

Études byzantines et post-byzantines

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Études byzantines et post-byzantines

Nouvelle série

Études byzantines et post-byzantines continuent, sous la forme d'une revue à parution annuelle, la série homonyme, éditée par la Société roumaine d'études byzantines, dont le premier tome est paru en 1979, sous l'égide de l'Institut d'études sud-est européennes, par les soins de Nicolae-Şerban Tanaşoca et Eugen Stănescu.

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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

Sommaire

<i>Contributors</i>	9
<i>Avant-propos</i>	15
Antonio Rigo	
<i>Introduction</i>	17
Paul Magdalino	
<i>The Foundation of Constantinople and the Beginnings of Byzantine Studies</i>	23
<i>N. Iorga et le congrès de 1924</i>	
Andrei Timotin	
<i>Pourquoi un congrès international des études byzantines ? L'argument de N. Iorga</i>	47
Marie-Hélène Blanchet	
<i>Le discours d'ouverture de Nicolas Iorga au congrès de 1924. Byzance entre réminiscences et rémanences</i>	61
<i>La découverte des patrimoines artistiques byzantins</i>	
Jannic Durand, Maximilien Durand	
<i>1924-2024 : cent ans au Louvre</i>	75
Ioanna Rapti	
<i>La Roumanie dans l'œuvre de Gabriel Millet et la Collection chrétienne et byzantine de l'École pratique des Hautes Études</i>	95

Elena N. Boeck	
<i>Byzantium in the Objectiff: Nikodim Kondakov, Jean Xavier Raoult and Their Photographic Expedition to Sinai</i>	113
Dubravka Preradović	
<i>Research on Serbian Medieval Monuments at the Time of the Internationalisation of Byzantine Studies</i>	143
Lucila Mallart	
<i>The Barcelona-Bucharest Connection: Forging Intellectual and Political Alliances at the 1924 Congress of Byzantine Studies</i>	163
 <i>Les études byzantines avant et après le congrès de 1924</i>	
Srdan Pirivatrić	
<i>The Study of Byzantine History in Belgrade before and after the First World War</i>	185
Christos Stavrakos	
<i>Greek Participants in the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest: From the Archive of Professor Sokrates Kougeas</i>	195
Ivan Biliarsky	
<i>Entre l'histoire et la politique : Byzance et le droit médiéval en Bulgarie à l'époque des premiers congrès des études byzantines</i>	211
Adrien Palladino	
<i>Une alliance inachevée. Les études byzantines (et slaves) comme force fédératrice dans la Tchécoslovaquie d'entre-deux-guerres</i>	219
Andrea Paribeni	
<i>The Development of Byzantine Studies in Italy in the First Decades of the Twentieth Century. Facing the International Context</i>	239
Anna C. Kelley	
<i>Scholars, Adventurers, Spies: Byzantine Archaeology and the Evolution of a Discipline in Interwar Britain</i>	253
Pablo Ubierna	
<i>Byzance dans le Cône Sud au temps du Premier Congrès international des études byzantines</i>	279

Byzantinistes roumains avant et après le congrès de Bucarest

Ovidiu Cristea

*« Le Conseil du roi Charles » : les croisades et Byzance
dans l'œuvre de Gheorghe I. Brătianu 297*

Mihail Mitrea

*Oreste Tafrali's Contributions to Byzantine Studies
before and after the 1924 Congress 309*

Octavian-Adrian Negoită

*Philologia et historia: Vasile Grecu (1885-1972) and the Development
of Byzantine Philology 325*

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Jannic Durand is honorary curator at the Louvre, trained at the École nationale des chartes and the École du Louvre. He worked from 1983 at the Louvre Museum at the Department of Decorative Arts that he directed from 2013 to 2022. Specialist in Byzantine, medieval, and Eastern Christian art, he has curated many major exhibitions, including *Byzance* (1992), *Armenia sacra* (2007), *Sainte Russie* (2010), and *Chypre entre Byzance et l'Occident* (2012). His work addresses a wide range of topics related to the production and circulation of objects in the Byzantine East, Latin West and modern Europe, with a focus on relics and reliquaries, luxury arts, and the history of objects and collections.

Maximilien Durand is Director of the Department of Byzantine and Eastern Christian Art at the Louvre Museum. Trained as an art historian, he specialises in Byzantine, medieval, and cross-cultural Mediterranean material culture. Before joining the Louvre, he served as Director of the Musée des Tissus et des Arts Décoratifs in Lyon. He has curated several exhibitions and contributed to collective volumes on medieval art, textile history, and museum heritage. He also teaches Early Christian and Byzantine art at the École du Louvre. His research further encompasses the study of relics and the materiality of devotion in the Christian East, with particular attention to the circulation, authentication, and display of sacred objects.

Anna C. Kelley (PhD, University of Birmingham, Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies) is a Lecturer in Ancient History at the University of St Andrews. Her primary research is centred on issues of gender, labour, production, and consumption in the Late Antique East, and she is currently preparing a monograph on

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Paul Magdalino is Emeritus Professor of Byzantine History at the University of St Andrews and a Fellow of the British Academy. He has published extensively on all periods and many aspects of Byzantine history. His research has focused particularly on Thessaly in the Later Middle Ages, the twelfth century, the “Macedonian Renaissance”, astrology, court culture, political eschatology, the urban development of Constantinople and the literary perception of the city and its monuments.

Lucila Mallart is a cultural and art historian of modern Europe. She earned her PhD from the University of Nottingham (2016) and currently holds a Ramón y Cajal Research Fellowship at Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona. Her research explores the role of visual culture, urban planning, public exhibitions, and knowledge devices in shaping national identities in modern Spain. Her recent work investigates knowledge transfers across Europe’s borderlands during the interwar period, with particular attention to Spain, the Balkans, and the Nordic countries. Her publications have appeared in journals and with publishers such as *Cultural History*, *Urban History*, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, Routledge, and Peter Lang.

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Octavian-Adrian Negoită is Researcher at the Institute for the History of Religions of the Romanian Academy, where he works on the intellectual and religious history of early modern Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, with particular emphasis on the “entangled histories” of Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Ottoman context. After receiving his PhD in 2020 from the University of Bucharest, he has participated in several major research projects: ERC Synergy Grant *EuQu* (Copenhagen, 2020-2022); ERC Starting

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Adrien Palladino is responsible for the collections relating to the Slavic world in the Department of Byzantine and Eastern Christian Art at the Louvre Museum and is Assistant Professor at Masaryk University, Brno. His research focuses on the material cultures of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages across the Mediterranean and Eurasia, with particular attention to devotional practices and the agency of materials. He is also a specialist in the historiography of art history and Byzantine studies, exploring their entanglements with politics, religion, and heritage. Since 2024, he has been Principal Investigator of the Czech Science Foundation-funded project *Dreaming Byzantium in Nineteenth-Century France: Neo-Byzantine Architecture, Orientalism, and the Racial and National Myths of Art History (1848-1900)*.

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Andrei Timotin is Professor at the École Pratique des Hautes Études-PSL, President of the Romanian Society for Byzantine Studies, Editor of *Études byzantines et post-byzantines* and *Supplementa EBPB*, and Co-editor of the BIESEE series at the Institute for South-East European Studies of the Romanian Academy. He has published extensively on the relationship between philosophy and religion in Late Antiquity, as well as on Byzantine and post-Byzantine prophetic literature and hagiography. His publications include *Visions, prophéties et pouvoir à Byzance. Étude sur l'hagiographie méso-byzantine (IX^e-XI^e s.)* (Paris, 2010); *Savoirs prédictifs et techniques divinatoires de l'Antiquité tardive à Byzance* (Seyssel, 2019, with Paul Magdalino); and *Reading the Future in Byzantium and Beyond. New Approaches to the Byzantine Prophetic and Apocalyptic Tradition* (Heidelberg – Bucharest, 2024, with Paul Magdalino).

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Avant-propos

Ce volume réunit la plupart des communications présentées lors du colloque homonyme organisé par l'Institut d'Études sud-est européennes de l'Académie roumaine et par la Société roumaine d'Études byzantines, en collaboration avec le Musée National d'Art de Roumanie, qui s'est tenu à Bucarest et au monastère de Cozia du 4 au 6 septembre 2024.

L'organisation d'un colloque consacré au centenaire des congrès d'études byzantines s'imposait comme un devoir d'honneur tant pour l'Institut que pour la Société. Je rappellerai à cet égard deux faits significatifs. Le premier concerne la fondation, par Nicolae Iorga en 1926 et dans le sillage du congrès de 1924, de l'Institut roumain d'études byzantines, qui partageait le même bâtiment – l'ancienne maison de Iorga – avec l'Institut d'Études sud-est européennes, fondé une dizaine d'années plus tôt. Dès leur création, les deux instituts connurent un destin jumeau : ils partageaient non seulement leurs locaux, mais aussi une bibliothèque remarquable, enrichie notamment par celle d'August Heisenberg – successeur de Karl Krumbacher à la tête de l'Institut de byzantinologie de Munich – que Iorga avait pu acquérir grâce à une donation du roi de Roumanie. Après la mort tragique de leur fondateur en 1940, la direction des deux instituts fut assumée par Nicolae Bănescu, son fidèle collaborateur, jusqu'en 1948, date à laquelle ils furent supprimés par le régime communiste. Durant les deux décennies de leur existence, ces institutions jouèrent un rôle essentiel dans le développement des études byzantines.

Lorsque le nouvel Institut d'Études sud-est européennes fut fondé en 1963, il adopta un programme de recherche pluridisciplinaire demeuré fidèle à l'héritage de son prédécesseur, dans lequel les études byzantines occupaient une place de premier plan. La même année fut créée la Société roumaine d'études byzantines, avec Nicolae Bănescu comme président d'honneur et Vasile Grecu comme président. Cette revitalisation institutionnelle fut suivie, en septembre 1971, par l'organisation à Bucarest du quatorzième congrès des études byzantines, présidé par Vasile Grecu – devenu entre-temps vice-président d'honneur de l'AIEB – et coordonné par Mihai Berza, directeur de l'Institut, en collaboration avec Eugen Stănescu, qui lui succéderait sept ans plus tard. Dès l'origine, le lien entre la Société et l'Institut fut indissoluble. C'est sous leur égide commune que parut, en 1979, grâce aux

soins de Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca et d'Eugen Stănescu, le premier tome des *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, publication qui se poursuit aujourd'hui sous la forme d'une revue annuelle.

L'Institut et la Société perpétuent ainsi un héritage qui remonte au congrès de 1924 et qui s'inscrit dans l'essor des études byzantines que cet événement a suscité en Europe et au-delà. Le centenaire que nous avons célébré l'an dernier a offert l'occasion d'évaluer pleinement l'ampleur et la portée de cet héritage. Les contributions réunies dans le présent volume expriment cette démarche selon des perspectives différentes, reflétant la pluralité des traditions scientifiques nationales.

Je souhaite adresser mes remerciements les plus vifs à toutes celles et tous ceux qui ont accepté de se rendre à Bucarest et d'apporter leur précieuse contribution à cette réflexion collective. J'exprime également ma gratitude à mon collègue Daniel Cain, directeur de l'Institut d'Études sud-est européennes, ainsi qu'à Emanuela Cernea, conservatrice en chef du Département d'Art roumain ancien du Musée National d'Art de Roumanie, sans l'appui desquels ce colloque n'aurait pu être organisé. Ma reconnaissance va aussi à Mihail Mitrea, pour son aide essentielle dans la préparation éditoriale du volume, et à Cristian Brutaru, pour en avoir assuré la publication. Enfin, je tiens à remercier tout particulièrement Antonio Rigo, qui a soutenu dès le début – c'était à Venise, lors d'une discussion pendant le congrès de 2022 – le projet du colloque, organisé sous les auspices de l'AIEB, et qui a bien voulu rédiger l'introduction du présent volume.

Andrei Timotin

Introduction*

Antonio Rigo

Comme le dit Paul Magdalino, le Congrès d'études byzantines de Bucarest de 1924 « is the *terminus ante quem* for the emergence of Byzantine studies as a field of research distinct from the classical studies, the moment which marked their coming of age as an academic discipline »¹. Le Congrès de 1924 a vraiment été un *terminus ante*, mais a été aussi, comme on va le voir, un *terminus post quem*. Nous ne nous arrêterons pas ici à évoquer ce moment historique précis pour parler du congrès, de son inspiration, de l'action et des attentes de ses principaux acteurs (Nicolae Iorga², mais aussi Henri Grégoire). Un bon nombre d'articles du volume sont consacrés à ces questions et, par ailleurs, nous ne voulons pas considérer le Congrès de Bucarest selon la perspective temporelle actuelle, dans une optique presque téléologique, comme le simple point de départ d'un parcours et d'une série (heureuse) de congrès qui atteindra en 2026 sa vingt-cinquième édition. Il ne s'agit pas non plus de souligner les dimensions et la réalité changeantes de l'événement, d'un point de vue quantitatif – les participants au congrès de Bucarest en 1924 étaient une soixantaine, tandis que ceux qui ont pris part aux dernières éditions (Belgrade et Venise-Padoue) étaient plus de mille trois cents –, mais aussi qualitatif – âge, sexe, situation professionnelle et universitaire, etc. Nous voulons plutôt, en remontant un siècle en arrière, essayer de montrer comment le Congrès d'études byzantines – celui de Bucarest comme ceux qui ont suivi immédiatement³ – a été vu par ses promoteurs (et pas seulement)

* J'adresse mes remerciements à mon cher ami Bernard Flusin pour la relecture de l'article.

¹ Cf. *infra*, p. 24.

² Voir en particulier les articles de Andrei Timotin et de Marie-Hélène Blanchet dans ce volume.

³ Pour lesquels, en addition aux articles de Srđan Pirivatrić, Christos Stavrakos et Ivan Biliarsky dans ce volume, il est utile de lire M. Nystazopoulou-Pélékidou, « L'histoire des congrès internationaux des études byzantines (première partie) », *Βυζαντινά Σύμμεικτα* 18, 2008, p. 11-33 ; S. Maufroy, « Les premiers Congrès internationaux des études byzantines : entre nationalisme et construction internationale d'une discipline », *Revue germanique internationale* 12, 2010, p. 229-240 ; voir aussi

comme l'événement décisif qui conférait à la discipline une visibilité et affirmait sa maturité et son autonomie. En d'autres termes, nous essaierons de voir quels ont été les événements et les projets – plus ou moins réalisés – qui ont été progressivement considérés comme la marque distinctive et identitaire des études byzantines : le Congrès, bien sûr, mais aussi d'autres structures et d'autres entités par la suite. Pour ce faire, il faut d'abord rappeler certains événements bien connus et bien illustrés dans ce volume.

À l'occasion du V^e Congrès international des sciences historiques de Bruxelles (1923), une section autonome d'études byzantines fut créée, sur la proposition de Henri Grégoire et de Henri Pirenne. À cette occasion, comme le rappelait Nicolae Iorga lui-même dans ses mémoires « est surgie une fois, pendant une conversation avec M. Grégoire, l'idée d'un Congrès spécial »⁴ dédié à Byzance, ce qui fut réalisé l'année suivante à Bucarest par Iorga lui-même. Malgré les difficultés liées à la situation politique de l'après-guerre, le congrès fut un vrai succès, pour son organisateur, mais pas seulement. Ce résultat fut atteint de plusieurs façons, et surtout, comme Vitalien Laurent le rappellera quelques décennies plus tard, cela « détermina dans toute l'Europe une efflorescence de nouveaux périodiques. La revue *Byzantion* à Bruxelles, les *Studi bizantini e neoellenici* à Rome, les *Byzantinoslavica* et le *Seminarium Kondakovianum* à Prague, l'*Annuaire de la Société des Études Byzantines* à Athènes ; tous ces organes dont le numéro limitaire porte le même millésime, 1924 ou 1925, sont issus de l'enthousiasme soulevé partout par les travaux de cette première assemblée auxquels Iorga avait su donner du prestige et une féconde cohésion »⁵.

Le grand propagandiste du succès de l'événement, mais aussi l'un des acteurs principaux à l'époque et dans les décennies suivantes, était sans aucun doute Henri Grégoire, comme on peut le voir surtout dans sa *Chronique du Congrès*, publiée entre 1924 et 1925 dans pas moins de quatre revues⁶. Il y célébrait l'entreprise, son succès et son créateur. Dans ces pages, Grégoire commençait par rappeler comment « la guerre mondiale avait été particulièrement fatale aux études byzantines », et « [qu']ainsi semblait détruite ou compromise l'œuvre de Karl Krumbacher,

A. Ignjatović, « Affecting Consonance, Striving for Dominance: Scholarship and Politics at the Congresses of Byzantine Studies in the Balkans, 1924-1934 », *Journal of Balkans and Near Eastern Studies* 21, 2019, p. 696-715.

⁴ Cité par F. Fodac, « Le premier Congrès International d'Études Byzantines (Bucarest, 14-20 avril 1924). Prémisses et contexte historique d'organisation », *Études byzantines et post-byzantines* 5, 2006, p. 509-522, ici p. 509.

⁵ V. Laurent, « Nicolas Iorga, historien de la vie byzantine », *Revue des études byzantines* 4, 1946, p. 5-23, ici p. 22.

⁶ H. Grégoire, « Un Congrès d'études byzantines à Bucarest (fin avr. 1924) », *Flambeau*, 30 juin 1924 ; *Journal des Débats*, 6 juillet 1924 ; *Revue archéologique* 20, 1924, p. 243-246 ; *Échos d'Orient* 24, 1925, p. 56-59 ; voir aussi son entretien publié dans *Neamul Românesc*, 23 avril 1924.

fondateur de la *Byzantinische*, esprit large d'ailleurs et bon Européen, lequel avait réussi à grouper sous le signe de Byzance les philologues, les archéologues, les théologiens préoccupés de l'Orient Chrétien ». La citation de Krumbacher est plus que significative, car Grégoire ne voulait pas seulement parler de l'enseignement de la chaire de Munich, mais surtout de la fondation de la *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, ici définie comme le « moniteur officiel » et « l'organe central » des études byzantines, « cette science neuve, qui avait si tardivement conquis son nom et son unité ». Les paroles de Grégoire semblaient ainsi renvoyer, voire faire écho, à la note liminaire de Krumbacher lui-même dans le premier numéro de la *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* (1892), où on lit que l'existence de peuples intégrés dans le creuset byzantin depuis la fin de l'Antiquité jusqu'aux débuts de l'ère moderne est un domaine de recherche pour une discipline vivante et prometteuse : « Le moment semble venu de créer officiellement et explicitement cette nouvelle branche des sciences philologiques et historiques. (...) La byzantinologie commence à se développer comme une nouvelle science, indépendante et fondée sur ses propres bases (...). La byzantinologie n'est pas le résultat d'une fragmentation malsaine, mais un nouvel organisme issu de la fusion de particules auparavant fragmentées et donc souvent méconnues »⁷. Dans ce même premier numéro de la revue, Spyridon P. Lampros faisait écho à Krumbacher dans l'introduction de son article, qui s'intitulait de manière significative *Byzantinische Desiderata*⁸. Il mentionnait ensuite les considérations de Fiodor Uspenskij, sur lesquelles nous reviendrons plus bas, pour dire qu'il fallait un centre commun (*Mittelpunkt*), pour éviter que les recherches soient dispersées et fragmentées. Dans le discours programmatique de Krumbacher et dans les propos de Lampros, l'élément identitaire et marquant de la nouvelle discipline était clairement la création d'un organe représentatif au niveau international, en l'occurrence une revue.

En 1924-1925, Henri Grégoire reprenait ces idées. Dans un contexte complètement différent après la Première Guerre mondiale et la révolution bolchevique en Russie, il semblait identifier dans une autre institution, le Congrès international, le facteur distinctif et unifiant de la discipline et, en même temps, l'instrument déterminant pour affirmer son autonomie et son indépendance par rapport à d'autres spécialités d'études, telles que l'orientalisme, l'histoire de l'art, l'archéologie et l'histoire.

C'est évidemment dans ce sens que s'inscrivait, avec emphase, la circulaire envoyée par les organisateurs aux congressistes en vue du Congrès de Belgrade de 1927 : « En vérité, la Byzantinologie ne devait plus s'abstenir d'avoir ses propres Congrès Internationaux, ses propres Conciles universels. Bien qu'héritière de l'Empire romain et de la civilisation gréco-romaine, Byzance n'en formait pas moins une individualité politique et spirituelle tout à fait à part. Loin de constituer

⁷ K. Krumbacher, « Vorwort », *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 1, 1892, p. 1-12, ici p. 3.

⁸ Sp. P. Lampros, « Byzantinische Desiderata », *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 1, 1892, p. 185-201, ici p. 185.

un facteur historique secondaire, elle fut l'impératrice du monde médiéval et sa grande civilisatrice. Enfin, la matière de la science byzantine constituant un tout considérable et très complexe, des Congrès généraux de cette science peuvent, mieux que les Sections Byzantines des Congrès des disciplines voisines, embrasser l'ensemble si différencié des spécialités et des spécialistes désignés sous les vocables de Byzantinologie et Byzantinologues »⁹.

Au troisième congrès, à Athènes en octobre 1930, il fut question pour la première fois de créer un organisme international pour coordonner les byzantinistes. En fait, une idée similaire avait déjà été proposée un demi-siècle plus tôt (en 1886) par Fiodor Uspenskij, qui avait souligné la nécessité d'une meilleure intégration des études byzantines menées en Allemagne, en France, en Russie, en Grèce et en Grande-Bretagne, et avait appelé à la création d'une société internationale d'études byzantines, avec son siège à Athènes¹⁰. Son projet fut repris quelques années plus tard, comme on l'a vu, par Spyridon P. Lampros, qui l'a réinterprété dans un sens plus restrictif, en parlant d'une revue internationale comme organe commun des chercheurs.

À Athènes, on a donc proposé, avec le soutien de différents gouvernements, « la fondation d'un Institut international d'études byzantines qui, entre autres tâches, aurait celle de publier une Encyclopédie Byzantine »¹¹. La proposition n'a pas été suivie d'effet. Elle fut rappelée par Vitalien Laurent, quatre ans plus tard, lors du Congrès de Sofia, qui parle d'elle comme de l'une des « feuilles de l'automne qui la vit naître »¹². Une reprise de cette idée, avec une touche qui convenait bien à l'ambiance et au climat du Congrès italien de 1936, est encore reconnaissable dans les vœux finaux exprimés à cette occasion par les participants : « I Congressisti, constatando l'eccellenza degli studi italiani e il fervore della nuova Italia, fanno voto che in Roma, culla della civiltà di Bisanzio, sorga un grande centro internazionale di Studi Bizantini »¹³.

⁹ D. Anastasijević et Ph. Granić, *Deuxième Congrès International des Études Byzantines, Belgrade 1927. Compte-rendu*, Belgrade, 1929, p. VIII.

¹⁰ F. I. Uspenskij, « Ζητήματα πρὸς μελέτην τῆς ἐσωτερικῆς ἱστορίας τοῦ βυζαντινοῦ κράτους », *Δελτίον τῆς ἱστορικῆς καὶ ἐθνολογικῆς ἐταιρείας τῆς Ἑλλάδος* 2, 1886, p. 33-552, en particulier p. 551 : « Πρὸς τοῦτο δὲ ἀπαραίτητος εἶνε ἡ ἰδρυσις διεθνοῦς ἐταιρείας καὶ φιλολογικοῦ ὄργανου ἀναφερομένου εἰς τὰς βυζαντινὰς μελέτας. Καὶ τῆς μὲν ἀνάγκης τῆς ἰδρύσεως τοιαύτης ἐταιρείας συνειδηθῆναι ἔχουσι πάντες οἱ ἀσχολουμένοι περὶ τὴν βυζαντινὴν ἱστορίαν ».

¹¹ A. Orlandos (éd.), *Actes du III^e Congrès International des Études Byzantines, Athènes 1930*, Athènes, 1932, p. 270-271.

¹² V. Laurent, « Le IV^e Congrès des études byzantines (Sofia, 9-16 septembre 1934) », *Échos d'Orient* 37, 1934, p. 428-442, ici p. 437.

¹³ « Atti del V Congresso Internazionale di Studi Bizantini, Roma 20-26 settembre 1936 », t. II, *Studi bizantini e neoellenici* 6, 1936, p. 558.

De manière plus pragmatique, dès 1930, à Athènes, on avait souhaité « la création d'un Comité permanent chargé de s'occuper et des dates des prochains Congrès et de la surveillance des travaux qui doivent s'élaborer sous l'égide des Congrès »¹⁴. La proposition fut reprise et développée dans ses aspects les plus concrets à Sofia en 1934, avec une formulation qui anticipait déjà des réalités qui allaient se concrétiser des années plus tard, dans un contexte historique complètement nouveau. L'importance de cette proposition, acceptée par l'assemblée des congressistes, explique pourquoi elle a été intégralement relatée dans les actes et les différentes chroniques du Congrès. Nous la reprenons ici à partir du compte rendu des résolutions des séances plénières : « M. Fr. Dölger, président, propose, d'accord avec le bureau du Congrès, de constituer un Comité permanent qui devrait se charger de l'exécution des résolutions prises par le Congrès. L'assemblée a approuvé cette proposition et a décidé que le Comité soit composé pour le moment de 10 membres représentant les pays dans lesquels des congrès byzantins ont déjà siégé, les pays qui ont offert leur hospitalité pour les prochains congrès, et les pays où existent d'importants centres d'études byzantines. De cette manière le Comité sera composé des représentants des pays suivants : Roumanie, Yougoslavie, Grèce, Bulgarie, Italie, Hongrie, France, Allemagne, Belgique et Tchécoslovaquie. Les services du secrétariat seront assumés par les délégués de la Bulgarie et de l'Italie »¹⁵.

Ce qui avait été approuvé solennellement à Sofia ne devint réalité qu'après la coupure et l'interruption marquées par la Seconde Guerre mondiale, avec les deux congrès « jumeaux » de 1948, le VI^e et le VII^e, qui se tinrent successivement à Paris et à Bruxelles¹⁶. À ces occasions, reprenant clairement l'ancienne proposition, les études byzantines ont pris la forme qu'on connaît aujourd'hui avec la fondation de l'Association internationale d'études byzantines. C'est comme cela qu'arriva à son terme un processus qui, selon un protagoniste de ces événements comme l'était Paul Lemerle, avait installé cette discipline au même rang que les autres.

De cette manière, les études byzantines ont affirmé leur identité et leur autonomie en quelques décennies, d'abord grâce au Premier Congrès international (Bucarest, 1924), puis grâce à la création d'une structure internationale permanente,

¹⁴ A. Vogt, « III^e Congrès international des Études byzantines, Athènes 12-18 octobre 1930 », *Revue des questions historiques* 31, 1931, p. 231-237, ici p. 233-234.

¹⁵ « Actes du IV^e Congrès International des Études Byzantines, Sofia, septembre 1934, éd. B. Filov, I », *Bulletin de l'Institut Archéologique Bulgare* 9, 1935, p. 44 ; cf. H. Grégoire, « Le Congrès de Sofia », *Byzantion* 10, 1935, p. 259-281, ici p. 281 ; V. Laurent, « Le IV^e Congrès des études byzantines... », p. 440.

¹⁶ Cf. V. Laurent, « Les VI^e et VII^e Congrès Internationaux d'études byzantines », *Revue des études byzantines* 6, 1948, p. 291-298, en particulier p. 297-298 ; cf. aussi A. Dain, « Réunion du Comité International des études byzantines », *Revue des études byzantines* 7, 1949, p. 141-142 ; *Actes du VI^e Congrès international d'études byzantines, Paris, 27 juillet-2 août 1948*, t. I, Paris, 1950, p. 19-20.

dont les compétences et la physionomie se sont dessinées pendant les congrès des années 1930.

Ce n'est donc pas un hasard si Paul Lemerle a dit, à l'occasion des assises de 1948, que « ce Congrès (...) devait marquer, dans l'organisation des études byzantines, un tournant décisif. À la séance d'inauguration, le bureau proposa, en effet, de suivre l'exemple déjà donné par d'autres disciplines, et de substituer à une organisation nationale, qui ne s'élevait jusqu'au plan international qu'à l'occasion des Congrès, une organisation internationale *permanente* »¹⁷.

¹⁷ P. Lemerle, « Les VI^e et VII^e Congrès Internationaux d'Études Byzantines », *Revue historique* 202, 1949, p. 52-58, ici p. 55.

The Foundation of Constantinople and the Beginnings of Byzantine Studies

Paul Magdalino

Abstract: This essay takes issue with the idea that Byzantium and Byzantine studies are misnamed because the names misrepresent the true identity of the Eastern Roman Empire. It is argued that while Byzantine identity was indeed the invention of Byzantine studies, both developments were internal and native to the culture of the empire. They resulted from research, around the turn of the sixth century, into the origins of Constantinople, which rediscovered the city's past, prior to its refoundation by Constantine as a Roman imperial capital, in the ancient Greek city of *Byzantion*. In using this name to designate Constantinople, local intellectuals did not deny the capital's official status as New Rome, but signalled that it was a Rome with a Greek – Byzantine – difference.

Keywords: Byzantine, Roman, Greek, *Byzantion*, Constantinople, identity

Knowingly or unknowingly, the first International Congress of Byzantine Studies was held in a highly significant centenary year. In September 1924, it was 1600 years since the Roman emperor Constantine decisively defeated his co-emperor and brother-in-law Licinius in a battle by the shores of the Bosphorus that ended the last civil war in the breakdown of the Tetrarchy, the imperial system established by Diocletian 21 years earlier. Two months later, on 8 November 324, Constantine raised his second son Constantius to the rank of Caesar, and simultaneously marked the perimeter of the city on the European side of the Bosphorus that was to become Constantinople. This event was also commemorated in style by a centenary celebration, an international symposium held on 7-8 November 2024 at the Pera Museum in Istanbul.¹

¹ The proceedings are being edited by P. Magdalino and B. Pitarakis for publication by the Istanbul Research Institute.

The two centenary commemorations deserve to be considered together, because the events they commemorate were causally connected. The Congress of 1924 is the *terminus ante quem* for the emergence of Byzantine studies as a field of research distinct from classical studies, the moment which marked their coming of age as an academic discipline. The foundation of Constantinople in 324 was the *terminus post quem* for the emergence of the east Roman state and civilization that we still conventionally and conveniently, if now controversially, refer to as Byzantium. In light of the ongoing controversy about the identity of this state and civilization, it is relevant to explore the timeline between the two terminal events, and the Bucharest conference of September 2024 presented an ideal opportunity to do so. By working backwards from 1924 and forwards from 324, we can hope to arrive at the point where Byzantine studies meet Byzantine identity.

To get to this point, however, we have to work through the idea that Byzantine identity was the invention of Byzantine studies. This idea is thoroughly dissected in a volume of essays recently published by Dumbarton Oaks under the title *The Invention of Byzantium in Early Modern Europe*.² The two editors and the thirteen contributors to this volume end up by reaffirming that Byzantium was indeed a construction of western European scholarship in the centuries after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. However, they nuance this conclusion by demonstrating that the construction and the scholarship took shape together in a long process that lasted over four centuries, following the trajectory of the Ottoman Empire from triumphant conquest to humiliating disintegration. As Anthony Kaldellis argues in the final chapter, which is the keystone of the edifice, it was not until the late nineteenth century that Byzantium became identified as such by those who studied it: as the Byzantine Empire, not the Roman Empire (as its inhabitants called it), nor the Greek Empire or the Empire of Constantinople (as the western Europeans and Orthodox Slavs had normally referred to it).³ This detachment of Byzantium from its historic identities went along with the creation of new institutional structures for the dedicated study of Byzantine history, texts, and monuments: teaching posts, journals, and, we may add, associations of Byzantinists. It would thus be no exaggeration to claim that the invention of Byzantium was the work of the two generations of scholars who prepared the way for the Congress of 1924. To be precise, it was the work of western Byzantinists, because, Kaldellis argues, it answered to a western political need in the decades before the First World War: the need to solve the “Eastern question” by finding an identity for the territorial heritage of the “sick man of Europe”, the Ottoman Empire, that would continue to distinguish it from the superior, “real” Roman heritage of Western Europe while not playing into the hands of either Russian imperialism or Modern Greek irredentism.

² N. Aschenbrenner and J. Ransohoff (eds.), *The Invention of Byzantium in Early Modern Europe*, Washington, D.C., 2021.

³ A. Kaldellis, “From ‘Empire of the Greeks’ to ‘Byzantium’. The Politics of a Modern Paradigm Shift”, in N. Aschenbrenner and J. Ransohoff (eds.), *The Invention of Byzantium...*, p. 349-367.

The originality, and the merit, of Kaldellis' chapter, as indeed of the volume as a whole, is that they relativize the long-repeated cliché that Byzantine studies began and Byzantine identity was coined in the sixteenth century with the Augsburg humanist Hieronymus Wolf, when the title "Corpus of Byzantine history" (*Corpus universae historiae byzantinae*) became attached to his collected translations of the medieval Greek historians Zonaras, Choniates, Chalkokondyles, and Gregoras.⁴ Kaldellis reminds us that the "byzantinizing" of East Rome was not only completed four centuries after Wolf, but it had begun at least a century earlier, at the hands of a Greek intellectual, Laonikos Chalkokondyles, one of the historians in Wolf's *Corpus*.⁵ Chalkokondyles consistently refers to Constantinople as Byzantion, and introduces its rulers as "kings of Byzantion".⁶ So was this the moment when Byzantine studies first met Byzantine identity? It all depends on the reasons for Chalkokondyles' choice. Let us look at what lies behind his decision to call the capital, the "reigning city" (βασιλεύουσα πόλις) of the Christian Greek state, not by either of its official designations, Constantinople and New Rome, but by the name it had borne before its refoundation by Constantine, the name that recalled its original foundation in the mists of archaic antiquity by the mythical figure of Byzas.

From the opening pages of his *Histories*, Chalkokondyles makes it clear that he wants to deny, or minimise, the Roman identity of the state whose last gasp he is narrating. He defines his subject as "the fall of the Greeks and the events surrounding the end of their realm (ἀρχή), and [to] the rise of the Turks to great power, greater than that of any other powerful people to date".⁷ He looks forward to the resurgence of the fallen empire in revivalist terms that are reminiscent of Old Testament messianic prophecy as well as traditional Byzantine *Reichseschatologie*,⁸ yet his vision of this future state is thoroughly secular and Hellenic. His summary of ancient history, which comes next, is similarly reminiscent of a traditional narrative schema, the Four Kingdoms prophecy in the Book of Daniel (2, 31-48; 7, 1).⁹ However, its ultimate focus is the rivalry between Greeks and Persians, which culminates in the conquests of Alexander. Coming then to the "greatest world power" of the Roman Empire, Chalkokondyles immediately describes the transfer of power from Rome

⁴ On Wolf, see A. Grafton, "Western Humanists and Byzantine Historians", in N. Aschenbrenner and J. Ransohoff (eds.), *The Invention of Byzantium...*, p. 76-81.

⁵ A. Kaldellis, "From 'Empire of the Greeks'...", p. 352-353; see also id., *A New Herodotos. Laonikos Chalkokondyles on the Ottoman Empire, the Fall of Byzantium and the Emergence of the West*, Washington, D.C., 2014, especially p. 171-205.

⁶ Laonikos Chalkokondyles, *The Histories*, ed. J. Darkó, Budapest, 1922-1923; emended with English translation by A. Kaldellis, 2 vols., Cambridge, MA, 2014.

⁷ Chalkokondyles, *The Histories*, I.1, ed. and tr. Kaldellis, vol. 1, p. 3.

⁸ On which see G. Podskalsky, *Byzantinische Reichseschatologie*, Munich, 1972.

⁹ For the apocalyptic elaboration of this schema, see L. DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel and the Apocryphal Daniel Literature*, Leiden, 2005.

to Constantinople, of which he gives a highly idiosyncratic account that is worth quoting in full.

At that point [after Alexander and his successors] the Romans attained the greatest realm in the world because their virtue was in proportion to their fortune. They entrusted Rome to their great pontiff and crossed over into Thrace under the command of their king. In the land of Thrace, which is the closest to Asia, they made the Greek city of Byzantion for carrying on the struggle against the Persians, at whose hands they had suffered such terrible things. From this point on, the Greeks mixed with the Romans in this place, and because many more Greeks ruled there than Romans, their language and customs ultimately prevailed, but they changed their name and no longer called themselves by their hereditary one. They saw fit to call the kings of Byzantion by a title that dignified them, “emperors of the Romans”, but never again “kings of the Greeks”.¹⁰

The *translatio imperii* is thus described as a Roman migration to the east with the objective of establishing a new forward base in the war against Persia. In essence this is the story of the *Donation of Constantine*, the Carolingian fiction appropriated in Rome in order to justify papal sovereignty over Italy, and then adopted in the east in order to deny the legitimacy of the revived Western Empire.¹¹ The significant difference from the *Donation* is that Chalkokondyles does not identify the migrating and donating emperor as Constantine. He also does not name the new imperial capital either as Constantine’s city or as a new or second Rome. The new capital continues to be the ancient Greek city of Byzantion. It is effectively a Greek city under Roman occupation, and its Greek identity is confirmed by its Greek inhabitants, who greatly outnumber the immigrant Roman population. The decision of the “kings of Byzantion” to dignify themselves with the title of Roman emperor, and no longer to be recognised as kings of the Greeks, is therefore entirely arbitrary and, Chalkokondyles implies, a matter of political prestige. The Roman identity of their realm is fictive and artificial.

It is obvious that in deconstructing the Roman emperors of Constantinople as kings of Byzantion, Chalkokondyles is deliberately rewriting and distorting the standard narrative of east Roman history as it was known to his intended readers. It is also not difficult to see a connection between his reinvention of the “national” past and his messianic vision of a “national” future resurgence of Hellenism under a king “who is Greek himself, just like the kings who stem from him”; a dynasty purified from the pretensions to Roman imperial grandeur that had caused the “kings of Byzantion” to spurn their ancestral identity, and thus by implication to fail. This, it seems to me, is why Laonikos insists on calling their capital by its original Greek

¹⁰ Chalkokondyles, *The Histories*, I.5, ed. and tr. Kaldellis, vol. 1, p. 7.

¹¹ J. Fried, *Donation of Constantine and Constitutum Constantini: The Misinterpretation of a Fiction and Its Original Meaning*, Berlin, 2007; P. J. Alexander, “The Donation of Constantine at Byzantium and Its Earliest Use Against the Western Empire”, *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 8, 1963, p. 11-26.

name, and not by the name of the Roman emperor who had re-founded it, nor by the name of the city which he had left in the hands of the Pope. There was only one Rome, and it belonged, like *Romanitas*, in Italy and the West. To pretend otherwise was only to add unnecessarily to the confusion of identities that Chalkokondyles was trying to untangle. But an identity based on the ancient Greek city of Byzantium offered a clear separation.

So, the *Histories* of Laonikos Chalkokondyles was indeed the place where Byzantine studies first met Byzantine identity after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. But was this their first encounter? In other words, was Byzantine identity created retrospectively in the post-mortem examination of the defunct east Roman state? Or was it inherent in the genetic make-up of the deceased? And did Chalkokondyles invent it as part of his neo-hellenizing agenda, or was it symptomatic of a dissatisfaction with the Roman identity of the state and its capital city which had always been there under the surface?

To answer these questions, we have to revisit the large corpus of scholarship on Byzantine identity published by Anthony Kaldellis, of which his work on Chalkokondyles is only a small part.¹² His publications add up to a comprehensive, sophisticated, and impeccably documented statement that the so-called Byzantine Empire was in fact the Roman nation state, equivalent to the nation states of the modern world with which we are all familiar. This Roman nation originated in the emperor Caracalla's decision to extend Roman citizenship to all freeborn imperial subjects, and the nation even persisted after the Ottoman conquest in the form of the *Rum milleti* and in the self-identification of the Greek Orthodox population who continued to refer to themselves as *Romioi*, not Hellenes. The nation had a defined territory, known as *Romania*, with clear if shifting boundaries. It did not depend for its national identity on the city of Rome, or even Constantinople qua New Rome, nor on the use of the Latin language, which was official until the sixth century but redundant thereafter. Its citizens of all classes, whose only common language and culture were Greek, did not doubt for a second that they were Romans. In fact, the only people who questioned this identity were the western Europeans with a vested interest in the post-Roman institutions of the Latin medieval world, notably the Roman Papacy and the revived western Empire of the Carolingian, Ottonian, Salian, and Hohenstaufen dynasties. Thus, in Kaldellis' view, the essential Greekness of the Eastern Roman Empire was a construct of the western medieval appropriation of the Roman heritage, which grew more assertive as the eastern empire declined and alienated itself by schism from the

¹² I single out the following major monographs, in which references to numerous relevant articles will be found: A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition*, Cambridge, 2007; id., *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome*, Cambridge, MA, 2015; id., *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium*, Cambridge, MA, 2019; id., *The Case for East Roman Studies*, Leeds, 2024; id., *The New Roman Empire: A History of Byzantium*, Oxford, 2021.

Roman church. The Hellenic nationalism of Chalkokondyles and his teacher Plethon, with his project for a Greek national state based in the Peloponnese, was a logical outcome of this process. More exactly, it was a Greek appropriation of the Latin narrative, which turned the exclusion of the Greeks from the Roman inheritance into a declaration of national independence, thus pointing the way to 1821. But it was not the “coming out” of a closet identity that had always been lurking under the surface of the Roman status symbols that the political regime had been obliged to wear in order to make a suitably imperial impression on the barbarian world. Still less was it a change of identity that the majority of Chalkokondyles’ contemporaries, including the most erudite Hellenists, were willing to adopt, whether they were for or against Church union, pro-western or pro-Ottoman. It did not occur to Bessarion, Scholarios, Argyropoulos or the other historians of the fall to think of themselves as anything but Roman.

All this is very plausible, even true, but it does not mean that the medieval Greek speakers who called themselves Romans did not also think of themselves as Greeks, and that those who lived in Constantinople could not also think of themselves as Byzantines and their city as Byzantion. If Roman identity was the norm, it was not exclusive of other identities, which were not necessarily deviant. If Chalkokondyles adopted a Latin perspective in describing the kings of Byzantion as Greeks in fact and Roman only by name, he derived his positive view of what it meant to be Greek from his reading of ancient Greek literature as mediated by medieval Greek editors and commentators, and taught by a long line of Greek cultural chauvinists, of whom Laonikos’ own teacher, Plethon, was one of the most outspoken.¹³ He would have been familiar with at least some of the late Byzantine authors who regarded the Latins as barbarians, in full awareness that these same barbarians claimed to be the real Romans. He was not the first Greek intellectual to be painfully aware that national identity and cultural identity could be grossly mismatched.

Kaldellis’ idea of *Romanland* is a big advance on previous conceptions of Byzantium, both those which saw it as a universal, multi-ethnic empire and those which saw it as the precursor of the Modern Greek state. The Kaldellis thesis is rapidly becoming the new standard paradigm. As such, however, it is in danger of becoming an obstacle to a properly nuanced understanding of the Roman identity of medieval Greek *Romania*, in which, I shall suggest, Byzantine identity had a real existence, in addition to being an indispensable term of reference for the modern scholar. Kaldellis’ paradigm of Greek *Romania* uses a concept of national identity as a standardised, one-size-fits-all model that does not allow for the infinite range of variants and alternatives that exist in reality. Nation states come in all shapes and sizes each of which can change enormously over time: witness the expansion

¹³ A. Kaldellis, *A New Herodotos...*, p. 209-216; N. Siniosoglou, “Plethon, Scholarios and the Byzantine State of Emergency”, in A. Kaldellis and N. Siniosoglou (eds.), *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, Cambridge, 2017, p. 633-652.

and contraction of the British Empire, and the long rise and fall of Rome from city state to universal empire to small territorial kingdoms. Nations also come in many colours and textures, far more numerous, shifting, variegated, and permeable than can be conveyed by a political map of a continent or of the world. Yet it is the static, solid colours, and neat lines of these maps that influence our conception of national entities, and distort the picture of the dynamic spatial realities within which national identities operate. In the case of Byzantium, I would suggest that this is exactly what Kaldellis presents us with in his *Romanland*: a homogenized national bloc with all irregularities and unevenness smoothed over. It is a simple cartography that does not allow for gradations of national identity, the possibility that some citizens and some areas of *Romania* looked more Roman than others. It also fails to envisage the extent to which this *Romania*, including the elements that were most integral to its national identity, saw itself as a Rome with a difference – a difference which can best be described as Byzantine.

A national identity is a composite entity, made up of components that may be of widely dispersed and disparate geographical, genetic, and cultural origins. A nation may go under different names, deriving from different elements in its ethnic make-up: the name by which *ein Deutscher* refers to himself is echoed in the Italian *Tedesco*, but in English he is known as a *German*, in French as an *Allemand*, and in the Slav languages as a *Nemets*, without any of these designations being more official than the others. We may add that for centuries the most senior political figure in the German-speaking world, with the best historical claim to represent the German-speaking peoples, was the Habsburg monarch known for a time as the Holy Roman Emperor and ruler of what is now the independent country of Austria. More problematic and controversial, and still dangerously unresolved, are the cases of Serbia and Russia, whose earliest territorial nuclei now lie outside these nations' borders, and the first capital of Rus is now the capital of a different nation from Russia. Even in the less contested national cultures of England and Italy, standard English originated in the kingdom of Mercia and standard Italian in Tuscany, both regions distant from what became the national capitals. In spite of such variations, however, it is probably safe to generalise that a nation's identity and statehood is primarily focused and invested in its capital city – even though the capital city is often the area which has the highest immigrant population. Capitals, like nation states, come in all shapes and sizes. For present purposes, it is perhaps helpful to classify them in terms of a spectrum between two theoretical poles. At one extreme is the capital that predates the formation of the nation state as the most important local city and as the most regular seat of government. At the other extreme is the city that is founded or upgraded to serve as the capital of a pre-existing or newly created state. In the first model, the capital creates or at least shapes the formation of the state; in the second, the state creates the capital, often in defiance of an older, bigger city that is either a former capital or has strong claims to metropolitan status – St Petersburg, Washington D.C., Canberra, Ankara, and Brasilia are the modern examples that come

most readily to mind. In both models, the nation identifies with the capital, but in the second model the identification is weaker because it is not based on a long tradition of myths, customs, historical associations, and a collective sense of local roots and local pride. Of course, metropolitan patriotism and solidarity can develop over time, but this is not always enough to involve the whole country and to make provincials identify with metropolitan society. Indeed, it can sharpen resentment at the very idea that the outlying regions are provinces of a metropolitan centre whose importance is merely political, and that the members of the political elite feel more at home in this shallow, artificial homeland than in the regions from which they come and whose interests they should be prioritizing.

The Roman Empire had the distinction of experiencing both models in the course of its long history. It grew to greatness as the expanded city republic of Rome, but it survived through the foundation of a new capital that was the political creation of a Roman emperor. Constantinople was founded at a time when the coincidence between Roman identity and the city of Rome was at an all-time low. Caracalla's grant of universal citizenship created successive generations of Romans with no affective ties to Rome or Italy, and, in the crisis of the third century, the centre of political gravity shifted from the capital city to the army camps of the frontier legions, as the places where emperors were made, unmade, and spent most of their short reigns. "Rome is where the emperor is", an imperial general is alleged to have said in 180, and by the early fourth century the emperor was likely to be anywhere but Rome.¹⁴ The Roman Empire was a gigantic territorial bloc, in which Roman identity was spread evenly but thinly over the vast surface, and if there were any uneven lumps, they were more likely to be at the military edge than in the civilian centre.

The situation did not immediately change with the foundation of a second imperial capital.¹⁵ It took time for Constantinople to be recognised as the equivalent of Rome and the superior of the great Hellenistic cities of Antioch and Alexandria, which had accepted Roman hegemony with difficulty. It was difficult to feel respect, let alone affection and admiration, for this brash new city that sucked material resources and human talent from all over the Greek east to fund and feed its never-ending building programme, its hungry and violent plebs, its burgeoning bureaucracy, and its blatant political exhibitionism. The Christianization of the Roman Empire added another dimension to the widespread sense of injustice that Constantinople inspired by the meteoric promotion of its church, which was not an ancient apostolic foundation. If the USA, almost 250 years after independence, still has mixed feelings about the "swamp

¹⁴ Herodian I, 6.5; A. Kaldellis, "How Was a 'New Rome' Even Thinkable? Premonitions of Constantinople and the Portability of Rome", in Y. R. Kim and A. E. T. McLaughlin (eds.), *Leadership and Community in Late Antiquity: Essays in Honour of Raymond Van Dam*, Turnhout, 2020, p. 221-247.

¹⁵ A. Kaldellis, "Constantinople's Belated Hegemony", in P. Van Nuffelen (ed.), *Historiography and Space in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, 2019, p. 14-35.

city” that is its federal capital, this gives us some sense of the ambivalence with which ordinary Romans who had no stake in the central government must have looked at the continued expansion of Constantinople up to the age of Justinian. Was this the natural growth of a vital organ or an unnatural excrescence? It is perhaps indicative of the prevailing mentality that Justinian himself chose to honour his provincial origins by transforming his birthplace into an important new city, Justiniana Prima, with the rank of a major archiepiscopal see.¹⁶

If Constantinople was slow to develop as symbol and focus of Roman national identity, this was, I suggest, for the same reason that Rome itself had lost its hold over the minds and aspirations of its geographically distant citizens: the Roman Empire was not a national entity but an ecumenical empire. Constantinople could come into its own as a national capital, or in its own terms, a reigning city, only when the Empire it ruled acquired the dimensions and character of a nation state as we would recognise it. This happened in three stages: first with the restriction of the state ruled from Constantinople to what Fergus Millar has called the Greek Roman Empire of Theodosius II;¹⁷ secondly with the extinction of the Roman Empire in the West (476), whereby Rome ceased to be an imperial capital even in name.¹⁸ The third and final stage saw the massive loss of territories in both east and west which deprived the empire of Syria, Palestine, Egypt, North Africa, the northern Balkans, thus removing the bulk of its non-Greek population as well as the important cities that were regional centres of gravity.¹⁹ In these circumstances, Constantinople made itself indispensable not only to the identity, but also to the defence, survival, and the very existence of the state. It consolidated this centrality by acquiring a sacred dimension as a New Jerusalem that enjoyed the special protection of the Mother of God.²⁰ The Roman Empire thus became the nation state of *Romania* by returning to the model of the state whose national identity is created by its capital; indeed, by labelling its capital a New Jerusalem, it consciously conformed to the example of the state which has always been the original as well as the most extreme paradigm of capital-first and capital-centred nationalism: the ancient kingdom of Israel.²¹

The conceptual outcome of this transition can be clearly discerned in the treatises on government authorised and largely authored by the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. The *De thematibus*, *De cerimoniis*, and *De administrando imperio*

¹⁶ Justinian, *Novels* 11 and 131; Procopius, *De aedificiis*, IV, 1.17-27; S. Turlej, *Justiniana Prima*, Krakow, 2016.

¹⁷ F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II (408-450)*, Berkeley, 2006.

¹⁸ A. Kaldellis, *The New Roman Empire...*, p. 214-215.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, chapter 17; J. Howard-Johnston, *Byzantium: Economy, Society, Institutions 600-1100*, Oxford, 2024, p. 3-9, 13-18.

²⁰ J. Erdeljan, *Chosen Places. Constructing New Jerusalems in Slavia Orthodoxa*, Leiden, 2017, p. 72-143.

²¹ S. Eshel, *The Concept of the Elect Nation in Byzantium*, Leiden, 2018.

all present a firmly Constantinopolitan view of the world, in which the notions of east and west are defined in relation to Constantinople, and the topography and buildings of the city are the main points of reference and comparison.²² Most strikingly, the *De administrando* makes a distinction between the Roman Empire as a whole (ἡ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχή) and, within it, what Constantine calls ἡ καθ' ἡμᾶς πολιτεία.²³ By this, he means effectively Constantinople and the coastal hinterland of the Sea of Marmara. The choice of words is interesting; it refers to Constantinople not only as the emperor's city, but also as his state, implying that the capital was a city-state, just as Rome had been at the start.

Over the next three centuries, the fortunes and the frontiers of *Romania* waxed and waned dramatically, but each reversal only confirmed the centrality of Constantinople to the identity of the state. This emerges most clearly in the conquest of Constantinople by the forces of the Fourth Crusade in 1204, and its reconquest from Latin rule in 1261. On the one hand, *Romania* responded to the loss of Constantinople with amazing political resilience, generating three dynamic Greek governments in exile, the Empire of Trebizond, the Empire of Nicaea, and the Despotate of Epiros. The Empire of Nicaea, under the leadership of the highly competent Laskarid dynasty flourished so vigorously that it not only eclipsed its Greek rivals but significantly reversed most of the territorial gains made by the Latins and Bulgarians. By the 1250s, a national existence without the traditional national capital was clearly becoming viable, and the writings of the third Laskarid emperor, the highly intellectual Theodore II Laskaris, who was born and grew up outside Constantinople, suggest that he was thinking along these lines, in terms of a national state based on his homeland of western Asia Minor, which he regarded as the heartland of Hellenism.²⁴ But among the rest of the ruling elite, the sense of exile remained undiminished, and it came to prevail under the new dynastic regime of Michael Palaiologos, who pushed hard to retake Constantinople and was rewarded when the city fell, almost without a blow, to his troops in 1261. This apparently providential event seemed to offer retrospective confirmation, not only that the Empire of Nicaea had always been the legitimate Roman Empire in exile, but also that Constantinople was the only legitimate source of Roman imperial authority. In the speech which the historian George Pachymeres attributes

²² P. Magdalino, "Constantine VII and the Historical Geography of Empire", in S. Bazzaz, Y. Batsaki, and D. Angelov (eds.), *Imperial Geographies in Byzantine and Ottoman Space*, Washington, D.C., 2013, p. 23-41; id., "Constantinople in the Age of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus", in N. Gaul, V. Menze, and Cs. Bálint (eds.), *Center, Province and Periphery in the Age of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos: From De Ceremoniis to De Administrando Imperio*, Wiesbaden, 2018, p. 39-54, at p. 39-41.

²³ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. Gy. Moravcsik, tr. R. Jenkins, new revised edition Washington, D.C., 1967, p. 46, 225.

²⁴ See D. Angelov, *The Byzantine Hellene: The Life of Emperor Theodore Laskaris and Byzantium in the Thirteenth Century*, Cambridge, 2019.

to Michael Palaiologos on hearing the news that the City had been recovered, the emperor is presented as saying: now that we have regained our ancestral homeland, our possession of the other cities that we hold is more secure, and our claims to lost territories will be taken seriously by their occupants who previously dismissed us “as stateless (ἀπόλισι) and living far from the imperial throne”.²⁵

Michael’s achievement earned him the designation of New Constantine from his grateful subjects, who initially shared his optimism.²⁶ Yet this optimism was misplaced, as was already clear to Pachymeres when he wrote around 1300. The New Constantine had failed to deliver a new Constantinian Golden Age, and the new Constantinople under his dynasty had failed to inaugurate a sustained renewal of the state that had collapsed in 1204. The restoration did not put back the clock to the national unity of the tenth to twelfth-century state; instead, it merely delayed the process of centrifugal disintegration that had begun before 1204 and of which all the thirteenth-century Greek states, including the Empire of Nicaea, were symptomatic. It is indicative that the term *Romania* was taken over by the Latins to designate their short-lived Empire of Constantinople and the territories to which it laid claim – which in practice meant the whole politically fragmented Aegean and Black Sea world, divided between Greek principalities, Latin colonial powers, and Turkish emirates. In this world, the political centrality of Constantinople became increasingly meaningless. By the end of the fourteenth century the capital was just one of a few scattered enclaves that recognised the authority of a Greek sovereign, and in one of these enclaves, the so-called Empire of Trebizond, the Greek sovereign was fully independent of the Palaiologan regime in Constantinople.

So we return to the world of Plethon and Chalkokondyles and their futuristic visions of a Hellenic national state, the first envisaging an immediate retrenchment of the Palaiologan empire to the quintessentially Hellenic territory of the Peloponnese, and the second looking forward to an eventual, implied liberation from the hegemony of the Ottoman Empire that was the undeniable reality with which, and perhaps under which, Chalkokondyles was writing. The denial of Roman national identity involved in these visions was not, or not only, the result of adopting a western point of view. It grew out of the detachment of the capital of the eastern Christian empire from the territories that formed the empire’s demographic, ethnic, and material core. The denial was the extreme, logical outcome of a mental shift that had begun with the Empire of Nicaea: the “Nicaean experiment”, as Héléne Ahrweiler put it, of a state that survived and even flourished, rediscovering its Hellenic roots, in the absence of Constantinople.²⁷

²⁵ George Pachymeres, *Relations historiques*, II, 30, ed. A. Failler, tr. V. Laurent, vol. 1, Paris, 1984, p. 210-211.

²⁶ R. Macrides, “The New Constantine and the New Constantinople – 1261?”, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 6, 1980, p. 13-41.

²⁷ H. Ahrweiler, “L’expérience nicéenne”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 29, 1975, p. 21-40; D. Angelov, *The Byzantine Hellene...*, chapter 10.

For Constantinople was essential to the Roman national identity of Greek *Romania*, however much Chalkokondyles pretended otherwise by refusing to call the city New Rome or even to refer to it by the name of its Roman imperial founder. Only by deliberately ignoring the essential Romanness of the national capital could he argue for the essential Greekness of the national state that the “kings of Byzantium” decided, arbitrarily and artificially in his view, to rename the Roman Empire.

In fact, Chalkokondyles must have been very well aware of the huge and sustained investment that had been made, over the two hundred years from Constantine to Justinian, to give Constantinople not only the name and status but also the appearance, the image, and the material reality of Rome. There is ample evidence that Constantine intended his city to be a New Rome from the moment of its initial foundation in November 324, although he scrupulously refrained from using the name until the city had received its ritual *consecratio*/ἀποθέωσις in May 330.²⁸ Naturally the process of acquiring the equivalent dimensions, institutions, monuments, and symbolism lasted well beyond Constantine’s lifetime, but his successors remained faithful to his intentions and even improved on them.²⁹ With the abolition of the western empire in 476, Constantinople could claim to be not just a New or second Rome, but the only Rome in political existence, and the two cities were pronounced to be one and the same by writers of Justinian’s reign – in philosophical terms by John Lydus,³⁰ and poetically by Paul the Silentiary, who personifies Constantinople as Rome supplicating Justinian to rebuild Hagia Sophia.³¹ The transfer of empire was accompanied by a real or imaginary transfer of symbolic identity, in the form of the Palladium, the talisman of Rome that Aeneas was supposed to have salvaged from Troy, and Constantine was supposed to have secretly removed from the Temple of Vesta in Rome and buried at the foot of his column in Constantinople.³² A later legend

²⁸ G. Dagron, *Naissance d’une capitale. Constantinople et ses origines de 330 à 451*, Paris, 1974, p. 43-47; John Lydus, *De magistratibus*, I, 30; L. Ramskold and N. Lenski, “Constantinople’s Dedication Medallions and the Maintenance of Civic Traditions”, *Numismatische Zeitschrift* 119, 2012, p. 31-58, at p. 46-48.

²⁹ Most strikingly under the Theodosian dynasty, on whose additions to the built environment, see most recently P. Magdalino, “Renaissances d’une capitale: l’urbanisme constantinopolitain des dynasties impériales”, *Travaux et mémoires* 22.1, 2018, p. 57-64; A. Kaldellis, “The Forum of Theodosius I in Constantinople: Symbolic Geography and Dynastic Propaganda”, in S. Tougher (ed.), *Studies in Byzantine History and Culture: A Festschrift for Paul Magdalino*, Leiden, 2025, p. 11-24.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Paul the Silentiary, *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia*, lines 145, 219-248, ed. C. de Stefani, *Paulus Silentiarius, Descriptio Sanctae Sophiae, Descriptio ambonis*, Berlin, 2011, p. 8, 14-18.

³² John Malalas, *Chronographia*, VII, 1, ed. H. Thurn, Berlin, 2000, p. 132; R. Praet, “Re-Anchoring Rome’s Protection in Constantinople: The *pignora imperii* in Late Antiquity and Byzantium”, *Sacris Erudiri* 55, 2016, p. 277-319; H. Saradi, “Constantine, Constantinople and the Trojan Legends: Byzantine Reactions to the Decline of Rome”, in C. P. Christou, P. Katsoni, and C. A. Bozinis (eds.), *Constantine the Great and His Age*, Thessaloniki, 2022, p. 461-477, at p. 472-475.

maintained that the birthing chamber of the Great imperial Palace in Constantinople, where the children of the reigning emperors were “born in the Purple”, was built with porphyry stone imported from Rome.³³

In the transfer of empire from one capital to the other, the view from the Greek east was that Roman identity received an upgrade. The new, transplanted version of Rome was regarded as superior in three ways: (1) Constantinople, being the daughter, was naturally more vigorous and dynamic than her ageing mother;³⁴ (2) in traditional typological thinking, the new always superseded the old;³⁵ (3) Constantinople was founded as a Christian city by a Christian emperor, in contrast to the pagan memories, “the Capitoline legends” as Paul the Silentiary calls them, which haunted Old Rome.³⁶ In other words, the New Rome was more perfectly Roman than the old, and real Romans were more thoroughly at home in Constantinople than in Rome. The force of this logic, and the risk of it backfiring, are evident in two remarks by tenth-century emperors. Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, who never, as far as we know, wrote a word of Latin, nevertheless referred to it nostalgically as “the ancestral and Roman language” of his imperial predecessors.³⁷ Liudprand of Cremona, Otto I’s ambassador to the court of Nikephoros II, records that the emperor said to him over dinner, “You are not Romans but Lombards”. To which Liudprand did not give the obvious reply, “You are not Roman but Greek”, but instead answered that he, like all the Germanic peoples, was proud not to be Roman, because the Roman nobility, with which “you the world rulers and emperors” identify, descends from the criminal scum of the earth got together by Romulus. “When we want to insult our enemies, we can think of nothing worse than to say ‘You Roman!’”³⁸ The put-down would have been all the more deflating if Liudprand had known that the emperor’s family, the Phokades, claimed descent from Roman noble lineages that Constantine had transplanted from Rome to the east.³⁹

³³ G. Dagron, “Nés dans la pourpre”, *Travaux et mémoires* 12, 1994, p. 105-142.

³⁴ Paul the Silentiary, *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia*, lines 150-151, 164-167, ed. C. de Stefani, *Paulus Silentiarius...*, p. 8, 10; Theodore Prodromos, *Historische Gedichte*, ed. W. Hörandner, Vienna, 1974, poems I, 104-105, XVI, 175-181, XVIII, 97-99; Constantine Manasses, *Chronicle*, ed. O. Lampsidis, Athens, 1996, lines 3776-3780, 4449-4452. See also E. Chrysos, “Rome as *urbs inveterata*? A Battle of Epithets in the Confrontation of East and West in the 9th Century”, in S. Tougher (ed.), *Studies in Byzantine History and Culture...*, p. 181-194.

³⁵ See P. Magdalino, “The Religious Rhetoric of Political Prophecy”, in I. Biliarsky, M. Mitrea, and A. Timotin (eds.), *Religious Rhetoric of Power in Byzantium and South-Eastern Europe*, Brăila, 2021, p. 11-25.

³⁶ Paul the Silentiary, *Ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia*, line 152, ed. C. de Stefani, *Paulus Silentiarius...*, p. 9.

³⁷ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De thematibus*, ed. A. Pertusi, Rome, 1952, p. 60.

³⁸ Liudprand of Cremona, *Legatio*, XII, ed. P. Chiesa, *Liudprandi Cremonensis opera omnia*, Turnhout, 1998, p. 192-193.

³⁹ Michael Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. I. Pérez Martín, Madrid, 2002, p. 158-162; cf. N. Leidholm, “Nikephoros III Botaneiates, the Phokades and the Fabii: Embellished Genealogies and Contested Kinship in Eleventh-Century Byzantium”, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 42, 2018, p. 185-201.

At least as early as the tenth century, therefore, the Roman identity claimed by the Greek “kings of Byzantium” was beginning to look as artificial as Chalkokondyles found it to be five centuries later. What had sustained it, and continued to sustain it until 1453, was the identity of Byzantium as the New Rome, which Chalkokondyles ignored, but which had been powerfully asserted at the beginning of the fifteenth century by Manuel Chrysoloras in his *Comparison of the Old and the New Rome*, which he composed in the form of a letter sent from Rome to the emperor Manuel II.⁴⁰ Chrysoloras characterizes Constantinople as the spitting image of Rome, for “no daughter ever resembled her mother so closely”; if Constantinople was superior – as it had to be in a letter to the emperor –, this was only because Rome had had no model to follow, whereas Constantinople, looking to Rome as its model, was able to improve on the perfection of the prototype. Chrysoloras’ text was as original in its way as Plethon’s near contemporary manifesto, also addressed to Manuel II, for the creation of a Hellenic nation state in the Peloponnese, but its originality consisted in giving novel expression to the conventional nationalistic cliché that the Greeks were more Roman than the Latins.⁴¹

Chalkokondyles was of course reacting to this cliché. But he also tapped into a long tradition of reaction against it, a reaction that led ultimately to Plethon’s declaration of Hellenic independence, but had long before that manifested itself in more subtle ways, which gave expression to a sense of being Roman with a Greek difference, a difference that was inherent in the original, Byzantine identity of the New Rome. The search for a Greek Roman identity began with Constantine himself. The fifth-century church historian Sozomenos relates that when Constantine contemplated founding his new capital in the area of ancient Troy, he started building it on the site of the Achaean encampment, thus implicitly of identifying it with the Greek besiegers rather than with the Trojan defenders from whom Rome claimed its ancestry via Aeneas.⁴² Constantine filled the public spaces of the city with statuary taken mainly from Greek cities.⁴³ It emerges from the testimony of Zosimos, and from numismatic evidence, that Constantine dedicated his city to two protective deities, building twin temples to them at the NW and NE corners of what had been the upper agora of Byzantium.⁴⁴ One was the Fortune of Rome, presumably represented as *Dea Roma*

⁴⁰ Ed. C. Billò, “Manuele Crisolora, *Confronto tra l’Antica e la Nuova Roma*”, *Medioevo greco* 0, 2000, p. 1-26; P. Magdalino, *Roman Constantinople in Byzantine Perspective: The Memorial and Aesthetic Rediscovery of Constantine’s Beautiful City, from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance*, Leiden, 2024, p. 82-91.

⁴¹ George Gemistos Plethon, *Address to Manuel Palaiologos on the State of the Peloponnese*, ed. Sp. Lampros, *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, vol. 3, Athens, 1926, p. 246-265.

⁴² Sozomenos, *Ecclesiastical History*, II, 2-3; the significance of the detail is overlooked in all modern scholarship, e.g., H. Saradi, “Constantine, Constantinople and the Trojan Legends...”.

⁴³ S. Bassett, *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople*, Cambridge, 2004, p. 50-78.

⁴⁴ Zosimus, *New History*, II, 31, 2-3.

with spear, shield, and orb, as on the reverse of a medallion issued in 330. The other deity was the Tyche of Constantinople whose effigy in the other temple, probably the north-western, was according to Zosimos a modified cult statue of the goddess Rhea, the mother of the gods, a.k.a. Cybele, that Constantine had moved from her temple on the mountain above Kyzikos. It is likely that the modifications included not only the removal of the lions which pulled her chariot, but the addition of the attributes that became characteristic of the personification of Constantinople: the turreted crown, the cornucopia that depicted her as “flowering” (Anthousa), and the ship at her feet. It is thus that Constantinople is represented on the reverse in the medallion that forms the companion piece of the silver issue bearing the image of Rome, and this was undoubtedly how she appeared in the other effigies of the Tyche that were set up throughout the city. The significance of this iconography is that it depicted Constantinople as a typical, traditional Greek city, with a strong reminiscence of ancient Byzantium in the form of the ship’s prow that symbolized the source of the city’s abundance.⁴⁵

Constantinople was thus conceived and founded both as a duplication of Rome and a continuation of Byzantium. In the prodigious expansion that followed over the next two centuries, the Roman element predominated, mainly owing to the huge monumental input of the Theodosian dynasty. In the course of the fifth century, the New Rome became the only Rome with a secure political existence and a viable imperial future. Yet it was precisely this total assumption of Roman identity that provoked an identity crisis as the source of Roman identity, the city of Rome, came under barbarian control with the ending of the western empire in 476.⁴⁶ Two historians writing at the time, Malchus and Priscus, chose to entitle their works *Byzantine History*, so as to indicate that they were dealing with events that happened under the hegemony of Constantinople.⁴⁷ Marion Kruse, in his important recent analysis, has characterised their choice as “a road not taken”,⁴⁸ but this underrepresents the extent to which later intellectuals in *fin de siècle* Constantinople were travelling in the same direction, by researching and publishing the pre-Constantinian antecedents of Constantinople in ancient Byzantium.⁴⁹ Kruse himself highlights the contribution of one of those

⁴⁵ L. Ramskold and N. Lenski, “Constantinople’s Dedication Medallions...”, p. 44-47; N. Lenski, “Constantine and the Tyche of Constantinople”, in J. Wienand (ed.), *Contested Monarchy: Integrating the Roman Empire in the Fourth Century AD*, Oxford, 2015, p. 330-352. It was, however, the temple dedicated to the city personification of *Roma* that survived; see references in P. Magdalino, *Roman Constantinople...*, p. 33.

⁴⁶ For the identity crisis and its resolution, see in general M. Kruse, *The Politics of Roman Memory: From the Fall of the Western Empire to the Age of Justinian*, Philadelphia, 2019.

⁴⁷ A. Kaldellis, “Constantinople’s Belated Hegemony”, p. 27.

⁴⁸ M. Kruse, *The Politics of Roman Memory...*, p. 22.

⁴⁹ A. Kaldellis, “Constantinople’s Belated Hegemony”, p. 29-33; P. Magdalino, *Roman Constantinople...*, p. 14-29.

intellectuals, Hesychius, who in his so-called *Patria of Constantinople* narrates the history of Byzantium in a way that clearly parallels the history of Rome.⁵⁰ But he misses the evidence for another such narrative that is to be found in the contemporary or slightly later chronicle of John Malalas, which chops up the history of Byzantium (*Byzoupolis* as he calls it) and the foundation of Constantinople into chronological entries that are inserted at the appropriate points in the broader, universal historical narrative.⁵¹ Kruse – like all scholars before him – also passes over the existence of a third “Byzantine” narrative, possibly the master narrative from which Hesychius and Malalas drew their information. The *Souda*, the classical dictionary compiled at the end of the tenth century, lists among the works of the poet Christodoros of Koptos a *Patria* of Constantinople in twelve books of epic verse.⁵²

Any attempt to reconstruct Christodoros’ composition can only be hypothetical. But if we put together what the *Souda* entry tells us about his life and works with the evidence of the one work of his that survives, along with the conventions of the *patria* genre, “part historical, part poetical”,⁵³ in which he was writing, and what we can infer from Hesychius and Malalas, the circumstantial evidence is far from negligible. It allows us to read Christodoros’ epic *Patria* of Constantinople as a poetic manifesto for the importance of Constantinople as a normal Greek city with a respectable Greek past, involving traditional origin myths, the constitutional development of a typical Greek *polis*, and privileged relations with Roman emperors before its refoundation as a Roman imperial capital. This was not a denial of Constantinople’s identity as New Rome. Rather, it described a grafting of Roman urban identity on to the stock of a Greek civic organism. Indeed, given that Christodoros enjoyed the patronage of the emperor Anastasius I, it is conceivable that he wrote his *Patria* of Constantinople as an imperial commission, intended to characterize Anastasius I’s reign as the culmination of Constantine’s achievement, and to justify the recent, definitive transfer of empire

⁵⁰ M. Kruse, *The Politics of Roman Memory...*, p. 43-55. Hesychius’ text survives in three versions: (1) a freestanding text entitled *Patria of Constantinople according to Hesychius the Illustrious*; (2) a text incorporated into the tenth-century *Patria of Constantinople*; (3) a text incorporated into a medieval *Life of Constantine* (the so-called *Opitz-Vita*). See A. Kaldellis, “The Works and Days of Hesychios the Illustrious of Miletos”, *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 45, 2005, p. 381-403, and P. Magdalino, *Roman Constantinople...*, p. 14-16, 20-22, 25-28.

⁵¹ Malalas, *Chronographia*, VIII, 1, X, 51, XII, 20, ed. H. Thurn, p. 146, 200, 221-222. The fact that Malalas uses the name *Byzoupolis* only in these passages indicates that they all derive from a single source. His account of the voyage of the Argonauts (IV, 8-9, ed. H. Thurn, p. 54-56) also clearly derives from a local narrative. See P. Magdalino, *Roman Constantinople...*, p. 15-18, 25-26.

⁵² *Suidae Lexicon* s.v. Χριστόδωρος, ed. A. Adler, *Suidae Lexicon*, IV, Leipzig, 1935 (repr. Leipzig-Munich, 2001), no. 525, p. 827, tr. P. Magdalino, *Roman Constantinople...*, p. 22; M. Kruse, *The Politics of Roman Memory...*, p. 58. The following entry, no. 526, on Christodoros the Theban, may also refer to the same person.

⁵³ G. Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire: études sur le recueil des Patria*, Paris, 1984, p. 11.

from barbarian-occupied Rome by emphasizing the nobility and antiquity of the city in which imperial power had been resettled.

What is certain is that Christodoros' *Patria* of Constantinople presented the New Rome in a Greek cultural idiom.⁵⁴ That it walked a fine line between Byzantine and Constantinopolitan, Greek and Roman identity, and that Anastasius I approved of or even shared this ambivalence, can be inferred from Christodoros' surviving poem, his *Ekphrasis of the statues in the baths of Zeuxippos*, which, it has been plausibly suggested, was publicly performed.⁵⁵ In choosing the statues to describe, in what sequence, and how to describe them, he plays to both the expatriate Latin Romans and the local Greeks in his audience.⁵⁶ In describing the statue of Pompey the Great (vv. 398-406), he makes a significant nod to Anastasius I's claim to be descended from this great Roman hero, but he is less effusive on the subject of Pompey's rival Caesar (vv. 92-96), the founder of the Roman Empire.⁵⁷ His focus on the statues of the famous Trojans in the Iliad has normally been read as a conventional celebration of the Trojan origins of Rome – and this was perhaps the original point of the statue collection assembled by Constantine.⁵⁸ Yet as Marion Kruse points out, Christodoros subverts their fame by portraying them as total losers, unredeemed by the future glory of their Roman descendants, with whom he simply does not connect them.⁵⁹ And to underscore this tacit denial of the Vergilian narrative, he gives the statue of Vergil a place of ambivalent honour in three lines at the end of the poem (vv. 414-416). Vergil is acknowledged to be another Homer, raised in Rome, but the Homer who is placed before him (vv. 407-413) is also another Homer – not the epic poet, but a tragedian from Thrace, “who adorned with his verses his native city of Byzantion”.

Like the story of the transfer of the Palladium, which it may well have incorporated, Christodoros' epic *Patria* was constructed to demonstrate that

⁵⁴ L. Focanti, “Looking for an Identity: The *Patria* and Greek Cities in the Late Antique Roman Empire”, *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 96.3, 2018, p. 947-968, especially p. 952: “The first aspect we should highlight is the complete absence of *patria* from the Roman west”.

⁵⁵ The text is preserved as Book II of the Palatine Anthology; H. Beckby, *Anthologia graeca*, Munich, 1957, vol. 2, p. 188-211. For the likely performance context, see A. Kaldellis, “Christodoros on the Statues of the Zeuxippos Baths: A New Reading of the *Ekphrasis*”, *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 47, 2007, p. 361-383, at p. 368-372; M. Whitby, “Christodoros of Coptus on the Statues in the Baths of Zeuxippos at Constantinople. Text and Context”, in H. Bannert and N. Kroll (eds.), *Nonnus of Panopolis in Context II*, Leiden, 2018, p. 271-288, at p. 272, 284-286.

⁵⁶ H. Saradi, “Christodoros of Koptus, *The Statuary of the Baths of Zeuxippos*: Virgilian Heroes in a Constantinopolitan Context”, *Κυπριακαί Σπουδαί* 68-69, 2016-2017, p. 703-717, at p. 709.

⁵⁷ A. Kaldellis, “Christodoros on the Statues...”, p. 377-381; M. Kruse, *The Politics of Roman Memory...*, p. 72-76.

⁵⁸ R. Stupperich, “Das Statuenprogramm in den Zeuxippos-Thermen. Überlegungen zur Beschreibung durch Christodoros von Koptus”, *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 32, 1982, p. 210-235; S. Bassett, *The Urban Image...*, p. 53-54; H. Saradi, “Christodoros of Koptus...”, p. 706-714.

⁵⁹ M. Kruse, *The Politics of Roman Memory...*, p. 59-70.

Constantinople was both more Roman than Rome, because it was the Rome of the future, and better than Rome because it was a Rome with a Greek difference, this difference being its past in the ancient city of Byzantium. Christodoros and his contemporaries provided the New Rome with the alternative, Byzantine identity that Chalkokondyles would choose to prioritize one thousand years later. Why did it take so long for this alternative identity to come out on top?

In the short term, it had much to do with the political programme and ideological priorities of Justinian, who had no time for traditional Greek civic identities, especially if they involved mythological origins and republican constitutions other than that of the Roman Republic. In the long run, it suited the emperors and people of Constantinople to think of themselves as Romans, especially in their dealings with the barbarian world, which included just about everyone who was not an imperial subject. But things got complicated when the status and sovereignty of the New Rome were challenged by foreigners of Latin culture and religious obedience to the bishop of Old Rome. In these circumstances, the binary opposite of barbarian was not Roman but Greek, and the alternative, Byzantine identity of Constantinople had its uses. It rose to the surface on several occasions in the Middle Ages. It appeared in the local church as early as the sixth century, in what may be regarded as the Christian counterpart of Christodoros' *Patria*: the elaboration of the list of the early bishops of Byzantium and the legend that the first of them, Stachys, was consecrated by St Andrew the Apostle after his missionary tour of the Black Sea.⁶⁰ In the eighth century, the *Parastaseis* present the foundation of Constantinople as an act of aggression in which Constantine defeats the founders of Byzantium, who appear variously as Byzas, Antes, and Severus.⁶¹ But it was the violent conquest of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade which decisively alienated the Greek inhabitants of New Rome from the original Romans of Latin Christendom. This sense of alienation is vividly expressed by Niketas Choniates in the appendix to his *History*, his famous *ekphrasis* and lament on the statues destroyed by the Latin conquerors in 1204. He dwells particularly on the fate of a statue of a beautiful female figure whom he identifies as Helen of Troy. The Latins, he says, did not even offer the excuse that they were acting out of patriotic revenge for Helen's role in the destruction of Troy, from which their Rome derived its ancestry.⁶²

The inhabitants of Constantinople who were forced or chose to flee the city and set up political regimes in provincial centres likened themselves to the Jews

⁶⁰ C. Mango, "Constantinople's Mount of Olives and Pseudo-Dorotheus of Tyre", *Néa Póμνη. Rivista di ricerca bizantinistica* 6, 2009, p. 157-170.

⁶¹ *Parastaseis*, ed. Th. Preger, *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum*, Leipzig, 1901, §38, 41, 52, 54; G. Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire...*, p. 78-93.

⁶² Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. J.-L. van Dieten, Berlin, 1975, p. 647-655, especially p. 652-653; F. Spingou, "Classicizing Visions of Constantinople after 1204: Niketas Choniates' *De signis* Reconsidered", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 76, 2022, p. 181-220.

in Babylonian exile from their Holy City.⁶³ However, they did not articulate their exclusion from the New Rome with the same typological clarity: if anything, the experience intensified their sense of Hellenic, rather than Roman identity. The Greek regimes in exile sought to repossess Constantinople for the political status and not the national identity that it conferred. After the city was repossessed by the emperor of Nicaea, Michael Palaiologos, the church's spokesman, Manuel Holobolos, hailed the emperor as New Constantine, as well as a New Zerubbabel who had brought the Elect Nation back to the New Zion.⁶⁴ But of New Rome, not a word.

The climax of this “de-romanizing” trend came forty to fifty years later in Theodore Metochites' monumental oration in praise of Constantinople.⁶⁵ Not only is New Rome never mentioned, but the transfer of empire from Old Rome is entirely written out of the narrative: Constantine simply transforms Byzantium into the world capital that Nature had always destined it to become. Old Rome and the ancient Romans make only brief appearances. Old Rome is a point of unfavourable comparison with Constantinople as a city that has only its ancient ruins to be proud of, and in matters of faith has gone astray. The Romans themselves feature more positively in the passage where Metochites describes the initial settling (συνοικισμός) of Constantinople.

Immediately it was settled by the pick of the Hellenes and the Roman nobility, which then held sway. So from these two nations which excelled in intelligence and in strength and in the cultivation of great beauty, both by nurture and by nature – from these nations, then, was created and composed the first magnificent and noble establishment. As the natural scientists say, all things that exist consist of form and matter. So it was that the Fortune of Rome produced the form-giving principle, just as in every birth the seed comes from the male, while this land of Hellas, having once received it, provided everything else, that is the natural streams of matter, fine and abundant, or rather uncorrupted and pure, for this noble, universal blending, which resembles the first constitution of the universe. The seed and the material matrix were admirably suited to each other and to the perfect delivery of the whole, in a thoroughly well-tuned and harmonious construction.⁶⁶

⁶³ See, e.g., Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, p. 578, 591-592. For other sources and discussion, see D. Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204-1330*, Cambridge, 2006, p. 99; P. Magdalino and R. Nelson (eds.), *The Old Testament in Byzantium*, Washington, D.C., 2010, p. 25-26; S. Eshel, *The Concept of the Elect Nation...*, p. 173-179.

⁶⁴ Ed. M. Treu, *Manuelis Holoboli orationes*, Potsdam, 1906-1907, p. 43-44, 57, 83-84, 86; D. Angelov, *Imperial Ideology...*, p. 99; P. Magdalino, *Roman Constantinople...*, p. 105.

⁶⁵ Theodore Metochites, *Orationes*, ed. I. Polemis and E. Kaltsogianni, Berlin, 2019, no. 11, p. 430-552; previously published, with different chapter numbering, in I. Polemis, *Θεόδωρος Μετοχίτης, Βυζάντιος ἢ περὶ τῆς βασιλίδος μεγαλοπόλεως*, Thessaloniki, 2013.

⁶⁶ Ed. I. Polemis and E. Kaltsogianni, §58, p. 480-481.

The obvious message of this ingenious metaphor, derived from the Aristotelian theory of conception, is that the Roman, male element in the creation of Constantinople gives the city its form and therefore its identity. Yet Metochites subverts this obvious reading by reserving his lyrical praise for the female contribution from the land of Hellas that provided “everything else”. The implication is that Constantinople gets more of lasting value from its gestating, nurturing Greek mother than from its penetrating and inseminating Roman father. And the implication is not contradicted by the title that Metochites gives his work: *Byzantios, or concerning the imperial megalopolis*.

Long neglected by historians of Constantinople because of its total lack of concrete reference to specific buildings and topography, the *Byzantios*, since its critical edition by Ioannis Polemis, now stands revealed not only as the greatest rhetorical work of Theodore Metochites, but also as a major contribution to the urban image of what we may now unashamedly call Byzantine Constantinople.⁶⁷ It was, in its way, as significant as Metochites’ restoration of the Chora monastery church, which as the Kariye Camii is the most visited Byzantine monument in Istanbul after Hagia Sophia.⁶⁸ The *Byzantios* belatedly did for Constantinople, almost a thousand years after its foundation, what the great orators of the Second Sophistic had done for famous cities of the ancient world. Its title consciously echoed the *Panathenaikos* of Aelius Aristides and the *Antiochikos* of Libanius. The *Byzantios* is important to us here because it introduces a number of themes that previously were considered to be innovations of fifteenth-century authors:⁶⁹ ancient ruins and comparison with Rome (Manuel Chrysoloras), the mixture of Greek and Roman populations (Chrysoloras, Isidore of Kiev,⁷⁰ and Chalkokondyles), and the suppression of Constantinople’s identity as New Rome, which is the singular feature of Chalkokondyles’ narrative of the transfer of empire.

The *Byzantios* may thus be regarded as the first coherent statement of Byzantine identity. At the same time, it may be seen as the culmination of a Byzantine tradition of Byzantine studies, a local tradition of writing about Constantinople’s past that distanced the New Rome from the Old by justifying and contextualizing Constantine’s decision to upgrade the ancient Greek city of Byzantium into a new imperial capital. Metochites’ oration was the last of three major literary compositions that celebrated Constantinople, the others being the lost epic *Patria* of Christodoros of Koptos and the anonymous so-called *Patria* of the late tenth century. The relationship of these texts

⁶⁷ P. Magdalino, *Roman Constantinople...*, p. 109-143.

⁶⁸ On which, see most recently M. Studer-Karlen (ed.), *Biography of a Landmark: The Chora Monastery/ Kariye Camii in Constantinople/Istanbul from Late Antiquity to the 21st Century*, Leiden, 2023.

⁶⁹ For the authors and the political and intellectual context of their work, see in general F. Leonte, *Imperial Visions of Late Byzantium: Manuel II Palaiologos and Rhetoric in Purple*, Edinburgh, 2020.

⁷⁰ For Isidore’s praise of Constantinople, see F. Leonte, *Imperial Visions...*, p. 86-88; P. Magdalino, *Roman Constantinople...*, p. 141-143.

to the *Byzantios* does not concern us here.⁷¹ What matters is that the Byzantine studies that invented Byzantine identity did not begin with Chalkokondyles, with Renaissance humanism, or with the Latin denial that the Greeks were really Romans. Byzantine studies existed long before the fifteenth century, and they were made in Byzantium. We do not need to refer to the one or the other by any other names.

⁷¹ For some remarks relating and comparing them, see P. Magdalino, *Roman Constantinople...*, p. 51, 136-137, 143-149.

N. Iorga
et le congrès de 1924



Pourquoi un congrès international des études byzantines ?

L'argument de N. Iorga

Andrei Timotin

Abstract: The article examines the intellectual motivations underlying N. Iorga's initiative to organize the first International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest in 1924. Through his earlier works, Iorga developed the idea of a single "universal Empire" underpinning medieval civilization – embracing Byzantium, Western Christendom, and Islam. His historical vision emphasized the continuity between Eastern and Western political formations and the necessity of international scholarly collaboration to study this continuity. The congress thus embodied his ambition to establish a comprehensive, interdisciplinary Byzantinology linking history, literature, and art. Ultimately, the Bucharest congress represented both the culmination of Iorga's synthetic historical vision and a lasting institutional foundation for global Byzantine scholarship.

Keywords: N. Iorga, Byzantine studies, medieval history, *Byzance après Byzance*, historiography, intellectual history

Dans une conférence prononcée le 6 décembre 1945 à l'Institut d'Histoire universelle « N. Iorga », le Père Vitalien Laurent, après avoir rappelé les travaux de byzantinologie du grand historien ainsi que ses nombreuses initiatives et fondations ayant contribué à l'essor des études byzantines, affirmait : « Mais l'initiative la plus heureuse et la plus féconde de Iorga fut assurément la tenue du premier Congrès des Études byzantines dans cette capitale en 1924. Sa réussite détermina dans toute l'Europe une efflorescence de nouveaux périodiques. La revue *Byzantion* à Bruxelles, les *Studi bizantini e neoellenici* à Rome, les *Byzantinoslavica* et le *Seminarium Kondakovianum* à Prague, l'*Annuaire de la Société des Études byzantines* à Athènes ; tous ces organes, dont le numéro limitaire porte le même millésime, 1924 ou 1925, sont

issus de l'enthousiasme soulevé partout par les travaux de cette première assemblée auxquels Iorga avait su donner du prestige et une féconde cohésion »¹.

Émanant de l'un des plus illustres byzantinologues de son temps, qui passa plus de dix années à Bucarest en qualité de directeur de l'Institut français d'Études byzantines (1935-1947)², et qui, mieux que quiconque, pouvait mesurer la contribution de Iorga au développement des études byzantines, cette affirmation mérite d'être considérée avec une attention particulière. Le colloque organisé à l'occasion du centenaire du congrès de Bucarest offrait en effet une occasion privilégiée de s'interroger sur la portée de cette appréciation, mais aussi sur le contexte intellectuel et scientifique dans lequel prit forme l'initiative de Iorga : celle de rassembler, au sein d'un congrès international, les spécialistes des études byzantines – projet qu'il avait formulé à l'occasion du V^e Congrès international des sciences historiques, tenu à Bruxelles en avril 1923.

Le point de départ de cette enquête est le discours prononcé par Iorga lors de l'ouverture du congrès de Bucarest. Vers la fin de cette allocution, dissimulée au sein de son vibrant plaidoyer en faveur de l'héritage romain et byzantin de son pays, se trouve une section qui exprime sa propre conception de Byzance et qui, à ce titre, mérite d'être examinée de près :

« Byzance est quelque chose qui s'est formée dans l'Empire des Rhomées, qui s'est étendue sur toutes les formations politiques similaires, qu'elles aient appartenu d'une façon ou d'une autre aux basileis, mais quelque-chose qui existe par elle-même, après la déchéance et la mort de l'Empire dans lequel et par lequel la forme impériale de Byzance a pris naissance.

Elle appartient simultanément à toutes les civilisations asiatiques, à toute la pensée orientale, à tout l'apport chrétien, à toute la discipline romaine, qui n'a pas fourni seulement les cadres, mais a versé aussi le ciment. Il y a eu aussi un organisme byzantin, aux lignes directrices très claires, mais toujours ouvert à des accroissements, toujours sujet à des changements qui ne dérangent pas ses lignes. L'occidentalisme même y avait pénétré dès les Comnènes par la chevalerie, dès une époque encore plus ancienne, par la nouvelle économie bourgeoise des villes italiennes. L'esprit byzantin, tout de synthèse en mouvement, survécut.

Tous ceux qui se trouvent sur les territoires détenus par les successeurs de Constantin ou influencés par eux ont donc à leur disposition des éléments qui peuvent servir à mieux expliquer cette vaste synthèse. Séparés dans tant de domaines, il y a toujours cette collaboration scientifique qui peut les réunir, les dirigeant vers d'autres rapprochements utiles. D'un autre côté, les Occidentaux, auxquels les Roumains spécialement sont liés par de si nombreuses et si importantes attaches, ont dans leur

¹ V. Laurent, « Nicolas Iorga, historien de la vie byzantine », *Revue des études byzantines* 4, 1946, p. 5-23, ici p. 22.

² Sur l'histoire de l'Institut, voir M.-H. Blanchet et I.-A. Tudorie (éd.), *L'Apport des Assomptionnistes français aux études byzantines : une approche critique (Actes du colloque de Bucarest, 25-27 septembre 2014)*, Paris – Louvain, 2017.

propre histoire, plus qu'on ne le croit habituellement, des chapitres purement byzantins. En les reconnaissant, on se rend mieux compte chaque jour de la grande unité historique que nous avons trop longuement séparée, par nos délimitations et dans laquelle cette nouvelle évolution de l'antiquité classique, de Rome et du christianisme a une si large part. »³

Dans cet extrait, Iorga formule discrètement trois idées directrices qui structurent sa vision singulière de l'histoire byzantine :

a) la première est celle de l'unité de l'histoire médiévale, englobant l'ensemble des formations politiques héritières de l'Empire, en Orient comme en Occident ;

b) la deuxième est celle de la pérennité de la forme impériale byzantine, survivant à la chute de Byzance par sa remarquable capacité de synthèse et d'assimilation ;

c) enfin, la troisième, découlant des précédentes, est celle de la nécessité d'une collaboration scientifique internationale, dépassant les frontières non seulement disciplinaires, mais aussi celles qui séparent les différents domaines des études médiévales, seule à même de rendre compte de l'ampleur de cette synthèse et de mettre en lumière cette unité historique.

Formulées sous une forme dense et allusive, ces trois idées condensent l'argument de Iorga en faveur du congrès qu'il avait pris l'initiative d'organiser. L'argument sera ici explicité à partir des travaux de byzantinologie que Iorga publia avant et après le congrès de Bucarest.

Sa thèse principale est manifestement celle de l'unité fondamentale de l'histoire médiévale, une unité fondée sur l'aspiration commune des puissances politiques, tant en Orient qu'en Occident, à restaurer l'Empire, le seul empire véritable. Jusqu'à la conquête de Constantinople par les croisés en 1204, celui-ci demeure la principale source de légitimité politique dans le monde médiéval. Cette thèse est clairement formulée dans une communication présentée au III^e Congrès international d'études historiques, à Londres, en 1913, intitulée *Les bases nécessaires d'une nouvelle histoire du Moyen Âge* :

« À partir de Charlemagne la race germanique s'usera à faire du nouvel Empire créé par les Francs une réalité durable. Le même rôle revient du côté d'Orient à ces Bulgares, qui créent, après le Tzarat de Siméon, celui de Samuel, soutenu par les Albanais et les Vlaques, puis celui de Joannice, lui-même de race vlaque. Tout ce qui se passe en Europe et dans les régions voisines d'Asie, jusqu'au califat des Arabes, qui abandonne bien vite son caractère patriarcal, le bournous et le sac à figes des premiers successeurs du Prophète, pour chausser les brodequins impériaux, peut être classé sous cette rubrique des luttes pour le rétablissement de l'Empire. *C'est la vraie unité de l'histoire du Moyen Âge. Elle ne doit pas commencer donc par l'analyse des germes de nation, qui ne se*

³ « Discours d'ouverture de N. Iorga », dans *Compte-rendu du Premier congrès international des études byzantines*, éd. C. Marinescu, Bucarest, 1924, p. 10-15, ici p. 14-15. Sur le discours d'ouverture de N. Iorga, voir également la contribution de Marie-Hélène Blanchet dans ce volume.

développeront que dans quelques centaines d'années, ce qui appartient à l'histoire moderne, occupées de royautés nationales, mais bien poursuivre ces combats incessants, cette continuelle tension de tous les peuples pour avoir l'Empire, le seul Empire. »⁴

Dans cette conception, Byzance apparaît donc essentiellement comme la monarchie unique à vocation universelle, où tous les peuples sont appelés à trouver leur place, et dont le titulaire légitime, héritier de Constantin et de Rome, réside à Constantinople. Sur le plan juridique, qui fonde la légitimité politique, l'Empire romain n'a jamais véritablement renoncé à ses possessions occidentales, celles-ci étant, *de facto*, temporairement passées sous la domination d'autres puissances. C'est à la lumière de cette perspective que la « reconquête » occidentale menée par Justinien se présente plutôt comme un rétablissement naturel de l'unité impériale artificiellement fragmentée. Iorga le souligne de manière explicite dans plusieurs de ses travaux, notamment dans son étude « Justinien et sa conception de l'Empire »⁵. Les autonomies locales qui émergent dans les siècles suivants sur le territoire italien sont également interprétées comme autant de « formes impériales » héritières de Rome.

Cette thèse est reprise et développée, avant le congrès de Bucarest, dans une série de conférences données à la Sorbonne et publiées en 1923 sous le titre *Relations entre l'Orient et l'Occident au Moyen Âge*⁶. Le septième chapitre de cet ouvrage (p. 121-139) est intitulé, de manière suggestive, « Byzantins et Italiens au X^e siècle en Occident. Une nouvelle forme impériale ». Iorga présente l'Italie des autonomies locales, qui émerge au X^e siècle, comme héritière de l'Antiquité et comme un espace où la forme impériale romaine se manifeste, s'affirmant au détriment des prétentions romaines de l'Empire des Ottoniens : « Et, quant à l'*orbis romanus*, il devait appartenir à d'autres, il devait appartenir, en tant que commerce, en tant qu'initiative économique, en tant que civilisation, à cette formation des villes, s'inspirant du passé classique, à ces villes de l'Italie qui, sans grand fracas, sans manifester, sans inscrire sur leurs bannières de trop grandes ambitions, étaient les vraies héritières de cette antiquité vers laquelle les Othons étendaient une main impuissante »⁷. Ces Ottoniens, et en particulier Othon III, fils de Théophano de Constantinople, qui s'installe en Italie en quittant définitivement l'Allemagne et se présente comme empereur romain⁸, participent, dans cette perspective, à cette aspiration commune à la forme impériale. Mais les Ottoniens,

⁴ N. Iorga, *I. Les bases nécessaires d'une nouvelle histoire du Moyen Âge. II. La survivance byzantine dans les Pays roumains*. Deux communications faites, le 7 et 8 avril 1913, au troisième congrès international d'études historiques, à Londres, Bucarest, 1913 [*La survivance...* est reprise dans N. Iorga, *Études byzantines*, II, Bucarest, 1940 (Institut d'études byzantines), p. 257-276], ici p. 14-15.

⁵ Mais voir déjà sa contribution « Der lateinische Westen und der byzantinische Osten in ihren Wechselbeziehungen während des Mittelalters », dans *Ehrengabe Karl Lamprecht*, Berlin, 1909, p. 89-99.

⁶ N. Iorga, *Relations entre l'Orient et l'Occident au Moyen Âge*, Conférences données à la Sorbonne, Paris, 1923 (Institut roumain pour l'Étude du Sud-Est de l'Europe).

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 137-138.

écrit Iorga, n'arrivèrent pas à « donner à Rome un régime permanent et légitime, et, en même temps, [à] arracher aux Grecs et aux Sarrasins le Sud de l'Italie », la double mission que l'Empire germanique, autant que celui carolingien s'étaient donnée : « Les trois Othons – affirme Iorga – s'y sont employés ; après eux, leurs successeurs : Henri, Conrad, l'autre Henri, jusqu'à Henri IV, ont fait tout leur possible pour arriver à ce double résultat sans pouvoir l'atteindre »⁹.

Ce résultat sera, au contraire, l'œuvre de cette autre forme d'Empire que Iorga appelle « l'Italie des autonomies locales », ou, dans une autre conférence reprise dans le même ouvrage, « les *Romaniae* des cités libres »¹⁰, ou bien « les *Romaniae* autonomes de l'Occident »¹¹. Il montre ainsi que la domination normande dans l'Italie méridionale préserve les structures et parfois même les titres de l'organisation byzantine¹² ; de même la Raguse soumise aux Normands : « Si Venise [en effet – souligne Iorga –], à la fin du XI^e siècle, s'est tournée contre Robert de Sicile, c'est parce qu'elle voyait surgir la concurrence de Raguse, qui a fait hommage au roi normand : parfois cependant on oubliait tout ce qui reliait jusqu'alors la République avec l'Empire, qui n'aura jamais d'ennemis aussi énergiques et opiniâtres que ces Vénitiens »¹³. Une nouvelle autonomie, une nouvelle forme locale d'empire se consolide aussi à Rome. Au XI^e et XII^e siècle, le pouvoir passe de la communauté aux grandes familles patriciennes : les Frangipanni, les Pierleone, les Colonna, les Orsini. En 1290, écrit Iorga, « les Romains firent leur *dominus* (leur empereur) Jacques de Colonna, et le menèrent à travers Rome sur un char à la manière des empereurs (*more imperatorum*), et l'appelèrent César [...] ceci montre le dernier but naturel vers lequel tendaient ces communautés urbaines qui se détachaient d'abord de la vie de l'Empire pour finir avec la tentative de remplacer par des éléments nouveaux ce même Empire »¹⁴.

La conclusion qui s'impose à l'historien à la suite de l'examen de ces « autonomies » italiennes héritières de l'Empire, dans l'Italie méridionale, à Raguse, à Venise, à Rome, est qu'« on a donc vers 1200 cet état d'esprit, cette conscience que les organisations populaires ont pris un développement d'énergie leur donnant le droit de passer par-dessus l'autorité ancienne, que l'Empire sans l'acceptation populaire ne vaut rien, que les nouvelles démocraties organisées ont droit à tout. Cette conscience dépassait la vie locale, elle dépassait même le caractère des États qui s'étaient formés

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹⁰ N. Iorga, « Les *Romaniae* des cités libres et les formes d'Empire », *ibid.*, p. 154-167 [repris dans *id.*, *Études byzantines*, I, Bucarest, 1939 (Institut d'études byzantines), p. 277-286].

¹¹ N. Iorga, *Études byzantines*, I, p. 205-221.

¹² Sur la continuité des structures administratives, juridiques et culturelles byzantines sous la domination normande, voir maintenant J. Drell et P. Oldfield (éd.), *Rethinking Norman Italy. Studies in Honour of Graham A. Loud*, Manchester, 2021.

¹³ N. Iorga, *Relations entre l'Orient et l'Occident au Moyen Age*, p. 163.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 163-164.

sur la base de cette vie locale. Elle aspirait à remplacer l'Empire »¹⁵. Et, avec la quatrième croisade, cette aspiration trouve son accomplissement. La conquête latine de Constantinople se présente, dans cette perspective, comme le remplacement de l'Empire par l'une de ses formes qui, en suivant ses tendances naturelles, rétablit temporairement, d'une manière différente, l'unité de l'Orient et de l'Occident, unité qui définit l'unité légale et idéale de l'Empire. À la différence de John Bury, que Iorga admirait pourtant, et qui considérait le mouvement des croisades comme une action circonstancielle et marquée par le brigandage¹⁶, l'historien roumain y discerne – d'une manière qui n'est paradoxale que pour ceux qui ignorent ses fondements – un chapitre de l'histoire byzantine, ou mieux encore, de l'histoire impériale de l'Empire unique. Cette conception, longtemps mûrie, avait été préparée par les nombreux travaux que Iorga avait consacrés aux croisades, parmi lesquels son importante monographie sur Philippe de Mézières¹⁷, ainsi que ses *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XV^e siècle*¹⁸.

Dans une autre conférence donnée à la Sorbonne et publiée dans le même volume, « Orient impérial et Occident populaire devant le devoir de 'croisade' »¹⁹, le phénomène des croisades est envisagé, sur le long terme, comme une continuation des campagnes orientales des empereurs byzantins : de véritables « croisades byzantines » qui ont précédé et servi de modèle aux croisades occidentales. Sont ainsi évoquées les campagnes de Justinien, qui poursuivit celles de ses prédécesseurs romains, puis Héraclius, « dont la figure a été adoptée par la légende des croisades occidentales », et qui inspira, à la fin du X^e siècle, les expéditions de Nicéphore Phocas et de Jean Tzimiskès²⁰. Dans cette symbiose des formes byzantines et occidentales de croisade, Iorga souligne également la dimension occidentale de la personnalité et de l'époque du chevalier Manuel Comnène, figure d'un nouvel empereur restaurateur, qu'il met en relation de manière suggestive avec les contemporains occidentaux et orientaux : Richard Cœur de Lion et Saladin²¹.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 167 [= *Études byzantines*, I, p. 286].

