Time as a Dimension of Byzantine Identity

Identity in Byzantium

Identity – going back to the Byzantine Congress in Copenhagen¹ (1996) – is a current issue of research in Byzantine Studies. Identity is closely linked with a sense of belonging². Though the systems of cultural, religious, moral and ideological rules differ in the different regions of the Mediterranean, they are all deeply rooted in a fundamental need for belonging and express a need for communication with like-minded individuals. Hence, it is not astonishing that in Medieval Studies the development of a collective identity is of particular interest given the mythical ethnogenesis of many nations before the very beginning of their “history”³. With respect to ethnogenesis, Byzantium is one of the rare exceptions: it has no mythical origin because its prehistory is an amalgam of Christian ideology and the later history of the Roman Empire⁴.

Ancient, Byzantine and modern Greek identity have common elements, but also significant differences. In particular, the idea of an unbroken continuum from the Ancient past to the Modern Greek present – which was at least in part provoked or intensified by Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer’s theories – was (and still is) under discussion⁵.

² Always a rewarding topic for politological and anthropological scientists, it actually has gained currency again, see e.g. B. Latour, M. Lilla, Heimat: Was bedeutet sie heute?, “Die Zeit” Nr. 12, March 14, 2019, p. 40sq.
For the Byzantines in the Eastern Empire, the self-definition as Romaioi (“Romans”) had dominated since the 4th century. They used this term, mostly without too much reflection, in order to express their belonging to the Christian Greek Roman empire. To be a Roman was normal; it did not express a particular relationship to ancient Rome or any conscious sense of ethnic belonging, but more or less a political and ideological superiority and, as such, a delimitation from other empires or states. The name Romaioi was adopted and adapted into Ṣūrnî since late antiquity by the Syrians and the Arabs, and later also by Turkish tribes. Arabic scholars and writers made a clear distinction between the Byzantines, the Ṣûrnî, and the ancient Greeks, the Iûnânîûn: Al-Ğahiz (d. 868), a member of the ‘House of Wisdom’ (bait al-hikma) in Bagdad, denied their hellenic tradition, maintaining that the ancient Iûnânîûn had been savants (‘ulamā), whereas the Ṣûrnî were only artisans (ṣumānā).

The ancient Greek term for identity is tautotes. Its notion was discussed in its traditional meaning, in contrast to the opposite heterotes (“otherness”), also by Christian authors since Late Antiquity (e.g. in Clemens of Alexandria’s Stromata and in Damascius’ Parmenides). The approach in the Doctrina patrum...

6 Later also Romoi, to be found in written sources since the 16th century, see Georgius Chortatzes, Ἑρωφιλή, 6.23–25, ed. S. Alexiou, M. Apostiti, Athens 1988: Ποῦ τῶν Ἑλλήνων οἱ βασιλεῖς, ποῦ τῶ Ρωμιῶν οἱ τόσες / πλούσιες καὶ μπορεξάμενες χώρες, ποῦ τόσες γνώσες / καὶ τέχνες, ποῦ 'ναι οἱ δόξες τως…, and half a century later Marinus Tzanè Thronialèes, Ο Κρητικὸς Πόλεμος, 2.187–90 (et passim), ed. S. Alexiou, M. Apostiti, Athens 1995: Μά τὴν ἀρμάδα τῶν Τουρκῶν εἰδασ’ ἐκεῖν’ ἀράξου / καὶ ἀρχοντες πολλοι, Ρωμιοι, ἔτρεχαν νὰ φτάσου / στὴ χώρα, στὴν πατρίδα τως, ὀγιὰ νὰ πολεμοῦσι, / νὰ διώχνου τοὺς άγαρηνους, κ’ ἐκεῖνοι νὰ κοποῦσι. – Romoi is still in use: Personally I remember the quarrel of two Greek fisherman in the early seventies of the 20th c., ending with the angry question: So, what are you, a Roman or a Turk (Ρωμιός είσαι ἢ Τούρκος;)?


8 Mainly for ideological and religious aspects of otherness see C.D. Merantz, ANA-ΧΩΡΑ(-Η) ΣΗ: μορφές ετερότητας στον βυζαντινό πολιτισμό, Athens 2014.

