ACADÉMIE ROUMAINE
INSTITUT D'ÉTUDES SUD-EST EUROPÉENNES
SOCIÉTÉ ROUMAINE D'ÉTUDES BYZANTINES

ÉTUDES BYZANTINES ET POST-BYZANTINES

Nouvelle série
Tome VII (XIV)

Le Centenaire des congrès des études byzantines (1924-2024)

Le congrès de Bucarest (1924) et l'internationalisation des études byzantines

Éditeurs

Andrei Timotin et Mihail Mitrea

2025

The Barcelona-Bucharest Connection: Forging Intellectual and Political Alliances at the 1924 Congress of Byzantine Studies

Lucila Mallart

Abstract: The 1924 International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest served as a crucial nexus for intellectual exchange between two European cultural peripheries: Catalonia and Romania. This article examines how this academic gathering facilitated a complex transnational dialogue that operated simultaneously on diplomatic, scholarly, and personal levels. Focusing on the interactions between the Catalan architect and politician Josep Puig i Cadafalch and the Romanian historian and statesman Nicolae Iorga, along with the mediating role of Iorga's student Constantin Marinescu, it argues that the Congress became an arena for cultural protodiplomacy where both parties advanced their nationalist agendas through mutual academic validation. The analysis demonstrates how Catalan and Romanian scholars co-produced historical narratives that reinforced each other's claims to cultural distinctiveness, while personal encounters and travel accounts reveal the tensions between public solidarity and private perception. Drawing on archival sources and published works, the study shows how knowledge, identity, and diplomacy were intertwined in the reconfiguration of interwar Europe.

Keywords: Byzantine studies, transnational history, nationalism studies, protodiplomacy, invisible college, interwar Europe

Introduction

The First International Congress of Byzantine Studies, convened in Bucharest in April 1924, emerged in a complex post-war European landscape. For the newly enlarged Kingdom of Romania, it was an opportunity to assert its cultural and

political leadership in the Balkans. For stateless nationalities like Catalonia, whose autonomous institutions were under threat from General Primo de Rivera's recent coup in Spain, it offered an alternative, international stage. This Congress became a seminal event that facilitated intense transnational intellectual exchanges between Barcelona and Bucharest, primarily between the Catalan architect and politician Josep Puig i Cadafalch (1867-1956) and the Romanian historian and politician Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940).

This article shows that the 1924 Congress functioned on three interconnected levels: (1) as a protodiplomatic forum for Catalan and Romanian nationalists; (2) as a scholarly venue for producing and validating national histories in a transnational setting; and (3) as a catalyst for personal and intellectual networks that endured throughout the interwar period.

Firstly, the Congress was not merely a backdrop for these interactions but an active agent that shaped their form and content. The academic papers presented, the social aspects performed, and the excursions undertaken were all imbued with political significance, reflecting what Sandrine Maufroy considered the implicit and explicit political character of such meetings.[1] This occurred at a time when leading figures in Catalan nationalist politics worked to position Catalonia within international discussions on national minorities, notably at the League of Nations.[2] Furthermore, Iorga envisioned these gatherings as part of a broader cultural project to redefine South-eastern Europe following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. He sought to frame the region as a distinct supranational space, inheritor to both Byzantine and Ottoman traditions, with Romania playing a central leadership role.[3]

Secondly, the academic texts produced in or around the Congress also complicate our understanding of early-twentieth-century "nationalist" historiography.[4] Although both Puig and Iorga were undeniably nationalist figures who used history (and art history) to forge modern cultural and political identities, their story suggests that such projects were not always inwardly focused. As Paul Lawrence has observed, the precise relationship between history-writing and nationalism remains an open question,

[1] S. Maufroy, "Les premiers congrès internationaux des études byzantines: entre nationalisme scientifique et construction internationale d'une discipline", *Revue germanique internationale* 12, 2010, p. 229-240. For an extended study of this protodiplomatical dimension, see L. Mallart, "Protodiplomacy Across the Mediterranean: The Catalan Participation in the First Congresses of Byzantine Studies in South-Eastern Europe During the Interwar Period", *Studies on National Movements* 7, 2021, p. 1-29.

[2] A. Balcells, "Catalanism and National Emancipation Movements in the Rest of Europe Between 1885 and 1939", *Catalan Historical Review* 6, 2013, p. 94-95.

[3] D. Mishkova, "The Politics of Regionalist Science: The Balkans as a Supranational Space in Late Nineteenth to Mid-Twentieth Century Academic Projects", *East Central Europe* 39, 2012, p. 266-303.

[4] For an extended exploration of this argument, see L. Mallart, "Researching the Medieval Past Between Catalonia and Romania. Josep Puig i Cadafalch, Nicolae Iorga and the Transnational Writing of National History (1921-1935)", *Nations and Nationalism* 27.1, 2021, p. 148-161.

while Patrick J. Geary has powerfully argued that national history often became a "tool of nationalist ideology", filling popular consciousness with "the poison of ethnic nationalism".[5] A common assumption is that such history, unlike other disciplines, spurned international collaboration, often dismissing foreign scholars' work on one's own nation as irrelevant or unqualified.[6] The case of Catalan-Romanian exchanges, however, presents a compelling counterpoint: a form of national history constructed through transnational cooperation.

Transnational history has indeed become paramount in recent scholarship on national movements and intellectual exchanges.[7] The argument is that historical processes do not merely occur within separate containers that sometimes interact; rather, they unfold *across* spaces, and certain developments can only be fully understood by making this spatial leap. This shift necessitates a rethinking of spatiality itself. As Ángel Alcalde has suggested, adopting a transnational methodological perspective requires us to reformulate the very concept of space, recognizing it as a historically constructed entity, much like time.[8]

Intellectual history provides a particularly revealing lens for identifying these transnational spaces. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the emergence of a "transnational sphere", comprised of international congresses, expert gatherings, and specialized publications.[9] This sphere had a less formal, yet equally powerful, counterpart: the "invisible colleges" forged through personal connections, informal correspondence, and flexible alliances.[10] These networks, though often unofficial, were instrumental in driving scholarly innovation, facilitating paradigm shifts, and integrating global developments into local academic contexts. This final section brings the invisible college to life by examining the personal dimension of Catalan-Romanian

---

[5] P. Lawrence, "Nationalism and Historical Writing", in J. Breuilly (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, Oxford, 2013, p. 725; P. J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe*, Princeton, 2002, p. 15.

[6] E. Fuchs, "The Politics of the Republic of Learning: International Scientific Congresses in Europe, the Pacific Rim, and Latin America", in id. and B. Stuchtey (eds.), *Across Cultural Borders: Historiography in Global Perspective*, Boulder, 2002, p. 208.

[7] P.-Y. Saunier, *Transnational History*, Basingstoke, 2013; M. Díaz-Andreu, "Transnationalism and Archaeology. The Connecting Origins of the Main Institutions Dealing with Prehistoric Archaeology in Western Europe: the IPH, the CIPP and the CRPU (1910-1914)", in A. Guidi (ed.), *150 anni di Preistoria e Protostoria in Italia*, Florence, 2014, p. 163-177; P. H. Garner and A. Smith, *Nationalism and Transnationalism in Spain and Latin America, 1808-1923*, Cardiff, 2017, p. 163-177.

