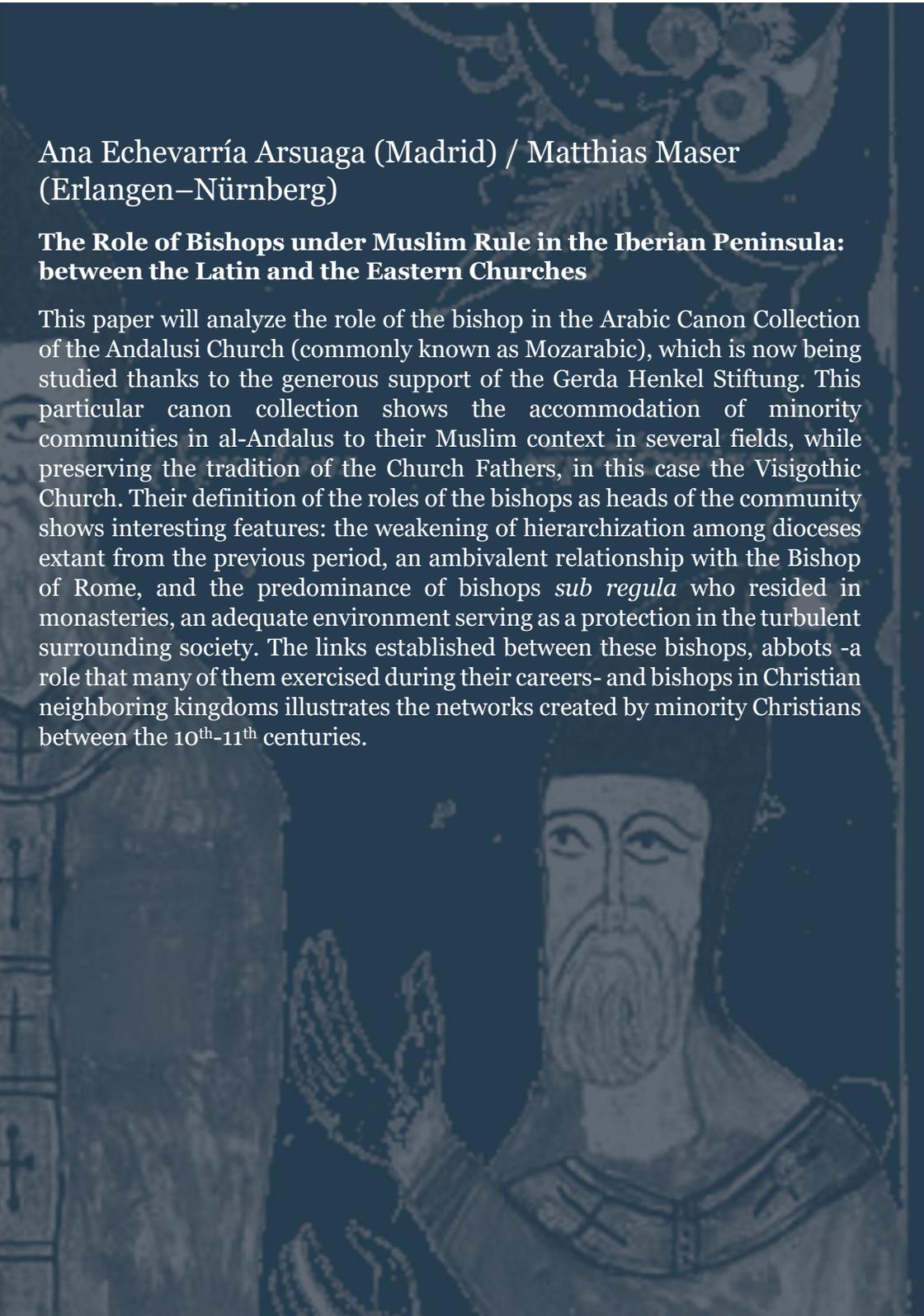
In the period after the Byzantine reconquest of Antioch in 969 the Emperors appointed members of the clergy of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople or monks from the most important monasteries of Constantinople and its region patriarchs of Antioch. They introduced a lot of liturgical and canonical innovations from the capital to Antioch and Syria to reintegrate the Greek Orthodox patriarchate of Antioch in the Church of the Byzantine Empire.