¹⁶ J. B. Bury (éd.), *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. IV, *The Eastern Roman Empire (717–1453)*, Cambridge, 1923, p. 571-613 (chap. 14 : « The Fourth Crusade and the Latin Empire »).

¹⁷ N. Iorga, *Philippe de Mézières (1327-1405) et la croisade au XIV^e siècle*, Paris, 1896 (2^e 1976). La monographie de Iorga demeure une référence incontournable dans les études consacrées à Philippe de Mézières. Voir récemment J. Blanchard, *Philippe de Mézières. Un monde rêvé, d'Orient en Occident*, Paris, 2024.

¹⁸ N. Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XV^e siècle*, t. I-V, Paris – Bucarest, 1899-1915.

¹⁹ N. Iorga, *Relations entre l'Orient et l'Occident au Moyen Âge*, p. 140-153 [repris dans id., *Études byzantines*, I, Bucarest, 1939, p. 265-275].

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 141-143.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 168-181 (chap. X « Chevalerie occidentale en Orient »). Sur Manuel Comnène, voir maintenant le livre classique de P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143–1180*, Cambridge, 1993.

La solidarité entre les deux parties de l'Empire, entre les deux sociétés médiévales, orientale et occidentale, est encore mise en avant, quatre ans après le congrès de Bucarest, dans une communication présentée au Congrès international d'histoire à Oslo (1928) intitulée de manière programmatique « L'inter-pénétration de l'Orient et de l'Occident au Moyen-Âge »²². Cette communication développe deux thèses originales déjà esquissées dans les travaux antérieurs. La première soutient que l'Islam médiéval participe à cette aspiration commune, à cette dynamique de compétition qui anime les grands États du Moyen Âge dans leur quête de maîtrise de l'Empire unique :

« On a présenté aussi l'Islam conquérant comme l'ennemi naturel de Byzance. Il en était plutôt, sous une autre forme, le concurrent, le rival, travaillant, avec un crédo religieux différent, accepté souvent par des Syriens, des Égyptiens, des Grecs mêmes, par les mêmes voies vers un but semblable à celui de Justinien. L'œuvre de celui-ci fut reprise par plusieurs califes, et ce que l'empereur orthodoxe avait accompli au VI^e siècle fut réalisé de nouveau, au VIII^e, IX^e et X^e, par les successeurs à différents titres du Prophète. L'Afrique, la Sicile, les Balcons, la Sardaigne, passagèrement, une partie même de l'Italie du Sud, et en plus l'Espagne, la France méridionale, subirent une autre domination orientale, sous tant de rapports pareille à la première. »²³

Cette thèse s'oppose à celle de Pirenne, le grand contemporain de Iorga, selon laquelle les conquêtes islamiques en Europe auraient entraîné une séparation politique et économique entre l'Occident et l'Orient²⁴. Iorga soutient, au contraire, que l'Islam contribue à restaurer l'unité politique de la Méditerranée, qui poursuit, sous une autre forme impériale, l'œuvre de Justinien, et que l'Europe médiévale connaît en réalité un commerce unique, qui se maintient pendant plusieurs siècles entre Orient et Occident.

D'autre part, affirme Iorga, « le sens de la solidarité des deux sociétés chrétiennes » existe des deux côtés de l'Europe. Cette solidarité se manifeste non seulement sur le plan économique, mais aussi sur celui du savoir, notamment par la connaissance des événements de l'Empire, telle qu'en témoignent les chroniques occidentales. Iorga s'appuie à cet égard sur les sources anglaises relatives à la croisade de Richard Cœur de Lion²⁵. Par la suite, les croisades ont favorisé pour les Occidentaux la découverte des monuments d'art de l'Empire, lesquels ont exercé une influence

²² N. Iorga, « L'inter-pénétration de l'Orient et de l'Occident au Moyen-Âge », *Académie Roumaine. Bulletin de la Section Historique*, t. XV, 1928, p. 1-38 [étude reprise dans *Études byzantines*, II, p. 97-136].

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁴ H. Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, Paris, 1937.

²⁵ N. Iorga, « L'inter-pénétration de l'Orient et de l'Occident au Moyen-Âge », p. 30-34. Sur la croisade de Richard Cœur de Lion, voir maintenant J. B. Gillingham, *Richard Coeur de Lion. Kingship, Chivalry and War in the Twelfth Century*, Londres, 1994, notamment p. 141-153 (chap. « Roger of Howden on Crusade ») ; sur les sources de la croisade, voir P. W. Edbury, *The Conquest of Jerusalem and the Third Crusade. Sources in Translation*, Aldershot, 1996.

notable sur l'art occidental. C'est un aspect auquel Iorga accorde une attention particulière : l'exemple de l'architecture romane de Catalogne, par exemple, lui est fourni par les études de Josep Puig i Cadafalch, le grand architecte et érudit catalan présent au congrès de Bucarest²⁶.

La seconde thèse de l'étude de Iorga distingue clairement les conquêtes de la troisième et de la quatrième croisade d'autres tentatives de remplacement de l'Empire d'Orient par des formes politiques héritières de l'Empire romain. Cette distinction tient à l'imposition, dans les territoires orientaux conquis, de structures politiques nouvelles, étrangères à la tradition impériale, sans la moindre intention d'assurer la continuité avec l'héritage de Byzance. Avant la prise de Constantinople en 1204, la troisième croisade avait déjà donné lieu à ce phénomène : « Richard [Cœur de Lion] – écrit Iorga – détrône en Chypre un empereur, fût-il même resserré, avec les droits qu'il croit avoir sur l'Empire entier, dans son île seule. Il lui substitue ses vicaires ; il installera à sa place un roi d'achat pris parmi ses chevaliers. C'est tout autre chose que les principautés, formées par le hasard de la conquête et dans une forme mal définie théoriquement, par la première croisade. *Pour la première fois l'Occident transporta, imposa ses formes à lui, ne cherchant aucun autre appui que celui de sa force victorieuse* »²⁷. Le phénomène se reproduit dans la capitale en 1204. Cette conquête se distingue essentiellement de celle menée par les Ottomans sur Byzance, deux siècles plus tard. À la différence de leurs prédécesseurs occidentaux, ces derniers eurent à cœur de se « relier au passé, même au passé dynastique » des empereurs romains – comme le fera Critoboule d'Imbros pour Mahomet II²⁸ – et de présenter ainsi leur empire comme la continuation de l'Empire byzantin. Dans une formule saisissante, qui put surprendre plus d'un lecteur de son temps, Iorga affirmait :

« Ce que conquiert en 1453 Mahomet II, infiniment plus byzantin même avant d'entrer à Constantinople que le demi-Serbe Dragasès Paléologue, n'était, sous les oripeaux de la vieille pourpre orientale, qu'un petit État latin infidèle à ses grandes origines dont le monde entier avait été si longtemps couvert. Les Turcs conquérants en paraîtront donc plus Byzantins par le rétablissement des anciennes frontières, mais aussi par la situation inférieure à laquelle seront réduits ces Latins de Péra, ces Génois, jusqu'ici

²⁶ N. Iorga, « L'inter-pénétration de l'Orient et de l'Occident au Moyen-Âge », p. 18. Les discussions suscitées par la contribution de J. Puig i Cadafalch au congrès de Bucarest, portant sur l'origine des formes décoratives des églises moldaves, sont résumées dans le *Compte-rendu du Premier congrès international des études byzantines*, p. 22-24. Sur l'influence byzantine en Espagne, voir aussi N. Iorga, *Études byzantines*, I, p. 329-339 [la conférence « Byzance en Occident » donnée à l'Institut d'Histoire de l'Art d'Utrecht], en particulier p. 338. Sur la personnalité de Puig i Cadafalch, voir la contribution de Lucila Mallart dans ce volume.

²⁷ N. Iorga, « L'inter-pénétration de l'Orient et de l'Occident au Moyen-Âge », p. 35. Voir id., *France de Chypre*, Paris, 1931 (Collection de l'Institut Néo-hellénique, 10) ; id., *France de Constantinople et de Morée*, Conférences en Sorbonne, Bucarest, 1935.

²⁸ *Critobuli Imbriotae De Rebus per annos 1451-1467 a Mechemete II gestis*, édition et traduction roumaine par V. Grecu, Bucarest, 1963 (Scriptores byzantini, IV).

maîtres économiques d'une société appauvrie, et enfin par la suppression des restes de la domination latine dans les provinces. »²⁹

En essayant de comprendre la conception historique qui sous-tend cette affirmation, on s'étonnera d'autant moins que Iorga soit également l'auteur d'une *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman* en cinq volumes imposants³⁰, dont le premier parut une quinzaine d'années avant le congrès de Bucarest, à l'époque même où paraissait à Londres *The Byzantine Empire* (1907). Cette *Histoire* n'est assurément pas « la grande infidélité de sa vie », selon l'expression de Vitalien Laurent, mais, au contraire, l'expression de sa conception unitaire de l'histoire médiévale et de son sens particulier des « permanences de l'histoire », pour reprendre le titre de sa communication présentée au Congrès international d'histoire à Zurich en 1938³¹.

Cette conclusion renvoie à l'une des idées directrices de la conception de Iorga sur Byzance, énoncée dans le discours inaugural du congrès de Bucarest : *l'idée de la pérennité de Byzance après la chute de l'Empire*. Avant d'être théorisée et développée dans son célèbre ouvrage *Byzance après Byzance* (1935³²), cette thèse avait été présentée pour la première fois dans une communication au Congrès international d'études historiques de Londres en 1913, publiée la même année à Bucarest sous le titre *La survivance byzantine dans les Pays roumains* : « La civilisation des Romains d'Orient – affirme Iorga – avait suscité chez leurs nouveaux voisins slaves ou slavo-roumains, mélangés parfois d'apports hétérogènes, comme les guerriers touraniens d'Asparouch au septième siècle, des formations politiques analogues, où le Tzar correspondait au César et un Patriarche nouveau était opposé à l'ancien »³³. « Tout est byzantin », souligne Iorga, dans ces formations politiques et dans leur expression culturelle fondée sur les traductions : c'est Byzance que l'on retrouve, sous une forme différente³⁴.

Anticipant de vingt ans l'exposé plus développé de *Byzance après Byzance*, Iorga recense et examine succinctement les éléments de la survivance byzantine au nord du Danube – « le Danube d'Empire », selon sa propre expression dans une conférence des années 1920. Il commence par l'exode byzantin du XIV^e siècle, qui touche également cette région, et par le despotat de Dobrotich (les villes de la mer Noire), consolidé grâce

²⁹ N. Iorga, « L'inter-pénétration de l'Orient et de l'Occident au Moyen-Âge », p. 38.

³⁰ Id., *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches*, t. I-V, Gotha, 1908-1913.

³¹ Id., « Les permanences de l'histoire ». Communication au Congrès international d'Histoire à Zurich, Bucarest, 1938, 20 p. (plaquette).

³² Id., *Byzance après Byzance. Continuation de l'« Histoire de la vie byzantine »*, Bucarest, 1935 (Institut d'études byzantines) (1971, 1992, et trad. anglaise par L. Treptow, Jassy, 2000).

³³ Id., I. *Les bases nécessaires d'une nouvelle histoire du Moyen Âge*. II. *La survivance byzantine dans les Pays roumains*. Deux communications faites, le 7 et 8 avril 1913, au troisième congrès international d'études historiques, à Londres, Bucarest, 1913 [*La survivance...* est reprise dans *Études byzantines*, II, p. 257-276], ici p. 23-24.

³⁴ Cf. id., « Les Balcanes et l'Empire byzantin », dans *Études byzantines*, I, p. 343-352.

à une alliance familiale au profit des Byzantins. Il souligne ensuite le rôle de l'autorité ecclésiastique byzantine dans les débuts de l'État valaque et l'influence politique de Byzance dans les deux principautés roumaines, Valachie et Moldavie. Il conclut en évoquant la présence des Grecs après la chute de Constantinople et la dimension « byzantinisante » de certaines figures princières valaques, telles que Michel-le-Brave, Radu Mihnea et Constantin Brancovan. Les recherches menées dans la seconde moitié du XX^e siècle et au cours des deux dernières décennies nuancent certains détails, sans toutefois remettre en cause le cœur de ses analyses³⁵.

De tout cela, de la conception historique structurée par les thèses présentées ici, naquit, dans l'esprit de Iorga après la Première Guerre mondiale, la conviction de la nécessité d'une coopération scientifique internationale capable d'étudier et d'approfondir l'ensemble de la civilisation byzantine telle qu'il la concevait : une histoire globale du Moyen Âge, où les formes impériales de l'Orient et de l'Occident s'interpénétraient. Une initiative similaire, sous une autre forme et avec des objectifs différents, avait déjà été envisagée par Krumbacher ; comme Iorga le rappelle, « le grand désir de Krumbacher avait été de réunir tous les byzantinologues pour un grand travail d'ensemble rénovateur »³⁶. La guerre vint malheureusement interrompre ce projet, et sous la direction de Heisenberg – dont Iorga sauva la bibliothèque, en l'acquérant avec le concours du roi pour celle de son Institut sud-est européen – la dimension philologique de la *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* s'accentua, au détriment des grandes ambitions historiques que poursuivait Iorga. Le congrès de Bucarest se voulait, en quelque sorte, une résurgence de ce projet, sous une autre forme et avec de nouveaux objectifs. Quels étaient ces objectifs ?

Iorga explicite ces objectifs à plusieurs reprises dans ses travaux byzantins. On peut prendre comme exemple ce qu'il écrit dans *L'avenir des études byzantines*, où il se réfère directement au congrès de 1924, en lien avec la création d'une nouvelle revue générale de byzantinologie, de langue française : « Après le Congrès de Bucarest – affirme Iorga –, nous avons créé, étant donnée la disparition de la revue russe et les

³⁵ Dans une bibliographie en constante expansion, on retiendra notamment, en laissant de côté de nombreux articles, les ouvrages suivants : A. Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină în țările române în secolele XVI-XVIII*, Bucarest, 1983 (2001) ; id., *Byzantins, Ottomans, Roumains. Le Sud-Est européen entre l'héritage impérial et les influences occidentales*, Paris, 2006 ; V. Al. Georgescu, *Bizanzul și instituțiile românești până la mijlocul secolului al XVIII-lea*, Bucarest, 1980 ; M. A. Musicescu, *Tradition et innovation dans l'art du Sud-Est européen du XV^e au XIX^e siècle*, édition par O. Iacubovschi, Brăila, 2019 ; N.-Ș. Tanașoca, *Études byzantines et balkaniques*, édition par O. Iacubovschi et A. Timotin, Brăila, 2018 ; id., *Bizanzul și românii*, Bucarest, 2003 ; T. Teoteoi, *Byzantina et daco-romana. Studii de istorie și civilizație bizantină și românească medievală*, Bucarest, 2008 ; id., *Bizanz, romanitate orientală și români în Evul Mediu*, Bucarest, 2020 ; E. Stănescu (éd.), *Nicolae Iorga, istoric al Bizanzului. Culegere de studii*, Bucarest, 1971 ; O. Delouis, A. Couderc et P. Guran (éd.), *Héritages de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est à l'époque moderne et contemporaine*, Athènes, 2013 ; A. Timotin, S. Pirivatrić et O. Iacubovschi (éd.), *Byzantine Heritages in South-Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period = Études byzantines et post-byzantines* 4 (11), 2022.

³⁶ N. Iorga, « L'avenir des études byzantines », dans id., *Études byzantines*, II, p. 3-18, ici p. 13.

difficultés contre lesquelles luttait Heisenberg pour la sienne, une revue de caractère plutôt français, mais rédigée sous la direction d'un savant belge d'une jeunesse et d'une énergie d'esprit tout à fait extraordinaires, d'une hardiesse à chercher les solutions nouvelles qui donnera, à l'avenir aussi, des pages nouvelles à l'Histoire de Byzance : il s'agit de M. Henri Grégoire. C'est le *Byzantion*. Il se distingue des revues byzantines précédentes par le fait qu'ici, on fait beaucoup d'histoire, même de l'histoire littéraire, car, pour la première fois, on y trouve des pages, d'un savant russe, qui représentent la méthode de l'histoire littéraire appliquée à Byzance, dans le sens dans lequel nous entendons l'histoire littéraire pour les pays de l'Europe Centrale et de l'Europe Occidentale »³⁷.

Pour Iorga, histoire et littérature vont de pair, et c'est dans cette perspective qu'il conçoit l'avenir des études byzantines, la direction vers laquelle elles devraient évoluer. Iorga réclame « une bonne collection des sources narratives de l'histoire de Byzance », ainsi qu'une « grande collection de documents concernant l'histoire de Byzance » ; « ils sont parsemés de tous côtés, – affirme Iorga – et il faudra bien alors qu'on forme, à côté de l'édition nouvelle des historiens, un recueil des chartes byzantines »³⁸. Cependant, ce qui lui paraît le plus nécessaire et le plus urgent est de découvrir et de comprendre la littérature byzantine : « par-dessus les préoccupations de vocabulaire et de syntaxe, il y a donc dans la littérature byzantine quelque chose de vivant à découvrir. Car cette chose vivante est cachée sous toute espèce de formules prises dans des écrivains antérieurs, parfois dans des écrivains anciens. Il y a une croûte qu'il faut briser »³⁹.

Cet impératif se concrétise sous la forme d'un véritable programme de recherches dans une conférence donnée à l'Université de Genève en 1925, fondée sur les cours que Iorga avait dispensés à Bucarest une dizaine d'années plus tôt, et intitulée *La littérature byzantine : son sens, ses divisions, sa portée*⁴⁰. Iorga commence par expliquer pourquoi la *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur* de Krumbacher, dont il souligne les grands mérites, ne constitue pourtant pas une histoire de la littérature byzantine au sens où il l'entendait. Selon ses propres mots, « c'est un répertoire très abondant, fait avec un soin infini, donnant une bibliographie des plus complètes et des renseignements nombreux et précis sur la biographie des personnalités qui ont joué, dans un domaine ou dans un autre, un rôle important dans le développement de la littérature byzantine. Cependant, cette littérature reste encore, je ne dirai pas seulement à écrire, mais encore à définir, à en fixer le sens, à en marquer les divisions, à en faire un grand spectacle d'ensemble, rempli de cette vitalité qui existe dans cette littérature comme dans n'importe quelle autre »⁴¹.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67-94.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

Iorga propose d'abord l'idée d'une anthologie de la littérature byzantine, qui ne se limite pas à la production constantinopolitaine de style élevé, presque exclusivement centrée sur la vie politique de l'Empire. Henri Grégoire partage cette perspective, et ils envisagent ensemble la publication de cette anthologie à Bruxelles. Dans la vision de Iorga, dont on peut reconnaître la modernité, voire l'actualité, la littérature byzantine n'est pas « simplement et entièrement grecque » (p. 72), et lorsqu'elle est grecque, elle ne se réduit pas au seul style élevé (p. 73-74). La littérature reflète les différences de région et de niveau social. Ce qui l'intéresse avant tout, ce n'est pas la littérature de Cour et d'Église – bien qu'il reconnaisse que « même dans celle-là il y a de pièces de toute beauté » (p. 77) –, mais avant tout « la littérature non-officielle, parfois contre celle officielle ; par exemple les traces de la littérature qui avait pris la défense des iconoclastes » (p. 81)⁴², la philosophie byzantine, à partir des commentaires d'Aristote et de Platon (p. 82)⁴³, et surtout les *Vies* de saints, dans leur dimension littéraire : « sans cesse accumulées et transformées » ; « après l'ancien roman de l'Antiquité, – affirme Iorga – celui de l'époque byzantine existe donc aussi, par les hagiographes » (p. 83)⁴⁴. Il souligne également leur influence sur la littérature russe jusqu'au XIX^e siècle et, de manière plus générale, l'impact de la littérature byzantine sur les littératures du Sud-Est européen (bulgare, serbe et roumaine) (p. 84).

Ce qui intéresse Iorga avant toute chose, c'est la littérature vivante, qu'il estime pouvoir trouver davantage dans les provinces que dans la capitale. Cette vie provinciale constitue, selon lui, la véritable vie de l'Empire, telle que la conçoit l'auteur de l'*Histoire de la vie byzantine* (t. I-III, Bucarest, 1934-1936). La communication

⁴² Ce vœu a été entre temps comblé. Sur la littérature de l'époque iconoclaste, voir L. Brubaker, J. Haldon (éd.), *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era, c. 680–850: A History*, Cambridge, 2011 ; L. Brubaker, *Inventing Byzantine Iconoclasm*, Londres, 2012 ; M. Humphreys (éd.), *A Companion to Byzantine Iconoclasm*, Leiden – Boston, 2021 (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, 99).

⁴³ La philosophie byzantine a pris du temps à s'imposer comme domaine d'études autonome : voir B. Tatakis, *La philosophie byzantine*, Paris, 1950 ; G. Kapriev, *Byzantine Philosophy. A Systematic Perspective*, Leiden, 2025. Des collections des écrits philosophiques byzantins existent depuis quelques décennies, avec un rythme de publication soutenu : *Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi – Philosophi Byzantini*, éd. Académie d'Athènes, 12 volumes parus à ce jour, depuis 1984 ; *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca et Byzantina* (CAGB), éd. Académie de Berlin, 11 volumes parus à ce jour, depuis 2007. Voir aussi *Michaelis Pselli Philosophica Minora*, vol. I *Opuscula logica, physica, allegorica, alia*, éd. J. M. Duffy, Leipzig, 1992 ; vol. II *Opuscula psychologica, theologica, daemonologica*, éd. D. J. O'Meara, Leipzig, 1989.

⁴⁴ Longtemps étudiée notamment comme source historique, l'hagiographie byzantine a commencé depuis quelques décennies à être également examinée dans sa dimension littéraire ; voir notamment les contributions réunies dans les volumes suivants : P. Odorico et P. Agapitos (éd.), *Les vies des saints à Byzance : genre littéraire ou biographie historique ?*, Paris, 2002 ; A. Rigo, M. Trizio et E. Despotakis (éd.), *Byzantine Hagiography: Texts, Themes and Projects*, Turnhout, 2018 ; S. Efthymiadis (éd.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, 2 vol., Routledge, 2011-2014 ; A. Lampadaridi, V. Déroche et Ch. Høgel (éd.), *L'histoire comme elle se présentait dans l'hagiographie byzantine et médiévale*, Uppsala, 2022.

présentée au Congrès d'études byzantines à Rome en 1936, intitulée précisément « La vie de province dans l'Empire byzantin »⁴⁵, souligne l'importance des provinces et des sources comme la chronique de Malalas pour la connaissance de l'histoire de la ville d'Antioche à la fin de l'Antiquité, mais aussi comme référence pour d'autres villes, telles qu'Oronte ; il évoque également les récits de Jean de Nikios et de Sébéos, concernant l'Égypte et l'Arménie, et insiste surtout sur l'importance des *Vies* de saints pour l'histoire provinciale (p. 148). Au même titre, il souligne la nécessité et l'urgence de constituer un Corpus des inscriptions byzantines (p. 155). Dans les dernières années de sa vie, Iorga accorde une importance croissante à cette vie provinciale, tant dans les villes que dans les villages⁴⁶. Pour sa dimension urbaine, il se réfère toujours aux exemples italiens, là où, pour reprendre sa formule, « la cellule urbaine prépare la nation » (p. 170). La communication intitulée *Le village byzantin*, qu'il envisageait de présenter au Congrès d'études byzantines prévu à Alger en 1939, en témoigne ; il en publie le texte dans le second tome de ses *Études byzantines*⁴⁷.

Son *Histoire de la vie byzantine* reflète pleinement cet intérêt et cette vision. Iorga n'a cependant pas écrit l'*Histoire de la littérature byzantine* qu'il aurait sans doute souhaité rédiger, et qui aurait placé la littérature byzantine aux côtés des autres littératures médiévales, qu'il connaissait si bien – lui qui avait déjà publié une *Histoire des littératures romanes* en trois grands tomes⁴⁸. Il a néanmoins défini le cadre, l'étendue et la portée de cette histoire, qu'il concevait comme indissociable de l'histoire et de l'art – il avait toujours plaidé pour une meilleure connaissance de l'art byzantin et de son rayonnement. Cette ambition constituait sans aucun doute une part essentielle de l'objectif qu'il poursuivait en réunissant les byzantinologues pour un travail collectif et de longue haleine : c'était le sens même du congrès de Bucarest. Comme la plupart de ses initiatives – parmi lesquelles la fondation de l'Institut d'Études sud-est européennes en 1914, « le premier institut de byzantinologie qui fut au monde », selon Vitalien Laurent⁴⁹ – le premier congrès des études byzantines était destiné à connaître une longue et féconde postérité, dont l'ampleur se mesure aujourd'hui, après le succès du congrès de Venise et avant le XXV^e congrès, qui se tiendra l'année prochaine à Vienne.

⁴⁵ N. Iorga, *Études byzantines*, II, p. 147-171.

⁴⁶ Voir maintenant J. Lefort, C. Morrisson et J.-P. Sodini (éd.), *Les Villages dans l'Empire byzantin (IV^e-XV^e siècle)*, Paris, 2005 ; S. E. J. Gerstel, *Rural Lives and Landscapes in Late Byzantium: Art, Archaeology, and Ethnography*, Cambridge, 2015 ; F. Kondyli, *Rural Communities in Late Byzantium: Resilience and Vulnerability in the Northern Aegean*, Cambridge, 2022.

⁴⁷ N. Iorga, *Études byzantines*, II, p. 375-412.

⁴⁸ Id., *Istoria literaturilor romanice în dezvoltarea și legăturile lor*, t. I-III, Bucarest, 1920 (1968).

⁴⁹ V. Laurent, « Nicolas Iorga, historien de la vie byzantine », p. 21.

Le discours d'ouverture de Nicolas Iorga au congrès de 1924 Byzance entre réminiscences et rémanences

Marie-Hélène Blanchet

Abstract: The organization of the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest owed much to the personal initiative of the Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga. The congress opened on Monday, 14 April 1924, with Iorga, as president of the organizing committee, welcoming the delegates from across Europe. This article analyzes his inaugural address, highlighting Iorga's understanding of the Byzantine legacy, the traces of that legacy preserved in Romanian culture, and the place of Byzantine and post-Byzantine history within universal history.

Keywords: Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940), historiography, Byzantine and post-Byzantine history

« Réminiscences » est le dernier mot du discours d'ouverture de Nicolas Iorga au premier congrès international des études byzantines, entièrement rédigé en français. Sa phrase finale à l'adresse de ses hôtes formule un vœu, que la Roumanie puisse offrir aux savants byzantinistes européens rassemblés chez elle pour la première fois « un amical abri tout plein d'archaïques réminiscences »¹. « Archaïque » n'est pas un terme péjoratif sous la plume de Iorga : il renvoie à un substrat fondamental, premier, originel, essentiel. Quant à « réminiscences », le mot est certes plus ambigu, puisqu'il fait référence à une mémoire plus qu'à une histoire. Or Iorga se veut évidemment historien, il est l'héritier des conceptions de l'histoire du XIX^e siècle et entend donc

¹ « Discours d'ouverture de Nicolae Iorga », dans C. Marinescu (éd.), *Compte rendu du premier congrès international des études byzantines, Bucarest 1924*, Bucarest, 1925, p. 15.

étudier le passé sur pièces, à partir des documents, non en se fondant sur des souvenirs impalpables. Pourtant il se considère plutôt comme un médiéviste que comme un byzantiniste, et « réminiscences » correspond assez bien à la place de Byzance dans sa pensée et dans son œuvre.

Les études sur la biographie de Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940) et sur son œuvre historique se sont largement développées dans les dernières décennies². Le présent article ne contribuera pas directement à ces travaux, mais vise à resituer le projet de Iorga lorsqu'il accueille le congrès international des études byzantines à Bucarest et à tenter de mieux comprendre ce qu'il a apporté à l'historiographie byzantine. Son discours de 1924 évoque quelques thèmes qu'il est possible de rattacher à d'autres développements explicités ailleurs par Iorga, tout en essayant de comprendre quelles étaient les sources de sa pensée et dans quel courant historiographique il s'inscrivait. L'histoire était une discipline reine pour Iorga, et il faudra revenir sur sa conception, ou même sa philosophie de l'histoire, à la fois en tant qu'instrument de compréhension du passé et comme fondement pour la construction de l'avenir. Dans une perspective aussi vaste que la sienne, Byzance n'est certes pas le point focal : l'histoire proprement byzantine, celle de l'existence d'un Empire byzantin – en excluant donc la période postérieure à 1453 – n'a été que marginale dans ses recherches et dans son œuvre, consacrée plutôt aux croisades tardives, à l'Empire ottoman et à l'histoire des pays roumains. Mais on a pu soutenir que l'Empire byzantin était omniprésent dans sa pensée, en arrière-plan, en tant que forme politique spécifique, paradigmatique, ou peut-être même en tant qu'archétype³. Il vaut donc la peine d'examiner en détail

² Sur Iorga lui-même, voir D. M. Pippidi (éd.), *Nicolas Iorga. L'homme et l'œuvre à l'occasion du centième anniversaire de sa naissance*, Bucarest, 1972 ; M. Berza (éd.), *Nicolae Iorga, Choix de textes*, publié avec un avant-propos, un tableau chronologique et une bibliographie sommaire, Bucarest, 1972 ; N. M. Nagy-Talavera, *Nicolae Iorga. A Biography*, Iași, 1996 ; A. Pippidi, « À propos d'un livre centenaire », *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique* 3, 2007, p. 217-226. Sur l'historiographie roumaine de l'époque de Iorga, voir notamment L. Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, Budapest, 2001 ; A. Zub, « Geschichtskultur und Modernisierung Rumäniens im 20. Jahrhundert », dans K. Clewing et O. J. Schmitt (éd.), *Südosteuropa von vormoderner Vielfalt und nationalstaatlicher Vereinheitlichung. Festschrift für Edgar Hösch*, Munich, 2005, p. 315-325 ; N.-Ș. Tanașoca, « Byzance dans la conscience historique des Roumains », dans O. Delouis, A. Couderc et P. Guran (éd.), *Héritages de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est à l'époque moderne et contemporaine*, Athènes, 2013, p. 263-283 ; D. Stamatopoulos, *Byzantium after the Nation: The Problem of Continuity in Balkan Historiographies*, Budapest, 2022, notamment p. 316-322 et 342-347.

³ Voir V. Laurent, « Nicolas Iorga, historien de la vie byzantine », *Revue des études byzantines* 4, 1946, p. 5-23, ici p. 6 : « Ses conclusions dans ce domaine l'ont même conduit très loin, puisque le rôle attribué par lui à l'Empire d'Orient au Moyen Âge est au centre de sa perspective historique. Pour résumer d'une phrase sa pensée, la vie des peuples les plus divers, Francs, Germains, Latins, Turcs et Slaves ne fut, suivant son expression favorite, que des réalités multiples superposées à la seule forme qui comptât, la forme byzantine ». Sur la conception de l'histoire de Iorga, voir également la contribution d'Andrei Timotin dans ce volume.

ce qu'il en dit dans ce discours du 24 avril 1924, qui occupe quatre pages dans le compte-rendu de ce premier congrès publié par Constantin Marinescu en 1925⁴.

I. « Nous appartenons à Byzance »⁵ ou l'appétence pour l'histoire byzantine

La phrase complète de Iorga, aux deux-tiers de son discours, est formulée ainsi : « par tous ces points nous appartenons à Byzance, et nous pouvons offrir un apport aux études byzantines représentées aujourd'hui avec tant d'éclat par les cinq grandes écoles : de la France, de l'Angleterre, de la Russie, de l'Allemagne et de l'Italie, auxquelles s'ajoutent, en dehors de nos efforts modestes, aussi les contributions belge et catalane dans ce domaine, et celles de la Grèce, de la Yougoslavie, de la Hongrie, de la Tchécoslovaquie et de la Bulgarie »⁶. Un lien direct est donc établi entre la réunion de ce congrès, le potentiel de la contribution roumaine aux études byzantines, et l'appartenance à Byzance d'un « nous » dont se réclame et dans lequel s'inclut Iorga : ce « nous » désigne certes le peuple roumain, puisque c'est de lui qu'il est question dans le contexte des deux pages précédentes, mais pas seulement, comme on va le voir. Il faut examiner d'abord quels sont les « points » qu'il vient juste auparavant d'énumérer comme constitutifs de l'héritage byzantin. Ils sont au nombre de trois : on trouve « ce bon ordre romain », qui correspond au droit romain ; « la perpétuation de l'idée impériale » ; et un « art » résultant d'une synthèse orientale⁷.

Ce sont donc là pour lui les trois caractéristiques les plus importantes transmises par la culture byzantine. L'art⁸ auquel il se réfère est celui des églises villageoises roumaines, qui ne sont pas issues du modèle basilical, tout de marbre et de mosaïques d'or, ce qu'il assimile au « luxe romain », mais qui reproduisent l'église monastique de type athonite, sans « prétention », la modeste chapelle qu'on trouve dans les villages et les villes de Roumanie. Le droit⁹ est un deuxième pilier de cet héritage, mais là encore, selon Iorga, il ne se retrouve pas dans sa forme pure, mais ne subsiste que mélangé au droit traditionnel roumain coutumier qui remonte aux populations autochtones pré-romaines – mais Iorga ne parle à cet endroit que des Thraco-Illyres,

⁴ « Discours d'ouverture de Nicolae Iorga », p. 11-15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12 : « Cet art qui s'était formé par la collaboration en Orient de l'idée romaine avec toutes les civilisations et toutes les énergies ». Ces trois points sont un peu développés ensuite, *ibid.*, p. 12-13.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13 : « L'art religieux, qui, sauf de rares exceptions – comme je l'ai dit – abandonnant le type de la basilique à transepts et à galeries pour acclimater celui de l'église monastique de l'Athos, devint peu à peu, avec des éléments pris au fond local, une création mi-paysanne, adaptée aux villages et aux bourgades ». Voir aussi *ibid.*, p. 12.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13 : « les principes des législations byzantines pénétrèrent profondément cette société et elles fusionnèrent avec la coutume archaïque ».

pas des Daces ni des Gètes¹⁰. Ce droit qu'il qualifie de « mixte » ne serait pas un droit écrit¹¹, mais seulement « les principes des législations byzantines » qui auraient fusionné avec les coutumes. Le troisième élément relève de la culture politique, c'est l'affirmation de la survie de l'idée impériale, dont on sait l'usage qu'a fait Iorga dans *Byzance après Byzance*¹². Le système politique byzantin¹³ transcende ce qu'il appelle « l'Empire des Rhomées », Rhomées traduisant dans cette expression le nom Ῥωμαῖοι : Iorga reprend peut-être ici ce nom propre à son prédécesseur Gheorghe Șincai, qui refusait de désigner les habitants de l'Empire byzantin comme des Romains¹⁴ – écho intéressant d'une problématique redevenue très contemporaine¹⁵. Il s'agit certes d'une forme politique impériale, mais c'est en fait bien plus : elle « s'est étendue sur toutes les formations politiques similaires » – on pense volontiers aux empires bulgare et serbe –, « qu'elles aient appartenu d'une façon ou d'une autre aux basileis » – donc des réalités politiques conservant un lien même très lâche et lointain avec le système impérial. Il semble chercher à décrire les traces rémanentes d'une culture impériale même après la disparition du ou des empires, peut-être ce que nous pourrions qualifier aujourd'hui d'imaginaire politique impérial, qui façonne dans la très longue durée les modes d'exercice du pouvoir politique.

Les trois éléments dont il parle ne subsistent donc qu'à l'état de traces, des traces qui ont subi de telles transformations qu'elles sont même difficiles à repérer et à isoler de ce qui s'y est agrégé par la suite. Malgré, ou peut-être même à cause de

¹⁰ *Ibid.* : « il remonte sans doute aux institutions primitives des Thraco-Illyres ».

¹¹ Iorga évoque une controverse à propos de l'existence ou non d'un droit écrit sous le règne du prince de Moldavie Alexandre I^{er}, entre 1400 et 1432 : « on a prétendu pendant longtemps que la Moldavie d'Alexandre le Bon a eu au xv^e siècle des lois écrites venant de Byzance » (*ibid.*, p. 13). Iorga fait probablement ici allusion au manuel de droit le plus répandu en Moldavie, à savoir la traduction slave du *Syntagma* de Matthieu Blastarès. D'après les recherches récentes de V. Alexandrov, les manuscrits du *Syntagma* produits en Moldavie sont en effet postérieurs. Le plus ancien témoin, réalisé au monastère de Neamț, remonte au règne d'Étienne le Grand (1457-1503), puisqu'il est daté de 1474, suivi de peu par le témoin du monastère de Putna, daté de 1475 : voir V. Alexandrov, *The Syntagma of Matthew Blastares: the destiny of a Byzantine legal code among the Orthodox Slavs and Romanians, 14th-17th centuries*, Frankfurt a. M., 2012, p. 99-100 et 200-201. Il n'est cependant pas impossible que d'autres codes de droit, par exemple le *Nomocanon* de saint Sava, aient pu circuler jusqu'en Moldavie au xiv^e et au début du xv^e siècle : *ibid.*, p. 18-30.

¹² N. Iorga, *Byzance après Byzance. Continuation de L'Histoire de la vie byzantine*, Bucarest, 1935.

¹³ « Discours d'ouverture de Nicolae Iorga », p. 14 : « Byzance est quelque chose qui s'est formée dans l'Empire des Rhomées, qui s'est étendue sur toutes les formations politiques similaires, qu'elles aient appartenu d'une façon ou d'une autre aux basileis, mais quelque chose qui existe par elle-même, après la déchéance et la mort de l'Empire dans lequel et par lequel la forme impériale de Byzance a pris naissance ».

¹⁴ N.-Ș. Tanașoca, « Byzance dans la conscience historique... », p. 272.

¹⁵ Voir A. Kaldellis, « From "Empire of the Greeks" to "Byzantium". The Politics of a Modern Paradigm Shift », dans N. Aschenbrenner et J. Ransohoff (éd.), *The Invention of Byzantium in Early Modern Europe*, Washington, D.C., 2021, p. 349-367.

leur caractère un peu vague, presque évanescent, Iorga affirme ces reliquats comme un héritage essentiel. Essentiel en premier lieu pour les Roumains, comme tout son discours vise à le montrer, mais aussi pour les « autres héritiers byzantins ». Ces autres héritiers ne sont pas nommés, mais rassemblés sous la formule générique de « toutes les chrétientés d'Orient »¹⁶. Pourtant on lit ensuite avec surprise que les héritiers sont aussi les Européens de l'Ouest : « les Occidentaux, auxquels les Roumains spécialement sont liés par de si nombreuses et importantes attaches, ont dans leur propre histoire, plus qu'on ne le croit habituellement, des chapitres purement byzantins »¹⁷. Est-ce juste une formule destinée à flatter ses hôtes français, belges, italiens et anglo-saxons, une *captatio benevolentiae* au seuil d'un congrès international ? Peut-être, mais la suite du discours permet de penser que cette affirmation va plus loin : Iorga parle juste après de la « grande unité historique que nous avons trop longtemps séparée par nos délimitations et dans laquelle cette nouvelle évolution de l'Antiquité classique, de Rome et du christianisme a une si large part ». Byzance donc comme le réceptacle du classicisme, de la romanité et du christianisme...

Le rapprochement de ces trois éléments sonne comme un écho familier. Les trois strates de Iorga sont identiques à ceux de la célèbre définition que Paul Valéry donne de l'Europe : « Toute race ou toute terre qui a été successivement romanisée, christianisée et soumise, quant à l'esprit, à la discipline des Grecs, est absolument européenne »¹⁸. Or Valéry s'exprimait ainsi devant les étudiants de l'université de Zurich en 1922 dans une conférence intitulée « La crise de l'esprit européen ». Il semble que, sans peut-être connaître le texte de Valéry, Iorga dans son discours valorise à son tour cet héritage de l'Empire gréco-romain christianisé en tant qu'il est commun à toute l'Europe. C'est pour sa dimension de creuset culturel que Byzance intéresse Iorga, parce que cet objet historique permet de penser une synthèse, tout particulièrement la synthèse européenne, quelques années après la fin de la première guerre mondiale, alors même que les tensions entre les pays d'Europe restent aiguës, y compris dans la vie académique¹⁹.

Le temps de Iorga est indéniablement celui de la longue durée dans sa conception de la sédimentation historique et de la survie des traces qui forment un héritage. S'il

¹⁶ « Discours d'ouverture de Nicolae Iorga », p. 14 : « Et, comme notre territoire est plus étendu que celui des autres héritiers byzantins [...], comme nous nous sommes trouvés aussi sous l'influence des courants vivifiants venant en même temps de la Pologne, de la Hongrie, de l'Italie, génoise, vénitienne, insulaire, nous avons pu offrir, pendant cinq siècles, dans des conditions plus larges et plus variées, l'image de ce que Byzance a transmis à toutes les chrétientés de l'Orient ».

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁸ P. Valéry, « Note (ou l'Européen) », *Revue Universelle*, 1924, repris dans *id.*, *Variété I, Essais quasi politiques*, Paris, 1957, p. 988-1014 (« La crise de l'esprit », deuxième lettre).

¹⁹ Sur l'absence des byzantinistes allemands, autrichiens et russes au Congrès, je renvoie à 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, ici p. 232-234.

est hautement sensible à la persistance de ce passé byzantin dans le présent, Iorga l'est aussi à l'extension de l'influence byzantine dans l'espace. Considérer Byzance comme une réminiscence permet de la retrouver partout, dans toutes les régions romanisées, et d'ailleurs même au-delà, en jouant sur l'idée que la frontière danubienne a toujours été poreuse²⁰. Le « nous » de Iorga peut donc être compris à plusieurs échelles : c'est un « nous » roumain qui revendique sa pleine appartenance à la culture byzantine ; mais c'est aussi un « nous » sud-est européen : la construction intellectuelle par Iorga de cet ensemble géographique repose aussi sur l'héritage byzantin et s'oppose à l'idée plus restrictive de Balkans, dans laquelle il ne se reconnaît guère²¹ ; enfin c'est un « nous » européen, qui plaide pour la collaboration de savants de toute l'Europe autour de ce que Iorga considère comme un héritage commun à eux tous.

Il faut alors poser la question de l'exclusivité européenne de cet héritage : quelle y est la place de l'islam et des Ottomans ? Iorga considère la culture politique byzantine, cet imaginaire impérial, comme le résultat d'une synthèse qui va au-delà de l'Europe romanisée, puisqu'elle intègre dès l'origine des éléments qu'il qualifie tantôt d'orientaux, tantôt d'asiatiques, faisant par là référence notamment à l'Empire perse. Dans son discours de 1924, il n'y fait allusion que fugitivement, en affirmant que Byzance « appartient simultanément à toutes les civilisations asiatiques, à toute la pensée orientale, à tout l'apport chrétien, à toute la discipline romaine »²². Mais il a développé par ailleurs de manière beaucoup plus approfondie l'idée que la forme impériale byzantine reposait sur deux sources, celle de la civilisation romaine et celle des grands empires d'Asie²³. En aval, il n'a donc éprouvé aucune difficulté à

²⁰ Thème cher à l'historiographie roumaine puisqu'il permet d'inclure le sud de la Roumanie, ou même la Roumanie tout entière, dans l'espace romanisé : voir par exemple O. J. Schmitt, « 100 ans de recherches sud-est européennes en Roumanie », dans A. Timotin (éd.), *Un siècle d'études sud-est européennes en Roumanie*, Brăila, 2019, p. 13-25, ici p. 18.

²¹ La distinction entre « Balkans » et « Sud-Est européen » est bien analysée par Schmitt, « 100 ans de recherches... », p. 15-16. Iorga a fondé en 1914 un Institut d'Études Sud-Est Européennes qui prenait en compte l'histoire d'une région entière, une large zone de l'Europe s'étendant de la Méditerranée à la mer Noire, incluant notamment la Grèce. Le dénominateur commun de cette région n'était donc ni linguistique ni ethnique. Iorga ne rejetait pourtant pas complètement l'idée d'un espace géographique balcanique, comme en témoigne son ouvrage intitulé *Formes byzantines et réalités balcaniques*, Paris, 1922. Son hostilité à cette notion est en partie due au fait que l'Institut qu'il avait créé s'est trouvé à la fin des années 1930 concurrencé par l'Institut de recherches balcaniques, fondé par Victor Papacostea en 1937, lequel a édité la revue *Balcania* entre 1938 et 1947, date à laquelle les deux instituts ont été supprimés par le régime communiste. Cette rivalité s'est par la suite estompée, au point que Papacostea a même été à l'origine de la refondation de l'Institut d'Études Sud-Est Européennes en 1963. Je remercie Andrei Timotin pour toutes ces précisions.

²² « Discours d'ouverture de Nicolae Iorga », p. 14.

²³ Voir en particulier N. Iorga, « Y a-t-il eu un Moyen-Âge byzantin ? », in id., *Études byzantines*, I, Bucarest, 1939, p. 301-311, ici p. 301 et 304 ; id., « L'homme byzantin », *ibid.*, p. 315-325, ici p. 323-325. Voir aussi id., « Deux conceptions historiques », dans M. Berza, *Nicolae Iorga...*, p. 27-35, ici p. 32.

reconnaître l'Empire ottoman comme lui aussi héritier de Byzance, ou plus exactement comme le remplaçant terme à terme de l'Empire byzantin. Il a pour cela deux formules frappantes : « ces Néo-Byzantins de l'Islam que furent les Turcs ottomans »²⁴, et de manière au premier abord plus obscure pour parler de ce qui suit la chute de la deuxième Rome : la « Rome touranienne »²⁵. « Touranien » signifie de langue turque, selon une classification linguistique, mais aussi ethnique, élaborée au XIX^e siècle, qui fait des Touraniens l'ensemble des peuples turco-mongols, possiblement liés aussi aux peuples finno-ougriens²⁶. Byzance – à entendre en tant qu'héritage culturel et non pas en tant que structure étatique – apparaît donc comme ce qui permet à Iorga de concevoir un objet synthétique, à la fois oriental et occidental²⁷, dont le centre géographique se trouverait en Europe, voire en Europe du sud-est, et dont l'apparition chronologique remonterait au Moyen-Âge, mais outrepassant ces limites spatiales et temporelles, en somme un cadre de pensée très vaste qui lui permet d'exposer sa conception de l'histoire.

II. « Que peut l'histoire ? »²⁸ ou la construction d'une connaissance scientifique des civilisations

Son discours de 1924 est évidemment un texte de circonstance, une évocation bien plus qu'une tentative de démonstration scientifique. La notion de science est pourtant très présente aussi chez Iorga, et il se réclame bien d'une certaine conception de l'histoire comme une science.

Dans ce court discours, Iorga évoque en passant, à propos du droit agraire dans les pays roumains, « une énorme quantité de semblables documents [= archives de propriétés foncières] [qui] a passé entre mes mains pendant plus de trente ans de travail »²⁹. La méthode de Iorga dans ses ouvrages d'érudition consiste en effet à relever, classer et commenter des informations historiques tirées de documents d'archives, et on ne peut mettre en doute la qualité de son rapport aux sources, dont il avait une connaissance exceptionnelle. Ses travaux en témoignent abondamment, il suffit de citer les six volumes des *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades*

²⁴ Id., « Y a-t-il eu un Moyen-Âge byzantin ? », p. 310. Mais dans son discours de 1924, l'Islam, déconnecté de sa composante ottomane, est présenté de manière moins favorable : « invasion des barbares » (« Discours d'ouverture... », p. 11) ; « l'Islamisme patriarcal, simpliste et naïf des Arabes » (*ibid.*, p. 12).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

²⁶ Voir M. Laruelle, « La question du "touranisme" des Russes », *Cahiers du monde russe* 45, n° 1-2, 2004, p. 241-266, ici p. 243 (la problématique du « touranisme » russe ne semble pas présente chez Iorga, du moins pas dans le discours ici étudié).

²⁷ L'idée d'Eurasie semble elle aussi absente chez Iorga : voir note précédente.

²⁸ N. Iorga, « Deux conceptions historiques », p. 27.

²⁹ « Discours d'ouverture de Nicolae Iorga », p. 13.

au *xv^e siècle*³⁰ qui sont encore aujourd'hui une mine d'informations. De ce point de vue, son rapport à l'histoire peut être qualifié de positiviste, par opposition à ceux qu'il pourfend pour leur goût du « pittoresque », de « l'exotisme », ou leur approche romantique et littéraire du Moyen-Âge³¹. Non que Iorga n'ait pas lui-même écrit aussi de la littérature, mais il ne mélange pas les genres.

Sa conception de l'histoire est riche et, comme il convient à un esprit universaliste, nourrie de philosophie : en témoigne en particulier son discours de réception à l'Académie Roumaine, prononcé le 17 mai 1911 et publié sous le titre « Deux conceptions historiques »³². Il est cependant avare de références, de sorte qu'il n'est pas si facile de comprendre quelles sont les filiations intellectuelles qu'il revendique³³. Celles-ci sont roumaines, en la personne de son maître Alexandru Xenopol à l'université de Iași dans les années 1880, même s'il s'est rapidement éloigné des conceptions historiques de ce dernier au profit d'une approche beaucoup plus généraliste ; françaises entre 1890 et 1892 – il obtient le diplôme de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études en 1892, avec un mémoire sur Philippe de Mézières ; et allemandes – il a soutenu sous la direction de Karl Lamprecht une thèse de doctorat à Leipzig en 1893 sur Thomas de Saluces, l'auteur du *Chevalier errant*.

On peut relever une quasi-absence, à première vue, de lien intellectuel avec la Russie. Il a très certainement été marqué par certaines influences allemandes, en particulier celle de son maître Lamprecht, pionnier de l'histoire culturelle : celui-ci est peut-être à l'origine de la volonté de Iorga de prendre en compte toutes les dimensions du vécu des populations qu'il étudie : arts, sciences, vie religieuse, coutumes, lois, etc.³⁴ Du côté français, quelques noms peuvent être cités : Iorga fait une référence élogieuse à Fustel de Coulanges dans son article « Moyen Âge et Antiquité »³⁵, et

³⁰ N. Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au xv^e siècle*, Paris – Bucarest, 1899-1916 (6 vol.).

³¹ Id., « Deux conceptions historiques », p. 29 ; id., « Moyen Âge et Antiquité », dans M. Berza (éd.), *Nicolae Iorga...*, p. 39-46, ici p. 39. Voir aussi, à propos de *L'Histoire de la vie byzantine* de Iorga, le jugement de V. Laurent, « Nicolas Iorga... », p. 6 : « Cet unique livre, tout de synthèse, a beau multiplier les vues originales et découvrir des horizons insoupçonnés, sans ressembler en rien aux gracieux et inutiles in-douze que de grands dilettantes ont écrits pour leur délassement, il ne saurait prétendre à être fondamental ».

³² N. Iorga, « Deux conceptions historiques », p. 27.

³³ On trouvera beaucoup d'éléments d'analyse sur ses filiations intellectuelles dans D. M. Pippidi (éd.), *Nicolae Iorga...*

³⁴ Voir N.-Ș. Tanașoca, « Byzance dans la conscience... », p. 280. Cette approche n'a pas été sans influencer aussi l'École des Annales.

³⁵ À propos du Moyen-Âge en tant que période nouvelle qui succède à l'Antiquité, Iorga écrit : « Signifie-t-il une révolution, comme on l'a cru longtemps, même après la critique, si pleine de verve et d'un si haut bon sens, d'un Fustel de Coulanges ? » (N. Iorga, « Moyen Âge et Antiquité », p. 40). Il fait certainement référence à la critique approfondie des sources dans N.-D. Fustel de Coulanges, *La Cité antique*, Paris, 1864.

cite en une occasion ses maîtres parisiens, Gabriel Monod, l'abbé Duchesne, Victor Duruy notamment³⁶. Gabriel Monod fut le fondateur de la *Revue historique* en 1876 et l'un des fers de lance, pour la discipline historique, de l'école positiviste, ou école méthodique³⁷, elle-même en partie héritière de la pensée d'Auguste Comte, fondateur de la sociologie, et de l'approche historique d'Ernest Renan et de Numa Fustel de Coulanges, déjà cité. Ce milieu intellectuel très fortement lié à l'École Pratique des Hautes Études, où Iorga suivait des cours³⁸, mettait l'accent sur l'étude systématique des sources, non seulement les textes littéraires, mais aussi et surtout les documents d'archive, en vue de la reconstruction méthodique et la plus exhaustive possible du passé. Parmi les byzantinistes français de cette époque, celui qui se trouvait dans cette mouvance était Alfred Rambaud : il s'intéressait à l'œuvre de Xenopol au point d'écrire la préface de la traduction française de l'*Histoire des Roumains* en 1896³⁹. Selon Stamatopoulos, l'idée de la continuité entre les Empires byzantin et ottoman développée par Rambaud pourrait avoir influencé Iorga⁴⁰.

On trouve chez Iorga, une génération après Monod, une grande confiance dans la possibilité d'établir des faits historiques en étudiant les sources, de la même manière qu'un biologiste mène ses expériences sur le vivant. Les métaphores empruntées à la biologie ne sont pas rares sous la plume de Iorga, par exemple celle-ci dans notre discours de 1924 : « Il y a eu un organisme byzantin aux lignes directrices très claires, mais toujours ouvert à des accroissements, toujours sujet à des changements qui ne dérangent pas ses lignes. [...] L'esprit byzantin, tout de synthèse en mouvement, survécit »⁴¹. Il parle ailleurs de « faits organiques »⁴², conférant volontiers aux objets historiques une vie, un esprit, une énergie, tous termes qu'il faut probablement comprendre dans une telle analogie biologique.

Il faut donc le ranger dans ce courant positiviste issu des sciences naturelles – représenté par la figure de Darwin, mais aussi par celle de Claude Bernard, dont Iorga évoque le nom à propos de Paris⁴³. Sa démarche est celle d'un savant doué d'esprit de

³⁶ N. Iorga, « Paris », in M. Berza (éd.), *Nicolae Iorga...*, p. 158-160, ici p. 159.

³⁷ Voir G. Bourdè et H. Martin, *Les écoles historiques*, Paris, 1989, p. 181-214.

³⁸ Iorga a publié un article dans la *Revue historique* : « Une collection de lettres de Philippe de Maizières (Notice sur le ms. 499 de la bibl. de l'Arsenal) », *Revue historique* 49, n° 1, 1892, p. 39-57 ; 49, n° 2, 1892, p. 306-322. Sur la genèse de cet article, voir I. Ionașcu, « N. Iorga, éditeur de sources historiques », dans D. M. Pippidi (éd.), *Nicolae Iorga...*, p. 85-113, en particulier p. 87-90 : Iorga dit avoir trouvé à l'École Pratique des Hautes Études à Paris une « école d'érudition ».

³⁹ A.-D. Xenopol, *Histoire des Roumains de la Dacie trajane depuis les origines jusqu'à l'union des principautés en 1859*, avec une préface par A. Rambaud, Paris, 1896, p. I-XXXV.

⁴⁰ D. Stamatopoulos, *Byzantium after the Nation...*, p. 321.

⁴¹ « Discours d'ouverture de Nicolae Iorga », p. 14.

⁴² N. Iorga, « Deux conceptions historiques », p. 28.

⁴³ Id., « Paris », p. 159. Cette ambition de faire de l'histoire une science exacte sur le modèle des sciences expérimentales, particulièrement de la médecine telle qu'elle était pratiquée par Claude

synthèse, qui recherche des « lois » de l'évolution historique, terme récurrent dans son texte le plus théorique⁴⁴. L'histoire peut devenir un principe explicatif de tout ce qui concerne les transformations de la nation, conçue justement comme un tout organique et interdépendant, constitué d'une vie collective propre⁴⁵. La nation n'est pas le peuple, au sens racial du terme, et en cela aussi Iorga apparaît plus français qu'allemand ou que russe. Il s'éloigne d'une conception génétique de la nation et de toute forme d'ethnogenèse, y compris fondée sur l'élément dace⁴⁶ : « Le mot peuple revêt, de nos jours, une toute autre signification que jadis. Le peuple n'est plus ce bloc de marbre blanc pur, unitaire, paisible, fermé à l'invasion de racines étrangères, et sur la tête duquel le vent n'emporte pas le moindre grain de poussière vagabonde ; unité naturelle, il mène une vie organique semblable à celle des individus. Il croît grâce aux apports qui lui viennent du dehors, se purifie, fait peau neuve en se débarrassant de ses scories, meurt pour ressusciter, vieillit et rajeunit tour à tour »⁴⁷.

Il en découle des phénomènes de contacts déterminants, d'hybridation, même s'il n'utilise pas le terme : « l'histoire d'un peuple, loin de frôler celle des autres par quelque mention fugace ou de brefs chapitres consacrés à l'interpénétration de leurs influences, se fixe et se perpétue dans ce milieu naturel qu'est l'universalité humaine et dont elle procède essentiellement »⁴⁸. Pour Iorga, la seule démarche valable est celle qui se donne pour objectif la construction de l'histoire universelle, ou « histoire des civilisations », les deux expressions étant très fréquentes chez lui : à la fin de son discours de 1924, le congrès est ainsi appelé à représenter « un pas important vers la réalisation de cette nouvelle et vraie histoire des civilisations »⁴⁹. Sa conception des civilisations reste très datée : pour lui, cette notion est clairement opposée aux « barbares », selon une hiérarchie de valeur par ailleurs conforme à celle de ses contemporains. Mais son idéal d'histoire universelle qui inclut l'étude des contacts entre plusieurs sphères culturelles n'est pas si éloigné de l'ambition actuelle de la *global history*.

Bernard, était celle d'Hippolyte Taine, l'un des inspirateurs de l'école méthodique en histoire : voir G. Bourdieu et H. Martin, *Les écoles historiques*, p. 152.

⁴⁴ N. Iorga, « Deux conceptions historiques », p. 29. Par exemple, pour justifier qu'il n'y ait pas de clivage entre histoire politique et histoire culturelle, l'argument de Iorga est exprimé ainsi : « Il n'est qu'une seule évolution d'où découlent toutes les manifestations de la vie ».

⁴⁵ Par exemple N. Iorga, « Deux conceptions historiques », p. 30 : « Toute nation représente une énergie issue de sa propre source, revêt un caractère particulier et remplit une mission spéciale. On ne saurait, pour la mieux étudier, isoler de façon étanche quelque'une de ces sources d'énergie ; d'ailleurs, le procédé serait malhabile ».

⁴⁶ D. Stamatopoulos, *Byzantium after the Nation...*, p. 317, n. 37.

⁴⁷ N. Iorga, « Deux conceptions historiques », p. 28.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴⁹ « Discours d'ouverture de Nicolae Iorga », p. 15.

On a peut-être finalement la clé de la difficulté initiale à considérer Iorga comme un byzantiniste⁵⁰. Il ne pouvait pas lui-même se définir ainsi, ayant un appétit historique trop large pour se limiter à un objet circonscrit. Mais Byzance est l'une des « traces » qui accompagnent sans cesse sa réflexion, selon le terme utilisé si souvent par Iorga comme aussi par Langlois et Seignobos. S'il ne s'intéresse guère à l'histoire byzantine pour elle-même, il se passionne pour la rémanence de sa culture et se fait fort d'en identifier les marques dans la Roumanie de son temps, si bien que le passé byzantin constitue en réalité pour lui un peu plus qu'une simple réminiscence.

Son très fort investissement dans l'organisation du congrès de 1924 résulte en partie d'une conjoncture favorable, dans la mesure où il a vu là l'occasion de mettre à l'honneur les historiens roumains et la Roumanie elle-même, méconnue des savants occidentaux. Cependant, les congrès ont ensuite continué de rythmer le développement de ses travaux en le rapprochant peut-être des préoccupations byzantines. Sa contribution « Y a-t-il eu un Moyen-Âge byzantin ? » fut prononcée à Belgrade lors du deuxième congrès en 1927⁵¹ ; même s'il ne se rendit pas à Sofia en 1934⁵², il donna une contribution à ce congrès sous le titre « Byzance après Byzance. Considérations générales pour le Congrès d'études byzantines de Sofia »⁵³, qui n'était autre que l'introduction de son livre *Byzance après Byzance*, publié en 1935 à Bucarest.

⁵⁰ Voir en particulier la biographie de Iorga par Laurent, qui explique dès son entrée en matière avoir été piqué par la remarque d'un ami disant : « Alors Iorga, un byzantiniste ? » : V. Laurent, « Nicolas Iorga... », p. 5.

⁵¹ S. Salaville, « Le II^e Congrès international d'études byzantines à Belgrade (11-16 avril 1927) », *Échos d'Orient* 27, n°149, 1928, p. 78-110, ici p. 96.

⁵² V. Laurent, « Le IV^e Congrès des études byzantines (Sofia, 9-16 septembre 1934) », *Échos d'Orient* 33, n°176, 1934, p. 428-442, ici p. 429.

⁵³ Publié sous forme de plaquette à Bucarest en 1934.

*La découverte
des patrimoines
artistiques byzantins*



1924-2024 : cent ans au Louvre¹

Jannic Durand et Maximilien Durand

Abstract: This article traces a century of developments at the Louvre concerning the study, display, and institutional recognition of Byzantine and Eastern Christian art. Beginning with the absence of any Louvre involvement at the first International Congress of Byzantine Studies in 1924, it examines how scholarly advances, major exhibitions, and internal reforms gradually reshaped the museum's approach. Key milestones include the 1931 Byzantine Art exhibition, the short-lived Section of Christian Antiquities (1954–1969), and later curatorial initiatives that expanded research, acquisitions, and international collaborations. The creation in 2022 of the Department of Byzantine and Eastern Christian Arts marks the culmination of this trajectory, bringing together some 20,000 works previously dispersed across eight departments. The article details the department's scientific priorities, acquisition strategy, archival projects, and global partnerships, as well as the forthcoming 2,500-m² museographic circuit that aims to articulate the universal vocation of the Louvre through dialogue between civilizations.

Keywords: Byzantine art, Louvre Museum, museum history, Eastern Christian heritage, curatorial practices

Dans l'éditorial du numéro d'automne de *Grande Galerie. Le Journal du Louvre*, paru peu après la tenue à Paris des Jeux olympiques d'été de 2024 et quelques jours seulement avant la célébration à Bucarest du centenaire du premier Congrès international des études byzantines, Laurence des Cars, présidente-directrice du musée du Louvre, s'exprimait en ces termes :

¹ Cette contribution reprend les termes mêmes de l'intervention des auteurs au Centenaire des études byzantines des 4 et 5 septembre 2024. Les auteurs tiennent ici à exprimer leurs plus vifs remerciements aux organisateurs de cette rencontre et, en particulier, à Andrei Timotin et à nos collègues du Musée national d'art de Roumanie.

Les Jeux olympiques et paralympiques auront empreint d'émotions indélébiles le domaine national du Louvre, magnifié aux yeux de milliards de spectateurs. Au cœur de l'événement, le Louvre est apparu plus que jamais comme un musée global. De fait, son échelle est planétaire. Ses collections, provenant du monde entier, parlent au monde entier. L'histoire qu'elles éclairent est celle de notre humanité commune. Leur message paraît universel. Universel ? Contrairement à une idée trop fréquemment répandue, le terme ne qualifie pourtant pas le Louvre depuis ses origines. Si sa dimension mondiale est bien envisagée dès l'époque révolutionnaire [...], la notion ne lui est réellement appliquée qu'au début du XXI^e siècle. C'est la création du département des Arts de l'Islam et, plus encore, celle du Louvre-Lens et du Louvre Abu Dhabi qui le feront se réclamer publiquement des musées universels. L'époque est alors à la défense de ce modèle qui réunit quelques-unes des plus grandes institutions muséales à travers le monde. Depuis, l'utopie originelle, certes généreuse, a montré ses limites. Le mot, comme la notion qu'il recouvre, nourrissent de profonds débats. Je ne crois pas, pour ma part, que le Louvre soit un musée universel, au sens que l'on donne désormais à cette catégorie : ses collections, par leurs limites intrinsèques, ne le permettent pas. Le Louvre n'a pas, aujourd'hui, de visée totalisante ; il n'a pas non plus de volonté expansionniste au-delà de ses propres domaines. Je suis en revanche convaincue que le Louvre possède une vocation universelle. La distinction n'est pas rhétorique ou sémantique, elle est au cœur de sa définition. Cela signifie faire dialoguer les œuvres, les cultures, les époques et les perspectives, au-delà de toute limite temporelle ou géographique. Cela impose aussi de toujours s'adresser au plus grand nombre, le plus généreusement possible ; de mettre le musée à hauteur du visiteur pour le rendre accessible à chacun, quelles que soient sa langue, son origine ou son expérience préalable.²

Ainsi Laurence des Cars distingue-t-elle un « musée universel », qui aurait pour objet de documenter systématiquement l'ensemble des civilisations du passé, et un « musée à vocation universelle », c'est-à-dire un musée qui propose un nouveau regard sur les collections.

En ce qui concerne la civilisation et l'art byzantins, le cas du Louvre en offre une belle illustration. Présent dès l'origine du Muséum central des Arts en 1793 à travers les incomparables vestiges des anciens trésors ecclésiastiques de Saint-Denis et de la Sainte-Chapelle, et représenté par des ensembles qui font de la collection du musée une référence, l'art byzantin n'a pourtant, jusqu'à une date toute récente, pas eu de parcours dédié dans les salles du musée, ni même une visibilité digne des chefs-d'œuvre qu'il abrite.

Laurence des Cars, en 2021, a annoncé dès sa nomination son souhait de créer au Louvre un neuvième département de conservation dédié aux Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient. En 2022, le décret du 3 octobre publié le lendemain au *Journal officiel de la République française* créait définitivement ce département et l'instaurait « grand département patrimonial », avec des compétences réglementaires

² L. des Cars, « Éditorial. Au sujet de l'universel », *Grande Galerie. Le Journal du Louvre* 68, 2024, p. 7.

nationales³. Cette création doit nécessairement s'accompagner de celle d'un parcours muséographique dédié. Il prendra place sur 2 500 mètres carrés, au sein de l'aile la plus visitée du musée du Louvre, l'aile Denon, où est aujourd'hui exposée la Joconde.

C'est bien la vocation universelle réaffirmée par Laurence des Cars que porte désormais ce département, en ne limitant pas son champ au seul Empire byzantin mais en intégrant également le monde slave, le Caucase, les pays du Levant et l'Afrique chrétienne sur une période chronologique courant jusqu'en 1923. Ce projet scientifique et muséographique, en plein cœur du Louvre, aura également la particularité de dialoguer étroitement avec les départements antiques du musée, avec celui des Arts de l'Islam et avec les départements modernes occidentaux de peinture, de sculpture et d'objets d'art.

Par son ampleur et cette volonté de dialogue entre les collections du musée, le projet du Louvre offre ainsi pour la première fois une place privilégiée à la civilisation byzantine et à celles des chrétientés orientales. Il aura donc fallu attendre deux cent trente ans depuis la création du musée du Louvre, et cent ans depuis le premier Congrès international des études byzantines, pour voir advenir cette création. Ce sont précisément ces cent dernières années que notre intervention commune se propose d'explorer⁴.

*

Au premier Congrès international des études byzantines organisé à Bucarest en 1924, si la France est bien représentée, le Louvre, lui, brille par son absence. Aucune autre institution muséale française, d'ailleurs, n'est présente à cet événement, ni non plus aux premiers Congrès qui ont suivi, à Belgrade, Athènes ou encore Sofia. Mais il n'y a rien d'anormal ni d'étonnant au fait, puisque les études byzantines, en France, au début du XX^e siècle, ne sont pas portées par les musées.

Depuis 1924, le siècle qui a suivi le Congrès de Bucarest a vu l'essor incroyable des études byzantines et l'implication progressive des responsables de collections muséales internationales dans ce champ disciplinaire. La tenue régulière des Congrès

³ Décret n° 2022-1285 du 3 octobre 2022 portant création du département des Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient au sein de l'Établissement public du musée du Louvre, publié au *Journal officiel de la République* du 4 octobre 2022.

⁴ Quelques éléments de l'histoire de la constitution de la collection byzantine du Louvre ont été évoqués dans J. Durand et M. Durand, « Le département des Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient au musée du Louvre », *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, comptes rendus des séances* 3 (juillet-octobre), 2023, p. 893-918. Voir aussi J. Durand, « A Little-Known Chapter in the History of the Byzantine Collections of the Musée du Louvre », dans J. Ball, Ch. Maranci, B. Ratliff et Th. K. Thomas (éd.), *Beyond Byzantium: Essays on the Medieval Worlds of Eastern Christianity and Their Arts. In Honor of Helen C. Evans*, à paraître. On signalera également le mémoire de Master 2 (sous la direction de M. Durand et D. Piéri) soutenu à l'Université de Paris 1-Panthéon Sorbonne en 2025 par M. Bertholon, *1924-1954 : la naissance d'une spécificité byzantine au musée du Louvre*, non publié.

a favorisé cet essor et sans doute façonné et structuré en partie une approche matérielle nouvelle de la civilisation byzantine.

L'année 1924 à Paris fut marquée, comme nous le savons tous, par la tenue des Jeux olympiques d'été en juillet, auxquels participèrent notamment trente-cinq athlètes roumains et auxquels assista le prince héritier Carol. La même année, les souverains de Roumanie eux-mêmes, Ferdinand et Marie, avaient honoré Paris d'une de leurs visites en avril. Mais ils n'étaient bien sûr pas venus au Louvre. Tout au plus furent-ils reçus le 11 à l'Académie des Beaux-Arts, à laquelle la reine Marie avait été élue membre correspondant en 1918 et où il ne fut bien évidemment pas question d'études byzantines.

Au Louvre non plus, à cette date, il n'était guère question de Byzance. Pourtant, c'est précisément en 1924 que le musée s'enrichit du moulage de la Vierge découverte en 1921 au cours des fouilles effectuées sous la direction du commandant Charles-Antoine Charpy par l'armée française d'occupation sur le site de l'ancien palais et de l'ancienne église Saint-Georges des Manganes à Istanbul, offert par Halil Edehm dit Halil Bey, alors conservateur du Musée archéologique⁵. Avouons-le, cette acquisition, affectée au département des Sculptures, passe relativement inaperçue.

Pourtant, la décennie des années 1920 marque au Louvre une première prise de conscience de la singularité artistique des chrétientés orientales. L'exceptionnel ensemble lapidaire provenant du monastère de Baouît, en Moyenne-Égypte, reçu en partage de fouilles en 1903 et jamais encore présenté au public, est enfin révélé dans une salle dédiée, aménagée dans l'aile de Flore par Charles Boreux, conservateur depuis 1926 des Antiquités égyptiennes, inaugurée le 17 juillet 1929 (fig. 1)⁶. En revanche, la même année 1929, la très belle icône crétoise de saint Jean-Baptiste du début du XVI^e siècle est donnée au musée par le marchand Allan Loeb⁷, mais elle est acceptée par le département des Peintures comme un « primitif » de « l'école italienne du XIII^e siècle⁸ ».

⁵ Louvre, inv. RF 1834 : G. Bresc-Bautier (dir.), *Les sculptures européennes du musée du Louvre : Byzance, Espagne, îles Britanniques, Italie, Anciens Pays-Bas et Belgique, pays germaniques et de l'Europe de l'Est, pays scandinaves, Antiques restaurées et copies d'antiques*, Paris, 2006, p. 27, ill. 27 ; J. Durand et M. Durand, « Le département des Arts de Byzance... », p. 902, fig. 5.

⁶ Ch. Boreux, « Musée du Louvre. La salle de Baouît », *Bulletin des musées de France*, 1929, p. 1-8.

⁷ Louvre, inv. RF 2804 : N. Milovanovic, « Les icônes peintes du Louvre. Histoire d'une collection », *Revue de l'Art* 216, 2022, p. 29, 36, fig. 15.

⁸ Archives des musées nationaux, 1BB41, *Procès-verbaux du Comité consultatif*, 4 mars 1929, p. 45, et 3BB3, *Procès-verbaux du Conseil artistique*, 6 mai 1929, p. 70. Cf. J. Durand, « A Little-Known Chapter... ».



Fig. 1. Musée du Louvre. Salle de Baouït des Antiquités égyptiennes aménagée dans l'aile de Flore en 1929. © Médiathèque du Patrimoine et de la Photographie

L'individualisation de la céramique byzantine au département des Objets d'art intervient aussi à la fin des années 1920. Elle participe à l'essor des études dans ce domaine, inauguré par les publications pionnières d'Henry Wallis au début du siècle⁹ et, surtout, celles de David Talbot Rice, en particulier *Byzantine Glazed Pottery* en 1930 dont Jean-Joseph Marquet de Vasselot – conservateur du département de 1923 à 1933 – possède un exemplaire dans son bureau et dont Gaston Migeon, son prédécesseur, publie l'année même, à la veille de sa mort, un compte-rendu dans *Syria*¹⁰. En 1927, le département des Objets d'art obtient des marchands Agop et Mergueditch Indjoudjian, arméniens originaires de Kayseri installés à Paris et spécialisés dans les arts du Proche-Orient, une trentaine de « céramiques ou fragments » dont on précise qu'ils ont été « trouvés à Stamboul ». Ils sont identifiés pour la première fois comme « byzantins » et acquis à ce titre pour la collection. Ce premier enrichissement est rapidement suivi par plusieurs autres réguliers et tout aussi considérables de 1928 à 1938¹¹.

⁹ H. Wallis, *Byzantine Ceramic Art*, Londres, 1907.

¹⁰ G. Migeon, « D. Talbot Rice – Byzantine glazed pottery » [compte-rendu], *Syria* 11, n° 2, 1930, p. 195.

¹¹ Sur la constitution d'une collection de céramique byzantine au Louvre : J. Durand, avec la collaboration de D. Giovannoni et M. Fradet, « Histoire d'une collection », dans V. François (éd.), *La vaisselle de terre à Byzance. Catalogue des collections du musée du Louvre*, Paris, 2017, p. 14-35.

Un véritable tournant dans la perception de l'art byzantin au Louvre est naturellement lié, au début des années 1930, à l'exposition internationale d'Art byzantin qui se tient au musée des Arts décoratifs en 1931¹². Dans la liste des membres du Comité français d'organisation, en tête du catalogue, on retrouve plusieurs noms familiers des premiers Congrès internationaux : Charles Diehl, président, mais aussi Gabriel Millet, ou encore Louis Bréhier, mais aussi ceux de Jean-Joseph Marquet de Vasselot, Charles Boreux et Étienne Michon, tous trois conservateurs des départements des Objets d'art, des Antiquités égyptiennes et des Antiquités grecques et romaines au Louvre, ainsi que celui de Raymond Koechlin, président du Conseil des musées nationaux, et surtout ceux de Georges Salles (1889-1966) et Georges Duthuit (1891-1973), tous deux attachés au département des Objets d'art, et chevilles ouvrières du projet.

Georges Salles, co-auteur d'un catalogue des collections de l'Orient musulman au Louvre en 1928¹³, est conservateur-adjoint au département des Objets d'art de 1923 à 1932, date à laquelle il devient le premier conservateur du département des Arts asiatiques, alors détaché des Objets d'art. Quant à Georges Duthuit¹⁴, secrétaire général de l'exposition, attaché libre au département des Objets d'art dès 1925, auteur en 1926 d'un livre sur *Byzance et l'art du XII^e siècle* et d'un autre sur *La Sculpture copte* en 1931 où les reproductions sont à dessein entourées d'œuvres de la fin de l'Antiquité et des arts de l'Islam¹⁵, il a collaboré en 1929 avec Paul Vitry pour célébrer dans le *Bulletin des musées de France* l'entrée au Louvre de la collection d'objets du Moyen Âge léguée par Victor Martin Le Roy¹⁶. Ensemble, comme on sait, Duthuit et Salles publieront avec Wolfgang Fritz Volbach, en 1933, sous le titre *Art byzantin*, une sorte d'Album de l'exposition, illustré, comme le précise le titre, de « cent planches

¹² *Exposition internationale d'art byzantin. 28 mai-9 juillet 1931*, Paris, Musée des arts décoratifs, 1931, p. 9-10. Sur l'exposition, ses origines, ses organisateurs et son déroulement, voir notamment : R. Labrusse, « Modernité byzantine : l'exposition internationale d'art byzantin de 1931 à Paris », dans L. Arnoux-Farnoux et P. Kostamadaki (dir.), *Le double voyage : Paris-Athènes (1919-1939)*, Athènes, 2019, p. 221-242. Voir aussi J. Durand, « A Little-Known Chapter... ».

¹³ M.-J. Ballot et G. Salles, *Musée national du Louvre. Les collections de l'Orient musulman*, Paris, 1928.

¹⁴ R. Labrusse, « Le muséoclaste », dans Cl. Duthuit et R. Labrusse (éd.), *Autour de Georges Duthuit*, Catalogue de l'exposition d'Aix-en-Provence, Galerie d'art du Conseil général, 11 avril-22 juin 2003, Aix-en-Provence, 2003 (Cahiers d'art du Conseil général des Bouches-du-Rhône) ; id., « Dossier Georges Duthuit », *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, hors-série, novembre 2015 ; id., « Modernité byzantine... ».

¹⁵ G. Duthuit, *Byzance et l'art du XII^e siècle*, Paris, 1926 (116 p. et 16 pl.) ; id., *La Sculpture copte. Statues, bas-reliefs, masques*, Paris, 1931 (80 p. et 72 pl. hors texte). Ce dernier ouvrage « en souscription » figure parmi les deux publications signalées par un placard en pleine page en tête du catalogue de l'exposition.

¹⁶ « La donation Martin Le Roy. Sculpture, orfèvrerie, bronzes du Moyen Âge », *Bulletin des musées de France*, 1^{ère} année, n° 10 (octobre), 1929, p. 220-232.

reproduisant un grand nombre de pièces choisies parmi les plus représentatives des diverses tendances¹⁷ ».

Le Louvre – les départements des Antiquités égyptiennes, des Antiquités grecques et romaines, des Sculptures et des Objets d'art¹⁸ – a prêté à cette exposition une centaine d'œuvres – ivoires, cristaux de roche, pierres dures, textiles coptes, objets d'orfèvrerie, bronzes, sculptures en marbre et en porphyre, verrerie, céramiques, mosaïques, et un manuscrit¹⁹ – sur près d'un millier. Le chiffre en soi – indépendamment d'attributions à l'art byzantin un peu larges à nos yeux contemporains – est signifiant de la prise de conscience qui est en train de s'effectuer.

Presque au même moment, au Louvre, commence le grand chantier de restructuration et de modernisation de l'ensemble du musée, envisagé dès 1926 et progressivement mis en œuvre à partir de 1929 sous l'égide du directeur des musées nationaux Henri Verne. Les grands travaux culminent entre 1932 et 1938.

Au rez-de-chaussée de l'aile sud de la Cour carrée, une « salle chrétienne » ou « des Antiquités chrétiennes », classées « suivant leur provenance (Gaule, Italie, Tunisie, Algérie, Égypte, Grèce et Asie mineure), créée vers 1900 pour remplacer l'ancienne Galerie d'Alger, est entièrement remaniée et augmentée d'un nouvel espace en 1934 pour regrouper « sarcophages, bas-reliefs, inscriptions » et rendre compte de l'introduction du christianisme dans l'empire romain (fig. 2)²⁰.



Fig. 2. Musée du Louvre.
« Salle chrétienne »
ou « des Antiquités
chrétiennes » des
Antiquités grecques
et romaines vers 1900.
© Médiathèque
du Patrimoine
et de la Photographie

¹⁷ F. Volbach, G. Salles et G. Duthuit, *Art byzantin. Cent planches reproduisant un grand nombre de pièces choisies parmi les plus représentatives des diverses tendances*, Paris, s. d. [1933].

¹⁸ À cette date, le département des Peintures ne possède plus d'icônes. Toutes ont été déposées à partir de 1863 et surtout après 1872 dans des musées de région. Cf. N. Milovanovic, « Les icônes peintes du Louvre », p. 22-37 ; J. Durand et M. Durand, « Le département des Arts de Byzance... », p. 904.

¹⁹ Le célèbre manuscrit des *Œuvres de Denis l'Aréopagite* provenant du trésor de Saint-Denis, n° 656 du catalogue.

²⁰ A. Dain, « Les nouvelles salles d'antiques au Musée du Louvre », *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé* 1934, p. 33-40, ici p. 39.

En lien étroit avec les études conduites par Georges Duthuit sur la sculpture copte, la salle de Baouït est transférée de l'aile de Flore au rez-de-chaussée de la Cour carrée, dans la continuité du département des Antiquités égyptiennes dont elle était jusqu'alors totalement séparée. La collection est déployée dans deux salles, inaugurées en 1936 (fig. 3)²¹.



Fig. 3. Musée du Louvre. Nouvelles salles de Baouït inaugurées en 1936.
© Musée du Louvre / Département des Arts de Byzance et des Chrétientés en Orient – © Emmanuel Sougez

Enfin, les nouvelles salles du département des Objets d'art, remodelées à partir de 1935 par Carle Dreyfus, qui dirige le département de 1933 à 1940, assisté de Georges Fontaine, sont inaugurées et ouvertes au public en juin 1938²². Les œuvres byzantines du département, jusqu'alors parsemées de façon thématique ou par grandes donations dans des salles géographiquement séparées au sein du musée, sont pour la

²¹ É. Drioton, « L'art copte au Musée du Louvre », *Bulletin de la Société d'archéologie copte* 2, 1936, p. 1-8.

²² G. Fontaine, *Le département des Objets d'art du Moyen Âge, de la Renaissance et des Temps modernes et ses nouveaux aménagements. Discours prononcé à l'Assemblée générale de la Société des Amis du Louvre le 20 mai 1938*, Compiègne, 1938 ; id., « Nouveaux aménagements du musée du Louvre », *Bulletin des musées de France*, juin 1938, p. 73-82 ; G. Bress (dir.), *Histoire du Louvre*, t. II, G. Bress, G. Fonkenell et Fr. Mardrus (dir.), *De la Restauration à nos jours*, Paris, 2016, p. 386-387 et 394-421.

première fois regroupées au premier étage de la Cour Carrée dans la première salle médiévale. Elles ne sont plus mélangées avec celles de l'Occident médiéval mais, au contraire, rassemblées parce que byzantines – ou considérées à cette époque comme telles ou comme des dérivations – et offrent au public une vision inédite au Louvre des arts précieux byzantins, envisagés désormais à part entière²³.



Fig. 4. Musée du Louvre. Salle du Haut Moyen Âge de la Colonnade au département des Objets d'art, aménagement de 1938. © Musée du Louvre / Département des Objets d'art ; Fonds de la Médiathèque du patrimoine et de la photographie

Pour la première fois, également, des œuvres remarquables, identifiées comme byzantines dans les collections des autres départements du musée, ont été sollicitées pour se joindre à celles du département des Objets d'art, comme l'insigne ivoire Barberini ou encore des céramiques mais également les cuillers de Lampsaque, les pièces du trésor de Carthage, les coupes de Valdonne ou une bouteille de verre syrienne à décor dionysiaque qui ont figuré à l'exposition de 1931²⁴. Ce sont autant d'œuvres auparavant abritées au département des Antiquités grecques et romaines qui illustrent maintenant de façon nouvelle aux Objets d'art l'orfèvrerie et la verrerie des premiers siècles byzantins. Deux colonnes monumentales romaines de porphyre ont été déménagées des salles antiques : leurs bustes impériaux sculptés saillants « indiquent qu'antérieurement à la Paix de l'Église (313), l'art byzantin était en formation »²⁵.

²³ J. Durand, « A Little-Known Chapter... ».

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ G. Fontaine, *Musée du Louvre. Le département des Objets d'art*, p. 2 ; J. Durand, « A Little-Known Chapter... ».

La porte d'entrée de la salle est flanquée de deux bustes impériaux du Bas-Empire, le premier alors identifié comme celui d'Honorius et le second parfois dit de Léon, et sont aussi convoqués, venus des Sculptures, un *formello* vénitien du XII^e ou XIII^e siècle acquis en 1932 comme provenant d'Athènes, un bas-relief byzantin médiéval avec un lion et des rinceaux acquis en 1937, le *Saint militaire* paléologue sculpté sous l'arcade en remploi d'un sarcophage antique : tous ont également figuré à l'exposition byzantine²⁶. Ainsi la salle du haut Moyen Âge ressemble-t-elle en partie à une salle « byzantine », la présentation des œuvres associant pour la première fois de façon raisonnée au Louvre, comme à l'exposition byzantine des Arts décoratifs, des objets et des sculptures du Bas-Empire, des premiers siècles byzantins et du Moyen Âge byzantin jusqu'à la chute de Constantinople placés au regard de leur aire d'influence en Occident²⁷.

Toutefois, faute de place et parce qu'elle est portée exclusivement par le département des Objets d'art, la vision de Byzance proposée aux visiteurs est encore essentiellement réduite à quelques sculptures et à quelques techniques des arts somptuaires. Elle est cependant résolument neuve au Louvre pour l'époque dans sa démarche transversale. Mais elle n'inclue, bien évidemment, ni les séries archéologiques, ni les mosaïques de pavement, ni les « sarcophages, bas-reliefs, inscriptions » des premiers temps chrétiens, exposés ailleurs dans le musée, dans la salle de 1934 plus haut évoquées. Il n'y a pas non plus d'icônes peintes, ni de textiles. Dans le cadre du plan Verne, pourtant, le versement des collections égyptiennes du musée Guimet (actuel musée national des Arts asiatiques-Guimet) était initié et allait enrichir le Louvre d'un fonds de référence mondiale d'objets d'époques romaine et byzantine (masques funéraires, statuettes, céramiques, vannerie, verrerie et textiles) provenant notamment des fouilles d'Antinoé, conduites entre 1896 et 1914 par l'archéologue français Albert Gayet²⁸. Ce transfert de collections, interrompu par la Seconde Guerre mondiale, durera plusieurs décennies.

La Guerre, évidemment, coupe durablement tout effort. Toutefois, l'évolution de la perception des collections byzantines au Louvre conduite dans les années 1930 a préparé l'idée qu'un discours dédié à Byzance et aux chrétientés orientales était

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Sur les fouilles d'Antinoé et la dispersion du matériel issu de cette ville, voir Fl. Calament, *Les Fouilles d'Albert Gayet à Antinoé : étude du matériel archéologique dans les collections publiques françaises*, thèse de doctorat en art et archéologie sous la direction de Fr. Baratte, Paris IV, 2000, publiée sous le titre *La révélation d'Antinoé par Albert Gayet : histoire, archéologie, muséographie*, 2 vol., Le Caire, 2005 (Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire. Bibliothèque d'études coptes, 18) ; Fl. Calament et M. Durand, *Antinoé, à la vie, à la mode. Visions d'élégance dans les solitudes*, catalogue de l'exposition de Lyon, musée des Tissus, 1^{er} octobre 2013 – 28 février 2014, Lyon, 2013. Voir aussi Y. Lintz et M. Coudert (dir.), *Antinoé. Momies, textiles, céramiques et autres antiques. Envois de l'État et dépôts du musée du Louvre de 1901 à nos jours*, Paris, 2013 (Histoire des collections du musée du Louvre).

nécessaire. On ne s'étonnera pas que ce projet ait été porté par Georges Salles, devenu directeur des musées de France en 1945, poste qu'il occupe jusqu'en 1961. Il œuvre pour la création, en 1954, de la Section des Antiquités chrétiennes, qu'il confie à Étienne Coche de La Ferté. Dans l'introduction au catalogue de cette section, que ce dernier publie en 1958, Georges Salles rappelle l'ambition de cette nouvelle section : « La création de la section des Antiquités chrétiennes a eu pour but de regrouper les éléments de toutes provenance où se rencontre la marque chrétienne »²⁹. Et Marcel Aubert d'ajouter dans son compte rendu : « Enrichie d'apports des départements antiques et du Moyen âge, sculptures, ivoires, œuvres d'art, [elle] se propose de regrouper les éléments de toutes provenance où se rencontre la pensée chrétienne, marquant des œuvres romaines, byzantines, hellénistiques, orientales »³⁰. Étienne Coche de La Ferté conduit pour la première fois au Louvre une politique d'acquisition dédiée aux Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient. En quinze ans d'existence de la Section, il enrichit la collection de près d'un millier d'œuvres, élargissant le champ chronologique et géographique du Louvre, cherchant, par exemple, à acquérir des icônes russes³¹, une croix bulgare³² ou un carreau de verre syrien³³. Parallèlement, une chaire d'enseignement consacrée à « l'Archéologie chrétienne » est créée à l'École du Louvre, qui existe toujours, désormais appelée « Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient ». Cette Section des Antiquités chrétiennes, qui n'est rattachée à aucun département, se voit concéder provisoirement une unique salle au sein du musée, la Salle dite « des Sept Cheminées », au premier étage du Palais (fig. 5). Le département des Peintures, dont elle dépend, impose néanmoins que la muséographie n'empêche pas la contemplation des grands formats accrochés sur les murs. Au total, c'est donc moins de 100 mètres carrés qui sont accordés à la présentation des œuvres. Par ailleurs, les départements des Antiquités grecques et romaines, des Antiquités orientales, des Antiquités égyptiennes et des Objets d'art qui contribuent, non sans réticence, à prêter quelques objets, n'ont pas renoncé dans leurs salles à exposer des chefs-d'œuvre relevant du même champ civilisationnel, comme l'ivoire Barberini, par exemple,

²⁹ G. Salles, « Préface », dans É. Coche de La Ferté, *L'Antiquité chrétienne au musée du Louvre*, Paris, 1958, p. 6.

³⁰ M. Aubert, « Coche de la Ferté (Étienne), *L'Antiquité chrétienne au musée du Louvre* [compte-rendu] », *Bulletin monumental* 116, 1958, p. 221-222.

³¹ Par exemple la Vierge à l'Enfant dite « géorgienne » (*Gruzinskaya*), inv. AC 118 RF 1972-47, ou la Crucifixion, inv. AC 119 RF 1972-48, toutes deux acquises de Richard Zeiner-Henrikssen ; voir M. Durand, « École de Novgorod. La Vierge à l'Enfant dite Vierge géorgienne », dans A. Ténèze et H. Bouillon (dir.), *Le Louvre-Lens. Histoires d'un musée en partage*, catalogue de la Galerie du Temps, Paris, 2025, p. 138.

³² Inv. AC 902 ; B. Pitarakis, *Les croix-reliquaires pectorales byzantines en bronze*, Paris, 2006, n° 187, p. 241.

³³ Inv. AC 102 ; *Byzance. L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises*, catalogue de l'exposition du musée du Louvre, 3 novembre 1992 – 1^{er} février 1993, n° 217.

qui demeure exposé dans les salles des Objets d'art. Le visiteur qui souhaite voir de l'art byzantin au Louvre doit donc se préparer à une longue pérégrination dans les salles du musée. Une situation à laquelle le département des Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient mettra fin à l'ouverture de ses salles.

On notera que l'intitulé de cette Section, qui couvrait un champ chronologique allant du III^e siècle au XIX^e siècle, parlait d'« Antiquités chrétiennes », comme s'il s'agissait de civilisations du passé, à l'existence révolue, sans résonance avec le



Fig. 5. Musée du Louvre. Salle dite « des Sept Cheminées » de la Section des Antiquités chrétiennes vers 1960. © Maurice Chuzeville / Musée du Louvre - Département des Arts de Byzance et des Chrétientés en Orient

monde contemporain. Les contraintes imposées à la Section, les rivalités avec les départements, la conception même du projet, qui n'a jamais été partagée au sein du Louvre, expliquent entre autres la dissolution de cette Section en 1969³⁴. Le millier d'œuvres acquises est réparti entre les départements, plus ou moins concernés par la nature et les dates des œuvres. La plupart, d'ailleurs, n'est plus depuis cette date présentée dans les salles.

La dissolution de la Section laisse au Louvre un souvenir amer et, hélas, durable. Cependant, au département des Antiquités égyptiennes, la section copte, dirigée par le Père Pierre Du Bourguet, bénéficie à sa façon de cette dissolution. Grâce au succès de l'exposition sur l'Art copte organisée en 1963 à Essen en Allemagne, puis à Paris, au Petit Palais, en 1964 (où plusieurs sculptures de Baouït sont présentées)³⁵, le ministre

³⁴ L. Wilhelm-Jaureguiberry, *La Section des Antiquités chrétiennes sous Étienne Coche de la Ferté (1954-1969)*, Mémoire d'étude (sous la direction de C. Metzger et M.-H. Rutschowscaya) soutenu à l'École du Louvre, Paris, en 2001 (non publié).

³⁵ *Koptische Kunst. Christentum am Nil*, sous la dir. de Kl. Wessel, Essen, Villa Hügel, 3 mai – 15 août 1963 ; *L'Art copte*, sous la dir. de P. Du Bourguet, Paris, Petit Palais, 17 juin – 15 septembre 1964.

des Affaires culturelles André Malraux souhaite donner plus d'espace et de visibilité aux salles coptes du Louvre, désormais réunies dans trois salles du rez-de-chaussée inaugurées en 1972³⁶. C'est la première fois qu'elles disposent d'un espace aussi structuré et homogène, ultérieurement agrandi avec le creusement de l'ancienne Cour Visconti dans le cadre du Grand Louvre et réinstallé en 1997³⁷. En 1979, Marie-Hélène Rutschowskaya rejoint le Père Du Bourguet à la conservation de la Section copte. Au départ de ce dernier, Dominique Bénazeth sera nommée conservatrice aux côtés de Marie-Hélène Rutschowskaya.

Parallèlement, les collections de l'Antiquité tardive sont désormais prises en charge, au département des Antiquités grecques et romaines, par Catherine Metzger. Enfin, grâce à la bienveillance d'Hubert Landais, directeur des musées de France, un poste de conservateur médiéviste au sein du département des Objets d'art, responsable entre autres des collections byzantines, a été créé en 1983. Cette création a été encouragée notamment par Danielle Gaborit-Chopin, conservatrice au département des Objets d'art, qui avait suivi les cours d'André Grabar. Jannic Durand a été nommé à ce poste.

Outre la publication systématique de pans de collection par des catalogues raisonnés (sarcophages, ampoules à eulogie, bois et métaux de l'Égypte copte, céramiques byzantines) ou des articles, des acquisitions importantes ont pu être menées dans ce domaine, indépendamment de l'existence d'un département byzantin, mais réduites aux champs de compétence techniques des départements du musée³⁸.

Il faut néanmoins attendre la fin des années 1980 pour que la question de salles ou d'un département byzantins ou d'un département médiéval englobant plus largement Islam et Byzance soit à nouveau évoquée au Louvre, notamment par Michel Laclotte, directeur du Louvre, dans le cadre du projet du Grand Louvre. On renonce finalement à créer des salles byzantines ou un département médiéval mais une exposition est programmée pour 1992. Ce sera l'exposition *Byzance. L'Art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises* puis, en 2001, *Le trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle*, conçue en lien avec l'exposition *Byzance retrouvée* à la Sorbonne et l'exposition de manuscrits byzantins à la Bibliothèque nationale de France dans le cadre du XX^e Congrès international de Paris ; *Armenia sacra. Mémoire chrétienne des Arméniens (IV^e-XVIII^e siècles)*, en 2007 ; *Sainte Russie. L'art russe des origines à Pierre le Grand*, en 2010, et *Chypre entre Byzance et l'Occident IV^e – XVI^e siècle*, en 2012.

L'idée d'un nouveau département au Louvre fait alors son chemin : en 2006, elle est évoquée au Congrès de Londres lors d'une table ronde organisée par Helen Evans.

³⁶ P. Du Bourguet, « Les nouvelles salles coptes », *La revue du Louvre et des musées de France*, n° 6, 1972, p. 423-424.

³⁷ C. Meurice, « Comment montrer la sculpture copte ? Un siècle de muséographie au musée du Louvre », *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie copte* 59, 2020, p. 127-142.

³⁸ J. Durand et M. Durand, « Le département des Arts de Byzance... ».

Sa conception englobe alors Byzance mais aussi les chrétientés en Orient jusqu'au début du XIX^e siècle. En 2010, le Président de la République française, Nicolas Sarkozy, dans la préface du catalogue de l'exposition *Sainte Russie*, appelle de ses vœux la création d'un département consacré aux Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient³⁹. Le projet est mis en œuvre à la demande du président-directeur du musée du Louvre, Henri Loyrette. Il lui est remis en avril 2013. Mais la nomination de son successeur annule *sine die* la création d'un département.

Deux expositions seront néanmoins organisées, plus ou moins en résonnance avec ce projet, dans le cadre des saisons bulgare et roumaine de 2018 et 2019 : *Le trésor de Preslav. Reflet d'un âge d'or du Moyen Âge bulgare et Broderies de tradition byzantine en Roumanie du XV^e au XVII^e siècle. Autour de l'étendard d'Étienne le Grand*, toutes deux présentées au cœur des collections du département des Objets d'art.

Les expériences malheureuses de la Section des Antiquités chrétiennes et du projet conçu sous Henri Loyrette, tout autant que les expositions et les publications qui ont révélé l'extraordinaire richesse de la collection du Louvre, ont néanmoins préparé l'avènement du dernier département créé au musée du Louvre. Lorsque Laurence des Cars a remis au Président de la République française son projet pour la présidence et la direction du musée, elle avait inscrit la création de ce département comme un axe structurant pour l'avenir du musée. C'est d'ailleurs celui qu'elle a exposé lors de sa première prise de parole annonçant sa nomination comme présidente-directrice du Louvre, en mai 2021.

La situation géopolitique, à cette date, était évidemment bien différente de celle que nous connaissons aujourd'hui. La Russie n'avait pas encore envahi l'Ukraine. La situation de l'Arménie n'était pas si préoccupante. L'attentat du 7 octobre en Israël n'avait pas encore plongé le Proche-Orient dans la tourmente et l'inquiétude. Plus que jamais, la création d'un département consacré aux Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient apparaît comme une nécessité, afin de montrer la richesse et la fragilité de ces civilisations et de leur patrimoine matériel.

Dès le mois de mars 2022, Maximilien Durand prenait ses fonctions comme préfigurateur du département. La rédaction d'un rapport de préfiguration a permis de soumettre au Conseil d'État le projet de modification du décret constitutif de l'établissement public du musée du Louvre, instituant neuf et non plus huit départements de conservation, et de celui du ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, instituant seize et non plus quinze « grands départements

³⁹ *Sainte Russie. L'art russe des origines à Pierre le Grand*, sous la dir. de J. Durand, D. Giovannoni et I. Rapti, catalogue de l'exposition de Paris, musée du Louvre, 5 mars – 24 mai 2010, p. 7 : « Et pour que cette ouverture vers l'Est et vers l'Orient demeure, j'apporte mon soutien au très beau projet de création, au Louvre, d'un département consacré aux Arts des chrétientés d'Orient, notamment les Empires byzantin et slave. Car c'est la mission d'un pays tel que la France, d'un musée tel que le Louvre de s'ouvrir ainsi à toutes les cultures et de refléter de manière encyclopédique le génie des civilisations ».

patrimoniaux ». Ces derniers, au regard du droit français, exercent des missions règlementaires de conseil et d'expertise sur l'ensemble du territoire national, dans le domaine des acquisitions, des restaurations, de l'exportation des œuvres d'art et de la lutte contre le trafic illicite et la spoliation des biens culturels. Le département est ainsi, depuis la publication des décrets modifiés au Journal de la République française le 4 octobre 2022, officiellement créé⁴⁰. Maximilien Durand en assure la direction depuis le 1^{er} janvier 2024.

Un Comité scientifique a été nommé pour accompagner la création de ce département, présidé par Jannic Durand et composé de onze spécialistes internationaux⁴¹, représentant autant que possible les champs de spécialité couverts par les collections. Trois fois par an, les orientations stratégiques, les acquisitions et les projets lui sont présentés pour débat.

Une équipe scientifique a été recrutée, composée de quatre conservateurs du patrimoine, d'un chargé de collection, d'un service d'études et de documentation et d'un service de la régie des œuvres. Avec le personnel administratif et technique, l'équipe se compose aujourd'hui de dix-huit personnes. Les responsabilités scientifiques sont réparties entre l'Antiquité tardive, l'Égypte copte, Byzance, le Caucase, les chrétientés du monde arabophone et ottoman et le monde slave. Le périmètre de la collection et du département s'étendant, en effet, de l'Éthiopie à la Russie, du Caucase à la Mésopotamie, des Balkans au Levant. La période chronologique définie court, rappelons-le, du début du III^e siècle à 1923. Cette dernière date, qui repousse les limites chronologiques traditionnelles du musée du Louvre, a évidemment été retenue par rapport au Traité de Lausanne. Les déplacements forcés de populations consécutifs à l'incendie de Smyrne, notamment, marquent aussi, hélas, les débuts d'un trafic illicite des biens de ces communautés. Le département est d'ores-et-déjà un acteur engagé de la lutte contre ce trafic.

La mise en œuvre d'une politique d'acquisition active et particulièrement vigilante sur la question des provenances est un des témoignages de cet engagement. La première acquisition concernait un triptyque russe, réalisé pour la famille impériale par la maison Olovyanishnikov vers 1911⁴². Cette œuvre a été emportée avec elle par la fille du directeur de la maison lors de son exil hors de la Russie bolchévique. Elle l'a transmise à son fils, l'historien de l'art Jurgis Baltrusaitis, et a été transmise à sa veuve, Hélène Focillon, elle-même fille du célèbre historien de l'art Henri Focillon. Le triptyque a été acquis en vente publique lors de la dispersion de la succession de cette dernière. La deuxième, également acquise en vente publique, est une exceptionnelle

⁴⁰ Voir *supra*, n. 3.

⁴¹ Nathalie Bosson, Nano Chatzidakis, Ivan Drpić, Cäcilia Fluck, Grace Homsy-Gottwales, Karel Innemée, Catherine Jolivet-Lévy, Nikos Kontogiannis, Charles Personnaz, Ioanna Rapti, Umberto Utro.