[8] Á. Alcalde, "Spatializing Transnational History: European Spaces and Territories", *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 25.3-4, 2018, p. 553-567.

[9] D. Rodogno, B. Struck, and J. Vogel (eds.), *Shaping the Transnational Sphere: Experts, Networks and Issues from the 1840s to the 1930s*, New York, 2015.

[10] M. Díaz-Andreu, "Revisiting the 'Invisible College': José Ramón Mélida in Early 20th Century Spain", in N. Schlanger and J. Nordbladh (eds.), *Histories of Archaeology: Archives, Ancestors, Practices*, Oxford, 2008, p. 121-129.

exchanges. Through an analysis of the travel accounts of Iorga and his student, Constantin Marinescu (1891-1970), this article argues that their first-hand experiences in Barcelona both shaped and were shaped by their perceptions of Catalonia and their native Romania.[11]

The protagonists and their parallel agendas

The Bucharest Congress brought together two figures whose careers remarkably mirrored each other, straddling the worlds of academia, politics, and cultural activism. Nicolae Iorga was one of the most influential Romanian historians of the twentieth century, who, in the words of Marius Turda, "successfully provided Romanian nationalism with the essential notions of historical continuity and cultural unity".[12] A professor at the University of Bucharest, founder of the conservative Democratic Nationalist Party (PND), and future Prime Minister (1931-1932), Iorga envisaged his intellectual project as the reconstruction of a neo-Byzantine cultural and political space, which he termed "South-eastern Europe". Influenced by the German historian Karl Lamprecht (1856-1915), Iorga believed that supranational regions were crucial for understanding a nation's past and projecting its future. Drawing on Lamprecht's concept of *Weltgeschichte*, Iorga saw the writing of history as a process of aligning each nation's past with the broader cultural and political spheres (regional or global) to which it belonged. Unlike contemporaries such as the Bulgarian ethnographer Ivan D. Shishmanov (1862-1928), Iorga rejected the use of the term "Balkan" as a defining label, favouring instead the concept of "South-eastern Europe".[13] In pursuit of this vision, he founded the Institute for South-East European Studies in Bucharest in 1913, alongside a dedicated journal, the *Bulletin de l'Institut pour l'Étude de l'Europe sud-orientale*.[14]

The establishment of the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies a decade later should also be understood within this framework. For Iorga, South-eastern Europe was not only a lens through which to interpret the past but also a means to shape the future, particularly in the aftermath of the Great War, when multiple forces competed to reconstruct the territories left by the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. What Iorga termed "Byzantium after Byzantium" referred to a

---

[11] For a larger analysis of Iorga's texts on Barcelona, see L. Mallart, "Architectural Conversations Across Europe's Borderlands: Transnational Exchanges Between Barcelona and Bucharest in the 1920s", in E. Gantner, H. Hein-Kirchner, and O. Hochadel (eds.), *Interurban Knowledge Exchange in Southern and Eastern Europe, 1870-1950*, London, 2020, p. 219-236.

[12] M. Turda, "Historical Writing in the Balkans", in S. Macintyre, J. Maiguascha, and A. Pók (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 4: *1800-1945*, Oxford, 2011, p. 352.

[13] D. Mishkova, "The Balkans as an Idée-Force. Scholarly Projections of the Balkan Cultural Area", *Civilisations. Revue internationale d'anthropologie et de sciences humaines* 60.2, 2012, p. 39-64.

[14] D. Mishkova, "On the Space-Time Constitution of Southeastern Europe", in S. Rutar (ed.), *Beyond the Balkans: Towards an Inclusive History of Southeastern Europe*, Münster, 2014, p. 47-66.

cultural and political space inhabited by diverse peoples with historical links extending back to the Middle Ages.[15] Within this context, Catalans had maintained a brief yet undeniable presence, as will be discussed below.

Josep Puig i Cadafalch was a renowned *Modernista* (Art Nouveau) architect, politician, and art historian. From 1917 to 1923, he served as President of the Mancomunitat de Catalunya, a federation of Catalan provinces that represented the first step towards self-government since the early eighteenth century.[16] Deposed by Primo de Rivera's coup in September 1923, Puig arrived in Bucharest as a political outcast yet still embodying the aspirations of Catalan autonomism. As an architectural historian, he was devoted to the study of Romanesque art, through which he argued for Catalonia's central and innovative role in medieval European culture.[17] He maintained a vast international correspondence (over 1,000 individual contacts have been identified), with Romanians constituting a significant cohort, especially when compared to other European "peripheries".[18]

Iorga and Puig probably met for the first time at the 1921 Congress of Art History in Paris, and the earliest surviving trace of their correspondence originates from that time.[19] The two had nearly parallel careers: they both researched their countries' medieval past, were involved in the foundation of the Christian-democrat nationalist parties that would rule Catalonia (in the 1910s) and Romania (in the 1930s), and participated in the vibrant transnational academic scene of interwar Europe.

A third important figure in this story was Iorga's student, Constantin Marinescu. Marinescu was particularly interested in the connections between the Crown of Aragon and the Byzantine Empire in the late Middle Ages. The Crown of Aragon (sometimes referred to as the Catalan-Aragonese Confederation) was a composite state that existed in the northeast of the Iberian Peninsula between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries. Initially, Marinescu intended to focus his research on the Companyia Catalana ("Catalan Company"), a group of mercenaries founded in the early fourteenth century,

---

[15] D. Mishkova, "The Politics of Regionalist Science...".

[16] For an introduction to Puig's architectural and art historical work, see J. Rohrer and I. de Solà-Morales (eds.), *Josep Puig i Cadafalch: Architecture Between the House and the City*, Barcelona, 1989.

[17] M. Umbach, "The Modernist Imagination of Place and the Politics of Regionalism: The Case of Puig i Cadafalch and Early Twentieth Century Barcelona", in J. Landy and M. T. Saler (eds.), *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age*, Stanford, 2009, p. 81-101.

[18] L. Mallart, "Josep Puig i Cadafalch in the Nordic Countries: Transferring Art Historiographic Knowledge Between North and South in the Interwar Period", in S. Kallestrup and C. Ashby (eds.), *Nordic Design in Translation: The Circulation of Objects, Ideas and Practices*, Bern, 2023, p. 183-209.

[19] During the Congress, Puig presented the paper "Contribution à la chronologie de l'architecture romane en Catalogne", while Iorga talked on "Les origines de l'art roumain". *Actes du Congrès d'histoire de l'art, organisé par la Société de l'histoire de l'art français, Paris, 26 septembre-5 octobre 1921*, 5 vols., Paris, 1923, p. 235-236.

which was hired by the Byzantine emperor to combat internal enemies and ultimately established two satellite states, in Athens and Neopatras, for over a century.[20]

Marinescu conducted multiple research trips to Barcelona's archives in the early 1920s. His initial visit lasted from September to November 1920, followed by at least one additional trip in the autumn of 1921.[21] During his first visit, he was disappointed to discover that a Catalan historian, Antoni Rubió i Lluch (1856-1937), was about to publish a large number of documents on the Companyia and other Catalan connections in Byzantium.[22] Marinescu probably referred to *Diplomatari de l'Orient Català (1301-1409)*, a collection of archival documents concerning the Catalan involvement in the Eastern Mediterranean that Rubió intended to publish in 1921, but kept updating it until 1947.[23] In response, Marinescu shifted his focus to royal and diplomatic connections between Aragon and Byzantium, and decided to broaden the scope of his source material to include new archives, beyond the originally planned Archive of the Crown of Aragon.[24] Marinescu's accounts of his months in Barcelona are vivid, and will be discussed below. He subsequently published several articles and books that addressed entanglements between various Aragonese kings and the Palaiologos dynasty, as well as with other Byzantine regions such as Albania and Armenia.[25]

The Congress as a cultural protodiplomatic arena

In a recent book, Elisabet Carbó-Catalan and Diana Roig-Sanz brought Joseph Nye's highly successful concept of "soft power" to the study of culture.[26] Drawing on

---

[20] T. N. Bisson, *The Medieval Crown of Aragón: A Short History*, Oxford, 1986.

