



23rd

International Congress of
BYZANTINE STUDIES
Belgrade, 22-27 August 2016

Thematic Session of Free Communications:

**BYZANTIUM AND ΟΙ 'ΡΩΣ: HISTORICAL AND TEXTOLOGICAL
QUESTIONS OF THE OLD TESTIMONIES' INTERPRETATIONS**

Conveners: Karsten Fledelius, Olena Syrtsova

Karsten Fledelius,

Royal Scandinavian Visitors to Rus' and Byzantium revisited

Mari H. Isoaho,

A Byzantine Look at οἱ 'Ρῶς – The New People with an Apocalyptic Burden

Vladimir Petrukhin,

Sarkel and Annales Bertiniani: Khazarian Beginning of Russian History?

Pavel Kuzenkov,

«Russian Monastery» on Mount Athos:

the Metamorphoses of the Name in Greek, Serbian and Russian Texts

Olena Syrtsova,

L'Apocryphe sur l'apôtre André et le Menologium de Basile II

Oleksandr Romensky,

Rus' and the Civil War in Byzantium in 987–989:

the Chronology of the Battle of Chrysopolis and the Rus-Byzantine Treaty



Oleksandr Romensky

*Rus' and the Civil War in Byzantium in 987–989:
the Chronology of the Battle of Chrysopolis and the Rus-Byzantine Treaty*

In 987–989 the Byzantine society and state passed through a deep political crisis related to the armed struggle for power between the followers and supporters of the Macedonian dynasty and noble families of Skleroi and Phokades. The decisive role in defeating the forces of the usurper at the key moment was played by Rus' troops which arrived to help Basil II as a result of an agreement between the basileus and the prince of Kiev. This study allowed us to refine the chronology of the battle of Chrysopolis – the first military clash which was attended by the “Russian-Varangian corps”, sent by Vladimir Svyatoslavich.

The exact date of the Chrysopolis battle that took place according to Stephanos Taronetsi, in 437 year of the Armenian calendar (March 24 988 – 23 March 989) remains controversial. The information of the sources proves that the interval between the battles of Chrysopolis and Abydos was not significant. A. Poppe suggests that the first one occurred in January or early February, 989 as soon as Bardas Phokas ordered his son Leo to banish Agapius, the Patriarch of Antioch off the city, which was fulfilled on March the 8, 989. Noteworthy, however, that the presentation of the events given by Yahya of Antioch does not always correspond to the chronological order. For example, a message on the negotiations with Rus', marriage of their ruler with the sister of the emperor and the subsequent baptism of their country seems to be an obvious insertation without precise chronological indications. After a brief mention about the victory at Chrysopolis Yahya reminds about the departure of Magister Gregory Taronite to Trebizond, as well as Phokades' negotiations with David Curopalates and Bagratids about military assistance. The message on the fate of Patriarch Agapius who was suspected of disloyalty by the both sides also was not directly related to the date of Chrysopolis battle.

According to Leo the Deacon, Bardas Phokas came up with the main forces to Abydos as soon as he got to know of the defeat of the troops at Chrysopolis. In turn, the basileus moved against him, having gathered the fleet armed with “Greek fire”. However, John Skylitzes notes that Emperor Basil II came back to Constantinople after the first victory, but probably he did not stay long there. It is important to note that Stephanos Taronetsi places the battle of Abydos immediately after the Chrysopolis clash, in the next, 438 year of Armenian chronology, when “it was still spring.” Thus, we can conclude that the defeat of the troops of Kalokyros Delphynas took place in early spring (March) of 989. This date is the terminus ante quem of the new Rus'-Byzantine treaty.

The transition from the military confrontation to cooperation occurred only after the capture of Cherson by the Russes, due to the Byzantines' urgent need of military aid. The conclusion of the treaty between Basil II and Vladimir happened no later than the summer and autumn of 988 (most likely in May or June 988). The agreement provided for the sending of the troops (six thousand foot soldiers) in support of Basil II, the personal baptism of Prince Vladimir and the introduction of Christianity throughout Rus', the dynastic marriage of Rus' and Byzantium and the subsequent creation of Rus' metropolitanate as part of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.