⁴² Inv. RFML.ABCO.2022.16.1 ; M. Durand, « Acquisitions, Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient. Un chef-d'œuvre de l'art impérial russe », *Grande Galerie. Le Journal du Louvre* 60, 2022, p. 28-29.

maquette du complexe du Saint-Sépulcre, en bois d'olivier, nacre, ébène et ivoire⁴³. Elle fut envoyée à Louis XIV en remerciement de libéralités concédées au Saint-Sépulcre par le roi et présente pour cette raison un décor fleurdelysé unique. Elle est inscrite aux inventaires du Garde-Meuble de la Couronne à Versailles. Au XIX^e siècle, elle rejoint une collection particulière, dans laquelle elle reste par descendance jusqu'à son acquisition. Le département a ensuite acquis une icône crétoise de la première moitié du XVII^e siècle, signée d'Emmanouil Lambardos, elle aussi attestée en France depuis la fin du XIX^e siècle et restée dans la même famille jusqu'à sa vente⁴⁴. Enfin, en juin 2024, le département a pu faire entrer au Louvre une icône en bois sculpté russe, datant du règne d'Ivan le Terrible, conservant sa polychromie et sa dorure d'origine. Elle est un des premiers témoins de la naissance de l'iconographie de la Vierge du Buisson, et le premier jalon connu à ce jour de son introduction dans la dévotion privée. Elle provient de la collection des princes Oettingen-Wallerstein où elle était conservée sans doute depuis le mariage de la princesse Christine-Charlotte avec le tsarévitch Alexis, fils de Pierre le Grand⁴⁵.

Depuis la réunion de Bucarest, le département a poursuivi sa politique d'acquisition, s'enrichissant notamment d'un don de soixante-dix icônes russes de la collection de Jeanne Grout de Beaufort⁴⁶, d'une collection de deux cent soixante-douze icônes grecques, crétoises, melkites, roumaines et russes réunie par Georges et Freddy Abou Adal⁴⁷, d'une *Pietà* crétoise du XV^e siècle⁴⁸, de trois cent quarante-six dessins de Jules-Paul Gérard documentant les fouilles d'Antinoé⁴⁹, de six fragments de textiles provenant d'Antinoé⁵⁰, d'un encensoir provenant de Kamechlié⁵¹, d'un moule à eulogie

⁴³ Inv. RFML.ABCO.2022.28.1 ; M. Durand, « Acquisitions, Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient. Une exceptionnelle maquette du Saint-Sépulcre », *ibid.* 61, 2022, p. 16-18.

⁴⁴ Inv. RFML.2023.23.1 ; M. Durand, « Acquisitions, Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient. Le meilleur de l'école crétoise », *ibid.* 65, 2023, p. 16-18.

⁴⁵ Inv. RFML.2024.21.1 ; M. Durand, « L'iconographie du Buisson ardent dans l'orthodoxie russe : un hymne illustré à la création », dans F. Kazemi et M. Buresi (dir.), *Jardins et palais d'Orient*, catalogue de l'exposition de Draguignan, Hôtel départemental des expositions du Var, 14 décembre 2024 – 6 avril 2025, p. 92-95.

⁴⁶ Id., « Acquisitions, Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient. Une donation de soixante-dix icônes russes », *Grande Galerie. Le Journal du Louvre* 69, 2024, p. 20-22.

⁴⁷ Id., « Acquisitions, Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient. Un exceptionnel ensemble d'icônes, jalon de l'histoire de l'art oriental », *ibid.* 70, 2025, p. 22-24.

⁴⁸ Id., « Acquisitions, Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient. Une *Pietà* crétoise du 15^e siècle », *ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴⁹ Id., « Acquisitions, Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient. Trois cent quarante-six dessins inspirés d'Antinoé », *ibid.*, p. 26.

⁵⁰ Id., « Acquisitions, Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient. Trésors d'une nécropole byzantine », *ibid.*

⁵¹ Id., « Acquisitions, Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient. La pièce de référence d'une série d'encensoirs », *ibid.*, p. 27.

en stéatite de saint Siméon Stylite le Jeune⁵², d'un triptyque de la maison Fabergé offert par l'aristocratie saint-pétersbourgeoise à Nicolas II pour la naissance de la Grande-Duchesse Olga⁵³ et de deux icônes russes importantes⁵⁴.

Ces œuvres complètent une collection estimée aujourd'hui à vingt mille œuvres, réparties auparavant entre les huit départements du musée. Leur transfert, administratif et physique au sein des réserves du Louvre, est en cours. Près de dix-neuf mille ont déjà été transférées au département des Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient et relèvent désormais de sa gestion directe.

La constitution d'une bibliothèque et d'une documentation de référence, accessibles aux chercheurs et aux étudiants, constitue également un enjeu majeur du département. Dès le début de la guerre en Ukraine, notamment, nous avons réuni, avec l'aide des collègues ukrainiens, universitaires, chercheurs et conservateurs, un ensemble d'ouvrages sur les icônes unique en France, et sans doute aussi en Europe, qui a été donné officiellement au département par le biais de l'Institut ukrainien à Paris et de l'Ambassade d'Ukraine en France. Il faut aussi remercier Andreï Timotin et nos collègues roumains pour l'enrichissement significatif qu'ils ont également bien voulu apporter à la bibliothèque. Nous avons également reçu en don, pour le fonds d'archives patrimoniales du département, les relevés d'architectures des églises syriaques du Tur Abdin réalisés lors de la mission de Jules Leroy en 1967-1969. Ils viennent compléter un fonds riche déjà des carnets de fouilles de Baouït, de photographies anciennes (plaques de verre et tirages papier) et de documents relatifs au développement des études byzantines au début du XX^e siècle. D'autres promesses de dons ou opportunités d'acquisition d'archives de chercheurs ou d'ensembles photographiques remarquables pourront être annoncés prochainement. Depuis le congrès de Bucarest, on signalera notamment le don par Régis Crozat de dix-huit milles clichés numériques des traces archéologiques de l'ancien royaume arménien de Cilicie.

Peu de temps après l'invasion de l'Ukraine, nous avons accueilli dans l'équipe, et pour plus d'un an, une collègue conservatrice au musée national des Arts Bohdan et Varvara Khanenko de Kyiv. Elle a été chargée, notamment, d'assurer une veille quotidienne sur le marché de l'art français et international, afin d'identifier la proportion d'œuvres ukrainiennes en circulation et de préparer les outils nécessaires dans le futur pour instruire les potentielles demandes de restitution. Nous avons construit avec le musée Khanenko une relation d'estime et de confiance qui a permis d'organiser l'accueil temporaire des icônes les plus précieuses de leur collection dans les réserves du Louvre pendant toute la durée de la guerre. Une première exposition a présenté au

⁵² Id., « Acquisitions, Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient. Un moule à eulogie du Mont Admirable », *ibid.*

⁵³ Id., « Acquisitions, Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient. Un triptyque réalisé par Fabergé », *ibid.*, 71, 2025, p. 16-17.

⁵⁴ Id., « Acquisitions, Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient. Deux icônes russes fameuses », *ibid.* 72, 2025, p. 24.

Louvre les quatre célèbres icônes provenant du monastère Sainte-Catherine du Sinaï, datant des VI^e-VII^e siècles, et l'icône en micro-mosaïque représentant saint Nicolas et datant du XII^e siècle⁵⁵.

Une seconde exposition ouvrira au Louvre-Lens le 12 septembre et présentera pour quelques mois quatre autres icônes du musée Khanenko, une icône vénéto-crétoise du XV^e siècle, une icône épirote du XVI^e siècle et deux icônes signées de Théodoros Poulakis. Elle est aussi l'occasion de rappeler, dans la région des Hauts-de-France plusieurs fois éprouvée par les guerres, le rôle des professionnels de musée dans la conservation du patrimoine face aux conflits.

L'action internationale du département vise ainsi à construire des partenariats durables. L'accueil des œuvres ukrainiennes s'accompagne d'un programme de recherche et d'analyses autour de ces icônes exceptionnelles. En Arménie, le département a noué une relation privilégiée avec le musée national d'Histoire de Erevan. Elle se concrétise par un projet de dépôt d'œuvres « ambassadrices » de la richesse et de la splendeur de la culture arménienne. Elles trouveront une place de choix dans le futur parcours du département, et le Louvre et le Musée historique national d'Arménie travaillent actuellement au projet d'une exposition à Erevan pour septembre 2025. Dans le cadre du programme « Intiqal » et avec le soutien de l'Agence française pour le développement et du ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, nous collaborons, à Jérusalem et en Palestine, à la préservation et à la valorisation du monastère Saint-Hilarion à Gaza⁵⁶.

À l'inter-congrès du Comité international des études byzantines qui s'est tenu en avril 2024 à Athènes, les auteurs de ces lignes ont proposé, au nom du Comité français et avec le soutien du Président du Comité international, la création d'une Commission « Patrimoine ». Elle aura notamment pour objet de réunir, autour d'une réflexion et de projets communs, des experts internationaux de la conservation, de la restauration, de l'étude et de la promotion du patrimoine. Elle entend aussi couvrir des champs nouveaux de la recherche et de la protection des biens culturels, comme l'histoire des collections, la recherche de provenance des œuvres, la protection du patrimoine dans les zones de conflit ou encore la circulation des biens culturels, voire même le marché de l'art, en lien avec les législations des nations sur la protection des biens issus de contextes archéologiques, ou ayant fait l'objet de spoliations.

Entre avril et mai 2024 a eu lieu la dernière campagne de fouilles sur le site égyptien de Baouît. Depuis plus de vingt ans, le monastère fait l'objet de campagnes annuelles de fouilles, conduites par l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire et le Louvre et dirigées depuis 2022 par Florence Calament, directrice adjointe du

⁵⁵ *Aux origines de l'image sacrée. Icônes du musée national des arts Bohdan et Varvara Khanenko de Kyiv*, 14 juin 2023 – 29 janvier 2024.

⁵⁶ Cette coopération a notamment donné lieu à une journée d'étude à l'Auditorium Michel Laclotte du Louvre, le 29 avril, Transmission et mise en valeur du patrimoine byzantin en Terre Sainte. Le cas du monastère de Saint-Hilarion et de son rayonnement au cœur de la Bande de Gaza.

département. La campagne de cette année a vu notamment s'achever la fouille de la nécropole et a révélé des stèles inscrites inédites. Elle a surtout permis de dégager une partie des vestiges de l'église sud, mettant au jour des peintures et des sculptures et permettant de préciser la connaissance du bâtiment, dont une grande partie du décor sculpté est conservé dans la collection du Louvre depuis 1903.

Les vestiges du monastère de Baouît constitueront un des fleurons du parcours muséographique. Le programme scientifique et culturel de ce parcours a été rédigé et validé par les instances décisionnaires du musée. Il a permis de lancer un concours international d'architecture et de muséographie en novembre 2023, qui englobe à la fois le périmètre du parcours byzantin (2 500 mètres carrés au sein de l'aile Denon) et celui du parcours romain renouvelé (également 3 000 mètres carrés). Les deux parcours sont physiquement connectés. Le parcours byzantin se déploie à proximité et en connexion directe avec celui des Arts de l'Islam. Le projet muséographique offre donc l'occasion de repenser ce dernier pour permettre un véritable dialogue des collections. Vingt agences internationales ont répondu à l'appel. Un premier jury s'est réuni en février 2024 pour sélectionner les quatre candidats habilités à proposer un projet. Ces derniers ont été examinés par le jury final en juillet. Le nom du lauréat sera communiqué dans les prochains jours. Il s'agit du groupement constitué par l'agence américaine d'architectes WHY, qui a notamment réalisé la Rockefeller Wing du Metropolitan Museum de New York, et l'agence parisienne de scénographes BGC.

Les travaux commenceront après la passation des marchés, dans la seconde moitié de l'année prochaine. L'inauguration des espaces est prévue à l'horizon 2027-2028. La réalisation du projet est rendue possible par la recherche active de mécénats que nous avons menée depuis deux ans. Un premier soutien conséquent a été annoncé dans la presse. D'autres seront annoncés régulièrement. Ils montrent l'enthousiasme que suscite, en France et à l'étranger, le projet en cours de réalisation.

Un effort tout particulier porte sur la médiation au sein des espaces. Plus que jamais, les musées sont des chambres d'écho des préoccupations, des interrogations et des heurts du monde contemporain. Une étude de publics a été commandée en amont de la rédaction du programme scientifique et culturel afin de définir les attentes, notamment, des jeunes visiteurs mais aussi des spécialistes du domaine concernant les futures salles.

Pour la première fois, la collection du Louvre, encore méconnue par bien des aspects, sera magnifiée grâce à un parcours chronologique, dont le propos principal se développera autour de la question du statut de l'image pour Byzance et les chrétientés orientales. Elle montrera à la fois des ensembles archéologiques, des chefs-d'œuvre des arts somptuaires et des arts décoratifs, mais aussi des peintures. La fin de l'Antiquité, la période médiévale et les temps modernes seront ainsi également abordés. Le dialogue avec les Arts de l'Islam et l'Art occidental permettra d'inscrire symboliquement et pleinement au Louvre Byzance et les chrétientés en Orient comme un trait d'union civilisationnel indispensable entre Orient et Occident.

Les cent années qui se sont écoulées depuis le premier Congrès international des études byzantines de Bucarest ont été décisives pour les études byzantines. Au Louvre, elles ont assurément contribué, directement ou indirectement, à une meilleure connaissance des collections, à la prise de conscience de la singularité des Arts de Byzance et des chrétientés en Orient, à la maturation et à l'avènement du département qui leur est désormais dédié.

La Roumanie dans l'œuvre de Gabriel Millet et la Collection chrétienne et byzantine de l'École pratique des Hautes Études

Ioanna Rapti

Abstract: The article examines the impact of the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies on the development of Byzantine scholarship in France, focusing on largely overlooked visual material preserved in the Byzantine and Christian collection founded by the pioneering Byzantinist Gabriel Millet at the École pratique. It shows that monuments from Romania entered the Collection as early as 1909 but became a regular topic in the seminars and studies in the years around the Congress. The 1925 exhibition at the Jeu de Paume further drew attention to this recently independent country. Millet – who, as a leading scholar, participated in nearly all major art-historical initiatives of his time – was well aware of Romania's Byzantine heritage, which he had studied through the embroidered textiles in the Athonite monasteries. The architecture and iconography of Romanian monuments aligned closely with his interest in the dissemination of artistic traditions across the Balkans and throughout the Byzantine world. In addition, Millet's Romanian contacts contributed to the expansion of the French Byzantinist community. Although he did not fully exploit the visual documentation relating to monastic churches, Millet's teaching and mentorship played a decisive role in integrating the art of the Danubian regions into the broader framework of Byzantine artistic traditions.

Keywords: Gabriel Millet, Byzantine art, historiography, photography, Paris, Balkans

Le patrimoine médiéval et religieux de Roumanie tient une place particulière dans la géographie culturelle de l'Europe et du monde méditerranéen : charnière entre le christianisme slave et les traditions latines et germaniques mais aussi fier héritier de la mémoire byzantine, l'art des pays roumains attend encore de trouver sa

place dans les études byzantines. Pourtant, cette importance qui vient d'être rappelée participe de l'émergence de l'histoire de l'art byzantin comme discipline en phase avec la modernité et les avant-gardes en Europe. Parfaitement inscrite dans ce contexte mais essentielle aussi pour l'identité moderne de la Roumanie, la découverte de l'art roumain médiéval se prolonge en Occident tant bien que mal après les deux guerres et même sous le régime communiste, notamment grâce à la diaspora roumaine¹.

La Collection chrétienne et byzantine de l'EPHE, fondée par Gabriel Millet, dont le nom résonne toujours avec l'histoire de l'art byzantin et la valorisation du patrimoine orthodoxe des pays balkaniques, incarne le souvenir de ce phénomène. Constituée comme un petit musée universitaire pour la documentation scientifique et l'enseignement de l'art byzantin, elle évolue, à l'instar des fonds analogues, vers la patrimonialisation et devient à son tour objet et outil historiographique². Le pionnier savant à l'initiative de cet exploit encyclopédique inédit, adapté aux spécificités d'une étude contextuelle d'un objet dont il définit lui-même les contours géographiques et chronologiques mais aussi thématiques, entre pratique religieuse, documentation historique et pensée théologique, est une personnalité influente de la vie académique en France et de la communauté internationale des byzantinistes. Activement présent sur le terrain comme dans les événements majeurs tels les Congrès et les expositions, il assure la vice-présidence de l'exposition de 1931 qui consacre l'art byzantin au musée des Arts décoratifs dans le pavillon de Marsan du palais du Louvre³. L'absence de la Roumanie de cette manifestation est peut-être la conséquence de sa « place à part dans

* Cette étude est dédiée à la mémoire de Monica Breazu et d'Ilana Tahan, spécialistes de livres et roumaines d'origine, dont la collégialité à la Réserve des livres rares de la BnF et au département des manuscrits orientaux de la British Library m'a accessoirement éclairé bien de facettes de l'histoire de ce pays.

¹ *L'Exposition de l'Art roumain ancien et moderne, musée du Jeu de Paume du 25 mai au 1er août 1925*, Paris 1925, satisfait une curiosité cultivée dans les pavillons des expositions universelles. Henri Focillon, auteur d'un chapitre d'introduction sur le caractère de l'art roumain, en offre une vision teintée de folklore dans « L'exposition de l'art roumain au Jeu de Paume », *Revue des deux mondes* 28, 1925, p. 164-181. Pour l'importance idéologique du premier congrès des études byzantines à Bucarest voir 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 ; V. Laurent, « Les études byzantines en Roumanie 1939-1946 », *Revue des études byzantines* 6, 1948, p. 241-268 ; G. Stephanesco, « La Roumanie, cette Byzance après Byzance », *Revue des deux mondes* 1972, p. 121-128.

² G. Millet, « La collection byzantine de l'École des Hautes Études », *Revue archéologique* 38, n° 1, 1901, p. 289-290 ; id., *La Collection chrétienne et byzantine des Hautes Études*, Paris, 1903, p. 1-10 ; A. Adamantiou, « Βυζαντινόν μουσείον ἐν Παρισίοις », *Πρακτικά της Ιστορικής Εθνολογικής Εταιρείας της Ελλάδος* 1904, p. 397-400 ; C. Jolivet-Lévy, « Gabriel Millet (1867–1953)'s photographic archive and the reception of Byzantium », dans N. Bhalla et D. Kotoula (éd.), *A Handbook to the Modern Reception of Byzantium*, Londres (à paraître) ; I. Rapti, « L'objectif à la recherche de Byzance : les photographies de la collection Gabriel Millet », dans P. Henriot (éd.), *L'École pratique des Hautes Études. Invention, érudition, innovation de 1868 à nos jours*, Paris, 2018, p. 651-657.

³ R. Labrusse, « Modernité byzantine : l'Exposition internationale d'art byzantin de 1931 à Paris », dans L. Arnoux-Farnoux et A. Farnoux (éd.), *Le double voyage : Paris-Athènes (1919-1939)*, Athènes, 2018, p. 221-242.

la famille byzantine »⁴ et symptomatique de la position de son patrimoine à la marge du canon byzantin⁵. Elle reflète sans doute aussi une certaine difficulté à représenter la tradition byzantine par des œuvres comme celles qui avaient figuré quelques années plus tôt, en 1925, à l'exposition du Jeu de Paume, sous les auspices des mêmes historiens et historiens de l'art qui allaient encadrer l'évènement du musée des Arts décoratifs⁶.

Afin d'éviter le risque du panégyrique ou de l'anecdote, inhérent à l'évocation des dates anniversaires, les pages qui suivent s'attachent à évaluer l'influence du Congrès de 1924 dans l'histoire de l'art byzantin en France ; à envisager le rôle du patrimoine roumain dans la géographie de l'art byzantin et plus particulièrement sur la scène balkanique ; et, dans une moindre mesure, évoquer quelques perspectives de l'historiographie et de méthodes nouvelles. Enfin, l'analyse de la documentation photographique per se permettra d'en évaluer l'importance au-delà de l'apport documentaire et de l'objet de curiosité.

Millet et la Roumanie

Parmi les très nombreuses publications de Gabriel Millet, une courte étude intitulée « L'esprit de l'art arménien »⁷, en roumain, n'est pas un des grands jalons dans l'œuvre du savant. Elle mérite d'être rappelée pour l'intention de l'auteur de s'adresser au public roumain et de lui faire connaître la tradition artistique d'une composante essentielle du paysage multiculturel et multireligieux de la Roumanie⁸. Il importe de souligner l'idéal d'universalité qui anime le savant français en même temps que sa sensibilité aux causes et aux arts nationaux et, paradoxalement, son attachement au travail et à la personne à la renommée sulfureuse de Josef Strzygowski⁹.

La contribution essentielle de Gabriel Millet à l'étude de la production artistique en Roumanie consiste en son dernier opus magnum *Broderies religieuses de style byzantin* mais aussi en son enseignement qui fit la part belle à cette aire

⁴ V. Laurent, « Les études byzantines en Roumanie ... ».

⁵ Dans ces notes, conservées avec les fiches qu'il avait demandées à son étudiante Juliette Renaud, Millet distingue, à propos de Sucevitsa, les éléments byzantin, roumain, russe et occidental (51 CdF 83).

⁶ Charles Diehl, Henri Focillon et Gabriel Millet cultivent tous des amitiés roumaines mais portent en effet de regards différents. L'approche de Focillon qui minimise l'héritage du « génie byzantin » au profit d'un art populaire et spontané de contrées rurales éloignées, est peut-être révélatrice : voir aussi I. Vlasiu, « Henri Focillon et son expérience roumaine », *Histoire de l'art* 50, 2002 [= *Regards extérieurs. Études d'historiens étrangers sur l'art en France*], p. 139-145.

⁷ G. Millet, « Spiritul culturii armene », *Ani. Anuar de cultură armeană* 3, 1941, p. 131-136.

⁸ Cl. Mutafian, *La Saga des Arméniens de l'Ararat aux Carpates*, Paris, 2018, p. 137-395.

⁹ I. Rapti, « A "Global" Middle Ages in the Early 20th Century: Millet, Baltrušaitis, and the Caucasus », *Sovijus. Interdisciplinary studies of culture* 13, n° 1, 2025, p. 87-101 ; I. Rapti et Fr. Pacha Miran, « Gabriel Millet et l'art byzantin », dans M. A. Amir-Moezzi et Y. Guermeur (éd.), *Des livres et des dieux. Célébration de la Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études. Sciences Religieuses*, Paris, à paraître.

géographique encore inconnue¹⁰. Dans cet ouvrage les donations et les représentations de souverains roumains dans les trésors et les sacristies des monastères de l'Athos représentent bien la relève de la tradition byzantine¹¹. Formes, techniques et images témoignent de la qualité de cette tradition byzantine de se redéfinir et de réactualiser son héritage en tension entre la constance avec les leçons du passé et le savoir-faire à l'air du temps. Les broderies illustrent aussi une parenté certaine entre les aires linguistiques slaves et grecque des Balkans entre lesquelles se situent les chrétiens des régions danubiennes; elles témoignent d'une effervescence artistique dans la péninsule, dont les fruits convergent du mont Athos où se perpétue la mémoire de l'empire, ainsi que le formule Millet dans les comptes rendus annuels de son enseignement : « La grande tradition byzantine se continue, plus ou moins pure, au XVI^e et même au XVII^e siècle grâce à l'appui des princes serbes, valaques et moldaves »¹². L'annuaire de l'EPHE témoigne en outre de l'esprit de solidarité de compétences et d'une véritable communion entre savants désireux de partager la connaissance et de promouvoir des héritages byzantins régionaux au sein d'une histoire de l'art médiéval qui s'étend volontiers au Moyen Âge occidental et à l'Orient préchrétien et islamique.

La documentation d'archives et la collection même de l'EPHE corroborent l'indication de l'*Annuaire* que le Congrès de 1924 est un véritable tournant qui met la Roumanie au cœur de l'histoire de l'art byzantin à Paris. Cela ne s'est guère produit *ex nihilo* mais sur un terreau favorable grâce à la présence roumaine à Paris y compris à l'Université, notamment en Sorbonne et à l'EPHE où Oreste Tafrali (1876-1937) incarne l'ambition des études byzantines à la croisée de la science et de l'histoire de l'État roumain récemment constitué. En effet, dès 1909, la Collection de l'EPHE reçoit des épreuves de monuments de Roumanie en don de la part de l'architecte Nicolae Gabrielescu (1854-1926) comme l'atteste une lettre de Millet à un correspondant non identifié à propos d'échange de documents photographiques¹³. C'est dans ces

¹⁰ G. Millet et H. des Ylouses, *Broderies religieuses de style byzantin*, Paris, 1939. Voir aussi *Broderies de tradition byzantine en Roumanie du XI^e au XVII^e siècle. Autour de l'Étendard d'Étienne le Grand*, Paris, 2019 [Catalogue de l'exposition du musée du Louvre] et I. Rapti et Fr. Pacha Miran, « Gabriel Millet et l'art byzantin ».

¹¹ *Broderies de tradition byzantine de Roumanie*. Pour la présence roumaine à l'Athos, voir P. Ș. Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos et les Roumains. Recherches sur leurs relations du milieu du XII^e siècle à 1654*, Rome, 1986, et plus récemment P. Zahariuc, « Documents roumains d'avant 1500 dans les archives des monastères du Mont Athos », dans O. Delouis et K. Smyrlis (éd.), *Lire les « Archives de l'Athos ». Actes du colloque réuni à Athènes du 18 au 20 novembre 2015 à l'occasion des 70 ans de la collection refondée par Paul Lemerle*, Paris, 2019, p. 607-640.

¹² G. Millet, « Christianisme byzantin et Archéologie chrétienne », *École pratique des hautes études, Section des sciences religieuses. Annuaire 1921-1922* 30, 1921, p. 55.

¹³ La lettre porte la date de 1909 reportée au crayon. Elle a été acquise en 2024 sur le marché de l'art en ligne et se trouve aujourd'hui avec la correspondance de Gabriel Millet à l'EPHE. Cf. Annexe 1. L'information de la lettre est confirmée par l'inventaire manuscrit de la collection où le don figure sous

années, où Millet entreprend de conseiller le couturier parisien Jacques Doucet pour sa Bibliothèque d'art et d'archéologie, aujourd'hui au cœur de l'Institut national d'Histoire de l'art, qu'il recommande l'acquisition de la nouvelle revue roumaine *Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor istorice*. Cette collaboration est amplement documentée par les lettres de Millet au bibliothécaire de Doucet, René Jean, conservées aux archives de l'INHA avec la bibliographie composée par Tafrali recruté comme assistant en matière d'art byzantin, peu après son arrivée à Paris en 1906¹⁴. Elle va de pair avec un intérêt soutenu de Millet pour le monde slave dont témoignent les acquisitions, dès 1907, des œuvres des photographes Ivan Bartchevsky, basé à Smolensk, et Dimitri Ermakov, tenant studio à Tiflis et accrédité auprès de l'armée du tzar : le premier couvre l'anneau d'or autour de Moscou et tous deux travaillent sur le sud des terres russes et dans le Caucase¹⁵.

L'année même du Congrès de 1924, le compte rendu de l'enseignement de Christianisme byzantin et archéologie chrétienne précise que les séminaires avaient été interrompus à Pâques en raison de la mission d'étude de Gabriel Millet en Roumanie et en Serbie¹⁶. Une mission, vraisemblablement de caractère préparatoire, est évoquée dans le compte rendu de 1923¹⁷. L'année suivante, le thème de la conférence de Millet, *Peinture religieuse byzantine et slave*, lui permet de résumer les résultats de ses leçons antérieures et d'évoquer les avancées de ses missions avec l'armée de l'Orient en 1918-1919, riches pour l'étude des peintures de l'Athos¹⁸. Et d'insister « plus longuement sur les peintures de Curtea de Argeș en Valachie récemment mises à jour par la Commission des monuments historiques de Roumanie et qu'il a pu étudier à l'occasion du Congrès des études byzantines, tenu à Bucarest

l'année 1909. Ces photographies inventoriées sous les numéros 7700-7766 sont montés dans un album photographique (EPHE, Centre Gabriel Millet A. 84) qui comporte à leur suite des clichés réalisés à partir des photographies de Mlle Bengesco (inv. 4581-4597 et plaques de verre correspondantes C5357-C5373) en 1904 et des épreuves de la collection de G. Balș (inv. 10063-10111) acquis en 1914.

¹⁴ INHA, Archives de la BAA, Lettres de Gabriel Millet [480], la lettre porte la date de 11 février, sans doute 1910. Intitulée *Répertoire général de l'art byzantin*, la bibliographie de Tafrali, composée sous la direction de Millet, aspirait à l'exhaustivité mais l'acquisition n'a pas toujours abouti. Je remercie Mademoiselle Salomé Gallician d'avoir partagé les éléments de son enquête sur Tafrali, menée lors d'un stage à la Bibliothèque de l'INHA, dont elle a aussi présenté les résultats au colloque *C'est Byzance !* en 16-17 octobre 2025 (accessible sur la chaîne youtube de l'INHA). Sur Tafrali, voir N. Bănescu, « Oreste Tafrali (1876-1937) », *Échos d'Orient* 37, 1938, p. 504-505, et la contribution de Mihail Mîtreă dans ce volume.

¹⁵ Avec Dr. Sipana Tchakérian, coordinatrice scientifique à l'INHA, nous avons présenté les fonds caucasiens de l'EPHE et de la Bibliothèque d'art et d'archéologie au colloque susmentionné.

¹⁶ G. Millet, « Christianisme byzantin et archéologie chrétienne », *École pratique des hautes études, Section des sciences religieuses. Annuaire 1925-1926* 34, 1925, p. 48-49.

¹⁷ Id., « Christianisme byzantin et archéologie chrétienne », *École pratique des hautes études, Section des sciences religieuses. Annuaire 1924-1925* 33, 1924, p. 58-59.

¹⁸ Id., « Christianisme byzantin et archéologie chrétienne », *École pratique des hautes études, Section des sciences religieuses. Annuaire 1925-1926*, 34, 1925, p. 48-49.



Fig. 1. Curtea de Argeș, EPHE, Collection chrétienne et byzantine – photothèque Gabriel Millet, tirages

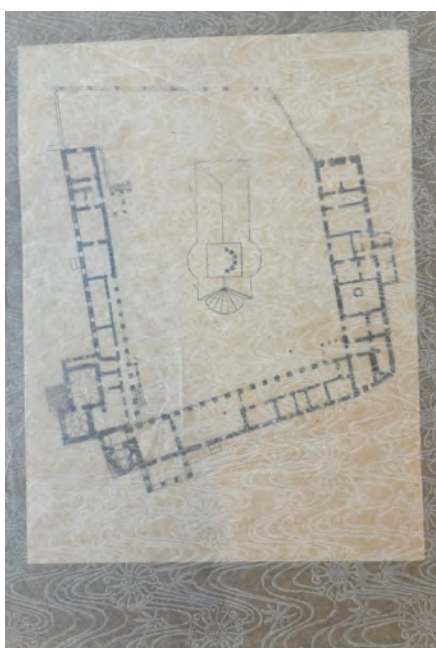


Fig. 2. Curtea de Argeș, plan au sol. EPHE, Collection chrétienne et byzantine – photothèque Gabriel Millet. Album A. 84

au printemps 1924 »¹⁹ (fig. 1-2). En 1933, la contribution de Millet dans les *Mélanges Iorga*, dédiée à Cozia, évoque la visite effectuée à l’occasion du premier Congrès d’études byzantines, en compagnie de Virgile Drăghiceanu, dans le cadre d’une mission d’étude pour la Commission des Monuments Historiques, en vue de la restauration sous la houlette de Nicolae Ghika-Budești²⁰. Millet évoque les photographies qui lui ont été confiées mais qui ne permettaient pas l’étude avant le retrait du crépi et le démontage des toitures (fig. 3). Dans son compte rendu de l’Annuaire, Millet distingue « la part des Slaves de celle des Grecs. Copies de Kahrié et répliques des églises serbes ou macédoniennes »²¹. Cette formulation courte et non argumentée condense une interrogation fondamentale dans la recherche de l’époque : comment classer et hiérarchiser les formes et les styles dans une logique qui est très

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ G. Millet, « Cozia et les églises serbes de la Morava », *Mélanges offerts à Nicolas Iorga par ses amis de France et des pays de langue française*, Paris, 1933, p. 828. À propos de N. Ghika-Budești voir *infra*, p. 108.

²¹ Id., « Christianisme byzantin et archéologie chrétienne », *École pratique des hautes études, Section des sciences religieuses, Annuaire 1925-1926*, 1924.



Fig. 3. Cozia vers 1924, avant le retrait du crépi. EPHE, Collection chrétienne et byzantine – photothèque Gabriel Millet, tirages

proche de l'esprit des expositions universelles et se perpétue à travers le schéma centrifuge d'une carte mentale centrée sur Constantinople²².

Parmi les interventions au séminaire que Millet tient en Sorbonne le samedi dans l'année suivant le Congrès de 1924, on relève deux sujets roumains, l'un sur les fouilles de Curtea de Argeș par Manesco (ou Banesco avec une faute de saisie ?) et l'autre sur les broderies moldaves par Ioan Stefanescu ainsi qu'une conférence sur l'art et la liturgie par un certain Monsieur Constantinesco²³.

Les fouilles de Curtea de Argeș avaient déjà attiré l'attention de la communauté scientifique française, au-delà de seuls byzantinistes, avec la communication de Nicolae Iorga à l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres en 1921. La publication parue à Bucarest un an avant le Congrès avait été saluée dans les pages du *Bulletin monumental*²⁴. L'importance du complexe mo-

nastique royal de Curtea de Argeș avait été déjà reconnue dès 1908-1909, lorsque Oreste Tafrali avait présenté au séminaire de l'EPHE un compte rendu « d'après les récentes publications de la Commission des monuments historiques de Roumanie et de la Société *L'art roumain* ». Un an avant le premier congrès d'études byzantines, les bijoux découverts lors de ces fouilles donnaient à Georges Brătianu l'occasion d'une diatribe sur la principauté valaque et ses liens avec le grand commerce génois

²² Pour la critique de ce schème qui minimise les phénomènes artistiques des périphéries, voir A. Eastmond, « The Limits of Byzantine Art », dans L. James (éd.), *A Companion to Byzantium*, Chichester Malden, Mass., 2010, p. 313-322. Voir aussi C. Popescu, « Digging Out the Past to Build Up the Future: Romanian Architecture in the Balkan Context 1859-1906 », dans P. Geary et G. Klaniczay (éd.), *Manufacturing Middle Ages: Entangled History of Medievalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Boston, 2013, p. 189-216.

²³ G. Millet, « Christianisme byzantin et archéologie chrétienne », *École pratique des hautes études, Section des sciences religieuses, Annuaire 1925-1926* 34, 1925, p. 49. On ne retrouve pas d'autre trace de Constantinesco.

²⁴ N. Iorga, « Fouilles faites à Curtea de Argeș », *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 65^e année, 1921, p. 22-26.

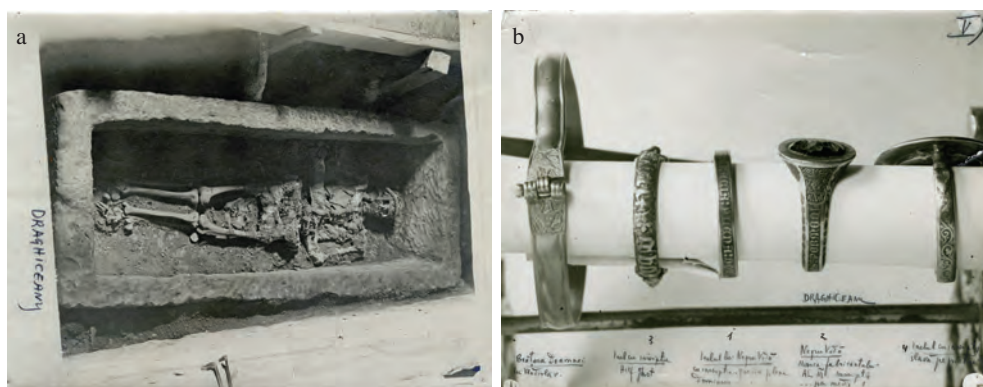


Fig. 4. Découvertes archéologiques à Curtea de Argeș ayant servi à l'illustration de l'étude de G. Bratianu. EPHE, Collection chrétienne et byzantine – photothèque Gabriel Millet, tirages



Fig. 5. Découvertes archéologiques à Curtea de Argeș avec note autographe de Marthe Bibesco. EPHE, Collection chrétienne et byzantine – photothèque Gabriel Millet, tirages

en mer Noire fondée sur la documentation des archives de Pétra²⁵. Dans le contexte d'un monde médiéval encore « connecté » à la veille de l'avènement de l'ère moderne et de la navigation transatlantique, Curtea de Argeș, un monument prestigieux au décor exquis, est un jalon précieux pour la continuité de la tradition byzantine et un geste éloquent de *translatio imperii* que les souverains roumains sauront reformuler ultérieurement de maintes façons. Les photographies des trouvailles conservées à l'EPHE (fig. 4-5) sont la source de l'unique planche d'illustration de l'article. Sur le verso d'un des tirages une note manuscrite indique leur acheminement via

²⁵ G.-J. Bratianu, « Les bijoux de Curtea de Argeș (Roumanie) et leurs éléments italiens », *Revue archéologique* 17, 1923, p. 90-110. Sur Georges (Gheorghe) Brătianu, voir la contribution d'Ovidiu Cristea dans ce volume.



Fig. 6. Albums photographiques donnés à la Collection de Gabriel Millet. EPHE. Collection chrétienne et byzantine – photothèque Gabriel Millet. Albums

la mondaine et influente princesse Marthe Bibesco, active dans le Paris d'entre-deux guerres que Byzance ne cesse de fasciner²⁶. Curtea de Argeș marque durablement l'étude de la peinture byzantine mais sa reconnaissance reste d'une dimension locale, méconnue des synthèses et des questions actuelles de l'histoire de l'art. L'enthousiasme des byzantinistes pour ce « beau monument » ainsi que Louis Bréhier qualifie l'ouvrage de Tafrales semble en adéquation avec la projection de l'idéal byzantin qui anime la Rou-

manie moderne mais en tension avec l'appréciation formaliste, tout aussi engagée et moderne, de ce « saint Denis rustique » que propose Henri Focillon²⁷.

Souvenirs et documents photographiques

Les clichés publiés par Brătianu sont parmi un lot important de documents photographiques conservés à la Collection de l'EPHE dont l'arrivée se situe à cette période d'engouement roumain sans pour autant faire partie d'une même campagne d'acquisition.

Une douzaine de petits fascicules dédiés chacun à un monument différent (fig. 6) se détachent par leur mise en page, une reliure artisanale manufacturée, cousue à une ficelle de laine et avec une couverture parlante, soit ouverte sur le premier cliché soit portant un tirage de petit format en plus de l'identification inscrite. Il s'agit sans doute d'une part de la « précieuse collection de relevés et de photographies » évoquée à propos de Cozia²⁸. Ce dernier monument est, avec Curtea de Argeș, le plus représenté

²⁶ Collège de France, Archives, fonds Thomas Whittemore 92 CDF 35. Lettre de Mathe Bibesco à Thomas Whittemore. Mogosoăa par Kitila (Ilfov)
Téléphone 3-6815
June 30th 1935

My dear Friend

Here are the snapshots. I rather like them, in their simplicity. They have something of your appearance.

Do please remember you are to visit the saints of Bucovina in late autumn. They wait for you; and so do I.

With all wishes and my thoughts with you ever.

Marthe Bibesco

²⁷ Bréhier Lettre, fonds Whittemore 92 CdF : <https://salamandre.college-de-france.fr/archives-en-ligne> ; H. Focillon, « L'exposition de l'art roumain au Jeu de Paume ».

²⁸ G. Millet, « Cozia et les églises serbes de la Morava », p. 828, n. 20.

et la plupart des photographies portent en filigrane la marque du photographe Heirich Haydvoegel. Les autres photographies sont signées Stelian et portent des numéros d'inventaire attribués à chaque épreuve²⁹. L'ensemble de ces documents est consigné comme Don du ministère de l'Instruction publique de Roumanie reçu en 1909, la même année que les photographies du don Gabrielescu mais indépendamment de ces dernières³⁰.

Oreste Tafrali, auteur d'une monographie pionnière sur la topographie chrétienne de Thessalonique, devient pour les médiévistes de Paris un relai avec son pays d'origine et un pilier de la conférence de l'EPHE : il y participe activement même après sa nomination à l'Université d'Iași en 1912 qui l'oriente davantage vers des recherches sur le territoire roumain pour aboutir à sa monographie sur sa Dobroudja native³¹. Tafrali ne semble pas avoir participé directement à l'enrichissement photographique de la collection de l'EPHE. Son étude sur l'église princière de Curtea de Argeș, publiée à Paris en 1931, replace ce monument phare dans le renouveau de l'art byzantin au XIV^e siècle avec une introduction polémique sur les restaurations où il observe de manière avisée l'impossibilité de les caractériser comme un ensemble vu la présence de plusieurs couches de peintures. Elle figure parmi les trois publications majeures remises ultérieurement à l'Institut byzantin selon la volonté de la veuve de Tafrali sans doute avec le dossier des lettres qui saluent avec enthousiasme la parution, tant dans l'entourage de l'auteur que de la part du métropolite de l'Église de Transylvanie³². L'exemplaire personnel de l'auteur est aujourd'hui une pièce historique. Accessible à la Bibliothèque byzantine du Collège de France, constituée à partir du fonds parisien de l'Institut byzantin de Thomas Whittemore, il conserve un revêtement textile artisanal et une sélection de coupures de presse et de comptes rendus collés sur les pages de garde (fig. 7).

Les photographies et les publications qui en reproduisent seulement une partie permettent de documenter mieux cette escalade roumaine, avec un intérêt croissant dans les conférences des années autour du Congrès, qui se poursuivent ensuite. Peu après l'*Histoire de l'art roumain ancien* de N. Iorga et G. Balș, publiée à Paris en 1922, *Le trésor byzantin et roumain du monastère de Poutna*, Paris, 1925, « œuvre de brodeuses et tisseuses formées dans l'école des arts somptuaires de Byzance », forgeait une idée du travail byzantin que l'exposition du Jeu de Paume rendait davantage

²⁹ EPHE, Collection chrétienne et byzantine, CGM T-14 (Cozia et Curtea de Argeș) et CGM T-15 (Horezu, Snagov, Bălteni, Gura Motrului, Frumoasa, Popești, Govora, Mănăilești, Probota).

³⁰ EPHE, Collection chrétienne et byzantine, inventaire manuscrit, p. 19-20 (inv. 7897-8022, un total de 126 épreuves, sans mention détaillée des sites). Cf. *supra*, p. 98.

³¹ O. Tafrali, *La Roumanie transdanubienne : la Dobroudja : esquisse géographique, historique, ethnographique et économique*, Paris, 1918.

³² Collège de France, Fonds Whittemore, 92 CdF 38 : lettre du père Louis Mariès à Thomas Whittemore. Louis Mariès qui, comme Tafrali avait fréquenté le cercle de Millet et enseigné ponctuellement dans le cadre de sa chaire, précise avoir assisté Mme Tafrali décédée à Paris en 1953.

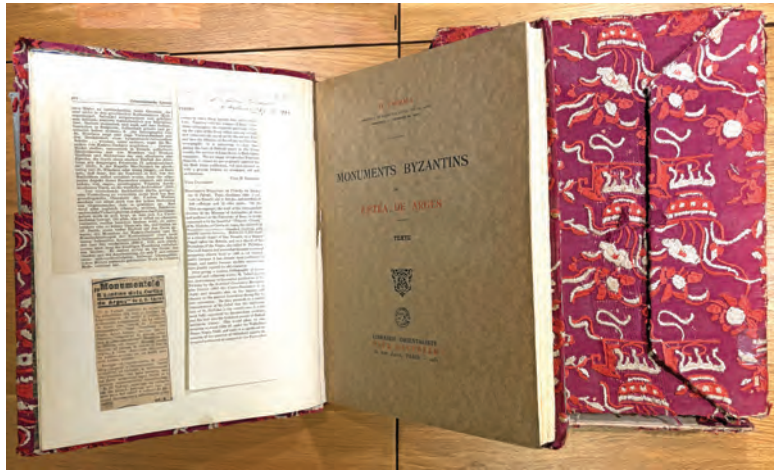


Fig. 7. Paris, Bibliothèque byzantine – Fonds Thomas Whittemore, Collège de France.
Copie personnelle de l'ouvrage de Tafrali avec une sélection de comptes rendus

sensible. L'art des pays qui composent la Roumanie est au cœur de la réflexion de Millet à propos des broderies mais son importance se vérifie également dans les séminaires et dans les publications francophones publiées en France par des chercheurs roumains que le Congrès a pu motiver de venir à Paris ou qu'il a confortés à s'insérer dans les réseaux déjà en place. Ioan D. Ștefănescu (1886-1981) est un tel exemple avec une carrière jalonnée par plusieurs publications majeures sous la houlette d'éminents maîtres (Diehl, Millet, Focillon)³³.

La peinture murale et le textile sont des domaines de prédilection et le demeureront dans la tradition de l'EPHE même si le nombre de chercheurs roumains et de thématiques roumaines diminue après la seconde guerre mondiale. Disciple d'André Grabar, Miltos Garidis fera la part belle aux monuments de Roumanie dans son étude de synthèse sur la peinture post-byzantine dans les Balkans³⁴, avec une approche conjuguant analyse stylistique et histoire sociale.

³³ I. D. Ștefănescu, *Contribution à l'étude des peintures murales valaques : (Transylvanie, district de Vâlcea, Târgoviște et région de Bucarest)*, Paris, 1928 (Orient et Byzance, III, dir. G. Millet) ; id., *L'évolution de la peinture religieuse en Bucovine et en Moldavie depuis les origines jusqu'au XIX^e siècle*, Paris, 1928, avec une préface de Ch. Diehl qui salue « l'âme du peuple roumain » ; id., *L'évolution de la peinture religieuse en Bucovine et en Moldavie depuis les origines jusqu'au XIX^e siècle : Nouvelles recherches, étude iconographique*, Paris, 1929. L'ouvrage est dédié à Henri Cihoschi, ministre de l'Armée roumaine qui a ouvert la souscription et œuvré pour le soutien de l'État roumain (plusieurs ministères remerciés) ; id., *La peinture religieuse en Valachie et en Transylvanie depuis les origines jusqu'au XIX^e siècle*, Paris, 1932, avec dédicace à sa majesté le roi Carol II de Roumanie.

³⁴ M. Garidis, *La peinture murale dans le monde orthodoxe après la chute de Byzance (1450-1600) et dans les pays sous domination étrangère*, Athènes, 1989.

Une nouvelle province de l'art byzantin ?

La découverte scientifique de l'art religieux roumain pose de manière sous-jacente les questions de l'équilibre entre différentes traditions des régions qui composent le pays mais aussi avec les aires culturelles et religieuses du monde byzantin. Si la question d'un art roumain n'est pas posée alors qu'un patrimoine roumain est pleinement reconnu, la relation avec Byzance, l'Orient et l'Occident semble être souvent la mesure ou la clef de la compréhension. Cette question, sans être exclusive, est sous-jacente comme le montrent les remarques conclusives de Sirarpie Der Nersessian dans son étude sur les émulations slavonnes du Paris grec 74³⁵. Dans la note de remerciement, l'auteur ébauche un tableau de collégialité et d'entre-aide autour de Millet et à l'occasion de l'exposition du Jeu de Paume où elle a étudié les manuscrits. Der Nersessian évalue les manuscrits selon les critères de forme et de style prévalent, à la mesure de la tradition hellénique et la vraisemblance de l'élément naturel dont la transformation du Jourdan en « un enfant vêtu d'une longue tunique et muni d'un objet amorphe dans sa main » offre un exemple caractéristique de la perception « généalogique » des manuscrits³⁶. Les analogies et les points communs constatés entre les manuscrits valaque et moldave, Sucevitsa 23 et 24 font de leur production une entreprise à vocation commune malgré les écarts dans l'interprétation qui varie entre la grande fidélité au modèle pour le premier et une certaine émancipation pour le second, notamment pour les détails. La dette commune de tous les deux programmes iconographiques au BnF grec 74 est justement attribuée à la médiation des évangiles d'Ivan Alexandre présents en Moldavie³⁷. Selon l'intention qui prime alors dans l'étude iconographique, la quête est alors l'origine du cycle. Sirarpie Der Nersessian suit l'hypothèse « palestinienne-cappadocienne » de Millet stipulant plus précisément un prototype antiochien plutôt que le « tout Orient » de Strzygowski. La quête des origines encore fortement présente dans le positivisme académique de la période entre-deux guerres a peut-être occulté une intention sous-jacente de *translatio imperii* qui semble sous-tendre l'appropriation de cet illustre modèle byzantin, resémantisé à chaque étape de son cheminement dans le monde slave d'une façon parallèle que la mémoire byzantine des peintures murales et des textiles liturgiques. En revenant sur ces manuscrits dans les *Mélanges Iorga*, Der Nersessian, réexamine les deux décors à la lumière d'un autre tétraévangile slavon, conservé à Lviv (Lwow),

³⁵ S. Der Nersessian, « Two Slavonic Parallels of the Greek Tetraevangelia: Paris 74 », *The Art Bulletin* 9, 1927, p. 223-274 ; réimprimé dans ead., *Études byzantines et arméniennes*, Louvain, 1973, p. 231-278. L'analyse s'appuie sur les photographies. L'auteur distingue deux paires recensons de manuscrits entre les évangiles d'Ivan Alexandre et leur reprise dans le manuscrit de Sucevitsa 23 d'une part et, d'autre part, entre le manuscrit d'Elisavetgrad et le codex moldave de Sucevitsa 24.

³⁶ « The Moldavian artist, misunderstanding his model, has placed in the middle of the stream a child clothed in a long tunic, with a shapeless object in his hand (fig. 164) ».

³⁷ « Happened to be carried to this country [Romania] after the conquest of Bulgaria by the Turks ». Voir aussi L. Yordanova, *The Gospels Manuscript of Tsar Ivan Alexander of Bulgaria* : <https://mappingeasterneurope.princeton.edu/item/the-gospels-manuscript-of-tsar-ivan-alexander-of-b.html>

réalisé sur commande de l'archevêque et métropolitain de Moldavie Anastase Crimcoviți grâce à la synergie d'un moine scribe et d'un peintre professionnel de Suceava. Dans cette étude qui accessoirement mesure l'importance de l'exposition de 1925 et des invitations de la Commission des Monuments historiques à découvrir les monastères de Moldavie aux spécialistes du monde byzantin, Der Nersessian, sans abandonner la méthode iconographique, replace la focale sur le contexte même de cette production manuscrite et rend justice à la stratégie de l'image élaborée par le prélat moldave et son entourage. Le centre artistique et l'« école vivante » dont elle crédite le métropolitain valent la reconnaissance d'un art roumain où se réincarne la mémoire byzantine, appuyant finement l'hommage au savant pionnier de la réinvention de Byzance³⁸.

Un autre aspect, moins heureux des collaborations bilatérales entreprises sous l'impulsion du Congrès d'études byzantines et des relations franco-roumaines, est révélé par les lettres de Grigore Nandriș (1895-1968), professeur de slavistique à l'Université de Cernăuți. Ses sollicitations réitérées auprès de Millet en vue de leur publication commune de la documentation valaque et moldave constituée pendant la mission Millet avec l'Armée de l'Orient, restées vraisemblablement sans réponse, trahissent une mésentente que semble confirmer la critique de l'écart méthodologique par rapport au modèle des Actes de Lavra³⁹. La parution de l'ouvrage en 1937 sans la contribution de Millet, simplement crédité de la collecte du corpus et des photographies qu'il avait communiqués à l'auteur douze ans plus tôt, provoqua sans surprise le courroux du savant français auprès de la fondation du roi Carol I, editrice du volume et des menaces d'une publication en réponse. L'âge et la guerre ont sans doute donné la priorité à d'autres causes.

Avec quelque précaution on peut reconnaître la « motivation serbe » qui aurait initialement orienté Gabriel Millet vers la Roumanie, pour l'étude des monuments les plus pertinents pour son traité sur l'art ancien serbe⁴⁰. Il est également vrai que Millet aspire à une envergure encyclopédique et embrasse l'ensemble du monde byzantin dès l'*École grecque* où quelques monuments de Roumanie, connus à partir des publications, sont cités à propos des grandes lignes de l'évolution de l'architecture chrétienne.

Dans l'*Art ancien serbe*, Cozia prolonge en Valachie la gloire de l'église palatine de Kruševač lorsque le voïévode allié au prince Lazare « reproduit le trait le plus caractéristique, le clocher au-dessus du narthex et imite jusqu'au détail des sculptures, jusqu'aux aigles et aux serpents qui déploient leurs belles lignes au tympan

³⁸ S. Der Nersessian, « Une nouvelle réplique slavonne du Paris gr. 74 et les manuscrits d'Anastase Crimcoviți », *Mélanges N. Iorga*, p. 695-725.

³⁹ 51 CDF 83 : lettres de Grigore Nandriș, documents photographiques et copies des lettres envoyées par Millet à ce sujet.

⁴⁰ G. Millet, *L'art ancien serbe. Les églises*, Paris, 1925. Cette idée semble partagée : L. Bréhier, *L'art roumain*, compte rendu de N. Iorga et G. Baș, *Histoire de l'art roumain ancien*, dans *Journal des savants* 21 (septembre-octobre), 1923, p. 215-216.



Fig. 8. Cozia après la restauration. Clichés de Th. Ghika-Budești reproduits par Millet dans les *Mélanges N. Iorga*

des fenêtres »⁴¹. Dans l'étude de cette « église serbe en terre valaque », en hommage à Iorga, Millet évoque aussi les travaux⁴² de l'architecte Ghika-Budești à qui il doit les deux clichés de Cozia reproduits dans l'étude (fig. 8)⁴³. Nicolae Ghika-Budești (1869-1943), instigateur-auteur du style néo-roumain, Inspecteur général des monuments historiques, membre de la Société française de minéralogie entretient des échanges avec Millet qu'il désigne comme « maître ». Leurs échanges à propos de Cozia comme la réception des travaux de Ghika-Budești révèlent accessoirement le pôle que constitue Paris pour les historiens de l'art des Balkans.

La marque serbe se retrouve également dans les peintures extérieures, comme à Moldovitsa, dont André Grabar identifie les sources à Peć, et en rapport avec les exonarthex à baies ouvertes reconnaissant le prestige moral écrit-il et l'autorité du patriarcat de Peć en Roumanie où cette peinture extérieure s'amplifie singulièrement⁴⁴.

⁴¹ G. Millet, *L'art ancien serbe*, p. 197, le voïévode n'est pas nommé.

⁴² Id., « Cozia et les églises serbes de la Morava », p. 828, n. 20.

⁴³ Millet reproduit aussi de relevé architectural de Ghika-Budești.

⁴⁴ A. Grabar, « L'origine des façades peintes des églises moldaves », dans *Mélanges Iorga*, p. 382. Grabar se garde de qualifier la formule de byzantine mais souligne la postérité loin du pays d'origine.

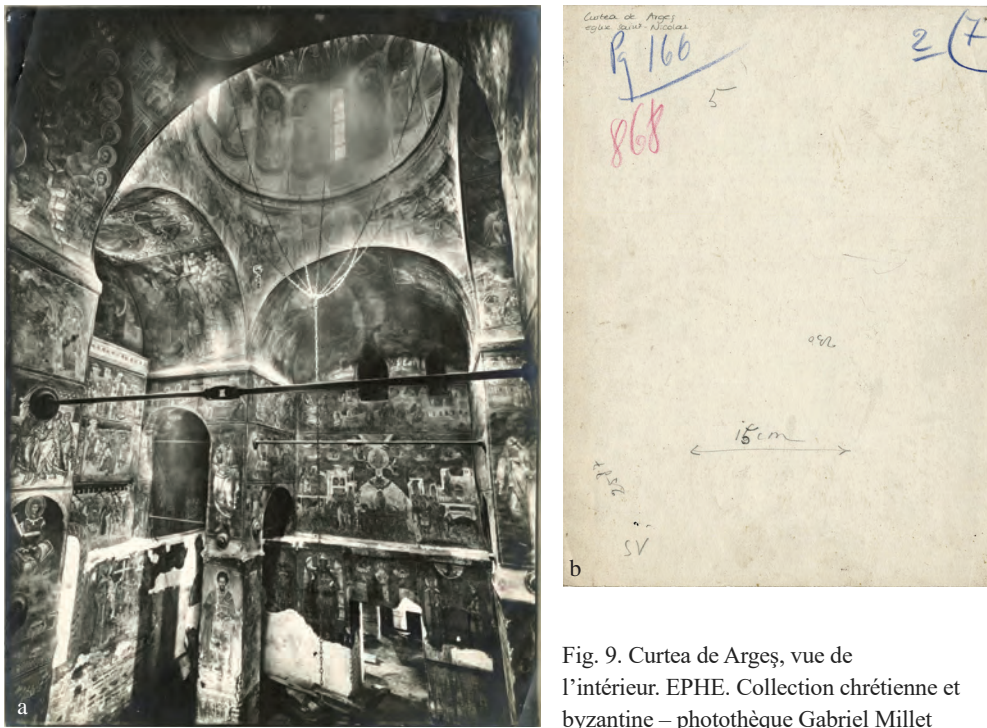


Fig. 9. Curtea de Argeș, vue de l'intérieur. EPHE. Collection chrétienne et byzantine – photothèque Gabriel Millet

Le patrimoine chrétien de Roumanie reste d'actualité jusqu'à la dernière conférence de Gabriel Millet à l'EPHE (c.r. 1937) où Ioan Stefanescu présente « les remarquables peintures latines des églises de Transylvanie » et Millet lui-même avec Hélène Lefort des Ylouses les broderies byzantines et roumaines étudiées à l'Athos et à l'exposition du Jeu de Paume⁴⁵ en 1925⁴⁶.

L'enseignement de Gabriel Millet à l'EPHE introduit le patrimoine roumain dans la géographie complexe de l'art byzantin, ce que la collection, encore insuffisamment exploitée pour sa composante roumaine, pérennise (fig. 9). La numérisation des albums et des documents rassemblés pendant les années qui précèdent et suivent le Congrès permettra de compléter la documentation déjà numérisée à partir des plaques de verre et en partie disponible sur la plateforme de PSL⁴⁷. Ces objets photographiques particuliers non seulement offrent des vues des monuments mais révèlent autant de regards et de mises en scène par les photographes professionnels qui travaillent

⁴⁵ 51 CDF 83 lettre de Juliette Renaud ; doc sur les styles ; fiches sur les objets (reliquaire de la fin du XV^e ; de Cotroceni 1685 ; reliure de 1681 copiant les gravures de l'Apocalypse de Jost Aman.

⁴⁶ G. Millet, « Christianisme byzantin et archéologie chrétienne », *Annuaire des sciences religieuses. Annuaire 1937-1938* 47, 1937, p. 61-65. La Collection de l'EPHE conserve un nombre considérable de clichés sur plaques de verre réalisés lors de l'exposition <https://bibnum.explore.psl.eu/s/psl/ark:/18469/2z84f#?xywh=-2363%2C-1%2C12000%2C9638>.

⁴⁷ <https://bibnum.explore.psl.eu/s/psl/ark:/18469/28hpmm>.

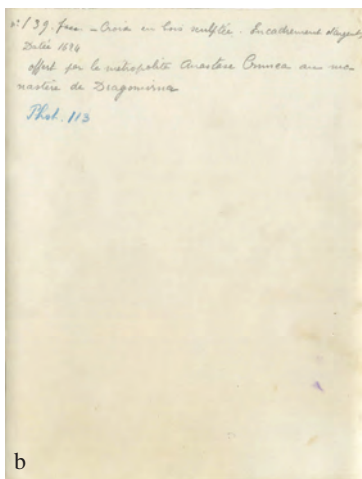


Fig. 10. Croix, photographie A. Chevalier. EPHE. Collection chrétienne et byzantine – photothèque Gabriel Millet, tirages



Fig. 11. Horezu. Détail de décor sculpté. Photographie de l'Institut d'Histoire de l'Art, Bucarest. EPHE, Collection chrétienne et byzantine – photothèque Gabriel Millet, tirages



Fig. 12. Cozia, l'entrée de l'église, EPHE, Collection chrétienne et byzantine – photothèque Gabriel Millet, Album A 85

parallèlement avec ceux du service des monuments ou mandatés par cette institution à la prise de vue et au montage des épreuves sans manquer d'apposer soigneusement leur cachet ou leur signature (fig. 10-12).

Le vif intérêt suscité par le patrimoine roumain chez les médiévistes et les savants en France et dont les études byzantines ont conservé la mémoire mais pas forcément l'ampleur pourrait motiver à l'heure actuelle une approche décloisonnée de la civilisation médiévale des Balkans où le chapeau de l'orthodoxie ne suffit ni à uniformiser les sensibilités diverses des populations ni à unifier les routes sur lesquelles

circulent des biens, des artisans et des artistes. L'ouverture à l'Europe centrale et la perméabilité avec l'Occident apparaissent comme une perspective fructueuse servie opportunément par des travaux récents⁴⁸. Dans une telle perspective, affranchie des préjugés nationaux ou religieux dans le sillage de Nicolae Iorga⁴⁹ mais attentive à l'histoire des idées et à la matérialité complexe et changeante des œuvres, l'histoire de leur découverte trouve tout son sens à travers les archives scientifiques et à la lumière des projecteurs photographiques d'antan. La redécouverte des archives photographiques des pays balkaniques, dont la Collection chrétienne et byzantine – Photothèque Gabriel Millet de l'EPHE conserve un précieux échantillon, est pour l'histoire de l'art byzantin une opportunité, comme la chute de l'Empire, l'opportunité d'une impulsion nouvelle.

Annexe 1

Lettre de G. Millet, EPHE, Centre Gabriel Millet
34 rue Hallé XIV
30 Décembre [1909]

Monsieur,

J'ai reçu exactement le mandat de 5^{fr}25 que vous avez bien voulu m'envoyer pour le tirage des photographies. Vous voudrez bien être indulgent si en cette saison la photographie nous fait un peu attendre.

Je vous remercie de vos indications au sujet des photographies de Roumanie.

J'en ai déjà reçu qui ont été offertes par le ministre de l'Instruction publique de Roumanie et par l'architecte Gabrielescu.

Le supplément de *l'Habitation byzantine*⁵⁰ est en vente chez Leroux 28 rue Bonaparte. La même librairie mettra en vente sous peu mes « Monuments byz. de Mistra ».

Je possède quelques vues du château d'Argos et de la citadelle de Patras ainsi que des forteresses serbes de Manassia et de Smederevo. Vous pouvez consulter sur les monuments du Royaume de Serbie Pokryškin, *Monuments de l'architecture orthodoxe dans le royaume de Serbie*, ouvrage qui contient un très grand nombre de photographies et ne coûte que 22 fr. publié par l'Académie des Beaux Art de S. Pétersbourg, et sur la Macédoine, le livre récent de Kondakov *Makedonja*.

⁴⁸ M. A. Rossi et A. I. Sullivan (éd.), *The Routledge Handbook of Byzantine Visual Culture in the Danube Regions, 1300-1600*, Routledge, 2024.

⁴⁹ Voir N.-Ș. Tanașoca, « Byzance dans la conscience historique des Roumains », dans A. Couderc, O. Delouis et P. Guran (éd.), *Héritages de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est à l'époque moderne et contemporaine*, Athènes, 2012, p. 263-283.

⁵⁰ L. De Beylié, *L'Habitation byzantine. Recherches sur l'architecture civile des Byzantins et son influence en Europe*, Paris, 1902 ; supplément : *Les anciennes maisons de Constantinople*, 1903.

Veillez agréer, Monsieur, l'assurance de ma haute considération.

G. Millet

Annexe 2

Collège de France, Archives, Fonds Millet, 51 CdF 83

Deux lettres de Th. Ghika-Budești.

Bucarest le 26 septembre 1938

8 Strada Sebastopol

Mon cher maître

Les diapositifs sont prêts. Ils sont sous verre car l'on ne trouve pas à Bukarest (*sic*) de films de cette dimension me dit-on. Il faudra en avoir soin afin qu'il ne se casse pas pendant le transport ! L'emballage sera bien fait et pour plus de sûreté je vais essayer de les confier ou bien à la légation de France ou bien au ministère des Affaires étrangères qui feront mettre le paquet dans la valise diplomatique. De cette façon, cela sera je pense, moins exposé à des accidents. Je joins à ma lettre la note du photographe. Je m'informerai de la façon la plus pratique pour la payer et je vous ferai savoir après que l'exposition sera faite comment il vaut le mieux procéder. Veillez agréer, je vous prie, cher maître, mes sentiments respectueux et dévoués.

Th. Ghika

Bucarest le 18 juillet 1938

Mon cher maître

Veillez, je vous prie excuser le retard que j'ai pris pour vous répondre.

La mort de Monsieur Tzacu le photographe de la Commission des Monuments historiques en est la cause.

Je ne sais pas trop jusqu'à quel point on peut compter sur la compétence de son adjoint qui le remplace, pour des questions d'un ordre assez délicat. Mais on me dit le plus grand bien.

Monsieur Brătulescu qui remplace M. Drăghiceanu au secrétariat de la Commission m'a promis les photographies pour le 1^{er} août.

Je me suis assuré aussi le concours de Monsieur Theodoru, l'architecte que vous connaissez. Je crois et qui m'a promis d'aller à Putna où il a affaire et de s'occuper du photographe. Je me propose d'y aller faire un tour aussi afin que le travail se fasse d'après les indications que vous m'avez données aussi exactement que possible.

Je veille et je vous promets une lettre pour le 1^{er} août.

Veillez agréer, ainsi que Madame Millet, mes salutations respectueuses et croire à mes sentiments dévoués et reconnaissants.

Th. Ghika

Byzantium in the Objectiff: Nikodim Kondakov, Jean Xavier Raoult and Their Photographic Expedition to Sinai

Elena N. Boeck

Abstract: Nikodim Kondakov (1844-1925), arguably the greatest art historian of the Russian empire, provided a new impetus to the study of Byzantine art. During decades of rigorous travels, he documented and introduced into scholarship previously unknown Byzantine monuments by embracing the power and promise of archaeological photography. The academic impact of Kondakov's publications was greatly enhanced by the participation of a brilliant French photographer, Jean Xavier Raoult (ca. 1835-ca. 1890). This article analyses their most challenging venture, the expedition to Sinai in 1881. This journey contributed to advancing a more objective conception of Byzantine art via the collaboration between archaeology and photography. As a key example of how the Kondakov-Raoult partnership advanced the state of the art of academic knowledge, this article also analyses the historiographic importance of the earliest extant photograph of the Transfiguration mosaic.

Keywords: Nikodim Kondakov, Jean Xavier Raoult, Byzantine art, history of photography, archaeological photography, Sinai monastery, Transfiguration mosaic, Odessa

In the 1870s-1880s, when the history of Byzantine art was just coming into its own as an academic discipline, much of the field's key terrain was still *terra incognita*. While western European scholars could deride whole periods of Byzantine artistic production as decadent or even "degenerate", a different academic vision of Byzantium was emerging in the east. Nikodim Kondakov (1844-1925), arguably the greatest art historian of the Russian empire, provided a new impetus to the study of

Byzantine art.¹ He accorded Byzantium both creative agency as well as independent development outside the selective, constrictive western canon of medieval art. During decades of rigorous travels, he documented and introduced into scholarship previously unknown Byzantine monuments by embracing the power and promise of archaeological photography. The expeditions launched him on the road to international fame and stature, which would culminate in his appearance at the First Congress of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest in 1924, the momentous event which is celebrated in this volume. Kondakov's attendance at the Congress, according to Henri Grégoire, caused great emotion and palpable enthusiasm among its participants.² The Congress closely aligned with Kondakov's eightieth birthday and would become his "swan song" upon the academic stage.³ The steering committee for the newly inaugurated journal *Byzantion*, which met in Bucharest at the Congress, even decided to dedicate the first volume of the journal to Kondakov.⁴

Though largely forgotten today, the academic impact of Kondakov's publications was greatly enhanced by the participation of a brilliant French photographer, Jean Xavier Raoult (ca. 1835-ca. 1890). The two men collaborated on the publication of the Chora mosaics, the Sinai treasures, and the arts of the Caucasus. Theirs was a special business relationship, a successful partnership, and, for a time, something of a

¹ I would like to thank Andrei Timotin and Petre Guran for their invitation to participate in a stimulating conference, for their wonderful hospitality in Bucharest, and for organizing an excellent excursion to Romanian monasteries.

The enormous contributions of Nikodim Kondakov to the shaping of Byzantine art history were greatly downplayed during the Soviet period. Irina L. Kyzlasova and Svetlana O. Vialova revitalized interest in his legacy, correspondence, and impact on Russian-language scholarship. See I. L. Kyzlasova, *Akademik N. P. Kondakov: poiski i sversheniia*, St Petersburg, 2018; *Mir Kondakova: publikatsii, stat'i, katalog vystavki*, Moscow, 2004; S. O. Vialova published ground-breaking works on the Sinai album and the correspondence of Kondakov preserved in the St Petersburg library. For bibliography, see S. O. Vialova, "Fotograficheskoe nasledie XIX veka: N. P. Kondakov i ego 'al'bom vidov i drevnostei sinaiskikh'", *Fotografiia. Izobrazhenie. Dokument* 1, 2010, p. 15-21. For a useful introduction to Byzantine art history in imperial Russia and Kondakov's contributions, see M. Lidova, "The Rise of Byzantine Art and Archaeology in Late Imperial Russia", in J. Elsner (ed.), *Empires of Faith in Late Antiquity: Histories of Art and Religion from India to Ireland*, Cambridge, 2020, p. 128-160. For a brief contribution in a Romanian venue, see A. Adashinskaya, "An 'Ancient Argonaut' in the Service of the Empire: The Research Expeditions of Nikodim Pavlovich Kondakov", <https://arthist.ro/2020/11/an-ancient-argonaut-in-the-service-of-the-empire-the-research-expeditions-of-nikodim-pavlovich-kondakov>.

² According to H. Grégoire, "...son apparition au milieu des congressistes, dont la plupart se proclament ses élèves, provoqua un frémissement d'émotion et un véritable mouvement d'enthousiasme". H. Grégoire, "Un Congrès d'études byzantines à Bucarest (fin avr. 1924)", *Échos d'Orient* 137, 1925, p. 58.

³ For a recent study of Kondakov's last years, see E. P. Serapionova, "Poslednii prazhskii period zhizni Nikodima Pavlovicha Kondakova (1922-1925)", *Slavistica* 29.1, 2025, p. 74-85. The article does not, however, highlight the Bucharest Congress.

⁴ P. Graindor and H. Grégoire, "Avant-propos", *Byzantion* 1, 1924, p. vi.

friendship. This article analyses their most challenging venture, the expedition to Sinai in 1881.⁵ This journey became a launching point for Kondakov's academic career, even though it was far from an immediate success. It also contributed to advancing a more objective conception of Byzantine art via the collaboration between archaeology and photography. As a key example of how the Kondakov-Raoult partnership advanced the state of the art of academic knowledge, this article also analyses the historiographic importance of the earliest extant photograph of the Transfiguration mosaic.

The publications of the results of the Sinai expedition were momentous for the careers of both Raoult and Kondakov.⁶ The first publication consisted of two texts under one cover authored by Kondakov – his travelogue and description of the Byzantine treasures of the Sinai monastery, including the Transfiguration mosaic and various Byzantine and Slavonic manuscripts. *Puteshestvie na Sinai v 1881 godu. Iz putevykh vpechatlenii. Drevnosti Sinaiskago monastyria (The Journey to Sinai in the Year 1881. From Travel Impressions. Antiquities of the Sinai Monastery)* was a hasty publication, written in Russian, and widely circulated as a separate offprint of the annual journal of Kondakov's own Novorossiia University.⁷ The travelogue stands out in the body of Kondakov's otherwise scientific, and rather dry prose, for featuring strong personal political opinions (he detested the British), visceral comments on the hardships of the journey (waves of cockroaches that terrorized them on a small boat), as well as extensive descriptions of people (the Bedouins) and places (the European refashioning of Cairo). He also chose to write the travelogue in the first-person plural, thus making Raoult and himself into a joint narrative entity, perhaps to position it as a grand scientific expedition. Only occasionally does he break away from that narrative mode and switch to first-person singular. His publication was a defining milestone for the study of the Orthodox East, it was in dialogue with the international interests of the Russian imperial government, and it was revelatory because for the first time any of the Sinai treasures (architecture, icons, and manuscripts) were captured as photographs rather than drawings.⁸ In Kondakov's own words the greatest scholarly result of the

⁵ J. Ebersolt noted: "Avec l'année 1881 s'ouvre la période des grandes missions scientifiques en Orient". J. Ebersolt, "M. Nicodime Pavlovitch Kondakov", *Byzantion* 1, 1924, p. 3.

⁶ S. O. Vialova, "Fotograficheskoe nasledie...", p. 17-18. Vialova was the dedicated scholar who introduced the photographic volume into scholarship. She has published brief, but highly informative articles on the subject, and introduced many new archival materials into scholarship. In addition to the aforementioned article, see especially ead., "Sinaiskii al'bom N. P. Kondakova", *Rossiia i Khristianskii Vostok* 1, 1997, p. 207-225.

⁷ From volume 33 of *Zapiski Imperatorskago Novorossiiskago universiteta*, 1882.

⁸ N. Kondakov published as an appendix the full list of the photographs taken on the trip. In both of his reviews of this publication, H. Omont engaged only with the list of the manuscripts. See H. Omont's reviews of Kondakov's *Voyage au Sinai en l'année 1881. Impressions de voyage. Les antiquités du monastère du Sinai*, published in *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* 43, 1882, p. 667-678, and in *Le Cabinet historique* 28, 1882, p. 604-606.

voyage “consists of the photographs...”.⁹ And yet despite the great importance of these images, Kondakov and Raoult struggled mightily to disseminate knowledge of these treasures.

The second publication of the journey was a photographic album of over 100 images, *Vues et antiquités du Sinâi par M. le Professeur N. Kandakoff et Phot. J. Raoult*, a bibliophile rarity already at the time. This was an album of ca. 100 glued-in-by-hand photographs, which had been taken by Raoult on the journey. The volume was self-financed and jointly owned by the two men, with enough photographs created in order to have produced ca. 15 copies of the album.¹⁰ The volume was simultaneously an economic fiasco and an academic marvel. As I discuss below, it was displayed in 1884 at the exhibition of the Sixth Archaeological Congress in Odessa and caused a sensation.¹¹ Both men would receive delayed recognition for their labours. Raoult would eventually be awarded the order of Stanislav of the third degree and concomitant ennoblement, while Kondakov received the coveted Lomonosov award in 1883.¹²

There is one complete album in the Russian National Library, St Petersburg, and it features 107 photographs.¹³ Raoult had travelled to France in order to sell subscriptions to the volume in Paris. He reported success in selling three albums to institutions and private individuals there, but the locations of those original albums are not presently known.¹⁴ However, this author has learned of the existence of a simulacrum – a copy of the album created at the behest of Gabriel Millet containing 102 photographs, as well as copies of photographs on glass plates.¹⁵ Among these images we encounter the first photograph of the Transfiguration mosaic which will be analysed below.

As I have previously demonstrated, Kondakov was keenly aware of the seminal importance of photography for the expansion of knowledge.¹⁶ He argued already

⁹ Kondakov’s letter to V. V. Iagich dated 6 June 1881, published in S. O. Vialova, “Iz perepiski N. P. Kondakova s A. F. Bychkovym i V. V. Stasovym”, *Vspomogatel’nye istoricheskie distsipliny* 27, 2000, p. 218.

¹⁰ S. O. Vialova, “Fotograficheskoe nasledie...”, p. 18-19.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹³ The National Library of Russia 15.31.1.86.

¹⁴ Kondakov’s letter to V. V. Stasov dated 1 May 1883, published in S. O. Vialova, “Iz perepiski...”, p. 213.

¹⁵ I wish to thank Ioanna Rapti (EPHE) for sharing with me her knowledge of the *Photothèque Gabriel Millet, Collection chrétienne et byzantine* (EPHE), and for showing me this volume preserved in the EPHE collection. I am also grateful to Mathilde Lorilliard, archivist of the Humathèque, for facilitating access to the glass plates of the photographs.

¹⁶ E. N. Boeck, “Mosaics and Mavericks: Nikodim Kondakov’s Pioneering Studies of the Chora (1880-1886)”, in B. Pitarakis (ed.), *From Istanbul to Byzantium: The Path to Rediscovery, 1800-1960*,

in 1881 that photography could have resolved many questions and controversies regarding various monuments of St Catherine's. It would take the famous photographic expeditions of Kurt Weitzmann to Sinai in the 1950s (following in the footsteps of the Soterious team in the 1940s) to firmly institutionalize access to the Sinai treasures. Had Kondakov succeeded in securing funding for the planned publication and wider dissemination of Raoult's photographs, more attention would have been devoted to the Sinai treasures even earlier.

Jean Xavier Raoult as a historiographic ghost

Jean Xavier Raoult (ca.1835-ca. 1890) was a French adventurer and talented photographer, who spent two decades working in the Russian empire and was based in Odessa (1860s-1880s). He garnered considerable contemporary recognition in Russia and France for his ethnographic photographic album *Collection de types de peuples de Russie, Roumanie et Bulgarie*. His photographs were hailed as "marvellous", and celebrated for their technical perfection and ingenious compositions.¹⁷ The bicultural life that propelled him to the threshold of fame also contributed to the complication of his legacy, including his very name: the spelling variants of his first and last names in Russian are different from French (Zh. Raul', I. Raul'), and his first name is frequently Russified (Jean becomes Ivan or Ivan Petrovich).¹⁸ The remarkable photographer became something of a historiographic ghost, lost between different cultural narratives and disciplinary traditions.¹⁹

We do not have a clear picture of either his background or training. Rumoured to have originated from Marseille, he set up a photographic studio in the 1860s on the most fashionable street of Odessa, a new city on the northern edge of the Black Sea which was an emerging centre of Russia's hugely profitable grain trade.²⁰ He operated the studio until 1884 and traded on his fashionable French identity, advertising his craft as "French photography". Raoult had also traversed the vastness of the Russian empire

Istanbul, 2021, p. 474-85; ead., "First Encounters of a Chora Kind: Nikodim Kondakov and the Emancipation of Byzantine Art", in ead. (ed.), *Afterlives of Byzantine Monuments in Post-Byzantine Times* (= *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, new series, 3), Heidelberg, 2021, p. 201-218.

¹⁷ V. V. Stasov, *Fotograficheskii i fototipicheskii kollektii imperatorskoi publichnoi biblioteki*, St Petersburg, 1885, p. 38-39.

¹⁸ For an introduction, see A. P. Popov, "Raul', Zhan", in id., *Rossiiskie fotografy (1839-1930): slovar'-spravochnik*, vol. 2, Kolomna, 2013, p. 237-239.

¹⁹ He merited a brief and rather incomplete entry in the *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*. See A. Loginov, "Raoult, Jean (Ivan Petrovich)", in J. Hannavy (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*, London, 2007, p. 1183-1184.

²⁰ For an excellent introduction, see P. Herlihy, *Odessa: A History, 1794-1914*, Cambridge, MA, 1986. Of all the many works devoted to Odessa I highlight this particular volume for its path-breaking role in western scholarship and in gratitude to the late Professor Herlihy for some stimulating conversations in 2007.



Fig. 1. Peasants of the Nizhegorodskaya guberniia, from the album *Collection de types des peuples de Russie, Roumanie et Bulgarie (Neskol'ko narodnykh tipov Rossii)*.

Photographer Jean Xavier Raoult.
The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach
Division of Art, Prints and Photographs:
Photography Collection, The New York
Public Library. New York Public Library
Digital Collections.
Accessed 26 October 2025.
<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/fc64e180-c6ba-012f-942b-58d385a7bc34>

and photographed its diverse peoples to great acclaim, while he also documented the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878. Raoult is believed to have departed Russia around 1884, shortly after his final trip with Kondakov to Constantinople. He was rumoured to have returned to southern France, possibly Marseille, where he is presumed to have died around 1890.

Jean Xavier Raoult as photographer

Raoult's work came to the notice of an important, astute, and discerning contemporary observer, the celebrated Russian critic Vladimir Stasov (1824-1906). In order to understand Raoult's personality, philosophy, and accomplishments as a creative photographer, it is useful to examine Stasov's assessment of Raoult's first celebrated *baustein* – a large album of picturesque nationalities of the Russian empire, unassumingly titled as *Collection de types des peuples de Russie, Roumanie et Bulgarie (Neskol'ko narodnykh tipov Rossii)* (fig. 1). He assembled them into a vast collection over the course of several years of traversing the empire:

... the album consisting of 224 photographs, taken on site [*s natury*] in the course of the 1870s and 1880s by the Odessa photographer Raul' (J. X. Raoult), who has now left his craft [*svoe delo*] and who forever returned to France, in 1883 [*sic*, it

was actually in or after 1884]. This album can be considered a true chef-d'œuvre of technical production [*proizvodstva*] and represents at the same time a remarkable wealth of artistic [*khudozhestvennago*] and scientific material: the choice of types and poses, picturesque [*zhivopisnoe*] posing and grouping of the figures captured by the lens [*vziatykh ob"ektivom figury*], and in some instances also the picturesqueness of the landscape, which serves as the backdrop to the paintings [*kartin*], and finally, the richness of the national [*natsional'nykh*] or tribal [*plemennykh*] facial types [*fizionomii*] and outfits [*kostiumov*], reproduced [*vosproizvedennykh*] in the photographs of Raoult, make his album an extraordinarily outstanding phenomenon [*iavleniem neobyknovenno vydaiushchimsia*]. That is why Raoult was granted his just reward [*spravedlivost'*], when he was awarded the highest honorary awards at the Paris geographical exhibition of 1875 (for the then still incomplete album) and at the world international exhibition [meaning Paris] of 1878. On account of the enormity of the money spent [*zatrachennykh sredstv*], Raoult could not produce too great a quantity of the albums, and those few complete specimens, which were created by him, constitute now the property of royal personages or large scientific institutions. Our specimen was the last of those prepared by Raoult and initially intended as an offering [*podnesenie*] to the Danish king Christian IX ...²¹

This testimony is highly revealing. We encounter an ambitious, self-assured, and adventurous risk-taker, who is able to implement a long-term plan. In order to execute this project, Raoult would have had to have been fluent enough in Russian in order to communicate with his models. From Kondakov we learn that he also spoke some basic Turkish.²² Since the photographic volume was an expensive, multi-year, prestige project, we can imagine a crafty strategist, who balanced income-generating projects (the studio in Odessa) with a high-stakes artistic gambit. We learn that Raoult's investment paid off, but only to an extent. Though he garnered international prestige, he was not able to realize full profits (either financial or in terms of patronage) from the venture. Thus, the emerging psychological portrait is that of a self-made man willing to stake major sums in his quest for international recognition, while earning a respectable living in the provinces.

What do we learn about Raoult as an artist? Stasov's gushing assessment of the album as an "extraordinarily outstanding phenomenon" is superlative as a stand-alone statement. It is also an exceptional statement of praise. In the eyes of the important critic, Raoult had clearly become a star. He was celebrated for all aspects of photographic production: first, as a technical virtuoso; second, for his mastery of creatively assembling the picturesque subjects and settings; and, finally, for effectively capturing them. His departure from the Russian scene was both noticed and noted.

In collaboration with Kondakov, Raoult excelled in the documentary precision of unmediated exactitude. Raoult's ability to adjust to a scholar's needs and archaeological

²¹ V. V. Stasov, *Fotograficheskii i fototipicheskii kolleksii...*, p. 38-39.

²² N. P. Kondakov, *Puteshestvie na Sinai...*, p. 14.

way of seeing was impressive. What is even more impressive, especially when working in the gruelling conditions of field photography, was his technical virtuosity. Kondakov in private correspondence declared Raoult's photographs from the Sinai expedition to be its greatest result: "Now I am working with the [collected] materials, but I most definitively do not know what I will do with them, since the main result [material] consists of the photographs with colours".²³

The photographer, in turn, ranked his collaboration with the Novorossiia University among his signal accomplishments. Raoult's sensitivity to acclaim and accolades was even featured on his photographs. The Sinai expedition photographs bear a substantive itemized list:

Phie par J. X. Raoult, Chevalier de plusieurs ordres, Membre collaborateur de l'Université Impériale d'Odessa, Mention honorable de S. M. l'Empereur de toutes les Russies, Médaille à l'Exposition Universelle de Paris 1878, Membre de la Société de Photographie de Paris (Odessa).

The obverse of his Paris medals was carefully represented in outline, and centred below the photographic image. All but one of the photographer's claims were true. It is most improbable that Raoult was a "chevalier de plusieurs ordres", because it was Kondakov who finally made that dream come true with a Russian order of merit, as a long-fought-for reward for the Sinai expedition.

Odessa as chance and choice

Neither charismatic nor well connected, Kondakov was a diligent workaholic. A college friend steered him towards the new field of art history, by prophetically arguing that he would be able to find an academic position after graduation rather than be reduced to begging for a job.²⁴ Following the completion of his bachelor's degree in Moscow in 1865, a university job seemed like an impossible dream for several years. He struggled through eighteen-hour work days, exhausted and dispirited as a school teacher and a private tutor.²⁵ Then fortune smiled upon him in 1870, when he received an offer to teach at the very new Novorossiia University in Odessa (established in 1865).²⁶ Though Kondakov was not the first choice for the position, in hindsight he was clearly the best choice.²⁷

Though his relationship with Odessa was a marriage of convenience, the city became a most fortuitous place for propelling his career development and subsequent rise to prominence. He would remember it as a convenient point for efficient travel

²³ Letter to V. V. Iagich of 6 June 1881, published in S. O. Vialova, "Iz perepiski...", p. 218.

²⁴ N. P. Kondakov, *Vospominaniia i dmy*, ed. I. L. Kyzlasova, Moscow, 2002, p. 65-66.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 108, 122, 125-126.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

abroad,²⁸ and a place situated between East and West.²⁹ His extensive travels were instrumental to his eventual rise to the top of the art historical field. Moreover, he studiously participated in the university's excavation projects along the northern Black Sea coast for several years.³⁰

In the nineteenth century, Odessa came to epitomize modernity, ambition, and cosmopolitanism in the Russian empire. It was a new city and a strategic port, founded in 1794 at the order of Catherine II, as part of the grand vision for transforming the Black Sea from the Ottoman lake into Russia's entry point into international maritime trade.³¹ In addition, Odessa was a major starting point for the pilgrimage to the East for Christian and Muslim pilgrims of the Russian empire.³²

Kondakov arrived in the city in 1871, when its fortunes were still on the upswing as the grain trade boomed, propelled by steam and rail technologies. While Russia's defeat in the Crimean War stifled its naval ambitions, the government poured money into Odessa, establishing it as a major international grain trading centre and a key node in passenger transportation. The headquarters of the Russian Steam Navigation and Trade Company were relocated to Odessa from St Petersburg in 1861.³³ Concomitantly, Odessa was connected with Moscow by railway in 1872.³⁴ The embrace of the steam engine revolution meant that science and technology were particularly dynamic in the city: "Odessa became the centre of technological innovation in maritime transport in the region".³⁵ This also meant the rise of more affordable, international mass

²⁸ A. V. Shamanaev, "N. P. Kondakov i VI arkheologicheskii s"ezd v Odesse (1884)", *Nauchnye Vedomosti. Seriya Istoriiia. Politologiia. Ekonomika. Informatika* 1.96, 2011, p. 71.

²⁹ N. P. Kondakov, *Vospominaniia...*, p. 136.

³⁰ P. A. Alipov, "Voprosy mezhsivilizatsionnogo vzaimodeistviia v Rossiiskoi nauke rubezha XIX-XX vekov: Trudy N. P. Kondakova v otsenkakh G. V. Vernadskogo i D. V. Ainalova", *Novyi istoricheskii vestnik* 4.78, 2023, p. 27.

³¹ E. Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa: People, Spaces, Identities*, Leiden, 2018; P. Herlihy (ed.), *Odessa Recollected: The Port and the People*, Boston, 2018.

³² N. A. Chrissidis, "The Athonization of Pious Travel: Shielded Shrines, Shady Deals and Pilgrimage Logistics in Late Nineteenth-Century Odessa" (special section on pilgrimage ed. C. Chulos with commentary by C. Worobec), *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 28-29, 2012-2013, p. 169-191. For background, see E. M. Kane, *Russian Hajj: Empire and the Pilgrimage to Mecca*, Ithaca, 2015; L. A. Gerd, *Russian Policy in the Orthodox East: The Patriarchate of Constantinople (1878-1914)*, Berlin, 2014; L. Gerd, "A Russian Island in the Orthodox East: Mount Athos in the 19th-early 20th Centuries", *Vestnik Rossiiskogo fonda fundamental'nykh issledovani. Gumanitarnye i obshchestvennye nauki* 3, 2018, p. 27-36.

³³ A. Sydorenko, "The Russian Steam Navigation and Trading Company: The Transition from Sail to Steam in the Russian Black Sea (1856-1914)", in A. Delis (ed.), *Mediterranean Seafarers in Transition: Maritime Labour, Communities, Shipping and the Challenge of Industrialization, 1850s-1920s*, Leiden, 2023, p. 490.

³⁴ P. Herlihy (ed.), *Odessa...*, p. 216. The line was inefficiently laid out, and the decision-making was hampered by the factionalism of court politics.

³⁵ A. Sydorenko, "The Russian Steam Navigation..." p. 480.

travel on steam ships via the recently established routes to places such as Istanbul and Alexandria.³⁶ The policies of the imperial government had a notable impact on Kondakov, who recollected that he owed his academic career to frequent trips abroad in order to study monuments both in the West and the Greek East. He also noted that these trips became affordable in his time.³⁷ Incidentally, he and Raoul hurried desperately across the desert at the end of their visit to the Sinai monastery in order to arrive in time for the departure of a Russian steam ship from Alexandria.

A pioneering collaboration: Archaeology and photographic reproduction

There was a pioneering partnership, an important collaboration between a scholar who travelled and an adventurer-photographer who liked to explore. They were united by a passion for collecting – while for Kondakov this translated into images of Byzantine monuments, Raoul “collected” curious ethnographic types and picturesque views. Their professional collaboration was also a cordial relationship, since Kondakov travelled “in the company of Raoul” for months at a time.³⁸

In February of 1881, just after getting approval for academic leave in order to undertake the expedition, Kondakov was optimistically planning a grand tour, which was to include Constantinople, İznik (Nicaea), Thessaloniki, Patmos, and Sinai (as well as other places in Greece and Asia Minor). For Constantinople he had highlighted one particular goal – “photographing of the mosque church in [*sic*] Kahrie Dzamisi [i.e., Chora]”.³⁹

Because Kondakov had failed to secure subventions for travel from the ministry of education,⁴⁰ his plan had to be drastically curtailed. He was so bitter about it that he opened the published travelogue of the Sinai journey with a line that appraised the reader of his predicament: “the journey to Sinai, undertaken by me as a private venture [*chastnym obrazom*] in the company of photographer Raoul”.⁴¹ His bitterness resurfaced again when he discussed the absence of means for the publication of the photographs within the context of making the monuments a shared scientific heritage:

Not having access to the funds for the production of ... images [*izgotovleniia takikh snimkov*], except for those few monuments, which constituted the most important

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 499.

³⁷ N. P. Kondakov, *Vospominaniia...*, p. 71.

³⁸ V. V. Stasov, review of N. P. Kondakov’s *Puteshestvie na Sinai...*, in *Zhurnal ministerstva narodnago prosveshcheniia* 226, 1883, p. 326.

³⁹ Kondakov’s letter to A. F. Bychkov, 6 February 1881, published in S. O. Vialova, “Iz perepiski...”, p. 212.

⁴⁰ S. O. Vialova, “Sinaiiskii al’bom...”, p. 207.

⁴¹ N. P. Kondakov, *Puteshestvie na Sinai...*, p. i.

part of my journey, I consider, still necessary to briefly describe all the monuments of antiquity, which are preserved in the Sinai monastery ...⁴²

This unfortunate situation meant that the fundamental publication which he had envisioned as the result of the journey, would not and could not materialize, even after his return. Stasov would attempt to remedy the blow suffered by Kondakov by publishing a glowing, extensive, and high-profile review of the *Journey to Sinai*, which he opened with the statement that Kondakov had heretofore not received the recognition which he deserved for his impressive scholarship.⁴³

Kondakov's correspondence regarding the Sinai venture reveals the extent to which the business partnership between Kondakov and Raoult was built on mutual trust, and the degree to which that trip strained their relationship. It also provides a better understanding of the economics of knowledge production. It is most likely that Raoult advanced most of the necessary funds in order to salvage the journey, and, by virtue of bringing his own photographic equipment, exposed himself to an even greater financial risk. The expedition (the journey and the photographic equipment and supplies) cost the staggering sum of 3,000 rubles,⁴⁴ equivalent to roughly \$73,000 in today's currency.⁴⁵ Despite the vast expenditure, the travellers suffered enormous hardship and had to cut costs on even the barest of necessities. In assessing the total financial outlay, we must also take into account that Raoult produced 1500 individual photographs. The resulting album (fifteen copies of hand-glued images) was intended to sell for 100 rubles (roughly equivalent to \$2,500 today), which meant that the venture was almost certain to incur a loss.⁴⁶

The trip was both bold and ambitious. Though steam ships and rail networks made movement in the Mediterranean easier, it was still an age when travel in the eastern Mediterranean could be dangerous. Greece, for instance, was still deemed unsafe in the 1870s by the British government.⁴⁷ A private venture without a single,

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁴³ According to Stasov: "It is surprising that Mr. Kondakov to this day has not received just recognition for his impressive work [the first book], and the book has not received in the academic world that honourable place, which it deserves". V. V. Stasov, review of N. P. Kondakov's *Puteshestvie na Sinai...*, p. 325.

⁴⁴ Kondakov's letter to A. F. Bychkov, dated 17 November 1881, published in S. O. Vialova, "Sinaiskii al'bom...", p. 223.

⁴⁵ The exchange rate then was \$1 = 1,3 rubles, which converts to \$2,308. The current sum was arrived at using inflation calculator, <https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1881?amount=2308> (last consulted, 26 October 2025).

⁴⁶ The sum was calculated using inflation calculator, <https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1881?amount=77> (last consulted, 26 October 2025).

⁴⁷ The hostage crisis of 1870, when a group of prominent British visitors were kidnapped at Marathon was still fresh in memory, especially since some hostages were murdered after the failed negotiations. D. Harlan, "Travel, Pictures, and a Victorian Gentleman in Greece", *Hesperia: The Journal of the*

dedicated, multi-lingual guide through Ottoman territories was certainly audacious. Kondakov and Raoult navigated the travel logistics by relying on an early travel guide book, *Itinéraire de l'Orient* by Adolphe Joanne and Émile Isambert (first issued in 1861).⁴⁸ During the journey they lost patience with each other, suffered from sunburns, and fell off of camels. The adventurous gambit precipitated a financial crisis which lasted for nearly three years, putting a great strain on their relationship.

It is reasonable to infer that Kondakov was fundraising until the last minute, and therefore the travellers had to delay the journey until late in the sailing season. As a result, they faced inclement weather and rough seas. The very difficult roundtrip lasted 51 days (the passage to Sinai alone was 23 days).⁴⁹ It included such perils as a ferocious storm in a prodigiously leaking boat on the crossing of the Red Sea and swarms of roaches which so loudly attacked their food supply that they were awoken at night.⁵⁰ Traveling without a servant or a guide, the journey was painfully onerous: “With limited means our luggage was truly a burden [*otiagoshchenie*]”.⁵¹ The bulk of the luggage consisted of Raoult’s photographic equipment, but this turned out to be a blessing. It insured a welcome reception at Sinai: “At the monastery we were treated very courteously [*liubezno*], which is understandable, on account of the photographic camera”.⁵² Shortly after returning from Sinai, Kondakov declared to various correspondents: “The journey was extremely long and so difficult, that if I had known how it would be, I would have never undertaken it”.⁵³ He also quipped that “In Odessa we were presumed dead and it was an unpleasant surprise [in Odessa] when I returned”.⁵⁴

And yet, their pioneering spirit is on full display in the two volumes produced in the aftermath of their fateful journey. Kondakov’s textual narrative of the Sinai adventure mirrors the visual structure of the *Vues*. Both begin with the journey (the Bedouins, the desert, the mountains, the Bedouins in the desert and among the mountains), then transition to the architecture of the Sinai monastery, and conclude with the Byzantine and Glagolitic manuscripts.

American School of Classical Studies at Athens 78.3, 2009, p. 423.

⁴⁸ N. P. Kondakov, *Puteshestvie na Sinai...*, p. 1.

⁴⁹ V. V. Stasov, review of N. P. Kondakov’s *Puteshestvie na Sinai...*, p. 327.

⁵⁰ N. P. Kondakov, *Puteshestvie na Sinai...*, p. 15-18, roaches at p. 15.

⁵¹ Kondakov’s letter to V. V. Stasov dated 17 June 1881, published in S. O. Vialova, “Sinaiskii al’bom...”, p. 217.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Letter to V. V. Iagich of 6 June 1881, published in S. O. Vialova, “Iz perepiski...”, p. 218. The same sentiments are in the letter to Stasov, 17 June 1881, published in S. O. Vialova, “Sinaiskii al’bom...”, p. 217.

⁵⁴ Letter to V. V. Iagich of 6 June 1881, published in S. O. Vialova, “Iz perepiski...”, p. 218.

The two volumes also reveal the promise of photography for scholarship. The possibilities of documentary field photography, as opposed to staged and romanticized images of new discoveries, were not yet clearly realized.⁵⁵ While the German state-sponsored excavations at Olympia, which were begun in the late 1870s, but published in the 1890s,⁵⁶ included numerous, carefully staged photographs of new finds, archaeologists were only beginning to harness the power of the medium for documentary purposes or for landscape archaeology.⁵⁷ As late as 1898, in the age of hand-cameras (rather than the earlier heavy and bulky stand cameras), photography enthusiasts had to exhort archaeologists to appreciate the possibilities of photography to capture the vanishing monuments:

Archaeology now claims our attention, and this furnishes plenty of scope for the photographer, inasmuch as examples everywhere abound. There are numerous relics of a bygone age still existing; ruined castles, ruined abbeys, ruined monasteries, and ruined churches; all of these could be secured photographically ere they pass for ever away. In our own day improvements are always being made; old houses and ancient landmarks disappear, leaving nothing, unless, happily, a photograph behind. [...] In connexion with archaeology, one can but regret that Dr. Schliemann and Mr. Gladstone, that marvellous man who seemed to have time for everything, and to whom nothing came amiss, could not have had the assistance of photography in their researches on the buried cities of Troy.⁵⁸

Kondakov and Raoult established a collaboration between archaeology and photography over two decades prior to this exhortation, and well before the advent of the more convenient hand-cameras. In his review, Stasov emphasized the scientific importance of this kind of collaboration:

From Sinai professor Kondakov brought back very substantive artistic-historical material. One half of it consists of the text of his book, the other – the photographic album of images, which were made under his observation and leadership [*nabliudeniem i rukovodstvom*] by the photographer Raoult. This “Sinai Album” [i.e., *Vues*] holds particular importance precisely because, all previous travellers either did not include

⁵⁵ F. N. Bohrer, “Edges of Art: Photographic Albums, Archaeology, and Representation”, *Studies in the History of Art* 77, 2011, p. 225.

⁵⁶ E. Curtis and F. Adler (eds.), *Olympia: Die Ergebnisse der von dem deutschen Reich veranstalteten Ausgrabung*, Berlin, 1890-1897.

⁵⁷ For a broad overview of the subject, see F. N. Bohrer, *Edges of Art: Photography and Archaeology*, London, 2011; C. L. Lyons, J. K. Papadopoulos, L. S. Stewart et al. (eds.), *Antiquity and Photography: Early Views of Ancient Mediterranean Sites*, Los Angeles, 2005. For the Ottoman empire, see R. G. Ousterhout, *John Henry Haynes: A Photographer and Archaeologist in the Ottoman Empire, 1881-1900*, Istanbul, 2011. See also B. Anderson, *Palmyra 1885: The Wolfe Expedition and the Photographs of John Henry Haynes*, Hawick, 2016.

⁵⁸ J. H. Baldock, “Photography in Relation to Science”, *British Journal of Photography*, 17 June 1898, p. 394.

any drawings with their descriptions of Sinai, or included hand-drawn images [*ot ruki*], which were most inaccurate and unsatisfactory. The “Sinai Album”, quite the opposite, consists of all the scientific proofs of reliability [*vse nauchnye ruchatel'stva dostovernosti*] and the most impeccable scientific accuracy [*samoi bezukoriznennoi nauchnoi tochnosti*].⁵⁹

The modes of beholding and staging for the camera differed significantly between the genres of travel and archaeological photography. While scientific exploration demanded positivist precision, travel photography was rooted in the aesthetics of the picturesque with a heavy dose of artistic licence and infused with Orientalist expectations. The Sinai album embodies this collaborative understanding. While Raoult produced the images needed for Kondakov’s scholarly purposes, Kondakov understood that Raoult would also need to create picturesque panoramas and ethnographic images. This had important ramifications and drew “a distinction between what might be called the engraving’s interpretive anatomy and photography’s descriptive physiognomy”.⁶⁰ It is worth noting that Raoult would retain ownership of the picturesque views, while Kondakov claimed ownership of images of an academic nature.

The partners clearly understood the parameters of visual economies of their respective professions. Raoult ably calibrated images for the different sectors of the photography market, and was recognized for these efforts by an astute critic in St Petersburg. In 1885, Stasov published the inaugural catalogue dedicated to the particularly noteworthy holdings of photographic materials in the imperial library of St Petersburg.⁶¹ Though he proclaimed the photographic album of the Sinai trip as “marvellous” [*velikolepnyi*],⁶² Stasov discussed it not as a single entity, but chose to describe the photographs in three discreet sections: “views”, “architecture”, and “painting”.⁶³ The observant interlocutor understood that the scholar and the photographer had complimentary, but not identical, goals on this journey:

The main goal of the trip for N. P. Kondakov was the study of architectural and painted monuments of Byzantine art in the Sinai monastery, and therefore the majority of folios of this album will be enumerated below, in the categories “architecture” and “painting”. In the first category [here meaning “views”] of the current survey belong only the outstanding photographic views of Sinai and its environs, which are also presented in this album and belonging to the number of the rarest photographs among

⁵⁹ V. V. Stasov, review of N. P. Kondakov’s *Puteshestvie na Sinai...*, p. 334.