[21] The second trip is recalled in a letter from C. Marinescu to N. Iorga, 12 October 1921, Romanian Academy, Correspondence of Nicolae Iorga, vol. 291. In this letter, he claims that this will be "his last trip to Spain".

[22] Letter from C. Marinescu to N. Iorga, 25 September 1920, published in P. Țurlea (ed.), *Scrisori către Nicolae Iorga. Studii și documente*, vol. 6: *(1919-1920)*, 2nd part: *(1920)*, Bucharest, 1972, p. 123-126.

[23] M. T. Ferrer i Mallol, "Pròleg", in *Diplomatari de l'Orient català (1301-1409): colleció de documents per a la història de l'expedició catalana a Orient i dels ducats d'Atenes i Neopàtria*, Barcelona, 2001, p. 5.

[24] Letter from C. Marinescu to N. Iorga, 25 September 1920, published in P. Țurlea (ed.), *Scrisori către Nicolae Iorga*..., p. 123-126.

[25] To mention just a few: C. Marinescu, "Alphonse V: roi d'Aragon et de Naples et l'Albanie de Scandenberg", *Mélanges de l'École roumaine en France* 1, 1923, p. 1-135; id., "Catalogne et l'Arménie au temps de Jacques II (1291-1327): envoi par le roi Ochine des reliques de sainte Thécla à la cathédrale de Tarragone", *Mélanges de l'École roumaine en France* 2, 1923, p. 1-35; id., "Manuel II Paléologue et les rois d'Aragon: commentaire sur quatre lettres inédites en latin, expédiées par la chancellerie byzantine", *Bulletin de la Section Historique – Académie Roumaine* 11, 1924, p. 192-206.

[26] E. Carbó-Catalan and D. Roig-Sanz (eds.), *Culture as Soft Power: Bridging Cultural Relations, Intellectual Cooperation, and Cultural Diplomacy*, *Culture as Soft Power*, Berlin, 2022.

a variety of examples, including several from the Catalan context, the authors show not only how non-state actors (such as organisations, festivals, associations, etc.) engage in cultural diplomacy activities, but also how culture affects and is affected by politics. The authors argue that "cultural activities have the capacity to consolidate, legitimise, and consecrate a given collectivity, not only as a cultural actor, but also as a political one, through foreign action".[27] This section explores the 1924 Bucharest congress as an arena for cultural protodiplomacy. Catalan and Romanian delegates used the event to strengthen the symbolic position of their respective countries in the highly unstable political milieu of interwar Europe. While Romania had substantially modified its borders at the end of the First World War (incorporating Transylvania, formerly under Hungarian rule), Catalan activists attempted to bring the cause for the region's autonomy to the attention of political forums such as the League of Nations.[28]

Even though Puig was no longer active in politics, his participation both before and during the Congress was discursively shaped in a manner that illustrates that the meeting did not have a merely academic nature. As Sandrine Maufroy noted, the first Congresses of Byzantine Studies closely monitored the attendance, conduct, and contributions of participants, particularly those from belligerent nations like France and Germany.[29] Following the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, the Congresses also became an instrument for Iorga's broader project: redefining South-eastern Europe as a supranational cultural heir to both the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires, a region where he believed Romania was destined to lead.

The protodiplomatic nature of Puig's attendance was evident from the outset. The earliest known correspondence between Iorga and Puig is a letter dated 7 November 1922. Notably, even though Puig wrote solely about academic matters, he chose to use official stationery from the Presidency of the Mancomunitat of Catalonia.[30] In addition, Iorga's invitation, dated 20 December 1923, was explicitly extended to Puig and the aforementioned Antoni Rubió i Lluch on the grounds that "Catalonia could be represented by a scholar of your importance and a tireless researcher of the Catalan studies in Greece like M. Rubió i Lluch".[31] Considering conference participants as "representatives" of the countries they belonged to was common in the first congresses

---

[27] E. Carbó-Catalan and D. Roig-Sanz, "Swinging Between Culture and Politics: Novel Interdisciplinary Perspectives", in eid. (eds.), *Culture as Soft Power*..., p. 8.

[28] P. Dalmau, "Catalans and Rifis during the Wilsonian Moment: The Quest for Self-Determination in the Post-Versailles World", *Contemporary European History* 32, 2023, p. 131-145; X. M. Núñez Seixas, *Internacionalitzant el nacionalisme: el catalanisme polític i la qüestió de les minories nacionals a Europa (1914-1936)*, Catarroja – Valencia, 2010, p. 82-90.

[29] S. Maufroy, "Les premiers congrès internationaux...", p. 232.

[30] Letter from J. Puig i Cadafalch to N. Iorga, 7 November 1922, Romanian Academy, Correspondence of Nicolae Iorga, vol. 299.

[31] Letter from N. Iorga to J. Puig i Cadafalch, 20 December 1923, Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya, Fons Puig i Cadafalch, UC 1414. Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

of Byzantine studies. As Maufroy noted, delegates participated not only as individual researchers but also as representatives of their countries, and thus their presence, attitudes, and scholarly ideas could also be read as "diplomatic acts".[32] Iorga further cemented this fraternal narrative by writing that, if he accepted, "the foundations would be laid for a cultural exchange between your beautiful and brotherly Catalonia and its Romanian sister".[33]

Puig embraced this role. During the opening ceremony, he formally paid his respects to the organizing country on behalf of Catalonia, not Spain, listed alongside representatives of nation-states like Belgium, Bulgaria, and the United States.[34] During the closing event, he expressed his satisfaction with the attention given to Catalonia during the Congress.[35] The ambiguity of his status was, however, reflected in the official "List of Members", where he and Rubió were listed under the headline "Spain". This tension between representing a region and being classified under a state underscores the Congress' role as a contested arena for national recognition.

The protodiplomatic performance extended beyond the conference hall. In an interview with the Romanian newspaper *Dimineața*, Puig was presented as the "president of the Catalan provincial union" that was currently "suspended" (fig. 1).[36] This ignored the fact that Primo de Rivera had already appointed Alfons Sala i Argemí (1863-1945) as the legitimate president. Puig's continued use of the title suggests he rejected Sala's authority, perceiving the Mancomunitat's takeover as an illegitimate hijacking. He explicitly used the interview and the Romanian context to outline his political vision, distancing himself from full independence while advocating for a strengthened autonomy within a Spanish federation. He described Catalonia's "struggle for more autonomy", arguing that "we understand our autonomy, but still within the Spanish federation. But we want a stronger affirmation of our national character [which] made us create a Catalan cultural movement for encouraging and supporting patriotism". He also held up Romania's model of "national culture" as an example for Catalonia to follow. This public statement, made in a foreign capital, was a direct challenge to Primo de Rivera's centralizing regime and a clear example of using a transnational academic event for protodiplomatic ends.[37]

---

[32] S. Maufroy, "Les premiers congrès internationaux...", p. 232.