9 Most of the following quotations from Greek texts are owed to the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae Digital Library, ed. M.C. Pantelia, University of California, Irvine, http://www.tlg.uci.edu [II–III 2019].


was influential on others; its content was later received by John of Damascus and Michael Psellus. The *Doctrina patrum* explains the three *modoi* of difference between identity and otherness as follows:

Identity is the indistinguishability, according to which the sense of the indicated term owns in every respect its uniqueness and knows in no way any difference. One must know that the identity is understandable in three modes. It is identical with kind… it is also identical with species… finally, it is identical with number… The difference is also understandable three-fold: It is a difference in kind and species and again number.

In later centuries, Michael Psellus and John Italus speak about the contrast of *tautotes* vs. *heterotes* as a subdivision of *genos*, whereas, for example, Pseudo-Zonaras defines *tautotes* separately from “otherness”, a term which he expresses primarily with *diaphora*.

Byzantine scholars, however, did not use the term *tautotes* in the meaning of “identity”, as it is understood nowadays in social and political sciences, namely, the sum of beliefs about oneself, in particular the individual feeling as a personality.
or – in the case of collective identity – as belonging to a social, ethnic, or cultural group. Nevertheless, we observe some interest in collective identity, though expressed in other terms: an informative example is Nicephorus Blemmydes in the 13th century. He discusses the meanings of *génos* and observes, that *génos* describes the origin (*arche*) of a person or group, and he makes the following distinction:

> The meanings of ‘genos’ may differ. ‘Genos’ may refer to the origin of each one’s provenance, be it of his procreator or his home… Hence, the origin of the provenance is dual, natural and local.\(^{18}\)

Fundamental manifestations of any dimension of identity – and in particular collective identity – are *language*\(^{19}\) (including *culture*)\(^{20}\), *religious* (and *political*) commitment\(^{21}\), and *space* (Greek keywords for local regional and supraregional

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\(^{18}\) Nicephorus Blemmydes, *Epitome logica*, [in:] *PG*, vol. CXLII, col. 753: …Τὰ σημαινόμενα τοῦ γένους διάφορα. Γένος γὰρ λέγεται καὶ ἡ ἑκάστου τῆς γενέσεως ἀρχή, εἴτε ἀπὸ τοῦ τεκόντος, εἴτε ἀπὸ τῆς πατρίδος… Διττὴ τούτων ἡ τῆς γενέσεως ἀρχή, φυσική τε καὶ τοπικὴ…

\(^{19}\) Not only Greek and Latin, but also – regionally and chronologically differentiated – more than a dozen other languages: Albanian, Caucasian Albanian, Arabic, Armenian, Coptic, Georgian, Gothic, Greek, Hebrew, Latin and Romance languages (e.g. Vlach), Persian, southern Slavic languages, Syro-Aramaic, many of them in dialectal variations. Maximus Homologetes’ distinction between religion and language (Maximus Homologetes, *Relatio motionis*, [in:] *PG*, vol. XC, col. 128) is interesting:

> Καὶ σιωπησάντων αὐτῶν λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ σακελλάριος· Διατί ἀγαπᾷς τοὺς Ῥωμαίους, καὶ τοὺς Γραικοὺς μισεῖς. Ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ δοῦλος τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶπε· παραγγελίαν ἔχομεν, τοῦ μὴ μισῆσαί τινα. Ἀγαπῶ τοὺς Ῥωμαίους ὡς ὁμοπίστους, τοὺς δὲ Γραικοὺς ὡς ὁμογλώσσους.


identity: patris, polis, politeuma, kome, chorion; klima, epeiros, oikoumene)\textsuperscript{22}, phenomena which are deeply rooted in human consciousness.

This paper does not deal with space, religion and language, which were discussed in earlier studies, but with one further complex dimension, the relationship between identity and time.