⁶⁰ F. N. Bohrer, “Edges of Art...”, p. 226.

⁶¹ V. V. Stasov, *Fotograficheskiia i fototipicheskiia kollektii...* . His selection principle was to discuss “the rarest” and “the most comprehensive” publications, with a more detailed treatment reserved of the publications which are of particular importance to “Russian history, ethnography, and art”. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 9-10.



Fig. 2. “Sinai, groupe de Bédouins des environs d’el-Tor”, from the album *Vues et antiquités du Sinai par M. le Professeur N. Kondakoff et Phot. J. Raoult*. Photographer Jean Xavier Raoult. Photothèque Gabriel Millet, Collection chrétienne et byzantine, EPHE B.00103

the photographic views by European travellers. These views, all of which turned out superbly, and are remarkably picturesque ...⁶⁴

The first image listed by Stasov was “the environs of El-Tor (the desert), with a group of the Bedouin in the foreground”.⁶⁵ Let us briefly examine this image, which is preserved in the Photothèque Gabriel Millet (Paris) (fig. 2).

We behold twenty men comfortably reclining in the foreground. Many of their faces are relaxed, and their body language is open. It is clear that Raoult, the extravert of the traveling duo, succeeded in creating a comfortable group dynamic for the photograph. At the same time, the composition is artful: the single standing man does not project above the distant tree line, while the composition is effectively asymmetrical on account of the pitched tent of the middle ground and a small building of the background. The group includes the Bedouin guides who were hired by Kondakov and Raoult to conduct them to the Sinai monastery from El-Tor (ancient Rhaithou, the settlement on the coast of the Red Sea and the travellers’ entry-point for traversing the desert en route to the Sinai monastery) and return them to Suez. The travellers bonded with their guides, referred to them by name in the travelogue, described their

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.



Fig. 3. “Sinaï, Bédouins des environs du monastère de Sainte-Catherine”, from the album *Vues et antiquités du Sinaï par M. le Professeur N. Kondakoff et Phot. J. Raoult*. Photographer Jean Xavier Raoult. Photothèque Gabriel Millet, Collection chrétienne et byzantine, EPHE B.00126

upbeat character,⁶⁶ admired their resilience,⁶⁷ and expressed gratitude for the success of the extremely arduous passage. Thanks to Kondakov’s narrative we can identify the central, seated figure of the photograph, as the leader of the Bedouins in charge of the travellers because of the prominent sabre in his hand. Kondakov called him “the sheikh”. He described his headgear as a hat interwoven with yellow ribbons,⁶⁸ and his weapon as “instead of a knife, a long, excellent sabre”.⁶⁹ Though occasionally succumbing to orientalist digressions, Kondakov ardently admired the Bedouins in their own environment and understood that European ideals of beauty were not universal:

I was long confused [*smuchali*] by the legs of our young sheikh, whom I liked very much: they did not at all resemble the proportions of Apollo of Belvedere, but when I had to walk on sand and pull my feet [out], which sunk to ankle deep, I understood how unattractive Apollo would have been here; the Bedouin was walking with a light step, consistent and graceful, barely leaving a trace with his sandal.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ N. P. Kondakov, *Puteshestvie na Sinai...*, p. 29.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

In a unique instance of the convergence between text and image, we can even trace directly how each partner influenced the other's mode of beholding subjects and objects. For instance, Kondakov recollected in *The Journey to Sinai* with some amusement how three Bedouin women were eventually convinced to pose for a photograph:

It was easy [to photograph] the monastic Bedouins, but it took enormous efforts with three Bedouin women, who came to the monastery following their husbands; several hours of coaxing, offers of money, orders of the monastic leadership finally broke the untameable nature and conservatism of Arab ladies. And then one had to see how they sat in front of the [photographic] camera, every minute jumping from their seats, covered with their tattered blue coverings [*pokryvala*] so thoroughly that one could only see coals of their eyes, and bronze circles which adorned their *buru*; a kind of cylinder on the bridge of the nose, through which was inserted a woven veil, which covers the forehead above and the chin below, and in general the lower part of the face and the chest.⁷¹

The precision of this recollection is quite remarkable, and is uncannily in dialogue with Raoult's photograph of the three women (fig. 3). Considering the impatience of the subjects for the exposure and the photographic process, one can forgive a tiny blurring in the faces of the two women on the left side of the image. The viewer is also struck by the intense, documentary immediacy of the image as opposed to the orientalist engravings of similar ethnographic subjects. It is also notable that this digression into the photographic process was narrated in the first-person plural, without mentioning Raoult by name.

In general, Kondakov's comments on Raoult's craft, and on the art of photographing human subjects in particular, appear very rarely in the volume: he provided two extended comments about photographing the interior of the church, and a single comment on photographing the human subjects. This is somewhat surprising, considering that a substantive number of picturesque photographs were taken along the way, and would have required time and preparation for staging the equipment and the human subjects. In one instance, Raoult posed standing Bedouins against Mount Horeb. In order to make the mountain peak visible, he would have had to walk or ride a great distance with the camera, in order to capture the monumental landscape and have the human figures appear almost as the size of small dots. While he was staging the sacred in dialogue with the picturesque expectations of travel photography, he also provides the viewer with an ability to imagine the scale of the monumental sacred landscape by means of this cluster of tiny human figures (fig. 4).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Fig. 4. “Sinaï, vue du sommet, partie nord du mont Horeb (Ras Safsaf)”, from the album *Vues et antiquités du Sinaï par M. le Professeur N. Kandakoff et Phot. J. Raoult.*

Photographer Jean Xavier Raoult.
Photothèque Gabriel Millet, Collection chrétienne et byzantine, EPHE B.00112



The key photograph of the Transfiguration mosaic

It appears that the earliest extant (and most likely the earliest ever) photographic image of the Transfiguration mosaic was captured by Raoult. A copy of this previously forgotten image is preserved in the Millet photographic archive.⁷² In order to understand, appreciate, and contextualize the image, we will consider the circumstances under which Raoult had to execute photographs inside the church. Raoult’s view of the interior, looking east towards the apse, reveals just how challenging it was to photograph within the cluttered religious space and to engage the building and its elements as an archaeologist, rather than as a worshipper (fig. 5). We behold numerous light fixtures suspended quite low from the ceiling, wooden furnishings with excellent mother-of-pearl decorations, beautiful inlaid marble floors, two icons of the iconostasis, and contours of a very large crucifix towering over the iconostasis. The image captures the illuminated and reflective surfaces – marble, metal, mother of pearl, gold background, and parts of the ceiling. We also behold blinding light emanating from one of the windows above the altar, which appears as a disc of light by the crucifix. The apse mosaics are completely invisible.

⁷² Photothèque Gabriel Millet, Collection chrétienne et byzantine, EPHE, B.03173.



Fig. 5. “Sinai, monastère Sainte-Catherine, basilique de Justinien (église de la Transfiguration), VI^e siècle, vue intérieure”, from the album *Vues et antiquités du Sinai* par M. le Professeur N. Kondakoff et Phot. J. Raoult. Photographer Jean Xavier Raoult. Photothèque Gabriel Millet, Collection chrétienne et byzantine, EPHE B.00127

The lighting of the church presented a particular, and in the end, insurmountable challenge. Our travellers did not have access to artificial means for illuminating the interior (like flash powder) as an aid in photography. Kondakov narrated their struggle of photographing inside the church and documented their ingenious solutions to overcome the obstacles. He also noted that the monks tried to lend a hand:

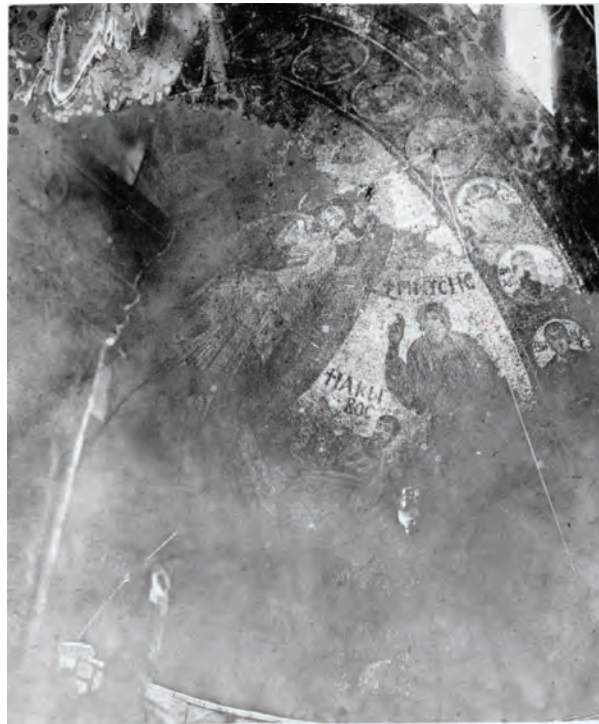
The monks with great enthusiasm helped us in our photographic works and are very keenly interested in their success. While we were photographing the dark doors and the mosaics immersed in darkness, we were already despairing to reach any positive result, when it occurred to us that it would be possible to illuminate them with the reflection of rays of sunlight through the mirror, which were streaming into the window, but at once we had another thought: where would there be found mirrors among the monks? But the mirrors were found and brought to us ...⁷³

This was a laudable effort and a clever solution, which worked effectively for the three photographs of the basilica’s doors.

For the mosaics, however, the result did not live up to his initial expectations (fig. 6). The lack of success, however, is most instructive for understanding the

⁷³ N. P. Kondakov, *Puteshestvie na Sinai...*, p. 53. The Bedouins did not want to pose for their portraits, but were persuaded (p. 54).

Fig. 6. “Sinai, monastère Sainte-Catherine, basilique de Justinien (église de la Transfiguration), VI^e siècle, mosaïque absidiale, Transfiguration, détail”, from the album *Vues et antiquités du Sinai* par M. le Professeur N. Kondakoff et Phot. J. Raoult. Photographer Jean Xavier Raoult. Photothèque Gabriel Millet, Collection chrétienne et byzantine, EPHE B.03172



conditions under which the work was undertaken. Even though the photograph of the Transfiguration mosaic did not turn out, Kondakov included it within the published list of the images taken by Raoult. Stasov, who appears to have closely examined Raoult's photographs before publishing his extensive review of *The Journey to Sinai*, offered a conciliatory statement: “Alas, the local conditions of the mosaic's position within the church, did not provide professor Kondakov with an opportunity to take a satisfactory photograph [*fotografiiu vpolne udovletvoritel' nuiiu*]”.⁷⁴

Raoult made a valiant attempt to stage the photograph and to make the image legible.⁷⁵ We can behold some of the obstacles and insurmountable challenges that he faced. The photograph is not centred, instead it captures the central figure of Christ and the right side of the mosaic (from the viewer's perspective). The image is simultaneously overexposed (the upper part) and underexposed (the lower part). Raoult had attempted to minimize the blinding light from the apse window, which is partially visible in the upper right corner of the image. This light was the leading cause of over-exposure and, in part, for the very sharp angle that the photograph was taken at. Raoult attempted to maximize the legibility of the composition in a very cramped space: the left side of the mosaic is blocked by a steeply projecting cornice,

⁷⁴ V. V. Stasov, review of N. P. Kondakov's *Puteshestvie na Sinai...*, p. 338.

⁷⁵ Photothèque Gabriel Millet, Collection chrétienne et byzantine, EPHE, B.03172, B.03173, B.00128.

and part of the wooden armature of the iconostasis is visible in the lower left part of the image. The photograph had to be taken at a very steep angle, close up, on account of the iconostasis, which otherwise blocked the view of the mosaic. Despite these difficulties, one can distinguish the figures of Jesus (with the mandorla of light and some emanating rays of light) and Moses quite clearly, and partially the figure of the kneeling Jacob. One can also distinguish seven roundels with busts of saints, which frame the mosaic and the architectural space of the apse.

Had the photograph turned out successfully, it would have been the biggest prize of the entire journey for both the scholar and the photographer. We can definitively make this conclusion based on the fact that Kondakov included a twenty-four page description of the apse mosaic, as well as several other comments about the photographic process. We can also judge the stakes for Kondakov and the pressure he put on Raoult from the two descriptions of the attempts to photograph the mosaic. This portion of the text is again presented in the first-person plural. He first informs the reader in the travelogue portion of the publication:

But above all other treasures of eastern art towers the ancient mosaic of the Transfiguration, which covers the half-dome [*polu kupol*] of the altar, and which is framed by medallions and ornamentation, the work of the VII-VIII centuries. Due to its [physical] distance [implied – from civilization], a work of ancient pictorial art as if disappeared in the midst of the desert, it has troubled the peace of archaeologists, who have keenly been guessing about the time of its creation.⁷⁶

The next time the struggle to photograph the mosaic enters the text as a long footnote within the extensive, academic description of the mosaic. Kondakov's frustration here is palpable:

The altar is illuminated by two windows (of new workmanship) above the arch and one window within the arch, below: the light shines directly into the camera [*apparat*] and impedes [the taking of] the image: we had to make use of the help of mirrors, so that we could illuminate the sides [of the mosaics] with these reflections; this [attempt] also worked poorly; finally, the photograph is not possible from afar, on account of the iconostasis. The monument [i.e., the mosaic] deserves to be executed in full size [i.e., traced] with *calques* [*kal'ki*], as it is done by the French mosaic workshops for the Ravenna mosaics; but for this scaffolding is necessary. Even for a precise description it is necessary to have scaffolding [*podmostki*], since due to the beaming light it is difficult to see the upper parts [of the mosaic], especially the scenes under the ceiling...⁷⁷

The very long verbal description of the mosaic was therefore Kondakov's plan B. Here we again can intertextually glimpse the stakes which were involved in the failure to produce a quality photographic image. One cannot fathom in the

⁷⁶ N. P. Kondakov, *Puteshestvie na Sinai...*, p. 40.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 77, n. 1.

present moment either the level of frustration or the stakes for his career. He was passionate about collecting and publishing ancient monuments, yet he failed to secure a high-quality photograph of the “most important monument”⁷⁸ of the Sinai monastery and “one of the most remarkable works of art of Christian antiquity in the East and of the Byzantine art in its most ancient period”.⁷⁹ For a scholar who was passionate about Byzantine art, this must have been exasperating. For a traveller, who had suffered enormous frustrations and hardships, this was all the more bitter. On a grander scale, it must have seemed a substantive setback to the study of authentic Byzantine art in general and to the rehabilitation of the status of this mosaic within the corpus of Byzantine art history more broadly.

Though his description of the mosaic is long, dry, and technical, he presents several explicit and implicit big picture claims and methodological points for the study of Byzantine art history, which are simultaneously offensive and defensive. The key elements, which we can infer from the text include the construction of a comprehensive corpus of precise images, pushing the boundaries of knowledge beyond the comfort of one’s own sphere, and not being satisfied with images already in circulation. The twin problems of the academic ignorance of works of art and the circulation of works of art in a distorted form as imprecise drawings and lithographs in his view formed a huge obstacle in the formation of a precise body of knowledge: “But the absence of knowledge of this monument, depends on the fact, that up until now not one specialist in archaeology has seen it personally, and in the absence of any satisfactory images [*snimki*] has been the cause that this work of art has remained fruitless [*besplodno*] for science”.⁸⁰ He again emphasizes the importance of photographs for the advancement of knowledge:

[...] the very questions about [the monuments of antiquity in the Sinai monastery] could be easily resolved, if the efforts of scholars, travelling to look at the monuments, were joined by satisfactory photographs, which so much enable the dissipation [*razseianiiu*] of various misconceptions [*zabluzhdenii*], as they make the monuments subject of shared scientific heritage [*obshchago nauchnago dostoiianiia*].⁸¹

Kondakov engages with hidden and named interlocutors in his description of the monastic treasures. He begins with the state of the question:

The monuments of monumental art and Christian antiquity, which are preserved in the Sinai monastery, have been the subject of learned curiosity [*liuboznatel’nost’*] of many scholars and educated travellers, but their brief notes and generic musings [*obshchiia soobrazheniia*], which lack [*lishennyia*] scientific archaeological criticism, have not heretofore provided the [kind of] material, which could be of value to historical science.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 69.



Fig. 7. “Grande mosaïque de l’église du couvent de Sainte-Catherine (Mont Sinai)”, from L. de Laborde, *Voyage de l’Arabie Pétrée*, Paris, 1830. General Research Division, The New York Public Library. The New York Public Library Digital Collections.

Accessed 26 October 2025. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/76b10900-c6e5-012f-3628-58d385a7bc34>

These notes only indicated the existence of monuments, and musings of generic nature had the purpose to present their historical importance and antiquity of origins.⁸²

He thus positions himself as the very first scholar to properly introduce the Transfiguration mosaic into scholarly discourse, by correcting previous errors and emending the imperfections of prior accounts. His empiricism and the influence of the natural sciences (first-hand observation) are fully on display in this properly scientific debut of the mosaic.

He harshly and rather unfairly criticizes the first western European publication of the mosaic, that of Léon de Laborde, in the *Voyage de l’Arabie Pétrée* of 1830 (fig. 7). He sarcastically misrepresents de Laborde’s engagement with the mosaic:

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

“the mosaic of Transfiguration, as if discovered [*kak by naidennoi*] for the first time by [de] Laborde and attributed [to the period] of Constantine the Great”.⁸³ Most likely Kondakov was responding to de Laborde’s statement that the mosaics were never previously drawn by travellers and that very few travellers had even mentioned them.⁸⁴ He is also dismissive of de Laborde’s publication of the outline of the mosaic composition: “[...] [he] brought with him careless description [*nebrezhnyi ocherk*] of some obscure painting [*tumannoi kartiny*]”.⁸⁵ Kondakov does not mention, however, that de Laborde in his publication was repeatedly cautious about the limitations of his publication, being acutely aware that the limited illumination of the interior space and the physical condition of the mosaics introduced errors into the figural composition and the transcription of the inscriptions:

Je l’ai soumise, telle que j’ai pu la copier, au savant M. Hase, et c’est à ses conseils que je dois de pouvoir faire remarquer quelques erreurs probables de dessin qui tiennent sans doute à l’obscurité du lieu, et des fautes dans les noms qui y ont été introduites par le graveur.⁸⁶

We can in part surmise that Kondakov’s frustration stemmed from the fact that de Laborde’s image became foundational in several subsequent publications in French, Italian, and Russian as late as 1880.⁸⁷ He was frustrated by the publication of the mosaic composition as an outline:

The drawing of de Laborde did not provide anything, other than contours, which allow one to guess the iconography [*siuzhet*], and therefore it is understandable that it left considerable expense for various kinds of guesses regarding the style, the date and the signification of the monument...⁸⁸

Kondakov was not impartial in his assessment of de Laborde’s effort. As Kondakov later himself acknowledged, the mosaic was cleaned/renewed in 1847, therefore what de Laborde had seen was at best a very hazy outline in comparison to what our Russian scholar was able to behold: “we know that [de] Laborde saw [the mosaic] in such a smoked through [*zakopchennom*], and, likely destroyed [*razrushennom*] state, that he considered it impossible to make a clear drawing of it [*sdelat’s neia iasnyi risunok*]”.⁸⁹

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ De Laborde declared: “Elle n’a jamais été dessinée, et même peu de voyageurs l’ont remarquée”. L. de Laborde, *Voyage de l’Arabie Pétrée*, Paris, 1830, p. 67.

⁸⁵ N. P. Kondakov, *Puteshestvie na Sinai...*, p. 75.

⁸⁶ L. de Laborde, *Voyage...*, p. 67.

⁸⁷ He enumerates those in an extensive footnote. N. P. Kondakov, *Puteshestvie na Sinai...*, p. 75.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

Though de Laborde's drawing of the Moses scenes in the upper register of the mosaic is approximate at best, he correctly recognized both compositions of the Burning Bush and the Ten Commandments, as well as noted that Moses is represented bearded, unlike the many representations of a youthful Moses ("avec des traits jeunes, sans barbe") in eastern Christian art.⁹⁰ De Laborde's image of the Transfiguration mosaic overall adequately conveys its major compositional elements, the inscriptions, as well as the roundels with the saints. De Laborde, however, introduced a major error into the identification of two large mosaic medallions, which appear on the eastern wall below the flying angels and above the Transfiguration mosaic. He claimed that the two mosaic medallions represented Justinian and Theodora: "Dans les deux médaillons placés au haut de la voûte sont représentés les fondateurs du couvent, l'empereur Justinien et Théodora, sa femme".⁹¹ Though he again hedged the verity of his observations, he did claim that Justinian is represented as beardless, despite the fact that one of the two imperially-identified heads is sporting a notable beard.⁹² The two medallions, which do not include identifying inscriptions, also puzzled Kondakov. He agreed with a recently proposed identification of the figures as John the Baptist and the Mother of God, but considered them to be of "rather late provenance" [*ves'ma pozdniago proiskhozhdeniia*].⁹³

Kondakov also speculated about the iconography and dating of the mosaics. He considered the iconography of the flying angels to be too modern and too similar to the mosaics of Ravenna:

But restoration, or more precisely, modernization of the ancient mosaics seeped in further, and more precisely into the ornamental group of the two flying angels, which is placed above the very arch. [...] the figures of both angels are notable by such elongation of proportions, which is neither feasible to surmise as being possible in the most ancient period of the Byzantine art (before the iconoclasts) nor to explain away as, for example, inability of a provincial artist or mosaicist...⁹⁴

He noted that the Sinai mosaics were restored in 1847 by a Russian monk Samuel.⁹⁵ Without going into much detail, he also used an argument by analogy – the aggressive restoration practices for the Italian mosaics.

⁹⁰ L. de Laborde, *Voyage...*, p. 67.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ N. P. Kondakov, *Puteshestvie na Sinai...*, p. 81.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

Kondakov's triumph and Raoult's recognition

Kondakov faced serious financial repercussions as a result of the Sinai expedition and remained in Raoult's financial and emotional debt for years. The scholar's tone and intentions shifted considerably from idealistic in 1881 to pecuniary in 1883: while in 1881 Kondakov had hoped to "transfer the entire album with all negatives to some institution [*uchrezhdenie*]",⁹⁶ by 1883 he was actively trying to sell a single copy of the album to the imperial library in St Petersburg, leveraging the fact that Raoult was able to sell three copies in Paris.⁹⁷ In order to raise some money, Raoult even broke the rules of etiquette. When Stasov decided in 1883 to purchase the *Peuples* album for the imperial library, Raoult, lacking another copy, demanded that the Danish embassy turn over the gift intended for their king to the imperial library in St Petersburg.⁹⁸

It is within this context that we gain insights into their business arrangement. Kondakov and Raoult shared intellectual and economic ownership of the Sinai photographic album.⁹⁹ The album, which bears shared credit to the scholar and the photographer, with Raoult's name significantly more prominent and Kondakov's misspelled, was a laborious and costly undertaking, with each photograph glued by hand.¹⁰⁰ Kondakov privately complained about the constraints of technology which hampered production: "I confess to you, that from the very beginning I refused to sell copies [of the album] – we do not have a workshop and we pay for everything threefold, since they [albums] do not bring to me and Raoult big revenues [*bol'shikh dokhodov*]"¹⁰¹ The partners may have produced fifteen copies, but were able to sell four. The negatives were the personal property of the photographer, who retained rights to the images.¹⁰² When contacted about replacements for some pages of "ruined" images, Kondakov did not have access to the good photographs, and had to wait patiently for Raoult to supply them, while the photographer did not treat the scholar's

⁹⁶ Kondakov's letter to A. F. Bychkov, dated 23 October 1881, published in S. O. Vialova, "Sinaiiskii al'bom...", p. 221.

⁹⁷ Kondakov's letter to V. V. Stasov, dated 1 May 1883, published in S. O. Vialova, "Iz perepiski...", p. 214.

⁹⁸ Kondakov's letter to V. V. Stasov, dated 19 September 1883, published in S. O. Vialova, "Sinaiiskii al'bom...", p. 218.

⁹⁹ Kondakov's letter to V. V. Stasov, dated 1 May 1883, published in S. O. Vialova, "Iz perepiski...", p. 214.

¹⁰⁰ S. O. Vialova, "Fotograficheskoe nasledie...", p. 17.

¹⁰¹ Kondakov's letter to V. V. Stasov, dated 1 May 1883, published in S. O. Vialova, "Iz perepiski...", p. 214.

¹⁰² Kondakov's letter to A. F. Bychkov, dated 17 November 1881, published in S. O. Vialova, "Sinaiiskii al'bom...", p. 223.

request as a priority.¹⁰³ In 1883, Raoult had even declared his intention to leave Russia for good, but delayed implementing the decision.

Kondakov resorted to rebuilding the relationship with Raoult through a different system of values – honour and status. For more than two years he doggedly leveraged his high-placed connections in order to secure for Raoult an imperial order of merit. He tried, in vain, for two years to obtain it directly through the official channels by performing an expected step – gifting photographic albums to different institutions. The award, in turn, would be the state’s acknowledgement of the gift. This seems to explain why two copies of the Sinai album were gifted to institutions in St Petersburg, the gratis copy for the imperial library Kondakov requested to be registered as coming from “me [Kondakov] or Mr. Raoult, if it were possible to petition [*khodataistvovat*] about awarding him some kind of Russian order of merit for his labours”.¹⁰⁴ That initiative did not bear fruit. The scholar, then, involved his network of connections and benefactors. In May of 1883 he pleaded with Stasov: “If you could find it possible to support my onerous strivings in awarding Raoult with at least [the order of] Stanislav of the lowest decree, then we could consider ourselves rewarded better than with money.”¹⁰⁵ Two weeks later he approached a prominent St Petersburg intellectual, Afanasii F. Bychkov (1818-1899): “Please allow me to approach you with a big request – how to go about regarding the question of petitioning [*khodataistvo*] about awarding Mr. Raoult (my photographer) with some Russian order”.¹⁰⁶ In the same letter, Kondakov confessed that Raoult’s satisfaction was essential to his own academic plans: “You are aware that the fate of my future [academic] endeavours depends on the satisfaction of the request of Mr. Raoult”.¹⁰⁷ Almost a year later (in March of 1884), after Raoult had finally received the order of St Stanislav, we witness Kondakov’s palpable relief being shared with another correspondent, Ivan V. Pomialovskii (1845-1906), professor at St Petersburg University:

I don’t know how to thank You for the gracious notice [*liubeznoe izveshchenie*] regarding the award of the order [to Raoult] and the gracious [*liubeznoe*] letter from Count Tolstoi himself. [...] The award of the order to Raoult lifted a heavy mountain off my shoulders, because I fruitlessly sought how I could thank him for his labours.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Kondakov’s letter to V. V. Stasov, dated 29 January 1884, published in S. O. Vialova, “Sinaiskii al’bom...”, p. 219.

¹⁰⁴ Kondakov’s letter to V. V. Stasov, dated 14 May 1883, published in S. O. Vialova, “Iz perepiski...”, p. 215.

¹⁰⁵ Kondakov’s letter to V. V. Stasov, dated 1 May 1883, published in S. O. Vialova, “Iz perepiski...”, p. 214.

¹⁰⁶ Kondakov’s letter to A. F. Bychkov, dated 14 May 1883, published in S. O. Vialova, “Sinaiskii al’bom...”, p. 223.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Kondakov’s letter to I. V. Pomialovskii, dated 26 March 1884, published in S. O. Vialova, “Sinaiskii al’bom...”, p. 225.

Though the order of St Stanislas of the third decree was the lowest in the hierarchy of Russian orders, it was still a major honour, which granted hereditary nobility.

Thus, the relationship of Kondakov and Raoult was temporarily mended and led to a new success. A month later, in April of 1884, Raoult travelled with Kondakov to Constantinople and fulfilled the scholar's long-standing desire of photographing the Chora Monastery. This was the final, fruitful result of their collaboration.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

Kondakov's path to international recognition at the First Congress of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest can be linked to an earlier congress, namely the Sixth Russian Archaeological Congress, held in Odessa in 1884. Kondakov served as one of its principal organizers, and it was there that the Sinai album and the Constantinople photographs were triumphantly displayed. Because written records shape recollection and memory, an excerpt from a review of the congress by N. Pokrovskii is useful for our wider assessment of Kondakov's rising fortune:

A rich Sinai album [*bogatyi sinaiskii al'bom*] of the photographs, taken by Mr. Raoult, who accompanied prof. Kondakov on a journey to Sinai in the year 1880 [*sic*], occupied a notable place at the exhibition. The album includes photographs of the monastery proper, its environs, the main church of the Transfiguration with the famous mosaic, parts of which are datable to the sixth century, and especially many photographs from ancient Greek manuscripts, decorated with initials, headpieces, and miniatures and remarkable likewise for their palaeography. [...] An artistic appraisal of the most important of these monuments was made by prof. Kondakov in his work "The Journey to Sinai", but the monuments themselves remain unpublished.¹¹⁰

Pokrovskii was an influential figure in the cultural and intellectual life of St Petersburg, and the founder of the Church-Archaeological Museum established there in 1879.¹¹¹ By this time, Kondakov had already attracted the attention of the capital's movers and shakers.

¹⁰⁹ In a letter dated 19 June 1884, Kondakov declared: "We returned from Constantinople with a more clear understanding of its ancient topography, with piles of notes and descriptions, but most importantly, with plans of churches, photographs and watercolours. We have 60 photographs, of large size in folio [...]. The entire mosque Kahrie with its mosaics and frescoes was photographed by us. All of it will be displayed at the Congress [...]" S. O. Vialova, "Sinaiiskii al'bom...", p. 220-221.

¹¹⁰ N. Pokrovskii, "Shestoi arkheologicheskii s'ezd v Odesse", *Khristianskoe chtenie* 1-2, 1885, p. 200-201.

¹¹¹ N. V. Pivovarova, "N. V. Pokrovskii i kolleksionirovanie khristianskikh drevnostei v Sankt-Peterburge. Tri modeli razvitiia tserkovno-arkheologicheskogo muzeiia: 1850-e-1917 g.", *Khristianskoe chtenie. Nauchnyi zhurnal Sankt-Peterburgskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi* 1, 2022, p. 320-328.

Following his triumph at the Odessa congress both as a scholar and as an organizer, Nikodim Kondakov soon left the city on the Black Sea for the imperial capital on the Baltic. In 1888, he accepted two prestigious appointments in St Petersburg: as Professor in the Department of Art History of St Petersburg University and as the Head of the Department of Medieval and Renaissance Art at the Hermitage. From then on, he enjoyed the standing of a recognized imperial authority and a professor of international renown. These accolades would ensure a relatively smooth transition for him when the age of revolution engulfed Russia in 1917.¹¹² The honoured reception accorded to him in Bucharest in 1924 thus served as a fitting coda to his long and remarkable career.

¹¹² In western European scholarship, Ivan Foletti has in recent years contributed to a revival of interest in Kondakov. He rediscovered the third volume of Kondakov's *Iconography of the Mother of God* and has published extensively on Kondakov's legacy. See I. Foletti, *From Byzantium to Holy Russia: Nikodim Kondakov (1844-1925) and the Invention of the Icon*, tr. S. Melker, Rome, 2017; I. Foletti and A. Palladino, *Byzantium or Democracy? Kondakov's Legacy in Emigration: The Institutum Kondakovianum and André Grabar, 1925-1952*, Brno, 2020. For critical appraisals of Foletti's work, see L. G. Khrushkova, "'Rab, pridvornyi istorik i emigrant': obraz Nikodima Pavlovicha Kondakova v sochineniiakh Ivana Foletti", in *Vizantiiskoe "sodruzhestvo": traditsii i smena paradigm*, Ekaterinburg, 2019, p. 163-165; E. Boeck, review of I. Foletti and A. Palladino, *Byzantium or Democracy?...*, in *Byzantinoslavica* 79.1-2, 2021, p. 295-297.

Research on Serbian Medieval Monuments at the Time of the Internationalisation of Byzantine Studies

Dubravka Preradović

Abstract: This article examines the evolution of research on Serbian medieval monuments within the broader context of the internationalisation of Byzantine studies from the mid-nineteenth century to the interwar period. It traces the pioneering contributions of domestic and foreign scholars – including Mihailo Valtrović, Dragutin Milutinović, Vladimir R. Petković, Nikodim Kondakov, Petr Pokryshkin, Gabriel Millet, and Gheorghe Balș – who laid the foundations for the academic study of Serbian medieval art, with particular emphasis on architecture. The article highlights the growing scholarly interest in Serbian heritage, especially in the context of emerging academic institutions and expanding international collaboration. Special attention is given to the methodological innovations, academic networks, and institutional frameworks that shaped the study of Serbian medieval art during this period, contributing to its recognition within the international field of Byzantine studies.

Keywords: Serbian medieval art, Byzantine studies, historiography, history of architecture, transnational scholarly networks, congresses of Byzantine studies, Mihailo Valtrović, Dragutin Milutinović, Nikodim Kondakov, Petr Pokryshkin, Gabriel Millet, Vladimir R. Petković, Gheorghe Balș

The revival of interest in Byzantine history, initially centred on the study of written sources, soon broadened to encompass the material remains of the empire. Interest in architectural and artistic achievements – at first regarded primarily as historical evidence, and only later recognised as works of art worthy of scholarly inquiry – emerged in the final decades of the nineteenth century, notably among French and Russian scholars, who were responsible for the earliest attempts to synthesise Byzantine art. At the same time, in regions gradually emancipating them-



Fig. 1. The front endpaper of *Serbiens byzantinische Monumente*. Gezeichnet und beschrieben von F. Kanitz, Vienna 1862 (after I. Borozan, “Ilustracija u službi obnove srednjovekovlja...”, fig. 3)

stands out.¹ Namely, in 1862, his richly illustrated study entitled *The Byzantine Monuments of Serbia* was published simultaneously in German and Serbian (fig. 1).² In this book, he described six medieval churches – important royal monastic foundations and mausolea (Studena, Žiča, Ravanica, Manasija), as well as two churches located in the political centres of late fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Serbia (Kruševac, Smederevo) – all of which lay within the borders of the Serbian state at that time. These descriptions, accompanied by finely executed illustrations, offer valuable testimony to the condition of the monuments at the time. They are preceded by an art-historical overview in which Kanitz analysed the morphological characteristics of the architectural forms of Serbian medieval foundations, their external treatment and decorative articulation, as well as their interior appearance. In this context,

selves from centuries of Ottoman rule, increasing emphasis was placed on the material traces of the past as witnesses to national histories – this was also the case in the Serbian context. Monuments were described with particular attention to inscriptions preserved on church walls, as well as to the historical portraits of Serbian rulers, noblemen, and high-ranking ecclesiastical figures depicted within them. These visual and epigraphic elements were regarded not only as valuable historical sources but also as keys to understanding the political, religious, and cultural identity of medieval Serbia and its role in shaping modern national consciousness.

Among the travel accounts and writings of both domestic and foreign nineteenth-century antiquarians on the monumental medieval heritage of Serbia, the work of Felix Kanitz, an Austro-Hungarian traveller, archaeologist, ethnologist, and one of the foremost experts on South-eastern Europe,

¹ J. Šaranac Stamenković, “Srpski srednjovekovni spomenici – vizantijsko umetničko i kulturno nasleđe u zapisima Feliksa Kanica”, in I. Ljubomirović (ed.), *Feliks Kanic na centralnom Balkanu – 150 godina istraživanja u Nišu*, Niš, 2015, p. 93-108.

² F. Kanitz, *Serbiens byzantinische Monumente*. Gezeichnet und beschrieben von F. Kanitz, Vienna, 1862; id., *Vizantijski spomenici po Srbiji*. Nacrtao i opisao F. Kanic, Vienna, 1862.

he emphasised that Serbian medieval churches emerged as a blend of Byzantine construction techniques and borrowed motifs from Western sculptural decoration, thereby underscoring the political dependence of the Serbian medieval state (and culture) on the West, alongside its adoption of the Orthodox Greek rite. In doing so, Kanitz affirmed the frequently repeated thesis of the dual identity of Serbian culture. Through the title of his book and his interpretation of what he observed, he laid the foundations for the theoretical definition of the Serbo-Byzantine style, which he understood as both the ideological and stylistic expression of Serbian medieval art.³

At the outset of the following decade, two Serbian architects, Mihailo Valtrović and Dragutin Milutinović, initiated extensive and long-term field research on the country's medieval heritage. These investigations were conducted under the auspices of the Serbian Learned Society, the predecessor of the Serbian Royal Academy. Their pioneering efforts, undertaken with the aim of producing a comprehensive synthesis of Serbian medieval art, marked the beginning of a scholarly approach to this field and laid the foundations for systematic academic inquiry.⁴ Both had completed their studies in Karlsruhe, Germany, and upon returning to Serbia held a range of prominent positions within key national institutions. In addition to their commitment to fieldwork, they also served as professors at the Velika škola (the Higher School, predecessor of the University of Belgrade). Valtrović was director of the National Museum for over two decades. He also conducted archaeological excavations, founded the Serbian Archaeological Society in 1883, and served for many years as editor of *Starinar* (*Antiquarian*), the first scholarly journal in Serbia issued by the Society. Although *Starinar* was conceived as the official journal of archaeologists, from its inception, and largely due to Valtrović's influence, it also welcomed contributions in the field of art history, particularly medieval art.⁵ Although the early issues of *Starinar* did not include contributions by foreign scholars, the journal's editorial policy was to follow scholarly research, primarily in neighbouring countries, namely Croatia and Bosnia, as well as Romania and Greece.

The outcome of their extensive work, conducted over eleven research campaigns during which they surveyed nearly sixty sites within the borders of the Serbian state at the time, is a valuable collection comprising the first professionally executed ground plans and sections of churches, watercolour studies of wall paintings, and a substantial number of drawings and sketches of architectural and sculptural details (figs. 2, 3). Parts of this field documentation were presented to the

³ A. Ignjatović, *U srpsko-vizantijskom kaleidoskopu. Arhitektura, nacionalizam i imperijalna imaginacija 1871-1941*, Belgrade, 2016; I. Borozan, "Ilustracija u službi obnove srednjovekovlja: topografsko-istorijski prikazi iz Vizantijskih spomenika po Srbiji Feliksa Kanica", *Zograf* 43, 2019, p. 197-214.

⁴ T. Damljanović (ed.), *Valtrović i Milutinović: tumačenja*, Belgrade, 2008.

⁵ S. Petković, "Sto godina izučavanja srednjovekovne umetnosti i arheologije na stranama Starinara (1884-1984)", *Starinar* n.s. 35, 1984, p. 135-157.



Fig. 2. Mihailo Valtrović, Žiča, wall painting on the western wall of the church, watercolour, 1873 (after D. Preradović, *U ime nauke i domovine*, fig. 9)

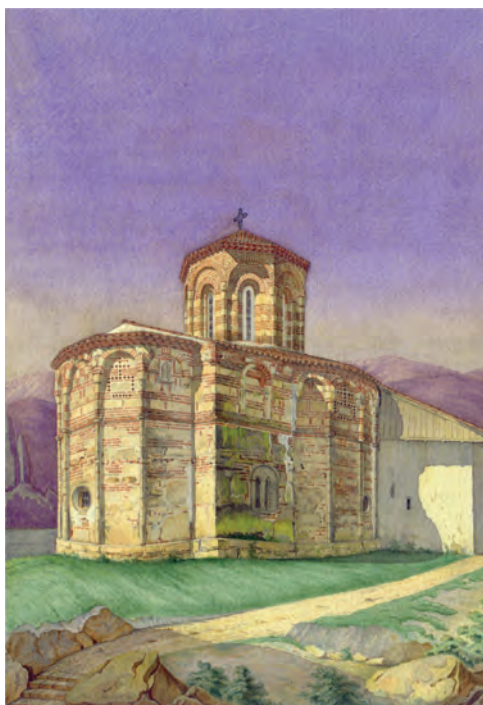


Fig. 3. Dragutin Milutinović, Church of the Dormition of the Virgin on the Old Cemetery in Smederevo, view of the church from the northeast side, watercolour, 1872 (after D. Preradović, *U ime nauke i domovine*, fig. 8)

scholarly community in the 1870s, first in 1872 at the Public Museum in Moscow, and later in Belgrade, through an exhibition of drawings organized by the Serbian Learned Society. Despite years of effort, however, the two scholars were ultimately unable to publish the results of their research. Their investigations remained confined to churches and monuments within Serbia's borders, while Serbian monuments located in territories under Ottoman rule were, by contrast, initially studied by foreign scholars, primarily Russian researchers.

The establishment of the Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople in 1895 marked an important turning point in the study of Byzantine and Slavic antiquities within the Ottoman Empire. A significant part of the Institute's activities focused on research on Mount Athos, resulting in a series of foundational studies on the Athonite archives, as well as on the history, architecture, frescoes, and treasures of its monasteries – including the Serbian monastery of Hilandar. In 1898, the Institute organised a scholarly expedition to Western Macedonia, during

which several important Serbian medieval endowments were also surveyed.⁶ Two years later, on the orders of Grand Duke Konstantin Romanov, Nikodim Pavlovich Kondakov led an important scientific expedition to the Kosovo and Bitola vilayets of the Ottoman Empire. The aim of the mission was to gather material for historical and ethnographic research.⁷ In order to survey Kosovo and Metohija more efficiently, the members of the team split into two groups. Kondakov, along with part of the team, travelled to Priština and then on to Gračanica, while the historian Pavel N. Milyukov and the architect Petr P. Pokryshkin investigated Prizren, Peć, Dečani, and Banjska. However, in the year 1900, the Russian experts did not cross the border to study the churches and monasteries located in the Kingdom of Serbia. Two years later, Pokryshkin would do precisely that. He became the first Russian scholar to travel to the Kingdom of Serbia with the purpose of studying its churches and monasteries. In the summer of 1902, Pokryshkin spent two and a half months in Serbia, studying and photographing churches and monasteries. Four years later, the Imperial Academy of Arts in St Petersburg published his richly illustrated book dedicated to church architecture from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries in the Kingdom of Serbia.⁸ In his analysis of Serbian medieval architecture, he distinguished three stylistic groups: one shaped by Dalmatian influence, a second aligned with Byzantine models, and a third which, although rooted in the Byzantine tradition, is characterised by a marked degree of originality and formal independence.

Such a classification represented a methodological advance over the earlier pioneering accounts that merely offered overviews of Serbian medieval architecture, written by architects such as the aforementioned Valtrović and Andra Stevanović,⁹ as well as by the art historian Božidar Nikolajević. Notably, Nikolajević – one of many Serbian intellectuals who pursued their education in Germany – chose the history of Serbian medieval architecture as the subject of his doctoral dissertation.¹⁰ Among the Serbian students who pursued advanced studies in Germany were the first Serbian Byzantinists, who continued their academic training at the Munich chair of

⁶ P. N. Milyukov, “Khristsianskie drevnosti Zapadnoi Makedonii. Antiquités chrétiennes de la Macédoine occidentale”, *Izvestiia Russkogo arkheologicheskogo instituta v Konstantinopole* 4, 1899, p. 21-151.

⁷ The results of that research were published by the Russian scholar a few years later. N. P. Kondakov, *Makedoniia: Arkheologicheskoe puteshestvie*, St Petersburg, 1909.

⁸ P. P. Pokryshkin, *Pravoslavnaia tserkovnaia arkhitektura XII-XVIII stoletii v nyneshnem serbskom Korolevstve*, St Petersburg, 1906.

⁹ M. Waltrowits, *Ἐ Πρώδρομος: Mitteilungen über neue Forschungen auf dem Gebiete serbischer Kirchenbaukunst*, Vienna, 1878; A. Stefanović, “Stara srpska crkvena arhitektura i njen značaj” (I), *Srpski književni glasnik* 8.7, 1903, p. 514-522; (II), 9.1, 1903, p. 47-54; (III), 9.2, 1903, p. 123-133; (IV), 9.3, 1903, p. 213-225.

¹⁰ B. S. Nikolajewitsch, *Die kirchliche Architektur der Serbien in Mittelalter: Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde an der hohen philosophischen Fakultät der Ruprecht-Karls Universität zu Heidelberg*, Belgrade, 1902.

Karl Krumbacher. Upon returning to their homeland, they laid the foundations for the study of Byzantine history within the Serbian scholarly context.¹¹ One of them, Vladimir R. Petković, began his studies under Krumbacher but soon redirected his focus toward archaeology and art history, earning his doctorate in 1905 at Halle under the supervision of Adolf Goldschmidt.¹²

This generation of foreign-educated scholars played a central role in the institutionalisation of the field upon their return. In 1905, the University of Belgrade was established, and many of them began teaching in its newly created faculties. Already at the beginning of 1906, the Department of Byzantine History Seminar for Byzantine Studies was established within the Faculty of Philosophy, with Dragutin Anastasijević, a student of Krumbacher, appointed as its first professor. That same year, lectures in art history were also introduced, with Božidar Nikolajević named as the first lecturer in the department. He was soon succeeded by Vladimir R. Petković, who taught there until the outbreak of the Second World War. Upon his return to Serbia, Petković was also appointed the first curator of the newly established Department of Byzantine and Serbian Antiquities at the National Museum in Belgrade. In the following decades, his contribution to the study of medieval architecture and iconography proved to be crucial.¹³

At the same time, Byzantine architecture also found its place within the curriculum of the Technical Faculty, where it was taught through a series of specialised courses. These included *History of Byzantine Architecture*, *Church Design in the Byzantine Style*, and a course titled *Ornaments*. Moreover, at the beginning of 1906, it was decided that, as part of their final examinations, architecture students would be required to complete a project in the field of Byzantine architecture, in addition to other graphic work.¹⁴

However, one event in 1906 proved to have far-reaching consequences: the arrival of Gabriel Millet in Serbia that spring. Millet came to complete his research on the painting after the restoration of the Byzantine Empire and to gather material for his doctoral dissertation on the iconographic studies of the Gospels. After spending a month investigating the churches and monasteries within the then borders of the Kingdom of Serbia, the French Byzantinist, in order to see other endowments of

¹¹ R. Radić, “Sto godina Katedre i Seminara za vizantologiju”, *Zbornik Matice srpske za književnost i jezik* 56.1, 2008, p. 177-187; S. Pirivatrić, “A Case Study in the Emergence of Byzantine Studies: Serbia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries”, in P. Stephenson (ed.), *The Byzantine World*, London, 2010, p. 481-490; Lj. Maksimović, “Karl Krumbachers serbische Schüler”, *Südost-Forschungen* 73, 2014, p. 429-443; see also the article by Srđan Pirivatrić in this volume.

¹² W. R. Petković, *Ein Frühchristliches Elfenbeinrelief im Nationalmuseum zu München*, Halle, 1905.

¹³ D. Preradović, “Vladimir R. Petković, A Founding Figure of the Institutional and Academic Realm”, in D. Preradović (ed.), *Vladimir R. Petković, A Founding Figure of the Institutional and Academic Realm*, Belgrade, 2024, p. 13-55.

¹⁴ D. Živanović, “Počeci proučavanja vizantijske arhitekture u Srbiji”, *Niš i Vizantija* 2, 2004, p. 399.



Fig. 4. G. Millet, Staro Nagoričino, 1906 (after D. Preradović, *U ime nauke i domovine*, fig. 21)

Serbian rulers and nobility, headed to Old Serbia and Macedonia, areas still under Ottoman rule.¹⁵ Millet was primarily interested in the frescoes in the endowments of Serbian rulers, nobility, and high church officials from the time of King Milutin (1281-1321) and King and Emperor Dušan (1331-1355), Staro Nagoričino, Gračanica, Mateič and so on. From his first journey onward, he showed a particular interest in the paintings of the Church of Saint George at Staro Nagoričino (fig. 4). There, in the central passage between the narthex and the naos, he discovered an inscription along the hem of the chiton worn by Theodore Tyron, identifying the painter Eutychios and the year the church was frescoed – 1317. He also devoted special attention to the churches of Skopska Crna Gora, including the Church of Saint Niketas near the village of Čučer, which had been overlooked in the limited academic literature of the time until Millet brought it to scholarly attention.¹⁶

¹⁵ D. Preradović, “Gabrijel Mije: terenska istraživanja srpskih spomenika i njihovi rezultati”, in D. Preradović and M. Marković (eds.), *Gabrijel Mije i istraživanja stare srpske arhitekture*, Belgrade, 2021, p. 99-112 and *passim*.

¹⁶ Ead., “The Contribution of Gabriel Millet to the Research of King Milutin’s Endowments”, in J. S. Ćirić and S. Ubiparipović (eds.), *Holy King Milutin and His Age: History, Literature, Art. Thematic Collection of Papers*, Kragujevac, 2023, p. 489-513.

Shortly after returning from his research expedition, Gabriel Millet included a contribution on Serbian medieval art in the third volume of the encyclopaedic *Histoire de l'art*, edited by André Michel. Millet authored the chapter on Eastern Christian art from the mid-twelfth to the mid-sixteenth century, in which, alongside Byzantine art, he gave considerable attention to the medieval artistic traditions of Russia, Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria.¹⁷ Serbian medieval architecture was treated in a separate section, while Serbian painting was discussed together with Russian art. In his concise overview of early Serbian architecture, he largely followed the prevailing tripartite division previously developed by Pokryshkin. However, Millet placed particular emphasis on the geographical distribution of the three stylistic groups: the churches and monasteries of the early Nemanjić dynasty clustered around the Ibar River; the endowments of King Milutin, his successors, and their nobility in the region surrounding Skopje and along the Vardar Valley; and, finally, the monuments from the time of Prince Lazar and Despot Stefan, concentrated in the Morava River basin. While acknowledging the influence of Byzantine elements on the formation of Serbian architecture, Millet repeatedly emphasized its originality, an idea he would further elaborate, with much greater nuance, a decade later in his seminal study on Serbian architecture.

Shortly thereafter, another French Byzantinist, Charles Diehl, included Serbian medieval art in his survey of Byzantine art.¹⁸ Thanks to the writings of these two French scholars, the international academic community was introduced to the achievements of Serbian medieval art. At the same time, more intensive research on medieval art began to take shape within the Serbian scholarly community. Owing to the pioneering efforts of Vladimir R. Petković, medieval painting also received the attention it deserved. In 1906, he was one of Millet's two local companions during his visits to Serbian churches. The outcomes of that research expedition were manifold. Inspired by Millet's photographic records of Byzantine monuments held at the *École des Hautes Études* in Paris, Petković initiated a systematic effort at the National Museum in Belgrade to document Serbian medieval monuments (figs. 5, 6). By the outbreak of the Second World War, this collection had grown to include more than 10,000 glass plate negatives, documenting architecture, fresco decoration, and monastic treasures from over 300 churches.¹⁹ In 1906, he published several important scholarly studies. Although modest in length, his article on the iconography of Serbian medieval churches was of particular significance, as it was the first of its kind within the Serbian scholarly context.²⁰ That

¹⁷ G. Millet, "L'art chrétien d'Orient du milieu du XII^e au milieu du XVI^e siècle", in A. Michel (ed.), *Histoire de l'art depuis les temps chrétiens jusqu'à nos jours*, vol. 3.2, Paris, 1908, p. 927-962.

¹⁸ C. Diehl, *Manuel d'art byzantin*, Paris, 1910, *passim*.

¹⁹ D. Preradović, *U ime nauke i domovine: istraživanja srednjovekovnih spomenika pod okriljem Narodnog muzeja Srbije i njihovi rezultati (1906-1940)*, Belgrade, 2023.

²⁰ V. R. Petković, "Ikonografija manastirskih crkava u Srbiji", *Nova Iskra* 8.10, 1906, p. 301-305; 11-12, 1906, p. 341-346.



Fig. 5. Žiča, view of the church from the southeast side, 1906 (after D. Preradović, *U ime nauke i domovine*, fig. 30)



Fig. 6. Mileševa, King Vladislav holding a model of the church (after D. Preradović, *U ime nauke i domovine*, fig. 91)

same year, he also published the first two studies on the Žiča Monastery,²¹ works that have rightly been described as the first scholarly monograph dedicated to a medieval monument.²²

The study on Žiča was published in the first issue of the relaunched journal *Starinar*. The new series of *Starinar* retained the original editorial concept: in addition to scholarly articles, particular attention was given to reviews of contemporary academic works produced across Europe. Through the pages of *Starinar*, and primarily through the writings of Vladimir R. Petković, readers were kept informed of the latest scholarly publications and developments in the fields of Byzantine archaeology and art. At the same time, Petković established a lasting collaboration with *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, through which the international scholarly community was regularly informed about the results of research conducted in Serbia.

The first volume of the new *Starinar* series included a detailed and insightful review of Pokryshkin's book on Serbian medieval architecture, authored by Mihailo

²¹ Id., "Žiča [I, II]", *Starinar* 1, 1906 (1907), p. 141-187.

²² S. Petković, "Sto godina izučavanja...", p. 140.



Fig. 7. Munich, Bavarian State Library, Munich Serbian Psalter (Cod. Slav. 4), illustration of Psalm 118, fol. 153^r (courtesy of the Serbian Orthodox Eparchy of Düsseldorf and All of Germany)

Valtrović,²³ while Petković contributed a review of another significant work published in 1906.²⁴ This review concerned the edition of one of the most richly illuminated Serbian manuscripts of the fourteenth century, preserved today in the Bavarian State Library in Munich (Cod. Slav. 4), hence its name – the Munich Psalter (fig. 7). The scholarly studies accompanying this edition, which published all the miniatures of the manuscript, were authored by Vatroslav Jagić, a philologist and Slavist, and Josef Strzygowski, the renowned art historian of the Vienna School.²⁵ In this work, Strzygowski presented the entire iconographic programme of the codex. However, he interpreted the iconography of its miniatures as having Syrian origins – an assumption based on his belief that the manuscript had been created in the Serbian Athonite monastery of Hilandar, where the illuminator had used a Syrian model from the pre-iconoclastic period. This view, inspired by his well-known book *Orient oder Rom*,

gave rise to a new scholarly debate – *Byzantium or the East?* – which, in the years that followed, filled the pages of the most prominent academic journals of the time. Strzygowski’s claim regarding the Eastern – specifically Syrian – origins of the iconography in certain miniatures met with strong opposition from leading scholars in Russia, Germany, and France, among them Nikodim Kondakov, Fyodor Schmidt, Dmitry Aynalov, Carl Anton Baumstark, Louis Bréhier, Charles Diehl, and, of course, Gabriel Millet.²⁶ The latter, as a connoisseur of Serbian monumental painting, argued for a con-

²³ M. Valtrović, “P. P. Pokryshkin, *Pravoslavnaia tserkovnaia arkhitektura XII-XVIII stoletii v nyneshnem serbskom Korolevstve*, St Petersburg, 1906”, *Starinar* 1.2, addendum, 1906 (1907), p. 34-43.

²⁴ V. R. Petković, “Josef Strzygowski, Die Miniaturen des serbischen Psalters mit einer Einleitung von V. Jagić”, *Starinar* 1.2, addendum, 1906 (1907), p. 44-55.

²⁵ J. Strzygowski, *Die Miniaturen des serbischen Psalters der Königl. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek in München nach einer Belgrader Kopie ergänzt und im Zusammenhange mit der syrischen Bilderredaktion des Psalters untersucht*, Vienna, 1906.

²⁶ For a detailed discussion of this issue, with an extensive bibliography, see K. Ž Miloradović, *Minijature minhenskog psaltira. Ikonografske odlike i literarne osnove*, PhD thesis, University of

nection between the miniatures of the Munich Psalter and Serbian fresco painting.²⁷ He did so on the basis of a meticulous iconographic analysis of the Gospel scenes, which he was studying in depth at the time while working on his voluminous dissertation. In contrast, Vladimir R. Petković's review of Strzygowski's work, published in *Starinar*, adopted a markedly different tone. Petković acknowledged Strzygowski as a diligent researcher who, in his view, had placed the idea of the direct influence of the East on medieval art on firm scholarly grounds. This was shaped both by the considerable prestige the Viennese art historian enjoyed in the Kingdom of Serbia, and by the prevailing political and ideological climate of nation building and the formation of national artistic canons. In this environment, the study of Serbian medieval art played a vital role in forging cultural identity.²⁸ Petković would, however, revise his position as early as the following year, influenced primarily by Gabriel Millet's article "Byzance et non l'Orient". Aligning himself with the French Byzantinist, he softened his earlier views and began to associate the miniatures of the Munich Psalter with Serbian medieval wall painting.²⁹

Just as they sought sources and models for iconographic solutions, scholars also aimed to understand the origins of the architectural sculptural motifs found on churches built between the Battle of Maritsa (1371) and the fall of the Serbian medieval state (1453). The distinctive geometric and vegetal interlaces of rosettes and archivolts found on triconch churches from this period were thus attributed to distant architectural traditions in Russia, Georgia, and Armenia, as well as to Islamic art – hypotheses that were eventually abandoned.³⁰ In this context, Gabriel Millet, writing in 1908 about the origin of the architectural sculpture of the Church of Lazarica (1375), noted:

Cette sculpture continue la tradition des Géorgiens et des Russes : ce sont les mêmes animaux fantastiques, entrelacés ou affrontés. Plus qu'à Ani, plus aussi qu'à Vladimir, les rubans sinueux se croisent en des combinaisons multiples. Comme parfois en Arménie, l'entrelace forme une suite de nœuds reliés par des tiges. Les bandes de faible relief encadrant les fenêtres, les cercles ajourés, surtout les feuilles grasses mêlées aux entrelacs et aux animaux, sont d'origine géorgienne. Ainsi l'ornementation romane orientale, qui avait fleuri à Vladimir, pousse un dernier rejeton, après deux siècles d'intervalle, sur les bords de la Morava. Elle s'y trouve mêlée à des motifs d'art musulman.³¹

Belgrade, 2022, p. 2-5.

²⁷ G. Millet, "Byzance et non l'Orient", *Revue archéologique* 11, 1908, p. 171-189.

²⁸ N. Makuljević, "The Political Reception of the Vienna School: Josef Strzygowski and Serbian Art History", *Journal of Art Historiography* 8, 2013, p. 1-13.

²⁹ V. R. Petković, "G. Millet, Byzance et non l'Orient", *Starinar* 2, addendum, 1908, p. 84-92.

³⁰ J. Maksimović, "Moravska skulptura", in V. J. Đurić (ed.), *Moravska škola i njeno doba*, Belgrade, 1972, p. 181-190.

³¹ G. Millet, "L'art chrétien d'Orient...", p. 939.

This group of monuments, erected in the basin of the three Morava rivers (which was later designated as the Morava School by Millet), also attracted the particular attention of the distinguished Romanian art historian and architect Gheorghe Baș. In 1911, he travelled to Serbia, where he explored and photographed several of the most important medieval royal foundations. Although, in the preface to his book, he notes that his account is limited to descriptions of only a few of the most significant churches and that it is not intended as a history of Serbian sacred art, Baș's compact and modestly titled volume – *Une visite à quelques églises de Serbie* – published in both Romanian and French and richly illustrated, possesses considerable scholarly value.³²

Rich in field experience, Baș was quick to recognize the key issues concerning the origins of the church architecture in Serbia. In his book, he identified the main stylistic groups of Serbian medieval architecture, a classification that corresponds to the one proposed by Pokryshkin and was later further elaborated by Gabriel Millet. Within the first group, characterised by a Byzantine spatial plan and by influences from Dalmatia and the West in façade design and decoration, he carefully described the Church of the Virgin at Studenica, as well as the churches of Žiča and Arilje. In the second group, the one most strongly influenced by Byzantine architecture, he devoted particular attention to Gračanica, the King's Church at Studenica, and the ruins of the church at Stara Pavlica, which he believed, based on its form, to belong to the same period.

Although primarily concerned with architecture, Baș did not fail to mention painting, even though he included no photographs of the church interiors he discussed. Unsurprisingly, he focused most of his attention on the churches of the Morava School, due to their direct connection with Romanian churches such as Tismana, Vodica, and, of course, Cozia. He provided meticulous descriptions of Ravanica, Lazarica, Ljubostinja, Rudenica, Kalenić (fig. 8), Manasija, and the church at the cemetery in Smederevo, and also included in this group the triconch monastic churches built on Fruška Gora after the fall of the Serbian medieval state (Kamenica, Krušedol, Jazak, Rakovac, and Bešenovo). Notably, Baș also included Cozia (fig. 9), founded by Mircea the Elder and built between 1387 and 1391, within this group of monuments.

In the introduction to the chapter on churches from the final period of the Serbian medieval state's independence, Baș offers a careful analysis of their morphological and stylistic features. He remarks that such architectural arrangements are found neither in Byzantine nor in Western buildings that could have served as models for Serbian art. Instead, he identifies similar solutions in Armenia and Georgia, suggesting that this particular feature of Serbian church construction likely originates from the Caucasus region. He further highlights the refined craftsmanship and inventive decorative language of Armenian and Georgian builders, shaped by their position between

³² G. Baș, *O vizită la câteva biserici din Serbia*, Bucharest, 1911; id., *Une visite à quelques églises de Serbie*, Bucharest, 1911.



Fig. 8. Kalenić, view of the church from the southeast side (© Blago Fund)



Fig. 9. Cozia, view of the church from the northeast side (photo by the author)

Byzantine and Eastern civilisations and their legacy of Syrian artistic traditions. Their enduring ties with Constantinople and, more significantly, their strong monastic presence on Mount Athos, through foundations such as the Great Lavra and Iviron, created a continuous channel for the transmission of artistic forms and ideas. In this broader context, the resemblance between decorative elements found in Georgian monuments and those of the Morava School gains additional weight. Mount Athos, and in particular the monastery of Hilandar, thus emerge as crucial intermediaries in the transfer of architectural and ornamental models from the Christian East into the visual culture of late medieval Serbia.

Although located outside Serbian territory, Balş included the church of Cozia within this group of monuments. He regarded it as fully part of the same stylistic corpus, citing numerous formal correspondences: the plan closely resembles those of Lazarica and Kalenić; decorative features such as colonettes, arcades, and rosettes are comparable to those found in Ravanica, Ljubostinja, and Rudenica; and even the fantastic animals and double-headed eagles echo Serbian sculptural motifs. The masonry, cornices, and overall execution, he argues, are virtually identical to those in Serbia. For Balş, this is not a matter of passive imitation but strong evidence that Cozia was most likely built by Serbian master builders. This interpretation is further reinforced by the close dynastic and ecclesiastical ties between Wallachia and Serbia. Balş emphasizes that Saint Nicodemus, a Serbian monk of noble origin, introduced Athonite monasticism and Serbian artistic models to Wallachia. He further suggests that the now-lost original church of Tismana, built before 1385, likely shared similar architectural features, a memory of which may be preserved in the fleur-de-lis interlace

motifs adorning its later, sixteenth-century portal. In contrast, he was unable to draw firm conclusions about Nicodemus' earlier foundation, Vodica, which is too heavily ruined to allow for architectural analysis.

During his travels through Serbia, Baš devoted particular attention to the architecture of the Church of Saint Nicholas at Lapušnja, an endowment of Radu IV the Great, the Wallachian Grand Voivode, dating from 1500/1501.³³ Located in the Krajina region, between the Morava and the Timok rivers, the church lies in an area that maintained close historical and cultural ties with Wallachia. Thanks to Baš, the architecture of this church received its first thorough scholarly interpretation. He carefully described and photographed the building, producing valuable documentation of its condition at the beginning of the twentieth century. Thanks to his photograph of the dedicatory inscription, parts of the text that have since been lost can today be reconstructed.³⁴ In this article as well, Baš remained committed to identifying architectural sources and parallels. He concluded that, although its plan recalls earlier Serbian churches, the Church of Saint Nicholas at Lapušnja lacks the defining features of the Morava School. Likewise, despite certain similarities in workmanship, it bears little resemblance to the monastery at Dealu in Wallachia, built by the same founder. Instead, Baš noted affinities with late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Wallachian architecture and proposed that one of the masons from Dealu may have been sent to Lapušnja. Modest in scale and decoration, the church was thus interpreted as a rare example of a monument built by a Wallachian ruler south of the Danube, offering valuable evidence of stylistic transmission across politically shifting territories in the late medieval Balkans.³⁵ Baš's interest in the direct connections between Serbian and Romanian architecture of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries did not end with his studies published in 1911. He returned to this subject in his paper at the Second International Congress of Byzantine Studies, held in Belgrade in 1927. The results of his continued research were published in 1930 in the important volume *L'art byzantin chez les Slaves*,³⁶ edited by Gabriel Millet, who would himself return to this topic a few years later.³⁷

³³ Id., "O biserică a lui Radu cel Mare în Serbia la Lopušnja", *Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice* 4, 1911, p. 194-199.

³⁴ B. Knežević, "Manastir Lapušnja", *Saopštenja* 18, 1986, p. 90, n. 32, fig. 4.

³⁵ A new interpretation of the Serbian and Wallachian architectural connections, including the Church of Saint Nicholas in Lapušnja, was proposed by J. Bogdanović, "Triconch Churches Sponsored by Serbian and Wallachian Nobility", in M. A. Rossi and A. I. Sullivan (eds.), *Byzantium in Eastern European Visual Culture in the Late Middle Ages*, Leiden, 2020, p. 167-199.

³⁶ G. Baš, "Influence du plan serbe sur le plan des églises roumaines", in G. Millet (ed.), *L'art byzantin chez les Slaves: les Balkans. Premier recueil dédié à la mémoire de Théodore Uspenskij*, vol. 1, Paris, 1930, p. 277-294.

³⁷ G. Millet, "Cozia et les églises serbes de la Morava", in *Mélanges offerts à M. Nicolas Iorga par ses amis de France et des pays de langue française*, Paris, 1933, p. 827-856.

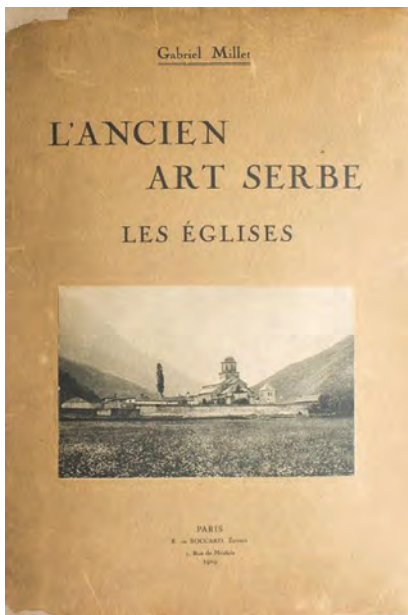


Fig. 10. G. Millet, *L'ancien art serbe. Les églises*, Paris, 1919, front cover (photo in the public domain)

Undoubtedly, the most significant contribution to the study of Serbian medieval architecture was Gabriel Millet's book *L'ancien art serbe. Les églises*, written during the Great War and published in Paris in 1919 (fig. 10). With this work, Millet effectively brought early research on Serbian medieval architecture to a close, while simultaneously establishing a methodological framework that would be adopted by nearly all subsequent scholars, a framework that, in essence, remains unchanged to this day.³⁸ Building on the findings of Valtrović, Pokryshkin, and Baš, Millet developed the now-canonical tripartite classification of Serbian architecture. What distinguished Millet's work from previous studies was its comprehensive vision of the evolution of Serbian church architecture – traced through structural forms, building techniques, and decorative systems. Millet approached Serbian medieval architecture through a historical and geographical framework, classifying monuments into three

stylistic groups based on dominant influences: the Raška School, shaped by Western models; the so-called Serbo-Byzantine School, rooted in Byzantine tradition; and the Morava School, which, in his view, represented the most characteristic synthesis of architectural forms in Serbia, in which he recognised the emergence of a truly national architectural style. Millet's tripartite classification was quickly recognised by the international scholarly community and, over time, gained wide acceptance in Serbian art historiography. His book gradually became a foundational reference for the study of individual monuments, and his approach was soon incorporated into major surveys of architecture across the Byzantine cultural sphere.³⁹

Unsurprisingly, the earliest research was directed toward church architecture, which was primarily regarded as a testament to the nation's past. Consequently, initial interest in medieval painting centred on the portraits of rulers and noble patrons – those who had commissioned these churches – as visual affirmations of a glorious historical legacy. However, this focus began to shift in the early years of the twentieth

³⁸ O. Špehar, "Modaliteti recepcije *L'ancien art serbe. Les églises* u domaćoj istoriografiji", in D. Preradović and M. Marković (eds.), *Gabrijel Mije...*, p. 191-213.

³⁹ R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Baltimore, 1965, p. 301-304; C. Mango, *Architettura Bizantina*, Milan, 1977, p. 171-178; V. Korać and M. Šuput, *Arhitektura vizantijskog sveta*, Belgrade, 2010, p. 235-246.

century, primarily due to the efforts of Vladimir R. Petković. His early contributions, mentioned above,⁴⁰ were followed over the years by a series of significant studies, most of which were published in the pages of *Starinar*. Among them were pioneering analyses of the frescoes in Žiža – the coronation church of both medieval and modern Serbian sovereigns – and in Kalenić, where Petković identified iconographic parallels between the cycle of the Virgin's life in the Serbian church and that in the Church of Christ in Chora, Constantinople,⁴¹ as well as his important study on *ktetor* portraits.⁴² As for Millet, he soon included his first remarks on Serbian medieval painting in Millet's *History of Art*, thereby marking the beginning of a more sustained interest in this artistic field.⁴³

A new impetus in the study of medieval painting emerged after the Great War. In the changed socio-political context and under the newly established Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the National Museum continued to play a leading role in field research on monuments. Functioning essentially as a seminar for the Department of Archaeology and Art History – since the Museum's director was always a university professor – it remained closely tied to academic institutions. Vladimir R. Petković became director of the Museum in 1919, while also serving as an associate professor of art history at the Faculty of Philosophy. The number of university-educated researchers steadily increased, and alongside art historians, archaeologists, and historians, architects such as Žarko Tatić and Đurđe Bošković, as well as theologians like Lazar Mirković, played an important role in the study of medieval heritage.

At the same time, the establishment of the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje in 1920, followed by the founding of the Museum of Southern Serbia in 1924, had a significant impact on the exploration and interpretation of Serbian medieval cultural patrimony within the broader context of the new state. A professor of archaeology and art history at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje from 1920 to 1922, Nikolai Okunev was one of several Russian émigrés who left a significant mark on the intellectual life of the Kingdom. Although he soon relocated to Prague, his field research on Byzantine and Serbian medieval monuments in the region resulted, among other writings, in monographic studies on Nerezi, Staro Nagoričino, Arilje, Lesnovo, and other churches, as well as in four photographic albums titled *Monumenta Artis Serbicae*.⁴⁴ The Museum in Skopje was directed by Radoslav Grujić, a historian and theologian who taught national history at the Faculty of Philosophy in that city. In 1925, he founded and served as editor of the important scholarly journal *Glasnik Skopskog naučnog društva* (*Bulletin of the Skopje Scientific Society*). The journal quickly established itself as a

⁴⁰ See above n. 20 and n. 21.

⁴¹ V. R. Petković, "Freske iz unutrašnjeg narteksa crkve u Kaleniću", *Starinar* 3, 1908, p. 121-143.

⁴² Id., "Likovi ktitora u starim crkvama srpskim", *Nova Iskra* 10.10, 1911, p. 299-304.

⁴³ G. Millet, "L'art chrétien d'Orient...", p. 951-955.

⁴⁴ N. Okunev, *Monumenta Artis Serbicae I-IV*, Zagreb – Prague, 1928-1931.

significant scholarly platform for contributions in the fields of history, archaeology, art history, and theology, with a particular focus on the medieval and ecclesiastical heritage of the southern regions of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

In Belgrade, the publication of *Starinar* was once again resumed after a hiatus following the Balkan Wars and First World War, reaffirming its role as the central scholarly journal for archaeology, art history, and related disciplines. As the official publication of the Serbian Archaeological Society, *Starinar* provided a platform for the dissemination of new research and the presentation of recent fieldwork findings.

Important research was undertaken by the director and curators of the National Museum, as well as by other medievalists of the period who conducted fieldwork under its auspices. Between 1920 and 1927, these investigations – together with the systematic photographic documentation of wall paintings and architecture – were particularly extensive, and although somewhat reduced in scope, they continued until 1934. In 1922, Petković launched an ambitious new series at the National Museum titled *Srpski spomenici* (*Serbian Monuments*), through which seven major volumes were published by 1934: five scholarly monographs (*Ravanica*, *Studenica*, *Kalenić*, *Markov Manastir*, *Manasija*) and two albums of medieval paintings (*La peinture serbe du Moyen Âge*). These publications, featuring detailed historical commentary, extensive summaries or full texts in French, and numerous illustrations, were warmly received by the international community of Byzantine scholars – particularly in France and Germany – and contributed significantly to raising awareness of Serbian medieval art and architecture beyond national borders.⁴⁵

The album of Serbian medieval painting was originally prepared by Petković for the Byzantine Congress in Belgrade in 1927, but the conditions for its publication were not met at that time. The extensive material he had gathered was subsequently divided into two separate volumes, which were published in 1930 and 1934, each accompanied by comprehensive introductory texts in French. Their publication was closely linked to the Byzantine Congresses, and archival records reveal that there was a rush to publish the albums in time for the Congress in Athens (1930) and later for the Congress in Sofia (1934). However, this publishing initiative was also shaped by a certain ideological pressure. Namely, archival documents reveal a growing concern that the study of Serbian medieval art was lagging behind the scholarly achievements of neighbouring countries – particularly Romania and Bulgaria.⁴⁶ During the 1920s, both countries had produced not only important monographic works, but also ambitious synthetic studies of their medieval artistic heritage.⁴⁷ In contrast, Serbia lacked similar

⁴⁵ For more details on these editions, see D. Preradović, “Edicija *Srpski spomenici* Narodnog muzeja Srbije: povodom sto godina od prvog izdanja”, *Zbornik Narodnog muzeja* 15.2, 2022, p. 285-311.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 293 and *passim*.

⁴⁷ This primarily refers to N. Iorga and G. Baș, *L'Art roumain du XIV^e au XIX^e siècle: description et documentation historique*, Paris, 1922; A. Grabar, *La peinture religieuse en Bulgarie*, Paris, 1928.



Fig. 11. Vladimir Petković, fifth from the left, among the participants of the congress, 1924 (photo in the public domain)

Fig. 12. Decree of Romanian King Ferdinand I appointing Vladimir R. Petković, professor at the University of Belgrade, Commander of the Order of the Crown of Romania, on 18 December 1924 (after D. Preradović (ed.), *Vladimir R. Petković, A Founding Figure of the Institutional and Academic Realm*, p. 219)



efforts, especially when it came to comprehensive studies of medieval painting, and, more broadly, any attempt to produce an overarching synthesis of Serbian medieval art that would jointly address architecture and wall painting.⁴⁸

By 1924, however, numerous individual monuments had already been the subject of scholarly investigation. Yet, at the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies, there was no discussion of Serbian medieval painting and architecture, nor of the connections between Serbian and Byzantine monuments, even though Vladimir R. Petković was among the members of the delegation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Petković's reputation and scholarly standing were, without doubt, well established and recognized within Romanian academic circles (fig. 11). A document preserved in Petković's personal archive at the National Museum of Serbia attests to the strength of the ties between the two Balkan countries and demonstrates that, despite the scarcity of sources, collaboration among experts did indeed exist. As the document shows, in December 1924 King Ferdinand of Romania appointed Petković Commander of the Order of the Romanian Crown (fig. 12).

⁴⁸ In addition to Millet's frequently cited book, the only other comparable publication of the period was a work by Miloje Vasić, *Žiča i Lazarica: studije iz srpske umetnosti srednjeg veka*, Belgrade, 1928, which was likewise devoted to the history of architecture.

The team of Yugoslav scholars who came to Bucharest was not a small one. Its members came from all parts of the then Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. From Belgrade came Vladimir R. Petković, along with the historian Vladimir Ćorović and the historian and archaeologist Nikola Vulić. According to the Congress records, they actively participated in discussions, although none of them presented a paper.⁴⁹ The only delegate to speak about monuments on the territory of Yugoslavia was Ljubo Karaman, an art historian from Split, who delivered a paper on early medieval architecture in Dalmatia and its connections with Byzantium – a topic that continues to attract scholarly attention today.

Although they were not the subject of any presentation in Bucharest, the art and architecture of medieval monuments were nonetheless among the reasons cited by Nikola Vulić when, during the concluding session of the Congress, he proposed that the next meeting be held in Belgrade, stating: “La Serbie en serait flattée, et les raisons ne lui manquent pas. Il rappelle le passé byzantin de son pays, la beauté des monastères et leur intérêt au point de vue architectural et pictural ; la beauté pittoresque de la Serbie”.⁵⁰ Indeed, following the Congress in Belgrade – just as after the one in Bucharest – a multi-day excursion was organised, allowing participants to visit and become acquainted with medieval monuments located between Belgrade and Skopje, thereby enabling international scholars to experience them first-hand.

By the time of the Belgrade Congress in 1927, the study of Serbian medieval monuments had progressed from an early antiquarian pursuit to a fully institutionalised academic discipline, shaped by a generation of scholars trained both at home and abroad. Through field research, museum work, and international scholarly exchange, a substantial body of documentation and interpretation had already been produced. The efforts of figures such as Valtrović, Petković, and Millet, together with contributions from Russian and Romanian researchers, positioned Serbian medieval art within the broader field of Byzantine studies, while simultaneously affirming its distinctive character and significance. Their work increasingly reflected contemporary methodological developments and engaged in dialogue with the international scholarly community. As a result, the study of Serbian medieval art was no longer confined to a national framework but began to participate in the wider scholarly discourse examining the material and visual legacies of the Byzantine cultural sphere. This integration laid the groundwork for subsequent generations of researchers, who continued to investigate and reinterpret Serbia’s medieval heritage within both regional and global contexts.

⁴⁹ C. Marinescu, *Compte-rendu du premier Congrès international des études byzantines, Bucarest, 1924*, Bucharest, 1925.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

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 protodiplomatic 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): col·lecció 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 Scandenbergh", *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 Théccla 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 Uniunii 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 introductor", 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 orígens 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. Ștefănescu (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 preromànica, 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. Ștefănescu 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, "Pistolero 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, Cosmopolitanism*, 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 țară 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 țară latină: Catalonia și expoziția din 1929. Note de drum și conferințe*, Bucharest, 1930, p. 38. Translation by the author.

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

⁷⁷ N. Iorga, *O mică țară 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 [III^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.



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

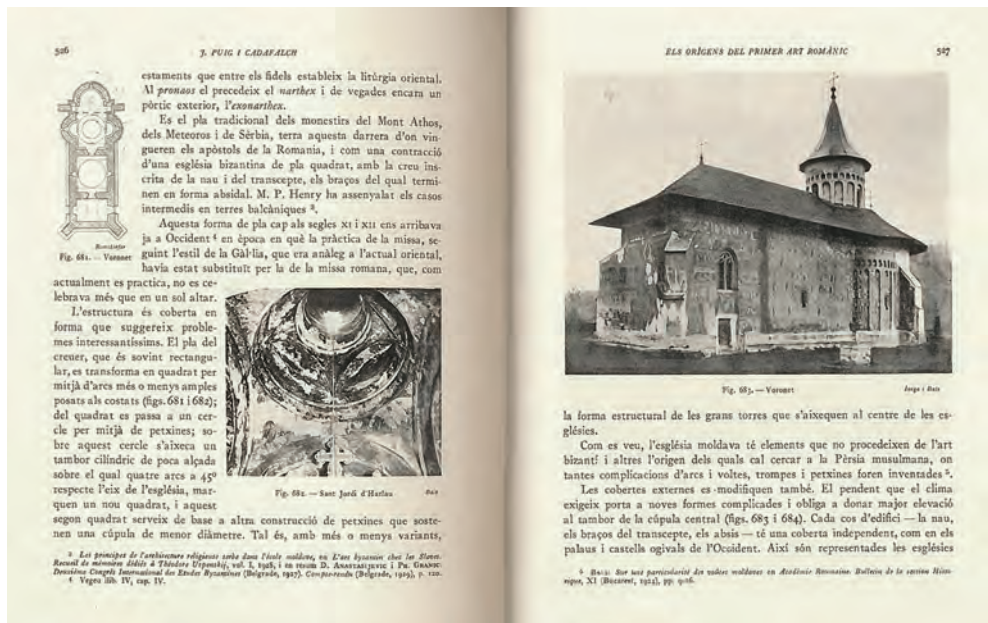
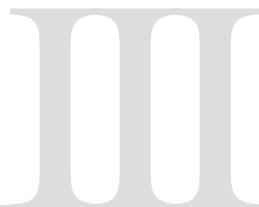


Fig. 2. Josep Puig i Cadafalch, *La geografia i els orígens del primer art romànic*, Barcelona, 1930, p. 526-527 (photo by the author)

*Les études byzantines
avant et après
le congrès de 1924*



The Study of Byzantine History in Belgrade before and after the First World War

Srđan Pirivatrić

Abstract: The emergence of academically grounded Byzantine studies in the renewed Serbia at the beginning of the twentieth century – marked by the establishment of the Chair and Seminar for Byzantine Studies at the University of Belgrade in 1906 – was connected with efforts to found a scholarly historiography in the restored state with the help of scholars educated at foreign universities. A decisive role in this process was played by Serbian students who had studied at the first Byzantine Studies Chair and Seminar of Professor Karl Krumbacher in Munich – Dragutin Anastasijević, Božidar Prokić, Filaret Granić, and others – who were active during the period of early internationalization of Byzantine studies, on the eve of and following the end of the First World War.

Keywords: Byzantine studies, Belgrade, Dragutin Anastasijević, Božidar Prokić, Filaret Granić

Modern Serbia emerged in the early nineteenth century from the Serb liberation movement in the Sanjak of Smederevo, then part of the Ottoman Empire. This movement combined the efforts to restore the erstwhile medieval state of the Nemanjić dynasty with the desire to implement modern European political ideals. Established in 1830 as an autonomous hereditary principality within the Ottoman Empire, Serbia initially encompassed the territory of the former sanjak. The crucial turning points in its political and territorial development came in 1878, when it was recognized as an independent state at the Congress of Berlin and gained some territorial expansion, and in 1882, when its head of state assumed the royal title and became king. Ideas and knowledge about the past formed an inseparable part of these processes of renewal and modernization efforts. They drew on pre-existing conceptions of national history and were accompanied by

efforts to cultivate a historical consciousness through a rudimentary educational system and an emerging academic life – both of which were closely intertwined with Serbian political life and with the broader national movement of the Serbs.¹

The introduction of Byzantine studies represents a distinct stage in the development of Serbian scholarly historiography, but the path toward its establishment as an autonomous academic discipline in the Principality and later in the Kingdom of Serbia was far from straightforward. For a considerable period, historical scholarship in Serbia remained rudimentary. It naturally depended on the broader progress of education and learning, the cultivation of erudition, and the organization of systematic research into the nation's past. The collection and publication of sources constituted the primary concern of learned individuals who sought to contribute to the advancement of historical study, particularly those related to the medieval period, which was among the chief preoccupations of the Society of Serbian Letters (*Društvo srpske slovesnosti*), founded as early as 1841. The Society's prominent members later formed the nucleus of the Serbian Royal Academy (*Srpska kraljevska akademija*), established in 1886, or joined it in 1892 after the Society merged with the Academy. These heuristic efforts were accompanied by the first attempts at systematic historical scholarship, cultivated through history courses taught at the highest educational institutions – beginning with the Lyceum, founded in 1838, which evolved into the Great School in 1863, serving as the precursor to the University of Belgrade.² Both the heuristic work and the teaching of history at these institutions were characterized by limited source criticism and a pronounced trust in various forms of tradition, especially oral and folk traditions – a feature that was reflected in early scholarly publications as well. Over time, proponents of a more critical approach to the sources gained predominance, although the leading figures of both schools of thought – today identified as the Romantic and the Critical schools – formally remained amateurs without proper academic training in historical method.³ A representative and, in this context, particularly telling example is Stojan Novaković (1842-1915): a polymath and politician who held several high state offices, and a distinguished historian without formal academic training. Although he largely stood outside the conflict between the two historiographical schools, his methodological

¹ A recent survey of the Serbian uprising against the Ottoman Empire in the Smederevo Sanjak and the emergence of modern Serbia is U. Šešum, *Устаничка Србија: народ и земља*, Belgrade, 2024; certain aspects of historical memory during the time of the uprising and the creation of modern Serbia are analysed in id., *Србија и Стара Србија (1804-1839)*, Belgrade, 2017.

² For a general overview of the development of educational and academic institutions, as well as historiography in the nineteenth century, see I. Vožić, *Постанак и развој у Универзитета у Београду*, Belgrade, 1988; *Универзитет у Београду 1838-1988, Зборник радова*, Belgrade, 1988; *100 година Српске академије наука и уметности (1886-1986)*, Belgrade, 1989; S. Ćirković, "САНУ", in id. (ed.), *Енциклопедија српске историографије*, Belgrade, 1997 (henceforth *ЕСИ*), p. 125-127; R. Mihaljčić, "Филозофски факултет у Београду", in *ЕСИ*, p. 127-130.

³ S. Ćirković, "Јављање 'критичке историографије' на Великој школи и Универзитету", in *Универзитет у Београду 1838-1988*, p. 645-654.

orientation clearly aligned with the latter.⁴ The clashes between these two intellectual camps during the final two decades of the nineteenth century mirrored the broader dilemmas – and eventual resolutions – of Serbia’s cultural policy at the time.

A key factor contributing to the formal professionalization of Serbian historiography – and, by extension, of Byzantine studies – was the government’s 1875 decision to sponsor students for study at foreign universities under highly favourable conditions. The state covered their travel expenses and tuition fees and granted them an allowance comparable to the salary of a mid-level university lecturer. In the decades that followed, this measure proved to be of great social and political significance, especially for the state administration, which had been its primary intended beneficiary. It also produced lasting benefits for higher education, scholarship, and the sciences, including historiography, medieval studies, and, ultimately, Byzantine studies.⁵

This period also witnessed the first – albeit incomplete – attempt to introduce Byzantine studies into higher education. In 1890, the royal government resolved to establish a Department of Medieval and Byzantine studies at the Great School, but the plan collapsed due to financial constraints. Shortly afterward, reflecting personnel changes at the Great School and the appointment of Božidar Prokić (1859-1922) – educated in Paris – as lecturer in medieval history in 1892, Byzantine history began to be taught, although not yet as an independent subject. The retirement of Pantelija Srećković (1834-1903), the long-serving professor of national history at the Great School and a leading representative of the Romantic conception of national history, and his replacement in 1893 by Ljubomir Kovačević (1848-1918) – his bitter opponent and a distinguished advocate of the critical approach – symbolized a decisive shift in the orientation of Serbian national historiography.⁶

Understandably, the emergence of Byzantinists with formal academic training in Serbia – and of scholars whose education included a component of Byzantine studies – was primarily linked to the renowned Chair of Byzantine studies at the University of Munich, headed by Karl Krumbacher, the world’s first such chair, established in 1893.⁷

⁴ Id., “Стојан Новаковић”, in *ЕСИ*, p. 540-542. A recent collective volume on his life and work is *Стојан Новаковић: Поводом сто седамдесет пет година од рођења*, Belgrade, 2018.

⁵ For a thorough analysis of this phenomenon, see Lj. Trgovčević, *Планирана елита: о студентима из Србије на европским универзитетима у 19. веку*, Belgrade, 2003.

⁶ Lj. Maksimović, “Развој византологије”, in *Универзитет у Београду 1838-1988*, p. 655-671; R. Mihaљčić, “Филозофски факултет у Београду”, in *ЕСИ*, p. 127-128; S. Pirivatrić, “A Case Study in the Emergence of Byzantine Studies: Serbia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries”, in P. Stephenson (ed.), *The Byzantine World*, London, 2010, p. 481-490, especially p. 482-483; Lj. Maksimović, “Бојидар Прокић”, in *ЕСИ*, p. 598-599; A. Veselinović, “Пантелија Срећковић”, in *ЕСИ*, p. 644-645; R. Mihaљčić, “Љубомир Ковачевић”, in *ЕСИ*, p. 440-441; *Глас САНУ CDXIV, Одељење историјских наука* 15, 2010.

⁷ On the establishment of the first Chair of Byzantine studies, see P. Schreiner and E. Vogt (eds.), *Karl Krumbacher: Leben und Werk*, Munich, 2011, especially the chapter by F. Tinnefeld, “Die Begründung der Byzantinistik als wissenschaftlicher Disziplin”, p. 27-37. On the Serbian students in Krumbacher’s

Stanoje Stanojević (1874-1937), born in Austria-Hungary, studied philology under Vatroslav Jagić and history under Konstantin Jireček at the University of Vienna, where he earned his doctorate in 1896. He subsequently spent time in St Petersburg and Moscow (1897-1898), where he met Alexander Vasiliev, one of the foremost Byzantine scholars of his generation, and later worked as a teacher at the Serbian school in Constantinople and at the Russian Archaeological Institute there (1898-1899), directed by Fyodor Uspensky. Upon returning to Belgrade, Stanojević decided to pursue advanced studies under Karl Krumbacher. He was attached to Krumbacher's Chair when he was appointed docent (assistant professor) of Serbian history at the Great School in 1900. The first among the relatively numerous Serbs taught by Krumbacher, he played a pioneering role in developing a more comprehensive conception of Byzantine research in Serbia. Stanojević undertook the ambitious project of writing a multivolume work titled *Byzantium and the Serbs*, intending to devote the first nine volumes to the political history of Serbo-Byzantine relations and the tenth and final volume to Byzantine cultural influences on the Serbs. Two volumes appeared under this title (1903 and 1906), covering the period of the Slavic settlement in the Balkans. He was promoted to associate professor at the Great School in 1903, and in 1905 became associate professor at the newly established University of Belgrade, as well as a corresponding member of the Serbian Royal Academy. His scholarly interests largely centred on national history, though often with a pronounced Byzantine component, as seen in his *Studies in Serbian Diplomatics* (a collection of 28 papers published between 1912 and 1936).⁸

In 1905, Dragutin Anastasijević (1877-1950) became the first of Krumbacher's Serbian students to defend a doctoral dissertation under his supervision. The thesis, titled *Die paränetischen Alphabete in der griechischen Literatur*, was published in the same year. Anastasijević was born into a Greek-speaking family of Aromanian ancestry originally from Moscopolis; this background, combined with a prolonged stay in Corfu after completing the classics program at the Great School, later proved instrumental in shaping his research on Byzantine letters and literature, as well as on Modern Greek philology. His three-year course of study at Krumbacher's Chair, followed by specialization in palaeography at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, culminated in the successful defence of his dissertation. He also conducted research in libraries across Germany, Austria, Greece, Russia, and Turkey (notably at the Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople). During this early phase of his scholarly career, Anastasijević concentrated on collecting diplomatic material – especially that gathered during his research in the archives of Mount Athos, and particularly in the

seminar, see Lj. Maksimović, "Karl Krumbachers serbische Schüler", *Südost-Forschungen* 73.1, 2014, p. 429-443.

⁸ M. Spremić, "Stanoje Stanojević", in *ECH*, p. 650-651; Lj. Maksimović, "Karl Krumbachers...", p. 438-439.

monasteries of Hilandar and Great Lavra – as well as on exploring specific issues in the history of Serbian-Byzantine relations and the Nemanjić dynasty.⁹

Božidar Prokić (1859-1922) defended his doctoral dissertation, *Die Zusätze in der Handschrift des Johannes Skylitzes (Cod. Vindob. hist. gr. LXXIV)*, in 1906, not long after Anastasijević. In examining this exceptionally important source, Prokić continued the line of research he had initiated with his earlier treatise on the beginning of Tsar Samuel's reign (1901). This was followed by studies on John Skylitzes as a source for reconstructing that history (1908), on John, the first archbishop of Ohrid (1910), and on the formation of the Ohrid patriarchate (1912). Around the time he concluded his investigations into the polity commonly known as Samuel's Empire, Prokić was appointed director of the State Archive of Serbia (1911).¹⁰ His dissertation remained a significant scholarly reference until the publication of the critical edition of John Skylitzes' *Synopsis historiōn* in 1973. This dissertation opens a distinct set of questions and arguably warrants discussion in a separate study. Its subject was an important, unpublished manuscript kept in the Imperial Court Library in Vienna (now the Austrian National Library), and entrusting Prokić with the task of studying it may have carried a political dimension. Prokić's scholarly work based on this material occupied a significant place within the contemporary academic debate between Serbian and Bulgarian historians over the history and population of parts of historical Macedonia, particularly Vardar Macedonia, in the pre-modern period. This topic, naturally, attracted attention beyond the Serbian and Bulgarian scholarly milieus, and the debate itself inevitably intersected with contemporary politics.¹¹ Such an intellectual confrontation could only have served the geopolitical interests of Austria-Hungary and Germany, aligning with their foreign policy objectives in the context of the Eastern Question in Macedonia and in perpetuating or steering Serbo-Bulgarian antagonism.

In the meantime, significant changes took place at the Great School in Belgrade, leading to the establishment of an independent centre for Byzantine studies. In 1905, the Great School was transformed into a university, and early the following year, the Chair and Seminar for Byzantine studies were founded within the Faculty of Philosophy, becoming the third oldest university department of Byzantine studies in Europe. In May 1906, the young Dragutin Anastasijević was appointed as its head, with the rank of associate professor.¹²

⁹ S. Ćirković, "Драгутин Анастасијевић", in *ЕЦИ*, p. 260-261; Lj. Maksimović, "Karl Krumbachers...", p. 429-434.

¹⁰ Lj. Maksimović, "Бождар Прокић", in *ЕЦИ*, p. 598-599; id., "Karl Krumbachers...", p. 429-434.

¹¹ For a comprehensive analytical review of the Bulgarian-Serbian historiographical controversies related to this issue, see R. Daskalov, *Историографски спорове за Средновековието: Българо-сръбски, българо-македонски*, Sofia, 2024.

¹² Lj. Maksimović, "Развој византологије", p. 657; S. Pirivatrić, "A Case Study...", p. 483-484; see also I. Đurić, "Свакодневна повест Семинара за византологију Филозофског факултета у Београду", *Зборник Филозофског факултета. Научни скуп поводом стопедесетогодишњице*

Another distinguished figure among Krumbacher's Serbian students was Veselin Čajkanović (1881-1946), who earned his doctorate in 1907 with a dissertation titled *Quaestionum paroemiographicarum capita selecta* (published in Tübingen, 1908). However, despite his Munich training, Byzantine subjects did not occupy a central place in his otherwise stellar academic and teaching career.¹³

Soon after Anastasijević and Prokić, Branko Granić (1883-1948) defended his doctoral dissertation under Krumbacher's supervision. His thesis, entitled *Die Subscriptionen in den datierten griechischen Handschriften des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts*, was published in 1922. Born in Velika Kikinda in Austria-Hungary, Granić pursued his education first in Novi Sad, then in Vienna, and ultimately completed his doctorate in Munich. Shortly thereafter, in 1912, he took monastic vows at the Hopovo Monastery, and entered the service of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci, where he also graduated from the Theological Seminary.¹⁴

Nikola Radojčić (1882-1964) was another Serbian scholar who spent a period studying under Krumbacher. After pursuing studies in Graz, Zagreb, and Jena, with a focus on history, Radojčić completed his doctorate in 1907 under the supervision of Heinrich Gelzer at the University of Munich. His dissertation, *Die Zwei letzten Komnenen auf dem konstantinopolitanischen Thron*, was published the same year in Serbo-Croatian in Zagreb. While serving as a teacher at the renowned high school in Sremski Karlovci, a post he still held at the outbreak of the First World War, Radojčić published several noteworthy studies in Byzantine history.¹⁵

Vladimir Ćorović (1885-1941), also a native of Austria-Hungary, studied languages and history in Vienna under Vatroslav Jagić, Milan Rešetar, and Konstantin Jireček, earning his doctorate in 1908. He subsequently attended Krumbacher's seminar for a short period – albeit toward the very end of Krumbacher's life – thus adding Byzantine studies to his already wide-ranging scholarly formation. In his remarkably prolific career, which after the First World War was closely associated with Belgrade, however, Byzantine subjects appeared only rarely.¹⁶

Vladimir Petković (1874-1956) was likewise among the Serbian students of Karl Krumbacher, although he completed his doctoral studies in Halle in 1905. Petković is regarded as the founder of scholarly art history in Serbia. As a researcher of Serbian and Byzantine art, he produced a substantial body of monographs, surveys, and specialized

Филозофског факултета, Belgrade 1990, p. 263-270; R. Radić, “Сто година Катедре и Семинара за византологију”, *Зборник Матице српске за књижевност и језик* 56.1, 2008, p. 177-178.

¹³ A. Loma, “Веселин Чајкановић”, in *ЕСИ*, p. 709-710.

¹⁴ R. Radić, “Филарет (Бранко) Гранић”, in *ЕСИ*, p. 331-332; Lj. Maksimović, “Karl Krumbachers...”, p. 435-437.

¹⁵ S. Ćirković, “Никола Радојчић”, in *ЕСИ*, p. 607-608; Lj. Maksimović, “Karl Krumbachers...”, p. 440-442.

¹⁶ R. Mihaljčić, “Владимир Ћоровић”, in *ЕСИ*, p. 688-690; Lj. Maksimović, “Karl Krumbachers...”, p. 4389-440.

studies – on Serbian medieval painting, church monuments, and the monasteries of Žiča, Ravanica, Studenica, Kalenić, and Dečani, as well as on topics such as the iconography of the Nemanjić dynastic tree. He also made notable contributions to the study of late antique and early Byzantine archaeology, particularly through his work on major sites such as Stobi and Caričin Grad. Petković was a distinguished professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, the founder of the Seminar for Art History, director of the National Museum, head of the Archaeological Institute, and editor of the journal *Starinar*. His importance as both an art historian and archaeologist – within Serbia and in the wider international scholarly community – is underscored by the dedicated contribution to his work included in this volume.¹⁷

Although several Byzantinists received formal training in Munich within a relatively short period – and a few others acquired informal specialization – on the eve of the First World War Byzantine research in Serbia remained limited to the Byzantine Studies Department at the University of Belgrade and to the efforts of a single scholar, its head, Dragutin Anastasijević. Yet, as later developments would show, the careers and activities of the other Serbian scholars mentioned above eventually left a significant imprint, in different ways and at different times, on the evolution of Byzantine studies in Serbia – an outcome impossible to foresee at that early stage. Upon his return from Munich, Anastasijević maintained close ties with his mentor, and their correspondence sheds light on the challenges he faced: a lack of students interested in Byzantine studies and insufficient institutional support from the university leadership. During his first years of teaching (1906-1910), he offered courses in medieval and modern Greek and in Greek palaeography; between 1910 and 1914 he taught the history of the Byzantine Empire from 395 to 1025. His practical classes consisted primarily of reading texts and analysing their language and style. Although Anastasijević succeeded in assembling a book collection that would have been a remarkable library by contemporary standards, almost the entire collection was destroyed during the devastation of Belgrade – and of the university building – over the course of the First World War.¹⁸

The outcomes of the First (1912) and Second Balkan Wars (1913) and of the First World War (1914-1918) drastically transformed the context in which the nascent institutionalized Byzantine studies operated in the Kingdom of Serbia. Serbia's territorial expansion during the Balkan Wars encompassed those areas of the medieval Nemanjić state containing major monuments and material heritage that belonged to the Byzantine cultural sphere – so-called Old and South Serbia, that is, the regions of historical Raška, today's Kosovo and Metohija, and a part of historical Macedonia.¹⁹

¹⁷ See D. Preradović's article in this issue; see also ead. (ed.), *Владимир Р. Петковић. Утемељитељ струке и науке*, Belgrade, 2024.

¹⁸ S. Pirivatrić, "A Case Study...", p. 483-484.

¹⁹ For the liberation of Old Serbia from Ottoman rule, see S. Terzić, *Стара Србија (XIX-XX век): драма једне цивилизације: Рашка, Косово и Метохија, Скопско-Тетовска област*, Belgrade, 2012. The term "Old Serbia" was coined in the early nineteenth century to denote the territory of the medieval

Following the First World War, the unification of the Kingdom of Serbia with the Kingdom of Montenegro and with territories belonging to Austria-Hungary to form the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (the predecessor of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) dramatically increased the volume and diversity of this heritage. These far-reaching political changes inevitably affected the development of Byzantine studies. A number of institutions founded in Skopje after the war – such as the Scientific Society of Skopje, the Faculty of Philosophy, and the Museum of South Serbia – naturally incorporated a substantial Byzantine studies component into their activities.²⁰

A particularly valuable contribution to several branches of Byzantine research came from highly educated émigrés from the dissolved Russian Empire, whose presence proved decisive. Among them were Teodor Taranovski (1875-1936), Sergije Troicki (1878-1972), Nikolaj Okunjev (1886-1949), Aleksandar Solovjev (1890-1971), and Vladimir Mošin (1894-1987).²¹ More broadly, although the study and cultivation of Byzantine heritage played a role in the cultural policy of the new Yugoslav state, it by no means ranked among its priorities. Seeking a historical framework that could support its ideological and political aspiration, the medieval realm of the House of Kotromanić, with Bosnia as its centre, was considered far more suitable as a historical precedent than the Nemanjić state, whose early seat in Raška later shifted to territories deeply embedded in the Byzantine world. This preference was clearly reflected in the representative historiography of the period.²² Nevertheless, institutionalised Byzantine studies continued to exist – albeit in the background of academic life, which focused primarily on national themes. After the war, Anastasijević worked to rebuild the Department's devastated library. From 1921 he headed the Department as a non-tenured professor, and for a time remained its sole member, since he had meanwhile taken up a full-time teaching position at the Theological Seminary of the University of Belgrade.²³

The First International Congress of Byzantine Studies, held in Bucharest in 1924, inaugurated a new phase of growing internationalization, and the composition

Serbian state of the Nemanjić dynasty that remained out of the contemporary principality of Serbia; see U. Šešum, *Србија и Стара Србија*, p. 75-92.

²⁰ S. Pirivatrić, “Тласник скопског научног друштва”, in *ЕСИ*, p. 73-74.

²¹ A partial insight into the contribution of the aforementioned scholars to post-war Byzantine studies is provided by texts in the volume dedicated to the themes of the Russian émigrés' contribution to Serbian culture, see M. Sibinović, M. Mežinski, and A. Arsenjev (eds.), *Руска емиграција у српској култури XX века*, I-II, Belgrade, 1994. See also the entries of R. Mihaljčić, “Теодор Тарановски”, D. Sindik, “Сергије Троицки”, S. Аврамовић, “Александар Соловјев”, M. Živojinović, “Владимир Мошин”, in *ЕСИ*, p. 669-670, 684-685, 640-642, 523-525; S. Mirković and N. Kršljanin (eds.), *125 година од рођења Александра Васиљевича Соловјева*, Belgrade, 2016.