[33] Letter from N. Iorga to J. Puig i Cadafalch, 20 December 1923.

[34] C. Marinescu, *Compte-rendu du premier Congrès international des études byzantines, Bucarest, 1924*, Bucharest, 1925, p. 15.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

[36] *Dimineața* was a daily newspaper published between 1904 and 1937, reaching a print run of 100,000 copies in 1927, one of the highest in the country.

[37] "De vorbă cu d. Puig i Cadafalc, președintele Uniunei provinciale catalane", *Dimineața*, 23 April 1924, p. 1. My thanks to Liliana Iuga for transcribing and translating this interview from Romanian.

Beyond the formal sessions, the Congress offered a valuable opportunity for informal conversations with fellow delegates. Puig i Cadafalch highlighted this collegial aspect in his *Dimineața* interview, noting his enthusiasm for the organised excursion to Oltenia and Moldavia following the conference. He highlighted Romania's "great merit" in having "preserved a large number of monuments of ancient art", something which, he noted, had not happened in other countries. He also noted that he was especially interested in the churches of Moldavia because of their "originality and simplicity of style", and was glad that he would have the chance to "know them closer during the trip arranged by the organisers of the Congress".[38] As is well known, the delegates departed on an especially arranged night train on 20 April 1924, arriving in Moldavia the following day. There, they embarked on a tour of the region's famed painted monasteries, including those at Voroneț, Putna, Moldovița, Sucevița, Rădăuți, and Suceava. In his *Dimineața* interview, Puig claimed to be particularly drawn to the Moldavian churches' "originality and simplicity of style".[39] Their journey continued on the 23rd to Iași, the former capital of Moldavia, and on the 24th took them south to the historic Wallachian towns of Curtea-de-Argeș and Pitești. The final leg of the tour, on the 25th, featured Cozia Monastery (the burial site of Wallachia's King Mircea the Elder, whom Iorga had renamed "the Great") before their return to Bucharest on the morning of the 26th.[40] The week-long trip was arguably designed to showcase the medieval roots of the modern Romanian state.

In summary, the 1924 Congress provided a significant international forum for both academic and parapolitical engagement. The event was an opportunity to assert Catalonia's distinct political and cultural identity on an international stage, directly challenging Spain's centralising regime. Both the formal sessions and organized excursions can be read as examples of soft power, reinforcing how academic gatherings could be used to pursue nationalist goals and foster transnational alliances in a shifting European landscape. The following section further explores how such alliances proved remarkably generative within the domain of historical scholarship.

Scholarly exchanges: Writing each other's national history

Beyond its performative dimension, the Congress also provided an excellent platform to highlight Romanian research on Catalan history and literature, as well as Catalan studies on Romanian history and art. The scholarly contributions of the Catalan and Romanian delegates were not isolated studies but complementary pieces that served to reinforce their respective nationalist narratives mutually.

At the Congress, Marinescu presented the fruits of his months in Barcelona. He discussed four unpublished letters from the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II

---

[38] *Ibid*.

[39] *Ibid*.

[40] C. Marinescu, *Compte-rendu*..., p. 85-87.

Palaiologos to the Aragonese court, exploring the diplomatic relations between these two powers.[41] The previous year he had published two articles that echoed Iorga's words of siblinghood between Catalans and Romanians. Marinescu crafted a narrative of fraternity between medieval Catalans and other Balkan peoples fighting against imperial rule, be it Byzantine or Ottoman. He depicted Aragonese kings as supporters of Albanian leader Skanderbeg and Armenian king Oshin against their enemies.[42] This created a historical precedent for a shared struggle, implicitly linking the contemporary Catalan and Romanian nationalist causes against their own "imperial" pressures (from Madrid and the legacy of Habsburg and Ottoman rule, respectively).

The narrative was further developed by Iorga in a book published just a few years later with the illustrative title *Contributions catalanes à l'histoire byzantine*.[43] The volume gathered two shorter pieces: one on Ramon Muntaner, a writer and member of the Companyia Catalana, and a second one on an anonymous short novel, *Història de Jacob Xalabín* (ca. 1404), written in Catalan and set in the court of Ottoman sultan Murad I. The text reproduced a widespread but inaccurate belief that Catalan-Romanian relations could be traced back to the fourteenth century. Muntaner wrote an account of his time in the East, where he mentioned a place called "Blaquia" which he described as "the strongest land on earth". Early modern commentators concluded that this referred to Wallachia, one of Romania's historical principalities, and interpreted the passage as evidence of Catalan presence there. Yet in 1777, Francesc de Montcada demonstrated that the "Blaquia" mentioned by Muntaner was in fact a mountainous region in Thessaly, present-day Greece, not Wallachia.[44] Although Montcada's correction remains widely accepted,[45] Nicolae Iorga clung to the older interpretation. In his 1927 travelogue on Spain, he insisted that medieval Catalans had reached "our Balkan Wallachia".[46]

The second piece of the book was a critical study of the *Història de Jacob Xalabín*, a tale of love and battle inspired by Yakub Çelebi, son of Ottoman sultan Murad I (r. 1362-1389).[47] Iorga noted that the novel had been reprinted several times in Catalonia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in the context

---

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 28-29. Later published in C. Marinescu, "Manuel II Paléologue et les rois d'Aragon...".

[42] C. Marinescu, "Alphonse V..."; id., "Catalogne et l'Arménie...".

[43] N. Iorga, *Contributions catalanes à l'histoire byzantine*, Paris, 1927.

[44] L. Sánchez Rodrigo, "Las relaciones literarias entre Cataluña y Rumanía", *Revista de lenguas y literaturas catalana, gallega y vasca* 19, 2014, p. 101.

[45] R. Muntaner, *The Catalan Expedition to the East: From the Chronicle of Ramon Muntaner*, Woodbridge, 2006, p. 146.

[46] J. J. Ortega Román, "Nicolae Iorga: viajero por España", *Revista de Filología Románica* 20, 2003, p. 158.

[47] L. Badia, "Estudi introductori", in *Història de Jacob Xalabín*, Barcelona, 1982, p. 5-23; A. Comas, J. Molas, and M. de Riquer (eds.), "Una novella oriental: la Història de Jacob Xalabín", in *Història de la Literatura Catalana*, vol. 3, 1985, p. 243-248.

of Romantic medieval revival.[48] According to Juan Miguel Ribera Llopis, Iorga read the novel as evidence that the Balkans were inhabited in the Middle Ages by a multiplicity of peoples, including Catalans. Ribera further argues that the novel may have been intended for Catalan communities in Greece during the Crown of Aragon's fourteenth-century expansion, since the same story circulated in other regional vernacular languages.[49] This would explain why Iorga viewed Jacob Xalabín as symbolic of the common interests of Catalans and Balkan peoples (including Romanians) against their shared Ottoman adversary. Of course, the Catalan narrative also contributed to reinforcing the notion that South-eastern Europe was inhabited by a multiplicity of peoples, and that Romanians could intellectually lead, in the aftermath of war, the symbolic reconstruction of that space.

