Colour in Byzantine Historiography (13th–15th centuries)

ΠΑΝΟΥ ΕΙΡΗΝΗ
ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟ ΑΝΟΙΚΤΟ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΗΜΙΟ ΑΟΙΚΤΟ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΚΥΠΡΟΥ

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COLOUR IN BYZANTINE HISTORIOGRAPHY (13th-15th CENTURIES)

«Οὐκ εὐσύμβολον τὸ χρῶμα τοῦτό», φησιν, «ὁ βασιλεῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ λίαν κατὰ τὴν ὥραν τοῦ πολέμου ταῖς ἀγαθαῖς τύχαις ἀντιπρᾶττον».

('This is not an auspicious colour, O Emperor, but in the hour of warfare it very much militates against good fortune').

This is the second publication arising from the research conducted for the Sylvester Syropoulos conference at Birmingham University in 2009, the proceedings of which were published in May 2014. Due to the anchoring of that first publication in the proceedings of the Ferrara-Florence Council, other works of the period had to be left untouched, a state of affairs the current article will change not primarily in the selection of authors but of words. For example, having surveyed word colours of red one finds in Sylvester Syropoulos such as κόκκινος, χρυσοκόκκινος and ἠερανοκόκκινος, κοκκοβαφής, other words meaning ‘red’ such as ἐρυθρὸς are examined in the current article. Likewise, for the colour purple only the


word πορφυρὸς had been recorded while now φοινικοῦς, ὀξύς, δίχροος / δίχρωμος, and ἁλουργὸς were added. Green and white have also been studied but their uses outside Syropoulos’ work are offered in the current publication. As for the colours mentioned here for the first time (black, blue, yellow, orange, and grey), they complete the puzzle of colours’ function in Byzantine historiographical texts from the thirteenth up until the fifteenth century, and provide an holistic view of the matter.

The idea to work on colour in the histories of the Late Byzantine period emerged during the research I conducted for the Sylvester Syropoulos publication. Having examined his approach to colour I was intrigued by the idea of how other historians of the same era approached colour. And as with the first publication, selectivity has been necessary to present such ample material. To facilitate the study of colour words in Byzantine historical accounts used by writers with the same linguistic background, other literary genres (non-historical)³, non-Greek sources, pre-thirteenth and post fifteenth-century additions to the sources discussed here⁴, have all been excluded from this study⁵. As to the method of selection and analysis of the material, colours in this article will be presented starting from the most popular to the least popular (shown in the number of words and times referenced in a text).

3. A third publication should consider how historians treat colour in their non-historical works. For example, in his treatise against Gregory Palamas, included in his Roman History, Nikephoros Gregoras uses black, white and gray [Nicephori Gregorae, Byzantina Historia, ed. L. Schopen, I-III, Bonn 1829-1855, XXXIV.63: III.473 (hereafter: Gregoras): οὔτε μὴν τῷ μέλανι πρὸς τὸ λευκὸν δραμεῖν εὐθὺς εὔχετος εὔχετος ἐν οἷς ἐπεφύκε … ἐνταυθοῖ δὲ τοῦ φαιοθ], but because of the section’s theological content these colours will not be considered.


5. The last centuries of the Byzantine Empire were not recorded only in Greek histories. A number of works appeared until shortly after the siege of Constantinople, but have been excluded from this article on the basis that they were not originally written in Greek, see M. Philippides - W. K. Hanak, The Siege and the Fall of Constantinople in 1453: Historiography, Topography, and Military Studies, Farnham 2011, 10-46.
The main question to address is, why is it important to know the associations made by the Byzantines with each colour? On a primary level, scholarship has shown that many colour words originated in ancient Greek literature, from which Byzantine historians adopted forms of expressing their thoughts, feelings and contemporary moral values. If we accept that the ‘perception of colors [...] is also a cultural phenomenon’, then we can safely argue that through the reuse of colour words, the Byzantines brought new connotations into their era using the language of the past. On a secondary level, colours not only signified classification and demonstrated the degree to which the Byzantine court and army constituted ranked institutions, but they also functioned as self-referential tools revealing the peculiarities of the interaction between the Byzantines and other political and religious entities. On a third level, colour is a symbolic language through which descriptions are transformed into commentary of political and religious nature. Colour, in other words, functions as concealed critic which could be decoded by the reader of the same linguistic background. Finally, and most importantly, colour safeguarded the ideals of imperial ideology despite the political, military, financial, and ecclesiastic turmoil it experiences over its last three centuries. This function of colour has been brought up in scholarship, but no study until now has examined colour in the totality of Late Byzantine historical works.

At this point, the reader may wonder, which are the boundaries between colour use in material culture and its function as commentary? In their works, writers did include descriptions of objects either by naming

6. For the definition of ‘colour’ in Byzantium, see L. James, Light and Colour in Byzantine art, Oxford 1996, 74-80.
7. For colour words of ancient Greek origin used in Byzantine sources, see James, Light and Colour, 69-72.
10. See later in this article.
11. The notion the Nicetas Choniates’ colours ‘are in fact almost always moral or ethical symbols’ (A. Kazhdan – S. Franklin, Nicetas Choniates and others: Aspects of the art of literature, in: Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries (Past and Present Publications, Cambridge 1984, 263) should be reconsidered, as it is clearly shown in the current article.
their hue (red, blue, green) or the value of their colour (light, dark)\textsuperscript{12}. Variations in the number of these colour descriptions depend not only on literary genre (analogically to their extent, there are more colour words found in histories than in chronicles)\textsuperscript{13}, but also on the personal style of each historian. Niketas Choniates (1155-1215/1216) quotes Homeric expressions that include colourful descriptions, and George Pachymeres (1242-1310) places colour to his wider fondness for metaphors and plays on words\textsuperscript{14}. Throughout the texts examined in the current article, actual descriptions go in hand with an aesthetic approach to material culture. At the same time, these descriptions are often vested with multiple symbolisms that pin down the essence of Byzantine identity. Colour is multifactional and this article demonstrates that it should be treated as such.


\textsuperscript{13} James, Light and Colour, 79: ‘Though the vocabulary remains fairly consistent, there may perhaps be some sort of pattern as to which colours is appropriate to mention in what sort of text: the nature of a romance might allow for more colour than, say, a hagiography.’ This is also related to the nature of historiographical narrative which in contrast to chronicles ‘it offered significantly more opportunities […] to indicate relations of cause and effect’. See E. C. Bourbouhas – I. Nilsson, Byzantine Narrative: the Form of Storytelling in Byzantium, in: A companion to Byzantium, ed. L. James, Chichester 2010, 268.

\textsuperscript{14} Georgios Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι, ed. A. Failer, Georges Pachymeres, Relations historiques, I-IV, Paris 1984-1999 [hereafter Pachymeres] II:3: I.135; Pachymeres VI:5: II, 557; VI:36: II, 665. Gregoras also uses metaphors and contrasts, e.g. Gregoras, XIII:4: II, 652: (τὸ τοῦ ἀέρος μειδίαμα = the wind’s laughter); also, XI:1: I, 562: (οὐκότος δὲ βαθὶ τὸ τοῦ ἡλίου κάλλος = the beauty of the sun consisted in its deep darkness), and his relationship with colour is unique, a thorough examination of which deserves a study of its own. Apart from using the greatest number of colour words than the rest of writers included in this article Gregoras, XXIX:13: III, 232 also uses the word colour (χρῶμα) but it does not describe hue, as for example in καὶ τὸ χρώμα τῆς γνώμης ἀστατός καὶ ἄβεβαιος (= the colour of opinion was unstable and uncertain), τὸ τῆς κακίας χρῶμα [Gregoras XVIII:4: II, 888 = the colour of spite], τὸ χρώμα τῆς ἐγκατατέσσαρας [Gregoras, XXI:5: II, 1027 (the colour of restraint)]. Moreover, he has a variety of uses of the word χρῶμα without referring to a single colour such as in ποικίλον τοῖς χρώμαις ἰσοτυγχανόντας χιτῶνα [Gregoras XVIII:2: II, 880] and καὶ παντοδαποῖς περιηνθισμένην τοῖς χρώμαις [Gregoras XXVIII 43: III, 204].
Ἐρυθρὸς

Ἐρυθρὸς (= red) has multiple uses, but it is particularly attached to Byzantine power. It describes objects that are correlated to the taking up or loss of imperial power, and it appears much more regularly than any other form of red in the histories and chronicles of the period.

Royal power

In contrast to κόκκινος, the word ἐρυθρὸς is associated with written commands. Choniates refers to the doctrine embraced by Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180), according to which the Father is greater than Christ, using the phrase Ἀμέλει καὶ γραφαῖς ἐρυθραῖς ὡς φλογίνῃ ὀμφαίᾳ τὸ δόμια τοῦτο διειληφώς, meaning that Manuel I attributed imperial authority to this doctrine. Red ink conveys power, which is why Choniates, writing on the fortune of monasteries fallen into misuse, mentions that red dye can revive old commands similarly to blood. Choniates' demonstration of the power of red ink is repeated by George Akropolites.

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16. In the works examined in this article, ἐρυθρὸς appears approximately three times more than κόκκινος. For the uses of κόκκινος in histories between the thirteenth and the fifteenth century, see Panou, The Colours, 176-179 and p. 201 in the present article.
18. Choniates, 212: ἀποδέχομαι μὲν τὰς περὶ τοῦ πατήρ μου μείζων μού ἐστι τῶν θεοφόρων πατέρων φωνάς, λέγω δὲ εἰρῆσθαι τοῦτο καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ κτιστὴν καὶ παθητὴν σάρκα [Mágoulias, O City, 120]. For the controversy see N. Zorzi, La storia di Niceta Coniata, Venice 2012, 311, with further bibliography.
George Pachymeres, John Kantakouzenos, and Nikephoros Gregoras. On the contrary, setting aside the red ink or observing the writings in red inconsiderately means disregard of imperial commands, a serious offence considering the power of letters in Byzantium (δύναμις τῶν γραμμάτων). 