²² Characteristic in this regard was the treatment of the history of the Kotromanić state in the surveys of the history of the peoples and regions that became part of the common Yugoslav state – conceived and presented as a master narrative of their time; see V. Ćorović, *Историја Југославије*, Belgrade, 1933.

²³ Lj. Maksimović, “Развој византологије”, p. 659; R. Radić, “Сто година Катедре...”, p. 292; S. Pirivatrić, “A Case Study...”, p. 484-485.

of the delegation sent by the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes illustrates the significance attributed to this development. Although Dragutin Anastasijević, the head of the country's only department of Byzantine studies, did not attend for reasons that remain unknown, several scholars affiliated with the University of Belgrade, including some of Krumbacher's former students, took part. Nikola Vulić, professor of ancient history at the University of Belgrade, was the most distinguished member of the delegation, charged with presenting the formal invitation to hold the next congress in Belgrade, a proposal already endorsed by the royal government. Among the active participants in the Bucharest congress was Vladimir Ćorović, by then a university professor and one of the most influential figures in Belgrade's academic milieu during the interwar period, while Filaret Granić and Nikola Radojčić delivered noteworthy papers.²⁴

At the final session of the Bucharest Congress on 19 April 1924, the decision was made to designate Belgrade as the host of the next meeting. The Second International Congress of Byzantine Studies, held in Belgrade from 11 to 16 April 1927, represented an important point in the internationalization of Byzantine studies and highlighted the role played by the Byzantine studies center in Belgrade in that process. The credit for the successful organization of the congress belongs, first and foremost, to Dragutin Anastasijević. In the years that followed, this process was shaped not only by the work of Anastasijević, as well as of Granić, Mošin, and other Belgrade scholars mentioned above but also by the unexpected arrival of George Ostrogorsky (1902-1976), who moved from Breslau to Belgrade in the pivotal year 1933. Ostrogorsky's scholarly activity in Belgrade, which extended for more than four decades, has been examined on numerous occasions.²⁵ It forms, however, a distinct chapter in the history of Byzantine studies in Belgrade and in Yugoslavia – one that belongs to a fundamentally different historical context, namely the period on the eve and after the Second World War, and for that reason it should be readdressed in another occasion.

²⁴ For an account of the participation of scholars from the Kingdom of SHS, see F. Granić, "Prvi međunarodni kongres predstavnika vizantijskih studija u Bukureštu", *Narodna starina* 3, 1924, p. 78-80; see also C. Marinescu, *Compte-rendu du premier Congrès international des études byzantines, Bucarest, 1924*, Bucharest, 1925.

²⁵ В. Феђанчић, "Георгије Острогорски (1902-1976)", *Глас Српске академије наука и уметности* 372, *Одељење историјских наука* 8, 1993, p. 57-95.

Greek Participants in the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest: From the Archive of Professor Sokrates Kougeas¹

Christos Stavrakos

Abstract: Professor Sokrates Kougeas' archive, which documents his participation in the First International Conference of Byzantine Studies held in Bucharest in 1924, offers previously unpublished insights into the nature and scope of Greek involvement in this landmark scholarly event. The pro-Venizelos government of Greece took particular care to ensure national representation by sending two eminent scholars: Sokrates Kougeas, Professor at the University of Athens, and Georgios Soteriou, archaeologist and Director of the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens. Drawing on this archival material, the article presents Kougeas' notes and reflections, focusing not only on his unexpected participation in the Congress but also on his impressions of several papers, the excursion to Wallachia, and his encounters with prominent members of both the Romanian and Greek political elites, as well as representatives of the Greek community in Romania. Finally, the archive sheds light on Athenian social life in the 1920s, recording personal details about the professor's family – most notably the birth of his twin sons during his absence in Bucharest.

Keywords: Byzantine studies, University of Athens, Sokrates Kougeas, Georgios Soteriou, Romanian Academy, Bucharest

¹ This research would not have been possible without the kind permission of Dr. Sokrates Kougeas, grandson of Professor Sokrates Kougeas, to consult and study his grandfather's archive. Access to this material made it possible to examine both direct and indirect sources concerning the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies (Bucharest, 1924). It also provided valuable insight into Kougeas' contacts and preparations prior to the Congress, as well as into its aftermath – his reservations, impressions, and commentary. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Sokrates Kougeas for granting access to his grandfather's personal archive and for his warm hospitality at his home beneath the Acropolis in Athens.

Before presenting the archive, it is essential to outline the broader historical context of Greece at that time. In the years preceding the Congress, Greece had experienced both the First World War and the two Balkan Wars (1912-1913). Following the Balkan Wars, the Ottoman Empire lost most of its territories, retaining only the lands east of the Evros (Maritsa, Марица, Meriç) River. Greece, in turn, incorporated many territories and doubled its population. Two crucial issues, however, remained unresolved for the Greek state: first, the demarcation of the Greek-Albanian border, and second, the question of the status of the Aegean islands – Chios, Lesbos, Lemnos, Tenedos, and Imbros – which Greece had occupied during the First Balkan War. Although the European powers cooperated to bring the Balkan conflict to an end, this collaboration paradoxically accentuated their division into two opposing camps. At the same time, the political influence of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy declined, while Romania distanced itself from it. In alliance with Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro, Romania remained committed to the Treaty of Bucharest (1913), which secured new territorial gains for these states and brought them into closer alignment with the Entente Powers. In 1913, following the assassination of King George I in Thessaloniki, his son Constantine I (1868-1923) ascended the Greek throne. By that time, Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos had already laid the foundations for a strong Greek-Romanian alliance aimed at cooperation with the Entente. This policy, however, met with the opposition of King Constantine I, whose pro-German orientation deepened the rift between the Crown and the Prime Minister.²

With the Treaty of Sèvres (10 August 1920), Greece was granted extensive territorial acquisitions, including most of Eastern Thrace, the islands of Imbros, Tenedos, Limnos, Lesbos, Chios, Samothraki, Samos, and Ikaria, as well as Western Thrace and the wider region of Smyrna.³ A few years later, Greece experienced what Greek historiography refers to as the Asia Minor Catastrophe of 1922 – the outcome of the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) – which brought to Greece approximately 55,000 Armenian and 1,250,000 Greek refugees from Asia Minor. The political and social situation that followed was catastrophic.⁴ However, on the other hand, these territorial gains laid the foundations for profound social and political transformation within Greek society.⁵ Six politicians and military leaders were sentenced to death

² G. Leontarites, “Η διεθνής θέση της Ελλάδος στις παραμονές του Πρώτου Παγκοσμίου Πολέμου”, in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους. Νεώτερος Ελληνισμός από 1913 ως 1941*, Athens, 1978, p. 8-15.

³ E. Allamane and K. Panagiotopoulou, “Ο ελληνισμός της Μικράς Ασίας σε διωγμό”, in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους...*, p. 133-146.

⁴ A. Despotopoulos, “Η Μικρασιατική καταστροφή”, in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους...*, p. 200-247.

⁵ N. Andriotes, “Οι προσφυγικές μετακινήσεις προς και από την Ελλάδα (1914-1924) και η συμβολή τους στη διαμόρφωση νέων κοινωνικών αντιλήψεων και προνοιακών θεσμών”, in A. Markopoulos and E. Chatzibasileiou (eds.), *1914-1924. Τα χρόνια των ανατροπών Ευρώπης και Ελλάδας. Πρακτικά Συμποσίου Δελφοί 4-6 Ιουλίου 2014*, Athens, 2017, p. 201-226.

and executed after a summary trial.⁶ The Asia Minor Catastrophe marked the end of a decade of successive wars and of the irredentist policy and expansionism (“Great Idea”/Μεγάλη Ίδέα),⁷ which had dominated the politics of the modern Greek state since its establishment. In the aftermath, Greek society was deeply and bitterly divided: one faction supported King Constantine I, who was overthrown in a coup, while the other backed Eleftherios Venizelos, a brilliant politician from Crete. In January 1924, Venizelos won the elections and formed a government. However, political instability persisted, as successive governments followed one another and the polarization between the supporters of Venizelos and those of the king remained acute. Finally, in April 1924, a referendum abolished the monarchy in Greece.⁸

During this turbulent and exceptionally difficult period for Greece – politically, economically, and socially – the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies was attended by Georgios Soteriou (1880-1965),⁹ archaeologist, Director of the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, and subsequently Professor at the University of Athens, and by Sokrates Kougeas (1877-1966),¹⁰ Professor of Ancient History at the University of Athens and a fervent supporter of Eleftherios Venizelos. Sokrates Kougeas was born on 14 September 1877 in Doloι, Mani. He attended school in Kalamata and later studied at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Athens, where he received his doctorate for a dissertation entitled *De novo Xiphilineo codice Iberitico 812*. In 1929, he was elected a member of the Academy of Athens. Together with Konstantinos Amantos (1874-1960), he established from 1928 to 1939 the journal *Ελληνικά*.

The archive of Georgios Soteriou is preserved at the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, but I was unable to consult it. According to the Museum’s director, Aikaterini Rosa Maria Dellaporta, the archive is currently being digitized under the

⁶ I. Giannouloropoulos, “Η επανάσταση του 1922, η δίκη των εξ και η συνθήκη της Λωζάννης”, in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους...*, p. 255-258.

⁷ P. Papastrates, “Από τη Μεγάλη Ίδέα στη Βαλκανική Ένωση”, in G. Mavrogordatos and Ch. Chatziiosef (eds.), *Βενιζελισμός και Αστικός Εκσυγχρονισμός*, Rethymno, 1988, p. 418-437; P. Kitromilides, “On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism: Paparrigopoulos, Byzantium and the Great Idea”, in D. Ricks and P. Magdalino (eds.), *Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity*, New York, 1998, p. 25-34; E. Lemonidou, “Απόηχος και αντιδράσεις για τη ‘Μεγάλη Ίδέα’: Η αντιμετώπιση των εθνικών διεκδικήσεων του ελληνισμού μέσα από τα δημοσιεύματα του γαλλικού τύπου για την Ελλάδα (1914-1923)”, in A. Markopoulos and E. Chatzibasileiou (eds.), *1914-1924. Τα χρόνια των ανατροπών Ευρώπη...*, p. 181-200.

⁸ A. Beremes, “Η αντεπανάσταση του 1923 και η ανακήρυξη της αβασίλευτης δημοκρατίας”, in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους...*, p. 271-282.

⁹ For the archaeological work and activities of G. Soteriou, see <https://www.ebyzantinemuseum.gr/?i=bxm.el.warehouses.5>.

¹⁰ N. Oikonomides, “Σωκράτης Β. Κουγέας”, *Ο Έρανιστής* 4.19-24, 1966, p. 198-199; D. Zakythenos, “Σωκράτης Κουγέας”, *Νέα Εστία* 95.1120, 1974, p. 287-296; S. Lampakes, “Σωκράτης Κουγέας (1877-1966) τριάντα χρόνια από τον θάνατόν του”, *Βυζαντινός Λόγος* 8-9, 1995-1997, p. 135-136.

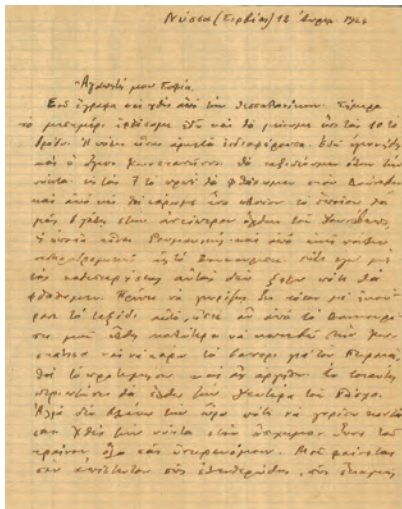


Fig. 1

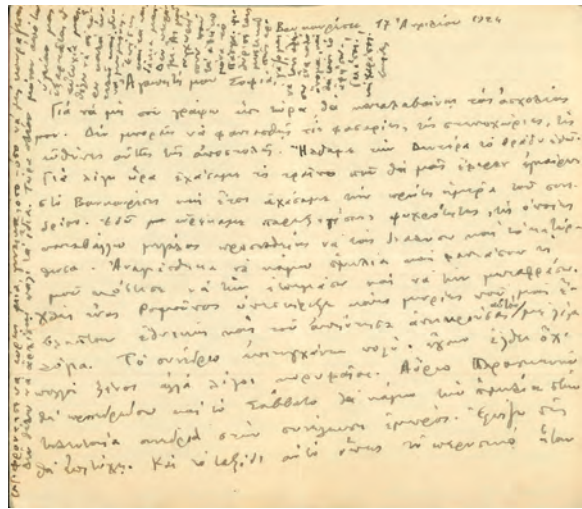


Fig. 2

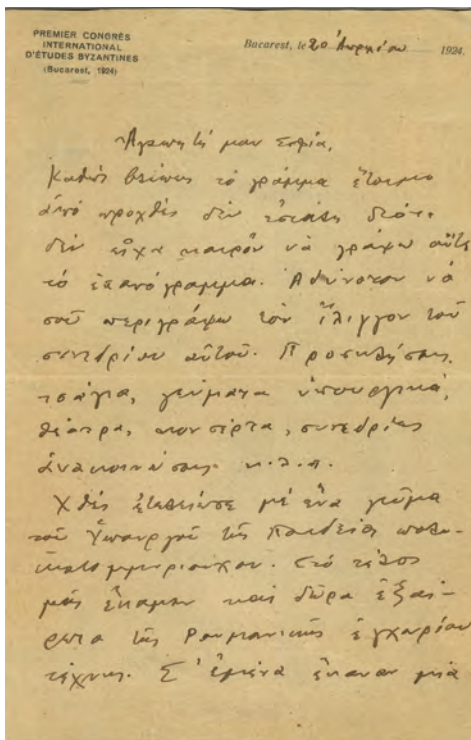


Fig. 3

supervision of the Greek Ministry of Culture. By contrast, in the archive of Sokrates Kougeas, I located a substantial body of material pertaining to the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies held in Bucharest.¹¹ The relevant documents from this archive can be categorized in the following groups:

I. *Letters*. The archive contains correspondence received by Sokrates Kougeas from various correspondents in Greece and abroad. Of particular significance, however, are the letters that Kougeas himself sent to Greece during his participation in the Congress. These include personal notes and informations addressed to his wife, Sophia, in Athens, and to other relatives. Three of these letters – dated 12 April (fig. 1), 17 April (fig. 2), and 20 April 1924 (fig. 3) – were sent to his wife. The first was sent from Niš, Serbia, while en route to Bucharest, and the other two from Bucharest itself. All

¹¹ L. Brehier, “Congrès de Bucarest”, *Byzantion* 1, 1925, p. 734-744; C. Marinescu, *Compte-rendu du premier Congrès international des études byzantines, Bucarest, 1924*, Bucharest, 1925.

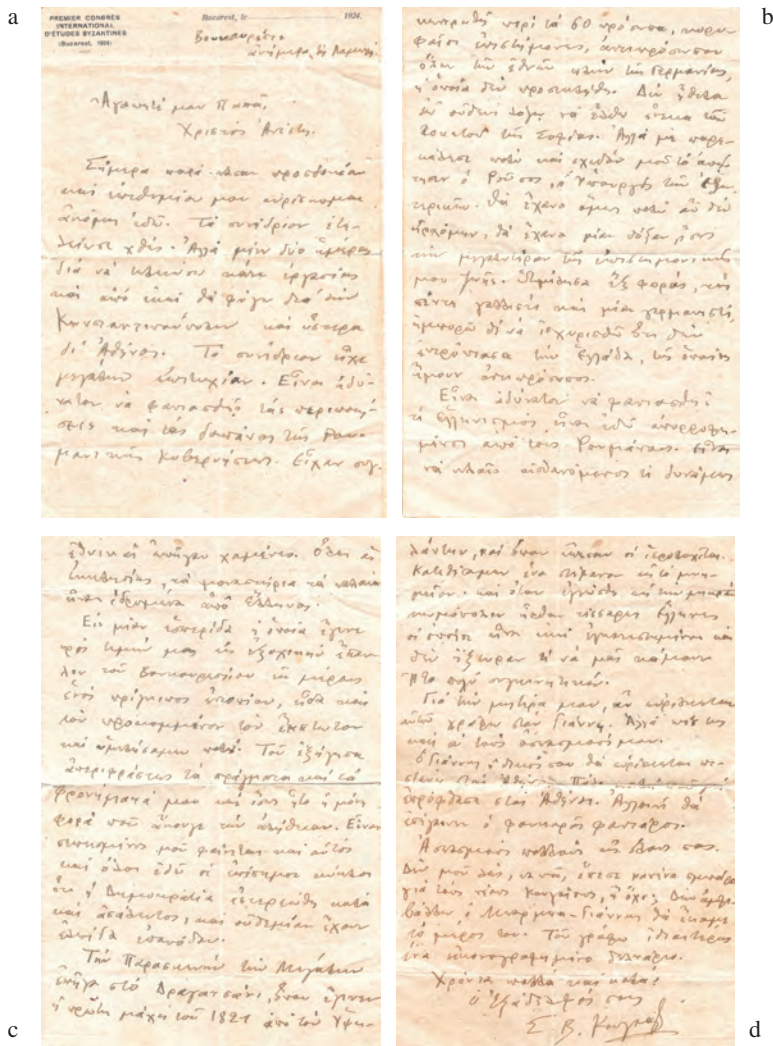


Fig. 4

three are deeply personal texts, written with great affection and concern for his heavily pregnant wife. In these letters, Kougeas shares his experiences and impressions from the journey and his stay in Bucharest. His descriptions focus primarily on events outside the academic proceedings – receptions, the hospitality of the organizers, meetings, and excursions – and contain little scientific information. Nevertheless, they also include brief remarks on the general political situation and his own political views. In a later letter, written after the birth of his twin sons, Kougeas gives detailed instructions for managing the new-borns’ needs during his absence – shopping, obtaining milk, and finding a wet nurse. This correspondence provides valuable insight into everyday domestic life in Athens during the 1920s. A different tone characterizes the letter of 27 April (Greek Orthodox Easter) (fig. 4), sent from Bucharest to his cousin Vasileios



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Kougeas, a priest in his native village of Doloi, near Kalamata. Here, Kougeas offers more extensive commentary on the Congress itself, its participants, and the political context of Greece and the Balkans, reflecting on how these dynamics influenced the event's atmosphere and discussions.

II. *Postcards*. In addition to the letters, Sokrates Kougeas sent two postcards to his wife (fig. 5) and daughter, Irene (fig. 6). Both are of a personal nature and refer exclusively to domestic events in Athens during his absence. Modern historiography recognizes postcards as surprisingly rich historical sources, whose value extends far beyond mere visual nostalgia.¹² Their brief handwritten messages can reveal elements of colloquial language, personal networks, and everyday preoccupations, while postcards sent abroad often reflect connections between homeland and emigrant communities. The two postcards sent by Kougeas retain this intimate character and were likely enclosed with one of his letters from Bucharest. The postcard addressed to his daughter Irene depicts a child holding an Easter basket filled with eggs and bears

¹² In recent years, research on postcards as a historical source has been steadily developing, highlighting their significance for the study of modern Greek history: see indicatively A. Anagnostopoulos, "Picturing Public Space: Ethnicity and Gender in Picture Postcards of Iraklio, Crete, at the Beginning of the 20th Century", in E. Pistrick, N. Scaldaferrri, and G. Schwörer (eds.), *Audiovisual Media and Identity Issues in Southeastern Europe*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2011, p. 171-191; K. Kopsidas, *Οι Εβραίοι της Θεσσαλονίκης από τις καρτ-ποστάλ, 1886-1917*, Thessaloniki, 1992; T. Alexander, G. Hadar, and Sh. Sabar, "'El oio ve, la alma desea (The eye sees, the soul desires)': Jewish Postcards from Salonika", *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* 27, 2011, p. 183-229 (in Hebrew).

the Romanian Easter greeting “Hristos a înviat” – “Christ is risen” (Χριστός ἀνέστη). The postcard to his wife portrays two young women, one of whom is bare-breasted, tenderly cradling an infant in her arms. The child rests peacefully against her chest as she gazes down lovingly – a serene, maternal scene rendered in soft natural light, symbolizing joyful motherhood. Beneath the image, Kougeas wrote in Greek: “Here the two are proud of a child. How much happier is the mother who boasts two. I could not find such a picture. I can only imagine her”.¹³

III. *Newspaper articles.* The archive also contains several newspaper clippings in Greek and Romanian. Because most of these items lack annotations, it has not been possible to determine with certainty the newspapers from which they originated or their exact dates of publication. The articles consist of reports written by journalists or scholars who, although not official delegates, attended sessions of both the First and Second International Congress of Byzantine Studies. The testimonies preserved in these newspapers are either direct or indirect. The indirect ones are excerpts from reports on the Second Congress (Belgrade, 1927) that include important retrospective references to the First Congress in Bucharest. Kougeas also collected numerous Romanian newspapers that discussed the Congress and mentioned him personally.¹⁴ Although he did not speak or understand Romanian, his letters reveal that he met several members of the Greek community in Romania during the Congress. It is likely that these individuals either supplied him with the newspapers or translated the relevant articles for him. He even notes that one of them – whom he does not name – corrected the French in his own presentation. The most significant of all these press accounts is, in my view, the extensive article published in the Greek newspaper *Ethnos* of Bucharest on 1 May 1924 (fig. 7), which contains vivid



Fig. 7

¹³ He meant that he was unable to find an image of a woman holding two babies in her arms that resembled his wife at that time.

¹⁴ Ș. Petrescu, “From Bucharest to Athens: Reflecting on the Balkan Cooperation in the Greek-Language Newspapers”, *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 61, 2023, p. 119-130.

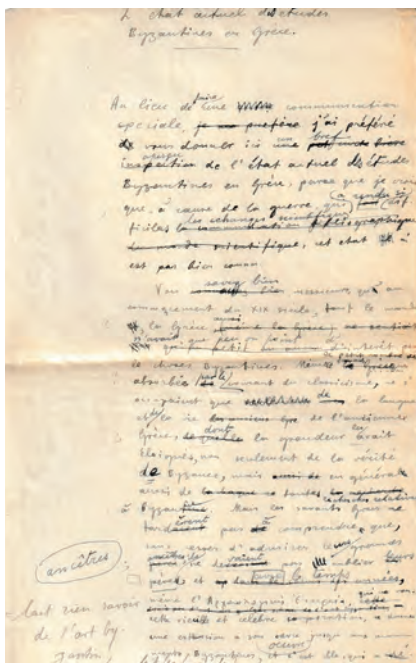


Fig. 8



Fig. 9

descriptions of the Congress events and of the participants' visits to Romanian monuments.¹⁵

IV. *Personal notes.* These comprise handwritten notes by Sokrates Kougeas related to the presentation he delivered on the final day of the Congress, devoted to the subject of Byzantine studies in Greece (fig. 8). In his first letter, written from Niš, Serbia, he mentions that he was not enthusiastic about the

trip, which, as he implies, had not been undertaken solely for academic purposes. However, once the Congress began, his attitude changed. He describes the speakers and lectures in general terms and expresses enthusiasm upon being invited to deliver a presentation on Byzantine studies in Greece and to preside over one of the sessions. In his second letter, he notes *mot à mot* that during the Congress he was asked to prepare and present this paper, which he delivered on the closing day.

V. *Photographs and other materials.* This section of the archive includes two photographs of the Congress participants (fig. 9). One of them was used on the poster of the International Conference commemorating the centenary of the Congresses of Byzantine Studies (Bucharest, 4-5 September 2024), while the other bears only a brief note identifying it as originating from the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies. This group also contains summaries of participants' presentations, as well as writings by Sokrates Kougeas himself. Among these are the handwritten version of his paper on the progress of Byzantine studies in Greece¹⁶ and his article “Εντυπώσεις ἐκ Ρουμανίας”, in which he describes in detail the events within the Congress and

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 129-130; id., *Correspondenții români de presă și publicațiile emigrației balcanice: (1877-1916)*, Brăila, 2021.

¹⁶ S. Kougeas, “L'état actuel des études byzantines en Grèce”, *Bulletin de la Section Historique – Académie Roumaine* 11, 1924, p. 164-169.



a

Fig. 10

b

related occasions.¹⁷ Finally, Kougeas carefully preserved several photographs and the elegant invitation issued by the Romanian Ministry of Public Education to a formal banquet, accompanied by its printed menu, held at the Grand Hotel Boulevard in central Bucharest on 19 April 1924 (fig. 10). In his second letter (20 April 1924), he mentions that he received as a gift from the Minister of Education – whom he describes as a “multi-millionaire” (πολυεκατομμυριούχος) – a wonderful blouse. Despite the efforts of Dr. Sokrates Kougeas, the professor’s grandson, this item has not been found in the family archive. According to the professor’s own account, the other delegates received similarly luxurious and costly gifts, including carpets, scarves, handkerchiefs, and other fine objects.

In the archive of Professor Sokrates Kougeas, concerning the First International Conference of Byzantine Studies, there are several comments directly or indirectly related to the event. These remarks fall into four categories: personal, scientific, historical/social, and political.

I. *Personal comments.* It should be noted that during that period the Orthodox Easter was being celebrated, while Kougeas’ wife was heavily pregnant. During his journey to Niš (letter of 12 April 1924), he learned of the birth of his twin sons.¹⁸ He emphasizes the physical fatigue associated with the journey, mainly due to the numerous stops and changes of transportation. He informs his wife that he would prefer to return by ship from Constanța to Piraeus, even though this route would take longer. Indeed, in a subsequent letter dated 17 April 1924, he tells her that, together with Henri Grégoire and other French colleagues, he plans to return by ship via Constanța to

¹⁷ Id., “Εντυπώσεις ἐκ Ρουμανίας”, *Απόσπασμα ἐκ τοῦ Ἡμερολογίου τῆς Μεγάλης Ἑλλάδος* 4, 1925, p. 513-526.

¹⁸ In his letter from Niš, he refers to an earlier letter written from Thessaloniki, which, however, is not preserved in his archive.

Istanbul, and from there to Piraeus. He adds that, should he encounter any difficulties with the Turks, he will instead travel to Belgrade and continue from there to Athens. In the same letter (17 April 1924), he also writes that he will not return until Easter Sunday, since the Romanian organizers of the Congress were arranging free excursions to various parts of Romania. In the earlier letter of 12 April 1924, he expresses his joy at the birth of his children and advises his wife to find a wet nurse from the island of Salamis. He stresses that she should not worry about expenses, as he has left her a substantial sum of money; however, in the letter of 17 April 1924, he suggests that, if she needs additional funds, she should borrow from mama (μαμά).¹⁹ Also noteworthy in the letter of 12 April are his detailed instructions regarding the care of the new-born twins, including the purchase of pure milk, which must be diluted before being given to them. His affection and tenderness toward his wife are evident even in his reference to his daughter, Irene, as the professor expresses his hope that she would be quiet and not cause any trouble for her mother. Such personal reflections become much less frequent in his later correspondence, which is increasingly dominated by his impressions and observations from the Congress itself.

As often happens at major conferences (even today), Kougeas' relationships with other participants were initially rather formal and distant, but the atmosphere soon changed. A decisive factor in this transformation was the warm and generous hospitality of the Romanian hosts, his relationships with the Greek community in Romania, which developed quickly, and certainly his acquaintance with other colleagues. A particularly touching personal moment occurred during the excursion of the Congress participants through Wallachia, when Sokrates Kougeas and Georgios Soteriou visited Drăgășani. This was the site of the battle led by Alexander Ypsilantis on 7 June 1821, where all 2,000 young volunteers of the Sacred Band (Ἱερός Λόχος) lost their lives. The Sacred Band had been a military unit founded by Ypsilantis at the beginning of the Greek War of Independence (March 1821, in Wallachia), composed of volunteer students from the Greek communities of Moldavia, Wallachia, and Odessa.²⁰ During their visit, Kougeas and Soteriou met the only three remaining Greek inhabitants of Drăgășani.²¹

¹⁹ According to Dr. Sokrates Kougeas, the professor's grandson, the "mother" (μαμά) was Angelike Aneze, the professor's mother-in-law.

²⁰ G. Gkekos, *Η επιστροφή. Αγωνιστές του Α. Υψηλάντη στον δρόμο για την Ελλάδα*, Athens, 2019, p. 111-140; N. Zygoire, "Ίχνηλατώντας την ιστορία του Ιερού Λόχου μέσα από τα κειμήλια του Εθνικού Ιστορικού Μουσείου", in T. Dinu and K. Kaimakame (eds.), *Πρακτικά του Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου "Η Ελληνική Επανάσταση και οι Ρουμανικές Χώρες" / Lucrările Congresului Internațional "Revoluția Greacă și Țările Române"*, Bucharest, 2023, p. 246-266; R. Katsimardou, "Έλληνες πρόσφυγες εκ του Ιερού Λόχου του Υψηλάντη", in N. Kastrite and R. Katsimardou (eds.), *Επαναστάση '21*, Athens, 2021, p. 339.

²¹ S. Kougeas, "Εντυπώσεις...", p. 524-525.

Together they sang the Epitaph Hymn “Ἡ ζωὴ ἐν τάφῳ”,²² as it was Good Friday (Μεγάλη Παρασκευή) and the hymn suited the character of the visit.

II. *Scientific comments.* Neither the professor’s letters nor the newspaper reports contain detailed descriptions of the presentations delivered at the Congress. Nevertheless, his remarks reveal two key points: (1) he believed that many of the leading Byzantinists of the time had gathered in Bucharest; and (2) although he had been initially reluctant to attend, his participation – particularly the six short speeches and interventions he delivered – represented the most important event in his scholarly career up to that point. However, the central role of Professor Nicolae Iorga is repeatedly emphasized. Kougeas expresses unreserved admiration for Iorga’s intellectual and political stature, noting that the absolute success of the Congress was due to him. He also reminds his readers that Iorga was not only a distinguished scholar but also a prominent politician and leader of a powerful parliamentary party in Romania. At the same time, Kougeas acknowledges the crucial assistance provided by Constantin Marinescu and by several women working in Iorga’s office.²³ In his article about his impressions from Romania, however, Kougeas observes that, although the Congress was called “international”, in practice it was far from truly so.²⁴ In a private conversation, he notes, the Romanian Prime Minister Ion I. C. Brătianu himself expressed dissatisfaction with the absence of leading Byzantinists. Scholars from certain countries had not been invited, while others declined to participate in protest.²⁵ Invitations were extended only to representatives from the Allied countries and those that had become members of the League of Nations (Paris, 1920). Moreover, Kougeas had expected the Congress to address major issues in Byzantine studies, rather than narrowly specialized topics such as those presented by Gabriel Millet²⁶ and Nikodim Kondakov. He thus concluded that, apart from the decision to establish the journal *Byzantion*, the overall benefit to the field had been limited and the scientific outcomes rather modest.²⁷ Further scholarly observations appear in his article about

²² Τριώδιον Κατανυκτικόν, Rome, 1879, p. 710; Th. Xydes, “Ἐγκώμια”, in *Πεπραγμένα του Θ’ Διεθνούς Βυζαντινολογικοῦ Συνεδρίου, Θεσσαλονίκη (12-19 Ἀπριλίου 1953)*, Thessaloniki, 1956, p. 277-278; E. Pantelakes, “Νέα Ἐγκώμια τοῦ Ἐπιταφίου ἐκ Συναίτικου χειρογράφου”, *Θεολογία* 14, 1936, p. 224-250, 310-329; A. Biliou, *Τα Ἐγκώμια στη λειτουργικὴ μας Παράδοση: τὰ δεδομένα τῆς ἀγορευτικῆς Παράδοσης*, PhD thesis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2011; K. Costa, *A Critical Edition and Study of the Transmission of the Megalynaria on the Burial of the Divine Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, MA dissertation, The Hellenic Institute at Royal Holloway, University of London, 2023.

²³ S. Kougeas, “Ἐντυπώσεις...”, p. 515.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 513.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 514.

²⁶ Published as G. Millet, “Sur les sceaux des commerciaires byzantins”, in *Mélanges offerts à M. Gustave Schlumberger, membre de l’Institut, à l’occasion du quatre-vingtième anniversaire de sa naissance (17 octobre 1924)*, Paris, 1924, p. 303-327.

²⁷ S. Kougeas, “Ἐντυπώσεις...”, p. 516-520.

his impressions from Romania, where he offers descriptions of monuments and, in particular, transcriptions of Byzantine and post-Byzantine inscriptions encountered during the Congress excursion. He was particularly impressed by a gold-embroidered fourteenth-century epitaph and a monogram of the Palaiologoi that he saw in the museum of Putna, as well as by the churches of the Three Hierarchs and of Saint Sabbas in Iași.²⁸ He also records his visits to the church of Curtea de Argeș and the Hurezi Monastery in Oltenia, from which he transcribed several Greek inscriptions.²⁹

III. *Historical/social comments.* Kougeas was impressed by the buildings and works of art he saw in Bucharest, and he was also struck by the fact that several were associated with aristocratic Greek families of Romania. In a letter to his cousin, while describing the Greek presence in Romania, he characteristically remarks: “It is worth weeping to realize what national forces have been lost. All the old churches and monasteries were founded by Greeks”. In another passage of the same letter, he adds: “Yesterday a Romanian put forward certain claims that were harmful to us as a nation, and I replied to him appropriately in a few words”. These statements, in my view, are not linked to the phenomenon of Balkan nationalism, which in any case had weakened in Greece following the end of the Great Idea. Rather, they reflect Kougeas’ emotional attachment to places and regions where the Greek presence had historically been significant.³⁰ In a note at the end of his letter to his wife (17 April 1924), he also remarks on the lower cost of goods in Romania compared to Greece, explaining that for this reason he intends to buy her and the family additional gifts. In the newspaper *Ethnos* (*Ἔθνος*, Thursday, 1 May 1924, no. 2209), there was a lengthy article devoted to the Congress and entitled “Τὸ Συνέδριον τῆς Βυζαντινολογίας. Ἡ ὠραία δρᾶσις τῆς ἑλληνικῆς ἀντιπροσωπείας. Αἱ ληφθεῖσαι ἀποφάσεις”. The final section of this article, titled “Ἡ προσφώνησις τοῦ κ. Κουγέα”, reproduces the speech Kougeas delivered before the authorities of Pitești. Several aspects of this address are noteworthy: (1) his admiration for Romania’s art monuments and for the progress achieved by the Romanian people in the sciences, arts, and industry; (2) his references to the past and the expression of gratitude focused on the long-standing presence of the Greek element in Wallachia and its assistance in the War of Independence against the Turks;³¹ and (3) his warm thanks on behalf of all participants for the generous hospitality.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 521-522.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 522-523.

³⁰ E. Gellner, “Ἐθνικισμός και πολιτική στην Ανατολική Ευρώπη”, in id., *Ἔθνη και Ἐθνικισμός*, tr. D. Laphazane, Athens, 1992, p. 257-270; D. Tziouvas (ed.), *Greece and the Balkans Identities: Perceptions and Cultural Encounters since the Enlightenment*, New York, 2003.

³¹ See F. Marinescu and M. Rafailă, “Το ελληνικό έντυπο στη Ρουμανία (1642-1918)”, in T. Sklavenites and K. Staikos (eds.), *Το έντυπο ελληνικό βιβλίο 15^ο-19^ο αιώνας. Πρακτικά Διεθνούς Συμποσίου Δελφοί, 16-20 Μαΐου 2001*, Athens, 2004, p. 265-278. At the end of the article, it is noted that the Greek participants in the Congress visited the offices of the newspaper *Ethnos* in Bucharest and left “enthusiastic”.

IV. *Political comments.* This section of the archive is, in my view, the most important, as it reveals how deeply political considerations permeated the Congress and the events surrounding it. Three aspects stand out.

(1) The prominent presence of politicians and royal figures. At the various receptions and dinners held during the Congress, members of the Romanian political elite and of the Romanian and Greek royal families were present.

(2) Greek politics were not confined to Athens. In a letter to his cousin dated 27 April 1924, Kougeas explicitly states that his trip to Bucharest and his participation in the International Congress were the result of the pressure and insistence of the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, George Roussos, a member of the pro-Venizelos government.³² Although he does not elaborate on the reasons, it seems clear that the Greek government sought to ensure representation at a scientific congress restricted to the Allied states, from which the “enemy” nations were excluded. It should be recalled that the deposed King Constantine I had been an ardent supporter of Germany and its allies, a stance that had caused the so-called National Schism (Εθνικός διχασμός).³³ By this time, King George II had been living in exile in Romania since December 1923.³⁴ I mention two characteristic examples. In his letter of 17 April 1924, addressed to his wife, Kougeas describes a reception at the royal palace, during which he met Princess Helena, daughter of King Constantine I and Queen Sophia, wife of King Carol of Romania and mother of Michael, the last king of Romania. He conversed with her in Greek. Yet, he later notes that he was not invited to the subsequent palace dinner, attended by all the other Congress participants – a slight he attributes to the disclosure of his anti-royalist convictions and open support for Eleftherios Venizelos. At another reception held in an “old château” outside Bucharest, he encountered the deposed King George II and Queen Elizabeth of Romania. Although he describes his situation as tragic, he nonetheless approached and spoke with the royal couple before discreetly withdrawing, while his colleague Georgios Soteriou remained behind. In his letter, Kougeas remarks that when he later took leave of Soteriou, their farewell was cold; he suspects that the King had been informed of his democratic sentiments and support for Venizelos. At this point in the letter, Kougeas refers to George only as “Glyxburg” (Γλύξμποργκ) (as a surname), a term still employed by some Greeks today, but, as far as I know, rejected by the former royal family. A different version of this meeting appears in his letter to his cousin in Doloi, in which he does not mention the former king by name, referring to him only as “disgraced” and “deposed”. He recounts speaking to him openly and honestly about his political views, adding that the ex-king may have been hearing such frank opinions for the first time. Kougeas concludes: “He

³² G. Daphnes, *Η Ελλάδα μεταξύ δύο πολέμων 1923-1940*, vol. 1, Athens, 1997, p. 214-215; A. Makrydemetres, *Οι υπουργοί των Εξωτερικών της Ελλάδας, 1829-2000*, Athens, 2000, p. 82.

³³ See G. Mavrogordatos, *1915: Ο εθνικός διχασμός*, Athens, 2015.

³⁴ A. Beremes, “Η αντεπανάσταση...”, p. 275-281.



Fig. 11

[the former king] seems convinced, and so do all the official circles here, that the Republic has been firmly established and they have no hope of returning”. This exchange likely explains the reason Georgios was cold towards him during the farewell.

(3) The political selectivity of the Congress. Finally, the exclusion of scholars from certain countries – Germany, Austria, Hungary, Poland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Portugal, and Scandinavian countries – constituted an overtly political gesture. This is noted both in an article by Kougeas himself and in Greek press reports concerning the Second International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Belgrade.

The First International Congress of Byzantine Studies and its associated events were deeply shaped by the political climate of the time, not only in Europe at large but also within Greece. The absence of leading scholars from uninvited nations became a topic of discussion and provoked mixed reactions. Articles from Greek newspapers preserved in Kougeas’ archive, particularly those describing the Second International Congress of Byzantine Studies (Belgrade, 1927), consistently characterize the Belgrade meeting as a complete success precisely because no participants were excluded. Professor Konstantinos Amantos³⁵ expressed this view clearly, noting: “The Serbs not only refrained from inviting political representatives to the scientific conference, but also underscored that, at their conference, scholars are bound together as colleagues and brothers”³⁶ (fig. 11). It should also be emphasized that political figures in Romania – not only in Bucharest, but also in the provinces – showed great interest and played an active role in hosting the Congress participants. However, beyond any doubt, both the archival documents and Kougeas’ reports attest that the personality of Nicolae Iorga was decisive in the conception, organization, and continuation of the event.

³⁵ For information on the first professorship of Byzantine studies at the University of Athens, to which K. Amantos was appointed, see T. Kiousopoulou, “Η πρώτη έδρα Βυζαντινής Ιστορίας στο Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών”, *Μνήμων* 15, 1993, p. 257-276.

³⁶ This is a clipping from the newspaper *Βήμα* found in Kougeas’ archive, although it is undated.

Kougeas' repeated observations also make clear that the Greek community in Romania displayed particular interest in the Congress and sought to establish contact with the Greek delegates. Kougeas met frequently with members of this community. Even in Drăgășani, the small town visited during the Wallachian excursion, the few remaining Greek there came forward to greet Kougeas and Soteriou.

Finally, the Greek government itself strongly desired a national presence at the Congress, although it appears that there had been little advance preparation. From Kougeas' letters, it emerges that he travelled to Bucharest at the request of the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, and that he was unaware prior to his departure that he would be asked to deliver a lecture. The invitation came only after his arrival in Bucharest, prompting him to prepare and present his paper on Byzantine studies in Greece. Undoubtedly, however, this Congress marked a turning point in his academic career, securing his international recognition as a scholar. This is evident not only from his own letters but also from the articles he later published in international journals, which reflect both the prestige and scholarly visibility he gained through his participation in the Bucharest Congress.

Entre l’histoire et la politique : Byzance et le droit médiéval en Bulgarie à l’époque des premiers congrès des études byzantines

Ivan Biliarsky

Abstract: This article explores the inclusion of Byzantine law at the first congresses of Byzantine Studies in the 1920s and 1930s. The legal field was not deliberately neglected; the absence of dedicated sections on law in most programmes and published proceedings resulted from the scarcity of proposals, despite the initial intention to include them. The early congresses were marked by both scholarly and political significance for the host countries. Accordingly, the article examines the Bulgarian delegations and concludes with observations on one participant, Father Kamen Vitchev, who later met a tragic fate under the communist regime in Bulgaria.

Keywords: Byzantium, Bulgaria, Byzantine law, politics, delegations, first Byzantine Studies congresses

Les questions relatives au droit, et en particulier à l’étude des sources de l’histoire du droit de l’Empire romain d’Orient, ont pris une importance fondamentale et ont suscité un intérêt croissant dans les études byzantines au cours des dernières décennies. Cette évolution tient sans doute à l’attention accrue portée aux approches sociales, mais aussi, dans une large mesure, au rayonnement du groupe de recherche de l’Institut d’histoire du droit européen de Francfort-sur-le-Main¹. Bien que les

¹ Le présent article a été réalisé dans le cadre d’un projet – dont la plupart des participants nous ont, hélas, déjà quittés – qui a donné lieu à la publication, en hommage au professeur Spyros Troianos, du volume *Byzantinische Rechtsgeschichte im internationalen Kontext. Akten einer Tagung der Akademien der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen und Sofia (28.9.-1.10. 2021)*, éd. P. Schreiner, J. P. Laut et I. Biliarsky, avec la collaboration de I. Grimm-Stadelmann, Berlin et al., 2024.

questions juridiques n'aient jamais occupé une place centrale dans la discipline, elles n'ont jamais été complètement négligées. Les raisons de leur traitement ont varié selon les périodes – dans l'immédiat après-guerre, au cours du XX^e siècle et jusqu'à aujourd'hui. L'étude d'une culture, de ses structures et des phénomènes qu'elle engendre ne saurait en effet faire abstraction du système normatif qui en constitue l'un des fondements². Le contexte historique de ces études, toutefois, a profondément changé. Dans les années 1920, le droit byzantin demeurait encore, dans une certaine mesure, en vigueur dans certains pays et dans des domaines juridiques précis, ce qui a sans doute favorisé le développement de la recherche dans ce domaine. Par ailleurs, l'entre-deux-guerres fut aussi une période de consolidation des États-nations, où Byzance et son héritage ont pu être mobilisés à des fins de propagande politique, tantôt comme modèle, tantôt comme repoussoir. Sans qu'il soit nécessaire d'en dresser la liste, il apparaît clairement que, dans le processus de développement des études byzantines et de leur institutionnalisation à travers les congrès, la science et la politique ont évolué de manière parallèle et souvent étroitement liée.

Le premier congrès d'études byzantines (Bucarest, 1924), dont on a célébré récemment le centenaire, s'est tenu à une époque particulièrement complexe pour l'Europe et pour le monde³. La situation était semblable lors des trois congrès suivants – Belgrade (1927), Athènes (1930) et Sofia (1934). À la suite de la Première Guerre mondiale, la carte politique de l'Europe avait été profondément transformée. Les États de la Triple Alliance, vaincus, en subissaient encore les conséquences. En ce qui concerne l'organisation du congrès, les représentants de l'Allemagne, de l'Autriche et de la Hongrie ne furent pas invités à y participer. Les États vainqueurs – dont certains étaient de nouveaux États ou avaient vu leurs frontières considérablement modifiées – cherchaient à affirmer leur place sur la scène internationale. Il convient de noter que trois des quatre premiers congrès d'études byzantines eurent lieu dans des pays vainqueurs, tandis que seul celui de Sofia fut organisé dans un pays vaincu. La Roumanie, dont la capitale, Bucarest, accueillit le premier congrès, était sortie de la guerre avec un territoire considérablement agrandi, tandis que le Royaume des Serbes, des Croates et des Slovènes (appelé plus tard Yougoslavie) constituait pratiquement un nouvel État. Les relations internationales demeuraient fragiles, et cette situation ne pouvait manquer d'influencer les manifestations à caractère académique et culturel organisées dans ce contexte⁴.

Il convient de s'arrêter plus longuement sur le cas de la Bulgarie. Le pays, occupé et amputé d'une partie importante de son territoire, connut alors ce que l'on a

² I. Biliarsky, *Word and Power in Mediaeval Bulgaria*, Leiden – Boston, 2011.

³ B. Schroeder-Gudehus, *Les scientifiques et la paix. La communauté scientifique internationale au cours des années 20*, Montréal, 1978.

⁴ S. Maufroy, « Les premiers congrès internationaux des études byzantines : entre le nationalisme scientifique et la construction internationale d'une discipline », *Revue germanique internationale* 12, 2010, p. 229-232.

qualifié de « catastrophe nationale ». Les conséquences de cet épisode se font sentir jusqu'à nos jours, car il fut à l'origine de divers courants nationalistes et xénophobes. Alors que, pour les trois pays de l'Entente, les congrès représentaient une forme d'affirmation, sinon officielle, du moins symbolique, de leur nouvelle position sur la scène européenne, pour la Bulgarie, ils constituaient avant tout un moyen de prise de conscience nationale et de sauvegarde de l'estime de soi. Ces circonstances ont naturellement influencé l'organisation des congrès : ceux-ci furent conçus à la fois comme une mise en valeur de l'héritage byzantin et comme une affirmation du sentiment national, allant parfois jusqu'à la présentation du folklore et à l'exaltation de la beauté du paysage bulgare.

Quelques remarques peuvent être faites au sujet des délégations bulgares aux congrès. À Bucarest, en 1924, la Bulgarie – ou plutôt la byzantinologie bulgare – n'était représentée que par Bogdan Filov⁵, dont la communication ne fut toutefois pas publiée dans les actes du congrès. Personnalité marquante, Filov occupait une place importante non seulement dans la recherche scientifique, mais également dans la vie politique de la Bulgarie. À la fin des années 1930, il devint Premier ministre, puis, après la mort du tsar Boris III, président du Conseil des régents (aux côtés du prince Cyrille de Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha et du général Nikola Mihov) pendant la minorité du jeune tsar Siméon II, exerçant ainsi le pouvoir effectif dans le pays. À la suite de l'occupation soviétique et de l'instauration du régime communiste, Filov fut exécuté le 1^{er} février 1945. Ces événements sont essentiels pour comprendre le parcours scientifique et académique de Filov. Archéologue et historien de l'art, il s'intéressait peu aux questions d'histoire du droit qui nous occupent ici. Il fut néanmoins une figure représentative du nationalisme bulgare durant l'entre-deux-guerres, et sa présence, en tant qu'unique délégué de la Bulgarie – et plus largement des États vaincus – au congrès de Bucarest, revêtait une forte valeur symbolique.

Le congrès de Belgrade constitua une démonstration du dynamisme du nouveau royaume. Il fut ouvert par le roi Alexandre, en présence du patriarche de Serbie, Dimitrije, et de l'archevêque catholique de Belgrade, Monseigneur Rodić⁶. Parmi les participants figuraient déjà des représentants de l'Allemagne, comme August Heisenberg, et de l'Autriche, E. Reisch, qui siégeaient même au bureau du congrès. La délégation bulgare était particulièrement nombreuse : de l'Académie des sciences de Bulgarie participaient Jordan Ivanov et Peter Nikov ; de l'Université, Peter Mutafchiev, Ivan Snegarov et le père Ivan Goshev ; de l'Université libre, Stéphane S. Bobčev ; de

⁵ *Compte-rendu du Premier congrès international d'études byzantines. Bucarest, 1924*, éd. C. Marinescu, Bucarest, 1925, p. 92 et 94.

⁶ S. Salaville, « Le II^e Congrès d'études byzantines à Belgrade (11-16 avril 1927) », *Échos d'Orient* 27, n° 149, 1928, p. 78-110, ici p. 79-80.

l'Institut d'archéologie, Bogdan Filov ; et du Musée national, Andrei Protich, Krâstiu Mijatev, Nikola Mushmov et Georgi Balashev⁷.

Il convient de noter que, pour ce congrès, une section de jurisprudence byzantine avait initialement été prévue. Cependant, après réduction du nombre de sections, jugées trop nombreuses, elle fut fusionnée et assimilée aux sections de littérature et d'histoire politique⁸. La présence de S. S. Bobčev est significative pour notre sujet, mais il faut malheureusement souligner que sa contribution ne figure pas dans le compte rendu officiel du congrès. Les communications relatives aux questions juridiques étaient peu nombreuses et portaient principalement sur le *Code du tsar Étienne Dušan*⁹, l'étude des chartes serbes¹⁰, ainsi que sur l'influence byzantine sur les droits serbe et croate. L'accent semble donc avoir été mis sur l'histoire du droit serbe médiéval et sur l'impact du droit byzantin dans cette sphère. L'idée d'une certaine unité des Slaves méridionaux, en particulier des territoires serbes et croates dans le domaine juridique au Moyen Âge, a également été mise en avant. Dans ce contexte, le droit byzantin apparaît comme un facteur de cohésion régionale, bien que son intérêt pratique reste limité. Aucune trace de participation bulgare dans ce domaine de recherche n'a été relevée.

Le congrès d'Athènes (1930) poursuivit la même orientation d'ouverture envers les pays de l'ex-Triple Alliance. Parmi les participants figuraient des savants d'Allemagne, d'Autriche et de Hongrie, non en tant que représentants gouvernementaux, mais uniquement au titre de leurs institutions de recherche. La délégation bulgare était importante : Vassil N. Zlatarski, Bogdan Filov, Peter Nikov, Peter Mutafchiev, Ivan Snegarov, Ivan Goshev, Krâstiu Mijatev et Andrei Protich¹¹, tandis que Georgi Balashev représentait uniquement l'Université et non le gouvernement. Les travaux du congrès étaient organisés en quatre sections : philologie, histoire, archéologie et une section intitulée « droit et médecine byzantins »¹². Cette dernière se distinguait par la richesse de ses thèmes et communications¹³. L'intérêt porté au droit byzantin s'explique en partie par le rôle encore joué par le droit canonique en Grèce, mais ce n'était pas le seul facteur. La section juridique comprenait des

⁷ *Deuxième congrès international des études byzantines. Belgrade, 1927. Compte-rendu*, éd. D. Anastasijević et Ph. Granić, Belgrade, 1929, p. 202-203.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. X et XII ; S. Salaville, « Le II^e Congrès d'études byzantines à Belgrade... », p. 79.

⁹ M. Jasinskij (Ljubljana), « Dans quelle mesure les collections des lois byzantines servirent-elles de supplément au code d'Étienne Douchan dans la pratique juridique ? » et A. Soloviev, « Droit byzantin dans la codification d'Étienne Douchan », dans *Deuxième congrès international des études byzantines. Belgrade, 1927*, p. 136 et 136-138.

¹⁰ M. Kos, « Ueber die byzantinischen Einflüsse in der älteren serbischen Diplomatie », *ibid.*, p. 138.

¹¹ *III^e Congrès international d'études byzantines. Athènes 12-18 octobre 1930. Programme des travaux*, Athènes, 1930, p. 23 et 26.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 16-17.

contributions portant sur des sujets purement juridiques, telles que celles de Paul Collinet ou d'A. Giffard sur l'*actio praescriptis verbis*, ainsi que des communications sur le système fiscal. Il convient également de mentionner les études portant sur la réception du droit byzantin, présentées par Ștefan Berechet (*Deux lois byzantines en traduction roumaine*), Ioannis Zeppos (*Τὸ βυζαντιακὸν δίκαιον ἐν Μολδοβλαχίᾳ*), A. Soloviev (*Zwei serbische Kompilationen des byzantinischen Rechts*), entre autres. Selon le programme officiel, aucune participation bulgare n'a été enregistrée dans cette section.

On arrive au congrès de Sofia, qui retiendra une attention particulière en raison de son importance pour notre sujet. Du point de vue politique, ce congrès revêtait une signification majeure compte tenu des événements de l'époque. Il convient de noter que le congrès de 1934 fut la première manifestation internationale organisée en Bulgarie après la Première Guerre mondiale, ce qui conférait à son importance une dimension dépassant le strict cadre scientifique. Les autorités bulgares s'impliquèrent fortement dans l'organisation et le financement du congrès, incluant le Tsar ainsi que le gouvernement militaire récemment arrivé au pouvoir par un coup d'État. La délégation allemande, et en particulier la présence de Franz Dölger, mérite également d'être soulignée, compte tenu de la situation politique en Allemagne à cette époque : Adolf Hitler était arrivé au pouvoir en 1933 et avait déjà commencé à imposer ses mesures révolutionnaires.

En Bulgarie, à la suite du coup d'État du 19 mai 1934, le pouvoir était assuré par un gouvernement issu du cercle politique appelé « Zveno », en alliance avec l'Union militaire. Ce gouvernement se caractérisait par une forte concentration sur l'idée de renouvellement national¹⁴. Bien que sa politique étrangère fût orientée plutôt vers la France, le régime présentait de nombreux traits communs avec le nouveau régime allemand.

Lors du congrès, la collaboration entre Franz Dölger et Bogdan Filov fut particulièrement notable, comme l'a expressément signalé Dölger dans son rapport après son retour de Sofia. Bien entendu, ce fait n'affecta en rien la qualité scientifique des travaux du congrès. La délégation bulgare était considérable et le programme très ambitieux. Le président d'honneur du comité d'organisation était une personnalité de premier plan, le métropolite de Varna et de Preslav, monseigneur Syméon. Le président du comité était Vassil Zlatarski, son adjoint Michail Arnaudov, et le secrétaire général Bogdan Filov¹⁵.

L'organisation du congrès prévoyait initialement une section de jurisprudence et de médecine byzantines, à laquelle furent ajoutées la musique, l'ethnologie et le folklore. Cette section devait être présidée par le protoprêtre professeur Stephane

¹⁴ A. Vožinov, *19 май и 21 април : Подготовка, грешки, постижения; Новия парламент и обществена сила; Единодушен фронт за новата държава*, Sofia, 1935; V. Vožinov, *Управлението на деветнадесетомайците (19 май 1934 - 22 януари 1935 година)*, Sofia, 2017.

¹⁵ « IV^e congrès des études byzantines à Sofia », *Échos d'Orient* 33, n° 174, 1934, p. 256.

Tsankov, avec comme secrétaire le professeur Vladislav Alexiev, éminentes figures de la recherche sur l'histoire du droit en Bulgarie¹⁶. Malheureusement, la section fut supprimée en raison du manque d'intérêt¹⁷, ce qui amena le père Vitalien Laurent à souligner le succès de la même section à Athènes. Malgré ces difficultés, le congrès de Sofia compta néanmoins plusieurs contributions portant sur le droit byzantin. Une grande attention fut accordée aux documents des rois serbes et à leurs formulaires, issus de la tradition byzantine. Ainsi, Vladimir Mošin aborda la chancellerie grecque des souverains serbes¹⁸, Milko Kos analysa l'influence byzantine dans la production documentaire de la chancellerie serbe¹⁹, et Aleksandre Solovjev examina les influences byzantines dans le droit coutumier en Yougoslavie²⁰. On peut également signaler la contribution de Kamen Vitchev, savant bulgare, portant sur le même sujet. Ces communications avaient toutes été soigneusement choisies pour mettre en évidence la continuité juridique et l'influence du droit byzantin sur celui des Slaves orthodoxes des Balkans.

Pour conclure, il convient de rappeler le père Kamen Vitchev, déjà mentionné pour sa contribution sur l'influence du droit byzantin sur le droit bulgare²¹. Sa communication, présentée au congrès de Sofia en 1934, portait sur le droit matrimonial slave et l'influence byzantine. Bien que le sujet soit formulé de manière imprécise, en parlant du « divorce » plutôt que de « l'annulation » du mariage, le père Vitchev, prêtre gréco-catholique, avait choisi un thème en lien avec la tradition religieuse dont il était issu. Dans son exposé, il contestait de manière argumentée certaines affirmations inexacts de l'historiographie bulgare du XIX^e siècle concernant le droit bulgare de la période païenne. Sont à rappeler, par exemple, les idées de Georgi S. Rakovski, selon lesquelles les Proto-Bulgares seraient arrivés dans les Balkans avec un droit déjà codifié venu de l'Hindoustan et l'auraient imposé aux Slaves méridionaux. Dans le même contexte, Vitchev rejetait également les comparaisons entre la figure du Khan Krum, supposé législateur, et le roi Hammourabi. Pour le père Vitchev, l'influence byzantine était indéniable et il l'étudiait, en particulier sur les questions de mariage et d'annulation, surtout sous l'angle théologique.

Sa fin fut tragique : il fut exécuté par le régime communiste en 1953. En 2002, lors de sa visite en Bulgarie, le pape Jean-Paul II béatifia un groupe de martyrs bulgares, parmi lesquels figurait le père Kamen Vitchev. C'est en partie pour cette

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 255-256.

¹⁷ V. Laurent, « IV^e congrès des études byzantines à Sofia », *Echos d'Orient* 33, n° 176, 1934, p. 430.

¹⁸ Vl. Mošin, « La chancellerie grecque des rois serbes », *Actes du IV^e congrès des études byzantines. Sofia, septembre 1934*, II, *Известия на българския археологически институт*, t. X, 1936, p. 78-79.

¹⁹ M. Kos, « Die Byzantinisierung der serbischen Herrscherurkunde », *ibid.*, p. 80.

²⁰ Al. Solovjev, « Survivances byzantines dans le droit coutumier yougoslave », *ibid.*, p. 81-82.

²¹ K. Vitchev, « Influences byzantines sur le droit paléo-bulgare. Les causes du divorce dans le *Zakon soudni lioudem* », *ibid.*, p. 83-86.

raison qu'il importe de rappeler aujourd'hui son nom et sa contribution en tant que savant, déjà largement oublié dans le milieu académique.

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L'histoire des premiers congrès d'études byzantines illustre clairement l'interaction entre la recherche scientifique et la politique, inévitable dans le contexte international de l'époque. Cela permet d'affirmer que la conservation et le développement des études byzantines doivent beaucoup à leur caractère à la fois interdisciplinaire et international²².

La question peut se poser de savoir pourquoi ce sujet, relativement peu représenté dans les actes des premiers congrès, a été choisi. La réponse est en réalité simple et pertinente : il offre l'occasion d'aborder un aspect particulier des études byzantines, à savoir la réception du droit byzantin en Bulgarie. Au-delà de tout intérêt personnel, ce choix s'explique également par l'organisation des congrès eux-mêmes, qui montre que les initiateurs avaient conscience de l'importance des recherches juridiques. Dès le départ, ces recherches étaient incluses dans les programmes et dans les sections prévues, qu'elles soient spécialisées ou combinées avec des études sur la médecine byzantine. Leur absence effective lors de certains congrès (à l'exception notable de celui d'Athènes) tient davantage à la rareté des participants qu'à un désintérêt initial.

Le temps de l'approfondissement des études sur le droit byzantin ne viendra que quelques décennies plus tard. Dans le cas du congrès d'Athènes, il convient de noter le contexte particulier de la Grèce, où le droit byzantin demeurerait encore en vigueur, grâce au statut officiel de l'Église.

Le problème de la réception du droit byzantin en Bulgarie, et plus particulièrement de son interprétation par l'historiographie nationale, mérite une attention particulière. Ces recherches mettent en évidence la manière dont le droit médiéval est devenu un enjeu d'identité nationale. L'intérêt pour les sources juridiques est apparu relativement tard en Bulgarie, et les textes eux-mêmes n'étaient souvent pas correctement publiés. Quant aux études portant sur l'application du droit, elles étaient pratiquement inexistantes. Le problème majeur résidait toutefois dans l'utilisation nationaliste de la question de la réception du droit byzantin. D'une part, certains chercheurs cherchaient à nier, ou au moins à minimiser, l'influence byzantine²³ ; d'autre part, ils s'efforçaient de mettre en avant la supériorité culturelle des pionniers

²² S. Maufroy, « Les premiers congrès internationaux des études byzantines... », p. 230.

²³ Il convient de se référer au livre du patriarche des études d'histoire du droit en Bulgarie, publié précisément à l'aube du congrès à Sofia en 1934 : S. S. Bobčev, *Byzance et Bulgarie. La lutte du droit populaire bulgare contre l'influence byzantine (extrait de « La Bulgarie », novembre 1934)*, Sofia, 1934. Voir aussi I. Biliarsky, « EMPHYTEUSIS: quelques remarques sur l' "implantation" du droit byzantin en Bulgarie », dans *Byzantinische Rechtsgeschichte im internationalen Kontext...*, p. 19-31.

bulgares par rapport aux autres Slaves à la Haute Époque. Ces positions résultaient en partie des relations complexes entre la Bulgarie et la Grèce à l'époque moderne, mais elles ont faussé la perception et l'étude du Moyen Âge, et de Byzance en particulier. L'attitude hostile envers le droit byzantin s'explique non seulement par l'orientation de certaines recherches historiques, mais aussi par les tensions politiques et culturelles entre Bulgares et Grecs au XIX^e siècle. Dans ce contexte, l'influence, voire la prééminence du droit byzantin au Moyen Âge, était soit niée, soit fortement réduite par l'introduction de changements ou d'adaptations fictifs. Les recherches récentes permettent de mesurer clairement l'ampleur et la nature réelle de cette influence.

Une alliance inachevée. Les études byzantines (et slaves) comme force fédératrice dans la Tchécoslovaquie d'entre-deux-guerres

Adrien Palladino

Abstract: Beginning with Czechoslovakia's participation in the 1924 Congress of Byzantine Studies, this article examines the role played by Byzantine and Slavic studies in the cultural and political vision of the First Czechoslovak Republic. Far from occupying a peripheral position, these fields were mobilized as instruments of national cohesion and international engagement. Under the guidance of figures such as Matija Murko and Nikodim P. Kondakov, and inspired by the ideals of Tomáš G. Masaryk, Prague emerged during the interwar years as a vital hub for Byzantine and Slavic studies. Institutions such as the Institute of Slavonic Studies, the *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, and the journal *Byzantinoslavica* embodied the ambition to inscribe Czechoslovak identity within a broader historical and cultural continuum linking the Slavic world to the Byzantine legacy. Yet this project – rooted, at least rhetorically, in ideals of transnational dialogue and intellectual exchange – was gradually weakened by mounting geopolitical tensions, the resurgence of nationalism, and the spread of authoritarian regimes. This contribution invites a reassessment of this moment as a significant chapter in the intellectual history of Byzantine studies in the twentieth century.

Keywords: Czechoslovakia, Byzantine studies, Slavic studies, intellectual history, interwar period, European cultural diplomacy, emigration

La byzantinologie tchécoslovaque au congrès de 1924

Bien que demeurant modeste au regard de celle d'autres nations, la participation de chercheurs issus des universités tchécoslovaques au Congrès de 1924 signale néanmoins l'entrée sur la scène d'un État nouvellement constitué, né en 1918 de l'émancipation des Tchèques et des Slovaques de l'Empire austro-hongrois. Si la Tchécoslovaquie ne figure pas parmi les « cinq grandes écoles » d'études byzantines que Nicolae Iorga évoque dans son discours inaugural, elle s'affirme alors, pourrait-on dire, comme une puissance « émergente » dans ce champ encore en formation¹. Ce n'est pas non plus l'un de ces « pays d'Orient » qu'évoque, par exemple, Louis Bréhier² – dont l'histoire porterait naturellement à un intérêt pour Byzance après Byzance – mais un État que l'histoire autant que la géographie inscrivent résolument, hier comme aujourd'hui, dans cet espace nostalgique de la *Mitteleuropa*³.

Trois chercheurs affiliés à des universités tchécoslovaques prirent part au congrès de 1924 : le philologue Matija Murko (1861-1952) et l'historien de l'art Alois Grünwald (1882-1931), tous deux issus de l'université Charles de Prague, une institution ancienne, historiquement dominée par la langue allemande, ainsi que Karel Svoboda (1888-1960), rattaché à l'université Masaryk de Brno, fondée en 1919 dans un esprit résolument tchécophone, en réaction à l'hégémonie germanophone. Ces trois figures, aux profils nettement différenciés, ont en commun d'être nées avant la Première Guerre mondiale dans l'espace austro-hongrois et d'avoir reçu une formation profondément ancrée dans la tradition mitteleuropéenne. Il convient de souligner qu'aucun d'entre eux ne saurait être qualifié, à strictement parler, de byzantiniste : Matija Murko était un philologue, appelé à acquérir une renommée durable pour ses travaux sur les langues slaves. Il est aujourd'hui reconnu comme l'un des pionniers des études littéraires et ethnographiques consacrées aux Slaves méridionaux, ainsi

¹ *Compte-rendu du Premier Congrès international des études byzantines. Bucarest, 1924*, éd. C. Marinescu, Bucarest, 1925, p. 14. Au sujet des différentes nations représentées aux premiers congrès et des enjeux, à côté des contributions dans ce volume, voir 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. Pour des réflexions individuelles sur la construction de Byzance par des nations d'Europe de l'Est, centrale et du Sud-Est, voir notamment D. Mishkova (éd.), *Rival Byzantiums: Empire and Identity in Southeastern Europe*, Cambridge, 2023 ; D. Stamatopoulos (éd.), *Byzantium after the Nation: The Problem of Continuity in Balkan Historiographies*, Budapest, 2022 ; O. Delouis, A. Couderc et P. Guran (éd.), *Héritages de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est à l'époque moderne et contemporaine*, Athènes, 2013.

² L. Bréhier, « Le Premier Congrès international des études byzantines à Bucarest », *Revue internationale de l'enseignement* 78, 1924, p. 266-275.

³ Au-delà du texte célèbre de M. Kundera, voir G. Konrád, « Der Traum von Mitteleuropa », dans E. Busek et G. Wilfinger (éd.), *Aufbruch nach Mitteleuropa. Rekonstruktion eines versunkenen Kontinents*, Vienne, 1986, p. 87-97.



Fig. 1. Matija Murko, 1911

que des recherches sur la culture populaire et le folklore de cette aire culturelle⁴ ; Grünwald, historien de l'art dont la carrière fut abrégée par une disparition prématurée, publia en 1929 une brève étude consacrée au Psautier de Paris, mais c'est surtout en tant que spécialiste de la Renaissance italienne qu'il s'est illustré⁵ ; Svoboda, quant à lui, était un philologue classique, dont les travaux portaient principalement sur la pensée antique et des questions de philosophie grecque⁶.

C'est le philologue Matija Murko (fig. 1) qui, si l'on en croit le rapport du Congrès, fit office de porte-parole de cette délégation tchécoslovaque hétérogène. Il incarne à lui seul la complexité des trajectoires savantes des slavistes et byzantinistes d'Europe centrale au tournant du siècle. Né dans l'Empire austro-hongrois, à Drstelja, dans le nord-est de

la Slovénie actuelle, Murko reçut une formation en philologie germanique et slave à l'Université de Vienne, dans un cadre intellectuel marqué par le positivisme. Un séjour déterminant en Russie, en 1887, lui permit de rencontrer des figures majeures telles qu'Alexandre Veselovskij (1838-1906). Il enseigna ensuite à Graz, puis à Leipzig, avant d'être nommé, dès 1920, premier titulaire de la chaire de littérature slave méridionale à la Faculté des lettres de l'Université Charles de Prague. Tout au long de sa carrière, Murko entretint des liens étroits avec les milieux savants russes et ukrainiens, tant avec les intellectuels en exil installés à Prague dans les années 1920 qu'avec certains chercheurs soviétiques, dans un second temps, malgré un contexte politique de plus en plus tendu. Son réseau, ainsi que celui du cercle linguistique pragois sur lequel je reviens plus loin, s'étendait bien au-delà du monde slave : il fut en contact avec plusieurs grandes figures de la linguistique et de la philologie comparée, au premier rang desquelles Antoine Meillet – éminent philologue indo-européen et maître de

⁴ A. Slodnjak et R. G. A. de Bray, « Matija Murko, 1861–1952 », *The Slavonic and East European Review* 31 (76), 1952, p. 245-247 ; B. Bošnjak, « Matija Murko in ljudsko pesništvo » [Matija Murko et la poésie populaire], *Slavistična revija* 50, n° 3, 2002, p. 389-399 ; S. Fischerová, « Habent sua fata inventiones. The Role of Czechoslovakian Slavistics in the Forming of the Parry-Lord Oral-Formulaic Theory », dans T. Kubíček et A. Lass (éd.), *Roman O. Jakobson: A Work in Progress*, Olomouc, 2014, p. 77-102.

⁵ A. Grünwald, *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Pariser Psalter, MS. Grec. 139*, Brno, 1929.

⁶ L. Varcl, « Prof. Dr. Karel Svoboda 1888–1960 », *Listy filologické / Folia philologica* 84, n° 1, 1961, p. 5-7.

Georges Dumézil –, André Mazon, ainsi qu’avec Milman Parry et Albert Lord, dont les recherches sur la poésie orale prolongent directement l’approche empirique et comparative initiée par Murko⁷. Quoi qu’il en soit, bien qu’il ne puisse être considéré comme un chercheur tchèque à proprement parler, la prise de parole de Murko lors de la séance de clôture du Congrès offre un point de départ suggestif à la réflexion que je souhaite engager ici. Il y déclare :

[...] la reconnaissance de ses collègues tchéco-slovaques pour le travail dépensé en commun et pour l’accueil roumain. Il regrette seulement que les Tchèques n’aient pas été mieux représentés : cela s’explique parce qu’ils sont plus orientés vers l’Europe centrale. Mais les philologues slaves savent tout ce qu’ils doivent à la civilisation de Byzance. Il souhaite une réunion plus nombreuse encore dans un prochain Congrès⁸.

C’est encore Murko qui signe un compte-rendu détaillé du Congrès dans les colonnes de la *Prager Presse*, quotidien de langue allemande publié à Prague⁹. Il y salue, une fois encore, le rôle fédérateur de Nicolae Iorga, « l’hospitalité proverbiale roumaine » (*sprichwörtliche rumänische Gastfreundschaft*), ainsi que le dynamisme des institutions nouvellement créées. Mais il y formule également quelques réflexions sur la place que les études slaves et byzantines sont appelées à occuper dans le cadre de la jeune démocratie tchécoslovaque. Il écrit notamment :

Il y a aussi une leçon à tirer pour Prague : l’Institut slave prévu, qui a déjà été approuvé légalement, doit enfin être réalisé et entreprendre des tâches similaires. Les Bulgares, les Serbes, en partie aussi les Croates et tous les Russes, c’est-à-dire la grande majorité des Slaves, appartiennent à la sphère culturelle byzantine [...] et doivent donc être étudiés d’un point de vue scientifique et pratique, d’autant plus que la Ruthénie représente directement une partie de cet ancien monde byzantin en République tchécoslovaque ; de nouvelles tâches sont donc apparues non seulement pour la philologie slave, mais aussi pour d’autres domaines de la connaissance. [...] Dans les jours qui suivent, le premier congrès des géographes et ethnographes slaves, le tout premier rassemblement de savants slaves, débutera à Prague. Puisse-t-il trouver le même enthousiasme dans tous les cercles et connaître le même succès !¹⁰

⁷ Voir I. Pospíšil et M. Zelenka (éd.), *Matija Murko v myšlenkovém kontextu evropské slavistiky : sborník studií* [Matija Murko dans le contexte intellectuel de la slavistique européenne : recueil d’études], Brno, 2005 ; M. Zelenka, « Le rôle de la slavistique française dans l’essor institutionnel et l’orientation intellectuelle de la slavistique tchèque après 1918 (André Mazon et Matija Murko dans les années 1920) », *Revue des études slaves* 91, n° 1-2, 2020, p. 45-63.

⁸ *Compte-rendu du Premier Congrès...*, p. 82-83.

⁹ M. Murko, « Der I. Byzantinologen-Kongreß in Bukarest. Erlebnisse, Erfahrungen und Ergebniss », *Prager Presse*, 29 mai, 1924, p. 5-6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6 : « Eine Lehre folgt aber daraus auch für Prag: das projektierte und gesetzlich bereits beschlossene Slavische Institut muß endlich auch verwirklicht werden und einen Teil ähnlicher Aufgaben übernehmen. Die Bulgaren, Serben, zum Teile auch die Kroaten und alle Russen, das heißt die große Mehrzahl der Slaven, gehören zum byzantinischen Kulturkreis, dessen Nachwirkungen noch lange fühlbar sein werden, und daher vom wissenschaftlichen und praktischen Standpunkte

En abordant la question du potentiel des études byzantines, Murko esquisse en réalité l'un des axes majeurs du programme politique et culturel de la jeune République tchécoslovaque, où les études slaves – et, par extension, byzantines – sont appelées à jouer un rôle structurant. Comme on l'a rappelé, il fut non seulement le premier titulaire de la chaire de langues et littératures slaves méridionales à l'Université Charles de Prague (1920-1931), mais également l'un des fondateurs, puis le directeur, à partir de 1931, de l'Institut slave affilié à cette même université. Murko compte aussi parmi les membres fondateurs de *Byzantinoslavica*, revue savante consacrée aux relations entre Byzance et les mondes slaves, fondée à Prague en 1929, et appelée à devenir un organe de référence dans le champ. Dans ce contexte, il n'est guère surprenant que ce soit un spécialiste de littérature slave qui, en 1924, prenne la parole au nom des études byzantines : loin d'être une anomalie, ce fait témoigne des conditions spécifiques dans lesquelles ce champ disciplinaire émerge alors en Tchécoslovaquie. Ce n'est pas un hasard, non plus, si Murko évoluait au sein des cercles savants les plus prestigieux – aux côtés de slavistes et de linguistes de renommée internationale, comme on l'a vu plus haut –, mais aussi des sphères politiques les plus élevées de la Première République tchécoslovaque, entretenant des liens étroits avec des figures de premier plan telles que le Premier ministre Karel Kramář (1860-1937) et le président Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850-1937)¹¹.

Les réflexions formulées par Murko à l'occasion du Congrès invitent ainsi à interroger la place singulière qu'occupèrent les études byzantines dans le projet intellectuel et identitaire de la jeune République tchécoslovaque, et en particulier le rôle qu'elles furent appelées à jouer dans l'élaboration d'une identité nationale fondée sur l'unité slave. Comme nous le verrons, après une phase initiale d'une remarquable intensité, nourrie par l'implication d'une émigration russe hautement qualifiée et par un dialogue fécond avec d'autres jeunes nations slaves, le projet d'une symbiose culturelle et savante entre peuples slaves au sein de la Tchécoslovaquie de l'entre-deux-guerres se heurtera progressivement aux réalités politiques et géostratégiques des années 1930. Ces dernières, implacablement, viendront miner les fondements de cet idéal, jusqu'à en compromettre durablement la réalisation.

studiert werden müssen, umso mehr als Karpathorußland direkt einen sehr rückständigen Teil dieser byzantinischen Welt in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik vorstellt; nicht bloß der Slavischen Philologie, sondern auch anderen Wissensgebieten sind dadurch neue Aufgaben erwachsen. [...] In den nächsten Tagen beginnt in Prag der erste Kongress slavischer Geographen und Ethnographen zu tagen, die erste Versammlung slavischer Gelehrter überhaupt. Möge er ähnliches Verständnis in allen Kreisen finden und ebenso erfolgreich sein! »

¹¹ Murko se lie d'amitié avec Masaryk dès la fin du XIX^e siècle, notamment à la suite de son habilitation remarquée sur les débats autour des influences étrangères, en particulier allemandes, dans la genèse de la renaissance nationale tchèque ; voir M. Murko, *Deutsche Einflüsse auf die Anfänge der slavischen Romantik. I. Die böhmische Romantik*, Graz, 1897. Voir M. Zelenka, « Le rôle de la slavistique française... », p. 47.

La première République tchécoslovaque et les études byzantines et slaves

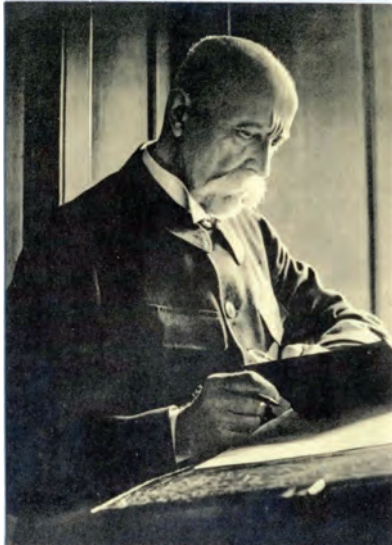


Fig. 2. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, vers 1920, carte postale – collection privée

Toute réflexion sur les liens entre la jeune République tchécoslovaque et le développement des études byzantines et slaves ramène inévitablement à la figure de son premier président, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (fig. 2), une personnalité fondatrice dont la figure, entre héritage intellectuel et construction historiographique symbolique, continue de marquer la mémoire nationale tchèque jusqu'à aujourd'hui¹². D'abord favorable à une réforme en profondeur de la structure multinationale de l'Empire austro-hongrois, Masaryk adopta progressivement une position résolument indépendantiste, qui le contraignit à l'exil au début de la Première Guerre mondiale afin d'échapper à la répression. C'est durant ces années d'exil, entre 1914 et 1918, qu'il mena une intense activité politique et intellectuelle en faveur de la cause tchécoslovaque. Dès les premiers mois du conflit, il fit le choix décisif de soutenir les puissances de

l'Entente contre l'Empire des Habsbourg, multipliant les déplacements entre l'Italie, la Suisse, la France et le Royaume-Uni. À Paris, aux côtés d'Edvard Beneš (1884-1948) et d'autres figures du mouvement national, il participa à la fondation du Conseil national tchécoslovaque et joua un rôle actif dans la formation des légions tchécoslovaques, engagées sur les fronts russe et français. De mai 1917 à décembre 1918, Masaryk séjourne en Russie, où il s'attache à consolider la Légion tchécoslovaque, composée en grande partie de prisonniers de guerre austro-hongrois d'origine tchèque et slovaque¹³. En avril

¹² Sur Masaryk (et ses mythes), voir notamment, A. Orzoff, « The Husbandman : Tomáš Masaryk's Leader Cult in Interwar Czechoslovakia », *Austrian History Yearbook* 39, 2008, p. 121-137, avec une riche bibliographie ; sur la représentation et le rôle du président, avec des éléments d'historiographie, voir récemment J. Štofanič, « Le château républicain de Masaryk. La formation de l'espace et des institutions dans le nouvel État tchécoslovaque indépendant », *Histoire Politique. Revue du Centre d'Histoire de Sciences Po* 49, 2023 [= *Les lieux du politique en Europe médiane (XIX^e-XX^e siècles)*, éd. M. Boisdrón], <https://journals.openedition.org/histoirepolitique/10745#ftn42> [lien consulté le 19.06.2025].

¹³ Masaryk œuvre à la reconnaissance de la Légion comme corps constitutif de l'armée tchécoslovaque en France et, après la révolution bolchévique, négocie avec le gouvernement français son transfert vers le front occidental. Toutefois, l'hostilité croissante soviétique entraîne l'implication des légionnaires dans une série d'affrontements armés en Sibérie, où ils en viennent à contrôler, pendant un temps, l'intégralité de la ligne ferroviaire reliant l'Oural à Vladivostok. Leur retour en Tchécoslovaquie ne s'achèvera qu'en 1920. A. Marès, « Les légions tchécoslovaques, 1914-1919 », *Encyclopédie d'histoire numérique de l'Europe*, <https://ehne.fr/fr/node/12378> [lien consulté le 15.06.2025].

1918, Masaryk quitte la Russie pour les États-Unis, où il plaide auprès du président Woodrow Wilson en faveur de la création d'un État réunissant Tchèques, Slovaques et Ruthènes. Son action diplomatique porte ses fruits : la France et la Grande-Bretagne reconnaissent bientôt le Conseil national tchécoslovaque comme gouvernement de facto, reconnaissance à laquelle les États-Unis se rallient peu après. Le 28 octobre 1918, l'indépendance de la Tchécoslovaquie est proclamée. Masaryk, encore en déplacement, est élu président de la République par l'Assemblée nationale révolutionnaire. Confirmé dans ses fonctions en 1920 à l'issue de l'adoption de la nouvelle Constitution, il sera réélu en 1927, puis de nouveau en 1934.

Parallèlement à son engagement politique, Masaryk développe une réflexion théorique de grande ampleur, située à l'intersection de l'histoire, de la philosophie politique et de l'analyse des courants intellectuels contemporains. Dès 1913, il fait paraître en allemand les deux premiers volumes de *Russland und Europa* (La Russie et l'Europe), vaste fresque historique, sociologique et philosophique où il s'attache à examiner les relations complexes entre le monde slave et l'Europe occidentale¹⁴. Au fil de son exil, notamment durant les années de guerre, Masaryk compose de nombreux textes où s'entrelacent étroitement la réflexion historique, l'analyse géopolitique et un plaidoyer sans relâche pour l'émancipation des peuples slaves et pour le rôle déterminant qu'ils sont appelés à jouer dans l'édification d'une nouvelle Europe¹⁵.

C'est dans cet élan intellectuel et diplomatique que Masaryk, avec le soutien d'Edvard Beneš et de Karel Kramář (fig. 3), initie en 1921 la *Ruská pomocná akce* (Action d'aide à la Russie), un programme sans précédent destiné à accueillir et à soutenir les intellectuels russes en exil, contraints de fuir leur patrie à la suite de la révolution bolchévique¹⁶. Pour Masaryk et Kramář, l'objectif de la *Ruská pomocná*

¹⁴ T. G. Masaryk, *Russland und Europa. Studien über die geistigen Strömungen in Russland*, 2 vol., Jena, 1913.

¹⁵ Id., *Nová Evropa : stanovisko slovanské* [La Nouvelle Europe : une perspective slave], Prague, 2016 [1918/1920]. Voir aussi le recueil d'études sur la pensée de Masaryk, *Češi a Němci v pojetí a politice T. G. Masaryka : sborník příspěvků z mezinárodní konference* [Les Tchèques et les Allemands dans la pensée et la politique de T. G. Masaryk : recueil de contributions d'un colloque international], éd. M. L. Neudorflová, Prague, 2004.

¹⁶ Sur l'« Action russe », voir surtout E. Chinyaeva, « Ruská emigrace v Československu: vývoj Ruské pomocné akce » [L'émigration russe en Tchécoslovaquie : le développement de l'Action d'aide à la Russie], *Slovanský přehled* 79, 1993, p. 14-24 ; voir aussi ead., *Russians outside Russia. The Emigré Community in Czechoslovakia 1918-1938*, Munich, 2001 et l'ouvrage fondamental de C. Andreyev et I. Savický, *Russia Abroad. Prague and the Russian Diaspora, 1918-1938*, New Haven, Londres, 2004 ; voir aussi I. Mchitarjan, *Das "russische Schulwesen" im europäischen Exil. Zum bildungspolitischen Umgang mit den pädagogischen Initiativen der russischen Emigranten in Deutschland, der Tschechoslowakei und Polen (1918-1939)*, Bad Heilbrunn, 2006 ; ead., « Prague as the Centre of Russian Educational Emigration: Czechoslovakia's Educational Policy for Russian Emigrants (1918-1938) », *Paedagogica Historica* 45, n° 3, 2009, p. 369-402 ; Olga. Bobrinskoy, « La Première République tchécoslovaque et l'émigration russe (1920-1938): la spécificité d'une politique d'asile », *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest* 26, 1995, p. 153-175.



Fig. 3. Lithographie avec les principaux politiciens de la Première République tchécoslovaque, en haut Karel Kramář, au centre Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, en bas à droite Edvard Beneš, 1928 – collection privée

akce ne se limitait pas à intégrer les exilés russes dans la société tchécoslovaque, ni à tirer seulement parti des bénéfices économiques et culturels qu'une telle intégration pouvait offrir ; il s'agissait aussi de préserver et de faire fructifier, en terre d'exil, l'héritage intellectuel et scientifique russe¹⁷. La formation de jeunes spécialistes fut pensée comme un investissement à double visée : d'un côté, elle devait contribuer au développement du jeune État tchécoslovaque, avide de compétences et de relais culturels ; de l'autre, elle préparait, dans l'hypothèse largement partagée d'un renversement prochain du régime bolchévique, l'avènement d'une Russie « saine » et régénérée. Les élites ainsi formées à Prague étaient appelées à occuper, le moment venu, les postes vacants d'une administration postrévolutionnaire et à constituer, à terme, un rempart intellectuel et diplomatique contre les menaces perçues en provenance notamment de l'Allemagne et de la Hongrie.

Masaryk et Kramář nourrissaient l'espoir que, par la formation et le soutien accordés à l'intelligentsia russe en exil, la future Russie post-bolchévique reconnaîtrait en la Tchécoslovaquie un allié privilégié dans la recomposition de l'espace européen. Une fois la situation stabilisée à l'Est, cette stratégie devait jeter les bases d'une alliance naturelle avec une puissance slave majeure, selon une vision géopolitique pensée à l'échelle du continent. Sans entrer ici dans les subtilités doctrinales, on perçoit en filigrane les prolongements d'un idéalisme panslave, particulièrement sensible chez Kramář¹⁸, mais aussi la projection masarykienne d'une Tchécoslovaquie appelée à jouer le rôle de trait d'union entre l'Europe occidentale libérale et le monde slave

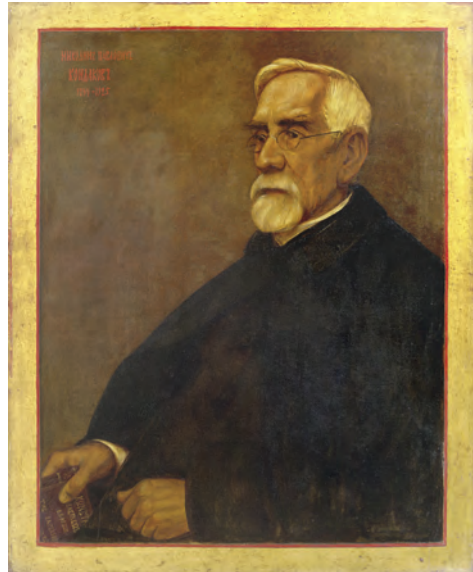
¹⁷ I. Foletti et A. Palladino, *Byzantium or Democracy? Kondakov's Legacy in Emigration: the Institutum Kondakovianum and André Grabar, 1925–1952*, Rome, 2020, p. 30, 54-58.

¹⁸ Voir M. Lustigová, *Karel Kramář. První československý premiér* [Karel Kramář. Le premier Premier ministre tchécoslovaque], Prague, 2007 ; M. Winkler, *Karel Kramář (1860-1937) : Selbstbild, Fremdwahrnehmungen und Modernisierungsverständnis eines tschechischen Politikers*, Munich, 2002.



Fig. 4. Carte postale de Prague, pont Charles, vers 1920 – collection privée

Fig. 5. Portrait « iconique » de Nikodim P. Kondakov par la Princesse Natalia G. Jašvil, 1925 – Institute of Art History, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague



oriental : un pont culturel et diplomatique tendu entre deux sphères trop souvent considérées comme irréconciliables.

C'est dans ce contexte politique et culturel singulier que se réunissent, au sein de la jeune République tchécoslovaque, un ensemble de conditions propices à l'essor des études byzantines (et non seulement). Prague devient alors, pour quelques années, ce que certains ont pu appeler un « Oxford russe » (fig. 4)¹⁹. À l'automne 1922, Nikodim P. Kondakov (1844-1925) (fig. 5), éminente autorité de l'histoire de l'art byzantin et médiéval russe, salué deux ans plus tard comme le « patriarche » des études byzantines lors du Congrès de 1924, est invité à enseigner à la faculté des lettres de l'Université Charles de Prague²⁰. Après un court séjour en Bulgarie, l'érudit en exil trouve en la capitale tchécoslovaque un ultime refuge, à la fois intellectuel et humain²¹. Outre Masaryk, qu'il avait connu en Russie, ce sont surtout deux figures

¹⁹ Z. Sládek, « Prag : Das 'russische Oxford' », dans K. Schlögel (éd.), *Der grosse Exodus. Die russische Emigration und ihre Zentren 1917-1941*, Munich, 1994, p. 218-233.

²⁰ Pour Kondakov « patriarche des études byzantines », voir H. Grégoire, « Le Congrès Byzantin de Bucarest », *L'Indépendance roumaine*, 18 juillet 1924. Sur Kondakov, voir I. Foletti, *From Byzantium to the Holy Russia. Nikodim Kondakov and the Invention of the Icon*, Rome, 2017 [2011], avec bibliographie.

²¹ I. Foletti, « Nikodim Kondakov et Prague. Comment l'émigration change l'histoire (de l'art) »,

majeures des études slaves en Tchécoslovaquie – Lubor Niederle (1865-1944), premier directeur de l’Institut Slave, et Jiří Polívka (1859-1933) – qui s’emploient activement à faciliter sa venue, inscrivant d’emblée sa présence dans un cadre institutionnel lié aux ambitions tchécoslovaques²².

Ainsi, loin d’être entièrement libre dans le choix de ses sujets, Kondakov se voit confier une mission précise, telle que l’attestent les documents officiels conservés : ses enseignements doivent porter sur l’art des peuples nomades, en mettant l’accent sur les Slaves et sur leurs interactions artistiques et culturelles avec Byzance²³. Ni l’art byzantin, l’art russe, ni l’Antiquité tardive méditerranéenne, qui avaient pourtant constitué le cœur des recherches antérieures de Kondakov, ne sont mentionnés dans les instructions officielles. Cette réorientation disciplinaire s’inscrit de manière explicite dans une logique institutionnelle, étroitement liée à la politique culturelle tchécoslovaque, pour laquelle le passé slave représentait une matrice identitaire fondatrice. Ce glissement thématique n’était toutefois pas totalement étranger à la trajectoire intellectuelle de Kondakov lui-même. Comme l’a montré Ivan Foletti, l’érudit avait constamment cherché, tout au long de sa carrière, à adapter ses recherches aux attentes des sociétés, et surtout des régimes, au sein desquels il évoluait²⁴. En exil, conscient que ses travaux menés sous le régime impérial suscitaient un intérêt limité dans son nouveau contexte, Kondakov choisit de valoriser un héritage commun aux mondes slave et byzantin, plus à même de rencontrer un écho favorable à Prague. La dernière série de conférences de Kondakov témoigne de cette inflexion : il y présente les populations slaves comme des acteurs décisifs dans la formation d’un espace à la fois géographique et symbolique que l’on commence alors à nommer

Opuscula Historiae Artium 62, n° 2, 2014, p. 2-11.

²² Sur ces deux figures, voir respectivement L. Havlíková, « Lubor Niederle (1865–1944) », *Akademický bulletin* 6, 2004, p. 24-25 et H. Hlůšková et A. Zelenková (éd.), *Slavista Jiří Polívka v kontexte literatury a folklóru* [Le slaviste Jiří Polívka dans le contexte de la littérature et du folklore], 2 vol., Bratislava – Brno, 2008.

²³ Voir G. V. Vernadskij, « О научной деятельности Н. П. Кондакова » [Sur l’activité scientifique de N. P. Kondakov], dans *Никодим Павлович Кондаков. 1844-1924. К восьмидесятилетию со дня рождения* [Nikodim Pavlovitch Kondakov. 1844-1924. Pour le quatre-vingtième anniversaire de sa naissance], Prague, 1924, p. 3-16. À ce sujet, voir I. Foletti, « Nikodim Kondakov et Prague... » et id., « After Kondakov. The Heritage of Russian Emigration in the Czech Lands », *Convivium Supplementum* 2020 [= *Transformed by Emigration. Welcoming Russian Intellectuals, Scientists and Artists (1917–1945)*], éd. I. Foletti, K. Foletti et A. Palladino], Brno – Turnhout, 2020, p. 10-30 ; I. Foletti et A. Palladino, « Nomadic arts in Emigration : Russian Diaspora, Czechoslovakia, and the broken dream of a borderless Europe (1918-45) », *Journal of Art Historiography* 25, 2021, https://arthistoriography.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/foletti_palladino.pdf [lien consulté le 19.06.2025].

²⁴ Voir I. Foletti, *From Byzantium to the Holy Russia*. Sur Kondakov au service des régimes, voir aussi *ibid.*, p. 24-25. Sur l’implication de certains chercheurs russes dans les politiques impérialistes et coloniales, à l’exemple du Caucase, voir I. Foletti et M. Khakhanova, *Armenophobia. Art, Scholarship, and Russian Colonial Policy at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, Brno – Rome, 2024.

« Eurasie »²⁵. Dans cette reconfiguration des cadres historiques, les peuples nomades apparaissent comme les vecteurs d'un mouvement unificateur entre Orient et Occident, un mouvement au sein duquel la Russie, mais aussi la Tchécoslovaquie, trouvent une place significative²⁶. Exilé, privé de sa patrie, Kondakov adopte à son tour une posture nomade : il projette dans son travail scientifique les tensions et les aspirations d'une identité déplacée, transformant progressivement son regard. Ce déplacement intellectuel – du paradigme impérial vers une perspective transnationale – fait notamment écho aux thèses contemporaines de figures telles que Georgij Vernadskij ou Nikolaj S. Trubetskoj, promoteurs du courant eurasiste²⁷. Comme ces chercheurs, Kondakov découvre ainsi dans l'émigration non pas une simple rupture, mais la possibilité d'un nouveau cadre d'interprétation pour penser à la fois son propre itinéraire, les formes culturelles qu'il étudie et le destin des mondes slaves au cœur des recompositions géopolitiques du XX^e siècle.

Autour des cours particuliers de Kondakov et des cercles de discussion qui animaient la Prague des émigrés gravitaient également plusieurs personnalités déjà évoquées, telles que Vernadskij et Trubetskoj, mais aussi des chercheurs issus de la nouvelle génération, comme Dmitrij A. Rasovskij (1902-1941), les historiens de l'art Nikolaj M. Beliaïev (1899-1930), Nikolaj P. Toll (1894-1975) et Nikolaj L. Okouniev (1885-1949), l'archéologue Alexandre P. Kalitinskij (1879-1946), ainsi que la jeune princesse Natalia Jašvil, qui suivait auprès de Kondakov et du peintre Pimen Sofronov des cours de peinture d'icône²⁸. Après la mort de Kondakov en 1925, ce cercle de chercheurs donna naissance à l'Institut Kondakov de Prague, une institution fondée dans le but explicite de prolonger les axes de recherche qui avaient été au cœur de l'œuvre de l'érudit russe²⁹. Au cours des années 1920, l'Institut Kondakov se

²⁵ Sur la question, voir M. Bruneau, *L'Eurasie. Continent, empire, idéologie ou projet*, Paris, 2018. Voir aussi M. Laruelle, *L'idéologie eurasiste russe ou comment penser l'empire*, Paris, 1999 ; W. Dressler et al. (éd.), *Eurasie : espace mythique ou réalité en construction ?*, Bruxelles, 2009.

²⁶ Voir I. Foletti et A. Palladino, « Nomadic Arts in Emigration ».

²⁷ Voir e. g., A. Ratchinski, « G. V. Vernadski (1887-1973) et le mouvement eurasien », dans D. Beaune-Gray (éd.), *Les historiens de l'émigration russe*, Paris, 2003, p. 43-48.

²⁸ Voir I. Foletti et A. Palladino, *Byzantium or Democracy?* Sur les cours de peinture d'icônes, voir aussi M. Řoutil, « Kníže Karel VI. Schwarzenberg a jeho učitel ikonomalby Pimen Maximovič Sofronov (na materiálu archivu Archeologického institutu N. P. Kondakova v Praze) » [Le prince Karel VI de Schwarzenberg et son maître en iconographie, Pimen Maksimovitch Sofronov (d'après les archives de l'Institut archéologique N. P. Kondakov à Prague)], *Parrësia. Revue pro východní křesťanství / A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 7, 2013, p. 261-282.

²⁹ Sur l'institut, voir L. H. Rhineland, « Exiled Russian Scholars in Prague: The Kondakov Seminar and Institute », *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes* 16, n° 3, 1974, p. 331-352 ; Z. Skálová, « Das Prager Seminarium Kondakovianum, später das Archäologische Kondakov-Institut und sein Archiv (1925-1952) », *Slavica Gandensia* 18, 1991, p. 21-43 ; V. Hrochová, « Činnost Institutu N. P. Kondakova v Praze a jeho mezinárodní význam » [L'activité de l'Institut N. P. Kondakov à Prague et son importance internationale], dans V. Veber et al. (éd.), *Ruská a ukrajinská emigrace v ČSR v letech 1918-1945* [L'émigration russe et ukrainienne en Tchécoslovaquie entre 1918 et 1945], vol. 3,

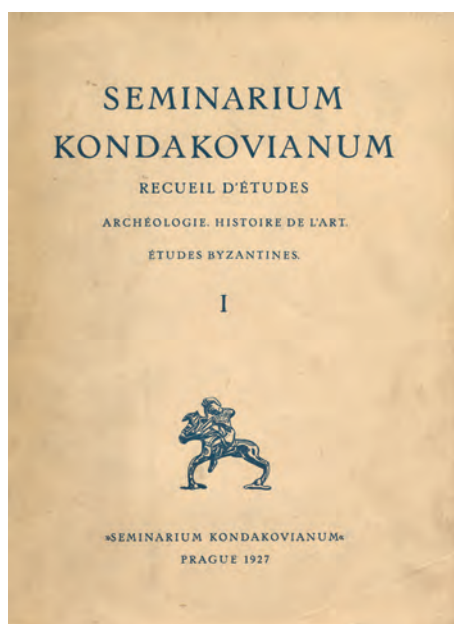


Fig. 6. Couverture de *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, tome 1, 1927

dote de ses propres instruments de diffusion scientifique en lançant trois séries de publications en Tchécoslovaquie : une revue et deux collections d'ouvrages consacrées aux mondes byzantin et slave. La revue *Seminarium Kondakovianum* (fig. 6) – dont le premier numéro fut le volume d'hommage à Kondakov – paraîtra jusqu'en 1940³⁰. Elle est complétée par deux séries thématiques : *Skythika*, consacrée aux arts des peuples nomades, et *Zōgraphika*, centrée sur la peinture et les icônes byzantines et russes.³¹ Dans cette dernière, il convient de rappeler, à titre d'exemple, la publication d'un ouvrage remarquable d'André Grabar (1896-1990), ancien élève de Kondakov, consacré à la Sainte Face de Laon³², une icône slave de la première moitié du XIII^e siècle « émigrée » en France au courant du même siècle, dont le parcours semble un écho symbolique à celui de Grabar³³.

Prague, 1995, p. 32-41 ; M. Beißwenger, *Das Seminarium Kondakovianum in Prag (1925-1952)*, thèse de Master, Humboldt-Universität, Berlin, 2005 [2001] ; R. Zaoral, « Karel VI. Schwarzenberg. Student, spolupracovník a mecenáš Kondakovova ústavu » [Karel VI de Schwarzenberg : étudiant, collaborateur et mécène de l'Institut Kondakov], dans Z. Bežecný et al. (éd.), *Schwarzenbergové v české a středoevropské kulturní historii* [Les Schwarzenberg dans l'histoire culturelle tchèque et d'Europe centrale], České Budějovice, 2008, p. 547-556 ; I. Foletti, « Russian Inputs in Czechoslovakia : when Art History meets History. The *Institutum Kondakovianum* during the Nazi occupation », dans I. Foletti et A. Palladino (éd.), *Inventing Medieval Czechoslovakia 1918-1968. Between Slavs, Germans, and Totalitarian Regimes*, Brno – Rome, 2019, p. 63-92 ; iid., *Byzantium or Democracy?*

³⁰ Sur l'histoire de la revue, voir notamment I. Foletti, « De Nikodim Kondakov au *Seminarium Kondakovianum* à *Convivium* », *Convivium* 1, n° 1, 2014, p. V-VIII.

³¹ Sur la genèse de ces revues, voir I. Foletti et A. Palladino, *Byzantium or Democracy?*, p. 58-60 et 97-109 ; voir aussi F. Lovino, « Constructing the Past through the Present : The Eurasian Views of Byzantium in the Pages of *Seminarium Kondakovianum* », dans M. Kinloch et A. MacFarlane (éd.), *Trends and Turning Points. Constructing the Late Antique and Byzantine World*, Leiden – Boston, 2019, p. 14-28 ; id., « Southern Caucasus in perspective : the scholarly debate through the pages of “Seminarium Kondakovianum” and “Skythika” (1927-1938) », *Convivium Supplementum* 2016 [= *The Medieval South Caucasus: Artistic Cultures of Albania, Armenia and Georgia*, éd. I. Foletti et E. Thunø], Brno – Turnhout, 2016, p. 36-51.

³² A. Grabar, *La Sainte Face de Laon. Le mandylion dans l'art orthodoxe*, Prague, 1931.

³³ Sur l'émigration de Grabar, voir A. Palladino, « Transforming Medieval Art from Saint Petersburg to Paris. André Grabar's Life and Scholarship between 1917 and 1945 », *Convivium Supplementum*

Au-delà de l'impulsion donnée par les historiens de l'art et les archéologues, la figure de Murko, déjà évoquée, rappelle combien Prague s'affirme alors comme un véritable carrefour intellectuel pour les études slaves, où se croisent linguistique, histoire de l'art et littérature, un espace interdisciplinaire animé, entre autres, par le cercle linguistique de Prague et les eurasianistes, autour de figures comme Roman Jakobson et Trubetskoj³⁴.