For his part, the Catalan Josep Puig i Cadafalch presented a paper titled "Les églises de Moldavie: contribution à l'étude des origines de leur forme décorative, une école parallèle pendant le XI^{e} siècle dans l'Europe Occidentale".[50] Thus, Puig reciprocated Marinescu's and Iorga's interest in the history of Catalonia by looking at the artistic heritage of Romania. His argument was both complex and intellectually daring. He identified striking stylistic similarities between the exterior ornamentation of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Moldavian churches and that of eleventh-century Catalan Romanesque churches. However, he vehemently rejected the obvious conclusion of direct influence or contact, given the vast geographical and chronological gap.[51] Not everyone was convinced: months after the Congress, Puig received letters of Romanian attendees that kept suggesting possible sources of mutual influence, such as Lombardy.[52] However, Puig proposed a theory of parallel evolution: both styles had developed independently, following a universal "fundamental law" of artistic development.[53] This theory served a dual purpose. For his broader art historical project, it validated his positivist belief that the evolution of artistic styles obeyed natural, scientific laws.[54] The Moldavian case became a perfect comparative example

---

[48] N. Iorga, *Contributions catalanes*..., p. 3.

[49] J. M. Ribera Llopis, "Presencia de los Balcanes en la cultura catalana", *Revista de Filología Románica* 16, 1999, p. 85-93.

[50] Subsequently published in J. Puig i Cadafalch, "Les églises de Moldavie: contribution à l'étude des origines de leur forme décorative, une école parallèle pendant le XI^{e} siècle dans l'Europe Occidentale", *Bulletin de la Section Historique – Académie Roumaine* 11, 1924, p. 76-89.

[51] C. Marinescu, *Compte-rendu*..., p. 23.

[52] Letter from M. Cotescu to J. Puig i Cadafalch, 9 October 1924, Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya, Fons Puig i Cadafalch, UC 1246.

[53] J. Puig i Cadafalch, "Les périodes successives de l'influence byzantine en Occident. Premier art roman. Architecture Mudéjar. Églises de Moldavie", in M. Lhéritier (ed.), *Mélanges Charles Diehl. Études sur l'histoire et sur l'art de Byzance*, 2 vols., Paris, 1930, vol. 2, p. 169.

[54] The theory had been already outlined earlier, for instance in J. Puig i Cadafalch, A. de Falguera, and J. Goday i Casals, *L'arquitectura romànica a Catalunya*, vol. 1: *Precedents: L'arquitectura romana;*

to prove that the stylistic evolution he had identified in Catalonia was not unique but part of a universal pattern.

Puig's research on Moldavian churches was not confined to the Congress but had a lasting impact on his art historical work. He further developed the topic at the Second Congress of Byzantine Studies, held in Belgrade in 1927. More crucially, he incorporated them as the final chapter of his magnum opus, *La geografia i els origens del primer art romànic* (*The Geography and Origins of the First Romanesque Art*, 1930). Under the title "Les esglésies de Moldàvia" ("The Churches of Moldavia"), Puig brought together his earlier studies to demonstrate how a group of churches located in what he termed "the remote lands of Romania" could illuminate the development of eleventh-century Romanesque art (fig. 2). "The artistic phenomena under examination will become more clearly comprehensible", he argued, "if we examine [a style] that developed with a complete geographic and historic independence […], in the old Moldavia, where, in the fifteenth century, Byzantine art was reflected in a school that was alive until the sixteenth century, and continued, in the mountains, into modern times".[55] His work influenced local Romanian art historians like Ion D. Ştefănescu (1886-1981), who told Puig in one of his letters: "Your insightful studies on Romanesque art and the observations you made during the Byzantinology Congresses have, more than once, guided me in my research and have always been models for me".[56]

In sum, the scholarly presentations at the 1924 Congress functioned as a form of intellectual reciprocity, reinforcing both Catalan and Romanian nationalist narratives through mutually validating studies. Marinescu and Iorga constructed historical narratives emphasizing fraternity and shared political struggle. Meanwhile, Puig's formalist analysis framed the stylistic similarities between Moldavian and Catalan churches as a case of parallel development, elevating both artistic traditions by situating them within a universal pattern. The personal visits of Iorga and Marinescu to Barcelona further solidified these transnational exchanges. When later recounted to a Romanian public, their travel narratives added significant layers to their understanding of Catalonia's national character, and by reflection, that of their own nation.

Marinescu and Iorga in Barcelona

While the central focus of this article has been the participation of Catalan scholars at the 1924 Congress, it is important to note that the intellectual exchanges described also facilitated reciprocal visits by the Romanian figures in this narrative

---

L'arquitectura cristiana preromanica, Barcelona, 1909, p. v-vi; J. Puig i Cadafalch, *La geografia i els orígens del primer art romànic*, Barcelona, 1930, p. xii.

[55] J. Puig i Cadafalch, *La geografia i els orígens*..., p. 525.

[56] Letter from I. D. Ştefănescu to J. Puig i Cadafalch, 13 July 1928, Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya, Fons Puig i Cadafalch, UC 1735.

to Barcelona. Marinescu visited archives in the city as part of his doctoral studies in 1920 and 1921, while Iorga visited Catalonia in 1927 and 1929. The lively accounts of their travels, aimed not at their Catalan friends but at a local Romanian audience back home, provide a rich insight into how the narrative of political siblinghood was toned down when it came into conflict with their own nationalist interests as Romanians, or when it was confronted with the reality of a city they did not always understand.

Marinescu's arrival in Barcelona was rather bumpy, as it took him five weeks to get permission from the Spanish Embassy to travel there from Paris. In a letter to Iorga, he explained: "The fact that I was from a country neighbouring Russia made the officials there suspect that I could be dangerous in an environment as heated as that of Barcelona with its almost daily bombs and attacks".[57] Indeed, the late 1910s and early 1920s were convulsed in the city, with trade unionists and gunmen hired by the Employers' Federation ("Federación Patronal") fighting a covert war in the streets.[58] Puig, who was President of the Catalan proto-government of the Mancomunitat at the time, received death threats and might have carried a pistol himself, similar to the ones that were discovered hidden in his personal archive in 2007.[59] In the aftermath of the Canadenca strike, which left the city without electrical power for over a month in 1918, conservative politicians like Puig feared the contamination of the Soviet Revolution into Spanish territory.[60]

Marinescu not only found Barcelona violent, but also hideous. At the beginning, he stayed in the old quarter, near the archives that he intended to visit. However, he quickly moved into the new town due to the "unbelievable stench that emanates from the dark houses, with an endless number of floors, from the narrow and filthy streets, from the sewers, from the people, from everything one can encounter".[61] This account contrasts with the fact that, by 1920, most of the sanitisation of the historic city had already taken place. The long-debated campaign to modernize and sanitise Barcelona's centre finally materialized with the opening of the Via Laietana in 1908.[62] This grand new avenue dramatically opened up the city's compact medieval layout, creating light and space. The new avenue facilitated modern transportation and infrastructure,

---

[57] Letter from C. Marinescu to N. Iorga, 25 September 1920, published in P. Țurlea (ed.), *Scrisori către Nicolae Iorga*..., p. 123. Translation by the author.