Εἰρυθρός is also frequently used for signing decrees on enthronement or deposition. Gregoras uses έρυθρός to describe the colour of the signature of Andronikos II (1272-1328), who signed the decree of his deposition after he was forced by his grandson, Andronikos III, to retire: ὃς ἐπίτροπος ἄνω μὲν έρυθρὸν προὔθηκε τὸν τοῦ θείου σταυρωτό τύπον, κάτω δὲ μέλανα.

Apart from decrees, attire worn in enthronement or deposition ceremonies was also described using the colour word έρυθρός. Akropolites tells us that John Komnenos Doukas, ruler of Thessalonike (1240-1242), removed his red sandals (τὰ μὲν γὰρ έρυθρὰ πέδιλα ἀπεβάλετο) and exchanged them for the insignia of despots. In contrast, putting on red buskins was interpreted as an acquisition of imperial power. Choniates writes...
that during the coronation of John II Komnenos (1118–1143), the emperor put on red sandals\textsuperscript{29}, as Ephraem writes of John III Vatatzes\textsuperscript{30}, Akropolites of Theodore Komnenos Doukas (1215–1230)\textsuperscript{31}, Pachymeres of John II Megalokomnenos\textsuperscript{32}, John VI Kantakouzenos of himself\textsuperscript{33}, and Gregoras of John VI Kantakouzenos\textsuperscript{34}. The word \textit{κόκκινος} is used in Doukas’ (1400–after 1462) description of the shoes of John VI\textsuperscript{35}, while John VI chooses \textit{ἐρυθρὸς} to describe the buskins during his proclamation as emperor in Didymoteichon\textsuperscript{36}. To the best of my knowledge, Doukas’ \textit{κόκκινος} is the only case in the histories of the period where buskins are described in such terms, since \textit{ἐρυθρὸς} was the accustomed word for this particular sartorial element. It should be noted that \textit{ἐρυθρὸς} involves loss or assumption of power but never usurpation, as is the case with \textit{κόκκινος}. For example, Pachymeres writes about John Tarchaniotes (first cousin of Andronikos II) καὶ μάλλον βασιλειὰν κατακριθέντος, ὥστε κἂν μιὰ τῶν συνελεύσεων ἐξ ἱκέσον ἐμφανισθῆναι χειρίδας ἐμμαργάρους κοκκίνας καὶ ἀλλὰ ἄτα ὡς δήδη σημεία βασιλικά, ἄ δή, παρὰ τίνι τῶν αὐτοῦ εὐφεβῆντα, τὴν ἀναφορὰν τῆς κατηγορίας πιστὴν ἐπ’ ἐκείνῳ παρεῖχε, καὶ διὰ ταῦτα φυλακῇ καὶ πάλιν δοθέντος (he had been primarily suspected of aspiring to sovereign power, since he appeared in an assembly wearing red gloves and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{29} Choniates, 16: πεδίλοις ἐρυθροῖς.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Ephraem, v. 8473: πεδίλ’ ἐρυθρά.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Akropolites, 33-34: πορφυρίδα τε ὑπενδύεται καὶ ἐρυθρὰ περιβάλλεται πέδιλα.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Pachymeres, VI.34: II, 657: Τὸ δὲ ἐπ’ ἐρυθροῖς μεταλαμβάνειν. That this phrase refers to shoes and insignia and not to garments, see Pachymeres, II, 657, n. 5.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Kantakouzenos, III.27: II, 166: ἐρυθροῖς κρηπίδας τοῖς πόδας κατεκόσμει; Kantakouzenos, IV 37: III, 269: καὶ τοίς τὸν ἐρυθράς κρηπίδας ἐρυθρὰς; Kanta-

\item \textsuperscript{34} Gregoras, XII.16: II, 625: τὰ ἐρυθραὶ ὑποδησαμένου πέδιλα; Gregoras XII.2II, 578: αὐτῶν τὰ ἐρυθραὶ ὑποδήσατα ὑποδήματα; Gregoras, III.4: I, 69: ὑποδήσας τὸν ἐρυθραῖς ὑποδεδέσθαι κρηπίδας ὑποδύεσθαι. For a translation of the last sentence, see \textit{Rhomāische Geschichte}, I, Stuttgart 1973, 98.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Doukas, \textit{Istoria Turco-Bizantina} (1341-1462), ed. V. GRECU (Bucharest 1958) [hereafter Doukas], 6.2.4: 49: ὑμηθέντοι τὰ κόκκινα καὶ τὰ σημεῖα πέδιλα.
\item \textsuperscript{36} See n. 33.
\end{itemize}
beaded other ornaments which were found [belonging to] someone of his party, and this was the reason he was imprisoned.\(^\text{37}\) The correlation between colour and power is clearly illustrated in the above example. Historians and chroniclers ‘attached’ the word ἐρυθρὸς only to ‘genuine’ assumption of power (but not necessarily a Byzantine one), which is not always the case for the compound word ἐρυθρός, as will be shown later.

Ἐρυθρὸς is associated with objects of material culture that, broadly speaking, constitute elements of imperial display. A red marble slab is included in Choniates’ description of the tomb of Manuel I\(^\text{38}\). Pachymeres refers to the red columns to the west of the naos of Hagia Sophia, where a veil depicting Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259-1282) was hung\(^\text{39}\), and John VI mentions the red veils that formed part of the decoration during imperial coronations held at the Church of Hagia Sophia\(^\text{40}\). As mentioned in the introduction, colour also denoted hierarchy, which (as Gregoras and Laonikos Chalkokondyles imply) was reflected in Byzantine or Ottoman military campaigns. Gregoras mentions the red saddle of horses that belonged to the Byzantine imperial army\(^\text{41}\), and Chalkokondyles describes coverings made of white and red felt used by the janissaries and the rest of the (Ottoman) army during the fall of Constantinople\(^\text{42}\). He also uses the same word to describe the sultan’s tent during campaigns: Σκηνὴ δὲ ἐρυθρὰ αὐτῷ. Ὁτὲ μὲν δύο, ὥτε δὲ καὶ τρεῖς ἰδέαν· ἐναυτῷ τῷ βασιλεῖ, ἀπὸ πίλου ἐρυθροῦ χρυσοσταστοί, καὶ σκηναὶ ἐδωροὶ ἀμφὶ τὰς πεντεκαίδεκα, πάσαι ἐν τῶν νεκρῶν\(^\text{43}\). When ἐρυθρὸς does not strictly pertain to royal power, it adds overall to the solemnity of imperial ceremonies and demonstrates the


\(^{38}\) Choniates, 222: προσκύνησιν δέχεται λίθος ἐρυθρὸς ἀνδρομήκης [Magoulas, Ο City, 125] and comments in Zorzi, Coniata, 322.

\(^{39}\) Pachymeres, XIII.23: IV, 677: ὲν ἐκείνος βασιλεῖ Μιχαὴλ πατριαρχεύων ἀνήρ τῶν πρῶτος τῇ δύσει μέσον ἐρυθρῶν κιόνων.

\(^{40}\) Kantakouzénos, I.41: I, 197: πέπλοις Σιχισκοῖς ἐρυθροῖς.

\(^{41}\) Gregoras, IX.9: I, 436: τοὺς βασιλικοὺς ζώπους μετὰ τῶν ἐρυθρῶν ἐφεστρίδων.


\(^{43}\) Chalkokondyles, I, 378: (His tent is red. Sometimes two and sometimes three tents are pitched for the sultan himself, which are of red felt embellished with gold, and about fifteen other tents as well, all of them within the janissary encampment).
extent to which the Byzantine and the Ottoman armies were associated with the colour red\textsuperscript{44}. Colour accentuated classification in political and military hierarchy, and Byzantine historians bore witness to this.

*Emotional State*

When it comes to expressing feelings, ἐρυθρὸς denotes humility, grief and anger, as Choniates, Gregoras, Pachymeres, and John VI tell us. More analytically, Choniates refers to eyes reddened out of wrath\textsuperscript{45}; Gregoras, Pachymeres and John VI associate it with humility\textsuperscript{46}; and Pachymeres with the ritual of removing red imperial garments during grief, as he tells us of the πορφυρογέννητος Konstantinos Palaiologos after the death of Anne, Andronikos II’s wife (ἀποβαλόντα διὰ τὸ πένθος τὰ ἐρυθρά [...] τῶν ἐρυθρῶν ἐκστάντα τῷ βασιλεῖ)\textsuperscript{47}. In all these cases, red expresses an emotional change, which Pachymeres places within the framework of Byzantine court ceremonial. It is important to note that, apart from recording emperors’ grief, when humility and anger are mentioned in relation to colour, they are never described otherwise than with ἐρυθρὸς.

*Compound words of ἐρυθρὸς*

Ἐρυθροβαφής

*Unofficial-Illlegitimate power*

In contrast to ἐρυθρὸς, the addition of the suffix –βαφής to ἐρυθρὸς functioned similarly to κόκκινος and presented political power as either illegitimate in the case of enemies or unofficial in the case of short-term co-operations of the Byzantines with other political figures. Akropolites

\textsuperscript{44} Red and white colours seem, according to J. HatHaWay (A Tale of two Factions: Myth, Memory, and Identity in Ottoman Egypt and Yemen, Albany 2003, 101), “to have enjoyed precedence as ‘Ottoman’ colors”.

\textsuperscript{45} Choniates, 477: ἄλλα Ἀρεος ὄντες τρόφιμοι θυμοῦ μὲν πυρὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἐρυθραίνονται [MACOULAS, O City, 262].


\textsuperscript{47} Pachymeres, VI.28: II, 629-631 referring to Konstantinos Palaiologos (PLP 21492) and Failler’s comments, 630, n. 1.
and Pachymeres use this word in a single case of usurpation and one of bestowal of Byzantine power on individuals who are otherwise enemies of the empire. Acropolites refers to the manner in which the Western Church manipulated its power after the siege of the City by the Latins in 1204, whereas Pachymeres refers to the former Seljuk Sultan Azz-Ed-Din, who co-operated for a short period with Michael VIII Palaiologos.