Identity and time

At first glance, time and temporality are not so obviously related to identity, though they are immanent in human consciousness and as phenomena not imaginable without beginning and end\textsuperscript{23}. Characteristically, William Butler Yeats says at the beginning of his famous Vision:

I think if I could be given a month of Antiquity and leave to spend it where I chose, I would spend it in Byzantium a little before Justinian opened St. Sophia and closed the Academy of Plato\textsuperscript{24}. I think I could find in some little wine shop some philosophical worker in mosaic who could answer all my questions, the supernatural descending nearer to him than to Plotinus even, for the pride of his delicate skill would make what was an instrument of power to princes and clerics, a murderous madness in the mob, show as a lovely flexible presence like that of a perfect human body.\textsuperscript{25}

Following him, human beings identify their belonging not only in terms of space, but also in terms of time. Mikhail Bakhtin had an entirely different approach to time: some hundred years ago, he referred to Einstein’s Theory of


\textsuperscript{24} In 529 or a little later, the emperor Justinian imposed a ban of teaching in the Platonic Academy in Athens; on December 27\textsuperscript{th}, 537, he inaugurated the new Saint Sophia (the second building being destroyed by fire during the Nika riot, 532); see: R. Scott, Justinian’s New Age and the Second Coming, [in:] idem, Byzantine Chronicles and the Sixth Century, Ashgate 2012, p. 7–8.

\textsuperscript{25} W.B. Yeats, A Vision, London 1937, p. 279.
Relativity and introduced the term *chronotope* ("time-space") into the theory of literature, in order to express the inseparability of space and time:

The special meaning it [scil. the *chronotope*] has in relativity theory is not important for our purposes; we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor... What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space)... The *chronotope* as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic.\(^{26}\)

As for the topic "time in Byzantium", Paolo Odorico, starting from the peak of the confrontation between Neoplatonism and Christianity in the 6\(^{th}\) century, recently made a significant contribution. He studied the influence of four categories of time – cosmic, historical, social, and individual – on the human condition and pointed to the formation of a new class of historiography that focussed on a universal history since the creation of the world (John Malalas, the *Chronicon Paschale*...): *Le temps cosmique est pour les Byzantins fondé sur l'action de Dieu, et de Lui dépend aussi le temps historique, qui ne repose que sur sa volonté. Le temps social de l'Empire s'aligne sur cette base, en rapportant à la dimension théologique [emphasized by JK] toute son organisation*\(^{27}\). Earlier, Gilbert Dagron analyzed the *ecumenic* purview of the emperors' political and religious power\(^{28}\). In his remarks on the territorial and temporal ecumenicity, he emphasized the latter's importance, which still increased in the 9\(^{th}\) and 10\(^{th}\) centuries. Relying on these considerations, it is obvious to postulate an inseparability of time and identity, especially collective identity.

The outstanding importance of *eschatological* time was highlighted by Gerhard Podskalsky and Paul Magdalino. Podskalsky\(^{29}\) again emphasized the theological origin of the Byzantine concept of history in the Jewish and Hellenistic tradition


and identified two types of imperial eschatology, the political and the religious, resulting in the perpetuation of the millennial reign. Magdalino\(^{30}\) took the chronological scheme of the cosmic week, which originated in the era of the world and dominated the thought of Byzantine authors, as an occasion to point out their concentration on the fate of the Byzantine empire and its capital Constantinople, when they express their eschatological expectations.

Only recently, Ilias Anagnostakis\(^{31}\) discussed the relationship between time and collective identity. Proceeding from the appeal Μετανοεῖτε, ἠγγικε γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (Matthew 3, 2 and 4, 17), he studied the Life of Nikon Metaneoite not only as an element of the narrative in the saint's life, but also “as an element of the saint’s identity and as the reflection of an eschatological age”, and “as the regulatory element in the religious identity of a community”, thus emphasizing the importance of time for collective identity.

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For a nearer analysis of the relationship between time and identity, the meanings of key words like \textit{aion}, \textit{kairos} and \textit{chronos}, and the relationships among them are helpful\(^{32}\). In spite of their versatile use in Patristic and Byzantine texts and their ambiguity, a closer examination of these three terms opens the opportunity for differentiated interpretations (and translations), which comply with the development of meanings in post-classical Greek and offer efficient links to identity. Not surprising, many of these meanings are strongly influenced by the Bible; the following four passages in the Septuagint and the New Testament\(^{33}\) may underpin this observation:

Ecclesiastes 3, 1–2, 11, 14: For every thing there is a \textit{chronos} (time) and for every matter under heaven a \textit{kairos} (right time), a \textit{kairos} to give birth and a \textit{kairos} to die, a \textit{kairos} to plant and a \textit{kairos} to harvest the planted... He made everything good in its \textit{kairos}; and he has given the \textit{aion} (eternity) in their heart, but mankind should not comprehend what God had created, from beginning to the end... I understood that whatever God had done, lasts for the \textit{aion}; there is no adding to it, and no taking away from it.