[58] J. C. Marinello, "Pistolerismo y violencia sindical en Barcelona (1917-1923)", *Barcelona: quaderns d'història* 26, 2020, p. 133-148.

[59] R. Planes i Albets, "El retrobament (de l'arxiu) de J. Puig i Cadafalch", *L'Avenç: Revista de història i cultura* 324, 2007, p. 42-45.

[60] J. Roca Vernet, "La vaga de la Canadenca: el Waterloo de la CNT i la jornada laboral de les vuit hores", *Barcelona: quaderns d'història* 26, 2020, p. 99-118.

[61] Letter from C. Marinescu to N. Iorga, 25 September 1920, published in P. Țurlea (ed.), *Scrisori către Nicolae Iorga*..., p. 123.

[62] J. Fuster Sobrepere, A. Nicolau i Martí, and D. Venteo (eds.), *La construcció de la gran Barcelona: l'obertura de la Via Laietana 1908-1958*, Barcelona, 2001.

and also prompted the renovation of many monumental areas nearby. Puig (then an established architect and emerging politician) led the restoration of the section of the avenue that was adjacent to the former Palace of the Kings of Aragon.[63]

The comments that Marinescu made on the palace reveal that he read Barcelona's built environment through the lens of an imagined vision of Spain and that he struggled to see the city's architecture as specific to a distinct Catalan identity. The palace "has an interior courtyard", he wrote, "a 'patio', so common in Spain, surrounded by a gallery with delicate columns, of great beauty".[64] Ironically, Puig argued that Gothic palaces in Barcelona (like that of the Kings of Aragon) represented the quintessence of the "Catalan house". "The house", he wrote, "is always national art as if it came from its own land".[65]

Marinescu was certainly cognisant of the nationalistic struggle, yet he maintained a discernible detachment from it. He complained to Iorga that "every Catalan I talk to first tries to convince me that the most stupid, lazy, and ignorant people are ... the Spaniards". He also evoked the 14 September celebrations, which commemorated the loss of Catalonia's autonomy in 1714, following the War of the Spanish Succession. Nationalists paid homage to the monument to Rafael Casanova, one of the defenders of the city during the siege by the Bourbon troops. According to Marinescu, "there was a mountain of flowers sent even by Catalans from America. Songs, the hymn of Catalonia, manifestations, 'death to Spain', and the inevitable charge of the mounted police sent from Madrid", a dynamic he approached not as a participant but as an analytical observer.[66]

In addition, Marinescu was puzzled by the colourful architecture that populated the Eixample, the extension neighbourhood to which Puig had substantially contributed as an Art Nouveau architect. Puig was notoriously critical of Ildefons Cerdà's gridded Eixample plan, which he disparaged as a monotonous and infinite "geometrical eruption" that lacked artistic merit, despite its modern recognition as a masterpiece of urban planning.[67] Because of that, he and other Art Nouveau architects intervened

---

[63] J.-M. Garcia-Fuentes, "Barcelona's Gothic Quarter: Architecture, Ideology and Politics", in T. Mager (ed.), *Architecture RePerformed: The Politics of Reconstruction*, Farnham, 2015, p. 35-54.

[64] Letter from C. Marinescu to N. Iorga, 25 September 1920, published in P. Țurlea (ed.), *Scrisori către Nicolae Iorga*..., p. 124.

[65] J. Puig i Cadafalch, "La casa catalana", in *Primer congrés d'història de la corona d'Aragó, 1908*, vol. 2, Barcelona, 1913, p. 1041.

[66] Letter from C. Marinescu to N. Iorga, 25 September 1920, published in P. Țurlea (ed.), *Scrisori către Nicolae Iorga*..., p. 125-126.

[67] J. Puig i Cadafalch, "A votar per l'Exposició Universal", *La Veu de Catalunya*, 11 November 1905, p. 3; T. Hall, "Introduction" to *Planning Europe's Capital Cities: Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Urban Development*, London, 1997, p. 2.

in the Eixample with constructions that signposted the historical connections of the city, as well as its symbolic place as capital of Catalonia.[68]

Marinescu disliked the "bizarre architecture" of some "grand houses" that he found in the Eixample, and even "laughed uproariously seeing one specimen, planned, surely, by some sick architect". Other buildings, however, were more to his liking, particularly those that combined "Arab motifs with features of classical architecture".[69] Eclecticism was indeed a hallmark of Puig's Art Nouveau architecture and can be seen in works such as the Casa Amatller (1898-1900). There, he transformed Catalan medieval motifs to create patterns that resembled Arabesques.[70] The creative blending of architectural elements from different historical periods was one of the landmarks of Catalonia's modern architecture, as defended by Lluís Domènech i Montaner (1849-1923) in his programmatic text *En busca de una arquitectura nacional* (*In Search of a National Architecture*, 1878).[71]

It is interesting to note that, when Iorga visited Barcelona a few years later, in 1927 and 1929, he reproduced many of the ideas that Marinescu had shared in his letters. In his travel account *Cîteva zile prin Spania* (*A Few Days in Spain*), Iorga contended that Catalonia's distinct history had not resulted in a region that was visibly different from the rest of Spain. "The land is the same as in the rest of the Peninsula", he said.[72] He even considered that Barcelona had "streets without personality, which even imitate, without any sense, Arab ornaments".[73] While Marinescu had appreciated this feature of the streets of the Eixample, Iorga was unimpressed by Domènech's and Puig's attempt to blend the architectural traditions of the Peninsula to create a new, "national style". On the contrary, he believed that the fact that Catalonia's "long historical development" had not yet been "represented in monuments" made the claim for Catalan autonomy weak.[74] These notes, composed in Romanian for a local readership, sharply contrast Iorga's public rhetoric in support of Catalan nationalism before and during the Bucharest Congress. Iorga's downplaying of Catalonia's cultural distinctness "at home" was likely a strategic choice to avoid encouraging a separatism that mirrored Romania's own struggle to integrate Transylvania.

---

[68] M. Umbach, "The Modernist Imagination...".

[69] Letter from C. Marinescu to N. Iorga, 25 September 1920, published in P. Țurlea (ed.), *Scrisori către Nicolae Iorga*..., p. 124.

[70] D. Pifarré, "Josep Puig i Cadafalch and the Sgraffito Technique: Influence and Adoption of Motifs from Gothic Art", in L. Mallart (ed.), *Josep Puig i Cadafalch. Vision, Identities, Cosmopolitism*, Mataró, 2018, p. 235-342.

[71] L. Domènech i Montaner, "En busca de una arquitectura nacional", *La Renaixensa: revista catalana de literatura, ciències i arts* 1.4, 1878, p. 149-160.

[72] N. Iorga, *Cîteva zile prin Spania*, Bucharest, 1927, p. 75; translated into Spanish and cited in J. J. Ortega Román, "Nicolae Iorga...", p. 157.

[73] N. Iorga, *Cîteva zile*..., p. 77; J. J. Ortega Román, "Nicolae Iorga...", p. 158.

[74] *Ibid*.