Cardinal Pelagius, Bishop of Albano, arrived in Constantinople in 1214 to help persuade the Greek clergy to recognize the Pope as head of both the Eastern and the Western Church. Akropolites describes the cardinal’s outfit as well as the equipment of the horse that carried him, which had been provided by the Latin emperor of Constantinople between 1206–1216, Henry of Hainault: ἑρυθροβαφῆ καὶ γἀρ ὑπεδέδετο πέδιλα, ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς δὲ χροιᾶς καὶ τὰ ἐνδύματα εἶχε, καὶ ἡ ἔφεστρις δὲ τοῦ ἱπποῦ καὶ τὰ χαλινὰ τῷ τοιούτῳ ἐβάπτοντο χρώματι. Spyropoulos believes that this emphasis on the delegate’s external appearance shows how impressive Pelagius looked to the Byzantines. Although this is plausible, for the reasons discussed below it seems that the impression had negative undertones for the Byzantines and that the delegate chose his colour to deliberately express the claims of papal authority over both the Eastern Church and the Byzantine emperor.

William Durandus (d. 1296), in his work *The Sacred Vestments*, writes that red garments were worn on certain feast days of the Latin Church. In his time, popes and bishops wore red sandals, the inner parts or stripes of which were sometimes the same (red) colour to signify the


49. Akropolites, 29: Cfr. Akropolites: *The History*, 154; For he wore red-dyed shoes and had clothes of the same hue and his horse’s saddle and reins were also dyed in the same colour.


Durandus refers to the Roman clerics’ right by the indulgence of the Emperor Constantine, to wear shoes with socks of white linen. Durandus mentions Constantine I in the context of the Donation of Constantine, which pertains to the appeal of the first Byzantine emperor to the Pope to allow him to wear shoes with socks of white linen: *We also decree that the clergy of the same holy Roman church [...] be distinguished in the same way as our Senate, which makes use of shoes with felt socks – that is, with white linen.* Thus, the Donation of Constantine includes white, rather than red, shoes. However, while in Constantinople, Pelagius wore red shoes. As Macrides notes, Nikolaos Mesarites “was sent by Theodore I to meet Pelagius in Constantinople and Nicaea in 1214/5 [...]. Mesarites relates that Pelagius made a point of showing him his red shoes, at the start of the proceedings, claiming that the successors of St. Peter were given the right to wear them by Emperor Constantine.” Pelagius here states what Durandus would claim in his work a few decades later: that the Western Church had been given the right to wear red shoes by the founder of the Byzantine state. But the forged Donation of Constantine (as Lorenzo Valla discovered in 1440) nowhere mentions red shoes. The reference to the first Byzantine emperor and the change of colour from white to red must have been a later invention.

52. Durandus, transl. Passmore, 65-67, 79; J. Braun, *Die liturgische Gewandung im Occident und Orient nach Ursprung und Entwicklung, Verwendung und Symbolik*, Freiburg 1907, 400, n. 3 and p. 751. See also J. Gage, *Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction*, London 1995, 131. Eastern Christianity held red-coloured cloaks for the traditional garments of martyrs, who suffered in their blood for the Christian faith. See the so-called καθίσματα μαρτυρικὰ (Tone 4) read on Saturday matins (Orthros): Τῶν ἐν ὅλω τῷ Κόσμῳ Μαρτύρων σου, ὡς πορφύραν καὶ βύσσον τὰ αἵματα, ἡ Ἐκκλησία σου στολίσαμένη, δι’ αὐτῶν βοήσου Χριστὸς ὁ Θεός... (Clothed as in purple and fine linen with the blood of your martyrs throughout the world, your Church cries out to you through them, Christ God).


55. Lorenzo Valla comments on this point that the word sock refers to shoes: *...he thought he ought to speak about the shoes. He did not call them ‘lunettes’ but felt socks or rather with felt socks, which, in the way of this hopeless man, he explains that is, with white linen, as if felt socks are linen. See Lorenzo Valla, On the donation, 97.*

had a specific ideological function in Latin-held Constantinople. Following the Byzantine sartorial tradition, usurpers of the imperial throne wore red buskins. For Pelagius, however, Constantinople's occupation by the Latins was not regarded as such, but was considered to be a right given to the Latin Church by the Byzantines themselves through Constantine. His remark on his red shoes leads to the thought that the Latins used Byzantine language of sovereignty to insinuate papal claims of authority over the Eastern Church, which had been promulgated from the eighth century onwards with the forged Donation of Constantine. By manipulating the power of imagery, Pelagius represents the claims of the Latin Church over the Orthodox Church, which explains not only his red garments and shoes but also the red coverings of his horse. Gregoras refers to Pelagius riding in the imperial carriage and to the jewels that decorated it: ἐν τῶν βασιλικῶν ὀχημάτων ἀναβιβάσας, ὡς εἶχε τῶν ἐρυθροβαφῶν κοσμημάτων. He uses ἐρυθροβαφῶν in this case, but when he mentions the saddles of the horses of the Byzantine royal army, he writes ἐρυθρῶν. Gregoras' use of red shows, as was argued earlier, that ἐρυθροβαφὴς highlighted invalid claims for power and demonstrates the response of writers to the messages that colour transmits.

The semantic nuance of colour is also shown by its use in political content. Michael allowed Azz-El-Din to use (ἐχρᾶτο) red-dyed buskins, one of the symbols of Byzantine power (τοῖς τῆς ἀρχῆς συμβόλοις). In the cases mentioned above, Latins and Turks assumed Byzantine power that was not bestowed on them as a result of legitimate succession; colour thus encompassed the ideals of a powerful Byzantine state and Church that held the reins in the ecclesiastical and political arena.

By contrast, Doukas is the only historian to use the word κοκκινοβαφῆς to describe the red-dyed sails of an Ottoman galley, and

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57. The second Latin emperor of Constantinople, Baldwin II, wore red buskins, as it was accustomed in Byzantium. See Akropolites, 185-186.
59. Gregoras IX.6: I, 425; For the translation, Rhomäische Geschichte, II.1, 99: Er nahm ihn von dor mit, setzte ihn auf eines der kaiserlichen Pferde, geschmückt, wie es was, mit den rotefärbten Decken.
60. See n. 41 above.
62. Doukas, XLIV.4: 417: καὶ ἴδοντες τὰ ἱστία εὐρύχωρα καὶ κοκκινοβαφῆ, ὑπέλαβον
the zarkolas (or zerkulah), a hood of red colour worn by the Ottomans\textsuperscript{63}: Τὸ γνωριστικὸν δὲ σημείωμα τούτων τὸ τῆς κεφαλῆς κάλυμμα, ὃ κατὰ τὴν κοινὴν γλῶτταν Ρωμαίοι ζαρκολᾶν λέγουσι καὶ γὰρ κοινῆ πάντες Τοῦρκοι τὸ εὐτό χρώντες ὡς κεφαλῆς περιβόλαιον, οἱ μὲν πάντες, ὧν έξ ίδιωτῶν καὶ ἕξ εὐγενῶν τυγχάνουσι, κοκκινοβαφὲς τοῦτο χρώνται ...\textsuperscript{64}. Doukas seems to attribute no special connotations to his choice of κόκκινος instead of ἐρυθρός, and it could be the result of his preference for the vernacular\textsuperscript{65}.

\textsuperscript{63} G. Moravcsik, Byzantinoturcica. Sprachreste der Turkvölker in den byzantinischen Quellen, II, Berlin 1958, 129. The fifteenth-century chronicler Theodore Spandounes describes the zerkulah and its colour [Theodore Spandounes, On the origins of the Ottoman emperors, trans. D. M. Nicol, Cambridge 1997, 118] but his work has not been included here since it was originally written in Italian.

\textsuperscript{64} Doukas, XXIII.9. 179. For its translation, see Magoulias, Decline and Fall, 135: their distinctive emblem is their headdress which in the common language of the Romans is called zerkulah. All Turks usually wear this for a head covering. However, both commoners and nobles wear a red-colored headdress. According to H. Inalcik [The Rise of the Turcoman Maritime Principalities in Anatolia, Byzantium, and the Crusades, BF 11 (1985), 179-217, reprinted in Idem, The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire: essays on economy and society, Bloomington 1993, 325], it was accustomed for the naval troops azeb to wear red caps, and white caps were worn by the beg and noble Turko-Mongols. See also E. Zachariadou, Holy War in the Aegean during the fourteenth century, in Latins and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204, ed. B. Arbel – B. Hamilton – D. Jacoby, London 1989, 224, n. 31.

\textsuperscript{65} Between the thirteenth and fifteenth century, κοκκινοβαφής is found in Byzantine romances such as in Livistros and Rodamne [where red clothes made of silk are mentioned, see T. Lendaris (ed.), Λιβίστρος Αρτεμίδας καὶ Ροδάμνης (Livistros and Rodamne): the Vatican version, Athens 2007, line 1982: μεταξία κοκκινοβαφής], and PhlORIES and Platziaflora, where we read about red lips burning like flame, see F. J. Ortola Salas, Florio y Plazia Flora. Una novela bizantina de época Paleologa, Madrid 1998, line 818: καὶ χείλη κοκκινοβαφήνα νὰ καίουν ὡς τὴν φλόγα.
Ἐρυθρόδανος, ἠρυθροδανωμένη, ἐρυθροσήμαντος, ἐρυθρογράφων (= writing in red) is strictly used in relation to imperial documents or to the colour of the ink used to write and sign them. Ἐρυθρόδανος, sometimes also referred to as ἄρενθέδανον, is a plant that produces red dye. Ἐρυθρόδανος and ἠρυθροδανωμένη (= rose madder dye) are attested only in Choniates and refer either to royal commands (ὁ θάνον κορυθουμένου καὶ μεταφούσις αὐτομένου καὶ τὸ βασιλεῖον ἀποκριθέντος ἔρυθρωμαν, ὡς γράφειν ἄντικρυς τοὺς γράφοντας δοκεῖν καθ’ ὑγρῶν καὶ ὑποσημαίνεσθαι μία τὰ οἴκεια πεπλωμάτων) or to the ink produced by the ἔρυθρόδανον (ἐκ τοῦ τῷ Στυππειώτῃ ἐγχειρισθῆναι δοχείον ἔρυθροδάνου διάλιθον χρύσεον). Ἐρυθροσήμαντος is attested both in Choniates and Ephraem and refers either to red letters or to the action of writing in red. Finally, the word ἔρυθρογράφον is used by Choniates to describe a letter written by Alexios III (1195-1203) in red ink. The same word in genitive plural (ἐρυθρογράφων) is used by Ephraem to note that writing in red was the custom for a [Byzantine] king. This last phrase contextualizes ἔρυθρος as a primary component of Byzantine political ideology, proved by the fact that it accompanied the emperors' reigns, dethronements, campaigns, and ceremonies. The legitimate user of ἔρυθρος enjoyed all the above and could only be God's chosen sovereign, the Byzantine king. If not, then ἔρυθροβαφής identified the usurpers.

