

# UNDER CONSTRUCTION

LECTURE SERIES FB07

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**(Christian Archaeology and Byzantine Art History)**

**28.01.**

**Illustrations of Military Technology  
in Byzantine manuscripts:  
Transfer and Adaptation of Ancient  
Knowledge in Byzantium**

Some Byzantine manuscripts contain the works of ancient engineers on military technology such as artillery and siege engines. Most of these manuscripts date into the 10th/11th century and are thus produced a thousand years after the lifetime of engineers such as Heron of Alexandria or Apollodorus

of Damascus. In the manuscripts several works of various engineers have been compiled to form a corpus of ancient military technology treatises. The texts in there are accompanied by illuminations. Scholars have often ignored these drawings as they are considered to have little source value for questions regarding ancient siege weaponry or artillery because it is believed that they have little in common with the original ancient archetype drawings.

Indeed the manuscripts pass on different variants of the same drawings which shows that copyists did not always faithfully reproduce older illustrations, even in the context of applied sciences. The changes in the illustrations which can be observed offer many aspects to study from the perspective of art history. Even if questions about how ancient siege engines worked and what they looked likely cannot be answered through an analysis of these drawings, questions about how images served to convey technical knowledge to different audiences at different times can be explored.

Thus, the illustrations will be analyzed as objects with a living history which reveal an insight into a part of the Byzantine culture of war.