Stephen Rapp (Huntsville, TX)

The Office of Bishop among the Georgians from Late Antiquity to the Mongol Conquest

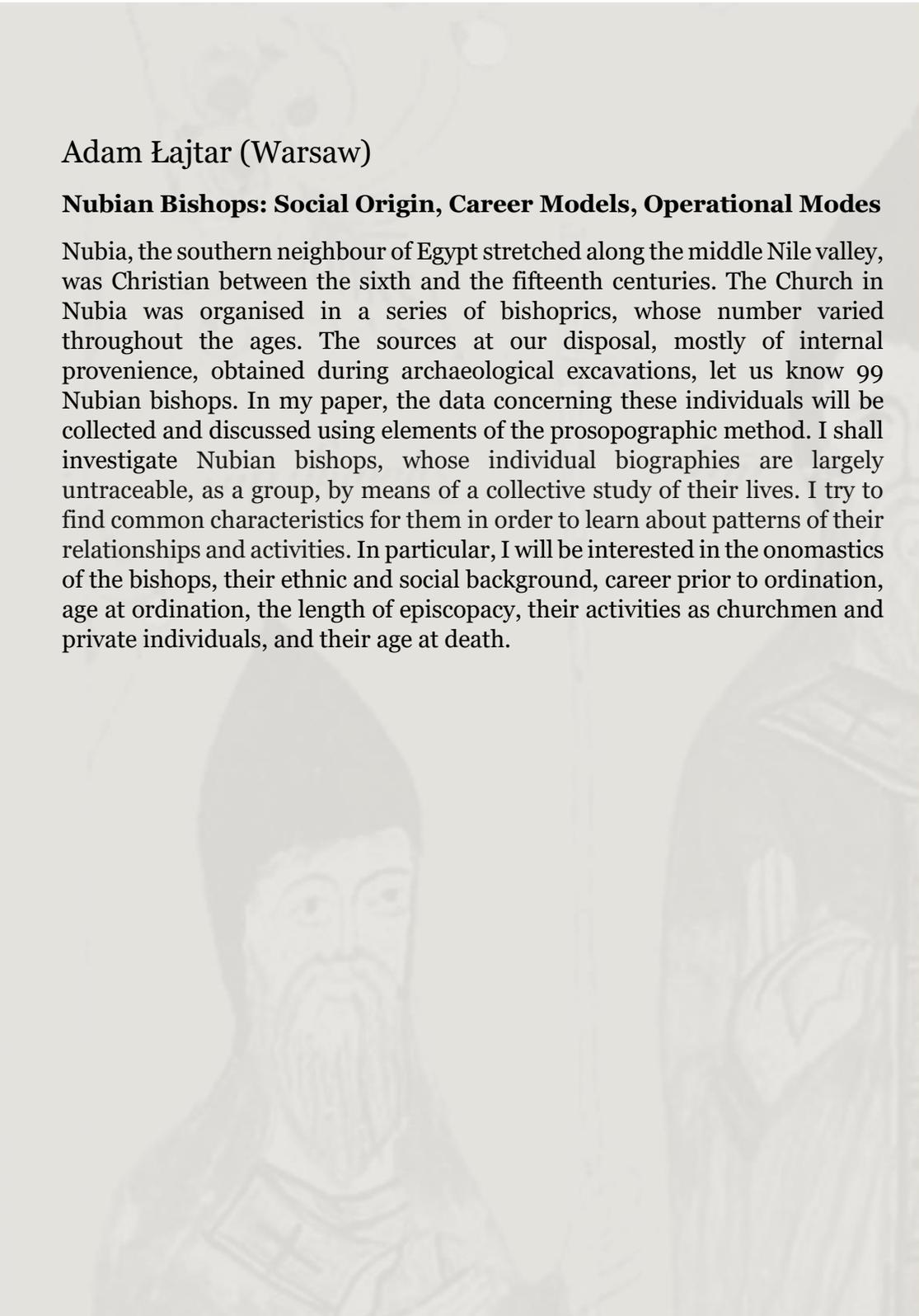
The monarchs of southern Caucasia were among the earliest rulers to convert to Christianity. Like the famous Constantine, Kings Trdat of Armenia, Mirian of Eastern Georgia, and Urnayr of Caucasian Albania all embraced the form of Christianity led and defined by bishops. In this presentation, I shall trace the genesis and historical development of the episcopal office among the Georgians from Late Antiquity down to the Mongol conquest. Through an emphasis on Georgian literary and epigraphical materials, we shall consider the articulation of episcopal power within Caucasia's Iranian/Persianate cultural environment; the complex relationship of bishops with aristocratic and royal houses; and the contribution of bishops to the making of a Georgian “national” church.