However, after visiting the 1929 Barcelona International Exposition, Iorga's tone shifted. Puig, who had been one of the exhibition's original designers, acted as Iorga's guide, conducting tours of the Exposition as well as other Catalan towns such as Vic and Ripoll.[75] This trip was documented in *O mică ţară latină* (*A Small Latin Country*, 1930), where Iorga acknowledged a "Catalan nationality, different from the nationality that conforms [to the] Spanish nationality".[76] And, echoing the narrative of siblinghood that he had built during the Congress, he also underscored the parallels between Romanian and Catalan history. He drew a direct analogy between their medieval rulers, noting that, like the Aragonese kings, Voivodes of Moldavia such as Roman I and Alexander I moved "from the mountain ... to the sea". He extended this comparison to their geography, equating the port city of Barcelona with the Black Sea fortress of Cetatea Albă, a symbol of Moldavian expansion located in present-day Ukraine.[77]

In several aspects, Iorga's description of Barcelona paralleled that of Marinescu in 1920. Like his student, who had been appalled by the contrast between the old and the new towns, Iorga observed a "duality between the Middle Ages – narrow, dark, full of hidden beauties – and the present day that displays, proclaims, shouts everything".[78] In Barcelona, he noted, "the new and large streets cut through the confusing shadow of the old districts".[79] He further replicated his mentee's earlier visit by meeting the scholar of the Crown of Aragon, Antoni Rubió i Lluch, whom he praised as a "great historian and poet". In his account, Iorga wrote: "I found him in the supreme solitude of his home, where everything reminds him of his life companion that he has recently lost. Every time he mentions her, tears well up and his eyes are full of pain, eyes that he offered to science – small, white, yet still strong at over 70 years old".[80]

These exchanges went beyond personal connections, developing into institutional collaborations that endured over time. Rubió, the first president of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (IEC, Institute of Catalan Studies), immediately attracted Marinescu's attention. Founded in 1907 by the Provincial Deputation of Barcelona, the IEC was conceived as a nationalist alternative to the University of Barcelona, which was regarded as an instrument of the Spanish state that neglected research into Catalan history, language, science, and culture.[81] Marinescu praised the Institute on

---

[75] N. Iorga, *O mică ţară latină: Catalonia şi expoziţia din 1929. Note de drum şi conferinţe*, Bucharest, 1930, p. 38. Translation by the author.

[76] *Ibid.*, p. 51; translated into Catalan and cited in X. Montoliu and D. Moţoc, "Quatre apunts sobre les relacions entre la literatura romanesa i la catalana", *Vîsat* 15, 2013, n. p.

[77] N. Iorga, *O mică ţară latină*..., p. 13.

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 15-16.

[81] A. Balcells and E. Pujol, *Història de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans*, vol. 1: *1907-1942*, 2 vols., Barcelona, 2002.

many levels: he found it "beautiful", "comfortable", with the "largest reading room, tastefully decorated […] having electric light at every chair, wide tables ...". He also admired the "enviable library" that the institution had been able to gather in such a short period of time. However, Marinescu attributed the IEC's strengths not to its Catalan character (an observation that would certainly have pleased his hosts) but rather to his mistaken perception of it as a "private" institution. He considered the IEC "an example of what an intelligent private initiative can do", and welcomed the opportunity of spending long hours in its library, well after the publicly owned archives in Barcelona had closed its doors.[82] Unsurprisingly, Marinescu was instrumental in forging an official link between the IEC and the Romanian Academy, which led to the exchange of publications between the two institutions until the outbreak of the Second World War.[83]

Marinescu left a lasting impression in Barcelona. A testament to his enduring impact is the posthumous publication of one of his major works, *La politique orientale d'Alfonse V d'Aragon, roi de Naples* – a study of the imperial policies of the humanist Aragonese king known as "the Magnanimous" –, which appeared in print only in 1994.[84] The scholar Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol, a member of the institute, remarked that the book continued to hold its scholarly value in the 1990s, as no subsequent study had engaged with the same source material.[85] During his lifetime, Marinescu also maintained fruitful exchanges with several of Rubió's mentees, including Lluís Nicolau d'Olwer (1888-1961) and Ferran Soldevila (1894-1971), two of the most influential Catalan historians of the 1930s.

Nicolau was likewise a historian of the eastern expansion of the Crown of Aragon and participated in the Second International Congress of Byzantine Studies (Belgrade, 1927), where he presented a paper on a Catalan account of the siege of Rhodes by the Mamluk Sultanate in 1444.[86] He and Marinescu exchanged publications and letters for more than a decade, discussing both historiographical and political matters.[87] Their correspondence rhetorically echoed Iorga's theme of Catalan kinship with other medieval

---

[82] Letter from C. Marinescu to N. Iorga, 25 September 1920, published in P. Țurlea (ed.), *Scrisori către Nicolae Iorga*..., p. 125.

[83] Letter from C. Marinescu to N. Iorga, 1 December 1920, cited *ibid.*, p. 158.

[84] C. Marinescu, *La politique orientale d'Alfonse V d'Aragon, roi de Naples (1416-1458)*, Barcelona, 1994.

[85] M. T. Ferrer i Mallol, "Presentació", in R. Salicrú i Lluch, M. M. Viladrich, and L. Cifuentes (eds.), *Els catalans a la Mediterrània oriental a l'Edat Mitjana*, Barcelona, 2003, p. 7-8.

[86] *Programme des travaux du congrès [II^e Congrès international des études byzantines, Belgrade, 1927]*, Belgrade, 1927.

[87] Letter from C. Marinescu to L. Nicolau d'Olwer, 9 April 1931, Arxiu de l'Abadia de Montserrat, Arxiu Lluís Nicolau d'Ower.

peoples, as when Marinescu commended Nicolau's research for "highlighting what the Catalans of the past were able to achieve in the history of the Middle Ages".[88]

In conclusion, the visits of Marinescu and Iorga to Barcelona reveal a complex negotiation between public solidarity and private perception. While publicly championing a narrative of Catalan-Romanian fraternity, their personal travel accounts (written for a domestic Romanian audience) often betrayed a reluctance to fully acknowledge Catalonia's cultural distinctiveness, particularly when it challenged their own nationalist frameworks or confronted unfamiliar urban realities. Yet, through sustained exposure and personal guidance from figures like Puig, Iorga's perspective evolved toward a more genuine recognition of Catalan identity. Ultimately, these exchanges transcended individual encounters, cementing lasting institutional ties between Catalan and Romanian academies and fostering scholarly collaborations across a large web of historians.

Conclusion

The 1924 International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest emerges from this analysis as a multifaceted event in which academic, political, and personal dimensions were inextricably intertwined. This article has shown that the Congress functioned simultaneously as a platform for cultural protodiplomacy, a venue for the co-production of nationalist historical narratives, and a catalyst for enduring intellectual networks. Through the interactions among Catalan and Romanian figures – most notably Josep Puig i Cadafalch, Nicolae Iorga, and Constantin Marinescu – we can observe how nationalist projects in the interwar period were not merely inward-looking but were often advanced through transnational collaboration. The scholarly exchanges, in which each side studied and validated the other's history and art, fostered a form of intellectual reciprocity that reinforced both Catalan and Romanian claims to cultural distinctiveness and historical significance. The Romanians, through Marinescu and Iorga, integrated the medieval Crown of Aragon into a narrative of Balkan brotherhood and resistance. The Catalans, through Puig, integrated the painted churches of Moldavia into a universal theory of artistic evolution that simultaneously underscored Catalonia's historical centrality. Each side wrote a chapter of the other's national history and, in doing so, found validation for its own.