Du rêve d'unité aux espoirs brisés

L'orientation slave de la politique culturelle tchécoslovaque s'inscrit, une fois encore, dans le projet porté par Masaryk et ses alliés politiques : celui d'une nation nouvelle, fondée sur une identité culturelle commune que l'on voulait définir comme résolument slave. En réalité, la Tchécoslovaquie naissante était l'un des héritiers les plus directs de l'Empire austro-hongrois, dans toute la complexité de sa composition ethnique, linguistique et confessionnelle. Aux côtés des Tchèques et des Slovaques coexistaient d'importantes minorités allemandes (env. 22,5% avant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale)³⁵, hongroises, ruthènes, ukrainiennes, polonaises, ainsi qu'une vaste communauté juive aux affiliations culturelles diverses³⁶.

Dans ce contexte, la promotion des études slaves au sein de la jeune république participait d'un double mouvement : elle contribuait d'une part à forger une conscience historique majoritairement slave, présentée comme fondatrice de l'unité nationale, et d'autre part à inscrire cette histoire dans une série d'échanges transversaux, avec les autres cultures slaves, mais aussi avec des traditions telles que le monde byzantin ou l'espace germanique. Cette orientation culturelle n'était pas sans précédent, dans la mesure où elle prolongeait les aspirations panslaves du XIX^e siècle, profondément enracinées dans les territoires tchèques et slovaques. C'est d'ailleurs en 1848, sous la présidence de František Palacký (1798-1876), l'une des figures intellectuelles et politiques majeures du XIX^e siècle en Bohême, considéré comme fondateur de la nation tchèque, qu'eut lieu ce qui est considéré comme le premier congrès panslave, symbole d'une tentative précoce d'unification culturelle et politique des peuples slaves face aux dominations impériales³⁷.

2020 [= *Transformed by Emigration. Welcoming Russian Intellectuals, Scientists and Artists (1917-1945)*], éd. I. Foletti, K. Foletti et A. Palladino], Brno – Turnhout, 2020, p. 122-141.

³⁴ Voir J. Toman, *The Magic of a Common Language. Jakobson, Mathesius, Trubetzkoy, and the Prague Linguistic Circle*, Cambridge – London, 1995. Voir aussi E. Velmezova, « Les linguistes russes à l'épreuve de l'émigration : quelques pistes pour une future recherche sur les contacts russo-tchèques dans le domaine de la linguistique », dans I. Foletti (éd.), *La Russie et l'Occident. Relations intellectuelles et artistiques au temps des révolutions russes*, Rome, 2010, p. 53-63.

³⁵ L. A. Kosiński, « Changes in the Ethnic Structure in East-Central Europe, 1930–1960 », *Geographical Review* 59, n° 3, 1969, p. 388-402, tableau 1, p. 389.

³⁶ Voir notamment J. Kuklík et R. Petráš, *Minorities and Law in Czechoslovakia, 1918–1992*, Prague, 2017.

³⁷ Voir H. Haselsteiner (éd.), *The Prague Slav Congress 1848: Slavic Identities*, Stuttgart – Hannover 2000. Le second congrès eut lieu à Moscou en 1867, affirmant alors la prétention de la Russie à diriger le monde

Parallèlement, l'idée d'un héritage chrétien commun à de nombreuses nations slaves, issu de l'activité missionnaire des saints « byzantins » Cyrille et Méthode, s'est largement diffusée dans les pays tchèques à la fin du XIX^e et au début du XX^e siècle³⁸. En Tchécoslovaquie, cette tradition cyrillo-méthodienne revêtait une signification toute particulière, car l'on considérait que la Grande Moravie, christianisée par les deux frères de Thessalonique, avait réuni les ancêtres des Tchèques et des Slovaques modernes, recouvrant une grande partie du territoire de l'État nouvellement fondé. La Tchécoslovaquie était ainsi envisagée comme l'héritière spirituelle de cette tradition, dans une continuité symbolique avec l'Empire romain d'Orient. Cette filiation idéale trouva une expression visuelle particulièrement marquée dans la production d'images des deux saints, souvent représentés dans un style néo-médiévalisant, néo-slave, voire même néo-byzantin. Ils figurent aussi bien dans la grande épopée slave d'Alphonse Mucha (réalisée entre 1910 et 1928) que dans de nombreuses images populaires, notamment des lithographies réalisées dans un esprit historiciste propre au début du XX^e siècle, telles celle du peintre académique tchèque Jano Köhler (1873-1941) qui porte l'inscription : « *Tito jsou otcové naši* » [Voici nos pères] (fig. 7).



Fig. 7. Jano Köhler, *Saints Cyrille et Méthode*, lithographie, 1912 – collection privée

slave. Plus amplement sur le panslavisme tchécoslovaque, voir notamment A. Hudek, M. Kopeček et J. Mervart (éd.), *Czechoslovakism*, Londres, 2021.

³⁸ Sur l'historiographie de la tradition cyrillo-méthodienne en Tchécoslovaquie, voir J. Malíř, « Cyrilometodějská tradice na Moravě koncem 19. a počátkem 20. století ve službách politiky » [La tradition Cyrillo-Méthodienne en Moravie à la fin du XIX^e et au début du XX^e siècle au service de la politique], dans E. Doležalová et P. Sommer (éd.), *Středověký kaleidoskop pro muže s hůlkou : věnováno Františku Šmahelovi k životnímu jubileu* [Kaléidoscope médiéval pour l'homme à la canne : hommage à František Šmahel pour son jubilé], Prague, 2016, p. 394-412 et F. V. Mareš, *Cyrilometodějská tradice a slavistika* [La tradition cyrillo-méthodienne et la slavistique], Prague, 2000. Voir aussi A. Tamborra, « La riscoperta di Cirillo e Metodio nel secolo XIX e il suo significato », dans E. G. Farrugia, R. F. Taft et G. K. Piovesana (éd.), *Christianity among the Slavs: The Heritage of Saints Cyril and Methodius*, Rome, 1988, p. 315-341. Pour des perspectives historiques récentes, voir aussi P. Kouřil et al. (éd.), *The Cyril and Methodius Mission and Europe – 1150 Years Since the Arrival of the Thessaloniki Brothers in Great Moravia*, Brno, 2014. Dans une perspective plus ample, voir J. Smolucha, « Cultural and Religious Significance of the Cyrillo-Methodian Tradition in Central and Eastern Europe », *Folia Historica Cracoviensa* 23, 2017, p. 193-213.

Si la question de la religiosité en Tchécoslovaquie durant la Première République, partagée entre héritages protestant et catholique, dépasse largement le cadre de cette étude, pour des chercheurs tels que Jaroslav Bidlo, Miloš Weingart ou František (Francis) Dvorník, la tradition cyrillo-méthodienne revêtait une signification particulière. Byzance y était envisagée comme le catalyseur historique de la christianisation et de l'acculturation des peuples slaves. Cette idée trouve une expression particulièrement structurée chez František Dvorník, prêtre, historien, et figure majeure des études byzantines, y compris après son émigration de Tchécoslovaquie en 1939. Dès les années 1920, Dvorník commence à écrire sur la tradition cyrillo-méthodienne, qu'il interprète comme le point d'origine d'un vaste réseau culturel et religieux reliant les territoires de la Tchécoslovaquie moderne à l'héritage de la chrétienté orientale³⁹. Il en proposera une synthèse largement diffusée dans un ouvrage publié en 1933 à l'Imprimerie d'État tchécoslovaque⁴⁰. Plus tard, à partir de la fin des années 1940, il jouera un rôle intellectuel majeur à l'Institut américain de Dumbarton Oaks, influençant durablement les études byzantines en contexte transatlantique⁴¹. Dans cette lecture, la tradition héritée de Cyrille et Méthode ne relevait pas d'un passé marginal, mais fondait une continuité historique unissant les Slaves bien avant l'émergence des États-nations modernes. Ainsi, dès avant l'effondrement de l'Empire austro-hongrois et tout au long des deux décennies de la Première République tchécoslovaque, l'héritage byzantin fut perçu comme un socle symbolique essentiel de l'identité slave.

Rétrospectivement, une telle conception d'une unité façonnée par le christianisme et par la civilisation héritée de Byzance rejoint, sous certains aspects, celle que défendent certains byzantinistes français, tel Charles Diehl (1859-1944) qui, dans son ouvrage *Byzance. Grandeur et décadence* (1920), propose une lecture de la christianisation des peuples slaves imprégnée d'une tonalité propre au colonialisme français, projetant sur Byzance des logiques civilisatrices :

De ses mains puissantes, Byzance a pétri toutes ces tribus barbares pour en former des nations. C'est elle qui « de ces hordes slaves, bulgares, magyares, varègues, a fait la Serbie, la Croatie, la Bulgarie, la Hongrie, la Russie chrétiennes ». [...] Sans Byzance,

³⁹ F. Dvorník, « De santo Cyrillo et Methodio in luce historiae byzantinae », *Acta V. Conventus Velehradensis Anno MCMXXVII post s. Cyrillum natum MC*, Olomouc, 1927, p. 144-155.

⁴⁰ Id., *Les légendes de Constantin et de Méthode vues de Byzance*, Prague, 1933. Voir aussi son important ouvrage *Les Slaves, Byzance et Rome au IX^e siècle*, Paris, 1926. Sur Dvorník et la tradition cyrillo-méthodienne, voir M. Garzaniti, « The Cyrillo-Methodian Mission in the Work of Francis Dvorník », *Byzantinoslavica* 76, 2018 [= *Homage to Francis Dvorník*, éd. V. Vavřínek, P. Melichar et M. Čechová], p. 40-48.

⁴¹ R. Thomson, « Francis Dvorník and Dumbarton Oaks », *Byzantinoslavica* 76, 2018 [= *Homage to Francis Dvorník*, éd. V. Vavřínek, P. Melichar et M. Čechová], p. 35-39.

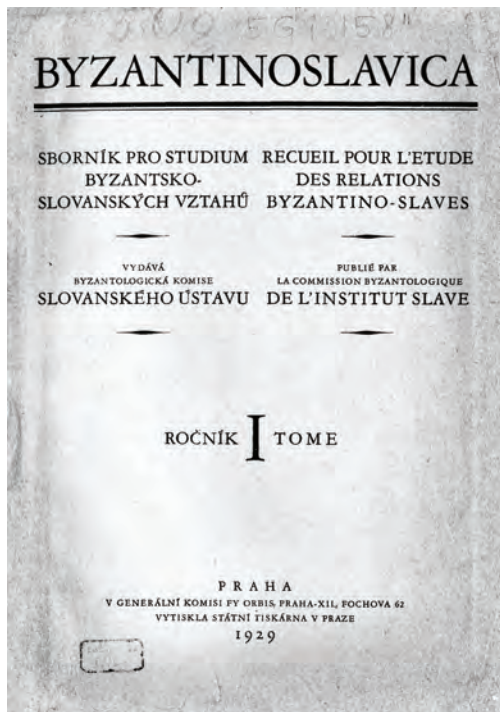


Fig. 8. Couverture de *Byzantinoslavica*, tome 1, 1929

Tchécoslovaquie transparait non seulement dans le soutien constant accordé à l'Institut Kondakov, mais aussi dans la fondation, en 1929, d'une nouvelle revue savante : *Byzantinoslavica* (fig. 8). Imprimée par l'imprimerie d'État à Prague et créée dans le même climat intellectuel et national, cette revue était étroitement affiliée au *Slovanský ústav* (Institut slave) de l'Académie tchécoslovaque des sciences, lui-même fondé sous les auspices du président Masaryk. Inspiré à la fois par l'Institut d'études slaves de Paris et par la School of Slavonic Studies de Londres, où Masaryk avait enseigné, le *Slovanský ústav* entendait doter la jeune république d'un organe scientifique de rayonnement international. Masaryk joua un rôle actif dans la promotion de cette entreprise, qui prolongeait son projet culturel panslave. L'Institut avait déjà lancé, dès 1922, *Slavia*, une revue consacrée à la littérature des mondes slaves, co-fondée Oldřich Hujer et Matija Murko – que l'on retrouve ici –, à peine un an après la *Revue des Études Slaves* publiée à Paris. Comme l'a montré Miloš Zelenka, cette dynamique éditoriale s'inscrit dans le processus par lequel Prague a progressivement remplacé Vienne en tant que centre majeur des études slaves en Europe centrale. Toutefois, en raison d'une orientation nettement antigermanique, ce nouveau pôle intellectuel ne s'est pas inscrit dans la continuité des traditions habsbourgeoises, mais s'est tourné vers les

tous ces peuples ignorerait presque tout de leur passé, comme sans elle ils auraient longtemps tout ignoré de la civilisation⁴².

Pour les érudits tchèques, un tel discours relevait certes d'une lecture biaisée, une projection occidentale sur l'histoire religieuse de l'Europe centrale et de l'Est. Mais ils partageaient néanmoins l'idée que Byzance avait joué un rôle déterminant dans la formation d'une « civilisation » slave chrétienne. Leur insistance sur l'héritage byzantin s'inscrivait ainsi dans un double effort : d'une part, marquer la singularité de la culture slave face à l'hégémonie de la culture allemande ; d'autre part, affirmer la pleine légitimité historique et spirituelle de cette même culture sur la scène intellectuelle européenne.

L'importance centrale du passé byzantin et de la question slave dans la construction culturelle et politique de la

⁴² Ch. Diehl, *Byzance. Grandeur et décadence*, Paris, 1920, p. 293 et 295.

modèles institutionnels français, dans un contexte où la France était perçue à la fois comme référence culturelle et comme allié politique privilégié⁴³. *Byzantinoslavica*, dans cette perspective, s'inscrit pleinement dans cet effort de redéfinition : pendant quelques années, avec Paris, Prague sembla ainsi s'imposer comme l'un des centres rayonnants de la recherche byzantine et slave à l'international.

Dès la préface du premier numéro, le comité éditorial de la revue *Byzantinoslavica* énonce sans détour un programme intellectuel clair, en parfaite continuité avec les dynamiques décrites plus haut. Il serait vain, selon les rédacteurs, de prétendre comprendre les cultures slaves sans analyser en profondeur leurs relations avec le monde byzantin et post-byzantin. On peut y lire notamment cette déclaration, programmatique :

Ce n'est qu'en 1928 que M. Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, président de la République tchécoslovaque, qui au cours de ses propres travaux scientifiques avait eu l'occasion de s'intéresser profondément à l'influence des éléments byzantins sur la pensée slave – favorisa la création d'un organe spécial destiné aux études byzantino-slaves. Il ne s'agissait pas seulement de grouper et de soutenir les efforts en ce sens des savants slaves, mais aussi d'établir un contact entre les spécialistes slaves et non-slaves. En avril 1928 fut institué un Comité de rédaction qui décida de publier une nouvelle revue, les *Byzantinoslavica* [...] Le but de cette revue sera de présenter avec le plus d'unité possible l'étude des relations entre le monde slave et Byzance, particulièrement les influences byzantines sur les Slaves. En bornant ainsi le champ de ses travaux, elle vise à occuper une place bien particulière parmi les publications de byzantinologie et de slavistique déjà existantes⁴⁴.

Miloš Weingart, linguiste, historien du christianisme slave et spécialiste reconnu des origines de la tradition cyrillo-méthodienne, fut nommé premier directeur de la revue⁴⁵. Autour de lui, le comité éditorial réunissait des figures de premier plan telles que Jaroslav Bidlo, František Dvorník, Matija Murko, Karel Kadlec, ainsi que deux érudits étroitement liés au *Seminarium Kondakovianum* : Aleksandr Kalitinskij et Nikolaï L. Okouniev, ce dernier ayant succédé à Kondakov à la chaire d'histoire de l'art byzantin à l'Université Charles de Prague⁴⁶. À leurs côtés, Josef Myslivec, ancien élève d'Okouniev, collabora également aux activités de la revue.

Dès ses débuts, *Byzantinoslavica* s'est donc trouvée étroitement liée à l'héritage scientifique du *Seminarium Kondakovianum* : Kalitinskij, Okouniev et Myslivec participèrent activement aux deux entreprises éditoriales, assurant une continuité

⁴³ M. Zelenka, « Le rôle de la slavistique française... ».

⁴⁴ « Quelques mots d'introduction », *Byzantinoslavica* 1, 1929, p. III-IV, ici p. III.

⁴⁵ Sur Weingart, voir notamment M. Ducháček, « Českoslovenští slavisté v osidlech geopolitiky » [Les slavistes tchécoslovaques dans les rets de la géopolitique], *Soudobé Dějiny* 29, n° 2, 2022, p. 471-512.

⁴⁶ F. Lovino, « *Seminarium Kondakovianum* / *Byzantinoslavica*: A Comparison », dans I. Foletti, F. Lovino et V. Tvrzníková (éd.), *From Kondakov to Hans Belting Library. Emigration and Byzantium – Bridges Between Worlds*, Brno – Rome, 2018, p. 38-55.

intellectuelle, institutionnelle et humaine. En parcourant les premières livraisons de la revue, on perçoit d'emblée un certain chevauchement avec la ligne éditoriale du *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, reflet des orientations des études byzantines russes en exil. Toutefois, l'accent porté ici sur une perspective panslave se fait plus explicite. Outre des articles consacrés à l'art serbe, bulgare ou slovaque, la diversité accrue des langues de publication témoigne d'une ouverture plus large et d'une ambition internationale renforcée. La ligne éditoriale de *Byzantinoslavica* exprimait clairement les aspirations du nouvel État tchécoslovaque à se définir comme à la fois résolument slave et culturellement cosmopolite. Elle prolongeait, dans le champ scientifique, les idées de Masaryk sur les relations profondes entre Byzance et les peuples slaves, en publiant des recherches sur la culture et l'identité slaves dans une perspective élargie, à la fois historique, géopolitique et transculturelle. Entre 1929 et 1946, *Byzantinoslavica* publia 106 articles. Parmi eux, environ 87,7 % (93 articles) portaient sur les interactions entre les mondes slave et byzantin, 10,4 % (11 articles) sur « Byzance » à proprement dire, et 2,8 % (3 articles) sur des sujets liés à la Moravie. Du point de vue linguistique, 47 % des textes étaient rédigés en russe, un peu plus de 26 % en tchèque ou en slovaque. Le reste des contributions fut publié en français, en allemand, ou dans d'autres langues slaves, notamment le bulgare, le polonais et le serbe⁴⁷.

Enfin, il n'est guère surprenant que le président Masaryk ait également été à l'initiative d'un troisième périodique, conçu comme le jumeau de *Byzantinoslavica* : *Germanoslavica*, cette fois dédié à l'étude des interactions entre les cultures slaves et germaniques en Europe centrale et au-delà⁴⁸. Ce projet témoigne du souci constant de Masaryk d'encourager une érudition ouverte sur les dynamiques culturelles régionales, sans pour autant céder à une vision exclusive ou unilatéralement panslave. Si son engagement en faveur des études slaves – notamment à travers le soutien apporté à l'émigration russe, à *Seminarium Kondakovianum* et à *Byzantinoslavica* – fut indéniable, il n'en demeurait pas moins attentif aux risques que ferait courir un programme intellectuel ignorant intégralement la composante germanophone de la population, de l'histoire et de la culture de la région. Ainsi, *Germanoslavica* fut pensée comme un complément nécessaire qui devait contribuer, avec les autres revues, à tisser des passerelles entre le monde slave, l'héritage byzantin et l'espace germanique, dans une vision savante fidèle à l'idéal de dialogue interculturel que portait le projet masarykien.

Ce qui se dessine ici, une fois encore, est une perspective dans laquelle le nouvel État tchécoslovaque est présenté comme un véritable pont. Plus encore, dans un contexte de nationalismes exacerbés, la Tchécoslovaquie, si l'on parvient à lire au travers des lignes de nationalisme, assume l'idée que son identité ne peut se réduire à une simple addition de composantes ethniques ou culturelles. Si l'élément

⁴⁷ Voir I. Foletti et A. Palladino, *Byzantium or Democracy?*, p. 103-104.

⁴⁸ A. Měšťan, « Vorwort », *Germanoslavica* 1 (6), 1994, p. 1-2.

slave y est sans conteste valorisé comme majoritaire, l'idéal promu par Masaryk repose sur la conviction qu'un État moderne « européen » se construit dans et par la diversité. Paradoxalement, la vision eurasiennne, transculturelle, défendue par de nombreux érudits russes ayant trouvé refuge en Tchécoslovaquie après la révolution bolchévique, venait compléter, du moins sur le plan théorique, ce projet politique et culturel. Dans ce cadre, la recherche savante, la création d'instituts et de revues, mais aussi la participation aux congrès, ne servait pas seulement à affirmer la légitimité historique de la nation. Elle devenait aussi le fondement d'une vocation plus large : faire de la Tchécoslovaquie un espace central de médiation.

Conclusion : la fin d'un rêve

Mais la vision d'une unité slave, portée par les institutions savantes de l'entre-deux-guerres, se brisa peu à peu, fragilisée par la conjonction de bouleversements géopolitiques, de violences totalitaires et de désillusions historiques. La Russie soviétique, loin de prolonger les liens esquissés par l'émigration intellectuelle, se radicalisa, et resta étrangère à ces aspirations. La majorité des intellectuels russes installés à Prague poursuivit son exil vers d'autres pays, empêchant toute consolidation durable d'un dialogue russo-tchécoslovaque. La guerre, quant à elle, ne fit qu'accélérer l'effondrement de cet élan.

À l'intérieur même de la Tchécoslovaquie, la composante slave, si vigoureusement valorisée dans les années 1920, fut progressivement marginalisée après les accords de Munich de 1938 et la mise en place du Protectorat de Bohême-Moravie, soumis à l'ordre nazi. En 1943, l'Institut slave fut officiellement absorbé par la Reinhard Heydrich Stiftung, scellant de manière sinistre la dépossession institutionnelle du projet culturel panslave⁴⁹. Une partie de l'Institut Kondakov, transférée à Belgrade, fut anéantie lors de bombardements en 1941 : son directeur, Dimitrij Rasovskij, et son épouse y trouvèrent la mort. Ce qui restait des collections de l'Institut fut transporté par la Wehrmacht à Prague, où l'institution poursuivit une activité résiduelle, privée de ses connexions internationales et de son élan initial⁵⁰.

La fin du conflit, loin de restaurer l'ouverture intellectuelle d'avant-guerre, s'accompagna d'un repli nationaliste agressif. Dans une dynamique d'épuration, la Tchécoslovaquie expulsa l'ensemble de sa population germanophone, portant un coup profond à la diversité culturelle. Le discours culturel national se referma progressivement sur lui-même, substituant à l'idéal de pluralité un récit de plus en plus homogène, centré sur une identité nationale conçue désormais comme unitaire.

⁴⁹ J. Němec, « Pražská věda mezi Alfredem Rosenbergem a Reinhardem Heydrichem. K prehistorii říšské nadace Reinharda Heydricha pro vědecká bádání v Praze » [La science pragoise entre Alfred Rosenberg et Reinhard Heydrich. Aux origines de la fondation impériale Reinhard Heydrich pour la recherche scientifique à Prague], *Studia Historica Brunensia* 58, n° 2, 2011, p. 85-105.

⁵⁰ I. Foletti et A. Palladino, *Byzantium or Democracy?*, p. 65-66.

L'instauration du régime communiste à la suite du coup de 1948 acheva cette brève époque où Prague avait pu incarner un véritable carrefour des études byzantines et slaves à l'échelle internationale. L'Institut Kondakov, étroitement lié à l'émigration russe et aux modèles académiques occidentaux, ne pouvait survivre dans une Tchécoslovaquie désormais intégrée au bloc soviétique⁵¹. Avec le putsch, c'est tout un projet qui s'effondra, un projet qui, pour un temps, avait cherché à faire dialoguer l'héritage byzantin et l'identité slave, à ancrer la jeune République tchécoslovaque dans la richesse de ses entremêlements historiques et culturels. Rétrospectivement, ce moment, à la fois fragile et exemplaire, demeure l'un des épisodes les plus saisissants de l'histoire intellectuelle des études byzantines au XX^e siècle. Il mérite d'être retenu non seulement pour ce qu'il fut, mais pour ce qu'il peut continuer de signifier : une invitation à concevoir Byzance non comme un espace clos ou un legs exclusif, mais comme un champ d'étude fondamentalement ouvert, un lieu de dialogue, de passage, et peut-être, d'inclusion.

⁵¹ F. Lovino, « Communism vs. *Seminarium Kondakovianum* », *Convivium* 4, n° 1, 2017, p. 142-157. Plus amplement sur la place de Byzance chez les soviétiques, S. A. Ivanov, « Byzance rouge : La byzantinologie et les communistes (1928-1948) », dans M.-F. Auzépy (éd.), *Byzance en Europe*, Saint-Denis, 2003, p. 54-60.

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The Development of Byzantine Studies in Italy in the First Decades of the Twentieth Century Facing the International Context

Andrea Paribeni

Abstract: Although the growth of Byzantine studies in Italy has generally been hindered by a deep-seated prejudice against a historical period viewed as an era of servitude and antithetical to the values of ancestral Roman identity, starting from the early decades of the twentieth century both cultural institutions and scholars from various disciplines – literature, history, archaeology – began to dedicate their studies to the world of Byzantium. This article aims to shed light on this cultural phenomenon – one that was not devoid of political interests – by tracing the growing participation of Italian scholars in the early international Byzantine congresses, from the inaugural meeting in Bucharest to the fifth congress held in Rome, with particular attention to the conduct of the Italian delegation at the Third Congress in Athens.

Keywords: Byzantine studies in Italy, cultural policy under Fascism, Italian occupation of the Dodecanese

International congresses, periodically held in prestigious academic venues, often pursue some political aims alongside their primary scholarly objectives. In this respect, the International Congresses of Byzantine Studies are no exception: precisely because of their subject matter, which brings together scholars of diverse nationalities, cultural backgrounds, and political or religious orientations, these gatherings have often provided fertile ground for controversy and debate.¹ Recent studies by Florina

¹ It suffices to recall how profoundly the Cold War influenced both the organization of and participation in the Byzantine Congresses held in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. See P. Lemerle, “Les VI^e et VII^e Congrès internationaux d’études byzantines”, *Revue historique* 202, 1949, p. 52-58;

Fodac, Marie Nystazopoulou-Pélékidou, Sandrine Maufroy, and Aleksandar Ignjatović devoted to the early International Congresses of Byzantine Studies – that is, those held before the Second World War – have emphasized that these meetings were conceived as instruments for stimulating and ensuring the continuity of scholarly research across the various branches of Byzantine studies, with the explicit goal of fostering international collaboration.² They were also regarded as opportunities to re-establish relations among countries that had been on opposing sides during the First World War and whose borders – particularly in the Balkan region, which significantly hosted the first congresses – had been redrawn in the aftermath of the peace treaties.³

At first glance, Italian scholars might appear to have stood on the margins of this international context. Byzantine culture – generally regarded as the legacy of an era of servitude and as the antithesis of the identity values of Roman ancestry – had long suffered from deep-seated distrust, a sentiment that intensified during the Fascist period.⁴ Nevertheless, Italian academic and political institutions were aware of the need

V. Laurent, “Le VIII^e Congrès international des études byzantines”, *Revue des études byzantines* 8, 1950, p. 297-299; H. Grégoire, “Le IX^e Congrès des études byzantines, Thessalonique, 12-25 Avril 1953”, *Byzantion* 22, 1952, p. 405-436. For the particular case of the congresses held – or planned to be held – in Istanbul, see B. Kitapçı Bayrı, “The 10th International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Istanbul, September 15-21, 1955”, *YILLIK: Annual of Istanbul Studies* 1, 2019, p. 123-144; Ş. Dönbekci, B. Bayram, and Z. Olgun, “Byzantium in Exile”, in B. Anderson and M. Ivanova (eds.), *Is Byzantine Studies a Colonialist Discipline? Toward a Critical Historiography*, University Park, PA, 2023, p. 58-72; K. Durak, “The Archive of the Organizing Committee for the Tenth International Congress of Byzantine Studies: Organizing a Congress in Istanbul and the State of Byzantine Studies in Turkey in 1950s”, in E. Akyürek and M. Özkılıç (eds.), *A Century of Byzantine Studies in Turkey: Papers from the Sixth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, Istanbul, 22-24 June 2023*, Istanbul, 2024, p. 33-68.

² F. Fodac, “Le premier Congrès International d’études byzantines (Bucarest, 14-20 avril 1924). Prémisses et contexte historique d’organisation”, *Études byzantines et post-byzantines* 5, 2006, p. 509-522; M. Nystazopoulou-Pélékidou, “L’histoire des congrès internationaux des études byzantines – première partie”, *Byzantinà Σύμμεικτα* 18, 2008, p. 11-34; 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; A. Ignjatović, “Affecting Consonance, Striving for Dominance: Scholarship and Politics at the Congresses of Byzantine Studies in the Balkans, 1924-1934”, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 21, 2019, p. 696-715.

³ The awareness of a profound shift in the geopolitical balance of Europe – and particularly of the Balkan region – is clearly articulated in a 1924 document entitled “Proposal by the Romanian Delegation Regarding the Submission to the Committee on Intellectual Co-operation of the Question of a Loan for Intellectual Purposes”: “Dans les nouveaux États institués au Centre et au Sud-Est de l’Europe, où la guerre a produit d’importants changements et suscité l’apparition de problèmes extrêmement complexes, toute la conception de la vie doit être adaptée aux Nouvelles circonstances et parfois même entièrement réinventée”. See D. Laqua, “Internationalisme ou affirmation de la nation? La coopération intellectuelle transnationale dans l’entre-deux-guerres”, *Critique internationale* 52, 2011, p. 51-67, at p. 57.

⁴ The censorious attitude toward Byzantine art, which became even harsher during the Fascist regime, is well illustrated by M. Bernabò, *Ossessioni bizantine e cultura artistica in Italia. Tra D’Annunzio, fascismo e dopoguerra*, Naples, 2003. By contrast, the myth of ancient Rome represented one of the

to expand and consolidate the nation's prestige and authority vis-à-vis the newly formed Balkan states through the instruments of cultural diplomacy. With the ultimate aim of establishing research centres that could both open avenues for the development of cultural spheres relevant to foreign policy and lay the foundations for future economic prospects, a group of Italian scholars founded the *Istituto per l'Europa Orientale* in 1921, together with its official journal, *L'Europa Orientale*. The inaugural issue included an article by Giuseppe Cammelli offering a nuanced overview of Byzantine studies in Italy.⁵ Although the institute was primarily devoted to Russian and Slavic linguistic and literary studies, it also promoted research in other related fields.⁶ In this spirit, three years later, the first volume of *Studi bizantini* appeared (fig. 1). This publication was closely linked to the Bucharest Congress since, according to the editors' intentions, it was meant to represent Italy's contribution to the Congress – had it been released in time.⁷



Fig. 1. Cover of *Studi bizantini* 1, 1924

most pervasive aspects of Fascist ideology and propaganda; for an overview, see now F. Oppedisano, P. S. Salvatori, and F. Santangelo (eds.), *Costruire la nuova Italia: Miti di Roma e fascismo*, Rome, 2023.

⁵ G. Cammelli, “Gli studi bizantini in Italia”, *L'Europa Orientale* 1, 1921, p. 17-28; for a portrait of the scholar, see A. Bonvini, “‘Atene risorta [...] sulle rive dell’Arno’. Giuseppe Cammelli tra scuola e filologia”, *History of Classical Scholarship* 5, 2023, p. 17-45.

⁶ In the editorial published in the first issue of *L'Europa Orientale*, Nicola Festa declared that the journal was “veramente rispondente a un bisogno dei tempi”, because “tra le novità che la grande guerra ha portato sulla carta geografica dell’Europa, merita il primo posto una costellazione di Stati nazionali che, tra il Baltico e il Mar Caspio, tra l’Adriatico e l’Egeo, si è formata, in gran parte ex novo, dai frantumi di due colossali Imperi. Popoli che ebbero comune con l’Italia il servaggio politico, che tentarono con lei la riscossa nei moti insurrezionali del nostro Risorgimento, ma meno fortunati di noi, rimasero più a lungo sotto il giogo detestato, sono ora risorti anch’essi e si volgono con naturale simpatia alla patria di Mazzini e di Garibaldi, al paese che sognò la libertà e l’indipendenza per tutte le nazioni, e senza risparmio diede il sangue dei suoi figli perché quel sogno divenisse realtà, com’è oggi divenuto” (N. Festa, “Ai lettori”, *L'Europa Orientale* 1, 1921, p. 1). On Festa’s role in the development of Byzantine philology in Italy, see N. Bianchi (ed.), *Nicola Festa (1866-1940): Documenti, lettere, libri*, Bari, 2024. For a critical assessment of the *Istituto per l'Europa Orientale*, see S. Santoro, *L’Italia e l’Europa orientale: diplomazia culturale e propaganda, 1918-1943*, Milan, 2005.

⁷ See A. Giannini, “Proemio”, *Studi bizantini* 1, 1924, p. i-iii. As Sévérien Salaville observed, technical

At Bucharest, despite the solid and recently strengthened cultural ties between Romania and Italy,⁸ only one Italian scholar was present: the legal historian Andrea Guarneri Citati, who presented “Le scuole e i diritti orientali nella formazione del diritto romano”, a controversial paper that sparked a heated debate with the French scholar Paul Collinet.⁹ Confronted with the exaggerations of recent scholarship, which tended to contrast classical and Justinian law both in form and in substance and to explain their divergences by invoking the influence of the eastern legal schools, Guarneri responded by proposing an alternative framework. In his view, it was not the local legal traditions that had prevailed over the Roman model, but rather the Roman legal school itself that had evolved and adapted over the centuries – a perspective which, to paraphrase Quintilian – amounted to a kind of “lex tota nostra est”. This minor incident exemplifies a broader attitude prevalent in the Italian academic milieu of the time – one characterized by a certain intolerance toward critical assessments by foreign scholars that might challenge the centrality of the Roman and Italian tradition. Far more significant, however, was the earlier controversy at the turn of the century, when Italian scholars, afflicted by what could be described as a “Sèvres syndrome”, rose up against Josef Strzygowski’s theories, which denied Rome the pride of being the cradle of Christian Art.¹⁰

A countervailing voice was that of Giuseppe Cammelli who, in the paper mentioned above, while calling for the consolidation and expansion of academic training among Italian scholars, acknowledged the hegemony of the German and French schools in Byzantine studies.¹¹ Although older journals such as *Bessarione. Rivista di studi orientali* ceased publication in early 1920s,¹² the appearance of volumes

difficulties and other setbacks notwithstanding, “il est certain que la ‘contribution’ totale de l’Istituto per l’Europa Orientale eût pu difficilement entrer dans le compte rendu du Congrès sans rompre vraiment par trop l’équilibre des nationalités représentées” (S. Salaville, “Bulletin d’études byzantines”, *Échos d’Orient* 26, 1927, p. 57-75, at p. 65-66).

⁸ Romania’s participation in the celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the Unification of Italy, the publication of volumes such as N. Iorga (ed.), *Studi sulla Romania*, Naples, 1923, and the gift of bronze statues depicting the Roman *Lupa* to Romanian cities such as Bucharest and Cluj – see *Orme di Roma tra Italia e Romania all’insegna di Roma antica*, Rome, 2014 (*Bollettino di Numismatica* 2, 2014) – were tangible expressions of the cordial relations between the two countries. These ties were further consolidated by the inauguration of the Institute of Italian Culture, directed by Ramiro Ortiz, on 7 April 1924, just one week before the opening of the Congress.

⁹ For the summaries of the lectures by Guarneri Citati and Collinet, as well as the ensuing debate see C. Marinescu, *Compte-rendu du premier Congrès international des études byzantines, Bucarest, 1924*, Bucharest, 1925, p. 16-20; N. Iorga, “Il Primo Congresso di Studi Bizantini a Bucarest (considerazioni e appunti)”, *Studi bizantini* 1, 1924, p. 1-5, at p. 5.

¹⁰ See M. Bernabò, *Ossessioni bizantine...*, p. 79-83, and, in a broader perspective, the essays in I. Foletti and F. Lovino (eds.), *Orient oder Rom? History and Reception of a Historiographical Myth (1901-1970)*, Rome, 2018.

¹¹ G. Cammelli, “Gli studi bizantini...” (see above n. 5).

¹² *Bessarione* ceased publication in 1923, following the death of its director, Cardinal Niccolò Marini.

celebrating the artistic masterpieces of Byzantium,¹³ the foundation in 1924 of *Studi bizantini* – later renamed *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici* – and the establishment in 1925 of a Chair of Byzantine Philology and History at the University of Rome, held by Silvio Giuseppe Mercati,¹⁴ all seemed to respond to Cammelli's appeal by stimulating further research in the field.

Perhaps as a result of these developments, a larger group of scholars represented Italy at the Second International Congress, held in Belgrade in 1927. The delegation was headed by the art historian Antonio Muñoz and included the philologist Silvio Giuseppe Mercati, the glottologist Carlo Tagliavini, the Slavist Giovanni Maver, the historian of law Giannino Ferrari, and the epigraphist Luigi Cantarelli.¹⁵ Among the various papers presented by the Italian participants, special mention should be made of Cantarelli's contribution, in which he proposed the ambitious project of compiling a corpus of Byzantine inscriptions¹⁶ – not so much for its practical impact as for its attempt to engage scholars of all nationalities, in the spirit of cooperation that characterized many of the initiatives promoted during the Congress.¹⁷

Despite an overall unfavourable climate, and while prominent figures such as Antonio Muñoz were gradually distancing themselves from Byzantine studies,¹⁸ the

¹³ See, e.g., A. Colasanti, *L'arte bizantina in Italia*, Milan, 1924. For a recent critical assessment of this pioneering study, see S. Moretti, "Arduino Colasanti e 'l'arte bizantina' in Italia", in A. Iacobini, M. L. Fobelli, S. Moretti, and M. De Giorgi (eds.), *Navigare nell'Italia bizantina. Arte, musei, mostre web*, forthcoming.

¹⁴ E. Follieri, "La filologia bizantina nel secolo XX", in *La filologia medievale e umanistica greca e latina nel secolo XX. Atti del Congresso internazionale, Roma, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Università La Sapienza, 11-15 dicembre 1989*, Rome, 1993, vol. 1, p. 389-431, at p. 393-396.

¹⁵ A. Muñoz, "Il Congresso Internazionale di Studi Bizantini", *Nuova antologia* 62, fasc. 1324, 1927, p. 248-253. On the Congress in Belgrade, see also G. Ferrari, "Il II Congresso Internazionale di Studi Bizantini", *Archivio Storico Italiano* 85 (serie 7, vol. 8), n° 4 (324), 1927, p. 285-293; S. Salaville, "Le II^e Congrès international d'études byzantines à Belgrade (11-16 avril 1927)", *Échos d'Orient* 27, 1928, p. 78-110.

¹⁶ L. Cantarelli, "Proposta di un *Corpus Inscriptionum Byzantinarum*", in D. Anastasijević and Ph. Granić (eds.), *Deuxième Congrès International des études byzantines, Belgrade, 1927: compte-rendu*, Belgrade, 1929, p. 173-175; A. Rhoby, "A Short History of Byzantine Epigraphy", in id. (ed.), *Inscriptions in Byzantium and Beyond. Methods – Projects – Case Studies*, Vienna, 2015, p. 17-29, at p. 22.

¹⁷ As Gabriel Millet stated in his inaugural address at the Belgrade Congress: "Nous comprenons maintenant plus que jamais que la science demande la collaboration, l'organisation du travail, la coordination des efforts" (S. Salaville, "Le II^e Congrès...", p. 80-81).

¹⁸ The juvenile interests of Antonio Muñoz towards Byzantine art are examined by G. Gasbarri, *Riscoprire Bisanzio. Lo studio dell'arte bizantina a Roma e in Italia tra Ottocento e Novecento*, Rome, 2015, p. 173-199; id., "Antonio Muñoz (1884-1960) and the History of Byzantine Illumination. A New Field of Research in Italy under the Aegis of Adolfo Venturi", *Journal of Art Historiography* 13, 2015, p. 1-17; A. Iacobini and G. Gasbarri, "La scoperta di 'Roma bizantina' (1880-1910): nuove prospettive per la genesi dell'arte medievale fra Europa e Mediterraneo", in *L'Italia e l'arte straniera. Atti del convegno "La storia dell'arte e le sue frontiere: a cento anni dal X Congresso Internazionale*



Fig. 2. Biagio Pace on board the “Corvin” in sight of Rhodes, 17 June 1926

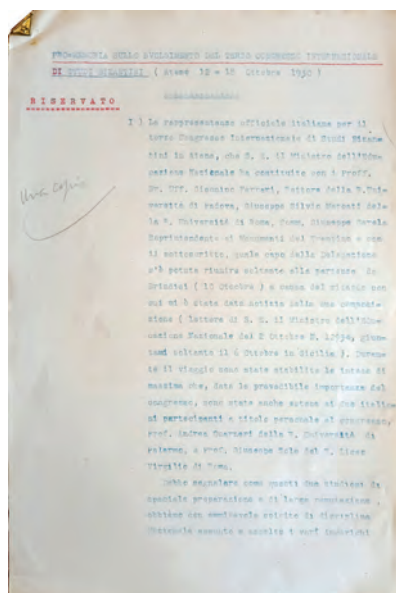


Fig. 3. Promemoria sullo svolgimento del congresso 12-18 ottobre 1930 (ACS, Busta 238)

years preceding the Third International Congress nonetheless witnessed renewed efforts to promote the Byzantine cultural heritage in Italy, most notably through the establishment of the *Istituto di Studi Bizantini* in Ravenna, thanks to the initiatives of Corrado Ricci and Renato Bartoccini.¹⁹

At Athens, the Italian delegation was headed by Biagio Pace (fig. 2), to whom we owe a detailed report – preserved, together with other relevant documents, in the *Archivio Centrale dello Stato* – that deserves careful analysis, as it offers a rare glimpse behind the scenes of the Congress.²⁰ The report, labelled *Riservato* (fig. 3), is a typescript entitled *Promemoria sullo svolgimento del congresso 12-18 ottobre 1930*, written and signed by the archaeologist Biagio Pace who, like Nicolae Iorga, Josep Puig i Cadafalch,²¹ and other regular participants in international conferences, combined

di Storia dell'Arte in Roma (1912). Un bilancio storiografico e una riflessione del presente, Roma, 23-24 novembre 2012, Rome, 2015, p. 127-154; G. Calanna, *Antonio Muñoz storico dell'arte e collezionista La fotografia per la ricerca e la didattica*, Bologna, 2018, p. 61-83.

¹⁹ P. Novara, “Corrado Ricci e i Corsi Bizantini”, *Libro Aperto* 35.75, 2014, p. 150-156. From 1930 until 1939, the Istituto organized spring courses – with the participation of Italian and, sometimes, foreign scholars – and exhibitions such as that displaying copies of the mosaics of the Umayyad Mosque at Damascus, held between 10-20 May 1930; see *ibid.*, p. 150. After several exhibitions in Europe and the United States, the copies of those lush mosaics were bequeathed to the Louvre in 1950; see L. Simonis, *Les relevés des mosaïques de la grande mosquée de Damas*, Paris, 2012, p. 17-19.

²⁰ Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, Direzione Generale Antichità e Belle Arti, Divisione II, 1929-1933, Busta 238 fascicolo non numerato, *Atene 1930 3° Congresso Internazionale di Studi Bizantini* (henceforth ACS, Busta 238).

²¹ See in this same volume the contribution by Lucilla Mallart.

the dual roles of scholar and politician.²² In these notes, addressed to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of National Education, Biagio Pace recounts the activities of the Italian delegation from its establishment to its first meeting in Brindisi – only two days before the opening of the Congress.²³ Considering how lengthy and complex the organizational process of modern international congresses typically is, such a last-minute planning of the Athenian expedition could seem exceedingly casual.²⁴ The failure to meet the deadlines set by the Congress Committee as early as June 1928 can, at least in part, be attributed to the limited interest that Byzantine studies then enjoyed in Italy. It is worth recalling that, for participation in other international congresses – such as the First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historical Monuments, held in Athens in 1931 – the Italian authorities were far more meticulous both in planning and in selecting the delegates.²⁵

In addition to Biagio Pace, the official Italian delegation included Giannino Ferrari, rector of the University of Padua, Silvio Giuseppe Mercati of the University of Rome, and Giuseppe Gerola, superintendent of Trentino.²⁶ Two other Italians, Andrea

²² On Biagio Pace, see P. E. Arias, *Quattro archeologi del nostro secolo: Paolo Orsi, Biagio Pace, Alessandro della Seta, Ranuccio Bianchi-Bandinelli*, Pisa, 1976, p. 31-42; P. Giammellaro, “Biagio Pace”, in G. Brands and M. Maischberger (eds.), *Lebensbilder: klassische Archäologen und der Nationalsozialismus*, Rahden, 2016, vol. 2, p. 237-250. For his contributions to the field of Byzantine studies, see B. Lavagnini, “Biagio Pace e gli studi bizantini”, *Κόκκολος. Studi pubblicati dall’Istituto di storia antica dell’Università di Palermo* 33, 1987, p. 211-212 (where Pace’s participation in the Athens Congress is not mentioned).

²³ Note that only on 2 October did the Ministry send to Pace the official letter confirming his appointment of head of the delegation; see ACS, Busta 238.

²⁴ National committees most committed to Byzantine studies usually began forming their teams of delegates well in advance; see T. Kioussopoulou, “La délégation grecque au II^e Congrès international des études byzantines (Belgrade, 1927)”, in O. Delouis, A. Couderc, and P. Guran (eds.), *Héritages de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est à l’époque moderne et contemporaine*, Athens, 2013, p. 403-411.

²⁵ Further relevant material is preserved in another dossier from the same archive: Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, Direzione Generale Antichità e Belle Arti, Divisione II, 1929-1933, Busta 238, fascicolo non numerato, *Atene 1931 Convegno Internazionale per il metodo del restauro ai monumenti*. On Italian involvement in this fundamental stage in the history of cultural heritage conservation, see S. Caccia Gherardini, “Prima di Atene. Cooperazione intellettuale e illusione elitaria, atmosfera de *La Conférence d’Athènes sur la conservation des monuments* del 1931”, *Restauro archeologico* 29, 2021, p. 4-17. In these years, Athens frequently served as the venue for international conferences of wide resonance. In addition to those mentioned in the text, see the 27th Universal Congress of Peace (6-10 October 1929) and the 4th CIAM (Congrès International d’Architecture Moderne), held in July 1933 aboard the *S. S. Patris*, a Greek steamer travelling from Marseilles to Athens, during which Le Corbusier drafted another Athens Charter on urban planning; see D. N. Karidis, *Athens from 1920 to 1940: A True and Just Account of How History Was Enveloped by a Modern City and the Place Became an Event*, Oxford, 2015, p. 59-100; G. Calandra di Roccolino, “La nave come metafora. Nota sul piroscampo *Patris II* e sul film *Architects’ Congress* di László Moholy-Nagy, a proposito del IV CIAM di Atene (1933)”, *La rivista di engramma* 174, 2020, p. 143-156; M. Tassopoulou, “Shifting over Athens: A Deep Dive into the Inner Mechanics of CIAM IV”, *Architectural Histories* 12.1, 2024, p. 1-19.

²⁶ In the Archive of Giuseppe Gerola, held at the Fondazione Biblioteca San Bernardino di Trento, some

Guarneri of the University of Palermo and Giuseppe Sola of the Liceo Ginnasio “Virgilio” in Rome, attended the Congress.²⁷ To this Italian contingent must also be added Evaristo Breccia, then serving as director of the Museum of Alexandria.²⁸ Pace proudly praised the high quality of the papers presented by the Italian scholars,²⁹ yet the primary purpose of his report was to highlight the delegates’ effort to defend the cultural and political interests of the nation against the manœuvres of potential adversaries. Given the coincidence with the First Balkan Conference, held in Athens on 5-12 October,³⁰ he maintained that the Byzantine Congress had assumed a distinctly political character, since Byzantine history and civilization were being used to provide a historical foundation for pan-Balkan ideals.³¹ According to Pace, papers such as those of Petar Skok – on the relationship between inter-Balkan linguistics and Byzantinology – and of Nikola Vulić – on the nationality of the Dardanians³² – as well as the frequent allusions made in the speeches of Nicolae Iorga (whom Pace bluntly described as a “noto buffone internazionale”) clearly revealed the “devious plot” of the members of the so-called Little Entente.³³ He also regarded the overwhelming French presence, led

documents related to the Athens Congress are preserved (Ger.3.8.1.48).

²⁷ Sola was appointed to represent the *Comitato Nazionale di Scienze Storiche*; see the letter sent to him by Secretary Ottorino Bertolini in the Archive of the Giunta Centrale per gli Studi Storici. Fondo Istituzionale 12. Congressi – Atti generali, 18 July 1927 – 1 September 1959, file 2.11.

²⁸ A communication by Carlo Cecchelli, who was not present at Athens, was read by Giacomo Caputo, a member of the Scuola Archeologica Italiana ad Atene, see *Promemoria*, in ACS, Busta 238, p. 3.

²⁹ “I proff. Ferrari, Gerola, Guarneri, Mercati, Sola sono stati ammirevoli per la disciplina e per la dottrina con cui hanno preso parte ai lavori, secondo il piano prestabilito” (*Promemoria*, in ACS, Busta 238, p. 4).

³⁰ F. Häberlin, *La première conférence balkanique (Revue internationale de la Croix-Rouge 13.145)*, Geneva, 1931. On the origin of the Balkan Conferences, see R. J. Kerner and H. N. Howard, *The Balkan Conferences and the Balkan Entente, 1930-1935: A Study in the Recent History of the Balkan and Near Eastern Peoples*, Berkeley, 1936; Th. L. Geshkoff, *Balkan Union: A Road to Peace in Southeastern Europe*, New York, 1940, p. 77-90.

³¹ “Il Congresso, per la sua coincidenza con il Congresso panbalcanico e per alcuni temi annunciati, si presentava manifestamente come di speciale contenuto politico. Evidentemente, attraverso la storia e le civiltà bizantina, si è cercato di provare una base storica interbalcanica” (*Promemoria*, in ACS, Busta 238, p. 2).

³² P. Skok, “La linguistique interbalkanique et la byzantinologie”, in A. C. Orlandos (ed.), *Troisième Congrès international des études byzantines: Athènes, 1930*, Athens, 1932, p. 73-76; N. Vulić, “La nationalité des Dardanes”, in *ibid.*, p. 162-164.

³³ Pace’s remarks stand in stark contrast to the demonstrations of friendship and cooperation with Italy shown by Iorga – labelled in the document as “ex Ministro romeno” – who, on 2 April 1930, inaugurated the Romanian Historical and Artistic Institute in Venice. On the diplomatic and cultural relations between Italy and Romania in the interwar period, see S. Santoro, “La diplomazia culturale dell’Italia fascista e la Romania”, *Annuario dell’Istituto Romeno di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica di Venezia* 14-15, 2012-2013, p. 235-247.

by Charles Diehl, as intrusive and domineering.³⁴ Seeking to counter these nationalistic tendencies, Pace stressed in his opening address the medieval universality of Byzantine civilization, which, he argued, extended far beyond the borders of the Balkans and accorded a prominent role to Italy. He also took care to ensure the active participation of the Italian delegates in every session, organizing an actual system of duty shifts among them.³⁵

During the Congress, a thorny debate arose with several Greek scholars concerning the question of the Dodecanese – the archipelago conquered by Italy during the Italo-Turkish War of 1912. Skeuos Zervos, the well-known historian of Byzantine medicine and a native of Kalymnos, one of the islands of the archipelago, had prepared a paper on Byzantine surgery³⁶ that contained a few polemical allusions to the condition of the Dodecanesian Greeks under Italian rule.³⁷ A fierce and determined opponent of the Italian domination,³⁸ Zervos complained that, owing to the restrictions on movement imposed upon the inhabitants of Dodecanese, he had been unable to consult certain manuscripts. In the abstract, written in French, that he circulated among the audience during his presentation (fig. 4), Zervos stated that “pour des motifs connus dans tout le monde et concernant le Dodécanèse”, it had been impossible for him to examine a codex preserved in the University Library of Bologna.³⁹ In his speech,

³⁴ “Schiacciante la presenza dei Francesi, il cui primo delegato sig. Diehl, nonostante la sue rinomanza nel campo di questi studi, ha finito con lo stancare per il suo ostentato e non sempre apprezzabile intervento in ogni occasione” (*Promemoria*, in ACS, Busta 238, p. 2-3).

³⁵ Pace had planned his colleagues’ work – and his own as well – “con interventi originali e prendendo parte sostanziale (e mai fatua e formale) alle discussioni” (*Promemoria*, in ACS, Busta 238, p. 3).

³⁶ S. Zervos, “Συμβολὴ εἰς τὴν ἱστορίαν τῆς ἰατρικῆς τῶν Βυζαντινῶν”, in A. C. Orlandos (ed.), *Troisième Congrès...*, p. 348-362.

³⁷ “Episodio dodecanesino: era annunciata una comunicazione del noto agitatore S. Zervos sulla chirurgia bizantina, poco prima che egli la facesse è stato distribuito un opuscolo contenente un riassunto del quale si allega una copia, con accenni politici forzatamente introdotti e un ordine del giorno assolutamente inaccettabile” (*Promemoria*, in ACS, Busta 238, p. 4-5).

³⁸ As early as 1920, Zervos – together with Paris Roussos, as the Executive Committee of the Dodecanesians – had signed the *White Book: The Dodecanese; Resolutions and Documents Concerning the Dodecanese 1912-1919*, London, 1920, demanding recognition of Greek primacy and the right to self-determination for the islands. See A. Guidi, “School Protests and the Making of the Post-Ottoman Mediterranean: Student Politicization as a Challenge to Italian Colonialism in Rhodes, 1915-1937”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 54.1, 2022, p. 21-39. For a biographical profile of Zervos, see L. E. Vladimirov, *Σκευός Ζερβός - Πρωτοπόρος Γιατρός, Ερευνητής, Συγγραφέας, Εθνικός Ενεργέτης & Πολιτικός*, Athens, 2018.

³⁹ “Je n’ai pas vu le code (*Iatrosophion*, Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, ms. 3632) de mes propres yeux et je ne l’ai pas examiné en personne car, pour des motifs connus dans tout le monde et concernant le Dodécanèse, l’entrée en Italie m’est formellement interdite” (*Contribution à l’histoire de la médecine des byzantins avec présentations d’images, d’objets archéologiques, etc., par le dr. Skevos G. Zervos*, in ACS, Busta 238). In the same abstract, Zervos also mentioned several surgical instruments from a fourth-century A.D. tomb in Kos that he had purchased “sous un déguisement” and kept with the intention of donating them to the island’s archaeological museum “lorsque le ciel

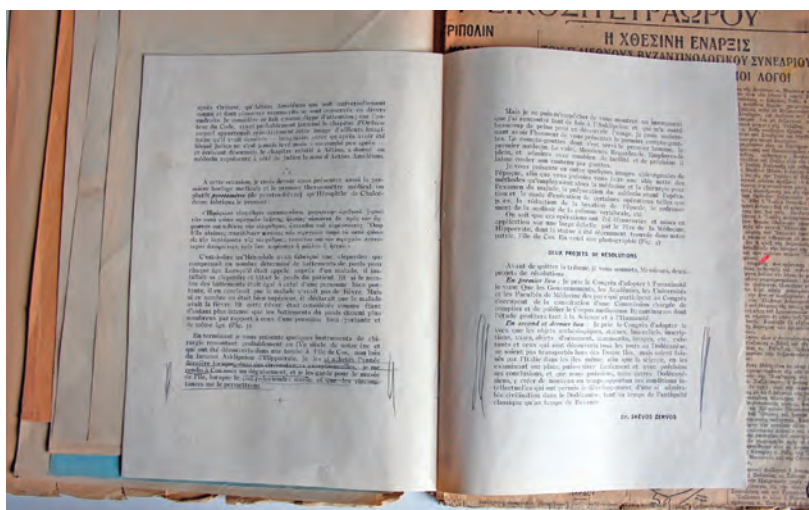


Fig. 4. *Contribution à l'histoire de la médecine des Byzantins avec présentations d'images, d'objets archéologiques, etc., par le dr. Skevos G. Zervos* (ACS, Busta 238)

he also managed to express the hope that the archaeological materials discovered in excavations in the Dodecanese would not once again be transferred to Italy, as had happened in the past.⁴⁰ Pace, in his report, portrayed the outcome of the incident as a complete success of the Italian delegates: forewarned of the contents of Zervos' abstract, Gerola, he claimed, replied to the Greek scholar's remarks with dignity and firmness, while the session's president sided with him, bowing – so Pace wrote – to the science and civilization of Italy.⁴¹ Although we cannot know precisely how the exchange unfolded, the fact remains that in the proceedings edited by Orlandos in 1932, Zervos' paper was published in its entirety, including his complaints against Italy.⁴²

The Athens Congress took place at a moment when official relations between Greece and Italy had markedly improved, owing in part to the new Venizelos

redeviendra serein et que les circonstances me le permettront”.

⁴⁰ For a recent discussion of Italian archaeological activity in the Levantine colonies, see M. Santi, *Sguardo a Levante. La politica culturale italiana sul patrimonio archeologico e monumentale del Dodecaneso 1912-1945*, Milan, 2018; and S. Troilo, *Pietre d'oltremare. Scavare, conservare, immaginare l'impero (1899-1940)*, Bari, 2021.

⁴¹ “Essendo intervenuto presso la Presidenza del Congresso, ho fatto ritirare gli opuscoli, stampati e distribuiti a sua insaputa (e difatti sono di un formato diverso dalle pubblicazioni ufficiali) e ho invitato categoricamente lo Zervos ad astenersi da quell'ordine del giorno. Ho provveduto inoltre a che i nostri fossero presenti alla sezione dando istruzioni al prof. Gerola per un'eventuale risposta, ritenendo inopportuno un intervento diretto del capo della delegazione, che avrebbe dato rilievo allo Zervos. Questi non ha svolto l'ordine del giorno, ma ha accennato al suo contenuto, al che il Gerola ha ribattuto con dignità e fermezza, cui il presidente della sezione ha fatto eco, inchinandosi alla scienza e alla civiltà d'Italia” (*Promemoria*, in ACS, Busta 238, p. 5).

⁴² S. Zervos, “Συμβολή...”, p. 362.

government.⁴³ A sign of this shift in atmosphere is offered by an episode of art diplomacy that occurred between 1927 and 1929: the gift of a copy of the bronze satyr from the Casa del Centenario at Pompeii, originally intended for Minister Theologos Nikoloudis but ultimately retained by the Scuola Archeologica Italiana di Atene.⁴⁴ It must be assumed, however, that the sensitivity of the central Greek government to the political situation of the Dodecanese – Venizelos declared in 1929 that “no Dodecanesian question exist between Greece and Italy”⁴⁵ – was not shared by the local population under Italian rule. This difference in perspective helps to explain Zervos’ harsh reaction during the Congress.

During their presentations, the Italian delegates occasionally took the opportunity to promote recent developments in Italian scholarship to the international academic community. For instance, at the conclusion of his paper on the Byzantine churches of Sicily, Biagio Pace presented to the audience the first issue of Corrado Ricci’s *Tavole storiche dei mosaici di Ravenna* and Giuseppe Galassi’s *Roma o Bisanzio: I mosaici di Ravenna e le origini dell’arte italiana* – a study that revisited the well-known antinomy *Orient oder Rom*, with a clear bias toward the latter term of the dilemma. He also announced the publication of the inaugural issue (1929) of the *Rivista dell’Istituto Nazionale d’Archeologia e Storia dell’Arte*.⁴⁶

This editorial promotion – also practiced by other national delegations to showcase their most recent publications or to support scholars who, for reasons beyond their control, were unable to attend the international gathering⁴⁷ – was intended to strengthen Italy’s bid to host the Fifth Congress of Byzantine Studies (the Fourth having already been assigned to Bulgaria). This initiative directly opposed French efforts to secure the venue for Paris or for Syria, then under French mandate – a plan which, according to Pace, would have turned the Byzantine Congresses into

⁴³ F. A. Ogg, “The Greco-Italian Rapprochement”, *Current History* 29, 1928, p. 339-341; A. Klapsis, “Greek Diplomacy Towards Fascist Italy, 1922-1940”, *Thetis. Mannheimer Beiträge zur Klassischen Archäologie und Geschichte Griechenlands und Zyperns* 20, 2013, p. 293-302, at p. 296-297.

⁴⁴ See Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, Direzione Generale Antichità e Belle Arti, Divisione II, 1929-1933, Busta 238, fascicolo non numerato, *R. Scuola Italiana Calco in bronzo del Satiro di Pompei che versa vino dall’otre da donare al ministro dell’Istruzione di Grecia*.

⁴⁵ See W. Miller, “Greece since the Return of Venizelos”, *Foreign Affairs* 7.3, 1929, p. 468-476, at p. 468.

⁴⁶ C. Ricci, *Tavole storiche dei mosaici di Ravenna*, vol. 1: *Sepolcro di Galla Placidia*, Rome, 1930; G. Galassi, *Roma o Bisanzio: I mosaici di Ravenna e le origini dell’arte italiana*, Rome, 1930; *Rivista dell’Istituto Nazionale d’Archeologia e Storia dell’Arte* 1, 1929.

⁴⁷ See also the case of F. Uspenskij and V. Benešević, *Les Actes de Vazélon. Matériaux pour servir à l’histoire de la propriété rurale et monastique à Byzance aux XIII^e-XI^e siècles*, Leningrad, 1927, presented at the Belgrade Congress. See D. Anastasijević and Ph. Granić, *Deuxième Congrès International des études byzantines, Belgrade, 1927: compte-rendu*, Belgrade, 1929, p. xxvi-xxvii; M. Nystazopoulou-Pélékidou, “L’histoire des congrès...”, p. 24.

instruments of French political influence.⁴⁸ Pace’s proposal for the Italian Congress, formulated in agreement with the Italian Minister Plenipotentiary Giuseppe Bastianini, envisaged Ravenna as the principal venue, alongside other cities rich in Byzantine heritage such as Venice, Rome, and Palermo.⁴⁹ Italy’s candidacy to host the Fifth International Congress was later presented with greater emphasis – and with a more favourable outcome – by Silvio Giuseppe Mercati during the closing session of the Sofia Congress in 1934,⁵⁰ where the Italian delegation included both veterans such as Gerola and newcomers such as Alba Medea, one of the very few female scholars admitted at the Congress.⁵¹

The long and detailed report written by Pace was accompanied by a series of newspaper clippings (fig. 5), in Greek and French, containing articles on the proceedings of the Congress.⁵² Leafing through the many items in this press review, one cannot help but notice that, from a broader perspective, the incidents which had so troubled Biagio Pace and his colleagues tend to fade into the background, while figures such as Nicolae Iorga, Henri Grégoire, and Charles Diehl – whom the Italian archaeologist had described in often markedly scornful tones – once again

⁴⁸ “La delegazione ha trovato sostanzialmente deciso che il prossimo congresso dovesse tenersi a Sofia. Ma si cominciava a parlare anche questa volta di impegni per il quinto. Di fronte a voci relative a Monaco, quale centro internazionale di studi bizantini, aveva preso rapida consistenza l’idea, caldeggiata naturalmente da parte francese, che il quinto congresso si tenesse o a Praga [perhaps a misleading reading of the manuscript, likely Paris] o in Siria. Mentre non mi è parso opportuno, d’intesa con S.E. il Ministro d’Italia Bastianini, attraversare [maybe avversare] la richiesta bulgara, ho ritenuto che si dovesse assolutamente scartare l’altra proposta [...] che avrebbe minacciato di trasformare i Congressi bizantini in una istituzione al servizio della politica francese” (*Promemoria*, in ACS, Busta 238, p. 6). The Syrian proposal (more exactly, Beirut) was renewed for the Sixth Congress, scheduled for 1939. Owing to the political instability that followed the French government’s decision to cede the Sanjak of Alexandretta to Turkey, the Congress was moved to Algiers, then under French control, but the outbreak of World War II prevented it from taking place (M. Nystazopoulou-Pélékidou, “L’histoire des congrès...”, p. 14). Plans for a Congress in Budapest were also advanced; see E. Juhász, “A Budapesti Nemzetközi Bizantinológiai Kongresszus Története”, *Antik Tanulmányok* 68.1, 2024, p. 23-45.

⁴⁹ “Preparato il terreno, varavo così, nella seduta di chiusura, la proposta d’un congresso in Italia con sede principale a Ravenna e secondarie in altri centri di arte bizantina da Palermo a Venezia, portando l’invito del governo d’Italia accolto da largo entusiasmo” (*Promemoria*, in ACS, Busta 238, p. 6).

⁵⁰ B. D. Filov (ed.), *Actes du IV^e Congrès International des études byzantines, Sofia, Septembre 1934*, Sofia, 1935, vol. 1, p. 44-46. In advocating for Italy’s candidacy, Mercati linked the first four congresses to the next with the words: “Questi quattro congressi hanno tracciato un quadrilatero: ora moviamo a tracciare la linea del timone dell’Orsa”.

⁵¹ Alba Medea remains a relatively obscure figure among twentieth-century Italian scholars. A first assessment is offered by M. De Giorgi, “Gli archivi della pittura rupestre in Puglia: da Alba Medea a Cosimo Damiano Fonseca”, in A. Iacobini and L. Bevilacqua (eds.), *Fotografare Bisanzio. Arte bizantina e dell’Oriente mediterraneo negli archivi italiani*, Rome, 2022, p. 221-239, at p. 222-224.

⁵² See ACS, Busta 238. Among the newspapers preserved are *Ἡ Πρωΐα*, *Le Messenger d’Athènes*, *Ἐλεύθερον Βῆμα*, and *Καθημερινή*, all dated 13 October 1930.

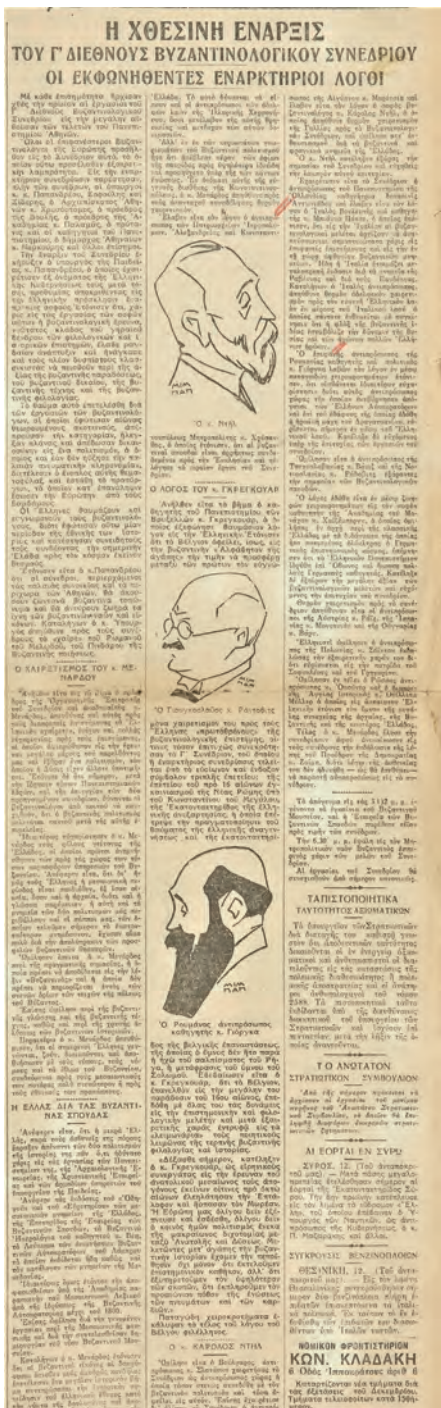


Fig. 5. Clipping from *H Prota*, 13 October 1930 (ACS, Busta 238)

occupy centre stage. This minor episode of Italy's participation in the Athens Congress, however, reveals something more. Fascist political culture, wholly grounded in the cult of *Romanitas*, certainly did not hold the culture of Byzantium in high esteem, as noted above. Yet whenever questions of national prestige arose, and international competition demanded it, such prejudices were temporarily set aside in the name of a common objective: to assert the nation's efficiency and superiority in every field – so that, as the session president quoted earlier put it, all would have to bow to the science and civilization of Italy.⁵³

⁵³ See above n. 41. The desire to assert national prestige was evident during the Fifth Congress: although financial and logistical concerns discouraged the idea of a traveling congress amid Italy's artistic landmarks, as envisaged in the speeches of Pace and Mercati at Athens and Sofia, the sessions held in Rome at the Città Universitaria nonetheless recorded unprecedented numbers of participants (450) and speakers (215). See V. Laurent, "Le V^e Congrès international des études byzantines à Rome (20-27 septembre 1936)", *Échos d'Orient* 36, 1937, p. 95-107.

Scholars, Adventurers, Spies: Byzantine Archaeology and the Evolution of a Discipline in Interwar Britain

Anna C. Kelley

Abstract: This article examines the development of Byzantine studies as an academic discipline in interwar Britain, arguing that the field's popular and academic resurgence owes a significant debt to the archaeological endeavours of scholars whose work was often intertwined with Britain's imperial ambitions. Figures such as Sir William Mitchell Ramsay, representing Britain at the first International Congress of Byzantine Studies, and David Talbot Rice were instrumental in leveraging both the public's growing fascination with the East and Britain's geopolitical interests to advance their own fieldwork. This article demonstrates that these archaeologists, often overlapping with the structures of diplomacy and intelligence gathering, not only generated new knowledge but also framed the Byzantine Empire as a crucial part of Western heritage to an eager public, thereby legitimizing Britain's political presence and interference in the Middle East. Ultimately, it was this fusion of scholarship, adventure, and politics that solidified Byzantine studies' interdisciplinary identity and secured its institutional foothold in Britain.

Keywords: Byzantine studies, archaeology, historiography, British imperialism, interwar period

Introduction

In his 1988 retrospective on the development of Byzantine studies in the United Kingdom, the renowned Byzantinist Anthony Bryer (1937-2016) opined that, in the shadows of both Classics and Modern Greek studies, "Byzantium lagged behind until it was given identity as a subject at the First International Byzantine Congress

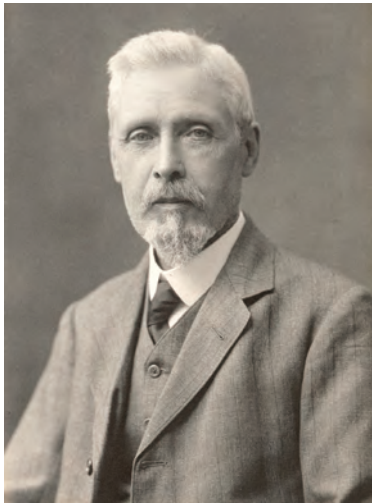


Fig. 1

in Bucharest in 1924”.¹ Bryer – himself the founder of the first interdisciplinary research centre devoted to the study of the East Mediterranean in Britain² – placed the formative years of the discipline in the period between 1908 and 1920, during which both Byzantine and Modern Greek studies in the United Kingdom were undergoing a transformation that saw three Chairs established in British universities, filled between 1919 and 1922.³ It was the interwar period, however, that established Byzantine studies as a discipline. The “founding father” representing Britain at the 1924 Congress was Sir William Mitchell Ramsay (1851-1939) (fig. 1), a well-known historical geographer and archaeologist who gave a paper entitled “The Over-Running of Anatolia by the Arabs and Their Final Expulsion

A.D. 641 to 965”.⁴ His argument of social resistance in the countryside was borne out of decades of archaeological investigation carried out in inner Anatolia.

Like Ramsay’s own shifting academic identity over the course of his career, the study of Byzantium in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had bounced between Classics, Medieval studies, and Near Eastern studies depending on the practitioner, and even amongst those who professed to study it the Byzantine Empire was often negatively compared to what were considered the “golden ages” within those disciplines. While the notorious hostility of early scholars such as Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) had certainly had a lasting legacy on both popular and academic receptions of Byzantium, the perceived negative reputation it held in Victorian Britain was due to diverse factors, not the least of which was a general lack of institutional support.⁵ The historiography of British Byzantine studies has tended to place the shift of this perception in the twentieth century under well-known historians such as

¹ A. Bryer, “Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies: A Partial View”, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 12, 1988, p. 16-17.

² The Centre of Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies at the University of Birmingham; see below n. 94.

³ At Oxford, King’s College London, and the University of Birmingham. A. Bryer, “Byzantine and Modern Greek...”, p. 2-13.

⁴ Published as W. M. Ramsay, “The Attempt of the Arabs to Conquer Asia Minor (640-964 A.D.), and the Causes of Its Failure”, *Bulletin de la section historique* 10, 1924, p. 1-8.

⁵ R. Cormack, “Introduction: Through the Looking Glass – Byzantium Through British Eyes”, in id. and E. Jeffreys (eds.), *Through the Looking Glass: Byzantium Through British Eyes*, Aldershot, 2000, p. 2-3; E. Jeffreys, J. Haldon, and R. Cormack, “Byzantine Studies as an Academic Discipline”, in iid. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, Oxford, 2008, p. 6.

John B. Bury (1861-1927), Norman H. Baynes (1877-1961), and Arnold J. Toynbee (1889-1975).⁶ This paper, however, argues that the popular and academic resurgence of Byzantine studies in interwar Britain owes as much, if not more, to the archaeological endeavours of figures like Ramsay, whose work was inextricably linked to Britain's imperial ambitions and the public's growing fascination with the East.

The rising awareness of the Byzantine Empire in Britain coincided with growing popular interest in science and knowledge production, stimulated by the Industrial Revolution and European competitive imperial expansion throughout the globe. Combined with rising literacy and novel forms of mass media, new audiences were being introduced to the history and cultures of far-off places.⁷ In Britain, archaeological inquiry, infused with an ideology of racial superiority, was presented as the moral responsibility of the empire, uncovering and preserving a "global" heritage from those who could not appreciate it (invariably the local populations).⁸ The advent of Biblical archaeology in particular enabled new narratives in which the legacies of the "great" ancient Mediterranean civilizations could be claimed as part of Western history, justifying the "civilizing" role of modern European empires. Archaeology therefore became a way of both appropriating the history and heritage of occupied territories while also serving as a tool of legitimation through the reproduction of imperial hierarchies.⁹

In Britain this was increasingly shaped by the "Eastern Question", the decline and anticipated collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the presumed volatility that would follow. Britain's primary concerns were for its access routes to India – the "jewel of the crown" – which passed through Ottoman territories, as well as maintaining the balance of power with other European states. By the end of the nineteenth century British policy had shifted from propping up the Ottoman regime to undermining its territorial integrity and securing political influence over strategic regions for itself.¹⁰

⁶ A. Cameron, "Bury, Baynes and Toynbee", in R. Cormack and E. Jeffreys (eds.), *Through the Looking Glass...*, p. 163-176; F. K. Haarer, "Writing Histories of Byzantium: The Historiography of Byzantine History", in L. James (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantium*, Malden, MA, 2010, p. 13-14.

⁷ B. Lightman, "Popularizers, Participation and the Transformation of Nineteenth-Century Publishing: From the 1860s to the 1880s", *Notes and Records of the Royal Society* 70, 2016, p. 343-359. On popular knowledge consumption, see E. Hall and H. Stead, *A People's History of Classics: Class and Graeco-Roman Antiquity in Britain and Ireland 1689 to 1939*, London, 2020, p. 53-64.

⁸ For example, see the studies in A. Swenson and P. Mandler (eds.), *From Plunder to Preservation: Britain and the Heritage of Empire, c. 1800-1940*, Oxford, 2013; B. Effros and G. Lai (eds.), *Unmasking Ideology in Imperial and Colonial Archaeology: Vocabulary, Symbols, and Legacy*, Los Angeles, 2018; G. Crouzet and E. Miller (eds.), *Finding Antiquity, Making the Modern Middle East: Archaeology, Empires, Nations*, London, 2025.

⁹ M. Díaz-Andreu, *A World History of Nineteenth-Century Archaeology: Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Past*, Oxford, 2007; ead., "Archaeology and Imperialism: From Nineteenth-Century New Imperialism to Twentieth-Century Decolonization", in B. Effros and G. Lai (eds.), *Unmasking Ideology...*, p. 3-28.

¹⁰ See J. Parry, *Promised Lands: The British and the Ottoman Middle East*, Princeton, 2022.

How this shaped the development of British science and academic disciplines, as well as its continuing legacies, have become the focus of important studies in fields such as Egyptology and Classics, but the impact on Byzantine studies has only recently begun to stimulate discussion.¹¹ The reasons for this lie in the discipline's own historiographic mythology as a "victim" of early negative characterizations in comparison to both classical and high medieval "golden ages".¹² Yet, as Daniel Reynolds has recently reminded us, "it would be disingenuous to claim that [Byzantium] was always relegated to the margins".¹³ The local political contexts of Byzantine studies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the archaeologists who were embedded in them, were crucial in both defining and transmitting the historical memory of Byzantium in Britain, leading to its eventual interdisciplinary institutionalisation after the conclusion of World War II.

Sir William Mitchell Ramsay, the "founding father"

Ramsay may not have been the most obvious ambassador for British Byzantine studies at the time of the 1924 Congress. Several Chairs had been recently named at British universities which, even if they had not been strictly intended for Byzantinists, had nevertheless been held by those whose research interests centred on the medieval East Mediterranean. The Bywater and Sotheby Professor of Byzantine and Modern Greek Language at Oxford was first filled in 1919 by the archaeologist Richard M. Dawkins, who had been the director of the British School at Athens between 1906 and 1913. The Koraes Chair at King's College London, established in 1917 in honour of the Greek philologist Adamantios Koraes (1748-1833), had been given to historian Arnold J. Toynbee also in 1919, but was left vacant when Toynbee resigned earlier in 1924 following his reporting on the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) for the *Manchester Guardian* (a paper Ramsay would also write for). It would remain vacant until 1926. The third position, the Chamber of Commerce Chair of Russian at the University of Birmingham, had been filled by the Byzantine musicologist Henry Julius Tillyard (1881-1968) in 1922. None of the three attended the Congress.

Ramsay, in contrast, had spent much of his professional life as a somewhat inadvertent Roman and New Testament scholar, and had retired in 1911. Born in

¹¹ For example, B. Anderson and M. Ivanova (eds.), *Is Byzantine Studies a Colonialist Discipline? Toward a Critical Historiography*, University Park, PA, 2023; D. Reynolds, *The Development of Byzantine Archaeology and Historiographical Tradition in Colonial Palestine, 1800-1948: Hold the Line*, London, 2026.

¹² On such historiographic traditions, see R. Cormack, "Introduction...", p. 3; E. Jeffreys, J. Haldon, and R. Cormack, "Byzantine Studies...", p. 7-8; A. Cameron, *Byzantine Matters*, Princeton, 2014, p. 10; D. Reynolds, "Conclusion: Post-Colonial Reflections and the Challenge of Global Byzantium", in L. Brubaker, R. Darley, and D. Reynolds (eds.), *Global Byzantium. Papers from the Fiftieth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, London, 2022, p. 375.

¹³ D. Reynolds, "Conclusion...", p. 375.

1851 in Glasgow, Scotland, he had first studied at the University of Aberdeen before winning a five-year scholarship to St John's College, Oxford, where he obtained a first-class degree in Classics and *Literae Humaniores* in 1876. After travelling for much of 1877 and 1878, he accepted the position of Assistant Professor of Greek at Aberdeen. A significant turn in his scholarly development came in 1880 when he was awarded an Oxford studentship – over none other than Oscar Wilde¹⁴ – to travel and conduct research in Greece. Upon his election he and his wife were invited to stay with Sir Charles Newton (1816-1894), Keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the British Museum, in London to discuss and plan the trip. Ramsay later wrote:

We dreamed of Athens; but Newton said “Don't go to Athens, which is pre-occupied by the Germans and the French; go to the west coast of Asia Minor, where the great Greek cities offer a better field to a new man”. Accordingly in early May, 1880, we landed in Smyrna.¹⁵

It seems even devoted antiquarians were moved by the ethos of Europe's imperial competition. Yet this too would prove fortuitous for Ramsay, for it happened that Sir Charles Wilson (1836-1905), then Consul-General of Anatolia, would arrive in Smyrna on the same day as the Ramsay to see his wife off from the port. Over the course of lunch, Wilson reportedly extolled Ramsay to “[c]ome into inner Anatolia. The east-lands are open to explorers; anyone can go there, but the inner country is unknown”.¹⁶ This would become Ramsay's initiation to fieldwork, and he subsequently accompanied Wilson into the Anatolian interior in 1881 and 1882, solidifying his reputation as an authority on the historical landscape of Asia Minor. While bearing little resemblance to archaeological practice today, Ramsay's foundational work was crucial for developing the field and demonstrating the possibilities archaeology could provide to historical analysis.

In 1882 he was further elected to a research fellowship at Exeter College, Oxford, tenable for five years; the offer letter sent by Ingram Bywater (1840-1914) guaranteed that, if accepted, an Asia Minor Exploration Fund (AMEF) would be formed to fund his work with the support of the Hellenic Society and the Royal Geographic Society. This was an important stipulation. Despite the importance placed on imperial science production and the prestige associated with it, and in contrast to other European powers, the British government was slow to facilitate direct involvement in archaeological excavation.¹⁷ While the *École française d'Athènes* had

¹⁴ W. M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, Aberdeen, 1915, p. 24.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25; C. Roueché, “The History of an Idea: Tracing the Origins of the MAMA Project”, in P. Thonemann (ed.), *Roman Phrygia: Culture and Society*, Cambridge, 2013, p. 252.

¹⁶ W. M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery...*, p. 26.

¹⁷ M. Diaz-Andreu, “Britain and the Other: The Archaeology of Imperialism”, in H. Brocklehurst and R. Phillips (eds.), *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain*, Basingstoke, 2004, p. 227-241.

opened in 1846 and the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut in Athens in 1874 – as both diplomatic institutions and symbols of imperial scientific advancement – the British state did not follow suit. In a letter to the editor of *The Times* questioning why Britain would cede such ground to France and Germany, Richard Claverhouse Jebb (1841-1905), lecturer in Greek at the University of Glasgow, noted: “Sustained energy and thorough method are worthy characteristics of scientific missions conducted on a regular system and animated by a national tradition”.¹⁸ The British School at Athens (BSA), however, would not open until 1884, and would not receive funding from the British government until 1895.¹⁹ As a result, throughout the nineteenth century archaeology was largely privately funded, either through wealthy patrons or subscriber-based excavation funds that had become increasingly popular.²⁰

The AMEF, however, was decidedly less successful than others like the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF, established in 1865) and the Egypt Exploration Fund (EEF, now the Egypt Exploration Society, established in 1882), which both continue to this day; an overview provided by the Hellenic Society president George A. Macmillan (1855-1936) in 1929 would note that the AMEF operated only at “intervals”.²¹ Whereas members of the PEF and EEF frequently engaged the public through lectures and publications to increase revenue, resembling learned societies,²² the AMEF seems to have kept a comparatively lower profile. Nevertheless, its appeals were full of the nationalistic rhetoric that had come to be associated with the development of archaeology as a scientific discipline, tying the need for public support of scientific discovery with national pride. Ramsay himself became a rallying cry. In one such appeal from 1890 Macmillan, then acting as Honorary Treasurer, encouraged his audience by reminding them that “it would be little to the credit of England if want of funds should oblige Professor Ramsay to leave the completion of his task to foreign hands”.²³

¹⁸ R. C. Jebb, “Archaeology at Athens and Rome”, *The Times*, 18 September 1878, p. 11.

¹⁹ G. A. Macmillan, “A Short History of the British School at Athens, 1886-1911”, *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 17, 1910-1911, p. xii.

²⁰ See A. Thornton, “‘... A Certain Faculty for Extricating Cash’: Collective Sponsorship in Late 19th and Early 20th Century British Archaeology”, *Present Pasts* 5.1, 2013, p. 1-12.

²¹ G. A. Macmillan, “An Outline of the History of The Hellenic Society”, *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 49.2, 1929, p. xii. Indeed, in a letter from Ramsay to Macmillan dated 24 March 1901, Ramsay wrote “I am under the impression that the A. M. Exploration Fund has long ago ceased to exist”. Hellenic Society William Mitchell Ramsay Letters 24.03.1901. According to Macmillan, the AMEF was still functioning to some degree in 1929.

²² A. Thornton, “‘A Certain Faculty...’”, p. 3; A. C. Kelley, “‘Thus the Work Goes On...’: Amelia B. Edwards and Imperial ‘Remembering’ of Egypt”, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, forthcoming.

²³ As quoted in C. Roueché, “The History of an Idea...”, p. 254.

While the profile of archaeology at this time was increasing elsewhere, it was still little represented in British universities; nevertheless, Ramsay secured a rare position in 1885 when he was appointed the Lincoln and Merton Chair in Classical Archaeology at Oxford. Yet only a year later, in 1886, he returned to Scotland and was appointed the Regius Professor of Humanity at Aberdeen, the Latinist counterpart of the Regius Professor of Greek. Ramsay had applied for the Greek position earlier that year, preferring the long summer semester at Aberdeen for his own travel to the Oxford system, but he was not offered the position, fortuitously as he would later reflect:

The reading of the Roman authors turned inevitably, owing to my bent of mind, to a study of Roman society and administration [...]. Thus I was led on to work at the relation of the Graeco-Roman literature to the life of the Empire, and to fill my mind with the Roman idea. I had found my proper work, the study of Roman institutions in Asiatic Greece, and the influence of Asia on the Graeco-Roman administration. If I had been appointed to a Professorship of Greek, as I wished, or had remained a Professor of Classical Archaeology, none of my proper work could have been done rightly.²⁴

His trajectory from Roman literature to early Christianity and biblical scholarship was no less circumstantial. In 1876, during his final year as a student at Oxford, Ramsay had been required to pass a Divinity examination, for which he chose to study Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, leading to an enduring interest in early Church history.²⁵

Illness which kept him in the United Kingdom for nearly a decade would give Ramsay the opportunity to pursue this interest. In 1891, he contracted cholera on a ship travelling from Alexandretta (İskenderun), leaving him unable to conduct field work until he returned to Konya in 1901. In the interim, he was invited to give a series of six lectures at Mansfield College, Oxford, in 1892 by the theological scholar Andrew Martin Fairbairn (1838-1912), titled "The Church in the Roman Empire before A.D. 170". In the lectures, later published under the same name, Ramsay used his knowledge of the topography of Asia Minor to argue that the New Testament, and particularly the *Books of Acts*, were founded on accurate geographical and historical detail. He would later confirm Luke as the author of *Acts* and, tracing Paul's missionary travels from Antioch to Rome, use archaeological and geographic evidence to argue for the veracity of the text.²⁶ In so doing he joined the ranks of scholars who sought to prove the historicity of the Bible and the importance of the Middle East to early Christianity, simultaneously feeding into imperial and nationalistic narratives as Britain expanded its informal empire into the Mediterranean and Middle East.²⁷ Highlighting

²⁴ W. M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery...*, p. 30.

²⁵ Id., *The Church in the Roman Empire Before A.D. 170*, London, 1893, p. 6.

²⁶ Id., *St Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, London, 1895.

²⁷ On these narratives, see A. Díaz-Andreu, *A World History...*; D. Gange and M. Ledger-Lomas (eds.), *Cities of God: The Bible and Archaeology in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Cambridge, 2013.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

the Christian heritage of regions under Muslim control, his work framed Ottoman Anatolia as fundamentally Christian, and therefore Western.

Ramsay's work went beyond merely providing empirical evidence of biblical authenticity. It was a logical step from locating the sites of the New Testament to understanding the contexts in which the early Church fathers were living and writing, and Ramsay became a pioneer in the study of epigraphy and topography to provide historical context to biblical literature (although in a 1934 letter to Sir Steven Runciman (1903-2000) he would conclude that "topography is a difficult and very complicated subject, and is not generally interesting").²⁸ One of his most consequential studies was carried out in 1907 when he spent six weeks surveying the sites of Binbirkilise alongside Gertrude L. Bell (1868-1926) (fig. 2), whom Ramsay had met by chance in Konya. Binbirkilise had been described by Charles Wilson, who had travelled there with Ramsay during their 1882 trip, in 1895 where he remembered "very fair preservation" of the buildings, noting "a historical study of them by a competent authority on Byzantine architecture is much required".²⁹ By the time Ramsay returned with Bell in 1907 many of the structures had been reduced to ruins,³⁰ but what remained was carefully documented

²⁸ Ramsay to Runciman, 30 December 1934, Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents, Oxford, William Mitchell Ramsay Archive.

²⁹ C. Wilson, *Handbook for Travellers in Asia Minor, Transcaucasia, Persia, Etc.*, London, 1895, p. 158. By his own admission, Ramsay himself was not up to the task, noting "I had not the knowledge of architecture needed for the task, and therefore did not revisit the spot". W. M. Ramsay and G. L. Bell, *The Thousand and One Churches*, London, 1909, p. vii.

³⁰ See R. Ousterhout, "Binbirkilise Revisited: The 1887 Photographs of John Henry Haynes", *Δελτίον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Αρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας* 34, 2013, p. 395-404.

(fig. 3). Ramsay and Bell's interest and skills complemented each other; while Ramsay focused on inscriptions and the historical context of the landscape, Bell was able to draft plans of the buildings and analyse them. In a 1907 letter, Bell wrote to her stepmother that the "plan is that Sir W. [Ramsay] shall write the historic and epigraphic part and I the architectural. I think it will be well worth doing, for this is the first time an accurate study has been made of any district in these parts..."³¹

While their ability to conduct actual excavation was severely restricted, by both desire and Ottoman officials,³² the interpretational model through extensive field study remained influential in the discipline. The resulting book, *The Thousand and One Churches*, was published in 1909 and marked a shift in the development of Byzantine archaeology that would only be fully realized after the conclusion of World War I. It was the first time the Byzantine architecture of central Anatolia was systematically documented, shifting the focus away from the monumental architecture of major urban centres like Constantinople; this would continue to have an impact on the discipline throughout the twentieth century,³³ and on Ramsay's own subsequent work. The historical narrative of Binbirkilise proposed by Ramsay and Bell was framed by the Arab incursions of the seventh and eighth centuries, the topic of his communication at the 1924 Congress. Throughout, Ramsay relied on the approaches of biblical exegesis to inform his understanding of the landscape and buildings. Reflecting on the roundabout way he had come to the study of eastern Christianity, he mused "this was the way that brought me to the study of Luke and Paul and the New Testament generally, when I found that my prepossessions and pre-formed opinions were wrong".³⁴

Ramsay's retirement saw him branch out into more popular engagement. Between 1923 and 1924, Ramsay's friend, the journalist and editor James A. Hammerton (1871-1949) produced *Wonders of the Past*, a richly illustrated four-volume set intended to make archaeology accessible to the public in the aftermath of the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in the Valley of the Kings by Howard Carter (1874-1939) in 1922. This work received both the support and encouragement of Ramsay and the Assyriologist Archibald Sayce (1845-1933), who both took "a keen personal interest".³⁵ Ramsay even contributed a chapter to the fourth volume, titled "The Romance of Konia", in which he gave an overview of the city from the Battle of Manzikert until the early fifteenth century. He was, however, already being widely read by the public.

³¹ G. Bell to F. Bell, 8 June 1907, Newcastle University Gertrude Bell Archive, GB/1/1/1/17/27.

³² M. Jackson, "A Critical Examination of Gertrude Bell's Contribution to Archaeological Research in Central Asia Minor", in P. Collins and C. Tripp (eds.), *Gertrude Bell and Iraq: A Life and Legacy*, London, 2017, p. 58-59.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 64-65.

³⁴ W. M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery...*, p. 31.

³⁵ J. A. Hammerton, *Books and Myself: Memoir of an Editor*, London, 1946 (1944), p. 306.

From 1910, Ramsay also served as a correspondent for the newspaper *The Manchester Guardian* (now *The Guardian*) in which he published a number of articles on the political and social situation within the Ottoman Empire through the lens of historical geography.³⁶ After the war, his relationship with the paper and its owner Charles P. Scott (1846-1932) helped him attain the necessary visas to return to his fieldwork in Anatolia, seemingly against the power of the Foreign Office and the Foreign Secretary, George Curzon (1859-1925), in particular; Curzon left the office in January 1924. In a letter sent to Scott on 10 March, 1924, Ramsay wrote:

The real difficulty is getting the F[oreign] O[ffice] to permit me to go, & to endorse my passport for Turkey. That pompous, fairly clever, very hardworking ass the Marquis Curzon stopped me for two years. But Mr Donald [James Ramsay MacDonald] ... may, as your sub-editor thinks, take a more rational view. Curzon (as my very old friend G. Younger wrote) was enough to ruin any government.³⁷

His description of Turkish officials was, in comparison, more circumspect, and he asserted, “the Turks are always very responsive to newspaper influence”.³⁸ Ramsay’s connection with the newspaper allowed him to navigate the difficult relationship between British officials and the nascent Turkish state and continue his work, but also highlighted how much archaeology had become ingrained with both politics and the public imagination by the end of World War I.³⁹

The formative years to 1922

The groundwork laid by Ramsay converged with a growing aesthetic appreciation for Byzantine art in the late nineteenth century, fostered by figures like the art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900), which together spurred the first organized efforts to formalize the study of Byzantine monuments in Britain. Ruskin’s Byzantium, however, remained an entirely Western construction, mediated through Northern Italy, particularly Venice. In Byzantium he – and other Victorian art historians – saw the line of progression from the Classical to the Romanesque and ultimately the medieval Gothic styles, the first steps towards a Modernist sensibility. Ruskin and

³⁶ See, for example, his discussion of ethnic Greeks in W. M. Ramsay, “Allies and Anatolia: The Incalculable Evils of Partition”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 29 May 1919, p. 9.

³⁷ Ramsay to Scott, 10 March 1924, University of Manchester Guardian Archive, GDN_A_R5_32.

³⁸ Ramsay to Scott, 1 March 1924, University of Manchester Guardian Archive, GDN_A_R5_27.

³⁹ On the occupation of Istanbul following World War I and the implications for its heritage, see D.-J. MacArthur-Seal and G. Tongo, “Representing Occupied Istanbul: Documents, Objects, and Memory”, *YILLIK: Annual of Istanbul* 4, 2022, p. 91-81; G. Tongo, “Mini Dossier: War, Occupation, and Culture: Arts, Heritage, and Istanbul, 1918-1923”, *New Perspectives of Turkey* 71, 2024, p. 4-13; C. Abi, “‘If it is not too paradoxical’: Archaeology in Istanbul under Occupation as a Window into Understanding the Creation of a Post-War Cultural Heritage Regime”, *New Perspectives of Turkey* 71, 2024, p. 62-82.



Fig. 4

his contemporaries were not only interested in the aesthetic values of Byzantium and its perceived precedent to abstract Modernism, but also to the moral value that could be projected onto it. The Byzantine “style” was viewed as a corrective to the Classical excesses of antiquity. In *The Seven Lamps*, Ruskin mused that the simplicity of Byzantine ornamental decoration and the way it diffused light was a sign that Byzantine architects “had truer sympathy with what God made majestic, than the self-contemplating and self-contented [ancient] Greek”, demonstrating “a power faithful more than thoughtful, which conceived and felt more than it created”.⁴⁰

Such an ethos appealed to the early figures of the Arts and Crafts movement, where it was closely associated with the modern state of Greece,⁴¹ and became key to its reinvention in the popular imagination. In 1854, Byzantium was brought to British doorsteps when a Byzantine Court was designed for the Crystal Palace in Sydenham, and affluent suburb of South London, following the Great Exhibition of 1851 (fig. 4). The “rediscovery” of the forgotten but significant empire was highlighted in the accompanying catalogue written by the court’s designer, Matthew Digby Wyatt (1820-1877). In the “General Remarks”, he began:

It is only within the present century that the style of architecture, many of the most interesting monuments of which are exhibited in the Byzantine Court, has received that amount of study to which it is certainly entitled, both from the peculiar position

⁴⁰ J. Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 6th ed., Orpington, 1889, p. 88.

⁴¹ See the studies within A. G. Kakissis (ed.), *Byzantium and British Heritage: Byzantine Influences on the Arts and Crafts Movement*, London, 2024.

which it occupies, as a link between the classic and Gothic styles, and from its own inherent merit [...]. Thus, the most superficial examination cannot but reveal to the student how Roman architecture – itself an offspring of Greece – was gradually transformed by successive changes into the Byzantine style, which ... resolved itself into two remarkable phases, in the Lombard and Norman styles...⁴²

Byzantium was constructed as a critical mediator between two crucial epochs in European narratives of self-fashioning. The eastern orientation stressed by Ramsay, while not fully ascribing to Josef Strzygowski's (1862-1944) theories,⁴³ set the stage for a synthetic view of classical and eastern influences, aligned with Britain's imperial ambitions for an "informal empire" in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East.

The late nineteenth century further saw Arts and Crafts architects travelling to the East Mediterranean to document Byzantine monuments. In 1894, William Richard Lethaby (1857-1931) published his influential *The Church of Sancta Sophia, Constantinople: A Study of Byzantine Building*. Lethaby's work, with its focus on the monument's spatial layout, decoration, and construction methods, was instrumental in shaping the understanding and appreciation of Byzantine architecture during a period of revived interest in the style. Beyond that, Lethaby was influential in promoting fieldwork in the study of the Byzantine Empire, and he encouraged his fellow architects and designers to travel to Greece and work at the BSA.⁴⁴ Two, Robert Weir Schultz (1860-1951) and Sidney Barnsley (1865-1926), would publish their pioneering study of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas in 1901,⁴⁵ including detailed architectural drawings, photographs, and analysis of the structure and its mosaics.

The establishment of the Byzantine Research and Publication Fund (BRF) in 1908 marked a pivotal moment in the formal organization of Byzantine archaeological research in Britain, directly influenced by the work of these architects. Schultz and Barnsley's work at Hosios Loukas had been funded by a Byzantine Architecture Fund, established under Ernest Gardner (1862-1939) at the BSA and supported by the wealthy lawyer and antiquarian Edwin Freshfield (1832-1918),⁴⁶ providing inspiration for

⁴² M. Digby Wyatt and J. B. Waring, *The Byzantine and Romanesque Court in the Crystal Palace*, London, 1854, p. 7.

⁴³ Particularly the emphasis on race and formal analysis over historical context laid out in J. Strzygowski, *Orient oder Rom: Beitrag zur Geschichte der spätantiken und frühchristlichen Kunst*, Leipzig, 1901; id., *Kleinasien: ein Neuland der Kunstgeschichte*, Leipzig, 1903. Nevertheless, Ramsay's and Bell's *The One Thousand and One Churches* was dedicated to Strzygowski.

⁴⁴ J. B. Bullen, "The Byzantine Revival in Europe", in A. G. Kakissis (ed.), *Byzantium and British Heritage...*, p. 21; R. Cormack, "The Discovery of Byzantium by British Visitors to Greece and What They Saw", in A. G. Kakissis (ed.), *Byzantium and British Heritage...*, p. 34.

⁴⁵ R. W. Schultz and S. H. Barnsley, *The Monastery of Saint Luke of Stiris, in Phocis, and the Dependent Monastery of Saint Nicolas in the Fields, Near Skripou, in Bœotia*, London, 1901.

⁴⁶ See F. Vanni and J. Varsallona, "Seeing Byzantium Through Edwin Freshfield's Eyes: Arts and Crafts, Antiquarianism, and Learned Societies at the End of the Nineteenth Century", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 48.1, 2024, p. 120-147.

others back in Britain, including Ormonde M. Dalton (1866-1945), then a curator in the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities at the British Museum. Dalton had spent the years between 1899 and 1901 creating a catalogue of the early Christian and Byzantine artefacts in the museum's collection,⁴⁷ which planted the seed for a lifelong interest in the subject. When his book *Byzantine Art and Archaeology* was published in 1911, it established Dalton as one of the most pre-eminent scholars in the field.⁴⁸ In its introduction, Dalton expressed an expansive view of what constituted "Byzantine", and raised issues of terminology that would be recognized in present-day debates:

It must be a subject of consideration to any writer on the archaeology of the East-Roman Empire whether to retain or discard the long-familiar epithet "Byzantine". In recent years the term has been employed more cautiously than heretofore, for reasons which may not be lightly disregarded. It seems to infringe the rights of Syria, Anatolia, and Egypt: it concedes to the city of Constantinople an artistic hegemony which she did not at first possess; it gives no hint of the debt which Byzantium owed to the non-Christian East beyond her frontiers.⁴⁹

Egypt and the eastern provinces were highlighted throughout the volume, although Dalton considered the art of "Coptic" Egypt inferior and "provincial" compared to the refinement of Byzantine (meaning Greek) Christianity.⁵⁰ Coptic studies would emerge as a field separate from both Egyptology and Byzantine studies, a result of both racial and cultural hierarchies established in the study of early Christianity – mirroring those established by the British state in Egypt – but Dalton would still leverage Christian Egypt in his push for the creation for a specifically Byzantine excavation fund.⁵¹

The proposal for the BRF, in the model of other subscription-based funds, was to promote the study of the early Church and Christian communities throughout the East Mediterranean and in 1908 it was established in association with the BSA; Freshfield served as its president and Dalton and Schultz shared the role of secretary. Freshfield

⁴⁷ O. M. Dalton, *Catalogue of Early Christian Antiquities and Objects from the Christian East in the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography of the British Museum*, London, 1901.

⁴⁸ C. Entwistle, "O. M. Dalton: 'Ploughing the Byzantine Furrow'", in R. Cormack and E. Jeffreys (eds.), *Through the Looking Glass...*, p. 180.

⁴⁹ O. M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology*, New York, 1911, p. 1.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 71-74; D. L. B. Hedstrom, "Artefacts, Archaeology and the Archaeologist: Late Antique Christian Material Culture and the History of Archaeology in Egypt", in E. O'Connell (ed.), *Egypt and Empire: The Formation of Religious Identity after Rome*, Leuven, 2022, p. 81.