Ana Echevarría Arsuaga (Madrid) / Matthias Maser
(Erlangen–Nürnberg)

The Role of Bishops under Muslim Rule in the Iberian Peninsula: between the Latin and the Eastern Churches

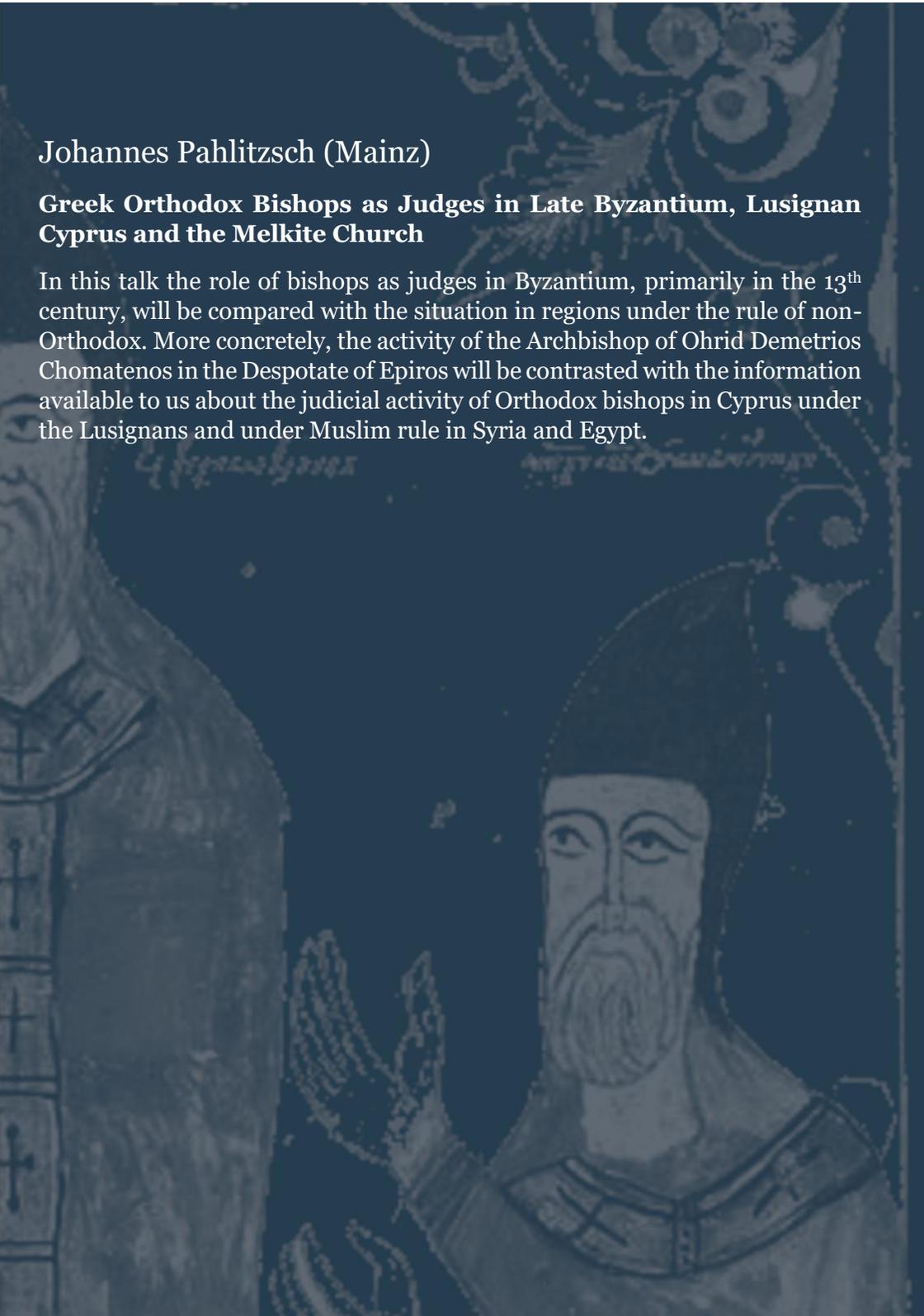
This paper will analyze the role of the bishop in the Arabic Canon Collection of the Andalus Church (commonly known as Mozarabic), which is now being studied thanks to the generous support of the Gerda Henkel Stiftung. This particular canon collection shows the accommodation of minority communities in al-Andalus to their Muslim context in several fields, while preserving the tradition of the Church Fathers, in this case the Visigothic Church. Their definition of the roles of the bishops as heads of the community shows interesting features: the weakening of hierarchization among dioceses extant from the previous period, an ambivalent relationship with the Bishop of Rome, and the predominance of bishops *sub regula* who resided in monasteries, an adequate environment serving as a protection in the turbulent surrounding society. The links established between these bishops, abbots -a role that many of them exercised during their careers- and bishops in Christian neighboring kingdoms illustrates the networks created by minority Christians between the 10th-11th centuries.