66. Ε. ΧΡΗΣΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ et alii, Το περίφημο ριζάρι (ἐρυθρόδανο το βαφικό) και η τεχνολογία του, Αρχαιολογία καὶ Τέχνες 99 (2006), 85.
68. Choniates, 326 [MAGOULIAS, O City, 180: but these imperial constitutions remained a dead letter; it was as if the cresting waves of this tempestuous evil washed away the imperial red]; Choniates, 49: ἐπερατον ἐρυθροδανωμενην βασιλειαν γραφην [MAGOULIAS, O City, 29: another royal letter written in red].
69. Choniates, 112: [MAGOULIAS, O City, 64: Stypeiotes was presented with an inkwell adorned with gems and gold to hold the red ink made of madder since he was the keeper of the inkstand, the imperial secretary].
71. Choniates, 529: ἐγραφής ἀναμακαριστη ἐρυθρογραφον [MAGOULIAS, O City, 290].
Φοινικοῦς and its compound words

Words that denoted the colour purple were diverse. Since πορφυρὸς was examined in the 2014 publication, attention will now be drawn to the function of other words of similar hue, starting with φοινικόχροος, φοινικοῦς and φοινικοβαφής, which are translated as purple, purple-red and crimson\(^\text{73}\), and describe attire, veils and texts.

Φοινικόχροον is used by Choniates for sandals\(^\text{74}\), which Ephraem describes using the term φοινικοῦν\(^\text{75}\). Ephraem’s extensive use of Choniates’ work is shown in the fact that, apart from ἐρυθροσήμαντος and ἐρυθρόγραφον – ἐρυθρογράφων, he employs Choniates’ wording to describe similar objects\(^\text{76}\). Φοινικοῦν is used in the realm of imperial display when John VI Kantakouzenos writes that he dreamed of young men covering him with a purple veil. Shortly after the dream, he learned that General John Vatatzes, who had abandoned John VI and had attempted to get some of his Turkish allies on his side, had been murdered by the Turks\(^\text{77}\).

When describing the fatal battle between Alexios Vranas and Conrad of Montferrat, Choniates also exalts Conrad’s armour over that of his comrades with the word ἐπίσημον (= official, significant) and, what is of importance here, with his reference to its colour\(^\text{78}\). Conrad’s power, however significant, was not recognized in the eyes of the Byzantine author. Apparently, ἐρυθρὸς, φοινικόχροος and φοινικοῦς functioned in an opposite manner to ἐρυθροβαφής and φοινικοβαφής, which is reminiscent of the common understanding of the addition of – βαφής to denote illegitimacy.

\(^{73}\) LSJ’, s.vv. For examples from texts, see Magoulas, O City, 191: purple dyed buskins; ibid., 274: crimson. For Aelius Herodianus (2nd c. AD), the φοινικοῦν colour is the red colour, see Aelius Herodianus, Herodiani partitiones, ed. J. F. Boissonade, London 1819 [=Amsterdam 1963\(^\text{2}\)], 147: φοινικοῦν χρώμα, τὸ κόκκινον.

\(^{74}\) Choniates, 498: περιέβαλες τὸ διάδημα καὶ τὸ φοινικόχροον περιέδησας πέδιλον.

\(^{75}\) Ephraem, v. 5820: καὶ φοινικοῦν πέδιλον εἰλίσσει πέδας.


\(^{78}\) Choniates, 346: φοινικοβαφῆς μετὰ τῶν αὐτῷ συνόντων τὸ τῶν ὅπλων ἔχων ἐπίσημον.
Ὁξὺς and its compound words
Οξὺς, ὀξύλευκος, ὀξυβαφῆ

Ὁξὺς ranges from the violet of the πορφύρα to dark purple\(^79\). It is attested
either on its own or as a compound word (ὀξυβαφῆς) and pertains to garments,
insignia and documents. Choniates writes that προιόν δὲ [Ἰσαάκιος] καὶ
φάλαρα ὀξυβαφῆ αὐτῶ ἐνδόξω ἐξειν, τοῦ ἱεροῦ σχοινίαματος ὄντι, καὶ
ἐφεστρίδα τοιαύτην ἐν τῷ ἱππεύειν ἱερήθαι καὶ διὰ βαφῆς ὑμιῶς
ὕποσημαίνεσθαι τοῖς τόμοις τῶν δημοσίων λόγων καὶ τὰ γραμμάτια\(^80\).
Here, – βαφῆς differentiates between legitimate imperial power and power
delivered by the emperor himself to a person of his preference, which,
however, would not have been given if it were not for the emperor himself.
The chronicler John Kananos (first half of the 15th c.) refers to a legend in
which, during one of Constantinople's sieges by the Turks, a woman wearing
purple clothes walked fearlessly along the city walls\(^81\). In these two references,
ὀξὺς is given imperial connotations. In the first case, it is equated with
assumption of power by differentiating between two ranks; in the second,
it alludes to the protection of the City, a miracle performed by the Virgin
Mary (τὸ πανθαύμαστον θαύμα τῆς Παναγίας)\(^82\). Finally, ὀξύλευκος is
a mixture of purple and white used only by Pachymeres to describe the
insignia of the σεβαστοκράτωρ John Doukas, who removed them to show
humbleness (τὸ ταπεινὸν) towards his brother, Michael VII\(^83\).

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\(^80\) Choniates, 438 [Magoulias, O City, 241: Isaakios allowed him (Theodore Kastamonites, Isaakios Angelos' uncle) to have the imperial purple trappings and to wear the purple military cloak; he was allowed to sign the public decrees and rescripts in dye of the same color].

\(^81\) See the new edition by A.M. Cuomo, Ioannis Canani de constantinopolitana obsidione relatio [Byzantinisches Archiv 30], Berlin 2016, 40, v. 349. For the translation of this part (wearing violet clothes), see Kananos, ed. Cuomo, 41.

\(^82\) Kananos, ed. Cuomo, 41.

Δίχροος, δίχρωμος

Pachymeres and Chroniates use the term ὀξύλευκος interchangeably with δίχροος or δίχρωμος. Both consist of a mixture of white and purple or violet, which seem to be juxtaposed, whereas the purple or violet took more space in the described attire. A visual representation of what this combination looked like is offered in a miniature in the Monastery of Sinai, showing the emperor John VIII Palaiologos (1425-1448) with a red and white crown.

Chroniates refers to Isaakios II Angelos’ cloak of two colours in his bloodstained confrontation with Stephanos Hagiocristophorites before the former’s elevation to the throne in 1185. According to Pachymeres, δίχροα were worn by Byzantine emperors, who wore purple shoes, insignia and garments on their assumption of the throne. He describes despot John II Μεγαλοκομνηνός wearing δίχροα shoes in the absence of Michael VIII Palaiologos. John was asked to change to black ones, the accustomed colour for despots, to differentiate between the two ranks.

Αλουργός

Purple is also denoted by the use of the word ἁλουργός, a colour that derives from a sea product and describes sartorial elements, veils and carpets, similarly to φοινικοῦς and its compound words. Due to the limitations of this article, the only examples where ἁλουργός is attested can be located in the work of Choniates, who uses it for veils and carpets, and the work of Akropolites, who uses it to describe the cloak of the Byzantine military official Melnik Dragotas (a reward for his services to Emperor John III Vatatzes).

84. FAILLER, Les insignes, 174.
85. FAILLER, Les insignes, 176.
86. Codex Sinaiticus gr. 2123, fol. 30v. See CARILE, Produzione e usi, 259.
87. Choniates, 342: τὸ δὲ σῶμα λωπίῳ διχρώμῳ συνεῖχε περὶ τὴν ἱξὺν καταβαίνοντι. For its translation, see MAGOULIAS, O City, 188: ‘he wore a cloak of two colours which descended to the waist’.
88. See n. 32 above.
89. LSI, s.v.
90. Choniates, 244: τάπησι καὶ πέπλοις ἁλουργέσι; Choniates, 86: ἁλουργοῖς τάπησιν.
Βύσσινος, ὑακίνθινος, ὑσγινοβαφής

Βύσσινος derives from βύσσος, a herb from which linen made of flax, cotton or silk is produced\(^93\). In texts, it denotes either the fabric or the colour in which it was dyed\(^94\). Based on these two qualities, it can be translated either as linen\(^95\) or as linen dyed in whitish (ὑπόλευκος) or purple hue\(^96\). When Doukas describes the clothes of the dead Hamzas, he writes: Φθάσας οὖν ἔν τινι τόπῳ λιβαδιαίῳ καὶ εὐθέτῳ ὁρᾷ πάλους πεφυτευμένους μυριαρίθμους, βρίθοντας ἀντὶ καρπῶν νεκρὰ σώματα, καὶ τὸν Χαμζᾶν, ὃν προείπομεν, ἐν μέσῳ μετὰ βυσσίνων καὶ κοκκίνων ὃν ἐφόρει πεπερονημένον ἐν τῷ πάλῳ (He came upon a meadow where he saw countless stakes planted in the ground, laden not with fruit but with corpse, and on a stake in the middle was transfixed Hamza, still wearing his purple and red garments\(^97\)).

The information on the death of Hamzas must have been sufficient to the reader and the sentence would in no way be incomplete if it stopped with … transfixed Hamza. However, the author conveys a second message with his last sentence. Considering the association of red objects with imperial power in Byzantium and the Byzantine influence of the colour red on the Ottomans\(^98\), it is not unreasonable to argue that Doukas is insinuating that Hamza’s aspirations to power were thwarted by his death\(^99\).