At the same time, the personal experiences and travel accounts of the protagonists reveal the complexities underlying these public alliances. The private observations of Marinescu and Iorga in Barcelona, often at odds with their public rhetoric of fraternity, highlight the negotiation between strategic solidarity and genuine perception. Yet these very encounters fostered a deeper, more nuanced understanding and laid the groundwork for lasting institutional collaborations. Ultimately, the case

[88] Letter from C. Marinescu to L. Nicolau d'Olwer, 13 September 1926, Arxiu de l'Abadia de Montserrat, Arxiu Lluís Nicolau d'Ower.

of the Barcelona-Bucharest intellectual axis challenges simplified narratives of nationalist historiography and underscores the value of a transnational approach. It reveals how intellectual "invisible colleges" operating between cultural peripheries could reshape historical scholarship, influence political self-fashioning, and create alternative geographies of knowledge in a Europe reconfigured by war and the collapse of empires.


DIMINEAȚA

O datorie imperioasă a guvernului

Sprerezolvirea problemei reparațiilor

Punctul de vedere al Germaniei

Poincaré despre posibilitatea unei înțelegeri

Victimele speculației

O nouă tragedie la Viena

Oglinda zilei

Oul trei lei

De vorbă cu d. Puig i Cadafalc

Regele la Versailles

Construirea unui pod peste Dunăre

Spre o fuziune între partidul național și partidul țărănesc

Tratativele ungaro-jugoslave

Două conferințe: Belgrad și Budapesta

Liga Națiunilor și „Numerus Clausus"

Campania presei rușești împotriva României

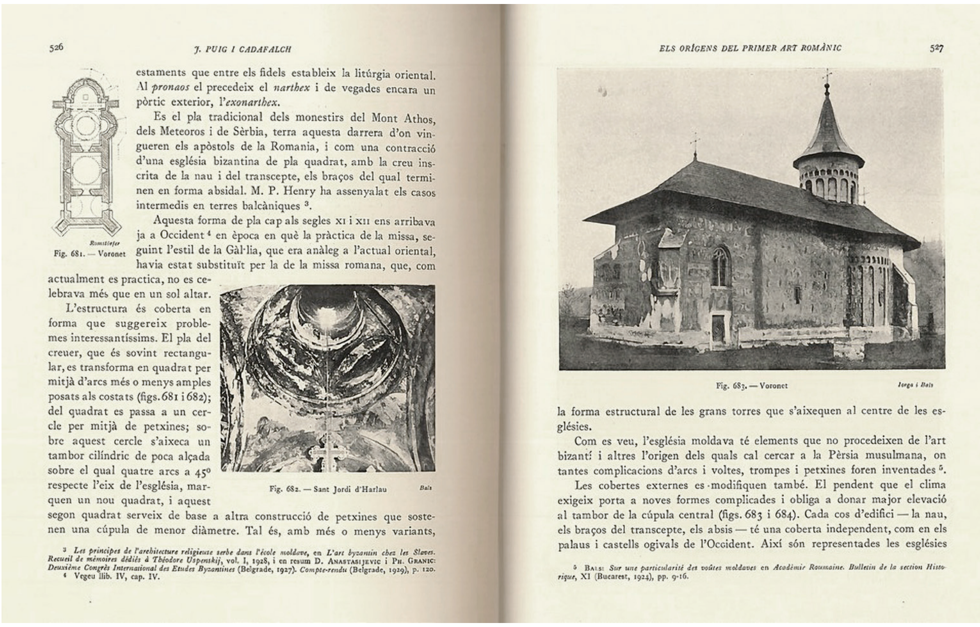
Grecia rela relațiile cu Rusia

D-rul Voronoff se va însura și el

CUPON DE PREMII

No. 10

Fig. 1. "De vorbă cu d. Puig i Cadafalc, președintele Uniunei provinciale catalane", *Dimineața*, 23 April 1924 (photo by the author)



526 *J. PUIG I CADAFALCH*

estaments que entre els fidels estableix la litúrgia oriental. Al *pronaos* el precedeix el *narthex* i de vegades encara un pòrtic exterior, l'*exonarthex*.

Es el pla tradicional dels monestirs del Mont Athos, dels Meteoros i de Sèrbia, terra aquesta darrera d'on vingueren els apòstols de la Romania, i com una contracció d'una església bizantina de pla quadrat, amb la creu inscrita de la nau i del transcepte, els braços del qual terminen en forma absidal. M. P. Henry ha assenyalat els casos intermedis en terres balcàniques [3].

Aquesta forma de pla cap als segles XI i XII ens arribava ja a Occident [4] en època en què la pràctica de la missa, seguint l'estil de la Gàl·lia, que era anàleg a l'actual oriental, havia estat substituït per la de la missa romana, que, com actualment es practica, no es celebrava més que en un sol altar.

Fig. 681. — Voronet

L'estructura és coberta en forma que suggereix problemes interessantíssims. El pla del creuer, que és sovint rectangular, es transforma en quadrat per mitjà d'arcs més o menys amples posats als costats (figs. 681 i 682); del quadrat es passa a un cercle per mitjà de petxines; sobre aquest cercle s'aixeca un tambor cilíndric de poca alçada sobre el qual quatre arcs a 45° respecte l'eix de l'església, marquen un nou quadrat, i aquest segon quadrat serveix de base a altra construcció de petxines que sostenen una cúpula de menor diàmetre. Tal és, amb més o menys variants,

Fig. 682. — Sant Jordi d'Harlau — Bals

[3] *Les principes de l'architecture religieuse serbe dans l'école moldave*, en *L'art byzantin chez les Slaves. Recueil de mémoires dédiés à Théodore Uspenskij*, vol. I, 1928, i en resum D. ANASTASIJEVIC i PH. GRANIC: *Deuxième Congrès International des Etudes Byzantines* (Belgrade, 1927). *Compte-rendu* (Belgrade, 1929), p. 120.

[4] Vegeu llib. IV, cap. IV.

ELS ORÍGENS DEL PRIMER ART ROMÀNIC 527

Fig. 683. — Voronet — Iorga i Bals

la forma estructural de les grans torres que s'aixequen al centre de les esglésies.

Com es veu, l'església moldava té elements que no procedeixen de l'art bizantí i altres l'origen dels quals cal cercar a la Pèrsia musulmana, on tantes complicacions d'arcs i voltes, trompes i petxines foren inventades [5].

Les cobertes externes es modifiquen també. El pendent que el clima exigeix porta a noves formes complicades i obliga a donar major elevació al tambor de la cúpula central (figs. 683 i 684). Cada cos d'edifici — la nau, els braços del transcepte, els absis — té una coberta independent, com en els palaus i castells ogivals de l'Occident. Així són representades les esglésies

[5] BALS: *Sur une particularité des voûtes moldaves* en *Académie Roumaine. Bulletin de la section Historique*, XI (Bucarest, 1924), pp. 9-16.

Fig. 2. Josep Puig i Cadafalch, *La geografia i els orígens del primer art romànic*, Barcelona, 1930, p. 526-527 (photo by the author)