Adam Łajtar (Warsaw)

Nubian Bishops: Social Origin, Career Models, Operational Modes

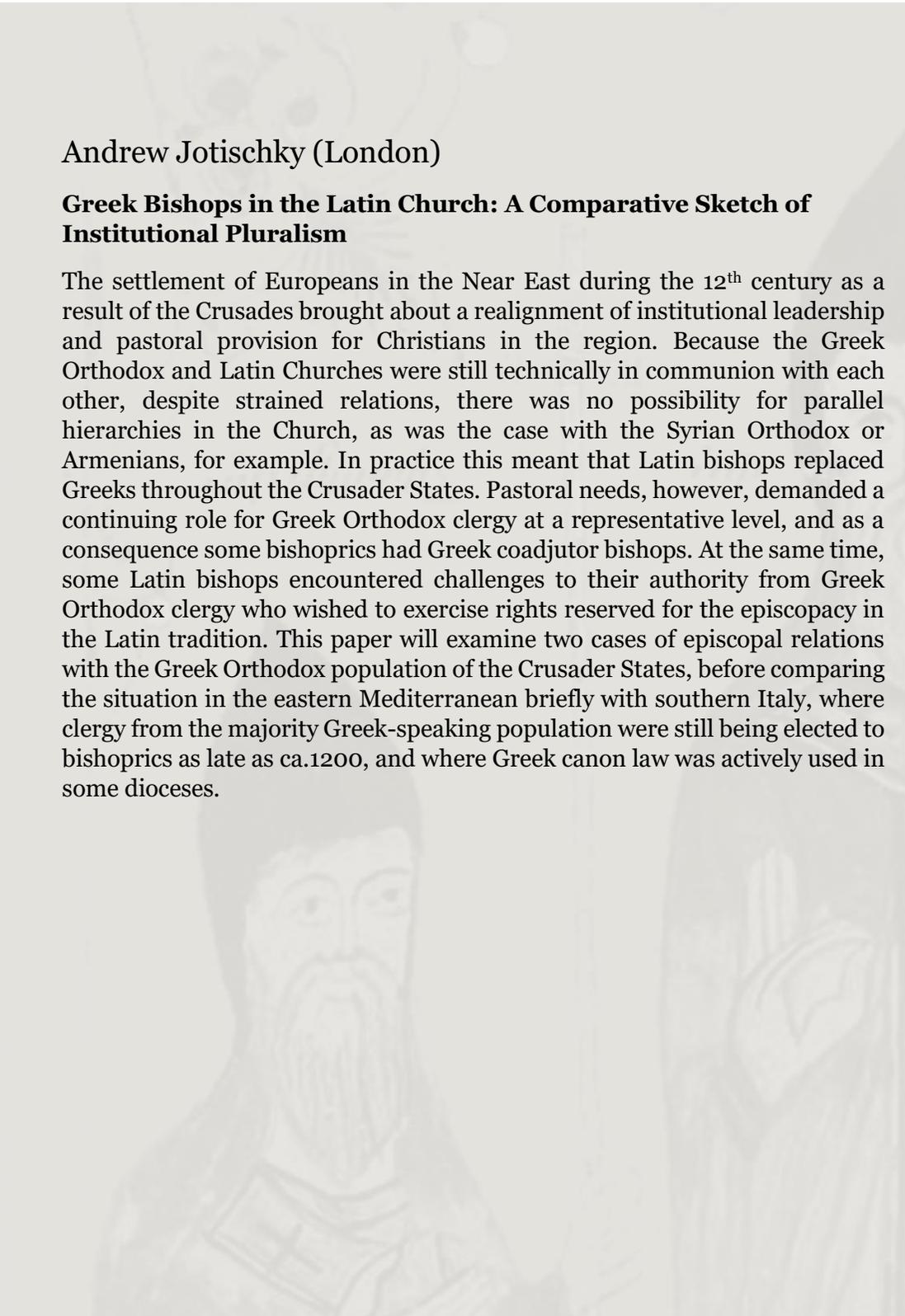
Nubia, the southern neighbour of Egypt stretched along the middle Nile valley, was Christian between the sixth and the fifteenth centuries. The Church in Nubia was organised in a series of bishoprics, whose number varied throughout the ages. The sources at our disposal, mostly of internal provenience, obtained during archaeological excavations, let us know 99 Nubian bishops. In my paper, the data concerning these individuals will be collected and discussed using elements of the prosopographic method. I shall investigate Nubian bishops, whose individual biographies are largely untraceable, as a group, by means of a collective study of their lives. I try to find common characteristics for them in order to learn about patterns of their relationships and activities. In particular, I will be interested in the onomastics of the bishops, their ethnic and social background, career prior to ordination, age at ordination, the length of episcopacy, their activities as churchmen and private individuals, and their age at death.



Johannes Pahlitzsch (Mainz)

Greek Orthodox Bishops as Judges in Late Byzantium, Lusignan Cyprus and the Melkite Church