\(^{93}\) LSI⁹, s.v.
\(^{94}\) BRAUN, Gewandung [as in n. 52], 400.
\(^{95}\) Choniates, 577 refers to its fabric (silk) in the sentence Ὄ η πολύγονος καὶ βύσσον καὶ πορφύραν ἠμφιεσμένη βασίλειον [o prolific City, once farbed in royal silk and purple, see MAGOULIAS, O City, 317].

\(^{96}\) A. Mitsani, Το παλαιοχριστιανικό κιβώτιο της Κατοπολιανής Πάρου, ΔΧΑΕ 19 (1996-1997), 320-321. That it was of red hue, see for example Cyril of Alexandria (PG 68, col. 737): Βύσσος δὲ ἦν ἄρα καὶ πορφύρα ταύτη; Herodianus [as in n. 74], 10: βύσσος, τὸ κόκκινον; and L. BACHMANN (ed.), Anecdota Graeca, I, Leipzig 1828, 132, s.v. βύσσος στολή ἣ ἐσθος πορφυρον. The lexicographer Hesychius translates it as purple [Hesychius, Lexicon, ed. K. LATTE, I, Copenhagen 1953, entry 1341: βύσσινα·  πορφυρᾶ] and the thirteenth-century lexicographer Pseudo-Zonaras as red (τὸ κόκκινον) [Zonaras Lexicon, ed. J. A. H. TITTMANN, Leipzig 1808, 411, s.v. Βύσσινον]. That it was white, see (among others) Nikolaos Mesarites’ Seditio Ioannis Comneni [A. HEISENBERG (ed.), Die Palastrevolution des Johannes Komnenos, Würzburg 1907, 44: τὸ βυσσίνῳ λελευκασμένη].

\(^{97}\) Doukas, XLV. 22. 12: 433: For its translation, see MAGOULIAS, Decline and Fall, 260.

\(^{98}\) HatHaWay, A Tale of two Factions, 101.

\(^{99}\) For Doukas’ regard of the Turks as usurpers of the Byzantine throne, see Michael Doukas, Βυζαντινοτουρκική Ιστορία, ed. trans. V. KARALIS, Athens 1997, 26-27.
Gregoras refers to the act of "engraving" (writing) letters and decrees in υάκινθος, a hue that ranges between blue and (dark) red\(^{100}\). Finally, the hue of υσγινοβαφής varies between orange and vermilion\(^{101}\), and is used by Choniates to describe the scarlet (according to Magoulias) clothes of the ραβδοῦχοι\(^{102}\), the teamsters who transported envoys, as Sylvester Syropoulos tells us\(^{103}\).

**White**

White and black often function as two sides of the same coin in the sense that they present both sides of a situation or of a person (good–evil). They are not, however, simply an indication of contradiction, since each colour has its own distinctive use. Similarly to red and purple, white and black are often, but not exclusively, bound to the Byzantine political sphere. Through the description of objects, feelings, thoughts and animals, white and black underline the differences between the Byzantines and ‘others’, without excluding cases of no particular ideological insinuation.

Λευκός-ἄσπρος

White is denoted with the words λευκὸς and ἄσπρος, and is attested in compound words with – χροια (= hue) – as in λευκόχροα (= of white hue). Unlike ἄσπρος (mentioned below), λευκὸς describes a variety of objects that range from sartorial elements, architectural parts and naval equipment to feelings, moral values, countries, people and animals.

Λευκὸς is mentioned in combination with materials such as linen (ἐπὶ λίνου λεπτοϋφοῦς καὶ λευκοῦ\(^{104}\)) , but more usually with objects such as shoes (καὶ λευκαῖς κρηπῖσι περιστελλόμενον τοὺς πόδας\(^{105}\) bands

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\(^{100}\) Gregoras, XIV.3: II, 697: χρώματι δ’ αὐτ’ ὕακινθίνῳ τὰς τῶν ἐπιστολῶν καὶ ψηφισμάτων ἐγχαράττειν ἐπισημασίας.

\(^{101}\) LSP, s.v.

\(^{102}\) Choniates, 343: οὐχ οἱ τὰ υσγινοβαφή φοροῦντες ραβδοῦχοι [‘Nor lictor dressed in scarlet’, see Magoulias, O city, 189].

\(^{103}\) Syropoulos, Les ‘Mémoires’, 436: ἐλθόντες οἱ ῥαβδοῦχοι μετὰ ὁρισμοῦ βασιλικοῦ ἄγουσιν ἐμὲ καὶ τὸν πρωτέκδικον εἰς τὰ βασίλεια.

\(^{104}\) Gregoras,IX.1: I, 395; Rhomäische Geschichte, II.1, 82: auf dünnem wießen Linnen; Kantakouzenos, III.36: II, 218: ὅθονη λευκὴ.

\(^{105}\) Choniates, 332: λευκαῖς χρησίοι [Magoulias, O city, 183; his legs were covered up to the knees in white boots]. Kantakouzenos IV.49: III, 358: λευκαῖς χρησίον.
(λευκόλινα)\textsuperscript{106}, shirts (καμίσιον λευκὸν)\textsuperscript{107}, coverings made of white felt (στεγάσματα πίλοις λευκοῖς)\textsuperscript{108}, decorative marble (ἐπὶ λιθίνου λευκοῦ τετραπλεύρου)\textsuperscript{109}, sails (ὡς νῦν γε οὐχ ἱστίοις τὰς ναῦς πτερῶσαι ἤμιν γενήσται)\textsuperscript{110}, and head covers (Ὠ ἐκ Χαλῆ [...] ἐκέλευσε τὰς λευκὰς καλύπτρας ὑποκρύπτειν τὸν καθένα)\textsuperscript{111}. In the last reference, found in Doukas’ work, the word καλύπτρα refers to the pyramid-shaped καλύπτρα worn both by the Ottomans and by the Byzantines\textsuperscript{112}. Doukas also describes the white-colored headgear (οὗτοι λευκόχροα φοροῦσι τὰ τῆς κεφαλῆς περιβόλαια)\textsuperscript{113}, made of whitest felt (ἐκ πίλου λευκοτάτου)\textsuperscript{114}, worn by the foreigners who have succumbed to the yoke of slavery and are registered as slaves of the ruler (καὶ πάντες ὀνομάζονται καὶ εἰσὶ τοῦ ἀρχηγοῦ δοῦλοι)\textsuperscript{115}. In times of grief, emperors removed their red garments and replaced them with white ones, as Gregoras\textsuperscript{116}, Michael Panaretos (1320-1390)\textsuperscript{117}, and...

\textsuperscript{106} Choniates, 594: καὶ τὰ κατὰ νώτου κεχυμένα λευκόλινα
\textsuperscript{107} Syropoulos, Les ‘Mémoires’, 340: εἷς ἐκ τῶν Λατίνων καμίσιον λευκὸν ἐνδεδυμένος.
\textsuperscript{108} See n. 44 above.
\textsuperscript{109} Choniates, 643 [Magoulias, O city, 353: four-sided white marble]; Doukas, 13.3: λευκῷ μαρμάρῳ συνηρμοσμένῳ...
\textsuperscript{110} Choniates, 166 [Magoulias, O city, 94. Let us now spread the ships’ white sails].
\textsuperscript{111} Doukas, 28.12: Halil [...] gave orders that everyone should hide his white headdress
\textsuperscript{112} M. Balivet, Les Turcs au Moyen-Age: des croisades aux Ottomans (Xle-XVe siècles), Istanbul 2002, 106.
\textsuperscript{113} Doukas, 23.9; Magoulias, Decline and Fall, 135.
\textsuperscript{114} Doukas, 23.9; Magoulias, Decline and Fall, 135.
\textsuperscript{115} Magoulias, Decline and Fall, 135.
\textsuperscript{116} Gregoras, XII.12.11, 612: ἐκ τῆς πορφύρας ἐς τὸ λευκὸν, ὡς εἴθιστο τοῖς βασιλέασ περὶ τὰς λύπας ἄει ποιεῖν [...] καὶ διήρκεσεν ἐκείθεν λευκοῖς ἐνδύμασι χρωμένος. For its translation, see, Rhomäische Geschichte, III, 63.
\textsuperscript{117} O. Lampsides (ed.), Μιχαήλ τοῦ Παναρέτου περὶ τῶν Μεγάλων Κομνηνῶν'}
John Kantakouzenos tells us that when Choniates refers to the change towards the whiteness of truth (= approaching the truth), he continues the Greco-Roman textual tradition of using white as an indication of morality. In the same context, Akropolites records a saying that you cannot whiten (λευκαίνεσθαι) an Ethiopian, a popular derogatory reference in the ancient Greek and early Christian world to describe the untrustworthy Michael II Angelos Doukas (1230-1266/68). Akropolites’ criticism stems from the fact that, although Michael had signed a treaty with John III Vatatzes, he revolted against him.

Laonikos Chalkokondyles’ love for ethnological and geographical observations is shown in his description of the skin colour of the tribal confederation of the White Sheep Turkomans with whom the Greeks of Trebizond intermarried. Most importantly, it is also shown by his division of Sarmatia (Southern Russia) into white and black according to its own populations. Chalkokondyles writes that those who live closer to the

[Ποντικαὶ Ἔρευναι 2], Athens 1958, 73: ὁ βασιλεὺς μεγάλως ἐλυπήθη ἐπιστὰς ἐν τῇ προπομπῇ τῆς ἐξόδου αὐτοῦ φορέας καὶ λευκὰ διὰ τὴν θλῖψιν, καθὼς εἴθισται τοῖς ἀναζεῖ.

121. Akropolites, 89: τὸ στρεβλὸν ξύλον οὐδέποτ’ ὀρθόν, καὶ ὁ Αἰθίοψ οὐκ οἶδε λευκαίνεσθαι.
123. For the original text, see Akropolites, 89: εἰς ἄποστασιάν γὰρ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐφώρησο.
126. Chalkokondyles, I, 212: τὰ μέντοι πρὸς Εὐξείνον πόλιν Σαρματῶν γένη [...]