\(^{32}\) In the cases of \textit{eniautos} and \textit{etos} (not in G.H.W. Lampe, \textit{A Patristic Greek Lexicon}, Oxford 1961 and E. Trapp et al., \textit{Lexikon zur byzantinischen Literatur}, vol. I–II, Vienna 2001–2017), both correspond in principle (\textit{LS}, col. 576b–577a, and 704a) to "year", the former emphasizing the duration of the year (see: e.g., Pseudo-Ioannes Zonaras, \textit{Lexikon}, epsilon 717), the second the unit of time (I am grateful to the anonymous reader for this clarification).

Sophia Salomonis 7, 17–19: For he himself gave me an unerring knowledge of the things that exist, to know the constitution of the world and the activity of the elements, the archē (beginning) and telos (end) and middle of chronoi (times), the alterations of the solstices and the changes of the kairoi (seasons), the cycles of the eniautos (year) and the constellations of the stars...

Titus 1, 1–3: Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of aionios (eternal) life, which God, who never lies, promised a long chronos (time) ago and at the idioi kairoi (proper times) manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior...

Luke 18, 29–30: Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this kairos (time), and in the aion (age) to come the aionios zoe (eternal life).

The framework of meanings of aion, kairos and chronos is confirmed by these and other passages in the New Testament. For a more differentiated understanding of the terms during the Byzantine period, I am quoting some characteristic examples from the large number of relevant Patristic texts, beginning with the definitions by Pseudo-Zonaras and continuing with quotations from other sources. Pseudo-Zonaras defines aion: “the time or what is coextensive in the heavens, like a temporal movement or distance”; kairos: “suitable time for work”; and kata kairos: “in the convenient and appointed time, so the apostle: He [Christ] died at the appointed time for the wicked”; chronos: “movement and course of the sun in a proportioned motion; or the coextensive with the substance of the world distance, in which every movement is measured, be it of the stars or living being or whatever is moved”.

34 See also: Gal 4, 10: ἡμέρας παρατηρεῖσθε καὶ μῆνας καὶ καιροὺς καὶ ἐνιαυτούς.
35 E.g. Gal 6, 7–10: Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life (ζωὴν αἰώνιον). And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season (κατὰ καιρὸν ἢ ἀπόδοσιν) we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity (καιρόν), let us do good to everyone. Act 1, 6–8: So when they had come together, they asked him, Lord, will you at this time (ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ τούτῳ) restore the kingdom to Israel? He said to them, It is not for you to know times or seasons (χρόνους ἢ καιρούς) that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.
36 PSEUDO-IOANNES ZONARAS, Lexikon, alpha 63sq: Αἰών· ὁ χρόνος ἢ τὸ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. οἷόν τι χρονικὸν κίνημα καὶ διάστημα· … ἀπέραντος αἰών δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀεὶ ὤν.
37 PSEUDO-IOANNES ZONARAS, Lexikon, kappa 1145: Καιρός· χρόνος ἢ πρόσηκος εἰς ἕργασίαν.
38 PSEUDO-IOANNES ZONARAS, Lexikon, kappa 1149: Κατὰ καιρὸν· κατὰ τὸν ὕδαιμον καὶ προσήκοντα καιρόν καὶ χρόνον. ὀὕτως ὁ Ἁπόστολος (Rom 5, 6)· κατὰ καιρὸν ὑπὲρ ἀσεβῶν ἀπέθανεν.
39 PSEUDO-IOANNES ZONARAS, Lexikon, chi 1860: Χρόνος· ἡμέρας καὶ πορεία μετὰ ἐμμέτρου φοράς, ἢ τὸ παρεκτεινόμενον τῇ ὑποστάσει τοῦ κόσμου διάστημα, ἐν ὑπόστασις καίνας εἶτε ἀστέρων, εἶτε ζωῶν, εἶτε οὐσίας ῥου μῖν κινούμενων.
Pseudo-Galenus, in *Peri chymon*, draws a remarkable parallel in the following comparison: “What in the universe (kosmos) is an element (stoicheion), is in human beings a humour (chymos), even as in the year (chronos) a season (kairos), not having complete identity (tautotes) or likeness (homoiotes)... the seasons of the year being spring, summer, winter and autumn”⁴².

