

**Areg Vardanyan, *Mutual Perceptions of Armenians, Greeks and Latins during the Komnenian Era (1081-1185)*. Bachelor Thesis. Prague: Charles University, Faculty of Humanities, 2020, 46 pp.**

*opponent review*

Anthropology, sociology and history have paid attention to the phenomenon of otherness and stereotypes for a long time. Areg Vardanyan attempts to outline the image of “the other” in Byzantium during the Komnenian era. His bachelor thesis is based on the semantic analysis of six texts originated in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and written in Armenian (Matthew of Edessa and Samuel of Ani), Greek (Niketas Choniates and Anna Komnene) and Latin (William of Tyre and Fulcher of Charters). It is necessary to appreciate that Armenian texts were used in their original form. By contrast, Greek and Latin chronicles are cited in English translations only.

Vardanyan’s thesis is well structured and fulfils all requirements of the academic text. The author pays main attention to characteristics of the mutual perception of Armenians, Greeks and Latins in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. I appreciate his ability to present the transformation of the image of “the other” as a dynamic phenomenon, depended often on the social origin of the author, which was changing in time and in connection with a concrete situation.

Nevertheless, despite all positives it is evident that the submitted construction and deconstruction of the image of “the other” is not the only possible perspective. The ethnic group identity can be observed not only through the negative image of foreign groups. At least three other aspects are worth considering: First, how was the caricatured form of qualities, which “the others” proved but which were lacking in the own group, projected into negative stereotypes or did the Latins ridicule strong qualities of the Greeks? Second, to what extent were negative attributes, of which the group was ashamed, reflected in the characteristic of “the others” or to what extent did the Latins or Armenians project their own weaknesses into the image of the Greeks? Third, how deep was awareness of social barriers inside the own group and reversely, what common characteristics did the consciousness of the own group consist of, in term of the relation towards foreigners? It would be also useful to define the rhetorical means (topoi) of particular images and to find out what was the rhetoric strategy of particular authors, being able to uncover deeper intents.

The reason why these other aspects are not considering to a sufficient degree relates, in my opinion, to the lack of theoretical concept supported with literature. Moreover, in some places poorer English occurs.

With respect to above mentioned remarks I recommend the submitted thesis to be awarded the **Very good** grade (“B”).

Prague, 22 June 2020

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