BYZANTINA ΣΥΜΜΕΙΚΤΑ 29 (2019), 195-230
Black Sea call it black, while those who live closer to the ocean under the Arctic Circle call it white\textsuperscript{127}, without justifying exactly how this division was shaped in the mind of the inhabitants\textsuperscript{128}. Nikoloudes however provides a number of reasons for the division of Sarmatia into white and black. He writes that “the distinction between a white and a black Sarmatia is rather puzzling. Possible explanations suggest that it is due either to the worship of a white or black god or to the clothes of the inhabitants in certain areas or to the period when the country was occupied by the Lithuanians. According to another view, the names were due to the white and black colours of the Viking’s ensigns who had occupied them in the 9th century, or it means that white Russia is the northern free part of the country, while the black is the one still under foreign rule”\textsuperscript{129}.

Skin is described as white (λευκὸς) or snow-white (χιονώδης), when for example Choniates describes Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180)\textsuperscript{130}, or only as snow-white in the fifteenth-century Chronicle of the Tokkoi\textsuperscript{131}.

The final set of examples consists of animals, such as when Pachymeres describes the differences between Skythia and Ethiopia, both countries belonging to the Mameluk Sultanate\textsuperscript{132}. One of the differences he points out is the colour of animals in both countries\textsuperscript{133}. He writes that in the North

\textsuperscript{127} See previous note.
\textsuperscript{128} Chalkokondyles, I, 214. Πρὸς μὲντοι ὠκεανὸν πόλις Ὀὔσεράτης καλομενήν, ἐς ἀριστοκρατίαν τετραμμένην ὅλθον τις ἄρχοντας καὶ αὐτὴν εὐδαιμονία ἀπερέφορον. Τῶν ἄλλων τῆς Σαρματίας πόλεων, τῆς τε λευκῆς καὶ μελαίνης οὕτωσι καλομενής.

\textsuperscript{129} Ν. Π. Νικολούδες (ed. trans.), Λαονίκου Χαλκοκονδύλη Βυζαντίου Ἅλωσις, Athens 2005, 342, n. 44. See for example, the justification of the name by the white clothes worn by its inhabitants in Chalkokondyles, I, 214: Ἡ μέντοι πρὸς ὠκεανὸν διήκουσα Σαρματία ἐπὶ Προυσίαν καλομενήν χώραν διήκει καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς ταύτη λευκοφόρους Ναζηραίους.

\textsuperscript{130} Choniates, 51: τὴν δὲ χρυσὶν[...] λευκὸς ἢ καὶ χιονώδης [Magoulias, O city], 30.

\textsuperscript{131} G. Schirò (ed.), Cronaca dei Tocco [CFHB 10], Roma 1975, 476, lines 3458-3459: Καὶ παρειθὺς ἐξύγιαν, ἐγένετο ὡς λέων, / ὁ δειμφος, πολυσφιλόχροος, λαμπρὸς καὶ χιονάτος.

\textsuperscript{132} A. K. Petrides, Ethnography and Narrative: Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι 3.3-5, GRBS 49 (2009), 312.

\textsuperscript{133} Petrides, Ethnography and Narrative, 303.
(Skythia), animals have become *white* (*λελεύκωται*)\(^{134}\). As will be shown in the next section, where black is discussed, Pachymeres’ zoological references functioned as a warning to the Byzantine state, which had developed political relations with different nations, that it needed to accumulate knowledge of the population it interacted with.

Choniates and Gregoras also describe colours in animals. In his description of the approach of Alexios Vranas to the Constantinopolitan city walls to depose Isaakios, Choniates writes that Vranas, ἵππῳ ἔποχος ὥν παρὰ τοσοῦτον μὴ παντὶ μέλανι, παρ’ ὅσον λευκαὶ τρίχες ἐς κύκλον σεληναίας περιαγόμεναι φυεῖσαι ἦσαν ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον\(^{135}\). Although colour made a difference in a horse\(^{136}\), the historians of the era did not go into detail when it came to horses, describing either the hue of their hair (black, white) or their attributes (red, yellow, white). In more detail, snow denoted the level of brightness, and it is in this sense that Choniates describes horsehair in the sentence quoted above, as well as in the phrase *whiter than snow*\(^{137}\) (inspired by Homer’s *Iliad*)\(^{138}\). Horses and their coverings were white, described either with *λευκός*\(^{139}\), or *ἀσπρός* (Leontios Machairas, fifteenth century)\(^{140}\). Apart from horsehair, sheep-hair and cats were also described as white\(^{141}\).

\(^{134}\) Pachymeres, III.3: I, 237: βορείοις γὰρ τὰ ζῷα λελεύκωται, νοτίοις δὲ μεμελάνωται.

\(^{135}\) Choniates, 378: οἱ άστριδες ἐν τοῖς άλλοις ἄλῳ μὴ παντὶ μέλανι, παρ’ ὅσον λευκαὶ τρίχες ἐς κύκλον σεληναίας περιαγόμεναι φυεῖσαι ἦσαν ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον.

\(^{136}\) For the colours of horses and their attributes in Byzantine texts, see also A. Babuin, Ο ιππός και η εξάρτυση του κατά την ύστερη βυζαντινή εποχή, *Byzantina* 27 (2007), 126-127, 133-134, 141-145.

\(^{137}\) Choniates, 19: ἵπποι καλλέτριες χίόνος λευκότεροι; Choniates, 136: λευκοτέρω χίόνος ἐποχος ἵππος.

\(^{138}\) Iliad, 10: 436-437: τοῦ δὴ καλλίστους ἵππους ἴδον ἣδε μεγίστους / λευκότεροι χιόνος...


Finally, the word ἄσπρος was very little used and appears particularly in the fourteenth-century *Chronicle of Morea*, where a white-horse rider is included in the narration\textsuperscript{142}.

**Black**

Μέλας, μελάγχροος, μελαμβαφής, μελάνωμα, μελάνωσις, μελανειμονεῖν, ύπομελαίνων, καπνηρός, μαύρον

The Greek words for black describe physical appearance, feelings, thoughts and moral values, as well as animals, natural phenomena and biological functions. More often than *white*, black is placed in the context of imperial display as it refers to royal tombs and imperial attire (buskins, garments). The various forms in which it appears (μέλας, μελάγχροος, μελαμβαφής, μελάνωμα, μελάνωσις, μελανειμονεῖν, ύπομελαίνων, καπνηρός and μαύρον) make it the third most commonly used colour after purple and red.

As with white, black is used to describe human skin and facial characteristics. Influenced by Greco-Roman literature\textsuperscript{143}, Choniates, Akropolites and Ephraem use the words μελάγχροος or μελάγχρους to describe dark human skin\textsuperscript{144}. Elsewhere, Choniates describes the skin of Manuel I Komnenos not with the word μελάγχροος but with καπνηρός (= smokey)\textsuperscript{145}. Ephraem uses μελαντέρα (= blacker) to justify the title of
Anastasios I (491-518) as Δίκορος, since one of his pupils was blacker than the other. As to biological functions, having described the symptoms of the monk Bardarios, whose body swelled after he did not consume food and drink for days, Gregoras writes that **blackness was poured over his face**, meaning that his face became black. Finally, the chronicler Ephraem uses μέλαινα to describe black-coloured gall produced during regurgitation.

When it comes to feelings, thoughts and moral values, black describes sadness, evilness, hidden thoughts and shame. Choniates, copying Homer, describes tears as a fountain of **black water** (μελάνυδρος), which originates in the thought that sadness leads to tears. Gregoras uses μελανειμονεῖν to describe the last hours before the death of emperors, during which they were accompanied by two boys dressed in black. A hue lighter than black (ὑπομελαῖον) is used metaphorically by Choniates to describe the darkness of evil (in contrast to the whiteness of truth mentioned earlier) and lack of purity.

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147. Gregoras, XXIX.52: ΙΙΙ, 260: καὶ μακρά τις ἐπεχύθη τῷ προσώπῳ μελάνωσις.


151. Gregoras, IX.14: 1, 463: τὸ οὖν μελανειμονεῖν καὶ τὸ ἀσκεπεῖς εἶναι καὶ τὸ δύο τα μειράκια φανῆναι ἐκθέμα τῷ βασιλεῖ τὸ τοῦ μελάνου ράκους ἔνδυμα. The custom of having two boys related to death experiences goes back to ancient Greek necromantic rituals, where two thirteenth-year old boys prepared those who wished to consult the dead, as it was the case in the necromantic oracle of Trophonios in Leibadia, Greece. See F. Spiro (ed.), *Pausaniae Graeciae descripicio* (Leipzig 1903; repr. 1967), 9.39.7: πρῶτα μὲν ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ αὐτῶν ἄγουσιν ἐπὶ τὸν ποταμὸν τὴν Ἕρκυναν, ἀγαγόντες δὲ ἐλαίῳ χρίσουσι καὶ λούουσιν ὁπό ταῖς παῖδες τὸν ἀστόν ἐπὶ τρία ποὺ καὶ δέκα γεγονότες, οὗς Ἐρμᾶς ἑπονομάζοντον ὀντοι τὰν καταβαίνοντα εἰσιν οἱ λοίποντες καὶ ὀπόσα χρὴ διακονούμενοι ὅτι παῖδες (= First, during the night he is taken to the river Hercyna by two boys of the citizens about thirteen years old, named Hermae, who after taking him there anoint him with oil and wash him. It is these who wash the descender, and do all the other necessary services as his attendant boys). The translation is provided by the Perseus Digital Library.
of clarity. Finally, by referring to the *melanoma of shame*, Choniates continues the Greco-Roman textual association of the colour black with immoral behaviour.

It was mentioned earlier that Choniates referred to the red colour of Manuel's tomb, but in the same sentence used the word *μελανία* (= blackness) to tell us the colour of the tomb's lid. Karagiorgou defines *μελανία* as a mournful blackish colour, resembling the verde antico, the ancient green, and notes that there should be no confusion between the words green and black, since the verde antico can sometimes be quite dark.