In the early 9th century, two authors explain the difference of chronos and kairos for their contemporaries. George Choiroboscus answers the question “How differ kairos and chronos?” as follows: “kairos is the measured arrival of days, chronos the extent of many kairoi and days”⁴³. Michael Syncellus explains that “chronos is more general and comprehensive than kairos; chronos encompasses kairos, but kairos does not encompass chronos”⁴⁴. The term chronos stands in the tradition of the Antiquity; it is formulaically linked with trochos and tyche, this often in ecclesiastical texts⁴⁵.

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⁴⁰καιρός (often contrasted to αἰών): due measure, proportion, fitness, exact or critical or convenient time, season, opportunity, period (LSJ, col. 859b–860a); fit, right, proper time, opportunity, present age, to come, ages of history, and time compared with eternity (G.H.W. Lampe, A Patristic..., col. 693b); year (E. Trapp et al., Lexikon zur..., col. 734b).

⁴¹χρόνος: time, a definite time, period, date, term, year (LSJ, col. 2008b–2009a); time, esp. in contrast to kairos and to aion, (divine) timelessness, eternity (of Son or Word), occasion and year (G.H.W. Lampe, A Patristic..., col. 1534b).


Ο πᾶσαν ἁπλῶς τεκτονεύσας τὴν κτίσιν, Ἐν πᾶσι τηρῶν τὴν τιμὴν τῆς τετράδος, Τέσσαρις καιροῖς ῥάφιζε τὸν χρόνον.


but also among non-theological authors⁴⁶, whereas the term kairos is used only as an exception in this context⁴⁷.

**kairos / aion**⁴⁸

As early as the break between the 4th and 5th centuries, the relationship between kairos and aion is explained by John Chrysostomus: “Short is the present kairos in relation to the interminable aiones”⁴⁹. In another homily, he refers to Paul’s letter to the Romans: “… and we must leave off from indifference. For deliverance is nearer now than we believed. Do you see, how he draws their attention already to the resurrection? As the chronos goes on, he says, the kairos of this life will be consumed and that of the future aion comes nearer⁵⁰. One generation earlier, Basil of Caesarea makes a clear distinction between the short kairos of this life and the eternity of the aion: “The present kairos is for repentance and forgiving of sins; but in the future aion comes the just judgement of retribution”⁵¹.

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⁴⁸ αἰῶν: period of existence, lifetime, life, age, generation, destiny, long space of time, epoch, age, epoch, age, the ages, i.e. eternity (LSJ, col. 45b); age, aeon, eternity, time, long but definite period, but also period(s) of indefinite duration (G.H.W. Lampe, A Patristic..., col. 55–57a); year (E. Trapp et al., Lexikon zur..., col. 37b) – αἰώνιος, …lasting for an age (αἰών II), perpetual, eternal (but dist. fr. άδιοι).


The relationship between *aion* and *chronos* was subject to the continuous development of both term's meanings. In the majority of cases, it may be found in theological contexts, once already in an ancient tragedy. In the Septuagint, with some insignificant exceptions, the wording εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα χρόνον, “for eternal times” (adjectival use of αἰών) dominates, and this wording was predominant in the patristic literature until the 5th century.

The development towards a separate interpretation of the two terms began obviously from the 5th/6th centuries, in particular in the discussion of the meaning of the *aïdiótes* (“everlastingness”). A representative selection from the large number of authors should begin with Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita; he postulates in *De divinis nominibus*:

It is necessary, I believe, to be informed about the nature not only of time (*chronos*), but also of eternity (*aion*) by the savants,

and he continues with an explanation, from which the main passage reads as follows:

… He [scil. Gregory of Nyssa] calls time, what by generation and destruction and alteration occasionally acts differently. Therefore, the theology teaches that we already here, bound in time, participate in eternity, whenever we are suitable for the eternal and always such existing eternity… (Therefore, we should) send hymns to God as eternity and time, as creator of all time and eternity and as ‘ancient of days’, because he is before time and above time and changing ‘periods (*kairoi*) and times (*chronoi*)’ and again existing before eternities, being before eternity and above eternity, and his kingdom is the kingdom of all eternities.
In chapters 4 and 5 of his *De aeternitate* (Κατὰ τῶν Πρόκλου περὶ ἀιδιότητος κόσμου ἐπιχειρημάτων), John Philoponus (6th century) argues against Proclus,57 and he offers a concise definition: “Eternity (aion) existed when time (chronos) did not exist, and eternity will exist when time will not exist.”58 The *Doctrina Patrum* (7th–8th centuries) says in a similar manner: “Eternity (aion) is time-less (chronos achronos) and endless end (peras aperanton).”59 Finally, John of Damascus (7/8th century) states: “What for those under the time (chronos) is the time, is for those in the everlasting (aïdia) the eternity (aion).”60