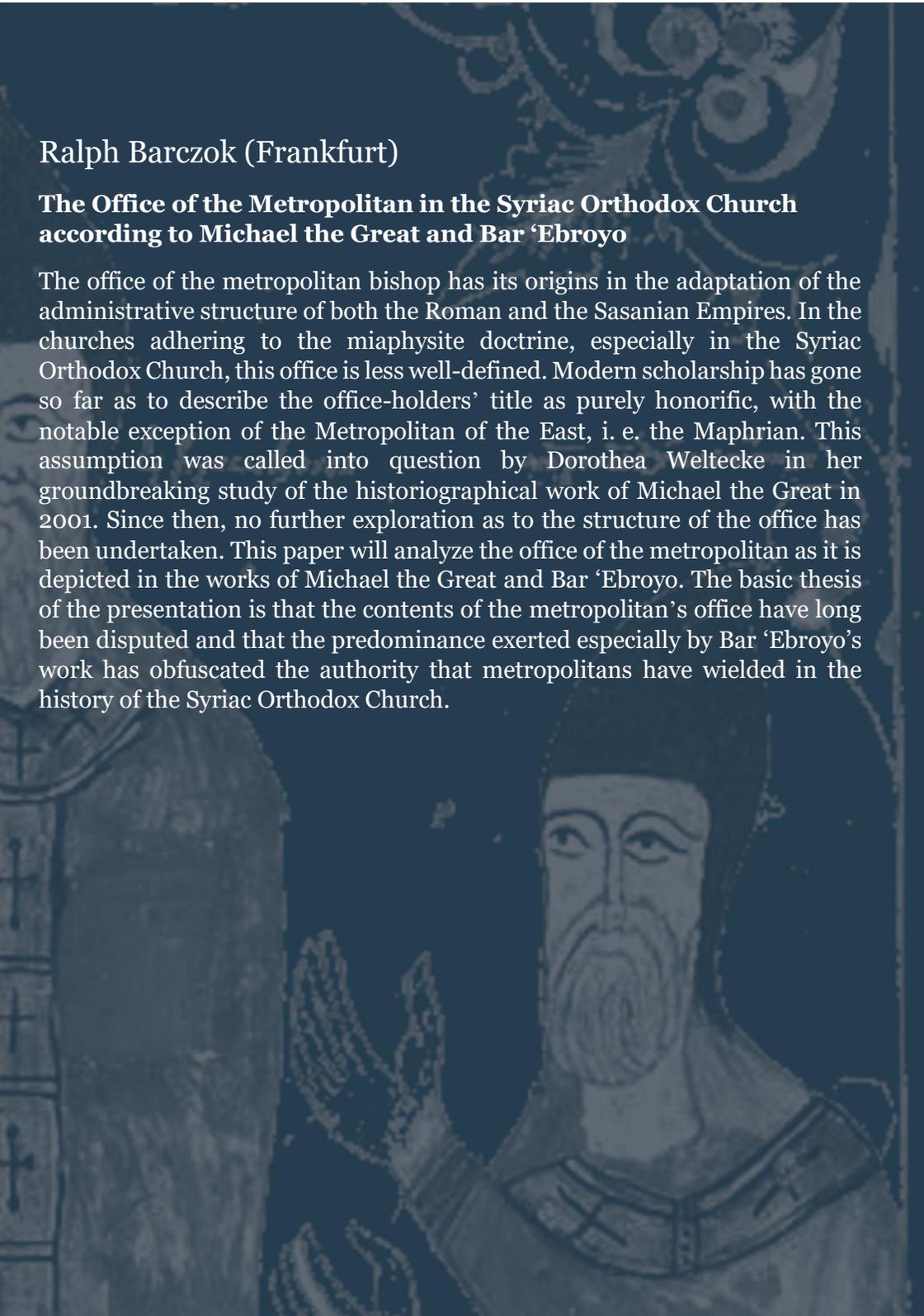
In this talk the role of bishops as judges in Byzantium, primarily in the 13th century, will be compared with the situation in regions under the rule of non-Orthodox. More concretely, the activity of the Archbishop of Ohrid Demetrios Chomatenos in the Despotate of Epiros will be contrasted with the information available to us about the judicial activity of Orthodox bishops in Cyprus under the Lusignans and under Muslim rule in Syria and Egypt.



Andrew Jotischky (London)

Greek Bishops in the Latin Church: A Comparative Sketch of Institutional Pluralism

The settlement of Europeans in the Near East during the 12th century as a result of the Crusades brought about a realignment of institutional leadership and pastoral provision for Christians in the region. Because the Greek Orthodox and Latin Churches were still technically in communion with each other, despite strained relations, there was no possibility for parallel hierarchies in the Church, as was the case with the Syrian Orthodox or Armenians, for example. In practice this meant that Latin bishops replaced Greeks throughout the Crusader States. Pastoral needs, however, demanded a continuing role for Greek Orthodox clergy at a representative level, and as a consequence some bishoprics had Greek coadjutor bishops. At the same time, some Latin bishops encountered challenges to their authority from Greek Orthodox clergy who wished to exercise rights reserved for the episcopacy in the Latin tradition. This paper will examine two cases of episcopal relations with the Greek Orthodox population of the Crusader States, before comparing the situation in the eastern Mediterranean briefly with southern Italy, where clergy from the majority Greek-speaking population were still being elected to bishoprics as late as ca.1200, and where Greek canon law was actively used in some dioceses.