Black buskins were the custom for despots and dignitaries. It has already been mentioned that Pachymeres uses the word *μελαμβαφής* (= dyed black) to describe the sandals of the despot John Komnenos Palaiologos (?–1274), who removed the insignia of sovereignty (τὰ τῆς δεσποτείας ἀπέβαλε σύμβολα) and, by wearing black-dyed buskins (*μελαμβαφέσι δὲ πεδίλοις*), was entitled to the title of δεσπότης only in name, since his headcover (καλύπτρα) and the colour of his horse's attributes (*καθ’ ἵππον στολισμοῖς*) suggested he had no right to the title anymore.

The addition of the component word – *βαφής* was meant also to differentiate between ranks, and this was another case of utilising imagery to support imperial ideology. Elsewhere, Pachymeres demonstrates the striking power of imagery in Byzantium by describing how the shoe-colour of a certain Theophylaktos proved him to be an innocent victim. Theophylaktos, one of Pachymeres’ relatives, and a secretary to the πρωτοβεστιάριος George Mouzalon – was killed by rioteers because he looked like his master.

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152. Choniates, 340: ὑπομελαῖνον τὸ πολυμερὲς τὴν κακίαν νυκτινόμον δαιμόνιον;
158. Pachymeres, VI.1: II, 435, and I, 85, n. 3.
(προσόμοιος τῷ κυρίῳ τὰ πάντα); unfortunately for him, his killers had not noticed the colour of his black buskins (τὸ γάρ πέδιλον ύποφανὲν τοῦ ποδός, μέλαν ὄν), while a πρωτοβεστιάριος wore green buskins. It was mentioned earlier that the despot John Komnenos Doukas was advised to wear his black shoes again, as this was considered to be the transitional colour between the ranks of despot and emperor.

Black was worn by everybody in times of grief, except for emperors, who wore only white, as mentioned earlier. George Voustronios (fifteenth century) uses the phrase cut black clothes (ἐκόψεν μαῦρα = he wore black) during grief: Καὶ μανθάνοντά το ὁ αποστολές πως ἐπέθανεν ἡ ρήγαινα ἐπῆρεν μεγάλην πλῆξιν Καὶ ἐκόψεν μαῦρα κ' εκείνος καὶ οἱ δουλευτάδες τοῦ [on learning that the queen had died the postulant grieved greatly, and both his servants dressed in black]. Gregoras refers to the black garments surrounding every age, meaning that death can come anytime, and to the sorrow expressed by wearing black clothes. Choniates uses μέλανα to describe the clothes of a widow. Chalkokondyles describes the black garments worn by the people surrounding Halil Pasha, the Granz Vizir of the Ottoman Empire, who mourned him after they were informed that he had been murdered in Andrianople. He also refers to the illness called μέλαινα, which caused black secretions (hence its name) and, ultimately, death.

159. Pachymeres, 85.
160. See above, p. 200.
161. Pachymeres, II, 657, n. 5.
162. The shoe colour of the protovestiarios was customarily green but in times of grief it was black, see Pachymeres, I, 84, n. 3. See also Pseudo-Kodinos, Trait des Offices-Introduction, Texte et Traduction, ed. trans. J. VERPEAUX, Paris 1966, 153. R. MACRIDES et al., Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court, Farnham 2013, 52-53. For green colour, see below.
166. Choniates, 548: γνύνη τις ἡμιφασάτο μέλανα χρήτει ἀνδρός.
167. Chalkokondyles, I, 208: ἐνταῦθα μὲν ὥρμηντο τῶν θεραπόντων αὐτοῦ οἱ πλείστοι μελαιοφορεῖν καὶ τῶν ἐπιτηδείων, ... ὡς ἂν ἐσθῆτα μέλαιναν φοροῖν.
Apart from death and sadness, black signified a loss of power. After the death of Anne, wife of Andronikos II, Michael VIII Palaiologos seized the opportunity to deprive his son of the right to wear purple garments (= become emperor) and attempted to remove his authority by forcing him to continue wearing black, which (as we have seen) was the colour of a despot’s outfit. Pachymeres mentions that when the army of John Palaiologos surrounded John I Doukas (ruler of Thessaly, 1268-1289) in a fortress in Neopatras, the latter managed to escape by dressing in a black cloak and pretending to be a servant. Ephraem described as ‘wretched’ the black clothes of Michael V Kalaphates (1041-1042), who sought refuge to the monastery of Stoudion, and for Ephraem and Pachymeres the phrase to become μελαμφόρος meant to become a monk. Another use of black was Gregoras’ description of a Bulgarian tribe he encountered as a Byzantine ambassador to Serbia in 1326. Gregoras also characterizes the second patriarchate of Athanasios I as more cruel than the first by using the Aesopian myth of a black cat, which he uses as a metaphor for becoming a monk (τὸ μοναδικὸν περιέθετο σχῆμα). He describes the fur of a white cat that turned black after falling into black dye. Now that the cat was black (like a monk’s attire), its prey (mice) initially believed that it would not be hungry for meat, since monks do not consume it. However, the cat became even hungrier for mice than before, by which Gregoras insinuates that Athanasios’ monastic disguise did not alter his fierce church policy. The use of black to describe animals also allowed for remarks on Byzantine political ideology. It has already been

169. Pachymeres, VI.28: II, 631: Σοφὸν δὲ ἄρα καὶ τὸ τοῦ καιροῦ ἥν, ὡς μὴ δόξαι τὰ ἐπίσημα μεταλλάττειν καί, ἀμὴ ἀποβαλόντα τὰ ἐννοθα, μεταλαμφάνειν τὰ ποικιλτά, ἀλλὰ, χρόνον φιέντος διὰ τὸ πένθος ἐπὶ μόνοις μέλαινοι, ἄνεκτην τὴν μεταβολὴν δεδόχθαι, ὡς ἐξ ἀρχῆς κοσμηθέντος τοῦ φορέσαντος τοῖς μετὰ βασιλεά λαμπροῖς. See also above, n. 47.

170. Ephraem, line 1059; μέλαν τι τριβόνιον ἐνδὺς ἀθλίως.


173. Gregoras, VII.1: I, 217: ἐν ὡς τὸ σκύτη μελαίνον ὁ σκύτης ἑκεῖνος εἶχεν ύγρόν, καὶ μόλις ἐκεῖθεν ἀνείσι μέλαν ἔχονα χρώμα.


BYZANTINA SYMMEIKTA 29 (2019), 195-230
mentioned that Pachymeres discusses the differences between Skythia and Ethiopia. Following his observation that in the South (Ethiopia) animals have turned black (μεμελάνωται)\(^\text{175}\), he describes a giraffe, a gift donated by the Mameluk Sultan of Egypt (Ethiopia) Baybars to Michael VIII\(^\text{176}\).

The detailed description of the giraffe, which includes the reference to a black line along the body of the animal\(^\text{177}\), as Petrides argues, “may seem like vintage historiographical ἀκρισία, lack of judgment [...] on the part of Pachymeres [...]. Nonetheless, [...] this assorted beast may symbolise the very kingdom of the Mameluks, a curious blend of nations and idiosyncrasies, a τέρας in its own right. If so, such use of zoological allegory here would be extremely interesting\(^\text{178}\). Pachymeres implies that having cultural, ethnological and political information on a potential ally is always helpful for the Byzantine state to establish a fruitful relationship with it. The use of antithetical colours indicated the level of polarity between the Byzantines and their allies-to-be, which, according to Pachymeres, called for the careful examination of the people with whom the Byzantines interacted. According to Kaldellis “the light and dark colors may signify the mixed nature of the Mamluk state that prevailed in the Near East”\(^\text{179}\). Popular geography reveals the relationship between geography and history in Byzantium, since the location of people influenced their way of life, language and mentality and thus their interaction with the Byzantines\(^\text{180}\).

Finally, Leontios Machairas describes the colour of a horse using the word μαῦρος, which denotes a Byzantine vernacular origin since neither

\(^\text{175}\). See n. 135 above.

\(^\text{176}\). For this unusual gift, see N. Moschonas, Η αγορά των δούλων, in: Χρήμα και ἀγορά τήν ἐποχή τῶν Παλαιολόγων, ed. N. Moschonas, Athens 2003, 251, n. 11. For diplomatic gifts in general, see A. Cutler, Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab, and Related Economies, DOP 55 (2001), 247-278.

\(^\text{177}\). Pachymeres, III.4: I, 239: λευκὸν τὴν κοιλίαν, καὶ ἀπὸ τραχήλου διὰ ῥάχεως πάσης καὶ ἕως οὐρᾶς μετρίας γραμμὴν ἐπὶ στάθμην μέλαιναν ἰθύντατα περικείμενον.

\(^\text{178}\). Petrides, Ethnography, 315.

\(^\text{179}\). A. Kaldellis, Ethnography after Antiquity. Foreign lands and peoples in byzantine literature, Philadelphia 2013, 159.

has Classical origin\(^{181}\), as is the case with an all-black horse (κατάμαυρον) in the Chronicle of the Tokko\(^{182}\). The progressive use of ἄσπρος instead of λευκός and μαύρος instead of μέλας marks the linguistic evolution of the Greek language towards the koine. Other uses of black include Michael Kritoboulos’ (1410-1470) paralleling of the sun to black copper (χαλκοῦ μέλανος)\(^{183}\), Pachymeres’ description of bread made with bran (πιτυρίας)\(^{184}\), and the black grains of θηριακή (theria)\(^{185}\), an antidote against the poisonous bites of animals and serious diseases\(^{186}\). Chalkokondyles uses it for stones\(^{187}\), Kritoboulos for machinery\(^{188}\), and Choniates for implements of iron\(^{189}\).

**Green**

In the previous article, green was examined against the framework of Syropoulos’ Memoirs\(^{190}\). An additional form of the same colour is the colour of frog used by Choniates to describe the buskins of a πρωτοβεστιάριος and the discoloration of a bull’s body during fight (he was turning greener than the colour of a frog)\(^{191}\). Kantakouzenos refers to a χλοάζουσα (= bright}

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181. See n. 140 and James, Light and Colour, 89. For the language of the chronicle of Machairas, see N. Anaxagorou, Narrative and stylistic structures in the Chronicle of Leontios Machairas, Nicosia 1998, 17-18.
182. Schirò, Cronaca dei Tokco, 238, line 229: Φαρὶν ἐκαβαλλίκεψεν κατάμαυρον…
187. Chalkokondyles, II, 176: τοὺς δὲ λίθους μέλανας ὄντας…
188. Kritoboulos, Historiae, 45: μελαιόντος ἐνδοθεν ὀδοιπομένη ἢ πάσοσαλος πνεύματι Ἴηρο. 
189. Choniates, 41: πῆ μὲν ἐς τὰ μέλανα καὶ οἰζοντα αὐθήμαι.