Most of the authors after the turn of the millenium remained more or less in the paths of their predecessors, so, for example, John Italus (11th century)61 and Gregory Palamas62. I should also mention John Cyparissiotes, who quotes *De divinis nominibus*, book 10 of Dionysius Areopagita63, and Gennadius Scholarius, who authored an *epítome* of the first part of Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*.64

The personality who deals with the relationship between *aion* and *chronos* several times is Michael Psellus (11th century) – not only in the *Opusculum logicum*465 and in the *Theological Treatises* 41, 88 and 105, but especially in his *Theological Treatise* 32, which is entirely dedicated to the topic “About eternity” (*Peri aionos*).66

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59 Doctrina patrum, p. 253.15: Αἰών ἐστι χρόνος ἄχρονος καὶ πέρας ἀπέραντον.


61 Ioannes Italus, *Quaestiones*, p. 60: …ὁ αἰσθητὸς οὗτος διάκοσμος οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ παράδειγμα, ἀλλ’ εἰκὼς, ἄλλου ὄντος τοῦ παραδείγματος καὶ χρόνος ἐνταῦθα, αἰῶνος ὄντος ἐκεῖνος.


65 Michael Psellus, *Opuscula*, op. 41.60–65: εἰ γὰρ αἰῶν ἐστὶ ζωή ἐν στάσει καὶ τῷ αὐτῷ ὠσάτωσι, εἰκόνα δὲ δεῖ τοῦ αἰῶνος τὸν χρόνον μὴ εἶναι, ἀντὶ μὲν κινήσεως νυχτῆς ψυχῆς τινος μέρους κινήσεως μέτρον τὸν χρόνον οἰρεῖν, ἀντὶ δὲ ταυτότητος καὶ τοῦ ὄσατός καὶ μένοντος τὸ μὴ μένον ἐν ταύτῳ… δεὶ δὲ νῦν ἔξωθεν τῇ ψυχῆς λαμβάνειν τὸν χρόνον, οὐδὲ τὸν αἰῶνα ἐκεῖ ἔξω τοῦ ὄντος, οὐδὲ παρακολούθημα ὡδ’ ὑστερον, ἀλλ’ ἐνορωμένον καὶ ἐνόντα καὶ συνόντα, ὡσπερ κάκει αἰῶν.

66 Michael Psellus, *Theologica*, op. 32, Περὶ αἰῶνος (etiam: *De omnifaria doctrina*, Appendix 2, Περὶ αἰῶνος.

Understand time (chronos) as an image of eternity (aion). If so, the reasoning by conversion says: agree that eternity is an example for the time… Such is eternity; time is a product of it, left behind by the father’s state. It was born in order to come to an end… We participated in a small share of the nature of time. The soul… is placed between eternity and time… Its substance is eternal, but its energy is temporal… Also the harmonious concordance of time and eternity leads me to this, as the opposites – correlating with each other – coalesced.  

The individualization and personalization of temporality can be verified by the combination of time-related terms with the possessive pronouns emos or (collectively) hemeteros. A biblical starting point seems to be the passage in the Gospel of John: Jesus said to them, My time has not yet come, but your time is always here… Go to the festival yourselves. I am not going to this festival, for my time has not yet fully come, which was commented on in the Catena in Ioannem and from many Church fathers (Athanasius of Alexandria, Basil of Caesarea, Cyril of Alexandria, John Chrysostomus, Nilus of Ancyra and Socrates Scholasticus).