⁵¹ At the time Dalton was engaged in some internal competition with E. A. Wallis Budge (1857-1934), the Keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities at the museum, who had successfully lobbied to keep Egyptian "Coptic" material within his own department, blocking acquisition attempts from other departments. E. O'Connell, "R. Campbell Thompson's 1913/14 Excavation of Wadi Sarga and Other Sites", *British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan* 21, 2014, p. 125-126.

wrote an announcement of the Fund's creation for *The Times*, where it appeared on 25 June, detailing the objective to support research "into the effect of the introduction of Christianity into the history and art of the Roman Empire of Constantinople".⁵² He went on to acknowledge the increasing profile of field work that was being conducted on Eastern Christianity:

It is only within the last 50 years that intelligent interest has been directed to this period; but within the last few years the increase in the interest has been so general and so rapid that there is great need of an English society to collect, sift, and classify the vast amount of information that has gradually been collected, not only in England, but on the Continent, upon the subject, and to induce something like order into it, and also, as a branch of it, the collecting of funds to permit the society to investigate on its own account. The present moment is very appropriate [...]. Professor Ramsay and Miss Gertrude Lowthian Bell have been making a thorough exploration of the extraordinary group of buildings at and near the Kara Dagh in the south of the plain of Konia. What the result of their investigation will be we shall know when it is completed; it cannot fail to be of the deepest interest. From a rapid visit that I made last year to the Kara Dagh, I can testify that the group of churches there will fill a most important gap which at present exists in our knowledge of church-building in the periods between the fourth and sixth centuries.⁵³

Although Ramsay would have no formal connection to the BRF, his renown was nevertheless a crucial point of reference.

While the majority of the BRF's work was conducted in present-day Turkey, Greece, and Israel, Dalton was also successful in urging the Fund to seek out a concession in Egypt. They were eventually granted permission to excavate a seventh-ninth century settlement that had been established in the pharaonic quarry at Wadi Sarga, thought to be the monastery of Apa Thomas, and its nearby cemeteries where it was hoped ornately decorated textiles, like those famously found at Antinoöpolis and Panopolis, would be found.⁵⁴ Excavations took place in 1913/14 under the direction of Reginald Campbell Thompson (1876-1941); other than a volume on the papyri and ostraca recovered,⁵⁵ the results were never fully published due to the outbreak of the First World War. Dalton was successful in his quest for artifacts, however, and over 2,800 objects made their way back to the British Museum,

⁵² E. Freshfield, "Byzantine Research Fund", *The Times*, 25 June 1908, p. 9.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ C. Entwistle, "O. M. Dalton...", p. 82; E. O'Connell, "R. Campbell Thompson's...", p. 126, 134. Thompson had initially thought he was excavating a lay settlement, only realizing it had likely been a monastery after it was discovered that the cemetery held only males. E. O'Connell, "R. Campbell Thompson's...", p. 136.

⁵⁵ W. E. Crum and H. I. Bell, *Wadi Sarga Coptic and Greek Texts from the Excavations Undertaken by the Byzantine Research Account*, Heidelberg, 1922.



Fig. 5

along with the excavation records.⁵⁶ Nevertheless the BRF evidently considered the excavations something of a failure, and Dalton left the Fund. Work carried out on the monuments of Macedonia and Anatolia were considered more successful and paved the way for the ongoing role of the BSA in the development of Byzantine studies in Britain.⁵⁷ The Fund's work was severely disrupted by the outbreak of World War I, and its final monograph was published in 1920; it ceased to accept donations in 1922.⁵⁸

Consolidating an (inter)disciplinary identity

The academic trajectories that began with Ramsay converged in several high-profile excavations in post-war Istanbul, recentered on the imperial city. The first of these were the excavations of the Hippodrome and surrounding area undertaken in 1927 and 1928 under the direction of Stanley Casson (1889-1944) in the first season and David Talbot Rice (1903-1972) in the second (fig. 5); both would become influential scholars and innovators in comparative approaches to Byzantine material culture, often blurring the lines between archaeology and art history. The excavations

⁵⁶ E. O'Connell, "Wadi Sarga at the British Museum: Sources for Study (with Annotated Bibliography)", in P. Buzi, A. Camplani, and F. Contardi (eds.), *Coptic Society, Literature and Religion from Late Antiquity to Modern Times*, vol. 2, Leuven, 2016, p. 1547.

⁵⁷ For an overview, see A. G. Kakissis, "The Byzantine Research Fund Archive: Encounters of Arts and Crafts Architects in Byzantium", *British School at Athens Studies* 17, 2009 ("Scholars, Travels, Archives: Greek History and Culture Through the British School at Athens"), p. 125-144.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 138. It was briefly revived during Peter Megaw's (1910-2006) directorship of the BSA.

were supported by the British Academy, but the funding for the 1927 season had been supplied by a single anonymous donor while the 1928 season was funded by the art dealer Sir Joseph Duveen (1869-1939).⁵⁹ Casson had been trained in Classical Greek art and archaeology, and before the war had spent time as a student at the BSA from 1912 to 1913. During the war Casson was wounded on the Western front, and was sent to Macedonia to recover, where he was instrumental in the ad hoc excavations the military undertook with the support of the BSA.⁶⁰ After the war he briefly served as the assistant director of the BSA between 1919 and 1922, taking up a permanent post as a fellow of New College Oxford before being promoted to lecturer in 1927.

Whereas Casson was introduced to Byzantium from Greece, Talbot Rice's initial interest had been rooted in the ancient Near East. He graduated from Christ Church College, Oxford, in 1925 – the year after the Congress – having read archaeology and anthropology. The same year he travelled to Iraq to join the Oxford University – Field Museum of Chicago excavations at Kish; his return journey took him through Istanbul, piquing his enduring interest. He would later reminisce: “Nothing is perhaps so sweet or enthralling as a first love affair; nothing can cause so many heart-aches. In 1925 I first fell in love with Constantinople...”.⁶¹ In 1926, this love affair would be solidified when he undertook his famous trip to Mount Athos with two friends from his Oxford days, Robert Byron (1905-1941) and Mark Olgivie-Grant (1905-1969). Their journey was commemorated by Byron in *The Station* (1928), which was not only his own introduction to travel writing but also contributed to a revival of interest in Byzantine art and architecture.⁶² The trip would also serve as the inspiration for Byron and Talbot Rice's joint volume *The Birth of Western Painting* (1930), which drew a direct line from Byzantine artistic movements to later developments in Western Europe, emphasising cross-cultural continuity between Byzantium and the West; in the vein of the Arts and Craft's practitioners who came before, Byzantine art was framed positively against Classical. Talbot Rice joined the Hippodrome excavations in 1927, and in 1928 was chosen by Casson to act as the site director.⁶³

⁵⁹ Duveen also supplied to funds for the Duveen Gallery at the British Museum, constructed to house the Parthenon Marbles, and reportedly made the damaging cleansing of the marbles so they shone white a stipulation of his funding.

⁶⁰ C. Morgan, “The British Salonika Force, the British School at Athens, and the Archaic-Hellenistic Archaeology of Macedonia”, in A. Shapland and E. Stefani (eds.), *Archaeology Behind the Battle Lines*, London, 2017; R. Clogg, “The Macedonian Front, the Great Idea and the ‘Weaponization’ of Antiquities”, in B. C. Gounaris, M. Llewellyn-Smith, and I. Stefanidis (eds.), *The Macedonian Front, 1915-1918*, London, 2022, p. 191-199.

⁶¹ D. T. Rice, *Constantinople: From Byzantium to Istanbul*, New York, 1965, p. 9.

⁶² Travel writing was not only a popular genre, but became an important part of the British public's experience of the British Empire. See A. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, London, 2014 (2005).

⁶³ A. Bryer, “Tamara and David Talbot Rice: A Byzantine Duet”, *Cornucopia* 1.4, 1993, p. 24.

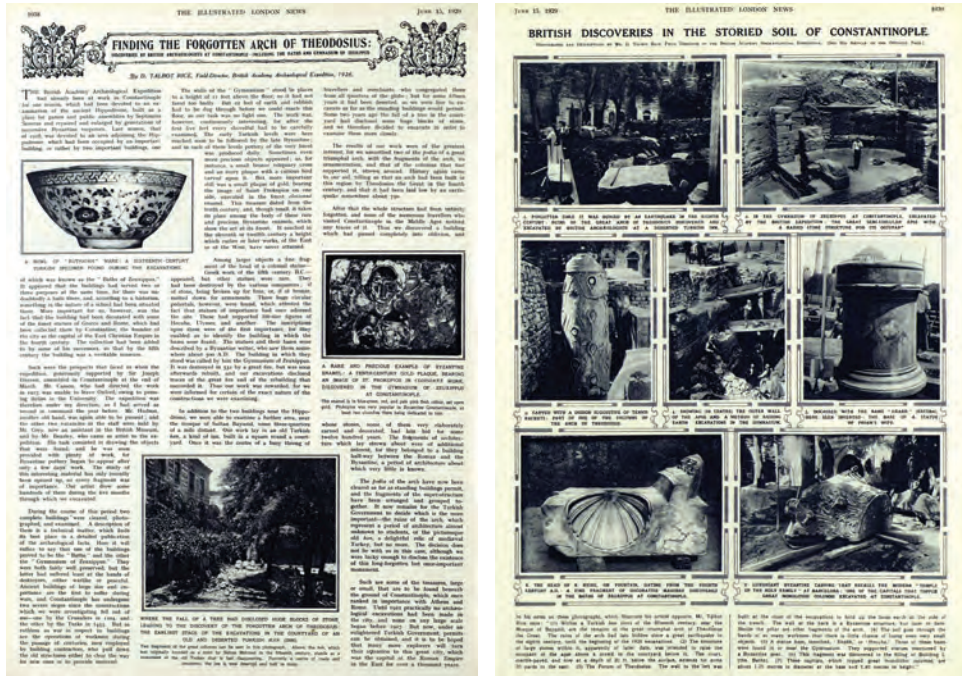


Fig. 6

Casson had begun the practice of engaging the public with updates of the Hippodrome excavations;⁶⁴ he had even produced a radio broadcast for the BBC on the 1927 season, capitalizing on the listening public’s newfound fascination with archaeology.⁶⁵ The advertisement that appeared in the *Radio Times* declared:

No city in Europe, except possibly Rome, has more secrets to yield to the archaeologist than Constantinople, which was the capital of the world when London was no more than a village, a fort, and a ford. Mr. Casson [...] has some interesting stories about their finds.⁶⁶

Talbot Rice followed suit, and frequent dispatches were sent to *The Times* and *The Illustrated London News*, illustrated with photographs taken from the excavation. The spreads produced, such as the article on the Forum of Theodosius with photographs of the excavation published in *The Illustrated London News* on 15 June 1929 (fig. 6), brought the adventure of archaeology and the world of the Byzantine Empire to life

⁶⁴ S. Casson, “Constantinople Hippodrome”, *The Times*, 18 November 1926, p. 15-16, 18; id., “The Hippodrome of Constantinople”, *Discovery* 9.99, March 1928, p. 69-73.

⁶⁵ On the use of radio to communicate archaeological finds, see A. Thornton, *Archaeologists in Print: Publishing for the People*, London, 2018, p. 42-43; J. Lewis, *Mediating the Past: BBC Radio Archaeology Broadcasting, 1922-1966*, PhD thesis, Bournemouth University, 2021.

⁶⁶ “Mr. Stanley Casson: Digging up Old Stamboul”, *Radio Times* 220, 16 December 1927, p. 592.



Fig. 7

for the British public. The two seasons at the Hippodrome were important not for their momentous finds, but for what they revealed about the infrastructure and urban topography of Byzantine Constantinople – as with Ramsay, this would continue as a theme of Talbot Rice’s work – especially with the discovery of the Baths of Zeuxippos, the focus of the 1928 season (fig. 7). Although hopes were high that remains of the expansive collection of Classical statuary held in the Baths would be uncovered only fragments remained, hinting at the extent of famed collection.⁶⁷

The lack of large finds had little effect on Talbot Rice’s enthusiasm, and he instead fostered a keen interest in what at the time were considered only “minor finds”, the ceramics. In 1930, he wrote of the 1927 and 1928 excavations:

More important in the history of art were numerous fragments of glazed pottery which, when considered together with those of the previous year, enabled us to undertake a detailed classification of the material. They showed that the ceramic art of Byzantium was one which can be considered on equal terms with those of Persia, Egypt or Italy.⁶⁸

This classification was included in the 1928 and 1929 preliminary reports on the excavation,⁶⁹ and served as the basis for Talbot Rice’s pioneering book *Byzantine Glazed*

⁶⁷ D. T. Rice, “British Excavations at Constantinople”, *Antiquity* 4, 1930, p. 415-420.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 417.

⁶⁹ D. T. Rice, “The Byzantine Pottery”, in *Preliminary Report Upon the Excavations Carried Out in the Hippodrome of Constantinople in 1927 on Behalf of the British Academy*, London, 1928, p. 29-42; *id.*, “The Byzantine Pottery”, in *Second Report Upon the Excavations Carried Out in and Near the Hippodrome of Constantinople in 1928 on Behalf of the British Academy*, London, 1929, p. 22-35.

Pottery published in 1930, which for the first time described a means of dating and classifying such objects. As demonstrated by the photographs of the ceramic finds, many of which he included in his publications, Talbot Rice's interest was not only in the most complete or decorated pieces of pottery, as had long been the focus of antiquarian scholars, but in creating diagnostic assemblages. Influenced by the methodological shifts Flinders Petrie (1853-1942) had introduced in Egyptology and the social and intellectual movements of interwar Britain which were increasingly challenging a rigid class system and wealth inequality, Talbot Rice's focus on mundane artifacts was revolutionary. By creating a framework for the archaeology of everyday life, he deliberately shifted the scholarly lens from the emperors and elites of Constantinople to the empire's ordinary people, introducing a new social-historical approach to the Byzantine world. He attempted to create a framework for the examination of the archaeology of every-day Byzantine life.⁷⁰

This approach had already been filtering into academic institutions. Archaeologists such as Vere Gordon Childe, influenced by historical materialism, began to view the past through the lens of class struggle, economic development, and social systems. Childe had been named the Abercromby Professor of Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh in 1927 and would pave the way for the processual/post-processual debates that dominated the 1970s and 1980s. While seemingly not as politically radical as Childe (or at least leaving no evidence of it),⁷¹ it is possible to see an increasing evolution in Talbot Rice's interests towards issues of labour and cross-cultural interaction. After he joined Edinburgh as the Watson Gordon Chair of Fine Art, he even travelled with Childe to St Petersburg in 1935 for the Third International Congress of Iranian Art. This would foreshadow the key role Talbot Rice, along with his wife Tamara (1904-1993),⁷² would play in obtaining objects from Russia for the 1958 exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, *Masterpieces of Byzantine Art*, against the backdrop of the Cold War. The 1935 Congress would prove formative for both scholars.⁷³

Talbot Rice's participation in the Iranian Congress reflected his interdisciplinary approach to Byzantium. By 1931, he had become close to Leigh Ashton (1897-1983), the Assistant Keeper of Ceramics at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Ashton invited him to help mount the Royal Academy's exhibition on Persian Art, in conjunction with the Second International Congress of Iranian Art held at Burlington House in London in 1931, the same year Talbot Rice served as a committee member for the Exposition Internationale d'Art Byzantin in Paris. Talbot Rice not only became the

⁷⁰ See A. C. Kelley, "Byzantium from Below: The Archive of David Talbot Rice and the Unearthing of Constantinople", in O. Delouis and B. Pitarakis (eds.), *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul: Scholars, Institutions, and Challenges, 1800-1955*, Istanbul, 2022, p. 277-300.

⁷¹ His archive held at the University of Birmingham is largely devoid of any personal writings.

⁷² Tamara had been born in Russia but fled to France, and eventually Britain, following the Russian Revolution.

⁷³ B. Trigger, "Childe and Soviet Archaeology", *Australian Archaeology* 18, 1984, p. 4.



Fig. 8

exhibition's lecturer but also gave a paper at the Congress entitled "The Influence of Persian Art on Byzantine Ceramics". At a conference where most scholars viewed Persian art as part of a linear and continuous "civilizational narrative" at the "nexus of the ancient Near East and Islamic Middle East",⁷⁴ Talbot Rice instead argued for diffusionism. At the Third Congress, he delivered a paper titled "Byzantine Elements in Iranian Art", where he discussed Iranian imitation of Byzantine motifs, frequently referencing Strzygowski.⁷⁵ While never outright advocating his racial theories, Talbot Rice was clearly attracted to the notion of cross-cultural influence. He would likewise promote this expansive view of Byzantium in his review of the 1931 Byzantine Exhibition for *The Illustrated London News*, which he explicitly tied to the Persian exhibition in London through the example of its textiles,⁷⁶ a prelude to his organization of *Masterpieces of Byzantine Art*.

Talbot Rice's reputation would eventually lead to his joining another important British excavation undertaken in Constantinople, the Walker Trust's excavations of the Great Palace (fig. 8).⁷⁷ The pursuit of the Great Palace had its origin in the period

⁷⁴ Y. Kadoi, "David Talbot Rice and Persian Art History", in M. Gibson (ed.), *Fruit of Knowledge, Wheel of Learning: Essays in Honour of Robert Hillenbrand*, London, 2022, p. 94.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁷⁶ D. T. Rice, "The Byzantine Exhibition: Certain of Its Gems Discussed", *The Illustrated London News*, 1 August 1931, p. 192-193.

⁷⁷ He would also undertake excavations of the Myrelaion (Bodrum Camii) in 1930; see A. C. Kelley, "Byzantium from Below...", p. 290-293.



Fig. 9

leading up to World War I and was borne out of biblical narrative. The driving force behind the excavations was not an archaeologist, or even a scholar, but the failed businessman and spiritualist Wellesley Tudor Pole (1884-1968). The backstory to the Great Palace excavations is a strange tale that has been comprehensively detailed by Lenia Kouneni,⁷⁸ but it started with a vision Tudor Pole had which he claimed depicted the library of Justinian beneath the ruins of the Great Palace, filled with manuscripts and relics from the time of Christ. In 1912, Tudor Pole met the Scottish paper baron and philanthropist Sir David Russell (1872-1956), who had a mutual interest in the occult. Tudor Pole shared the details of his vision with Russell and convinced him to fund excavations, known as “The Quest”.

In order to give “The Quest” a more acceptable and respectable veneer, Russell sought affiliation with the University of St Andrews, which had been the recipient of his benefaction through the Walker Trust for years, and brought on the ecclesiastical historian James H. Baxter (1894-1973) to lead the mission,⁷⁹ but the excavation itself would not start until 1935, almost immediately uncovering the famous mosaics (fig. 9). Excavators continued in the tradition of Talbot Rice in recording and analysing the small finds, particularly the pottery but also brick stamps. The pottery typologies

⁷⁸ L. Kouneni, “‘By Scottish Munificence’: The Walker Trust Excavations of the Great Palaces in Istanbul, 1935-1955”, in O. Delouis and B. Pitarakis (eds.), *Discovering Byzantium in Istanbul...*, p. 237-274.

⁷⁹ Talbot Rice had also been raised as a possibility to lead the excavations.

would form an entire chapter of the eventual 1947 publication.⁸⁰ The Great Palace excavations were a culmination of archaeological advancements that had begun with Ramsay and continued into the 1930s. Of the results of the Walker Trust Excavations, alongside a column written by Baxter on the mosaic, *The Times* would report:

Slowly but surely the East Roman Empire is coming to its own. Gone are the days when its decorative art and even at times its architecture were despised by the classicists: when historians (and politicians) habitually used the adjective “Byzantine” for a combination of pomp and servility, and dismissed the Eastern Caesars as dull rulers of ignoble Levantines who occupied themselves chiefly with religious disputations and the search for likely winners in the next chariot races. Such was the Victorian notion of Byzance [...]. Eminent historians and art critics have at last persuaded the educated British public to look with unprejudiced eyes on the Rome of Constantine and Justinian; to admire its art, to acknowledge our debt to a formal yet vigorous civilization in which the professional layman, soldier, lawyer, or Civil servant still flourished, while the rest of Europe was infested by ramshackle barbarians and administered by incompetent amateurs ...⁸¹

The foreign office would eventually become heavily involved in the excavation, especially as the personal relationships of those involved in the excavations began to fall apart due to professional jealousy and soaring costs. A letter from Russell’s lawyer in Istanbul, William J. Perkins, even warned “that there is the important question of the prestige of British archaeological enterprises present and future”.⁸² When the excavations resumed in the 1950s, it was under the direction of Talbot Rice, who continued to present the work of the project to the public.⁸³ But through the work of these excavations, and their presentation to the public, Byzantine studies solidified an interdisciplinary academic identity in Britain.

Epilogue: Espionage and institutionalization

Throughout these years, the British government remained selective in their engagement with the archaeology of the East Mediterranean. State interest had been growing since the completion of the Suez Canal in 1869 because of the access it offered to India, resulting in a process of gradual imperial expansion into Ottoman

⁸⁰ R. B. K. Stevenson, “The Pottery”, in G. Brett, W. J. Macaulay, and R. B. K. Stevenson (eds.), *The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors, Being a First Report on the Excavations Carried Out in Istanbul on Behalf of the Walker Trust (The University of St. Andrews) 1935-1938*, Oxford, 1947, p. 31-62.

⁸¹ “Treasures of Byzance”, *The Times*, 28 October 1935, p. 15.

⁸² Letter from Perkins to Russell dated 23 August 1938; University of St Andrews Walker Trust Archives, MS38515/12/6/2.

⁸³ The Walker Trust would also support Talbot Rice’s later work in Trebizond, detailed in the archives of the Walker Trust within the University of St Andrews; Talbot Rice would refer to it as the Russell Trust in D. T. Rice, *The Church of Hagia Sophia at Trebizond*, Edinburgh, 1968, p. v.

lands; Britain took administrative control of Cyprus in 1878 (officially annexed in 1914), established the British Protectorate in Egypt in 1882, and the British Mandate in Palestine and Transjordan in 1922. Recent studies have shown how a series of excavations, supported by British authorities, had doubled as intelligence gathering operations, with many of those involved going on to serve at the Arab Bureau in Cairo during World War I.⁸⁴ These expeditions also served an ideological function, however, offering Britain opportunities to promote their advancement of imperial science and prestige, while also promoting the Christian history of politically strategic regions. The cultural and moral justification this provided for Britain's political interests highlighted how archaeology became an important tool in legitimizing British political intervention in the region and asserting historical claims over Ottoman territory. The British government came to see the power of promoting foreign archaeology not only to create cultural links, but also to justify their presence as inheritors of "Western" heritage.⁸⁵ In many ways Ramsay's work provided the bridge. In 1895 and 1897, during his period of recovery from cholera, he published *The Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia* in which he examined the historical geography of the region from the ancient through the Byzantine eras, with a particular focus on the epigraphic and archaeological evidence of the development of Christian communities. Highlighting the Christian heritage of regions largely under Muslim control, the archaeology provided a further basis for legitimization, connecting early Christian imperial power of Byzantium to Western Christianity and, by extension, the modern British state.

In the aftermath of World War I, Anatolia formed an integral part of British post-war planning for the wider Mediterranean region, with British officials expressing the need to maintain influence in the Middle East to create "a chain of friendly states stretching from the confines of Europe to the frontier of the Indian Empire".⁸⁶ Istanbul's strategic location, seen as a "gateway to Arabia",⁸⁷ made the new Turkish Republic

⁸⁴ L. Meskell, "Imperialism, Internationalism, and Archaeology in the Un/Making of the Middle East", *American Anthropologist* 122.3, 2020, p. 554-567; J. J. Moscrop, *Measuring Jerusalem: The Palestine Exploration Fund and British Interests in the Holy Land*, London, 2000; T. Richter, "Espionage and Near Eastern Archaeology: A Historiographical Survey", *Public Archaeology* 7.4, 2008, p. 212-240; P. Satia, *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East*, Oxford, 2008, p. 34-36; A. Ulbrich and Th. Kiely, "Britain and the Archaeology of Cyprus. I. The Long 19th Century", *Cahiers du centre d'études chypriotes* 42.1, 2012, p. 305-356; Th. Kiely, "Britain and the Archaeology of Cyprus. II. 1914 to the Present Day", *Cahiers du centre d'études chypriotes* 47, 2017, p. 253-310; D. Reynolds, "An Imperial Eden: Archaeology, the Negev Desert and the European Rediscovery of Byzantium", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, forthcoming; id., *The Development of Byzantine Archaeology...* Many, such as Bell, William Calder (1881-1960), and David Hogarth (1862-1927) had travelled with Ramsay before the war.

⁸⁵ See A. C. Kelley, "'Thus the Work Goes On...'", for a bibliography.

⁸⁶ Earl of Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon, Being the Authorized Biography of George Nathaniel Marquess Curzon of Kedleston*, vol. 3, London, 1928, p. 209.

⁸⁷ P. Satia, *Spies in Arabia...*, p. 13.

and surrounding regions key to this aim, and it remained so throughout the Interwar years; as David Talbot Rice himself acknowledged in diplomatic correspondence towards the end of World War II:

The whole of our policy in the Balkans was associated with the major British aim of securing the Mediterranean as a British Highway and that, in furtherance of this policy, it was the object of the H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] to orientate the Mediterranean countries towards Britain and away from Russia.⁸⁸

The British government had already been working for decades to create the notion of an informal empire within the popular imagination of the British public. William Gladstone had used Ottoman violence against the Christian Bulgarians in the lead up to the 1878 Russo-Turkish War to turn public sentiment away from the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, which had taken a stance of non-intervention, and cultivated an image of British imperialism in the Middle East through friendly governments and military presence as the protector of Christianity in British self-identity.⁸⁹ The archaeology of the Christian Middle East only served as further historical legitimation, and the officials kept a close eye on the British archaeologists working in Istanbul. There was even discussion of establishing a British School in Istanbul amongst officials at the Foreign Office and British School at Athens, driven by David Russell, although it would not come to fruition.⁹⁰

Turkey's neutrality during World War II only increased its importance and meant Istanbul was an ideal centre for foreign intelligence; the British established several footholds there. First was the Foreign Office, represented by the embassy, which had already been deeply involved in the work of archaeologists. Second was a branch of the Special Operations Executive, established as a department of espionage; David Talbot Rice would be a Lt. Col. in the Special Operations Executive on the Balkan desk. Third, the Ministry of Information was established to produce British propaganda in Turkey, and counted Leigh Ashton, previously the curator of Textiles at the V&A who had involved Talbot Rice in exhibitions, as the Turkish Press Officer. Tamara Talbot Rice served in its London offices. Likewise, the British Council had been established in 1934 to counter German and Italian cultural propaganda, and in the 1940s, under Michael Grant (1914-2004), began looking to place British academics in positions at Turkish Universities; Sir Steven Runciman (1903-2000) was named as the Byzantine Art History Chair at Istanbul University. David Abulafia summed up rumours as to the nature of Runciman's position thus: "Once again we should conclude that he was

⁸⁸ The National Archives, Kew HS 5/154.

⁸⁹ M. Tusan, "Britain and the Middle East: New Historical Perspectives on the Eastern Question", *History Compass* 8.3, 2010, p. 213.

⁹⁰ L. Kouneni, "The Walker Trust Excavations...", p. 257.

something more than a professor of Byzantine studies, even if it would be absurd to cast him in the role of James Bond”.⁹¹

The British did establish an institute in Turkey, not in Istanbul, but in Ankara with John Garstang (1876-1956), who had worked closely with military intelligence in Palestine, as its first director in 1947.⁹² Garstang had been appointed the director of the British School of Archaeology at Jerusalem (now the Kenyon Institute) upon its founding in 1919 with the support of the Palestine Exploration Fund, but in Anatolia his interest was focused on the Hittites; his successor from 1949, Seton Lloyd (1902-1996), was also primarily interested in the prehistoric periods. Nevertheless, the establishment of the British Institute at Ankara solidified the role of British archaeologists in the region, and of Byzantine studies in Britain. In a 1969 letter to the Universities Grants Commission, Talbot Rice would advocate for the creation of a research centre dedicated to Byzantium at a British University, and named the University of Birmingham as the ideal location for it;⁹³ the Centre for Byzantine Studies was subsequently founded there in 1976.⁹⁴ So while the work of early British Byzantine historians like Baynes, Bury, and Toynbee deserve due credit for “rescuing” Byzantine studies in Britain from obscurity, it was the adventurous work of early archaeologists, whose activities often aligned with Britain’s geopolitical ambitions (whether conscious or not) that captivated public interest and gave Byzantine studies its disciplinary identity in Britain. Their innovative efforts can serve as an inspiration to scholars now, at a time when Byzantine studies once again finds itself threatened with marginalization within British academia.

⁹¹ D. Abulafia, “Sir Steven Runciman (1903-2000): A Memoir”, *Mediterranean Studies* 9, 2000, p. 6.

⁹² A. Thornton, “Tents, Tours, and Treks: Archaeologists, Antiquities Services, and Tourism in Mandate Palestine and Transjordan”, *Public Archaeology* 11.4, 2012, p. 195-216.

⁹³ This letter hung in the Whitting Room at the University of Birmingham until the room was closed for building works in 2023.

⁹⁴ Ottoman Studies was added in 1984, and Modern Greek Studies in 1988 to form the Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies. A. Bryer, “Byzantine and Modern Greek...”, p. 21-22.

Byzance dans le Cône Sud au temps du Premier Congrès international des études byzantines

Pablo Ubierna

Abstract: The article examines the presence of Byzantium in the cultural and artistic life of Buenos Aires from the late nineteenth century to the early interwar period, and traces the beginnings of an academic tradition fostered by the efforts of Clemente Ricci and the visit of Charles Diehl following the Bucharest Congress of 1924. That same year, Diehl delivered several lectures at the University of Buenos Aires and at the National Museum of Fine Arts. His visit contributed to the creation of the first research centre for ancient and medieval history (including Byzantium) at the University of Buenos Aires.

Keywords: Argentine, Byzantine studies, Theodora, Charles Diehl, Clemente Ricci, University of Buenos Aires

Le Cône Sud. Même si l'expression « Cône Sud » évoque les exploits de Saint-Exupéry, de *Vol de nuit* et des héros de l'Aéropostale, elle semble plus naturelle en anglais – *Southern Cone* – ou, du moins, y posséder une plus grande tradition littéraire, notamment dans les domaines de la sociologie et des sciences politiques. Cette hésitation aurait peut-être justifié une présentation en anglais, mais grâce au caractère bilingue du colloque, le choix du français s'est rapidement et naturellement imposé. En effet, ce que j'ai à dire constitue aussi, dans une large mesure, un chapitre de la francophonie au bout du monde.

Il était particulièrement opportun d'évoquer le Cône Sud dans le cadre d'une rencontre académique consacrée au Congrès de 1924. En effet, à cette époque – *more antiquo* – le Sud était encore un Sud purement géographique. Même s'il pouvait présenter de nombreuses spécificités culturelles selon les régions, il n'était pas encore cet espace ambigu auquel nous faisons aujourd'hui référence avec des expressions

telles que *Global South*¹. Cela dit, mon propre Cône Sud n'est qu'une fiction parmi d'autres, puisque, dans une synecdoque tout à fait invalide, je ne parlerai que de l'Argentine – et, en son sein, d'une seule ville, Buenos Aires –, ainsi que de la manière dont le Congrès de Bucarest y a été accueilli.

Buenos Aires et Bucarest : on peut dire que tout a commencé avec les diplomates-écrivains, tels que Paul Morand, qui nous ont laissé des descriptions vivantes de leurs séjours dans ces deux capitales. Une histoire tissée de regards oniriques, qui ont bercé tant d'exilés et leurs rêves d'un retour qui ne viendrait jamais. Là où les voyageurs établirent des correspondances entre l'architecture et l'espace artistique de Buenos Aires et de Bucarest – les deux pôles, disait-on à l'époque, d'une société de cafés, de théâtres et de librairies, dans lesquels résonnent toujours les mille voix de mille langues différentes².

J'imagine que cela a en grande partie résonné dans l'esprit de ceux qui ont lu dans la presse arrivée à Buenos Aires la tenue d'un Premier Congrès international des études byzantines à Bucarest en 1924. Et ces échos résonnaient sur un fond de plusieurs décennies de présence byzantine dans la vie artistique de la ville, qui allait ensuite se développer et faire le saut vers les études universitaires.

Ce qui suit est l'histoire de quelque chose qui aurait pu être, mais qui n'a pas été : le développement partiellement raté d'une tradition académique sur Byzance, laquelle ne prit forme que de manière limitée et constitua un mince cordon ombilical reliant la génération universitaire argentine des années 1920 aux chercheurs des décennies suivantes. C'est enfin un chapitre supplémentaire dans l'enracinement complexe des humanités universitaires dans un pays qui, en revanche, connaît un grand développement dans les sciences naturelles et biologiques, et d'où émergeront plusieurs Prix Nobel en Sciences³. Là où certaines traditions ont connu un développement modéré mais sérieux, comme les études sur l'Égypte ancienne – doublées de campagnes archéologiques menées avec des collègues français –, l'histoire médiévale des royaumes de Castille et de León et de l'Italie du centre-nord ainsi que la philologie classique, et la philosophie ancienne et médiévale – ce qui était

¹ Qui avec une généralisation abusive, voire biaisée, en tant que domaine académique, mêle l'Inde au Chili et la Chine à l'Uruguay.

² C'est une parabole qui s'étend sur un siècle, un bel arc, un degré de courbure, dont l'œuvre de Mircea Cărtărescu nous rappelle l'actualité et la pertinence. Des livres tels que *Solénoïde* ou *La Nostalgie* transforment ces rapports en une métaphore de nous-mêmes : les rues de Bucarest, ses banlieues, le spleen, les filles avec des ailes de papillon, les risques pris par *Le Roulettiste*, qui ne sont pas sans rappeler les aléas de *La Loterie à Babylone* de Jorge Luis Borges, ou même le partage de la profondeur complexe du *dor*, un concept et un mot qui s'accordent parfaitement avec le lyrisme de notre poésie et de notre musique urbaine. Tout nous est finalement proche, reconnaissable, intime.

³ G. Jaim Etcheverry, *Houssay, Leloir, Milstein. Científicos Nobel argentinos*, Buenos Aires, 2017 ; M. de Asúa, « La gran tradición. Los logros de la escuela argentina de fisiología, bioquímica y biología celular », *Ciencia Hoy* 16, n° 94, 2006, p. 9-19 [réimpression dans id., *Más allá del experimento. Risas, razones e historias de la ciencia en la Argentina*, Buenos Aires, 2025, p. 139-151].

clairement visible pour nous, jeunes étudiants, à travers l'existence de bibliothèques de travail relativement bien fournies et un réseau de contacts internationaux –, les études sur Byzance, par contre, ne se sont guère développées, réduites à une faible présence dans les plans d'études et dans l'offre de séminaires sporadiques. C'est donc cette humble histoire que retrace l'étude qui suit.

Pendant les premières décennies du XIX^e siècle, la formation intellectuelle, inspirée des Lumières, des révolutionnaires des années 1810 qui menèrent la guerre d'indépendance contre la couronne espagnole ne contenait guère plus que des mentions négatives de Byzance. En revanche, un peu plus tard, on remarque une bonne connaissance de Justinien, de Théophile *antecessor*, et les inévitables lectures de Procope par des avocats formés à la Faculté de Droit, sous l'enseignement de bons hellénistes tels que Mariano Larsen (1821-1894) et notamment l'Italien Matias Calandrelli (1845-1919)⁴. Ce n'était pas grand-chose, mais cela marquait les premiers signes d'un public lettré, au moins intéressé par certains aspects de l'histoire byzantine, et annonçait ce qui allait suivre. Et ce qui a suivi fut, vers la fin du siècle, l'apparition de Byzance sur la scène artistique et culturelle de Buenos Aires, une évolution que l'on peut résumer en quelques jalons⁵.

Tout d'abord, il convient de mentionner l'achat et l'installation, dans le nouveau zoo de la ville, d'un ensemble de pièces appelées *Le Portique byzantin*. Le zoo de Buenos Aires a été fondé en 1888 sur 18 hectares, au cœur des Bois de Palermo, dans la partie nord de la ville. Aujourd'hui, il a été transformé en un éco-parc interactif qui préserve 42 bâtiments, classés monuments historiques, reflétant l'architecture classique des pays d'origine des espèces qui les occupaient. C'est pourquoi l'ensemble présente une grande diversité de styles architecturaux (chinois, hindou, mauresque et gréco-romain). De plus, il compte neuf ponts et trois lacs. Dans l'un d'eux, sur une petite île, se dresse le *Portique byzantin* (fig. 1).

Il y a quelques années, avec mon collègue Diego M. Santos, nous avons eu l'occasion d'étudier un groupe de six colonnes, ainsi que leurs chapiteaux et bases, acquis par Eduardo Schiaffino (1858-1935) à Venise au début du siècle dernier⁶.

⁴ Sur le territoire actuel de la République Argentine, l'*Universidad de Córdoba* (dans la ville du même nom) est la seule à avoir été fondée à l'époque coloniale (1613). L'*Universidad de Buenos Aires* (1821), l'*Universidad del Litoral* (Santa Fe, 1889), l'*Universidad de La Plata* (1897) et l'*Universidad de Tucumán* (1914) furent les autres universités fondées durant la période couverte par cette étude. Il est à noter que la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Buenos Aires, la première du pays, ne sera fondée qu'en 1896.

⁵ Étant arrivés à ce point, nous pourrions envisager une autre direction. Notre récit pourrait se poursuivre avec l'apparition, au début du XX^e siècle, d'une série d'églises orthodoxes ou catholiques de rite oriental, issues de divers courants migratoires, mais cela relèverait d'une autre étude. Si l'on ose une comparaison, peut-être excessive, dans le sillage de Raoul Glaber qui, au début du XI^e siècle, évoquait le « blanc manteau des églises », on pourrait dire, pour la Buenos Aires des premières décennies du XX^e siècle, qu'elle se paraît d'un « manteau doré de coupoles ».

⁶ D. M. Santos et P. Ubierna, *Informe preliminar elevado a la Comisión Nacional de Monumentos*



Fig. 1. Portique Byzantin, Eco-Parque (ancien Zoo), Buenos Aires.
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Schiaffino, peintre raffiné et fondateur du Musée national des beaux-arts, fut envoyé en Europe par le gouvernement national au début du XX^e siècle avec un budget considérable pour l'achat d'œuvres d'art et d'antiquités. Il s'agissait d'un financement véritablement colossal – qui aurait pu couvrir de coûteuses expéditions archéologiques – et que Schiaffino allait dilapider.

Eduardo Schiaffino, en tant que correspondant d'un journal de Buenos Aires pendant ses études à Paris, avait rédigé la critique de la première de *Théodora* de Victorien Sardou en 1884, et il fut, dès lors, fasciné par Byzance. Néanmoins, en ce qui concerne l'achat d'art ancien, médiéval et oriental en Europe, il n'était pas l'homme le mieux qualifié pour la tâche qui lui était confiée. Pendant la même période, le naturaliste Clemente Onelli (romain de naissance et de formation) achetait des pièces

sobre el llamado "Pórtico Bizantino" del Ecoparque Interactivo de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, 2018 (inédit). En plus de nos propres observations, nous avons utilisé, pour ce rapport préliminaire, les références documentaires de *Cronología de la adquisición de columnas y de su instalación en el Zoo de la ciudad de Buenos Aires* qui nous ont été fournies par le Licenciado Pablo Chiesa, de la *Comisión Nacional de Monumentos, de lugares y de bienes históricos*. La seule étude approfondie est celle de D. Schavelzon, « El Pórtico Bizantino del Jardín Zoológico de Buenos Aires. Una reflexión sobre nosotros mismos », dans D. Schavelzon (éd.), *El Pórtico Bizantino del Jardín Zoológico de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, 2013, p. 17-81, avec des références bibliographiques aux travaux plus anciens.

de très bonne qualité pour divers musées publics, et Juan Bautista Ambrosetti faisait de même pour le Musée ethnographique de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Buenos Aires. Des collectionneurs privés tels que Matías Errázuriz et son épouse, Josefina de Alvear, acquéraient également en Europe et dans l'Empire ottoman des pièces de premier ordre, aujourd'hui exposées dans les musées de Buenos Aires. Ce ne fut malheureusement pas le cas de Schiaffino en ce qui concerne les antiquités⁷.

Il est manifeste que les colonnes, les chapiteaux et les vestiges de la fontaine ont été exécutés par une même main peu habile, révélant d'évidentes difficultés techniques dans la reproduction d'éléments de l'Antiquité tardive, en particulier pour les chapiteaux. Il est fort probable que les colonnes soient des créations fantaisistes, produites à une époque relativement proche de leur acquisition. Il en va de même pour la fontaine, qui a très certainement été fabriquée à la même période.

Dans la première moitié du XX^e siècle, des pièces imitant l'Antiquité ou purement fantaisistes ont été produites en Italie pour orner les jardins et même les intérieurs des maisons nord-américaines. Sur des marchés plus vastes que le nôtre, des importateurs comme W. H. Jackson Co., basé à New York et Chicago, ont importé ces matériaux en grande quantité et les ont même fabriqués localement pour répondre à la demande.

Je ne vais pas m'attarder sur la place qu'occupait Byzance dans l'imaginaire fin-de-siècle, puisqu'Olivier Delouis y a consacré des pages magistrales⁸, mais je vous dirai qu'une telle réception a également trouvé un écho dans le Río de la Plata. La décoration des colonnes, de la fontaine et de la structure en ciment – l'ensemble créant l'illusion d'une ruine – illustre bien la manière dont le public de Buenos Aires se représentait cette marge de l'Europe occidentale (Venise), à partir de laquelle commençait l'Orient. Cette référence à Venise est accentuée par la structure en ciment,

⁷ Les pièces acquises par Schiaffino doivent être considérées comme provenant de Venise et non de la région d'Istrie ou de Trieste, comme elles le sont souvent à tort. Dans une lettre adressée au maire de la ville, Carlos Torcuato de Alvear, datée du 27 février 1907, Schiaffino précise clairement l'origine des colonnes. Le matériau dans lequel elles ont été sculptées, le calcaire connu sous le nom de *pietra d'Istria* – clé de l'architecture vénitienne – a semé la confusion quant à leur provenance. Cela dit, étant un peintre d'excellente formation et de bon goût, il acheta des œuvres précieuses de Goya, Titien, Ribera, Murillo et El Greco pour le musée des Beaux-Arts ou des sculptures pour les parcs publics, comme une copie en bronze du *Penseur* de Rodin que l'on voit aujourd'hui sur la Plaza Lorea dans la ville de Buenos Aires. Cf. *Archivo Schiaffino*, Legajo 2, 1903-1907, Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), 4 pages, cité par P. V. Corsani, « Hermosear la ciudad: Ernesto de la Cárcova y el plan de obras para los espacios públicos de Buenos Aires », *Estudios e investigaciones en teoría e historia del arte* 2, 2007, p. 67-82, article qui mentionne aussi d'autres nouvelles parues dans les journaux de l'époque. Pour la documentation du voyage en Europe, cf. « Misión Schiaffino en Europa (1904-1908) », *Fondo Eduardo Schiaffino*, Área de Documentación y Registro, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires.

⁸ O. Delouis, « Byzance sur la scène littéraire française (1870-1920) », dans M.-F. Auzèpy (éd.), *Byzance en Europe*, Saint-Denis, 2003, p. 101-151.

moulée avec des armoiries de style vénitien et surmontée de ce qui semble être une vue frontale du *cornu ducale*⁹.

Il s'agit d'un ensemble factice, exotique et surchargé, mais qui constitue en même temps un pont vers un passé du Vieux Monde avec lequel l'Argentine a cherché à établir un lien et à s'identifier. Ce n'est donc pas un hasard si l'on y trouve une inscription témoignant de cette intention. Conçue dans une écriture épigraphique d'aspect médiéval, celle-ci ne présente d'ailleurs aucune difficulté de lecture¹⁰ : IC XC CIVES PENTAPOLIS IN TVRREM ASCENDITE. Après l'abréviation onciale courante du grec Ἰησοῦς Χριστός (« Jésus-Christ »), le reste de l'inscription indique en latin : *cives Pentapolis in turrem ascendite*, « Citoyens de la Pentapole, montez à la tour ». Il s'agit d'une citation non littérale du *Cronicon Altinate*, un texte de XII^e-XIII^e siècles, connu sous le titre *Origo gentium Italiae seu Venetiarum*. Ce n'est pas une véritable chronique, mais plutôt une compilation de documents et de légendes sur l'émergence de Venise et l'origine des Vénitiens¹¹.

Ce texte tente de donner à Venise une origine légendaire, en la rattachant aux anciennes villes de la région – et à son passé classique – à travers l'exode massif de leurs habitants, fuyant une invasion des païens venus de l'Est. Cet exode aurait ainsi donné naissance à la nouvelle ville. Alors que les barbares s'approchaient de leur cité d'origine, une voix céleste se fit entendre, proclamant en latin : *In turrem ascendite, ad astra autem videte*, « Montez sur la tour, contemplez les étoiles ». Ce présage permit aux habitants de s'échapper. Dans une Buenos Aires où les études classiques et médiévales demeuraient encore empreintes d'un dilettantisme littéraire¹² – l'essai

⁹ En principe, elle ne correspond pas – comme on pourrait s'y attendre en raison de la couronne – aux armoiries d'un doge, bien qu'elle soit similaire, en raison de la rose qui s'y trouve, à celles de Carlo Ruzzini, souverain entre 1732 et 1735. La fontaine présente également des armoiries vénitiennes – notamment par les caractéristiques générales du bouclier –, mais celles-ci sont en assez mauvais état et n'ont pas pu être identifiées.

¹⁰ L'inscription, qualifiée d'« exotique » et ayant suscité le désir d'y voir une version altérée, mérite quelques notes. Elle pourrait constituer l'élément le plus intéressant de la série. D. Schavelzon (« El pórtico bizantino », p. 41-43) n'a pas pu la lire correctement, ce qui a entraîné de nombreuses erreurs d'interprétation.

¹¹ Ş. Marin, « Considerations regarding the Place of *Chronicon Altinate* in the Venetian historical writing », *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 51, 2013, p. 83-103, et aussi A. Divjak, « The motif of warning birds in Attila's siege of Aquileia and its survival and transformation in the *Origo civitatum Italiae seu venetiarum (Chronicon Altinate et Chronicon Gradense)*, *La Cronaca di Marco and Chronica extensa* by Andrea Dandolo », *Acta Histriae* 21, n° 4, 2013, p. 493-512.

¹² À la fin du XIX^e siècle, les universités du monde occidental adoptaient le modèle allemand de recherche et d'enseignement, qui incluait naturellement les humanités. Cela marqua un tournant pour le nouveau projet universitaire, surtout aux États-Unis : faire de la *scholarship* un mode de vie, en la séparant des modes de vie rentiers des élites lettrées. Il est intéressant de noter que cette distinction ne figurait pas dans les considérations de la fondation de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Buenos Aires (la première du pays) en 1896, qui était conçue comme un espace pour la revitalisation spirituelle de l'élite locale, une approche esthétisante qui ne nécessitait

étant le genre dominant et la connaissance scientifique encore limitée –, le recours à un texte rarement cité, issu d'éditions pas toujours accessibles dans les bibliothèques locales, et son utilisation dans un contexte pertinent constituent un mérite certain¹³.

Un deuxième aspect important réside dans la fonction de l'inscription, qui constitue une clé de compréhension du monument dans le contexte de la forte présence de l'immigration vénitienne. Buenos Aires y est présentée comme une nouvelle ville qui, par ordre divin – la citation attribuée à Jésus-Christ dans les « ruines » du zoo était, dans le texte latin original, prononcée par une divinité anonyme –, a été peuplée et destinée à un grand avenir. Ces ruines, situées au milieu du lac, représentent une ville antique, probablement parallèle à Altinum dans le texte, mais correspondant à Venise (le Vieux Monde ?) dans un nouveau contexte : une ville pillée et abandonnée, dont les habitants ont traversé les eaux pour s'établir dans une nouvelle cité, Buenos Aires¹⁴.

Bien que Schiaffino ait été trompé lors de son achat et que l'ensemble des pièces ait été pendant des décennies considéré comme « byzantin », il est intéressant de noter que son désir de posséder des pièces byzantines n'était pas anodin. En effet, il avait assuré le compte rendu de la première de *Théodora* de Victorien Sardou à Paris, dans un journal publié à Buenos Aires¹⁵. Schiaffino a également joué un rôle clé dans la présentation de l'œuvre de Sardou à Buenos Aires, dans le circuit du théâtre

pas de développement institutionnel (bibliothèques, chaires, séminaires) comme en Europe et aux États-Unis. Ernesto Quesada et Clemente Ricci s'opposèrent à cette approche, avec un succès variable, dans les décennies qui suivirent. Cf. C. Winterer, « Scholarship and Culture », dans id., *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780-1910*, Baltimore, 2004, p. 152-179, et pour l'Argentine, O. Terán, *Vida intelectual en el Buenos Aires fin-de-siglo (1880-1910)*, Buenos Aires, 2000. Pour le cas français, auquel nous reviendrons, voir maintenant P. Henriot et M. Veuille, « Les origines », dans P. Henriot (éd.), *L'École Pratique des Hautes Études. Invention, érudition, innovation de 1868 à nos jours*, Paris, 2018, p. 25-55.

¹³ Pour la formation des historiens en Argentine au tout début du XX^e siècle, voir P. Buchbinder, « ¿Qué debe saber un historiador? Reflexiones sobre los modelos curriculares y la enseñanza de la historia de la Argentina durante el siglo XX », *Clio & asociados* 15, 2011, p. 155-177. Il convient de souligner que le « Portique byzantin » fut installé dans l'ancien zoo de Buenos Aires à l'époque où le savant Clemente Onelli en assurait la direction.

¹⁴ L'inscription explique la disposition de la ruine – à l'origine parmi les arbres, envahie par la végétation – dans le lac. L'utilisation des colonnes, chapiteaux et fontaines vénitiennes acquis par Schiaffino pour la création de ce monument symbolique est, dans ce contexte, brillante. Il a été décidé d'incorporer l'origine vénitienne du matériau en pierre (et non byzantine), lui conférant ainsi un sens cohérent dans l'ensemble.

¹⁵ En 1884, Schiaffino reçoit une bourse du gouvernement pour se former en Europe. Il devient également correspondant de *El Diario*, un journal de Buenos Aires, ce qui lui rapporte un revenu supplémentaire. Cf. A. M. Telesca et J. E. Burucúa, « Schiaffino, corresponsal de El Diario en Europa (1884-1885). La lucha por la modernidad en la palabra y en la imagen », *Anales del Instituto de arte americano e investigaciones estéticas « Mario J. Buschiazzo »* (Buenos Aires) 27-28, 1989-1991, p. 65-73, et L. Malosetti Costa, *Los primeros modernos. Arte y sociedad en Buenos Aires a fines del siglo XIX*, Buenos Aires, 2001.

francophone, avec Sarah Bernhardt et sa compagnie en 1893, ainsi qu'à plusieurs reprises par la suite.

À cette époque, un nouveau jalon a été ajouté à la présence byzantine à Buenos Aires. Dans un article sur l'impératrice Théodora publié en 1907 – la même année que l'achat des supposées antiquités byzantines – la revue *Caras y Caretas* publiait une photo du tableau de Théodora de Jean Joseph Benjamin Constant (1845-1902), qui fut ensuite acheté par la famille Madariaga-Anchorena et offert au Musée National des Beaux-Arts en 1912¹⁶. Le tableau y restera exposé en permanence jusqu'au début des années 2010¹⁷ (fig. 2).

¹⁶ Voir maintenant *Benjamin-Constant. Merveilles et mirages de l'Orientalisme. Exposition coproduite par le Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal et le Musée des Augustins de Toulouse*, Montréal – Paris, 2014. Cette remarquable exposition n'a pas pu présenter la *Théodora* du Musée des Beaux-Arts de Buenos Aires, en raison de la suspension par l'Argentine des programmes de prêts internationaux à la suite du krach boursier (*ibid.*, p. 20).

¹⁷ M. Gálvez, « La donación Madariaga-Anchorena », *Nosotros* 7, n° 48, 1913, p. 203-204. À propos de ce tableau et de la figure de Théodora dans le public de Buenos Aires, cf. A. Viale, « La emperatriz Teodora en Buenos Aires. Las derivas de un mito », 2016, inédit. Après une quinzaine d'années, le tableau est de nouveau exposé depuis janvier 2025. Nous pourrions ici revenir à ce qui a été évoqué au début de ces pages concernant les relations entre Bucarest et Buenos Aires, au sein desquelles la redécouverte de la figure de Théodora constitue un chapitre à part. Celle-ci s'est opérée à partir de l'ouvrage *Théodora, le cadeau de Dieu*, que Marthe Bibesco lui a dédié en 1953 et qui fut lu à Buenos Aires, en principe, comme relevant du vaste univers proustien auquel appartenait l'autrice – un univers auquel se référaient aussi les grandes figures de la littérature argentine. Cf. B. Matamoro, « De la porteña Bucarest interbéllica », *Cuadernos hispanoamericanos* 642, 2003, p. 77-93. Dans le cas de l'article de Blas Matamoro, il s'agit d'un texte de grande qualité qui, il y a quelques années, ravivait dans la mémoire des lecteurs argentins les similitudes entre les deux capitales. La réception de l'œuvre de Marthe Bibesco s'explique également par la comparaison qu'elle établit entre l'impératrice et Eva Perón, décédée l'année précédant sa publication. Cette analogie entre Théodora et Évita, ainsi que la revalorisation des deux figures – peut-être inspirée des conversations sur le discours politique contemporain que Marthe Bibesco avait l'habitude d'entretenir avec Thomas Whittemore – s'installe dès lors comme un topos de la discussion sur Théodora. Dans le même sens, H.-G. Beck le mentionnera brièvement dans *Kaiserin Theodora und Prokop. Der Historiker und sein Opfer* (Munich, 1986), tandis qu'une synthèse de l'évolution littéraire de cette comparaison est proposée par S. Ronchey, « La 'femme fatale', source d'une byzantinologie austère », dans M.-F. Auzépy, *Byzance en Europe*, p. 153-175. Le sujet avait déjà été abordé, de manière plus restreinte, par Ronchey dans un texte antérieur : « La femme fatale bizantina », *Palaeoslavica* 10, n° 2, 2002, p. 103-115. Bien que comparer des sociétés si éloignées dans le temps et l'espace, et se concentrer sur les relations entre individus, puisse surprendre, le thème a perduré dans le champ académique. Il convient donc de signaler un dernier texte qui, sans doute en raison de sa contemporanéité, a échappé à l'excellente synthèse de Silvia Ronchey : C. Foss, « Theodora and Evita. Two Women in Power », dans C. Sode et S. Takács (éd.), *Novum Millenium. Studies on Byzantine History and Culture Dedicated to Paul Speck*, Farnham, 2001, p. 113-121. L'article de Clive Foss, un court essai publié dans un *liber amicorum* académique, demeure le seul texte d'une certaine envergure consacré à ce sujet. Clive Foss apparaît comme un historien intéressé par l'histoire politique argentine contemporaine, bien que ses références bibliographiques restent limitées à un petit ensemble de textes de vulgarisation en anglais. Enfin, l'audace de cette approche comparatiste se manifeste dans le fait que certains auteurs ont même tenté de relier ces deux figures au moyen de théories sur la réincarnation et la migration des âmes. Cf. L. Fischer-Pap, *Eva, Theodora: Evita Perón, Empress Theodora Reincarnated*,



Fig. 2. Jean Joseph Benjamin Constant. La Emperatriz Theodora. 1887. © Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Photo Wikipedia Commons

L'achat du tableau par des collectionneurs argentins et son exposition à Buenos Aires – bien qu'ils aient renforcé la présence de Byzance dans la capitale argentine – l'ont fait disparaître du regard international. Encore dans les années 1980, le grand Robert Browning disait :

It was no doubt the success of Sardou's play which led Benjamin Constant, a Belgian painter working in Paris and specializing in harem scenes for the tired businessmen of the Third Republic, to exhibit at the Salon of 1887 paintings of Justinian and Theodora, which attracted lively attention. Tastes change, however, and the portrait of Theodora was sold in London in 1909 for £378, and the next year for £ 52. Attempts to trace it have proved vain. It may well be lying forgotten in the cellars of some English provincial art-gallery¹⁸.

Dans le livre *Theodora* de David Potter, publié en 2015, la présence du tableau dans la collection du Musée National des Beaux-Arts de Buenos Aires a été rétablie¹⁹.

Ainsi, entre 1893 et 1912, la présence de Byzance sur la scène culturelle de Buenos Aires se renforça et se développa. C'est au cours de cette période que les études byzantines eurent, pour la première fois, l'occasion d'être pleinement intégrées à la discussion universitaire. En 1910, Ernesto Quesada – fils de diplomate, formé au Gymnasium et à l'université en Allemagne, puis docteur en droit à Paris²⁰ – publia un ouvrage fondamental, le fruit d'un voyage d'études effectué en Allemagne entre 1908 et 1909, qui aurait dû marquer l'histoire du débat sur les institutions universitaires en Argentine²¹. Or, ses recommandations – très importantes

Rockford, 1983. Pour revenir au problème initial, la lecture du texte de Marthe Bibesco, favorable à Eva Perón, dut surprendre une partie de l'intelligentsia argentine francophile et francophone, proustienne de surcroît, en grande partie opposée au gouvernement de Juan Domingo Perón, d'autant plus que l'un des termes de la comparaison, l'impératrice Théodora, occupait une place d'honneur au Musée national des Beaux-Arts dans le tableau de Benjamin-Constant.

¹⁸ R. Browning, *Justinian and Theodora*, New York, 1987, p. 172.

¹⁹ D. Potter, *Theodora. Actress, Empress, Saint*, Oxford, 2015, p. 210.

²⁰ T. Duve, « El contexto alemán del pensamiento de Ernesto Quesada », *Revista de historia del derecho* 30, 2002, p. 175-199.

²¹ E. Quesada, *La enseñanza de la historia en las universidades alemanas*, La Plata, 1910.

pour un possible renouveau des études – ne furent pas suivies²². Dans ce vaste rapport (plus de 1300 pages) sur l'enseignement de l'histoire dans les universités allemandes, la place de Byzance est prise en compte dans les différentes universités où un cours relatif à Byzance était proposé. Il décrit ainsi des cours dans diverses institutions, non seulement à Munich avec Krumbacher (qui devait mourir vers la fin de cette même année 1909) et Maas, mais aussi à Göttingen avec Bonwetsch, à Tübingen avec Kornemann, et même à Breslau avec Seger, pour ne citer que quelques exemples, sans compter la description des chaires de littérature chrétienne ancienne, de droit romain, de l'Orient chrétien, ou encore les descriptions très détaillées des chaires et séminaires d'histoire médiévale. Cependant, ce qui aurait pu n'être qu'une simple accumulation descriptive de chaires, séminaires, professeurs et bibliothèques – en elle-même une mine d'informations utiles pour l'Argentine de 1910 – Quesada le transforme en un projet institutionnel, nécessitant ces éléments pour être pleinement compris. C'est pourquoi, vers la fin de son long volume de plus de 1 300 pages, Quesada propose l'Institut de Lamprecht à Leipzig, établi en 1909, comme modèle de développement institutionnel (thématique, méthodologique, architectural et budgétaire)²³. Georges Le Gentil écrivait dans le compte rendu publié dans le *Bulletin hispanique* en 1912 :

Le gros volume où celui-ci a consigné, en rentrant d'Allemagne, le résultat de ses observations, marque dans le développement des universités sud-américaines une date importante. On peut, sans exagération, lui attribuer la portée d'un manifeste. Il ne s'agit plus, en effet, de répondre aux besoins immédiats d'un pays en voie d'organisation. Le corps enseignant de Buenos-Ayres forme depuis longtemps des avocats, des médecins et des ingénieurs. Mais il est permis à l'Argentine, maintenant qu'elle possède le

²² Quesada avait déjà publié un rapport sur la Faculté de droit de Paris, également à la demande des autorités locales. Cf. E. Quesada, *La facultad de Derecho de Paris. Estado actual de su enseñanza*, Buenos Aires, 1906.

²³ La proposition de Quesada s'est avérée plus que correcte, comme le temps le montrera. L'Institut de Lamprecht, fondé en 1909, a été intégré à la König-Friedrich-August-Gesellschaft, l'équivalent saxon de la société prussienne Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft (KWG), qui, elle, ne serait fondée qu'en 1911. Cet institut représentait l'exemple le plus moderne – et particulièrement singulier dans son contexte en raison de sa vocation universaliste – d'un long développement institutionnel des sciences humaines qui se déployait en Allemagne depuis la fin du XIX^e siècle. Cette structure institutionnelle serait finalement adoptée, dès sa fondation, dans les instituts de la KWG, puis maintenue au sein du Max Planck Institut, successeur de la KWG, et, par la suite, de l'Institute for Advanced Study de Princeton, qui a reproduit ce projet institutionnel. Cf. M. Schubert, « Zum Wirken Paul Fridolin Kehrs für ein deutsches historisches Zentralinstitut oder der lange Weg zum Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Deutsche Geschichte », dans B. vom Brocke et H. Laitko (éd.), *Die Kaiser-Wilhelm-/Max-Planck-Gesellschaft und ihre Institut. Das Harnack-Prinzip*, Berlin, 1996, p. 423-444. Sur l'œuvre de Lamprecht à Leipzig, voir M. Middell, *Weltgeschichtsschreibung im Zeitalter der Verfälschung und Professionalisierung: Das Leipziger Institut für Kultur- und Universalgeschichte 1890-1990*, Band 1. *Das Institut unter der Leitung Karl Lamprechts*, Berlin, 2005.

nécessaire, de se donner, comme les nations du vieux continent, le luxe envié d'une culture désintéressée »²⁴.

Clemente Ricci, à Buenos Aires, exprima également, dans son compte rendu de l'œuvre de Quesada, des mots très élogieux pour un livre qu'il considérait déjà en 1910 comme un programme qu'il s'efforcera de réaliser :

[...] ha analizado, con ciencia y competencia raras el complejo mecanismo de la enseñanza de la historia en las universidades alemanas, y ha atesorado valiosísimas observaciones [...] Todo lo que sea encaminar nuestra juventud universitaria a la seriedad de estudios, a la especialización, a la perseverante dedicación a la investigación sobre las fuentes originales: todo eso merece ser importado y fomentado y en ese concepto, nada mejor que los métodos alemanes de estudio y nada mejor, para estudiarlos y comprenderlos, que este libro »²⁵.

Il convient de rappeler qu'à cette époque, Abraham Flexner préconisait la réforme des études universitaires aux États-Unis, suivant la même lignée, en promouvant le modèle allemand déjà adopté par l'université Johns Hopkins, son *alma mater*²⁶.

Comme on peut le voir, Quesada puisait aux mêmes sources que Nicolae Iorga : l'enseignement de Lamprecht et le programme de l'Institut de Leipzig²⁷. L'appel à une méthodologie historique visant à dépasser les limites nationales et à s'inscrire dans une

²⁴ G. Le Gentil, « À propos du livre de M. Ernesto Quesada, *La enseñanza de la historia en las universidades alemanas* », *Bulletin hispanique* 14, n° 3, 1912, p. 323-326.

²⁵ C. Ricci, *La Reforma*, août 1910. Les éloges de Ricci s'ajoutent à ce qui a été dit par divers professeurs allemands, français et nord-américains. Cf. E. Quesada, « La enseñanza de la historia », *Archivos de pedagogía y ciencias afines* 9, n° 25, 1911, p. 48-55.

²⁶ H. Röhrs, *The Classical German Concept of the University and its Influence on Higher Education in the United States*, Francfort, 1995 et T. N. Bonner, *Iconoclast: Abraham Flexner and a Life in Learning*, Baltimore, 2002. Lamprecht et Quesada continueront, pour leur part, de débattre des conditions des instituts de recherche et de la nécessaire réforme universitaire dans divers pays. Voir *Lettre de Lamprecht à Quesada* du 7 juillet 1912. *Lamprecht - Brief an Kollege (Ernesto Quesada)*, Leipzig, Schillerstr. 7, 15. Juli 1912, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn, Nachlass Lamprecht: 1, Bestand 1: 2, Korrespondenzen: 2, Wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz: 43, S 2713: Korr. 43.

²⁷ Voir L. R. Pyenson, « Uses of Cultural History: Karl Lamprecht in Argentina », dans *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 146, n° 3, 2002, p. 235-255. Louis Pyenson met en lumière la diffusion de la figure de Lamprecht, entreprise par Quesada, ainsi que la réception critique de l'œuvre de Quesada par des figures clés de l'époque, telles que Coriolano Alberini. Ce dernier a centré sa critique sur deux aspects particuliers : les fondements de la sociologie proposée par Quesada et la notion d'histoire culturelle telle qu'elle était comprise par Quesada et Lamprecht, et que Alberini critiquait du point de vue philosophique. Mais ce qui est le plus important, c'est qu'Alberini – ainsi que d'autres figures importantes de l'université de l'époque, comme Alejandro Korn et Ricardo Rojas – considérait que transplanter les méthodes allemandes à l'université argentine était une démarche pédante et, en fin de compte, contre-productive. Il s'agissait, sans aucun doute, d'une vision à très court terme qui a compromis le développement d'un format institutionnel dont la pertinence se révélera pleinement en Allemagne et aux États-Unis. Voir C. Alberini, « La enseñanza de la historia

histoire universelle nécessitait le développement de traditions de recherche couvrant diverses aires géographiques et époques, y compris Byzance. Cette vision, issue de Leipzig, était particulièrement pertinente pour un chercheur argentin désireux d'élargir ses domaines de recherche au-delà de l'histoire argentine et latino-américaine. En tant que pays d'immigration, l'Argentine se considère comme un miroir de l'universel et, de ce fait, cherche à trouver sa place parmi les nations.

À bien des égards, l'inattention portée au rapport de Quesada constitue une occasion manquée et illustre clairement l'éloignement des élites argentines des sciences humaines universitaires – au-delà des sujets liés à l'Argentine – pendant la Belle Époque²⁸.

Il convient ensuite de revenir sur le véritable fondateur des sciences humaines au niveau universitaire en Argentine, Clemente Ricci. Né à Casteggio, dans la province de Pavie, il avait étudié au séminaire épiscopal de Crémone, puis poursuivi ses études à Milan et travaillé aux côtés de Cesare Cantù dans son Institut. Après la retraite de ce dernier, qui mourut deux ans plus tard, Ricci se retrouva sans emploi. Il émigra alors en 1893 à Buenos Aires. La jalousie professionnelle, ainsi que son caractère parfois difficile, empêchèrent Ricci d'être embauché plus tôt par la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Buenos Aires, fondée en 1896. Cela le mena à concentrer son travail, principalement consacré à la critique biblique et au christianisme primitif, sur le circuit naissant de la formation théologique protestante en Argentine (principalement parmi les vaudois italiens, luthériens allemands et scandinaves, méthodistes, anglicans et presbytériens britanniques). À partir de son insertion dans ce milieu institutionnel, il publia d'importantes séries monographiques, comme la collection *La historia de Europa y de la segunda Roma (L'histoire de l'Europe et de la Deuxième Rome)*²⁹, qui commença à paraître en 1909, ainsi que des études sur des textes du Nouveau Testament, telles que son analyse approfondie du

en las universidades alemanas », *Nosotros* VII (VI), 1912, p. 56-64 ; id., « La enseñanza de la historia en las universidades alemanas: Las teorías de Lamprecht », *ibid.*, p. 97-120.

²⁸ Ernesto Quesada, épuisé et déçu par la direction que prenait la recherche scientifique dans son pays, est mort en 1934 en exil (auto-imposé) en Suisse, après avoir fait don en 1928 de sa bibliothèque de plus de 80 000 volumes à l'Allemagne, laquelle constituera la base de l'Institut ibéro-américain de Berlin, fondé autour de celle-ci en 1930. Cf. P. Buchbinder, *Los Quesada. Letras, ciencias y política en la Argentina, 1850-1934*, Buenos Aires, 2012. Pablo Buchbinder a souligné de manière synthétique et perspicace l'opposition entre la vision universitaire de Quesada, centrée sur le développement d'institutions dédiées à la recherche – une vision qui opposait déjà son père, le diplomate Vicente Quesada, à Domingo F. Sarmiento, 1811-1888, président de la République entre 1868 et 1874 – et celle d'une tradition locale qui finira par privilégier, avant tout, la formation professionnelle (avocats, médecins, ingénieurs). Les médecins et ingénieurs parviendront à sortir, finalement, de ce professionnalisme et à développer de véritables traditions scientifiques dans les sciences médicales, biologiques et physiques. Voir aussi P. Ubierna, *Las Humanidades. Notas para una historia institucional*, Gonnet, 2016, p. 123-139.

²⁹ Le titre de cette collection comprenait la première mention de Byzance dans l'édition universitaire et scientifique argentine.

codex Freer, la première étude de ce genre, publiée dans sa version initiale en 1913³⁰. Il n'est engagé par l'Université de Buenos Aires qu'en 1922, après les changements apportés par la réforme universitaire de 1918³¹, où il commence à enseigner l'histoire du christianisme ancien et tardo-antique, abordant des thèmes byzantins récurrents dans ses travaux antérieurs, tels que la papyrologie de l'Égypte romaine et byzantine, ainsi que l'étude des textes du VI^e siècle.

Le cas de Ricci était très différent de celui de Quesada. Bien qu'il fût un excellent germaniste, sa vision du développement institutionnel était sans aucun doute centrée sur le modèle français. Depuis toujours, son modèle d'organisation et de développement était l'École Pratique³². Il est intéressant de noter que Ricci a par la suite déclaré que, même si l'Argentine des années 1850-1860, en raison des guerres civiles, ne pouvait pas se permettre le luxe de la France du Second Empire – en référence à la date de fondation de l'École Pratique en 1868 –, elle en avait désormais les moyens dans les années 1880, une période où l'organisation universitaire fut renforcée par une génération politique déterminée à moderniser le pays³³. Ce manque de vision de la part des élites du pays, qui n'ont pas suivi l'exemple français en matière de développement universitaire des sciences humaines – ces mêmes élites qui avaient pourtant structuré l'enseignement primaire et secondaire ainsi que les études de médecine et de droit sur le modèle français –, le surprendra jusqu'à la fin de ses jours. Ricci, suivant l'exemple de l'EPHE, fut celui qui introduisit finalement le système de séminaire à l'Université de Buenos Aires³⁴. Passons donc à l'année 1924.

Les nouvelles du Congrès de Bucarest, qui s'est tenu en avril, arrivent à point nommé, permettant à Ricci d'inclure l'importance de Byzance dans les considérations

³⁰ Le sujet faisait partie du premier séminaire de Ricci à l'Université durant l'année 1922-1923, avec une publication ultérieure en 1924.

³¹ La réforme universitaire de 1918 constitua un mouvement de transformation académique qui, dans le domaine des sciences humaines, soutenait le travail scientifique et visait à écarter le dilettantisme ambiant. Née à l'Université de Córdoba – alors considérée comme plus arriérée que les autres universités –, elle proposa une série de transformations et s'étendit à d'autres pays d'Amérique latine. Voir P. Buchbinder, *¿Revolución en los claustros? La Reforma Universitaria de 1918*, Buenos Aires, 2008. Un nouveau groupe d'autorités fut celui qui permit enfin à Clemente Ricci d'occuper une place à la Faculté de Philosophie et de Lettres.

³² Elle-même une institution vouée au renouveau, comme nous l'avons mentionné plus haut.

³³ C. Ricci, « La historia de las religiones », *Verbum. Revista del Centro de estudiantes de filosofía y letras* 85 (27), 1934, p. 165-170. Pour souligner que le problème n'était pas économique (une excuse trop souvent invoquée), Ricci donnait l'exemple du développement de la grande tradition de l'orientalisme italien, à Naples, Pavie et Florence, réalisée malgré de grandes difficultés économiques. Il s'agit d'un projet qui, au-delà de l'évidente influence française, pouvait également être interprété comme le déploiement institutionnel de la vision historiographique holistique proposée par son ancien maître, Cesare Cantù, dont l'œuvre – notamment son *Histoire universelle* – a exercé une vaste influence en Argentine et dans toute l'Amérique latine.

³⁴ Quelque chose que Quesada avait également souhaité mais qu'il considérait encore comme très problématique et difficile en 1910.

qu'il présente aux autorités de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Buenos Aires. Il souhaite ainsi fonder un institut de recherches en histoire ancienne et médiévale – une adaptation (et limitation) du vieux projet de Quesada, centré cette fois uniquement sur les études classiques et médiévales. Cet institut sera, quelques années plus tard, scindé en plusieurs départements dédiés à la philologie classique, ainsi qu'à l'histoire ancienne et médiévale. Les considérations que Ricci inclut dans le rapport qu'il soumet aux autorités de la Faculté en août 1924, concernant les sujets à aborder, la méthodologie d'étude et un plan de publications, se rattachent non seulement à l'ensemble de ses travaux antérieurs, mais aussi à la pertinence de ces études dans un contexte international (le Congrès de Bucarest souligne cette pertinence pour Byzance)³⁵. C'est à ce moment-là qu'il commença à inclure formellement l'étude de Byzance dans les programmes d'études et, surtout, à constituer une bibliothèque de travail. Ses séminaires sur la papyrologie, l'épigraphie, l'Égypte romano-byzantine et le VI^e siècle firent désormais partie intégrante du programme d'études, formant les premiers chercheurs qui, à partir de la fin des années 1920, se consacreront au monde byzantin à Buenos Aires. Parmi eux figuraient notamment Alberto Freixas, qui publiera des études sur le VII^e siècle et l'historiographie de la période méso-byzantine, succédera à Ricci à la direction de l'Institut et fondera la revue *Anales de historia antigua y medieval*, toujours active aujourd'hui, ainsi que Sara de Mundo Lo, qui se consacra à l'étude de la vision byzantine des croisades.

La présentation de son projet aux autorités de la Faculté en août – une date inhabituelle dans un pays du Cône Sud où l'année universitaire s'étend de mars à décembre – n'était peut-être pas dénuée d'arrière-pensées. En effet, ce même mois d'août 1924 tout cela sera renforcé par l'arrivée de Charles Diehl, invité par l'Institut de l'Université de Paris à Buenos Aires, profitant de l'été boréal mais en plein milieu de l'année académique en Argentine³⁶, qui apporta de nouvelles informations sur le

³⁵ Cf. « Informe De Clemente Ricci, Director del Gabinete de Historia de la Civilización, al Sr. Decano de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Dr. Ricardo Rojas, 2/8/1924 », *Archivo de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras*, 81, n° 1.

³⁶ A partir de 1920, l'Université de Buenos Aires a intégré un réseau académique mondial grâce à toute une série d'institutions, comme l'Institut de l'Université de Paris (IUP) à Buenos Aires, l'Institut culturel espagnol et l'Institut culturel argentin-allemand, qui ont toutes facilité l'arrivée de chercheurs étrangers afin de donner des cours et de mener des activités de recherche à l'université. Inauguré en 1922, l'IUP bénéficia du soutien du gouvernement français, de l'Université de Paris et de l'Université de Buenos Aires à laquelle il est rattaché. Concernant l'IUP à Buenos Aires, voir H. Pelosi, *Argentinos en Francia. Franceses en Argentina, una historia colectiva. Prólogo de Paul Dijoud*, Buenos Aires, 1999, p. 216-250 et N. Barcolla, « Política y contingencia en la circulación global de ideas. Un caso de estudio: el Instituto de la Universidad de Paris en Buenos Aires en la primera mitad del siglo XX », dans S. Klein (éd.), *A circulação do conhecimento em teoria e prática*, Curitiba, 2023, p. 37-52. Bien qu'une institution équivalente à l'IUP – l'Institut des universités argentines à Paris, dont la fondation fut engagée à partir de 1923 – ait eu une portée limitée, la Fondation Argentine fut établie en 1928, parmi les premières dans la Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris. Cf. H. Pelosi, « Sociabilidad y vida universitaria. La fundación argentina de la Ciudad universitaria de



Fig. 3. Charles Diehl par (Luis) Macaya, *Caras y Caretas* (Buenos Aires), nr. 1355, 20 septembre 1924. Photo de l'auteur

congrès de Bucarest et donna également divers séminaires sur l'histoire byzantine³⁷, qui rencontrèrent un grand succès, faisant de lui une figure largement connue et médiatisée par la presse³⁸ (fig. 3).

Mais cette année-là, un autre événement important s'est également produit, élargissant l'audience intéressée par Byzance. À peine quelques semaines après la fin des cours de Diehl à Buenos Aires, de nouvelles informations concernant la tenue du congrès de Bucarest parvinrent en Argentine, principalement par l'article de Louis Bréhier dans la *Revue internationale de l'enseignement*, une publication largement lue et discutée dans divers milieux culturels et éducatifs du pays. Ces milieux étaient fortement influencés par les modèles français, tant dans l'enseignement public – qui adoptait les principes de la laïcité à la française – que dans les nombreuses écoles congréganistes qui se multiplièrent en Argentine, notamment après les lois françaises de 1901 et 1903 et l'expulsion des

Paris », *Temas de historia argentina y americana* 24, 2016, p. 145-180. La diplomatie culturelle française proposait d'adopter un système de conférences destinées au grand public, plutôt que des cours réguliers à l'université, et encore moins un échange de professeurs. Ce système fut finalement adopté par l'IUP. En revanche, Quesada avait soutenu un accord de nature très différente entre l'Université de Berlin et celle de Buenos Aires à la fin de la première décennie du siècle. L'offre allemande avant la Première Guerre mondiale était similaire à celle utilisée pour les échanges avec les États-Unis : douze professeurs allemands donnaient des cours à Buenos Aires chaque année, tandis que douze Argentins en faisaient de même à Berlin. Lorsque l'accord entre Berlin et Buenos Aires fut finalement conclu en 1922, il prit un format semblable à celui adopté par les Français. Voir l'intervention de Quesada à la réunion du Sénat (*Consejo Superior*) de l'Université, dans « Consejo Superior. Sesión de 1 de agosto de 1911 », *Revista de la Universidad de Buenos Aires* 15, 1911, p. 374-377 ; P. Buchbinder, « Los orígenes de la Institución Argentino-Germana: una aproximación al intercambio académico de la Universidad de Buenos Aires en tiempos de la primera posguerra », *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas* 51, 2014, p. 351-371.

³⁷ Lors de son séjour à Buenos Aires, il a donné deux séminaires : l'un au Musée des Beaux-Arts sur « Villes et art chrétien en Méditerranée », et l'autre à la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, sur « La vie à Byzance ».

³⁸ Comme en témoigne une note publiée dans le magazine d'actualité le plus diffusé, *Caras y Caretas*, n° 1355, 20 septembre 1924.

congrégations³⁹. À la fin de cette année 1924, les autorités de la Faculté ont donné leur approbation au projet de Ricci⁴⁰. Cette confluence de circonstances ferait de 1924, en Argentine aussi, une sorte d'*annus mirabilis* pour les études byzantines, car c'est à ce moment-là qu'elles furent incorporées au curriculum universitaire⁴¹.

Ce qui était une vision prématurée de la part de Quesada en 1910 devint possible avec l'embauche par l'Université de Buenos Aires de quelqu'un comme Ricci, qui allait développer des programmes d'enseignement et de recherche. Bien que limités, ces programmes allaient transformer l'évolution des sciences humaines en Argentine en accordant une modeste place à Byzance. Ce n'est que dans les années 1990 qu'une nouvelle série de bourses de recherche permit la formation, en Argentine et en Europe – surtout en France, en Belgique et en Allemagne –, d'un nouveau groupe de chercheurs qui constitue aujourd'hui le noyau du Comité argentin des études byzantines et assure l'enseignement de l'histoire et de la littérature byzantines dans diverses universités nationales⁴².

³⁹ L. Bréhier, « Le premier Congrès international des études byzantines à Bucarest », *Revue internationale de l'enseignement* 78, septembre-octobre, 1924, p. 266-275.

⁴⁰ Ricci prit ses fonctions en 1924 en tant que directeur d'un « Cabinet d'Histoire de la Civilisation », à partir duquel furent fondés en 1927 deux instituts : l'Institut d'Histoire ancienne et médiévale de l'Europe, ainsi que l'Institut de Philologie classique, lequel comprend également aujourd'hui une section de Philologie médiévale et byzantine. Voir D. M. Santos et P. Ubierna, « Clemente Ricci (1873-1946) y las Humanidades como parte del proyecto científico en la Argentina », *Ciencia Hoy* 30 (179), 2022, p. 57-60.

⁴¹ *Caras y Caretas*, n° 1355, 20 septembre 1924, p. 59 ; voir aussi *Revista Universidad de Buenos Aires* 21, n° 1-3, 1924, p. 344 et suiv.

⁴² La recherche et l'enseignement sur Byzance et le christianisme oriental se concentrent principalement dans deux universités publiques de la capitale : l'Université de Buenos Aires (UBA) et l'Université Pédagogique Nationale (UNPE), ainsi qu'à l'Université Nationale de Cuyo (Mendoza) et à l'Institut d'Histoire et des Sciences Humaines du Conseil National de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique (CONICET) à Buenos Aires. Toutefois, des cours sporadiques sont également proposés dans d'autres universités du pays. L'histoire de l'art byzantin reste encore à développer. Le *Comité Argentino de Estudios Bizantinos* (CAEBiz) est membre de l'Association internationale des études byzantines (AIEB) et regroupe une vingtaine de chercheurs travaillant dans l'enseignement supérieur, tant en Argentine qu'à l'étranger.

*Byzantinistes roumains
avant et après
le congrès de Bucarest*

IV

« Le Conseil du roi Charles » : les croisades et Byzance dans l'œuvre de Gheorghe I. Brătianu

Ovidiu Cristea

Abstract: Gheorghe I. Brătianu is renowned for his contributions to the history of the Black Sea region and the Romanian Middle Ages. His interest in the Pontic region, however, also prompted him to explore other fields, including Byzantine history and the late Crusades. His studies on Byzantium were collected in a volume on the social and economic history of the Byzantine Empire, published in 1938 (with a Romanian translation in 2003). His research on the Crusades of the Late Middle Ages, though largely overlooked today, contains documents, arguments, and conclusions that remain valuable. This is particularly true of his study of King Charles II of Naples' project, significant for publishing an unpublished text and for contextualizing its proposals – such as a maritime blockade of Egypt and the unification of military orders. Although the project was eventually abandoned for various reasons, including the death of Pope Nicholas IV, its ideas were developed by later crusade promoters, including Pierre Dubois and Marino Sanudo Torsello, and were partially implemented during the fourteenth century. Unfortunately, Brătianu's article – published during wartime – received little attention and was subsequently forgotten after the advent of the communist regime in Romania in 1947. *Le Conseil du roi Charles* nonetheless remains an impressive demonstration of historical interpretation, situating a medieval text both in its own context and in relation to contemporary issues.

Keywords: Gheorghe I. Brătianu, Charles II of Naples, later crusades, crusading projects, maritime blockade, Egypt

Je me souviens que, lors de ma première année à l'université, ce titre m'a mis dans l'embarras. À l'époque, Gheorghe I. Brătianu était un historien récemment redécouvert en Roumanie. L'homme Gh. I. Brătianu avait été l'une des nombreuses victimes du régime communiste, terminant sa vie dans la prison de Sighet, et son œuvre

avait suivi son destin¹. Pendant des décennies, la lecture des écrits de l'un des historiens roumains les plus importants de l'entre-deux-guerres a été théoriquement interdite et nombre de ses conclusions ont été sévèrement critiquées². Ce n'est qu'en 1980 que la situation a changé avec la publication d'un livre fondamental sur la fondation des principautés de Valachie et de Moldavie³. D'autres études sur le Moyen Âge roumain, le passé de la mer Noire, Byzance et, enfin, l'histoire des croisades deviennent, peu à peu, accessibles au grand public⁴.

Le Conseil du roi Charles était pour moi une catégorie à part. Je ne comprenais pas bien le mot « conseil » et le nom du roi accentuait ma perplexité. De quel Charles s'agissait-il ? Le sous-titre, *Essai sur l'internationale chrétienne et les nationalités à la fin du Moyen Âge*, ne répondait pas à mes questions mais les amplifiait. Seule la lecture du texte m'a permis de comprendre de quoi il s'agissait et m'a incité à lire davantage sur les croisades.

Je ne me serais pas souvenu de ces choses si je n'avais pas remarqué un paradoxe. Aujourd'hui, Gheorghe I. Brătianu est presque oublié par les historiens. Son œuvre est de moins en moins lue, après avoir été redécouverte en Roumanie dans les années 1980 et revalorisée dans les années 1990. Ce que le régime communiste n'a pas réussi à réaliser par une interdiction brutale, l'historiographie d'un régime démocratique semble pouvoir le réaliser, car aujourd'hui les travaux des prédécesseurs semblent souvent être considérés comme obsolètes. Cependant, de nombreux ouvrages de Brătianu, ainsi que ceux de son maître, N. Iorga, contiennent des documents, des

¹ Pour la carrière de Gheorghe I. Brătianu, voir Ș. Papacostea, « Gheorghe I. Brătianu : historien et homme politique », *Revista istorică* 4, n° 1-2, 1993, p. 19-32 ; cf. V. Spinei, « Gheorghe I. Brătianu între vocația istoriei și tentațiile vieții politice », dans *Confluențe istoriografice românești și europene, 90 de ani de la nașterea istoricului Gheorghe I. Brătianu*, Iași, 1988, p. 241-354. En ce qui concerne l'œuvre de Brătianu, l'historien britannique John Rogister affirmait : « son œuvre, injustement oubliée dans notre pays en raison des événements tragiques survenus en Roumanie après 1945, commence seulement à être mieux connue » (« A Moment in European Historiography: Towards a Universal History. The Legacy of Henri and Jacques Pirenne, Marc Bloch and Gheorghe Brătianu », *Revista istorică* 4, n° 1-2, 1993, p. 5-18, ici p. 7).

² B. Cîmpina, « Despre rolul genovezilor la gurile Dunării în sec. XIII-XV », *Studii. Revistă de istorie* 6, n° 1, 1953, p. 191-236 et 6, n° 3, 1953, p. 79-119.

³ Gh. I. Brătianu, *Tradiția istorică despre întemeierea statelor românești*, édité, avec étude introductive et notes par V. Râpeanu, Bucarest, 1980. Ce travail a été suivi d'un projet de cours consacré aux formules d'organisation de la paix dans l'histoire universelle. Le texte a été publié avec une introduction d'Andrei Pippidi dans *Anuarul Institutului de istorie și arheologie « A. D. Xenopol »* 24, n° 2, 1987, p. 45-61.

⁴ Parmi les réimpressions des œuvres de Brătianu, voir *La mer Noire des origines à la conquête ottomane*, t. I-II, éd. V. Spinei, Bucarest, 1988 ; *O enigmă și un miracol istoric: poporul român*, éd. S. Brezeanu, Bucarest, 1988 ; *L'Organisation de la paix dans l'histoire universelle*, préface de J. Rogister, Bucarest, 1997 ; *Studii bizantine de istorie economică și socială*, éd. I. Toderașcu et A.-F. Platon, Iași, 2003 ; *Les Génois et les Vénitiens dans la Mer Noire aux XIII^e-XIV^e siècles*, éd. V. Spinei et I. Căndea, Brăila, 2014.

idées et des conclusions qui sont encore valables. *Le Conseil du roi Charles* n'en fait pas exception.

Au moins par la publication d'une source inédite, le texte est une contribution à l'histoire des croisades, un domaine dans lequel, en Roumanie, Brătianu semble être éclipsé par son maître, N. Iorga. Les six volumes de *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XI^e siècle*⁵, ainsi que la monumentale monographie consacrée à Philippe de Mézières⁶, restent parmi les contributions les plus représentatives de l'historiographie roumaine à l'histoire des croisades tardives. Cependant, Gh. I. Brătianu n'est pas moins important. Les croisades et, en particulier, les croisades tardives ont été un élément constant de l'œuvre scientifique de l'historien⁷. Certaines contributions de détail méritent d'être mentionnées, comme celle consacrée au projet de mariage entre Michel IX le Paléologue et Catherine de Courtenay⁸, ou celle consacrée au projet de croisade du pape Nicolas IV⁹.

Une autre petite contribution est également consacrée à un épisode de la quatrième croisade. *Le Roman de Troie dans la chronique de Robert de Clari* analyse le surprenant dialogue entre Pierre de Bracheux et *Jehans li Blaks le roi des Vlaques et de Bulgares* qui eut lieu au lendemain du succès de la croisade de 1204¹⁰. L'intérêt de Brătianu a été suscité par l'invocation de Troie comme justification des revendications des croisés sur les terres de *Jehans*. Ce qui surprend le médiéviste, ce n'est pas tant l'argument de l'émissaire que la réponse des Valaques et des Bulgares qui, selon Robert de Clari, semblent bien informés des événements de la guerre de Troie. Brătianu écarte la possibilité que ce dialogue ait été inventé par le chroniqueur picard¹¹ et juge peu probable que le *Roman de Troie* de Benoît de Saint-Maure ait été connu dans les Balkans. Il tente alors de formuler quelques hypothèses sur les canaux par lesquels la connaissance de la guerre de Troie aurait pu atteindre la cour de *Jehans*¹².

⁵ T. I-II, Paris, 1899 ; t. III, Paris, 1902 ; t. IV-V, Bucarest, 1915 ; t. VI, Bucarest, 1916.

⁶ N. Iorga, *Philippe de Mézières 1327-1405 et la croisade au XIV^e siècle*, Paris, 1896.

⁷ Voir, par exemple, la discussion détaillée suscitée par la monographie de René Grousset publiée à titre posthume : G. I. Brătianu, « Autour des croisades au XV^e siècle. En marge de l'Empire du Levant de M. René Grousset », *Revue des Études Roumaines* 5-6, 1960, p. 9-20.

⁸ Id., « Notes sur le projet de mariage entre l'empereur Michel IX Paléologue et Catherine de Courtenay », *Revue historique du Sud-Est européen* 1, n° 1-3, 1924, p. 59-63.

⁹ Id., « Autour du projet de croisade de Nicolas IV : la guerre ou le commerce avec l'infidèle », *Revue historique du Sud-Est européen* 22, 1945, p. 250-255.

¹⁰ *Revue historique du Sud-Est européen* 6, n° 1-3, 1929, p. 52-55.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 54 : « Son récit est celui d'un témoin direct, sans grand sens critique, il est vrai, mais aussi sans excès d'imagination ».

¹² Pour la légende de la guerre de Troie en Roumanie, voir T. Shawcross, « Re-inventing the Homeland in the Historiography of Frankish Greece: The Fourth Crusade and the Legend of the Trojan War », *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 27, 2003, p. 120-152, en particulier p. 128 pour l'épisode de la *soleia* de Pierre de Bracheux. L'étude de Brătianu est ignorée. Pour une analyse comparative des sources latines et byzantines, voir F. Curta, « Constantinople and the Echo Chamber: The Vlachs in

Au-delà de ces analyses détaillées, Gheorghe I. Brătianu considérait la croisade comme un aspect fondamental des relations entre l'Occident et l'Orient, ayant un impact majeur sur Byzance, la Méditerranée et la mer Noire. Il voyait également la formation médiévale de la Valachie et de la Moldavie comme une conséquence directe des campagnes menées par les royaumes de Hongrie et de Pologne contre les territoires occidentaux de la Horde d'Or¹³. Suivant les idées de Nicolae Iorga, Brătianu estimait que la dynastie angevine de Hongrie avait joué un rôle politique décisif dans le recul de la domination tatare, notamment durant la première partie du règne de Louis le Grand¹⁴.

Outre les références générales à la croisade dans la synthèse sur l'histoire de la mer Noire, publiée à titre posthume, ou dans le livre sur la fondation des principautés roumaines médiévales, Brătianu s'est concentré sur la période postérieure à 1291, lorsque les dernières possessions en Terre Sainte ont été conquises par le sultan d'Égypte. Après cette date, le médiéviste constate que le phénomène des croisades est devenu, pendant plusieurs décennies, « une affaire d'écriture »¹⁵, et cite, à cet égard, les mots du maréchal Boucicaut « pour ce que tout fait de guerre et de bataille se doit plus mener par œuvre que par parole »¹⁶.

Ce n'est qu'au XIV^e siècle que cette forme de guerre par les mots sera abandonnée au profit des plusieurs actions militaires en mer Égée. À partir de 1334, les puissances occidentales organisent des expéditions militaires de moindre

the French Crusade Chronicles », *Medieval Encounters* 22, 2016, p. 427-462, en particulier p. 428, 432-433 et 459 pour le dialogue de Pierre de Bracheux avec *Jehans*. Je partage l'opinion selon laquelle « Peter of Bracheux's appeal to the Trojan legend in order to justify the crusade in terms of a patrimonial concept of state is a purely literary motif » (*ibid.*, p. 428) ; A. Madgearu, *The Asanids. The Political and Military History of the Second Bulgarian Empire (1185-1280)*, Leiden – Boston, 2017, p. 141. Voir aussi la remarque de P. F. Dembowski, *La Chronique de Robert de Clari. Étude de la langue et du style*, Toronto, 1963, p. 114, selon laquelle l'épisode du dialogue entre Pierre de Bracheux et les Vlaques est placé hors de l'ordre chronologique.

¹³ Voir, par exemple, G. I. Brătianu, « Les Rois de Hongrie et les Principautés Roumaines au XIV^e siècle. À propos du livre de B. Homan sur les Angevins de Naples en Hongrie », *Académie roumaine. Bulletin de la Section Historique* 28, n° 1, 1947, p. 69-105, en particulier p. 76-80 ; cf. id., *Marea Neagră. De la origini la cucerirea otomană*, II, éd. V. Spinei, Bucarest, 1988, p. 209-210.

¹⁴ Gh. I. Brătianu, « Autour de la fondation des États roumains (I) », *Revista istorică* 4, n° 1-2, 1993, p. 170. « Sa mission de croisade contre les 'mécraents' de l'Europe de l'Est a été particulièrement forte et soutenue avec constance dans la première partie du règne de Louis I^{er} d'Anjou... ».

¹⁵ Id., « Le conseil du Roi Charles. Essai sur l'internationale chrétienne et les nationalités à la fin du Moyen Âge », *Revue historique du Sud-Est européen* 19, n° 2, 1942, p. 293.

¹⁶ J. Delaville Le Roulx, *La France en Orient au XIV^e siècle. Expéditions du Maréchal Boucicaut*, II. *Pièces justificatives*, Paris, 1886, p. 166. Les mots font partie d'un défi envoyé par le maréchal à Michele Steno, doge de Venise et au commandant du Golfe, Carlo Zeno ; cf. G. I. Brătianu, « Le conseil du Roi Charles... », p. 292. Pour le contexte du défi, voir C. Taylor, *A Virtuous Knight. Defending Marshal Boucicaut (Jean II Le Meingre, 1366-1421)*, York, 2019, p. 33 et 59.

envergure¹⁷, dans un contexte nouveau et avec des cibles différentes, sous l'impulsion de personnages tels que Humbert de Vienne, Pierre de Lusignan, Amédée de Savoie et Sigismond de Luxembourg. Néanmoins, Brătianu n'a pas ignoré la phase de projets et a essayé de voir dans quelle mesure les appels, les plans, les lettres et les pamphlets qui circulaient se contentaient de reprendre des idées déjà exprimées auparavant ou, au contraire, essayaient de construire ces plans de récupération de la Terre Sainte sur la base des réalités de l'époque.

De ce point de vue, *Le Conseil du roi Charles* (dans la version originale *Ce est le conseil del Roy Karles*) est un cas intéressant. Il s'agit d'un projet adressé au pape Nicolas IV par le roi Charles II de Naples et de Sicile¹⁸, conçu au lendemain de la chute d'Acre en 1291. Le texte appartenait à un souverain dont le père avait été roi titulaire de Jérusalem et qui avait consacré une grande partie de ses efforts au rétablissement de l'Empire latin de Constantinople. L'intérêt de l'historien roumain pour le monarque angevin et son projet de croisade s'explique aisément. À l'époque, *Le Conseil* était inédit et, à l'exception des recherches de Delaville Le Roulx¹⁹, le projet était généralement ignoré par les historiens des croisades. Outre son caractère inédit, le texte était très intéressant pour son contenu, qui réunissait des idées politiques, économiques et stratégiques. Selon Brătianu, il s'agissait « d'un plan beaucoup plus vaste, d'une véritable organisation internationale de la croisade, avec son armée, ses finances et sa direction politique »²⁰. Au-delà des aspects politiques et militaires, Brătianu s'est intéressé à une autre question traitée largement par le projet, celle de l'organisation de la paix. L'expérience de l'entre-deux-guerres et de la Société des Nations a amené l'historien à s'intéresser particulièrement à ce sujet. Deux études publiées en 1945 et 1946 ont été consacrées à la question de la paix en histoire

¹⁷ E. Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade. Venetian Crete and the Emirates of Menteshe and Aydin (1300-1415)*, Venise, 1983; ead., « Holy War in the Aegean during the Fourteenth Century », dans B. Arbel, B. Hamilton et D. Jacoby (éd.), *Latins and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204*, Londres, 1989, p. 212-225; cf. M. Carr, *Merchant Crusaders in the Aegean 1291-1352*, Woodbridge, 2015.

¹⁸ Un portrait de ce roi dans N. Housley, « Charles II of Naples and the Kingdom of Jerusalem », *Byzantion* 54, n° 2, 1984, p. 527-528 ; voir également l'article d'A. Kiesewetter dans *The Crusades. An Encyclopedia*, I, éd. A. Murray, Santa Barbara, Denver, 2006, p. 239-240, qui, bien qu'inclus dans une encyclopédie sur les croisades, ne mentionne pas le projet conçu par Charles II à la demande de Nicolas IV.

¹⁹ J. Delaville Le Roulx, *La France en Orient au XIV^e siècle. Expéditions du Maréchal Boucicaut*, I, Paris, 1886, p. 16-19. Brătianu ajoute deux autres auteurs qui ont fait brièvement référence au roi Charles : T. G. Djuvara, *Cent projets de partage de la Turquie (1281-1913)*, Paris, 1914, p. 10-11 (qui résume essentiellement le texte de Delaville Le Roulx) et A. S. Atiya, *The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages*, 2^e édition, New York, 1970, p. 35-36. La seconde édition de l'ouvrage d'Atiya reprend presque intégralement le contenu de celle de 1938, sans même mentionner la contribution de Brătianu, qui comportait pourtant une édition de la source.

²⁰ G. I. Brătianu, « Le conseil du Roi Charles... », p. 295.

universelle²¹, ainsi qu'un ouvrage malheureusement resté inachevé et publié seulement en 1997²².

Le projet de croisade de Charles II de Naples a probablement été l'un des arguments qui ont poussé l'historien roumain à approfondir un sujet de recherche étroitement lié au contexte de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. L'historien a également conclu la deuxième partie de son étude par des points de suspension et une note générale dans laquelle il a exprimé l'espoir que « le retour de la paix, s'il ramène le calme et la sérénité dans les esprits, nous permettra d'achever la publication de ce travail, sans aucune atteinte à l'objectivité qui en doit demeurer le caractère essentiel »²³.

Revenant au *Conseil du roi Charles*, le médiéviste remarquait qu'il n'a pas joui d'une grande notoriété non seulement auprès des contemporains mais aussi auprès des historiens modernes, alors qu'il a précédé d'autres projets qui ont emprunté au moins certaines de ses idées. Brătianu a trouvé ce fait difficile à expliquer, peut-être même étrange, puisque l'emprunt de ces idées était évident, certaines d'entre elles étant développées.

Le Conseil s'articule autour de deux problèmes : l'organisation concrète de l'expédition militaire contre les infidèles et un plan d'organisation et de maintien de la paix entre les princes chrétiens. Pour Brătianu, la relation entre la paix de la chrétienté et le lancement d'une croisade était un aspect essentiel de la pensée des théoriciens de l'expédition sainte à la fin du Moyen Âge. De son point de vue, la croisade était l'expression de l'unité du monde chrétien et est entré en déclin au fur et à mesure que les puissances chrétiennes poursuivaient leurs propres objectifs. Il y aurait donc eu incompatibilité entre la croisade et les « nations » médiévales, une idée qui n'était pas partagée par tous les médiévistes de l'époque²⁴. Au-delà de ces différentes perspectives, pour le médiéviste roumain, *Le conseil du Roi Charles* contenait, dans ses deux parties, des idées très intéressantes qui allaient avoir une longévité considérable parmi les propagandistes de la croisade tardive et qui allaient être mises en pratique au XIV^e siècle.

²¹ Id., « Formules d'organisation de la paix dans l'histoire universelle », *Revue historique du Sud-Est européen* 22, 1945, p. 67-104 ; id., « Formules d'organisation de la paix dans l'histoire universelle (II) », *Revue historique du Sud-Est européen* 23, 1946, p. 37-56.

²² Id., *L'Organisation de la paix...*

²³ Id., « Formules d'organisation de la paix dans l'histoire universelle (II) », p. 56, n. 1.

²⁴ Voir à cet égard la controverse avec l'historien hongrois Sandor Domanovszky sur une communication de ce dernier au Congrès des historiens de Zurich (1938) : A. Domanovszky, « Der Ungarische Nationalstaat im Mittelalter », dans *VIII^e Congrès international des Sciences historiques (Zurich, 1938). Communications*, I, Zurich, 1938, p. 96-99. Sur la communication de Domanovszky à Zurich, voir récemment E. Vilmos, « A magyar nemzeti kérdés a középkorban - Domanovszky Sándor Domanovszky előadása a Zürichi Nemzetközi Történeztudományi Kongresszuson 1938-ban » (La question nationale hongroise au Moyen Âge : conférence de Sándor Domanovszky au Congrès international des historiens à Zurich en 1938), *Válóság*, novembre 2022, p. 10-24.

Brătianu analysait tout d'abord l'organisation de l'expédition de croisade, ce qui témoigne d'une bonne connaissance de la situation et des problèmes auxquels l'armée chrétienne devait faire face. Charles II était de ceux qui soutenaient qu'un *passagium generale* pour la récupération de la Terre Sainte aurait été irréaliste (*ni nen veoit que ce fust le proufit des crestiens de faire passage*)²⁵. Les raisons étaient nombreuses, et le roi invoquait, en premier lieu, la supériorité numérique écrasante des troupes du sultan d'Égypte. Ensuite, l'absence de base d'opérations (*refuge*) pour les troupes chrétiennes constituait un obstacle majeur à toute offensive en Orient. Même si l'armée chrétienne avait réussi à débarquer, les croisés auraient dû faire face non seulement à un adversaire beaucoup plus nombreux et redoutable, mais aussi à un climat défavorable qui aurait pu déclencher un certain nombre de maladies.