BYZANTINA SYMMEIKTA 29 (2019), 195-230

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green) olive branch\textsuperscript{192}, which could, however, also mean ‘fresh’. Overall, green is one of the most underrepresented colours in the historiography of the period under discussion.

\textbf{Κυανός}

\textit{Κυανός} is translated either as blue or as the colour of \textit{lapis lazuli}\textsuperscript{193}. Gregoraras and Akropolites spot differences in decoration but not in colour between the sandals of the \textit{σεβαστοκράτορες} John Palaiologos (brother of Michael VIII Palaiologos) and Constantine Tornikes. The emperor’s brother had eagles woven in gold attached to his blue shoes, whereas Tornikes’ blue sandals were decorated with no eagles\textsuperscript{194}. Hierarchy is here exalted through decoration only: both men had the same title, but, as a member of the imperial family, John Palaiologos was entitled to more elaborate attire. Syropoulos uses the word \textit{λαζούριον} (colour of lapis lazuli) to name one of the colours that decorated the small columns of the Doge’s Venetian galley\textsuperscript{195}, and Pachymeres uses the word \textit{κυανίζειν} (= looking like dark blue) to describe the colour of the sea\textsuperscript{196}.

\textbf{Yellow, orange, grey}

\textit{Χολοβάφινος, κιρρός, ὑπόκιρρον, ωχρός, πολιὸς}

Choniates mentions the colour of bile (\textit{χολοβάφινος})\textsuperscript{197} to denote a bad omen before battle: \textit{Οὐκ εὐσύμβολον τὸ χρῶμα τοῦτο, φησιν, ὦ βασιλεῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ λίαν κατὰ τὴν ὥραν τῶν ἀγαθῶν ταῖς ἀγαθαῖς τύχαις ἀντιπρᾶττον.}

In this incident, Gabras observed the yellowish appearance of the surcoat over the emperors’ coat of mail and remarked, ‘This is not an auspicious color, O Emperor, but in the hour of warfare it very much militates against good

\textsuperscript{192} \textit{Καθάπερ κλάδος χλοαζούσης ἐλαίας}, Kantakouzenos, VIII.1:II, 13.
\textsuperscript{193} James, \textit{Light and Colour}, 77, 121.
\textsuperscript{195} Syropoulos, \textit{Les ‘Mémoires’}, 228: καὶ τοῖς ἐκ λαζουρίου καὶ κυανοβάφινος χρώμισαν.
\textsuperscript{196} Pachymeres, IX.28: III, 295: \textit{θάλασσαν κυανίζειν τῷ φυσικῷ χρώματι}.
\textsuperscript{197} That it means yellow colour, see LSJ, s.v.
This is the most straightforward connection between colour and military campaigns in Late Byzantine historiography and shows the level to which colour had infiltrated Byzantine thought since similarly to an eclipse, colour could be contextualised as a malevolent sign. Alexander Kazhdan interprets the abovementioned quotation as ‘the imperial gold turns out to be the colour of bile and bitter defeat’ and the here Choniates ‘start[es] the reader with his unconventional interpretation’. The examination of colour use in the current article has shown that there is certainly nothing unconventional about interpreting the colour of bile since apart from the fact that yellow garments were worn by emperors during grief, it seems that compound words with χολή (= bile, gall) always had negative connotations. For example, Gregoras refers to the mother of Andronikos III Palaiologos (1328-1341), who abandoned everything of yellowish colour (χολοβάφινον). This comes after the writer contrasts roses with thorns and pure gold with fake metal, meaning that had she abandoned everything that appeared worthless to her, as power would seem to a woman who abandons everything to enter a monastery. In contrast, κιρρός does not have negative connotations but defines court titles. Κιρρός resembles yellow or orange, and is used by Gregoras to describe the yellow garments, sandals and horse coverings of the πανυπερσέβαστος (a fourteenth-century court title) and a nephew of Andronikos II, John Palaiologos. Pachymeres also uses κιρρός to describe ensigns and ύπόκιρρον for chalk.
It was shown above (p. 222) that Gregoras took a critical stand towards Patriarch Athanasios I by comparing him with a greedy black cat. Pachymeres makes a similar connection, associating the word ὧχρος (= pale) with Patriarch Athanasios I’s asceticism, reflected in the fact that his followers were barefoot (νήλιποί), pale (ὠχρίαι) and skeleton-like (κατεσκληκότες). Moreover, in his narration of the murder of the Mouzalon brothers in the Sosandron monastery, Pachymeres describes the expression of fear with the phrase ὧχρῳ τῷ προσώπῳ (pale in the face), which Choniates had at an earlier period associated with emotional state and immersion into deep thought. Finally, πολιὸς (= grey, grizzled, grisly) is used by Choniates and Gregoras exclusively to describe hair.

Conclusions
Liz James has argued that “there is no organized colour ‘symbolism’; rather the ‘meaning’ of the colour depends above all on the context in which it is used. Considering the unstable nature of manufactured colours, this should not surprise us.” From the cases examined in this essay, we can safely argue that this view represents the largest part but not all the examples discussed. This is because in Byzantine histories from the thirteenth up until the fifteenth century, colour functions in two levels: a purely descriptive one, that pertains to objects, facial characteristics, people and animals that the Byzantines were more or less familiar with, and a semantic one, such as the identification of the colour yellow as a bad omen before war. There are colours that lie somewhere in the middle, for they are used both to describe and to convey a message. However, what challenge James’ argument are the specific semantic embeddings for

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207. Choniates, 187: βαπτόμενοι πρὸς ὧχρον ἐπὶ δέος 
208. Choniates, 480: ὧχρός τε καὶ σύννους.
209. LSJ', s.v.
211. James, Light and Colour, 123.
certain colour words. For example, ἐρυθρὸς is associated with imperial commands, enthronement or deposition, ‘genuine’ assumption of power, which is the case with other words such as φοινικόχροος and φοινικοῦς. This is also the case of ἐρυθρὸς, which apart from its correlation to imperial power in Byzantium, it is since antiquity strongly correlated to human emotion (e.g. shame) either as an adjective or as verb and was carried on in later centuries also in this framework by Byzantine historians. Likewise, but in the other side of the same coin we find the suffix –βαφής as in ἐρυθροβαφής, φοινικοβαφής or μελαμβαφής that all denote illegitimate access to political or/and religious power. The intellectual ramifications of colours and their hues created a layered approach to the symbolisms they are attached to. For this reason, we can safely argue for the elevated linguistic sensitivity on the part of the Byzantines and a manipulation of the language that lays on their audience’s ability to decode the underlying messages. It can be said that in Late Byzantine historiography colour clearly propagates imperial ideology as it is particularly shown in the selection of words meaning red.

On a different level can we argue that the histories of this era provide detailed information on Byzantine material culture? Certainly not, since the information we have is abrupt especially if we consider that writers excluded a rich source for colourful descriptions: religious art. This choice however should not surprise us. Colour serves the purpose of history being recorded and in this process writers benefited from attending to objects the description of which could either upscale the vividness of their descriptions if colours were used in a purely descriptive manner or to perpetuate the imperial grandeur if colours were used symbolically. What bridges the actual and the symbolic is that the use of colour in historical accounts in the Late Byzantine period often depicts the Byzantine Empire in ‘archaic’ pigments, emphasizing Byzantium’s political ideology but less often than a commentary in on-going events. Thus, colorful descriptions are transformed to bastions of imperial authority using objects of material culture. In other words, the bridging between texts and colour in Late Byzantine historiography reveals that aesthetic approaches in histories did not aim at creating a visual imprint rather to convey the principles of imperial ideology. By referring to aspects of imperial ideology it was easy for the readers to
comprehend the commentary provided through colour as the semantics was familiar to them due to their repetition from writer to writer and from their acknowledgement of the power of imagery in Byzantium212.

Overall, Byzantine customs and political status were fortified through colourful descriptions in times when Byzantium was transforming itself through its interaction with other ethnicities because of war, trade, and cultural exchange. Gregoras bears witness to an innovation (καινοτομία) that took place during the reign of Andronikos III in the fashion of headgear. What is remarkable is not the novelty itself but Gregoras’ equation of new habits in attire with the dissolution of dominion (κατάλυσιν [...] τῆς βασιλείας)213. Byzantine sartorial customs safeguarded the perpetuation of imperial authority, and this is also exactly the message conveyed by colour: it protected the ideals of Byzantine imperial ideology in a period marked by constant change.

212. On the role of colour as means of social critic, see KAZHDAN – FRANKLIN, Nicetas Choniates, 263.

Το Χρώμα στην Βυζαντινή Ιστοριογραφία (13ος-15ος αι.)

Το άρθρο πραγματεύεται τη λειτουργία του χρώματος στα κείμενα της βυζαντινής ιστοριογραφίας μεταξύ του 13ου και του 15ου αιώνα. Μέσα από την ανάλυση της χρήσης των χρωμάτων και των αποχρώσεών τους γίνεται σαφές ότι το χρώμα αποτελεί μέσο με το οποίο οι συγγραφείς μεταφέρουν το πολιτικό και θρησκευτικό κλίμα της εποχής, προσφέροντας στον σημερινό αναγνώστη τη δυνατότητα διαφορετικής πρόσληψης της ιστορικής διήγησης. Για τον βυζαντινό αναγνώστη, το χρώμα εμπεριείχε ιδεολογικούς χρωματισμούς που προσδιόριζαν τη βυζαντινή ταυτότητα σε σχέση με άλλες πολιτικές και θρησκευτικές οντότητες και έτσι προάσπιζε την αυτοκρατορική ιδεολογία σε μια περίοδο έντονων αλλαγών.