67 Michael Psellus, Theologica, op. 32, 1sq: Αἰῶνος εἰκόνα τὸν χρόνον ἐπίστασο· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, ἀντιστρέψας ὁ λόγος ἐρεῖ, χρόνου παράδειγμα τὸν αἰῶνα τίθεσο… 49sq: Τοιοῦτος μὲν ὁ αἰών· ὁ δὲ γε χρόνος γέννημα μὲν ἐκείνου, ἀπολελειμμένον δὲ τῆς πατρικῆς στάσεως· γεγένηται γάρ, ἵνα καὶ ἐκδράμη… 73–75: ἡμεῖς δὲ ἐν βραχεῖ μέρει τῆς τοῦ χρόνου μετεσχήκαμεν φύσεως. ἡ δὲ γε ψυχή, ὑπὲρ ὁμοίως, μεταξύ αἰῶνος καὶ χρόνου τετάχαται… 78–82: αἰωνίζει is eternal μὲν γὰρ αὐτῆς ψυχῆς, χρονίζει is temporal δὲ ἡ ἐνέργεια ἡ αἰωνίζει εἰς τοῦτο καὶ ἡ παναρμόνιος συμφωνία χρόνου πρὸς αἰῶνα καθαρτότος καὶ τῶν ἐναντίων ἀλλήλοις συνυπολογησάντων.

68 Io 7, 6 and 8: λέγει οὖν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ὁ καιρὸς ὁ ἐμὸς οὔπω πάρεστιν, ὁ δὲ καιρὸς ὁ ὑμέτερος πάντοτε ἐστὶν ἔτοιμος. …ὑμεῖς ἀνάβητε εἰς τὴν ἑορτήν· ἐγὼ οὐκ ἀναβαίνω εἰς τὴν ἑορτὴν ταύτην, ὅτι ὁ ἐμὸς καιρὸς οὔπω πεπλήρωται; Jesus said to them, My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. – See also: Nonnus’ Paraphrasis sancti evangelii Ioannei, VII, 23–25, 32–35, ed. A. Scheindler, Leipzig 1881: …καὶ σφιν ἄναξ ἀγόρευεν ἀμοιβαίῳ τινὶ μύθῳ οὔπω καίριος ἦλθεν ἐμὸς χρόνος, ὑμέτερος δὲ πέπταται αἰὲν ἑτοῖμος, ἐλεύθερος… οὔπω ἐγὼ κλισίας νεοπηγέας ἄρτι γεραίρων εἰς τελετὴν ὁσίην ἐπιβήσομαι. ἡμετέρου γὰρ οὔπω μοι τετέλεστο χρόνου δρόμος. ὣς ὁ μὲν εἰπὼν ἐστὶ άκερς διαφθοράς, άγνής ἐδείχθην ἀκερσικόμων Γ αλιλαίων.

69 Catena in Ioannem, 261.6 and 30sq. [in:] Catenae Graecorum patrum..., vol. II, Oxford 1841: Οὐ γὰρ εἶπεν, ὑμεῖς τίνες ἐστέ συμβουλεύοντες ταῦτα καὶ διδάσκοντες, ἀλλὰ τί φησίν; “ὁ καιρὸς ὁ ἐμὸς οὔπω πάρεστι, τοῦτον τοῦ σταυροῦ καὶ τοῦ θανάτου… Τὸ δὲ “ὁ καιρὸς ὁ ἐμὸς οὔπω πεπλήρωται” δηλοῖ ότι ἔδει καὶ σημεῖα γενέσθαι καὶ δημηγορίας λεχθῆναι…

Athanasius of Alexandria and Socrates Scholasticus extended the interpretation of Io 7 in referring additionally to Mt 26, 45: *Then he came to the disciples and said to them, Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners*, and to the marriage in Cana, Io 2, 3–5: *When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, They have no wine. And Jesus said to her, Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come. His mother said to the servants, Do whatever he tells you.* Thus both authors indicate the general significance of kairos (and even hora, “time of day”) as the proper or suitable time in human life.

However, a reference to the present time of the respective authors is only implied or hinted at in these texts. The decisive additional step came from the following authors, who equated the kairos with their individual lifetime or (collectively) with the historical period, in which they and their contemporaries existed: Athanasius of Alexandria critised his opponents, the followers of Arius, who “in our time” by challenging the right faith, do not support the truth, and he compares them with a group of disciples, who did not accept the content of Jesus’ teaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and in the synagogue at Capernaum (Io 6). John Chrysostomos appealed to his contemporaries in his 4th homily on the First Letter to the Thessalonians: *Ours is the time! Let us use it for what is necessary! Let us cut off the ropes of the sins! Before we pass away, let us judge ourselves!*
Do not let the sun go down on your anger! Ephrem Syrus prayed to God to send to him his grace and to unravel his thoughts, because the distractions and cares during the present time (proskairos kairos) kept him away from God’s eternal benefits. Finally, at the end of Byzantium, Gennadius Scholarius lamented “our discord”, in comparing it with the mentality of “preparedness” in the times of the apostle Paul.