Ralph Barczok (Frankfurt)

The Office of the Metropolitan in the Syriac Orthodox Church according to Michael the Great and Bar 'Ebroyo

The office of the metropolitan bishop has its origins in the adaptation of the administrative structure of both the Roman and the Sasanian Empires. In the churches adhering to the miaphysite doctrine, especially in the Syriac Orthodox Church, this office is less well-defined. Modern scholarship has gone so far as to describe the office-holders' title as purely honorific, with the notable exception of the Metropolitan of the East, i. e. the Maphrian. This assumption was called into question by Dorothea Weltecke in her groundbreaking study of the historiographical work of Michael the Great in 2001. Since then, no further exploration as to the structure of the office has been undertaken. This paper will analyze the office of the metropolitan as it is depicted in the works of Michael the Great and Bar 'Ebroyo. The basic thesis of the presentation is that the contents of the metropolitan's office have long been disputed and that the predominance exerted especially by Bar 'Ebroyo's work has obfuscated the authority that metropolitans have wielded in the history of the Syriac Orthodox Church.

Martina Ambu (Paris)

**Yā'əqob (1337–1344) and Salāmā “the Translator” (1348–1388),
Metropolitans of Ethiopia: Two Opposite Political Models**

A long-term institutional history links the Ethiopian Church to the Coptic Patriarchate of Alexandria from the 4th up to the 20th century. According to pseudo-canons of Nicaea, that reached Ethiopia through the *Fəṭṭa Nagašt*, a 15th-16th century translation of the Arabic Nomocanons by 13th century Coptic Author Abū l-Faḍāil b. al-‘Assāl aṣ-Ṣafi, the Ethiopian diocese was depending on the Coptic Patriarchate of Alexandria. In fact, their chief could not be an Ethiopian, but had to be an Egyptian ordained amongst bishops from the Coptic Church. Recent studies prove that at some moments in history this tradition was not linear, notably in the 13th century, when Metropolitans might not have been ordained by the Coptic Church. However, as for the 14th century, the traditional ordination was undoubtedly reactivated, since two Metropolitans were ordained in Egypt and sent to the Ethiopian diocese. Yā'əqob (1337-1344) arrived in Ethiopia during ‘Amda Ṣəyon’s reign (1313-1344) and was chased and sent back to Egypt by king Sayfa ‘Ar‘ad (1344-1371), as he supported some anti-royal monastic movements (from Takla Haymānot’s monastic house), against both kings’ politics. He was later succeeded in 1348 by Salāmā, known in Ethiopia for his role in translating a great number of texts from Arabic into Ethiopic. He died in 1388, after a long institutional, cultural, and political career. This presentation aims to show how these Metropolitans were ordained, what were their rights and duties, and what was their political programme, as they represent two opposite political models in relation to Ethiopian kings and monastic networks. To do so, Yā'əqob will be studied on the basis of a few number of sources in Ethiopian hagiographies, that will be reinterpreted. As for Salāmā, the number and types of sources being much more abundant, his life and activity will be introduced, from his ordination up to the last documents we have (e.g., a royal and metropolitan decree for Ethiopian monks and nuns). As these Metropolitans might have had several bishops at their disposal, the concept of Ethiopian diocesan division and ecclesiastical hierarchy will be questioned for an open debate.

Emmanuel Van Elverdinghe (Louvain-la-Neuve)

**Bishops as Cultural Mediators in Medieval Armenia: Their Role in
the Production and Circulation of Manuscripts**

In addition to their liturgical duties and their role as community leaders, Armenian bishops were deeply involved in the preservation, transmission and development of the national culture. Organizing the production and consumption of books was a prominent aspect of this activity: bishops would regularly sponsor or copy new manuscripts, as well as disseminate or centralize existing ones, order restoration work on older volumes, negotiate the return of plundered items, etc. Much valuable information on this topic can be drawn from the testimony of the manuscripts themselves, via scribal colophons and other notes left by readers, owners, and restorers. Episcopal involvement also meant leveraging networks of clerics, intellectuals, and artists. A prime example is John the King’s Brother (Yovhannēs Ark‘aelbayr, ca. 1237-1289), abbot of Grner in Cilicia, who, during his thirty years of episcopacy, worked tirelessly to enrich the library of his monastery. It is fair to say that bishops with John’s means and talent were the exception; many, however, were just as dedicated and well connected.

Schedule

Thursday, February 24, 2022, 1:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Dorothea Weltecke (Berlin) 1:00 pm – 1:15 pm

Address of Welcome

Section I: Chair Dorothea Weltecke

Steffen Patzold (Tübingen) 1:15 pm – 2:00 pm

Bishops and their Office in the Early Medieval Frankish Kingdoms

Philip Wood (London) 2:05 pm – 2:50 pm

Melkite Bishops and their Critics in the Ninth-century Levant

30 min break

Section II: Chair Bernd Andreas Vest

Marianna Mazzola (Jerusalem) 3:20 pm – 4:05 pm

Dhimmi Bishops in a Muslim Polity: Syrian Orthodox Ecclesiastical Leadership and the Changing Dynamics of Power in the Omayyad and Early Abbasid Period (7th–9th c.)

Klaus-Peter Todt (Mainz) 4:10 pm – 4:55 pm

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchs and Bishops in Syria and Palestine in the Period from the Arabic Conquest of the Near East to the First Crusade (ca. 635–1095)

30 min break

Section III: Chair Birgit Emich

Stephen Rapp (Huntsville, TX) 5:25 pm – 6:10 pm

The Office of Bishop among the Georgians from Late Antiquity to the Mongol Conquest

Ana Echevarría Arsuaga (Madrid) / Matthias Maser (Erlangen–Nürnberg) 6:15 pm – 7:00 pm

The Role of Bishops under Muslim Rule in the Iberian Peninsula: between the Latin and the Eastern Churches

Friday, February 25, 2022, 9:00 am – 3:30 pm

Section IV: Chair Bruno Boute

Adam Łajtar (Warsaw) 9:00 am – 9:45 am

Nubian Bishops: Social Origin, Career Models, Operational Modes

Johannes Pahlitzsch (Mainz) 9:50 am – 10:35 am

Greek Orthodox Bishops as Judges in Late Byzantium, Lusignan Cyprus and the Melkite Church

30 min break

Section V: Chair Andreea Badea

Andrew Jotischky (London) 11:05 am – 11:50 am

Greek Bishops in the Latin Church: a Comparative Sketch of Institutional Pluralism

Ralph Barczok (Frankfurt) 11:55 am – 12:40 pm

The Office of the Metropolitan in the Syriac-Orthodox Church according to Michael the Great and Bar 'Ebroyo

60 min break

Section VI: Chair Ralph Barczok

Martina Ambu (Paris) 1:40 pm – 2:25 pm

Yā'əqob (1337–1344) and Salāmā “the Translator” (1348–1388), Metropolitans of Ethiopia: Two Opposite Political Models

Emmanuel Van Elverdinghe (Louvain-la-Neuve) 2:30 pm – 3:15 pm

Bishops as Cultural Mediators in Medieval Armenia: Their Role in the Production and Circulation of Manuscripts

Dorothea Weltecke (Berlin) 3:15 pm – 3:30 pm

Conclusion

Register for the online event at:
pluralchristianities@em.uni-frankfurt.de

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