To sum up the evidence, which results from the quoted sources and the mentioned studies: Time cannot be unlimited and infinite, because for human beings it is unimaginable without beginning and end. Time has to be structured in the dimensions of the past, present and future (and this for different cultures in different ways). The sources allow us to conclude that from the varieties of time (which were identified in the above mentioned bibliography), eschatological (cosmic) time dominated the thinking of the homo byzantinus in relation to individual and collective identity, whereas the historical dimension was rather limited to authors of a small educated class.

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77 Ioannes Chrysostomus, *In epistulam I ad Thessalonicenses*, hom. IV (on 1Thess 3, 5–8), [in:] PG, vol. LXII, col. 415sq: Ἡμέτερος ο καιρός· χρησώμεθα αὐτῷ εἰς δέον. Τὰ σχοινία τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων διακόψωμεν· ἀπὸ ό ή ἀπέλθειν εἰς τὸ κρίτηριον, αὐτοὶ κρίνωμεν ἀλλήλους. Ὁ ἥλιος, φησὶ, μὴ ἐπιδεύ-

tai pálin tâ deixía mou tráumata. Ἰδοὺ γάρ οἱ περιπτασμοὶ <και> αἱ μέριμναι τοῦ προσκαίρου καιροῦ ἀδολεσχοῦσι καὶ ἀμεριμνοῦσιν ἀπ' ἐμοῦ τὰ ἀγαθά σου τὰ αἰώνια…

gatōn ἐκείνων καιρὸν καὶ τὸν ἡμέτερον νῦν. Τότε μὲν γὰρ ἐκλογὴ ψυχῶν καὶ πίστεως αὐξήσεως, τὸ σύμπαν εἰπεῖν· νῦν δὲ ψυχῶν ἀποτασσομένης φρικώδης καὶ οὐράνιος ἐγκατάλειψις σὺν δίκῃ τὸ ἡμέτερον κατακαλύπτουσα γένος. – Similar also Gennadius Scholarius, *Quaestiones theologicae de prae
destinatio divina et de anima*, 1.2.1, [in:] Oeuvres complètes…, vol. I, Paris 1928: …ὁ γὰρ ἡμέτερος καιρὸς καὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων ὁχέτο λόγων, μάλλον δὲ παντὸς ἁγαθοῦ, καὶ δεὶ τὴν ἐγκατάλειψιν ἀποφέραν
tοῦ γένους ἐν ἀπαντί πράγματι καθημένου ἐν γυναῖς που θηρείν σωπὴ καὶ τὴν ἄπαγωγήν τῆς
tοιαύτης ἐξανίπτεσθαι ἵνας, ὁπόταν ἐπινεύῃ τὸ θεῖον.


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Time as a Dimension of Byzantine Identity


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**Abstract.** The notion of identity (*tautotes*) was discussed, often in contrast to its opposite “otherness” (*heterotes*), not only during Classical Antiquity but also by Christian and Byzantine authors since Late Antiquity. Fundamental manifestations of every dimension of Byzantine identity – and in particular of collective identity – are language (including culture), religious (and political) commitment, space and time; these phenomena are deeply rooted in human consciousness.

This paper deals with the relation between identity and time (temporality). This relation is analysed on the basis of key terms like *aion, kairos* and *chronos* and the relations among them; the individualization of temporality becomes manifest in combinations of the mentioned terms with adjectives like *emos* or *hemeteros*. Not surprisingly, Byzantine authors – referring to passages in the Old and the New Testament – dealt mainly with *eschatological* (cosmic) *time* in relation to individual and collective identity, whereas the interest in the *historical* dimension of time was limited to authors of a small educated class.

**Keywords:** *aïdrites*, *aion*, *chronos*, eschatology, *heterotes*, identity, *kairos*, otherness, *Romaioi*, *tautotes*, temporality, time.