Pour Charles II, il était donc nécessaire de penser et de faire la guerre autrement, en tenant compte des points forts du monde chrétien et de la situation du sultanat d'Égypte. La force de ce dernier résidait dans les richesses tirées du commerce, auxquelles le monde chrétien contribue lui-même. Malgré les interdictions proclamées par l'Église, les « mauvais chrétiens » (*mavves cristien*) introduisent dans les ports égyptiens des matériaux stratégiques tels que le bois, le fer et les esclaves²⁶. Il fallait donc intercepter ce commerce illicite et frapper l'ennemi au point le plus sensible. Ensuite, il était nécessaire d'attaquer et détruire Alexandrie, le principal port du sultan, à la fois base navale et source de richesse. L'allusion aux méchants chrétiens n'est pas fortuite. Un autre théoricien de la croisade, Guillaume Adam, avait lancé dans son projet une diatribe contre les marchands catalans, pisans, vénitiens *et maxime Ianuenses*. Cette mention spéciale fait probablement référence au traité conclu par Gênes avec l'Égypte le 13 mai 1290²⁷. Le traité en question avait été signé au nom de la République ligure par Alberto Spinola, et la mort du sultan Qalawun (novembre 1290) et la chute d'Acre (1291) qui s'ensuivit n'ont apporté aucun changement à l'accord²⁸.

C'est probablement à cause du traité de 1290 que Guillaume Adam a qualifié les marchands, surtout les Génois, de « faux chrétiens » (*falsos Christianos*) et de « serviteurs de l'enfer » (*ministros inferni*) qui, en faisant le commerce des armes, du

²⁵ G. I. Brătianu, « Le conseil du Roi Charles... », p. 354.

²⁶ *Ibid.*: *Item que le mavves cristien portoient en babiloine fer et marram contre la volonte de sainte glise porquoy il estoient escomenie*. Pour l'embargo contre l'Égypte, voir J. Trenchs Odena, « *De Alexandrinis. Comercio prohibido con los musulmanes y el papado durante la primera mitad del siglo XIV* », *Anuario de estudios medievales* 10, 1980, p. 237-320.

²⁷ Pour une analyse de la conjoncture dans laquelle le traité a été conclu, voir V. Ciocîltan, « Genoa's Challenge to Egypt (1287-1290) », *Revue roumaine d'histoire* 32, n° 3-4, 1993, p. 283-307. Pour S. A. Epstein, « Genoa and the Crusades. Piety, Credit and the Fiscal-Military State », dans L. Balletto (éd.), *Oriente e Occidente tra Medioevo ed eta moderna. Studi in honour of Geo Pistorino*, I, Gênes, 1997, p. 247, le traité avec l'Égypte a été « l'effet le plus tangible de la chute de Tripoli ».

²⁸ G. I. Brătianu, « Autour du projet de croisade de Nicolas IV : la guerre ou le commerce avec l'infidèle », *Revue historique du Sud-Est européen* 22, 1945, p. 250-255.

fer, du bois et des esclaves, ont contribué à la destruction de leur propre religion²⁹. Un siècle plus tard, Philippe de Mézières ajoute son grain de sel au portrait négatif des Génois. Ce sont des « gens pervers » auxquels « ne leur souffrit de conseiller et garnir les Sarrazins contre les Crestiens, en mandant en Égypte les navires et galees, de toutes manieres d’armeures plains et d’espees, voire contre la sentence apostolique rigoureusement et saintement fulminee »³⁰. Comme ses prédécesseurs, Philippe de Mézières considérait que, par ce commerce, les Génois contribuaient directement à la prospérité de l’Égypte et à la ruine de la chrétienté³¹.

On comprend ainsi pourquoi, pour certains théoriciens de la croisade au Bas Moyen Age, dont Charles II, le blocus maritime était considéré comme la meilleure solution, car il aurait touché non seulement les ennemis, mais aussi leurs alliés. Outre les « mauvais chrétiens », le roi de Naples envisageait également la Horde d’Or et son alliance avec l’Égypte. Le projet mentionnait que les Mamelouks, la force militaire du sultan, venaient de la région de la mer Noire et que l’interruption de ce flux d’esclaves aurait été un nouveau coup porté aux infidèles³².

Gh. I. Brătianu considérait l’idée d’un blocus comme très moderne. Virtuose de la méthode comparative, qu’il appliquait dans nombre de ses ouvrages, le médiéviste comparait la solution proposée par Charles II avec des tentatives similaires à d’autres époques. Un rapprochement avec le blocus continental de Napoléon était évident, mais le projet s’apparentait davantage à l’alliance de Philippe IV le Bel avec l’Aragon, la Norvège, la Flandre et les villes hanséatiques contre l’Angleterre d’Édouard I^{er}. Le plan, destiné à frapper les Anglais, a été conçu par l’amiral génois Benedetto Zaccaria³³, personnage considéré à juste titre par Brătianu comme « un des premiers diplomates et hommes de guerre de son temps »³⁴.

L’action contre l’Angleterre devait être menée par une escadre composée de 4 galères, 20 *huissiers* et 24 navires de transport qui devaient attaquer les ports,

²⁹ Guillaume Adam, *De modo Sarraceno extirpandi*, dans *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades. Documents arméniens, II. Documents latins et français relatifs à l’Arménie*, Paris, 1906, p. 523 ; cf. Guillaume d’Adam, *How to Defeat the Saracens*, ed. G. Constable, Washington, D.C., 2012, p. 26.

³⁰ Philippe de Mezieres, *Le Songe du Vieil Pelerin*, I, éd. G.W. Coopland, Cambridge, 1969, p. 297.

³¹ G. I. Brătianu, « Autour du projet de croisade... », p. 253-254, considérait, dans la conclusion de l’article, que « dans l’alternative de la guerre ou du commerce avec l’Infidèle elles [*i.e.* les Républiques italiennes] avaient choisi délibérément la solution qui convenait le mieux à leurs affaires ».

³² Id., « Le conseil du Roi Charles... », p. 354-355 : ... *de la mer maiour venoient les mamelours* (sic) *jounes et petis et estoient portes en babiloine vendus et achates et ces sont les meilleurs gendarmes de la paenisme*.

³³ Pour ce personnage, voir R. Sabatino Lopez, *Benedetto Zaccaria: ammiraglio e mercante. Genova marinara nel duecento*, Milan, 1933 ; plus récemment M. Carr, « Trade or Crusade? The Zaccaria of Chios and Crusades against the Turks », dans N. G. G. Chrissis et M. Carr (éd.), *Contact and Conflict in Frankish Greece and the Aegean, 1204-1453. Crusade, Religion and Trade between Latins, Greeks and Turks*, Londres – New York, 2014, p. 115-134.

³⁴ G. I. Brătianu, « Le conseil du Roi Charles... », p. 309.

les navires et les côtes de l'Angleterre. Les similitudes avec le projet de Charles II ont amené Brătianu à se demander si Benedetto Zaccaria n'était pas également l'inspirateur du plan de croisade, puisque le Génois avait l'expérience de la guerre contre l'Égypte. Par rapport au plan contre l'Angleterre, *Le Conseil du roi Charles* envisageait une flotte de 50 galères auxquelles s'ajoutaient 50 autres navires pouvant transporter 1 500 chevaliers et leurs montures. Le royaume de Chypre, les Hospitaliers et les Templiers doivent fournir 10 galères chacun, le reste étant équipé par le Saint-Siège³⁵. Il est intéressant de noter que le roi ne fait aucune allusion à la participation des puissances maritimes italiennes à cette force, ce qui serait un argument supplémentaire pour assimiler les « mauvais chrétiens » aux marchands de l'Italie. Il convient toutefois de noter que le projet suggère qu'une fois la Terre Sainte reconquise, les puissances maritimes soient encouragées à retourner dans les villes et les ports du royaume de Jérusalem. C'est, implicitement, une façon de reconnaître l'importance de Venise, Gênes et Pise dans le succès de la croisade et la consolidation des conquêtes d'*Outremer*. Pour Brătianu, le silence du projet sur la question des puissances maritimes serait un argument supplémentaire en faveur de l'implication de Benedetto Zaccaria dans son élaboration. L'amiral génois avait été mal aimé dans son propre pays, et il n'avait aucune raison de sympathiser avec Venise ou Pise.

Revenant au projet et à l'organisation de la force maritime, Charles II considèrerait que l'établissement du blocus aurait pu porter des coups lourds aux infidèles : il aurait provoqué l'interruption du commerce maritime avec les « mauvais chrétiens » et, d'autre part, il aurait contribué à l'affaiblissement économique de l'Égypte. Le processus aurait pu être accéléré par des raids de la flotte chrétienne, qui auraient dévasté les côtes ennemies et rendu les ports musulmans inutilisables.

Après cette première phase d'affaiblissement de l'Égypte était possible l'élaboration d'une expédition plus vaste vouée à porter un coup décisif au sultan. G. I. Brătianu analysait point par point les idées du roi, notant que le projet rassemblait des idées déjà acquises et d'autres plus originales. Parmi les points de vue qui ont une longue histoire, le médiéviste mentionnait le projet d'unification des ordres militaires. Sans parler des critiques formulées à l'encontre des ordres au fil du temps³⁶, Charles II estimait que cette mesure permettra à la croisade de disposer des effectifs et des ressources nécessaires à la réalisation du projet. Une autre innovation prévoit un nouvel uniforme³⁷ et un chef unique. Celui-ci devait être choisi parmi les fils d'un roi ou d'une grande famille noble. Une fois la croisade achevée avec succès, le chef

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

³⁶ Sur cet aspect, voir A. Forey, « The Military Orders in the Crusading Proposals of the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries », dans *id.*, *Military Orders and Crusades*, Aldershot, 1994, p. 317-345.

³⁷ C'est le seul point où le projet fait état des difficultés rencontrées pour fusionner les ordres ; la solution proposée – cape rouge et croix blanche – représentait un compromis entre les couleurs des Templiers et des Hospitaliers ; voir *ibid.*, p. 322-323.

de l'ordre devait être couronné roi de Jérusalem. Charles II ayant hérité du droit de son père au trône du royaume, il est probable qu'ainsi il se proposait implicitement comme candidat à la tête de l'ordre³⁸.

Les ressources que les ordres chevaleresques auraient mises à la disposition de la croisade auraient pu être complétées par des impôts ecclésiastiques, des dons et des taxes commerciales. Toutes ces mesures auraient augmenté les chances de récupérer les Lieux Saints. Cependant, le succès aurait risqué d'être éphémère si le monde chrétien n'avait pas pris des mesures pour consolider les territoires conquis. À cet égard *Le Conseil* proposait la convocation par le pape d'un concile général dont l'objectif était de conclure une paix durable. « Ainsi – remarquait Brătianu – l'organisation internationale de la croisade entraîne nécessairement l'organisation de la paix par la voie d'un concile général convoqué par le pape »³⁹. Cette dernière idée a été développée plus tard par le juriste Pierre Dubois en un projet de croisade qui a reçu plus d'attention de la part des historiens modernes⁴⁰. Cependant, Brătianu insistait sur le projet de Charles II et l'organisation de la paix « par la fédération chrétienne ». Cette idée sera développée dans la monographie consacrée au sujet, qui opérait une distinction claire entre la paix hégémonique et la paix « fédérative ». Pour Brătianu, le projet du roi de Naples était un excellent exemple de cette dernière⁴¹. Charles II considérait la paix générale et l'organisation d'une force militaire internationale comme le seul moyen de vaincre les infidèles. Analysant cette idée, Brătianu se demandait si l'organisation d'une telle armée internationale visait uniquement à assurer le succès de la croisade ou si elle permettait également de garantir la paix entre les États chrétiens⁴².

Cette « fédération chrétienne » ne semble pas inclure l'Empire byzantin. Pour le médiéviste, cela n'était pas surprenant, car le père de l'auteur du projet, Charles I^{er} d'Anjou, avait été un farouche opposant aux Byzantins et avait rêvé de restaurer l'Empire latin de Constantinople. Cette attitude négative à l'égard de Byzance a été abandonnée progressivement à partir du XIV^e siècle. Les croisades dirigées contre les émirats maritimes turcs d'Asie Mineure ont prévu une collaboration avec les empereurs

³⁸ N. Housley, « Charles II of Naples and the Kingdom of Jerusalem... », p. 528.

³⁹ G. I. Brătianu, *L'organisation de la paix...*, p. 165.

⁴⁰ Sur Pierre Dubois, voir P.-A. Fourcadet, « Le *De recuperatione Terre Sancte* de Pierre Dubois : prétexte de croisade et pouvoir royal », dans J. Paviot (éd.), *Les projets de croisade. Géostratégie et diplomatie européenne du XIV^e au XVII^e siècle*, Toulouse, 2014, p. 69-86.

⁴¹ G. I. Brătianu, *L'Organisation de la paix...*, p. 14 : « Il n'y a que deux formules selon lesquelles il a été possible de mettre fin aux conflits, d'organiser la paix, de lui donner la garantie de l'ordre et de la stabilité qui doivent la distinguer de l'état de guerre. Nous appellerons l'une la formule hiérarchique, imposée par la suprématie (...) d'une seule puissance (...). L'autre et la formule fédérative, qui repose sur l'accord de plusieurs États... ». Une analyse des idées de Brătianu sur ce sujet dans P. Teodor, « Gheorghe Brătianu, istoric al relațiilor internaționale », *Revista istorică* 4, n° 1-2, 1993, p. 33-42, en particulier p. 39-40.

⁴² G. I. Brătianu, « Le conseil du Roi Charles... », p. 303.

byzantins, bien que, finalement, Byzance n'ait pas été directement impliquée dans les succès d'Adrayttion (1334) et de Smyrne (1344). La persistance de la menace turque en mer Égée augmenta cependant l'importance de Constantinople dans les plans de croisade du XIV^e siècle, un fait admirablement reflété, selon G. I. Brătianu, dans les œuvres de Marino Sanudo Torsello⁴³. Dans l'un de ses premiers projets, *Liber Secretorum Fidelium Crucis*⁴⁴, Sanudo défend l'idée d'un blocus maritime contre l'Égypte et, à un stade ultérieur, il est favorable à une action contre les émirats turcs d'Anatolie, à réaliser par le biais d'une union des forces entre les puissances occidentales et l'Empire byzantin des Paléologues.

L'étude consacrée au projet de croisade du roi Charles II s'achève par une vaste discussion sur la *croisade et les nationalités* dans laquelle l'historien roumain contestait un point de vue formulé par l'historiographie hongroise⁴⁵. Pour Brătianu « la croisade est (...) une affaire essentiellement internationale. Vérité banale, si l'on veut, mais il devient nécessaire de la rappeler, à propos de certaines théories récentes ».⁴⁶ Brătianu développe cette idée à travers une analyse comparative des royaumes médiévaux et en se référant à certaines conclusions historiographiques formulées par Marc Bloch ou Johann Huizinga. Enfin, l'historien roumain a analysé le cas du royaume de Hongrie – qui a également suscité la longue digression – pour parvenir à une opinion contraire à celle de Sandor Domanovszky. Au terme d'une analyse détaillée des textes invoqués par l'historien hongrois, Gh. I. Brătianu conclut fermement : « la conception d'un état national et la conscience active d'un nationalisme sont bien autre chose. Il paraît incontestable sur ce point, que les facteurs d'universalité, qu'ils soient d'Église ou d'Empire, conservent à l'époque médiévale le premier rôle »⁴⁷. De ce point de vue, il était impossible de parler en Hongrie, après la grande invasion tataro-mongole, de « réaction d'un esprit national »⁴⁸.

La polémique avec l'historiographie hongroise semble être une digression qui aurait pu être omise dans l'analyse d'un projet de croisade à la fin du XIII^e siècle.

⁴³ Sur Sanudo, voir A. Magnocavallo, *Marin Sanudo il Vecchio e il suo progetto di crociata*, Bergamo, 1901 ; A. Laiou, « Marino Sanudo Torsello, Byzantium and the Turks: the Background to the Anti-Turkish league of 1332-1334 », *Speculum* 45, n° 3, 1970, p. 374-392 ; D. Jacoby, « Catalans, Turcs et Vénitiens en Roumanie (1305- 1332) : un nouveau témoignage de Marino Sanudo Torsello », *Studi Medievali* 15, 1974, p. 223-230 ; F. Cardini, « Per un' edizione del *Liber Secretorum Fidelium Crucis* di Marin Sanudo il Vecchio », dans id., *Studi sulla storia e sull' idea di Crociata*, Milan, 1993, p. 317-375 ; id., « I costi della Crociata. L'aspetto economico del progetto di Marin Sanudo il Vecchio », *ibid.*, p. 377-411.

⁴⁴ *Liber Secretorum Fidelium Crucis*, foreword by J. Prawer, Jérusalem, 1972 [reéd. anastatique de J. Bongars, Hanovre, 1611] ; cf. Marino Sanudo Torsello, *The Book of the Secrets of the Faithful of the Cross. Liber Secretorum Fidelium Crucis*, Londres – New York, 2016.

⁴⁵ Voir *supra* n. 24.

⁴⁶ G. I. Brătianu, « Le conseil du Roi Charles... », p. 329-330.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 344.

Mais la lecture de l'ensemble du fragment prouve le contraire. La controverse était très probablement liée à la divergence de vues sur le caractère du phénomène de la croisade. Sans nier l'importance de la participation du royaume de Saint Étienne à la croisade, Brătianu estimait que la guerre sainte restait, à la fin du Moyen Âge, une action de l'ensemble de la chrétienté sous l'égide de la papauté⁴⁹.

Le projet du roi Charles II de Naples soutenait pleinement ce point de vue. Le texte ne mentionne pas spécifiquement une puissance chrétienne de l'époque, suggérant implicitement la participation de toute la chrétienté occidentale. En outre, en soutenant l'idée de la fusion des ordres militaires, le projet soulignait le caractère international de l'action. Comme nous l'avons déjà mentionné, certaines de ces idées ont été reprises par d'autres théoriciens de la croisade au XIV^e siècle, tandis que d'autres ont même été mises en pratique.

Malheureusement, *Le Conseil* est resté lettre morte. Gh. I. Brătianu suppose que la mort du pape Nicolas IV, à qui le plan avait été soumis, a suspendu toute action contre l'Égypte. C'est très probablement pour cette raison que *Le Conseil du roi Charles* a été rapidement oublié. Par une malheureuse coïncidence, il en sera de même pour l'étude qui lui est consacrée en 1942. Le déclenchement de la guerre, l'interruption de la circulation des livres et des revues, ainsi que des relations entre savants⁵⁰, firent que l'étude de Brătianu ne fut connue que d'un petit cercle de spécialistes, surtout en Roumanie. S'ensuivit une période très troublée où le nom de l'historien et son œuvre furent mis à l'index. C'est ainsi que l'oubli s'est abattu sur *Le Conseil du roi Charles*. De plus, la contribution de Gheorghe I. Brătianu à l'histoire des croisades semble avoir été totalement ignorée au profit de sa mention en tant qu'historien de la mer Noire et de la genèse des principautés roumaines médiévales⁵¹. Malgré cela, quiconque aura la curiosité de lire l'étude consacrée au projet du roi Charles II découvrira un exercice d'une remarquable virtuosité, où un texte historique est analysé à la fois dans le contexte de l'époque de sa rédaction et à la lumière de sa pertinence pour le présent.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Sur ce point, voir J. Rogister, « A Moment in European Historiography... », p. 12 et 15-16, avec la mention de la relation épistolaire entre Gh. I. Brătianu et Jacques Pirenne.

⁵¹ L'œuvre d'un autre grand médiéviste roumain de l'entre-deux-guerres, Constantin Marinescu, a connu un destin similaire : ses contributions à l'histoire des croisades tardives, autrefois citées par les historiens occidentaux, sont aujourd'hui complètement tombées dans l'oubli en Roumanie.

Oreste Tafrali's Contributions to Byzantine Studies before and after the 1924 Congress

Mihail Mitrea

Abstract: This article offers insights into the scholarly contributions of Oreste Tafrali (1876-1937) to Byzantine studies, before and after the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies, held in Bucharest in 1924. Drawing on his published works, correspondence, and other archival sources, it reconstructs his intellectual trajectory from his early academic formation in Paris under figures such as Charles Diehl to his tenure at the University of Iași. The article highlights Tafrali's pioneering research on the topography and social history of fourteenth-century Thessaloniki, his contributions to the study of Byzantine art and epigraphy in Romania, and his active participation in the 1924 Congress. By situating Oreste Tafrali within both national and international scholarly networks, the article offers an appraisal of his standing in the historiography of Byzantine studies in the first half of the twentieth century.

Keywords: Oreste Tafrali, 1924 Bucharest Congress, Byzantine studies in Romania, Thessaloniki, Byzantine art and archaeology, historiography

On 18 April 1924, during the fifth day of the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies held in Bucharest, the Romanian Byzantinist Oreste Tafrali delivered a presentation on an *epitaphios* from Putna Monastery.¹ According to the minutes of the Congress, his paper provoked lively discussions, including remarks from his former doctoral supervisor at the Sorbonne, the distinguished historian and archaeologist Charles Diehl (1859-1944).² This episode encapsulates Tafrali's

¹ The communication was titled "L'épithaphios serbe du Monastère de Putna". For a synopsis of the paper, see C. Marinescu, *Compte-rendu du premier Congrès international des études byzantines, Bucarest, 1924*, Bucharest, 1925, p. 62-63.

² C. Marinescu, *Compte-rendu...*, p. 63-65.

scholarly stature: a Romanian academic who bridged national and international intellectual networks and played a key role in bringing Byzantine studies to prominence in interwar Romania. A gifted and prolific archaeologist and art historian, Tafrali served for twenty-four years as Professor of Archaeology and Antiquities at the University of Iași, during which time he advanced both archaeological research and art-historical scholarship in the country. Drawing on Tafrali's published works, personal correspondence, and archival materials, as well as on biographical studies,³ this article offers insights into his intellectual profile and scholarly legacy. It traces his academic formation, major research contributions, and institutional initiatives, situating his work within the broader development of Byzantine studies in the first half of the twentieth century. Particular attention is given to his contributions before and after the landmark 1924 Congress, an event that marked a turning point in the internationalization of the field.

Biographical sketch

Oreste Tafrali was born in November 1876 into a modest family from Tulcea, in the region of Dobrogea. He pursued a degree in Classical Philology at the University of Bucharest, where his intellectual formation was shaped by the mentorship of the eminent historian and archaeologist Grigore G. Tocilescu (1850-1909).⁴ As director of the National Museum of Antiquities,⁵ Tocilescu not only guided Tafrali academically but also offered him valuable practical training by employing him as a museum secretary during his undergraduate years (1902-1905). This mentorship laid the foundation for Tafrali's later scholarly career and helped secure support for his graduate studies in Paris.

³ Several monographs have been devoted to Tafrali: L. Ciupercă, *Oreste Tafrali*, Iași, 2016; I. Asăvoaie, *Oreste Tafrali. Activitatea istoriografică, didactică și publică*, Iași, 2016. See also L. Nastasă, "Oreste Tafrali și studiile de bizantinologie", *Cercetări istorice* 16, 1997, p. 157-172; and especially the comprehensive study by L. Rados, "'Supliciile' profesorului Oreste Tafrali la Universitatea din Iași: o poveste despre vanități și incompatibilități culturale", *Archiva Moldaviae* 9, 2017, p. 97-120, which includes excellent critical notes on the above-mentioned monographs (p. 98); see also Ioanna Rapti's paper in this volume.

⁴ On Tocilescu's life and works, see I. Bogdan-Cătănicu, "Grigore Tocilescu – întemeietor al școlii de arheologie românească", *Ephemeris Napocensis* 1, 1991, p. 189-195; A. Avram, "Grigore G. Tocilescu (1850-1909) – arheolog și epigrafist", *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche și arheologie* 43.2, 1992, p. 139-144; M. Mecu, "Grigorie G. Tocilescu (1850-1909), inițiatorul arheologiei clasice științifice în România", in A. Barnea (ed.), *Arheologia clasică în România: Primul secol*, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, p. 71-139.

⁵ On Tocilescu's activity as director of the National Museum of Antiquities, see A. Ștefan, "Istoricul Muzeului Național de Antichități din București – Institutul de Arheologie. II. Progresele arheologiei și muzeografiei în România în perioada 1881-1927", *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche și arheologie* 35.2, 1984, p. 109-143, at p. 110-125.

In 1905, on the recommendation of Professor Tocilescu, Tafrali embarked on a seven-year period of advanced study in France, attending courses at the Sorbonne, the *École Pratique des Hautes Études*, the *Collège de France*, and the *École du Louvre*. During these formative years in Paris, he studied under some of the leading scholars of Byzantine history and archaeology, including Charles Diehl, Léon-Maxime Collignon (1849-1917), Gabriel Millet (1867-1953), and Salomon Reinach (1858-1932).⁶ This rigorous academic training fostered a wide-ranging expertise that encompassed archaeology, art history, philology, epigraphy, and numismatics – an interdisciplinary orientation that would become a defining feature of his scholarly career.

Tafrali's years in Paris were marked by persistent financial hardship, as attested in the prefaces to his published doctoral theses and in his extensive correspondence with the erudite Demosthene Russo (1869-1938).⁷ Russo, a Greek immigrant to Romania, was one of the leading specialists in the cultural relations of Southeast Europe and, from the autumn of 1915, Professor of Byzantine Studies at the University of Bucharest – “a respected and feared scholar, a seminal personality and a central figure in the interwar Romanian cultural environment”.⁸ His academic career and historiographical vision – particularly his research directions and methodological orientation – brought him into direct conflict with the historian and politician N. Iorga (1871-1940), and their relationship further deteriorated amid the controversy surrounding Russo's appointment at the University of Bucharest.⁹

The correspondence between Tafrali and his learned mentor and friend, written in Modern Greek, French, and Romanian, reveals not only the intellectual camaraderie and shared scholarly interests but also provides vivid insight into the financial pressures and personal struggles that shaped Tafrali's student life in Paris. In a letter dated March 1908, for instance, Tafrali lamented his increasingly precarious

⁶ L. Rados, “‘Supliciile’ profesorului Oreste Tafrali...”, p. 100; L. Nastasă-Kovács, *Studentii români la École Pratique des Hautes Études (Section des Sciences Historiques et Philologiques): 1868-1948*, Cluj-Napoca – Bucharest, 2016, p. 35, 101-102; on Gabriel Millet, see Ioanna Rapti's contribution in this volume.

⁷ L. Rados, “Epistolar savant. Oreste Tafrali și Demosthene Russo”, in F. Ioncioaia and L. Rados (eds.), *Fragmente de pe un câmp de luptă. Studii în istoria universității*, Iași, p. 237-338; id., “‘Supliciile’ profesorului Oreste Tafrali...”, p. 102.

⁸ Id., “A ‘Dynasty’ of Hellenists in Twentieth-Century Bucharest: Demosthene Russo, Ariadna Camariano-Cioran and Nestor Camariano”, *The Historical Review / La revue historique* 10, 2013, p. 265-296, at p. 266.

⁹ Id., “O pagină controversată din istoria bizantinisticii române. ‘Dosarul’ numirii lui Demosthene Russo la Universitatea din București (1915)”, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie A. D. Xenopol* 42, 2005, p. 585-602; cf. M. Berza, “Metodă istorică și falsă erudiție”, *Revista istorică* 30, 1944, p. 96-108; L. Rados, “A ‘Dynasty’ of Hellenists...”, p. 281: “The relations between them were, in the first years, cold (Russo had amended some erroneous or contestable findings in Iorga's writing), after 1915 worse, and towards the end of their lives disastrous, especially after the emergence of the dissenting historiographic group of the ‘New School’”.

situation: “Ἀλλά, δυστυχῶς, δὲν ἔχω ἥσυχον τὸ πνεῦμα. Τὰ χρήματα μου τελειώνουν κατὰ τὸν Ἰούνιον”.¹⁰ To compensate for the limited financial support he received from the Romanian government and private benefactors – notably Ioan Kalinderu (1840-1913), administrator of the Romanian royal estate – Tafrali took on several additional roles during his Parisian years. Among these, he served as a lecturer in Romanian at the *École Orientale des Langues Vivantes* and worked as a librarian in the art history and archaeology library founded by the collector and patron Jacques Doucet (1853-1929).

In December 1912, Tafrali completed his *doctorat d'État* in letters. His principal thesis, *Thessalonique au quatorzième siècle*, submitted for examination in January 1910,¹¹ offered a comprehensive and pioneering study of Thessaloniki, the Byzantine Empire's “second city”,¹² examined through cultural, historical, and socio-economic lenses. In reconstructing the complex history of late Byzantine Thessaloniki, Tafrali drew upon an impressive range of both published and unpublished sources, demonstrating exceptional archival acumen and philological precision.

Complementing this major study, his secondary thesis, *Topographie de Thessalonique*,¹³ focused on the spatial organization and monumental landscape of the city. It provided a meticulous identification of key monuments and proposed a revised, earlier dating for the construction of Thessaloniki's fortification walls. Enriched with detailed plans and photographs taken by Tafrali himself, the work stands out as a valuable topographical and archaeological resource. The scholarly significance of this complementary thesis was recognized by Charles Diehl, who, in his formal report – an excerpt of which Tafrali shared with Demosthene Russo in a 1911 letter – praised the originality and thoroughness of the research.¹⁴ Diehl particularly emphasized the importance of Tafrali's analysis of Thessaloniki's fortifications, describing it as a pioneering contribution that filled a notable gap in Byzantine archaeological scholarship:

¹⁰ L. Rados, “Epistolar savant...”, p. 261-263, at p. 261.

¹¹ See Tafrali's letter to Demosthene Russo, written in Modern Greek and dated January 1910; L. Rados, “Epistolar savant...”, p. 281-283. O. Tafrali, *Thessalonique au quatorzième siècle*, préface de Ch. Diehl (avec 3 figures dans le texte), Paris, 1913.

¹² J. W. Barker, “Late Byzantine Thessalonike: A Second City's Challenges and Responses”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 57, 2003, p. 5-33; Ch. Bakirtzis, “The Urban Continuity and Size of Late Byzantine Thessalonike”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 57, 2003, p. 35-64.

¹³ O. Tafrali, *Topographie de Thessalonique*, thèse complémentaire pour le doctorat, Paris, 1912.

¹⁴ The correspondence between Tafrali and Russo sheds light on a lesser-known aspect of his relationship with Charles Diehl: the plagiarism of several sections from Tafrali's doctoral work by his former mentor, who had previously reviewed drafts of the thesis; see L. Rados, “Epistolar savant...”, p. 280-283 (letter no. 15, dated January 1910); and id., “‘Supliciiile’ profesorului Oreste Tafrali...”, p. 104.

Monsieur le Doyen,

Nous avons l'honneur de vous proposer d'accorder votre visa à la thèse complémentaire de M. O. Tafrali: Topographie de Thessalonique. Ce travail, qui repose sur une étude personnelle et attentive des lieux, qui est accompagné de deux plans excellents et de nombreuses photographies prises par l'auteur, est fort intéressant et par certains points tout à fait nouveau. Les chapitres relatifs à l'étude de l'enceinte fortifiée de Thessalonique sont à cet égard particulièrement dignes d'attention: il y a là une étude de la fortification byzantine qui n'avait point été faite et qui méritait de l'être.¹⁵

Two years later, in 1913, the academic merit of Tafrali's doctoral work was further recognized when the *Association pour l'encouragement des études grecques en France* awarded him its prestigious silver medal – an important acknowledgment of his contribution to the study of Byzantine history and archaeology.

Having abandoned his earlier plans to settle permanently in Paris,¹⁶ Tafrali returned to Romania in 1913, where he was appointed Professor of Archaeology and Antiquities at the University of Iași.¹⁷ This appointment marked the beginning of a long and productive academic career in the city that would remain his intellectual home for the following decades. In addition to his teaching and research duties, Tafrali also served as substitute Professor of Ancient History and Epigraphy, a position he held for fourteen years, until 1927. His sustained efforts to promote archaeological research in Iași culminated in 1916 with the foundation of the University's Museum of Antiquities, an institution he not only established but also directed with dedication until his death.¹⁸

During the final phase of the Great War and its immediate aftermath, between August 1917 and June 1919, Tafrali temporarily suspended his teaching duties at the University of Iași to represent Romania's interests abroad. He joined a delegation of Romanian academics in Paris, led by the mathematician, engineer, and former minister Ermil A. Pangrati (1864-1931).¹⁹ Over the course of nearly two years, Tafrali

¹⁵ Id., "Epistolar savant...", p. 297-299, at p. 298 (the letter dates from December 1911).

¹⁶ In 1910-1911, Tafrali married Geneviève, a Parisian by origin.

¹⁷ On the complex circumstances surrounding Tafrali's appointment at the University of Iași, see especially L. Rados, "'Suplicile' profesorului Oreste Tafrali...", p. 102-106; cf. M. Petrescu-Dîmbovița, "Unele considerații cu privire la cercetarea arheologică ieșeană până la Primul Război Mondial", *Arheologia Moldovei* 20, 1997, p. 171-180, at p. 178-179.

¹⁸ See, e.g., D.-O. Boldur, "Mărturii contemporane despre profesorul universitar ieșean Orest Tafrali", *Carpica* 37, 2008, p. 386-391.

¹⁹ The Romanian academic delegation to Paris included several of Tafrali's colleagues from the University of Iași – Ioan Găvănescu and Ioan Ursu – as well as Ion Nistor from the University of Cernăuți and seven professors from the University of Bucharest. The group operated under the leadership of Professor Ermil Pangrati. See A. C. Ibănescu, *Propagandă și război. Misiunea intelectualilor români la Paris (1917-1920)*, PhD thesis, University of Iași, 2017; V. Mîrza and A. C. Ibănescu, "Activitatea profesorilor ieșeni în cadrul Misiunii Universitare din Franța reflectată în ziarul 'La Roumanie'", *Historia Universitatis Iassiensis* 4, 2013, p. 81-98.

contributed to Romania's cultural diplomacy through a series of public lectures delivered in Paris and other French cities. During his absence from Iași, his courses in Ancient History were entrusted to the archaeologist Ioan Andrieșescu (1888-1944) – a temporary arrangement that would later give rise to professional tensions between the two scholars.²⁰

One of Tafrali's persistent ambitions – indeed, an intellectual fixation – emerged soon after his arrival in Iași:²¹ the pursuit of a professorship in the capital, Bucharest.²² His correspondence reveals a series of sustained and carefully orchestrated efforts to secure the support of influential intellectual and political figures who might facilitate this career move. Despite his perseverance, these efforts proved unsuccessful. He applied twice, without success, for the Chair of Art History at the University of Bucharest – first in 1923, and again in 1927.²³ His second candidacy was notably blocked by N. Iorga, who contended that Tafrali's scholarly work did not correspond to the specific academic profile required for the position. In response, Tafrali published a detailed defence of his qualifications in a 1930 article, emphasizing the relevance of his archaeological and art-historical research.²⁴ This rebuttal appeared in *Arta și Arheologia* (*Art and Archaeology*), the academic journal he had founded and which will be discussed later in this paper. Despite this professional setback, Tafrali remained a leading figure at the University of Iași and one of the most respected professors in its academic community.²⁵ In 1936, he was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters.²⁶

Tragically, Tafrali passed away the following year, on November 5, 1937, at the age of sixty-one, following complications from a surgical procedure. At the time of his death, he had served as Professor of Archaeology and Antiquities at the University

²⁰ D.-O. Boldur, "Orest Tafrali sau Ioan Andrieșescu? Dispută pentru ocuparea unei catedre la Universitatea din Iași", *Arheologia Moldovei* 28, 2005, p. 363-370; id., "Mărturii contemporane...", p. 388; L. Rados, "'Supliciile' profesorului Oreste Tafrali...", p. 111.

²¹ L. Rados, "Epistolar savant...", p. 316 (letter no. 35, received from Demosthene Russo in March 1914).

²² Id., "'Supliciile' profesorului Oreste Tafrali...", p. 97, notes that despite his substantial achievements in Iași, Tafrali never fully integrated into the city's intellectual milieu, seeking throughout his career opportunities to leave Iași for Bucharest, where he believed his true scholarly vocation would be realized and his work would receive the broader and more fitting recognition it deserved; see *ibid.*, p. 107-109, 113-118 (in the subchapter suggestively titled "The obsession with the capital: the sun rises from Bucharest").

²³ The Chair of Art History at the University of Bucharest had been officially declared vacant in the *Monitorul Oficial al României (Official Gazette of Romania)*, no. 107 (18 May 1927); see L. Rados, "'Supliciile' profesorului Oreste Tafrali...", p. 115-116.

²⁴ O. Tafrali, "Concursul pentru ocuparea Catedrei de Istoria Artelor de la Facultatea de Litere din București. Răspuns unui referat pătimaș", *Arta și Arheologia* 4, 1930, p. 48-61.

²⁵ D.-O. Boldur, "Mărturii contemporane...", p. 390.

²⁶ L. Rados, "'Supliciile' profesorului Oreste Tafrali...", p. 117.

of Iași for twenty-four years and had directed the University's Museum of Antiquities for twenty-one. His passing was widely mourned, and his contributions were praised posthumously by several prominent figures in Romanian intellectual life. Among them were the historian and politician Gheorghe I. Brătianu (1898-1953) and the Byzantinist Nicolae Bănescu (1878-1971),²⁷ both of whom paid tribute to Tafrali's prolific scholarly output and distinguished archaeological achievements.²⁸ Bănescu poignantly described his death as "une perte cruelle pour la science roumaine, à laquelle il consacra pendant trente ans ses efforts et qu'il enrichit de plusieurs remarquables travaux".²⁹ Brătianu, who attended Tafrali's funeral, offered a penetrating and insightful assessment of his wide-ranging and prolific scholarly activity:

His mind, animated by a passion for research, turned toward a wide range of fields. His work brought together distinct areas of inquiry – each of which, on its own, could have secured him the reputation of a specialist in its respective branch of historical scholarship – to which he devoted his unrelenting scholarly zeal. In Tafrali we thus find the classical archaeologist, ... the historian of art, ... the erudite commentator on the sources of ancient history, the discerning connoisseur of ecclesiastical art and iconography, and, finally, the historian of Byzantine institutions and daily life – a field he pursued from his doctoral dissertation, the monumental monograph on medieval Thessaloniki, to the final pages he published in the year of his death, devoted to Emperor Nikephoros Phokas.³⁰

Contributions to Byzantine studies

Tafrali's scholarly output was both prolific and wide-ranging, encompassing monographs, journal articles, reviews, brief notes, and – even if less well known – literary works, including novels.³¹ A comprehensive account of his œuvre lies beyond the scope of this article; what follows is therefore a selective overview focusing on his principal contributions to the field of Byzantine studies.

A substantial part of Tafrali's early scholarship was devoted to the city of Thessaloniki. In 1909, prior to completing his doctoral theses, he published two important studies in the *Revue archéologique* on the Church of Saint Demetrios

²⁷ On Gheorghe I. Brătianu, see Ovidiu Cristea's paper in this volume; on Bănescu, see Ș. Șubă, G. Costache, and L. Regneală (eds.), *Nicolae Bănescu: biobibliografie*, Bucharest, 2010.

²⁸ N. Bănescu, "Nécrologie – Oreste Tafrali", *Byzantion* 13.2, 1938, p. 761-763, republished as "Oreste Tafrali (1876-1937)", *Échos d'Orient* 37, 1938, p. 504-505. Bănescu also drew attention to one of Tafrali's lesser-known works, a monograph on the ancient Pontic city of Dionysopolis (*La cité pontique de Dionysopolis*, Paris, 1927), which presented the results of Tafrali's archaeological excavations at the site of modern Balçık.

²⁹ N. Bănescu, "Nécrologie...", p. 761 (p. 504).

³⁰ Gh. I. Brătianu, "Învățatul Oreste Tafrali. Pentru comemorarea lui Oreste Tafrali la Universitatea din Iași", *Însemnări ieșene* 3.5, 1938, p. 300-302 (translation mine).

³¹ See, for instance, O. Tafrali, *Urmărind idealul – roman*, Bucharest, 1921.

the Myroblytes, one of the city's most significant religious monuments. In these articles, Tafrali proposed a revised chronology for the church's construction, placing its foundation in the fifth century – a conclusion grounded in a careful analysis of previously unpublished sources.³² These studies were later reprinted in 1913 in a volume collecting his early contributions to the field.³³

Tafrali's two doctoral theses on Thessaloniki were met with considerable acclaim. In the preface to his principal thesis, *Thessalonique au quatorzième siècle*, his supervisor Charles Diehl praised not only Tafrali's extensive use of unpublished sources but also his scholarly diligence and perseverance. Diehl commended the work for shedding new light on the complex history of late Byzantine Thessaloniki:

M. Tafrali a eu le grand mérite, en étudiant toute une série de manuscrits inédits, de nous révéler plus pleinement le caractère de ces curieux événements et de les mettre en un jour plus vrai. Ce n'est point le seul mérite de son livre: ceux qui s'intéressent à l'histoire de Byzance y apprendront beaucoup sur la société byzantine et les éléments qui la constituaient; sur l'organisation municipale d'une grande cité; sur sa vie religieuse— que le culte de saint Démétrius faisait à Thessalonique particulièrement intense; sur les causes profondes enfin des haines de classe qui troublèrent la ville. Mais surtout ils y trouveront l'étude de ce que fut cette chose inconnue jusqu'ici, une *commune* byzantine. Et de cela, qui est absolument nouveau, nous ne saurions remercier assez l'auteur de ce livre. M. Tafrali a mis à l'écrire beaucoup de zèle, de conscience; il y a consacré plusieurs années de recherches persévérantes: je ne doute pas que l'ouvrage lui fasse honneur et je suis heureux de rendre ce témoignage à un bon travailleur, dont je sais les sérieuses qualités.³⁴

A year later, in a review of Tafrali's two theses,³⁵ Charles Diehl once again emphasized the extensive use of unpublished sources, particularly the writings of Isidore of Thessaloniki, Gregory Palamas, and Nicholas Kabasilas. He considered the chapters devoted to Thessaloniki's social structure, the hesychast controversy, and the Zealot uprising to be especially valuable contributions to the study of late Byzantine society. At the same time, Diehl did not hesitate to point out several shortcomings: he noted the occasional vagueness or incompleteness of the references, a tendency toward overly broad generalizations, and certain linguistic imperfections:

... a eu la bonne fortune de consulter nombre de sources inédites, en particulier les écrits d'Isidore de Thessalonique, de Grégoire Palamas, de Nicolas Cabasilas surtout, conservées à notre Bibliothèque Nationale, on appréciera à la fois l'effort accompli

³² O. Tafrali, "Sur la date de l'église et des mosaïques de Saint Démétrius de Salonique", *Revue archéologique* 13, 1909, p. 83-101, and id., "Sur les réparations faites au VII^e siècle à l'église de Saint-Démétrius de Salonique", *Revue archéologique* 14, 1909, p. 380-386.

³³ Id., *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'épigraphie byzantines*, Paris, 1913, p. 1-29, 30-39.

³⁴ Id., *Topographie...*, p. B-C.

³⁵ *Revue des études grecques* 27.122, 1914, p. 222-223.

par l'auteur et la nouveauté du livre qui en est sorti. Évidemment, tout n'est point parfait dans cet ouvrage. La langue, correcte en général, rappelle cependant trop souvent que l'auteur est étranger; bien des indications restent incomplètes et vagues, piquant la curiosité sans la satisfaire; les conclusions du livre enfin, d'une portée trop vaste, appelleraient plus d'une réserve et d'une critique. [...] On eût souhaité sans doute, dans une étude qui pouvait être si importante pour l'histoire de la fortification byzantine, une méthode parfois plus rigoureuse dans l'étude des inscriptions qui datent ces murailles, un emploi plus ingénieux aussi des comparaisons que pouvaient fournir d'autres enceintes byzantines conservées jusqu'à nous. Mais on trouvera dans ce livre des informations tout à fait intéressantes sur l'aspect qu'offrait jadis l'antique Thessalonique, sur les grandes églises qui en étaient la parure, sur la date probable où elles furent élevées. Ici encore il faut louer M. T. de l'effort personnel, persévérant et attentif avec lequel il a conduit ses recherches et des sérieuses qualités scientifiques dont il y a donné la preuve.³⁶

In a brief note published in 1994, on the occasion of the anastatic reproduction of the first edition of *Thessalonique au quatorzième siècle* (1913), the distinguished classical philologist Jean Irigoien (1920-2006) described Tafrali's monograph as a "classic". Despite the passage of time and advances in scholarship, Irigoien observed that it remained, even then, the only comprehensive study devoted to fourteenth-century Thessaloniki: "Cet ouvrage, entrepris sur le conseil de Ch. Diehl qui l'a préfacé, a vieilli sur plus d'un point, mais il représente encore, à ce jour, la seule étude synthétique sur la seconde ville de l'empire byzantin au temps de la querelle hésychaste et du second humanisme byzantin".³⁷

Despite its enduring value, Tafrali's study has in certain respects been overtaken by subsequent advances in scholarship. This is particularly evident in his interpretation of the so-called Zealot uprising in Thessaloniki (1342-1349), one of the most complex and enigmatic episodes in fourteenth-century Byzantine history. In his chapter on the Zealot revolt, Tafrali drew extensively on the so-called *Anti-Zealot Discourse* attributed to Nicholas Cabasilas – then still unpublished – and interpreted the text as a polemical refutation of the Zealots' political program. This interpretative framework remained largely dominant until 1957, when Ihor Ševčenko published the first critical edition of the treatise and convincingly challenged this reading.³⁸ Ševčenko's study fundamentally reshaped scholarly understanding of the source, delivering a decisive blow to its credibility as a witness to the Zealot movement and narrowing the documentary basis for reconstructing the events in Thessaloniki.³⁹ More recently, however, several scholars

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

³⁷ *Revue des études grecques* 107.509-510, 1994, p. 317.

³⁸ I. Ševčenko, "Nicolas Cabasilas' 'Anti-Zealot' Discourse: A Reinterpretation", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 11, 1957, p. 81-171.

³⁹ On the dossier of sources, see M.-H. Congourdeau, *Les Zélotes. Une révolte urbaine à Thessalonique au 14^e siècle. Le dossier des sources*, Paris, 2013; ead. (ed.), *Thessalonique au temps des Zélotes*

have drawn attention to interpretative biases in Ševčenko's edition and analysis, which affected both his translation and his overall understanding of the text.⁴⁰

Reviews of Tafrali's complementary thesis on the topography of Thessaloniki recognised its pioneering nature and praised its valuable contribution to the field, particularly the inclusion of detailed plans and photographs. At the same time, reviewers noted certain methodological limitations, such as the insufficiently rigorous analysis of epigraphic material and the relatively restricted use of comparative evidence.⁴¹

Tafrali's works on Thessaloniki were widely cited by his contemporaries and continued to be referenced in later scholarship.⁴² For instance, in a 1919 article on the Christian monuments of Thessaloniki published in the *Revue archéologique*, the French historian Louis Bréhier (1868-1951) referred to Tafrali's "beau livre sur *Thessalonique au XIV^e siècle*".⁴³ Beyond his two doctoral theses, Tafrali broadened the scope of his research with a comprehensive history of Thessaloniki, published in 1919, which traced the city's development from its foundation through the fourteenth century.⁴⁴ This volume was awarded a prize by the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* in 1921, further consolidating Tafrali's scholarly reputation.

In the later stages of his career, Tafrali broadened the scope of his research beyond Thessaloniki. In 1936, just one year before his death, he published a comprehensive study on the Byzantine emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963-969).⁴⁵ Another important contribution was his study of the *Akathistos Hymn*, which exemplified his combined expertise in art history and Greek manuscript studies.⁴⁶ This work offered a detailed iconographic analysis of the miniatures contained in

(1342-1350). *Actes de la table ronde au 22^e Congrès international des études byzantines à Sofia, 25 août 2011*, Paris, 2014; ead., "Le discours de Nicolas Kabasilas *Sur les audaces contre les biens sacrés commises par les archontes en enfreignant la loi*", in M.-H. Blanchet and R. Estangüi Gómez (eds.), *Le monde byzantin du XIII^e au XV^e siècle: anciennes ou nouvelles formes d'impérialité* (Travaux et mémoires 25.1), Paris, 2021, p. 391-450.

⁴⁰ M.-H. Blanchet and R. Estangüi Gómez, "Contextualization and Reinterpretation of Nikolaos Kabasilas's So-Called 'Anti-Zealot' Treatise, the *Discourse on the Audacities Against Sacred Goods Committed by the Archons in Infringing the Law*", in eid. (eds.), *State and Society in the Palaiologan Era (13th-15th Centuries)*, London, 2025, p. 127-178, especially p. 128-129.

⁴¹ See J. B. Bury's review in *The English Historical Review* 29.113, 1914, p. 128-131; *Revue archéologique* 22, 1913, p. 434-435; cf. Ch. Diehl's review in *Revue des études grecques* 27.122, 1914, p. 222-223.

⁴² See, e.g., A. Rigo, "Humanism, Hesychasm, and the Fate of Byzantium and Eastern Europe. A Re-Reading of John Meyendorff and Gelian M. Prokhorov", *La Parola del Passato. Rivista di studi antichi* 79.2, 2024, p. 291-312, at p. 294-295.

⁴³ L. Bréhier, "Les monuments chrétiens de Salonique", *Revue archéologique* 9, 1919, p. 1-36, at p. 3.

⁴⁴ O. Tafrali, *Thessalonique des origines au XIV^e siècle*, Paris, 1919.

⁴⁵ Id., *Nicéphore II Phocas* (Hommes d'État), Paris, 1936.

⁴⁶ Id., "Iconografia Imnului Acatist", *Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice* 7, 1914, p. 49-84.

manuscript no. 113 of the Library of the Romanian Academy and earned international recognition. Louis Bréhier, for instance, praised it as an excellent and insightful study.⁴⁷

Tafrali devoted considerable scholarly attention to the artistic heritage of Romanian monastic complexes. In 1925, he published a substantial volume on the treasury of Putna Monastery, cataloguing a wide variety of liturgical objects, including icons and embroidered textiles.⁴⁸ This study was followed by further investigations of the treasuries of Sucevița Monastery⁴⁹ and the Byzantine monuments of Curtea de Argeș.⁵⁰ The latter work, richly illustrated, examined the artistic and architectural influences emanating from Constantinople and their adaptation within Romanian religious art and architecture. Some of Tafrali's interpretations, however, drew criticism from his contemporaries.⁵¹ Gheorghe Balș (1868-1934)⁵² and N. Iorga both expressed reservations about his conclusions. In a critical review of Ioan D. Ștefănescu's monograph on religious painting in Wallachia and Transylvania,⁵³ Iorga reproached the author for having, in his view, uncritically accepted "Tafrali's opinions on the princely church of Argeș, which are full of historical inaccuracies".⁵⁴

Another major scholarly initiative undertaken by Tafrali was the founding of the academic journal *Arta și Arheologia* (*Art and Archaeology*), launched in 1927, three years after the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest.⁵⁵ In the preface to the first issue, Tafrali outlined the journal's aims: to publish, in both Romanian and French, scholarly articles, short reviews, and reports on artistic activity worldwide, along with coverage of exhibitions and the art market in Romania and abroad. The journal's contributors included several foreign scholars as well as a number of Tafrali's students, reflecting his commitment to fostering international scholarly

⁴⁷ See L. Bréhier's review in *Journal des savants* 17, 1919, p. 52-53. The *Akathistos Hymn* has since attracted considerable scholarly attention; see E. Timotin, L. Cotovanu, and O. Olar (eds.), *The Akathistos Hymn in the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Traditions: The History of a Liturgical Masterpiece Between Text and Image*, 2 vols. (Supplementa Études byzantines et post-byzantines 5.1-2), Heidelberg, 2024.

⁴⁸ O. Tafrali, *Le trésor byzantin et roumain du Monastère de Poutna*, vol. 1: *Texte*, vol. 2: *Atlas*, Paris, 1925.

⁴⁹ Id., *Le Monastère de Sucevița / Das Kloster Sucevița*, Iași, 1929.

⁵⁰ Id., *Monuments byzantins de Curtea de Argeș*, Paris, 1931.

⁵¹ D.-O. Boldur, "Mărturii contemporane...", p. 388-389.

⁵² See the critical notes published by Gh. Balș in *Revue historique du Sud-est européen* 5.1-3, 1928, p. 91-93; see also *Revue historique du Sud-est européen* 4.10-12, 1927, p. 320-325.

⁵³ I. D. Ștefănescu, *La peinture religieuse en Valachie et en Transylvanie depuis les origines jusqu' au XIX^e siècle*, Paris, 1932.

⁵⁴ *Revue historique du Sud-est européen* 10.4-6, 1933, p. 198: "Dans le domaine de l'art, on ne comprend pas comment telle église de Trnovo a pu influencer une autre de Suceava arménienne. M. Ștefănescu accepte sans broncher les opinions de M. Tafrali sur l'église princière d'Argeș qui sont pleine de contresens historiques". See *Revue historique du Sud-est européen* 5.4-6, 1928, p. 182.

⁵⁵ The issues of the journal are available online: <https://dspace.bcu-iasi.ro/handle/123456789/725>.

dialogue. Notably, however, *Arta și Arheologia* failed to attract contributions from some of the leading Romanian art historians of the time.

The inaugural issue of *Arta și Arheologia* opened with an article by Louis Bréhier, presenting a synthesis of nine lectures on Romanian art that he had delivered earlier that year at the Faculty of Letters in Clermont-Ferrand.⁵⁶ As Bréhier himself explained, the inspiration for these lectures came from the “unforgettable” study trip to the monasteries of Moldova and Oltenia, organized during the 1924 Congress of Byzantine Studies:

L'idée même de ce cours est née en Roumanie pendant l'inoubliable voyage d'études, offert par le gouvernement roumain aux membres du Congrès des Études Byzantines [...]. Comme pour mes confrères du Congrès, ce beau voyage a été pour moi la révélation d'un art extrêmement vivant et original, qui est plus qu'une survivance de l'art byzantin, qui en est la vraie continuation, mais avec une adaptation très remarquable des méthodes byzantines aux traditions et au génie particulier d'une race très vigoureuse et douée de qualités extrêmement personnelles.⁵⁷

The fourth issue of *Arta și Arheologia* featured another contribution by Louis Bréhier, this time devoted to apocalyptic themes in Byzantine art.⁵⁸ Tafrali himself authored a substantial portion of the journal's content, using its pages not only to disseminate his research but also, at times, to defend his scholarly positions in response to criticism. Despite his sustained efforts to establish *Arta și Arheologia* as a central forum for Romanian art historical scholarship, the journal struggled to achieve long-term stability. Publication ceased shortly after Tafrali's death, with the final issue appearing posthumously.⁵⁹ In parallel with this editorial activity, Tafrali also contributed to international bibliographical projects, most notably the *Répertoire d'art et d'archéologie*.

From the late 1920s onwards, Tafrali's work gained increasing recognition in international academic circles. He was elected a member of the Bulgarian Institute of Archaeology in Sofia (1928) and of the Kondakov Archaeological Institute in Prague (1931). In 1931, he was named an honorary member of the Association of Byzantine Studies in Athens and, the following year, a corresponding member of the Hellenic Academy. His achievements were finally acknowledged in Romania on May 23, 1936, when he was elected a corresponding member of the Romanian Academy, an honour that marked the culmination of his academic career, just one year before his death.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ L. Bréhier, “L'art roumain ancien”, *Arta și Arheologia* 1, 1927, p. 2-11.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵⁸ L. Bréhier, “Les visions apocalyptiques dans l'art byzantin”, *Arta și Arheologia* 4, 1930, p. 1-10.

⁵⁹ *Arta și Arheologia* 13-14, 1937-1938.

⁶⁰ In the same year, Vasile Grecu was likewise elected a corresponding member of the Romanian Academy, while Nicolae Bănescu was elected a full (titular) member; see Ș. Șubă, G. Costache, and L. Regneală (eds.), *Nicolae Bănescu...*, p. xxx.

As Gheorghe I. Brătianu perceptively observed, Tafrali “enjoyed greater renown beyond Romania’s borders than in his own country”.⁶¹

Contributions to the 1924 Congress

Tafrali played an active role in the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies, held in Bucharest in 1924. According to the official minutes, he participated in the discussions of four papers in the art history sections, including a presentation by the Romanian philologist Vasile Grecu (1885-1972).⁶² His interventions reflect both the breadth of his expertise and his readiness to engage critically with the work of his colleagues. For instance, he called for clearer terminological distinctions, proposed earlier chronologies for several fresco cycles in the churches of Bukovina, and – drawing on his own research – adduced additional examples of Marian iconography from Thessaloniki and from the miniatures of the *Akathistos Hymn*.

As noted above, on the fifth day of the Congress, Tafrali delivered the final paper of the day, presenting his research on an *epitaphios* from Putna Monastery. His paper was not among the twenty-four contributions later published in the *Bulletin de la Section Historique* of the Romanian Academy, edited under the direction of N. Iorga.⁶³ This omission was most likely the consequence of Tafrali’s strained relations with Iorga and his circle of disciples and protégés, such as Vasile Pârvan.⁶⁴ Notably, six months prior to the Congress, Tafrali had already presented a lecture on the same topic at the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* in Paris. He subsequently expanded this study in his 1925 volume on the treasury of Putna Monastery.⁶⁵

Following the academic sessions in Bucharest, the Congress participants embarked on a week-long study tour of the monasteries of Moldova and Oltenia. On 23 April, they arrived in Iași, where they attended a formal reception organized by Tafrali on behalf of the rector of the University of Iași. As documented in a draft letter to the Ministry of Public Education dated late April 1924, Tafrali was responsible for coordinating the financial arrangements for the delegates’ visit (see

⁶¹ Gh. I. Brătianu, “Învățăatul Oreste Tafrali...”, p. 300 (translation mine).

⁶² V. Grecu presented his paper, titled “Antike Philosophen in der Kirchenmalerei des Morgenlandes”, on the fifth day of the Congress, Friday, 18 April. See C. Marinescu, *Compte-rendu...*, p. 54-55; and Octavian-Adrian Negoită’s article in this volume.

⁶³ *Bulletin de la Section Historique – Académie Roumaine* 11, 1924. The volume brought together contributions by Sir W. Ramsay, G. Baș, N. Bănescu, I. Bianu, Gh. I. Brătianu, L. Bréhier, J. Puig y Cadafalch, A. Guarneri Citati, N. A. Constantinescu, V. I. Drăghiceanu, S. Dragomir, J. Gay, N. Iorga (two studies), Lj. Karaman, S. B. Kougéas, A. Rubió y Llúch, C. Marinescu, C. Moisil, G. Murnu, V. Pârvan, N. Radojčić, G. Sotiriou, and E. A. Stuckelberg.

⁶⁴ L. Rados, “‘Supliciile’ profesorului Oreste Tafrali...”, p. 110, 114-115.

⁶⁵ Tafrali’s transcription and interpretation of the Greek inscriptions on the *epitaphios* did not go unchallenged; they were critically reassessed in an article published in the *Revue historique du Sud-Est européen*.

Appendix). This included organizing a reception for one hundred guests, a task that required considerable logistical and financial planning.

Conclusion

Despite the many challenges posed by the turbulent historical and intellectual contexts in which he worked, Oreste Tafrali distinguished himself through a prolific and wide-ranging body of research. At times he laboured under unfavourable circumstances, shaped, among other factors, by the fraught atmosphere of Romanian academic life – vividly exemplified by the bitter rivalry between Demosthene Russo and N. Iorga.⁶⁶ Against this backdrop, Tafrali’s contributions to Byzantine archaeology, art history, topography, and epigraphy earned greater recognition abroad than at home, as reflected in the prizes and honours awarded to him by prestigious European academic institutions.⁶⁷ While his work was not without its limitations – whether in methodological rigor or interpretive nuance – it nonetheless laid essential foundations for the development of Byzantine studies in Romania. Through his research, teaching, and institutional initiatives, Tafrali played a key role in popularizing the study of Byzantium and in fostering its integration into the Romanian academic landscape. In particular, his studies of Thessaloniki, Byzantium’s “second city”, provided a starting point for later investigations into the social, urban, and religious life of this major late Byzantine centre. Likewise, his analyses of the Byzantine heritage of Romanian monastic art advanced a broader understanding of cultural exchange between Constantinople and the Romanian principalities.

Although Tafrali was not included among what N. Iorga termed the “modest legion of erudite” scholars in interwar Romanian academia,⁶⁸ his intellectual rigor, interdisciplinary approach, and sustained engagement with European scholarship firmly dispel any perception of amateurism or inadequate training.⁶⁹ His legacy securely places him among Romania’s most accomplished scholars of Byzantium – one whose work bridged national academic traditions and the wider intellectual currents that shaped Byzantine studies in the early twentieth century.

⁶⁶ Cf. L. Rados, “‘Supliciile’ profesorului Oreste Tafrali...”, p. 114.

⁶⁷ L. Năstasă, “Oreste Tafrali și studiile de bizantinologie”, *Cercetări istorice* 16, 1997, p. 157-172, at p. 157.

⁶⁸ D.-O. Boldur, “Mărturii contemporane...”, p. 389.

⁶⁹ L. Năstasă, “Oreste Tafrali...”, p. 157; L. Rados, “‘Supliciile’ profesorului Oreste Tafrali...”, p. 119; V. Pârvan, *Corespondență și acte. Studii și documente*, ed. A. Zub, Bucharest, 1973, p. 293.

Appendix

National Archives, Iași, Museum of Antiquities fund, 2 (olim 7) / 1924

16

Copie n^o 20
30 aprilie 1924

D^{le} Burileanu
Directorul Învățământului Superior
Ministerul Instrucțiunii
București.

Roș. amintită de către ministrul de plămure
Muzeului și intervenit să mi se ordoneze suma
de 15000 pentru banchetul și alte cheltuieli
avute în prilejul vizitei bizantinologice. Am
fost delegatul D^{le} Rector pentru recepție.
Suma de 15000 lei de D. secretar general
n'a ajuns pentru un banchet de 100 persoane

Directorul Muzeului de
Antichități Universității Iași

O. Tafrali

Transcription

*D-lui Burileanu
Directorul Învățământului Superior
Ministerul Instrucțiunii
București*

*Rog amintiți⁷⁰ d-lui ministru de planurile
Muzeului și interveniți⁷¹ să mi se ordonanteze suma
de 15.000 pentru banchetul și alte cheltuieli
avute cu prilejul vizitei bizantinologilor. Am
fost delegatul d-lui Rector pentru recepție.
Suma de 15.000 dați de d. secretar general
n'a ajuns pentru un banchet de 100 persoane.*

*Directorul Muzeului de
Antichități <al> Universității Iași*

O. Tafrali

English translation

*To Mr. Burileanu
Director of Higher Education
Ministry of Public Instruction
Bucharest*

*I ask that you remind the Minister of the Museum's plans
and intervene to secure authorization of the sum
of 15,000, intended to cover the banquet and other expenses
incurred on the occasion of the visit of the Byzantinists. I was
appointed by the Rector as his delegate for the reception.
The sum of 15,000 granted by the General Secretary
was insufficient to cover the cost of a banquet for 100 people.*

*Director of the Museum of
Antiquities <of> the University of Iași
O. Tafrali*

⁷⁰ *amintește* [imperative, 2nd person singular; informal form of address] ante corr.

⁷¹ *intervino* [imperative, 2nd person singular; informal form of address] ante corr.

Philologia et historia: Vasile Grecu (1885-1972) and the Development of Byzantine Philology¹

Octavian-Adrian Negoită

Abstract: This paper explores the life and scholarly activity of Vasile Grecu (1885-1972), one of the foremost representatives of the Romanian school of Byzantine studies in the twentieth century. Educated in Czernowitz and Vienna, Grecu emerged as a distinguished historian and philologist whose research made significant contributions to the understanding of Byzantine history, literature, and art. His career was marked by a rigorous interdisciplinary methodology that combined historical inquiry with philological precision. As his academic work laid the foundations for the institutional and intellectual advance of Byzantine studies in Romania, this paper investigates Grecu's contribution to the broader development of the discipline.

Keywords: Byzantine studies, Byzantine philology, Byzantine and post-Byzantine literature, Byzantine chronicles and historians, Byzantine art history, Romanian historiography, modern critical editions, Greek manuscript culture

¹ Since I began working on Vasile Grecu some time ago, I have incurred many debts to colleagues, to whom I would like to express my gratitude here – for their help in obtaining materials used in this study and for their generous discussions of various aspects of Grecu's work and legacy. My deepest thanks go first to Andrei Timotin, who invited me to take part in the International Colloquium "Le Centenaire des congrès des études byzantines (1924-2024). Le congrès de Bucarest (1924) et l'internationalisation des études byzantines". He read this study with a discerning eye and patiently waited for me to put my thoughts into words. I am also grateful to the late Ștefan Andreescu, Marian Coman, Ovidiu Cristea, and Ovidiu Olar, who offered valuable suggestions during my first lecture on Grecu, delivered at the Institute of History "Nicolae Iorga" (Romanian Academy) in 2018. I also thank Mihail Mitrea, Raluca Tomi, and Ionuț-Alexandru Tudorie for their very useful suggestions. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. Needless to say, all remaining errors are entirely my own.

1. Preliminaries

Travailleur acharné, passionné de sa discipline, il n'a jamais brigué les honneurs. Aimé et respecté de ses élèves qu'il a toujours dirigés et encouragés paternellement, sans jamais chercher à leur imposer ses vues ou ses préférences, Vasile Grecu n'en continue pas moins à 80 ans à suivre le mouvement des études byzantines en général et à se tenir au courant des progrès de cette science.²

With these words concluded Petre Ș. Năsturel (1923-2012) – a renowned Romanian historian and one of Grecu's most distinguished students – the portrait he wrote of his former professor on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. Indeed, Vasile Grecu was remembered by those who knew him not only as an erudite scholar but also as a remarkably courteous and gracious person. The history of Romanian Byzantinology is inseparable from the small circle of scholars who shaped the discipline in the first half of the twentieth century. Alongside the towering figure of N. Iorga (1871-1940), with his vast historical syntheses, Demostene Russo (1869-1938), the first to institutionalise Byzantine studies in Bucharest, Nicolae Bănescu (1878-1971), the great historian of Byzantine diplomacy, and Oreste Tafrali (1876-1937), known for his studies on Byzantine art, stands Vasile Grecu (1885-1972), whose name remains permanently inscribed in the pantheon of Romanian Byzantine studies. Unlike his predecessors, Grecu distinguished himself above all as a philologist, establishing his reputation through his rigorous editions of Byzantine texts.³

² P. Ș. Năsturel, "Le 80^e anniversaire du professeur Vasile Grecu", *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 3.3-4, 1965, p. 378.

³ On Byzantine studies in Romania, see V. Grecu, "Abriß der rumänischen Byzantinistik", *Südost-Forschungen* 7, 1942, p. 164-201; A. Elian, "Die byzantinischen Studien in Rumänien: Bemerkungen und Ergänzungen zu einem 'Abriß der rumänischen Byzantinistik'", *Balkanica* 5, 1946, p. 33-78; id., "Études byzantines en Roumanie, 1939-1945", *Byzantinoslavica* 9, 1948, p. 393-405; V. Laurent, "Les études byzantines en Roumanie, 1939-1946", *Revue des études byzantines* 6, 1948, p. 241-268; A. Elian, "La byzantinologie dans les préoccupations de la théologie orthodoxe roumaine", in *De la théologie orthodoxe roumaine: Des origins à nos jours*, Bucharest, 1964, p. 85-210; E. Stănescu and Gh. Zbucnea, "Bizantinologia la Universitatea din București", *Analele Universității din București, Seria Istorie* 14, 1965, p. 111-123; E. Stănescu, "Les études byzantines en Roumanie, 1963-1968", *Byzantinoslavica* 3, 1971, p. 203-227; id. (ed.), *Nicolae Iorga – Istoric al Bizanțului: Culegere de studii*, Bucharest, 1971; S. Brezeanu and T. Teoteoi, "Byzantinische Studien in Rumänien: Rückschau und Perspektiven", *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 19.2, 1981, p. 289-299; E. Popescu, "Catedra de bizantinologie la Institutul Teologic Universitar din București", *Studii teologice* 33.7-10, 1981, p. 537-541; V. Muntean, "Bizantinologia românească", *Analele Universității de Vest din Timișoara, Seria Teologie* 1, 1995, p. 71-76; V. Mercicariu, "Études et recherches de byzantinologie dans les années 1991-1995", *Études byzantines et post-byzantines* 3, 1997, p. 227-261; B. Maleon, "Istoria Bizanțului: Profesionalizarea unei discipline universitare la Iași (1834-1940)", in G. Bădărău, G. Cliveti, and M. Cojocariu (eds.), *Istoria – O meditație asupra trecutului. Profesorului Vasile Cristian la a 65-a aniversare*, Iași, 2001, p. 147-155; E. Popescu, "Deutschland und die Anfänge der rumänischen Byzantinistik", *Études byzantines et post-byzantines* 4, 2001, p. 327-341; N.-Ș. Tanașoca, *Balkanologi și bizantiniști români*, Bucharest, 2002; I.-A. Tudorie,

Although Vasile Grecu occupies a prominent place in Romanian cultural history as both a renowned Byzantinist and a committed advocate for the rights of the Romanian population of Bukovina – his intellectual authority matched by civic engagement – he has not been the subject of a comprehensive scholarly investigation. His presence in historiography remains mediated largely through encyclopaedic entries, commemorative notes, and scattered references in specialized studies devoted either to the history of Byzantine scholarship in Romania or to the editions of texts he produced.⁴ While such works have ensured that his name endures within the Romanian school of Byzantinology, they rarely attempt to reconstruct his intellectual networks, his pedagogical influence, or the personal dimensions that informed his scholarship. The absence of a systematic study leaves our understanding of Grecu fragmentary and incomplete. A thorough inquiry into archival materials – correspondence, records from Czernowitz, Vienna and Bucharest, as well as Grecu’s personal archive preserved in the Library of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest – remains a pressing desideratum.⁵

“Sinteze de istorie bizantină publicate în ultimul deceniu în limba română”, *Studii teologice, Serie nouă* 1.3, 2005, p. 120-128; L. Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei: Preocupări de bizantinistică în România până la 1918*, Bucharest, 2005; R. Filip, *Institutul român de Bizantinologie*, Bucharest, 2006; N. A. Hales, *Bizantinologia românească de la origini până astăzi: Reprezentanți, opere, evaluare*, PhD thesis, University of Bucharest, 2009; A. Timotin, “La place des études byzantines dans l’histoire de l’Institut d’études sud-est européennes”, in A. Timotin (ed.), *Un siècle d’études sud-est européennes en Roumanie: Bilan historiographique*, Brăila, 2019, p. 65-75.

⁴ On V. Grecu, see P. Ș. Năsturel, “Le 80^e anniversaire...”; N.-Ș. Tanașoca, “Vasile Grecu (1885-1972)”, *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 10.4, 1972, p. 724-725; G. Cronț, “Vasile Grecu (1885-1972)”, *Studii: Revistă de istorie* 25.5, 1972, p. 1127-1130; M. Bucur, *Istoriografia literară românească*, Bucharest, 1973, p. 218-222; J. Balacciu and R. Chiriacescu, “Grecu, Vasile”, in *Dicționar de lingviști și filologi români*, Bucharest, 1978, p. 134-135; F. Constantiniu, “Grecu, Vasile”, in Ș. Ștefănescu (ed.), *Enciclopedia istoriografiei românești*, Bucharest, 1978, p. 163-164; I. Pânzaru et al. (eds.), *Știința în Bucovina: Ghid biobibliografic*, vol. 1, Suceava, 1982, p. 63-65; V. Trebici, “Profesorul Vasile Grecu (1885-1972)”, *Analele Bucovinei, Serie nouă* 2.1, 1995, p. 15-22; C. Șerban, “Vasile Grecu – Extrase din Jurnal (I), (II)”, *Analele Universității ‘Ștefan cel Mare’ Suceava, Seria Istorie* 1.1, 1995, p. 270-273, and 2.2, 1996, p. 433-439; id., “Prezența la Constanța a bizantinologului Vasile Grecu în timpul Primului Război Mondial”, *Analele Dobrogei, Serie nouă* 5.2, 1999, p. 194-200; H. Mareci, “Vasile Grecu (1885-1972) (Repere în destinul unui savant)”, *Glasul Bucovinei* 11.1-2, 2004, p. 100-107; I. Moldoveanu, “Vasile Grecu, istoric al Bizanțului și al Bisericii Române”, *Studii teologice, Serie nouă* 4.4, 2008, p. 55-73; H. Mareci, “On the Horizon of Byzantinology: Vasile Grecu”, *Codrul Cosminului, Serie nouă* 14, 2008, p. 255-262; N. A. Hales, *Bizantinologia românească...*, p. 306-322; D. Rusu, “Grecu, Vasile”, in *Membrii Academiei Române*, vol. 1, Bucharest, 2016, p. 706-707; E. Satco and A. Niculică, “Grecu, Vasile”, in *Enciclopedia Bucovinei*, vol. 2, Suceava, 2018, p. 88-90; O.-A. Negoită, “Grecu (Greciuc), Vasile”, in V. Spinei and D. Rusu (eds.), *Enciclopedia reprezentanților scrisului istoric românesc*, vol. 2, Suceava, 2021, p. 365-366.

⁵ The personal archive of Vasile Grecu was acquired by the Library of the Romanian Academy (BAR) (acquisition no. 48/1982) and is now preserved in the Manuscript and Rare Book Collections. It contains private and official correspondence, three notebooks of daily notes (I: *Notes from Vienna, 1907-1908*; II: *Daily Notes, 1939-1941 and 1943-1969*; and III: *Daily Notes, 1950-1954*), activity reports, Grecu’s academic writings (some with autograph annotations in the margins), and various academic records. Further documentation concerning Grecu’s life and activity is preserved in the

Such an analysis would illuminate not only the contours of Grecu's personality and his place within the cultural elite of interwar Bukovina, but also the enduring impact of his philological rigour, editorial program, and civic commitments on the development of Romanian Byzantine studies.

This article takes an important step toward a comprehensive analysis of Vasile Grecu's life, scholarship, and legacy, moving beyond the brief encyclopaedic sketches and scattered references that have so far defined his presence in historiography. By drawing attention to archival material that has received little scholarly attention, the study seeks to reconstruct Grecu's career and his contribution to the development of Byzantine studies. At the same time, it situates Grecu within the broader intellectual landscape of Romanian Byzantinology, thereby offering a wider perspective on the history of Byzantine scholarship in Romania. The article aims to demonstrate not only the significance of Grecu's scholarly achievements, but also how his career exemplifies the interplay of academic rigour, national identity, and international recognition in the evolution of the field. Finally, the appendices include a comprehensive list of Grecu's scholarly works.

2. From Suceava to Czernowitz *via* Vienna, and the Kingdom of Romania: Early life, education, and academic interests (1885-1938)

Vasile Grecu grew up as a member of the Romanian community of the Duchy of Bukovina, a province that at the time formed part of the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The imperial context in which he grew up shaped both his educational opportunities and his linguistic horizons: the coexistence of diverse ethnic and confessional groups in Bukovina exposed him early on to a polyglot environment, while also heightening his awareness of Romanian cultural identity within a contested

Romanian National Archives — Suceava Branch, in the Archives of the University of Bucharest, and in the private correspondence of several contemporary historians (e.g., N. Iorga, *Corespondență*, vol. 2, ed. E. Vaum, Bucharest, 1986; A. Rădulescu, *Corespondență*, ed. D. Gruia Dufaut, Bucharest, 2024, p. 427, 437, 438). Thanks to the kind assistance of Raluca Tomi, who is researching the institutional archives of the Institute of History "Nicolae Iorga", I was able to confirm that there is only one document referring to Grecu, mentioning him as a collaborator of the committee for the publication of old Romanian juridical sources. Furthermore, following an official inquiry to the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archive (CNSAS), I was informed that no dossier exists under Grecu's name – indicating that he was neither a member of the Securitate nor monitored by it during the Communist period. I assume that additional materials may be found in private archives of other intellectuals or in the archives of the University of Czernowitz, but I have not yet been able to consult these sources. I am currently preparing a monograph on Vasile Grecu, which will include editions of the archival documents mentioned above and a comprehensive list of his publications. In this forthcoming work, I plan to pursue further archival avenues to complete the reconstruction of Grecu's life, scholarly and political activities, and legacy.

space.⁶ He was born on 31 July 1885 in Mitocu Dragomirnei, near Suceava, into the family of Emanuel and Ana Greciuc, peasants of modest means. His intellectual promise became evident during his years at the Greek-Orthodox High School of Suceava (1897-1905), where he distinguished himself in the study of Greek and Latin, thus laying the linguistic foundations of his later philological career.⁷ Crucial to his intellectual formation was the support of Simion Florea Marian (1847-1907), the renowned folklorist and professor of theology, who secured for him a scholarship and encouraged his scholarly ambitions, particularly after the death of his father.⁸ For a student from Bukovina, the continuation of higher studies at the University of Vienna was a natural trajectory, given the political and intellectual milieu of the Habsburg Monarchy, which made Vienna the principal academic and cultural centre for the province's aspiring elites. Grecu departed for Vienna in 1905, having obtained his *Maturitäts-Zeugnis* (Baccalaureate diploma) that July. There, he devoted himself to classical philology, studying under eminent scholars such as Hans von Arnim (1859-1931), a specialist in ancient Greek philosophy, Paul Kretschmer (1866-1956), a renowned German linguist, Wilhelm Kubitschek (1858-1936), an expert in classical epigraphy and numismatics, and Emil Reich (1854-1910), a Hungarian-born literary historian.⁹ After completing his studies in Vienna, Grecu returned to Czernowitz, where

⁶ For the history of Bukovina in this period, see, e.g., I. Nistor, *Istoria Bucovinei*, Bucharest, 1991; E. Turczynski, *Geschichte der Bukowina in der Neuzeit: Zur Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte einer mitteleuropäisch geprägten Landschaft*, Wiesbaden, 1993; P. Cernovodeanu, *Basarabia: Drama unei provincii istorice românești în contextul politic internațional, 1806-1920*, Bucharest, 1993; I. Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*, Ithaca, NY, 1995; K. Scharf, *Die Landschaft Bukowina: Das Werden einer Region an der Peripherie, 1774-1918*, Vienna – Cologne – Weimar, 2010; id., *Der griechisch-orientalische Religionsfonds der Bukowina, 1783-1949. Kontinuitäten und Brüche einer prägenden Institution des Josephinismus*, Vienna – Cologne – Weimar, 2020.

⁷ For Grecu's academic records from elementary and secondary school (*Schulnachrichten*, *Gymnasial-Zeugnis*, and *Maturitäts-Zeugnis*), see BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 3-23], *Acte de școlaritate, 1894-1905*.

⁸ On S.-F. Marian, see, e.g., M. Boca, "Preotul folklorist Simeon Florea Marian", *Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei* 33.3-4, 1957, p. 317-322; G. Ștrempel, "Simion Florea Marian și vechea slovă românească", *Studii și cercetări de bibliologie, Serie nouă* 13, 1974, p. 113-130; T. Filip, "Simion Florea Marian sau spațiul liric bucovinean în port național", in *Omagiu lui Iosif Constantin Drăgan*, vol. 1, Rome, 1977, p. 261-304; E. Dimitriu and P. Froicu, *Simion Florea Marian și corespondenții săi*, Bucharest, 1991; P. Leu, *Simion Florea Marian: Monografie*, Suceava, 1996; id., *Ctitorul etnografiei române: Simion Florea Marian*, 2 vols., Suceava, 1999; E. Satco and A. Niculică, "Marian, Simion-Florea", in *Enciclopedia Bucovinei*, vol. 2, Suceava, 2018, p. 487-490.

⁹ On these professors, see F. Egermann, "Arnim, Hans von", in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 1, Berlin, 1953, p. 372; H. Kronasser, "Paul Kretschmer (2. Mai 1866 bis 9. März 1956)", *Archiv für Orientforschung* 17, 1954-1956, p. 479-481; M. Leumann, "Paul Kretschmer, 2.5.1866-9.3.1956", *Glotta* 35.3-4, 1956, p. 161-171; A. Betz, "Kubitschek, Wilhelm (1858-1936), Althistoriker, Epigraphiker und Numismatiker", in *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon, 1815-1950*, vol. 4, Vienna, 1968, p. 314; G. Winkler, "Kubitschek, Wilhelm", in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 13, Berlin, 1982, p. 160; M. Pesditschek, "Kubitschek, Wilhelm", in P. Kuhlmann and H. Schneider

he pursued history and philology at the university (1907-1909). There, he studied with Ion Nistor (1876-1962) – who would later exert considerable influence on his academic career in both Czernowitz and Bucharest – and Sextil Pușcariu (1877-1948).¹⁰ While enrolled at Czernowitz, Grecu undertook a research trip to Berlin, Potsdam, Leipzig, and Dresden (February-March 1908), during which he attended the lectures of the celebrated classicist Enno Friedrich Wichard Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1848-1931), whom he greatly admired, and took the opportunity to explore the art galleries and cultural life:

Today I spoke with the greatest classical philologist and the finest connoisseur of the classical Greek language: Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff. I also listened to [Eduard] Norden [1868-1941] and to [Hermann Alexander] Diels [1848-1922]. At the Treptow Observatory near Berlin, I saw the Moon magnified 400 times and Jupiter magnified 40 times. – Berlin, 14. II. [19]08 V. Greciuc.¹¹

After graduating from the university, Grecu taught Greek and Latin at the “Dragoș Vodă” High School in Câmpulung Moldovenesc (1910-1914). On 8 May 1911, he married Victoria Morariu, the daughter of the distinguished priest Constantin Morariu of Pătrăuți (1854-1927), a noted advocate for Romanian rights in Bukovina.¹² This marriage brought Grecu into one of the province’s most prominent intellectual

(eds.), *Geschichte der Altertumswissenschaften. Biographisches Lexikon*, Stuttgart – Weimar, 2012, p. 674-675; W. B. Owen, “Reich, Emil (1854-1910)”, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35712> (accessed 2 November 2025).

¹⁰ On I. Nistor, see O. Bozgan, “Ion I. Nistor: Preliminarii monografice”, *Revista istorică, Serie nouă* 5.3-4, 1994, p. 345-357; D. Huzdup, “Ion I. Nistor și rolul său în viața culturală a Cernăuțului”, *Analele Bucovinei, Serie nouă* 1.2, 1994, p. 243-262; D. Alexa, *Ion Nistor: Dimensiunile personalității politice și culturale*, Rădăuți, 2000; P. Michelson, “Ion I. Nistor and the Development of Romanian Historiography in Bucovina to the Union of 1918”, *Codrul Cosminului, Serie nouă* 16.1, 2010, p. 59-81; id., “Ion I. Nistor in Romanian Politics, Scholarship, and Culture, 1919-1933”, *Codrul Cosminului, Serie nouă* 17.1, 2011, p. 117-148; E. Satco and A. Niculică, “Nistor, Ion I.”, in *Enciclopedia Bucovinei*, vol. 2, Suceava, 2018, p. 698-703. On S. Pușcariu, see M. Vaida, *Sextil Pușcariu, critic și istoric literar*, Cluj-Napoca, 1972; E. Faiciuc, *Sextil Pușcariu (1877-1948): Biobiografie*, Cluj-Napoca, 1998; D. Vladu, “Sextil Pușcariu”, in A. Corbea-Hoișie and R. Grăf (eds.), *Limbă și cultură germană în România (1918-1933): Realități postimperiale, discurs public și câmpuri culturale*, Iași, 2023, p. 347-340.

¹¹ BAR 48/1982 [I MSS 3], *Notes from Vienna, 1907-1908*, p. 26.

¹² BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 59], *Certificat de cununie* (8 August 1917). On Fr. Constantin Morariu and his political activities, see V. Grecu, “Constantin Morariu”, *Gazeta Bucovinenilor*, Bucharest, 1935, p. 12-13; V. Loichița, *Preotul și românul Constantin Morariu (1854-1927)*, Czernowitz, 1938; C. Morariu, *Cursul vieții mele: Memorii*, ed. M. Iacobescu and C. Măciucă, Suceava, 1998; Șt. Purici, *Mișcarea națională românească în Bucovina între anii 1775-1861*, Suceava, 1998; E. Glodariu, *Asociațiile culturale ale tineretului studios român din Monarhia Habsburgică, 1860-1918*, Cluj-Napoca, 1998; E. Turczynski, “Czernowitz, eine vom Bildungsbürgertum errungene Universität im Dienst staatlicher Bildungs- und Wissenschaftsförderung”, in P. Wörster (ed.), *Universitäten im östlichen Mitteleuropa: Zwischen Kirche, Staat und Nation – Sozialgeschichtliche und politische Entwicklungen*, Munich, 2008, p. 209-225; A. Popa, *Societatea Academică Arboroasa din Cernăuți*,

families, linking him to figures such as the literary historian Alexandru Leca Morariu (1888-1963), the pedagogue Victor Morariu (1881-1946), and the bibliographer and literary historian Ilie E. Torouțiu (1888-1953).¹³ Grecu himself became deeply involved in the Romanian national movement in Bukovina, where his intellectual formation was inseparable from his civic and political engagement. His former professor Sextil Pușcariu recalled that, when it came to defending a cause, Grecu was “the most fanatic individual”, one who wished to “change the face of Bukovina from one day to the next”, though Pușcariu also emphasized that Grecu was “the most gentle man” he had ever met.¹⁴ Closely connected to the Morariu family – whose members were all prominent voices in the struggle for Romanian rights – Grecu stood among the provincial elite who sought both cultural and political emancipation within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. He admired, and frequently invoked, N. Iorga, whose speeches and writings provided both inspiration and a model of national activism for young Bukovinian intellectuals.¹⁵ In 1910, Grecu attended the renowned summer school organized by Iorga at Vălenii de Munte. In his journal, he recounted not only his admiration for Iorga’s erudition but also his own fervent commitment to promoting Romanian national identity.¹⁶ Moreover, in an autograph note written after Iorga’s death, entitled “Remembrances about Nicolae Iorga” (*Aduceri aminte despre Nicolaie Iorga*), Grecu recounted an episode from that summer school that he regarded as emblematic of the Romanian historian’s character and influence:

At his courses in Vălenii de Munte, we also attended lectures by other invited speakers. Among them was Professor A. C. Cuza [1857-1947] from the University of Iași. On one occasion, he urged us to follow the example of the Saxons in Transylvania, who had

1875-1877, Câmpulung Moldovenesc, 2008; E. Satco and A. Niculică, “Morariu, Constantin”, in *Enciclopedia Bucovinei*, vol. 2, Suceava, 2018, p. 586-588.

¹³ On these intellectuals and their political and academic activities, see T. Cantemir, *Leca Morariu, folclorist*, Bucharest, 1989; E. B. Steiciuc, “Directoratul lui I. E. Torouțiu la ‘Convorbiri literare’”, *Codrul Cosminului, Serie nouă* 3-4, 1997-1998, p. 297-300; P. Rușșindilar, “Un eminent jurist, om politic și de cultură – Aurel Morariu”, *Analele Bucovinei, Serie nouă* 7.1, 2000, p. 25-42; I. Filipciuc, “I. E. Torouțiu și proiectele sale”, *Glasul Bucovinei, Serie nouă* 10.3-4, 2003, p. 109-113; E. Cristuș-Pascaniuc, “Ilie E. Torouțiu (1888-1953), un spirit bucovinean în cultura română”, *Analele Bucovinei, Serie nouă* 10.1, 2003, p. 215-221; P. Țugui, “Ilie Torouțiu și arhiva sa de istorie literară”, *Codrul Cosminului, Serie nouă* 10, 2004, p. 271-274; L. Papuc, *Leca Morariu: Studiu monografic*, 2004; E. Satco and A. Niculică, “Morariu, Aurel”, in *Enciclopedia Bucovinei*, vol. 2, Suceava, 2018, p. 585-586; id., “Morariu, Lecca (Alexandru)”, in *Enciclopedia Bucovinei*, vol. 2, Suceava, 2018, p. 588-590; id., “Torouțiu, Ilie E.”, in *Enciclopedia Bucovinei*, vol. 3, Suceava, 2018, p. 653-655.

¹⁴ S. Pușcariu, *Memorii*, Bucharest, 1978, p. 350-351.

¹⁵ From the extensive literature on Iorga, see, e.g., B. Theodorescu, *Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940): Bibliografie*, Bucharest, 1976; P. Michelson, “Nicolae Iorga between Paradox and Understanding”, *Romanian Civilization* 1.1, 1992, p. 50-60; F. Guida, “Nicolae Iorga e il compimento dell’unità nazionale romana”, *Quaderni della Casa Romana di Venezia* 1, 2001, p. 111-121; P. Țurlea, *Nicolae Iorga*, Bucharest, 2016; G. Țăranu, *Nicolae Iorga și seducția fascismului italian*, Bucharest, 2025.

¹⁶ BAR 48/1982 [II MSS 3], *Notes from the summer school of Vălenii-de-Munte, 1910*.

ingratiated themselves with the Hungarian authorities and thereby secured important cultural and economic advantages. By chance, Nicolae Iorga was also present at that lecture. He listened [in silence], though it was evident he could scarcely restrain his gestures of displeasure and impatience for the talk to end. As soon as it concluded, Iorga said that he regretted having to contradict the previous speaker. On the contrary, he firmly advised us to stand and remain always in opposition and struggle against foreign rule, for sooner or later the sword would fall into the balance between us and our oppressors, and that would decide the matter. These words proved truly prophetic, for that is exactly what came to pass.¹⁷

Greco himself contributed extensively to the press of his time, publishing articles and commentaries in contemporary newspapers and cultural journals, some of which he signed under the pseudonyms “V. Oprea” and “G. Val.”. Notably, he was an active member and vice-president of the “Junimea” Academic Society (1905, 1907-1909), the successor of the earlier “Arboroasa” society in which his father-in-law had been involved—imbued with a strong nationalistic character.¹⁸ It is therefore unsurprising that, on 22 March 1921, Greco was granted the title of *emeritus* by the members of “Junimea”.¹⁹ The articles he published reveal his political convictions and ideological commitments, testifying to a sustained dedication to the affirmation of Romanian identity in the multi-ethnic context of Bukovina.²⁰ Owing to his political views, however, the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 compelled Greco to take refuge in the Kingdom of Romania, where he briefly worked as a *corrector* for the *Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului* in Bucharest, and then he obtained a teaching position at the “Mircea cel Bătrân” High School in Constanța, where he remained until August 1916.²¹ Following the Treaty of Buftea in 1918, Greco faced the threat of deportation to the Habsburg authorities but ultimately managed to secure Romanian citizenship. He then left for Basarabia, where he continued his teaching career and actively promoted Romanian education. Later that year, he returned to Czernowitz and joined the National Romanian Council, serving as a delegate at the

¹⁷ BAR 48/1982 [I MSS 2], *Remembrances about Nicolae Iorga*, p. 6-7; this note was published in *Magazin istoric, Serie nouă* 36.11 (428), 2002, p. 20-21. After the summer school, Greco remained in close contact with Iorga, who himself took an interest in the young Bukovinian historian’s research (N. Iorga, *Corespondență*, vol. 2, p. 148).

¹⁸ T. Cantemir, “Principiile ideologice ale revistei ‘Junimea literară’”, in id., *Studii și cercetări științifice*, Bacău, 1970, p. 331-342; A. Popa, *Societatea Academică „Junimea” din Cernăuți, 1878–1938*, Câmpulung Moldovenesc, 1997.

¹⁹ BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 86], *Official Address to V. Greco regarding his recognition as emeritus of the society* (no. 139, Czernowitz, 22 March 1921).

²⁰ BAR 48/1982 [I MSS 3], *Notes from Vienna, 1907-1908*, p. 50-136, contains an autograph list of Greco’s 1312 publications, among which he also included the articles expressing his political views.

²¹ C. Șerban, “Prezența la Constanța...”, p. 194-200; BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 79], *Address of appointment from the Ministry of Instruction and Cults – Department of Education to V. Greco* (no. 113024, Bucharest, 13 December 1914); BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 78], *Address of appointment from the Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului to V. Greco* (no. 014358, Bucharest, 10 December 1914).

National Congress of Bukovina on 28 November 1918, where he voted in favour of the union between Bukovina and Romania.²² This political engagement illustrates the deep interconnection between his intellectual trajectory and the broader national project of Greater Romania. But apart from these activities, Grecu also translated classical authors – including Cicero and Plato – in order to sustain himself financially.²³

After returning to Czernowitz, Grecu briefly taught as a *secondary teacher* at the “Aron Pumnul” High School, but his career took a decisive turn with the completion of his doctoral thesis on 28 June 1919. Written in German and titled *Platons Verhältnis zur Tier- und Pflanzenwelt (Plato's Relationship to the Animal and Plant World)*, the dissertation opened the path to his academic career.²⁴ In 1920, with the support of his former professor Ion Nistor, Grecu joined the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters at the University of Czernowitz, where he initially taught in the Department of South-East European Studies, reorganized two years later as the Department of Byzantine Studies. Following the union of 1918, the University of Czernowitz came under the royal patronage of King Ferdinand I of Romania (1914-1927) and underwent a process of reformation, being inaugurated with great pomp on 24 October 1920.²⁵ During his tenure there, which lasted until 1938, Grecu helped to consolidate Byzantine studies as an academic discipline. He first served as a *substitute professor* (29 November 1919 – 1 October 1921), then as an *associate professor* (1 October 1921 – 21 January 1925), and finally as a tenured *professor* (21 January 1925 – 1 December 1938).²⁶ His academic leadership was recognized

²² V. Grecu, “Gânduri din ziua cea mare a Unirii”, in I. Nistor (ed.), *Amintiri răzlețe din timpul Unirii, 1918*, Czernowitz, 1938, p. 140-143.

²³ See Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Cuvântarea pentru M. Marcellus (Pro Marcello)*, tr. V. Grecu, Bucharest, 1915; Cornelius Nepos, *Căpitani străluciți ai neamurilor străine și viețile lui Marcus Porcius Cato și a lui Titus Pomponius*, tr. V. Grecu, Bucharest, 1915; Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Cuvântarea de apărare pentru Titus Annius Milo (Pro Milone)*, tr. V. Grecu, Bucharest, 1915; Platon, *Criton sau despre datoria cetățeanului*, tr. V. Grecu, Bucharest, 1916; Platon, *Apărarea lui Socrates (Apologia lui Socrates)*, tr. V. Grecu, Bucharest, 1916; Platon, *Ospățul sau discuțiuni asupra iubirii*, tr. V. Grecu, Bucharest, 1920.

²⁴ The doctoral thesis is still in manuscript: BAR 48/1982 [III MSS 8], *Griechische Hausarbeit: Platons Verhältnis zur Tier- und Pflanzenwelt*, signed V. Grecu, Czernowitz, 90 p.; BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 2a], *Doctoral Diploma* (Czernowitz, 5 June 1919).

²⁵ On the University of Czernowitz, see E. Turczynski, “Die Universität Czernowitz”, in F. Lang (ed.), *Buchenland: Hundertfünfzig Jahre Deutschtum in der Bukowina*, Munich, 1961, p. 321-355; G. Stourzh, “Die Franz-Josephs-Universität in Czernowitz, 1875-1918”, in R. Plaschka and K. Mack (eds.), *Wegenetz europäischen Geistes: Wissenschaftszentren und geistige Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Mittel- und Südosteuropa vom Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, Vienna, 1983, p. 54-59; V. Trebici, “Relațiile dintre societățile studențești române și germane de la Universitatea din Cernăuți ca model de înțelegere interetnică (1875-1938)”, *Analele Bucovinei, Serie nouă* 4.2, 1997, p. 281-286; M.-Șt. Ceașu, “Universitatea din Cernăuți: De la modelul cultural german la cel românesc de sorginte franceză”, *Analele Bucovinei, Serie nouă* 29.2, 2022, p. 439-453 [repr. in Gh. Iacob and O. Buruiană (eds.), *Societatea românească și concurența modelelor de dezvoltare (1859-1939)*, Cluj-Napoca, 2022, p. 98-112].

²⁶ On Grecu's activity as an academic in Czernowitz, see *Anuarul Universității Regele Ferdinand I din Cernăuți pe anul de studii 1923-1924*, Czernowitz, 1925; University of Czernowitz, *Programa*

when he was elected Dean of the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy for 1927-1928 and 1928-1929.²⁷ In his report for the 1937-1938 academic year, Greco described his teaching, showing that his dual expertise as historian and philologist enabled him to train students not only in the political and cultural history of Byzantium, but also in the rigorous methods of textual criticism and Greek palaeography:

I began my courses on 1 November 1937, at 6:00 P.M., and continued them every Monday and Tuesday from 6:00 to 7:00 P.M., in Room no. 40, covering the history of the Byzantine Empire from 1204 to 1453. The seminar sessions I held on Friday, 12 November 1937, and continued every Friday from 10:00 to 12:00 in Room no. 40, interpreting Byzantine historical texts by Niketas Choniates, George Akropolites, and Doukas, using the texts published by G. Soyter, *Byzantinische Geschichtsschreiber und Chronisten*, Heidelberg, 1929, p. 20-27. We then did exercises in Byzantine palaeography using plates nos. 12, 21, 27, and 44 from *Specimina codicum graecorum vaticanorum*, edited by P. Franchi de' Cavalieri and Joh. Lietzmann, Bonn, 1910. Finally, we discussed the interpretations and papers presented by the students—Eduard Strutynski, Maria Prelipceanu, Maria Tomaşevschi Haiducescu, Dumitru Ioanişescu, Vasile Mândruţeanu, Despina Dimitriu, and Livia Gemeniuc.²⁸

In October 1920, Greco submitted his habilitation at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Cluj, on the topic of the influence of the *Erotokritos* by Vikentios Kornaros (17th c.) in Romanian literature. The study was subsequently published in *Dacoromanica* in Cluj-Napoca. Greco's habilitation was certified by Nicolae Bănescu, who would later become his colleague at the University of Bucharest in 1938.²⁹ Yet, despite these achievements, Greco's private life was marked by profound tragedy. In May 1923, his wife Victoria suffered a mental breakdown during which he murdered her mother, Elena, before taking her own life on 26 May 1923. The event

cursurilor pentru anul de studii 1930-1931, Czernowitz, 1930, p. 11, 19, 25; University "King Carol II" of Czernowitz, *Programul cursurilor și lucrărilor în seminarii, institute și laboratoare pe anul școlar 1936-1937*, Czernowitz, 1936, p. 15; I. Nistor (ed.), *Anuarul Universității Regele Carol al II-lea din Cernăuți pe anul de studii 1936-1937*, Czernowitz, 1937, p. 121-122; id. (ed.), *Anuarul Universității Regele Carol al II-lea din Cernăuți pe anul de studii 1937-1938*, Czernowitz, 1938, p. 212-213, 233-234; id. (ed.), *Anuarul Universității Regele Carol al II-lea din Cernăuți pe anul de studii 1938-1939*, Czernowitz, 1939, p. 114. See BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 80], *Official Address from I. Nistor to V. Greco on his university appointment* (no. 144/C, Czernowitz, 5 December 1919).

²⁷ BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 93], *Official Address from the Ministry of Higher Education to V. Greco in which he is appointed dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters* (no. 100867, Bucharest, 8 August 1927).

²⁸ I. Nistor (ed.), *Anuarul Universității Regele Carol al II-lea din Cernăuți pe anul de studii 1937-1938*, p. 233-234.

²⁹ V. Greco, "Erotocritul lui Cornaro în literatura românească", *Dacoromanica* 1, 1920-1921, p. 9-72, with an additional note with the same title in *Codrul Cosminului* 1, 1924, p. 574-576. See BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 85], *Official Address from N. Bănescu to V. Greco* (no. 238-1920/21, Cluj-Napoca, 4 January 1921).

left Grecu widowed with two sons, Viorel (1912-1980) and Victor (1914-1941).³⁰ In the following years, he sought refuge in scholarly work. He eventually remarried, taking Olga Tomorug as his wife on 6 March 1927.³¹

A turning point in Grecu's career was the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies, held in Bucharest in 1924 at the initiative of N. Iorga, an event that also proved decisive for the consolidation of Byzantinology as an independent field of research. From an international perspective, the congress marked the recognition of Byzantine studies as a distinct discipline; for Romania, it provided a unique opportunity to showcase the vitality of its scholarly tradition and to affirm the place of Romanian Byzantinists within the European academic community. Grecu participated as a member of the Romanian organizing committee, delivering two papers in the Philology and Archaeology Section: *Antike Philosophen in der Kirchenmalerei des Morgenlandes* (18 April) and *Neue Quellen zu der Ἑρμηνία τῆς ζωγραφικῆς τέχνης des Dionysios von Phourna* (19 April). Both presentations sparked lively discussion among participants, notably Oreste Tafrali, Louis Bréhier (1868-1951), Nikodim Kondakov (1844-1925), Gabriel Millet (1867-1953), and Matija Murko (1861-1952).³² Grecu did not let the event pass without reflection: he later published an article dedicated to the congress, though it drew criticism from his colleague at Iași, Oreste Tafrali,

³⁰ The younger son, Victor, died at the age of 27 from wounds sustained on the battlefield of Odessa in September 1941. Grecu mourned this loss in the dedications to his editions of *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab* and *Viața Sfântului Nifon*. Another family tragedy befell his sister Domnica, who emigrated with her husband, Irimia Cazacu, to the United States; she died prematurely at 24, and her two children were subsequently raised by Grecu. See C. Morariu, *Cursul vieții mele...*, p. 159, 164; S. Pușcariu, *Memorii*, p. 630.

³¹ BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 60], *Excerpt from the Ledger of Marriage* (Czernowitz, 5 February 1940).

³² See C. Marinescu, *Compte-rendu du premier Congrès international des études byzantines, Bucarest, 1924*, Bucharest, 1925, p. 54-57, 73-74. From the extensive literature on the Bucharest Congress, see L. Bréhier, "Le premier Congrès international des études byzantines à Bucarest", *Revue internationale de l'enseignement* 78, 1924, p. 266-275; id., "Le premier Congrès international des études byzantines à Bucarest", *Byzantion* 1, 1924, p. 735-744; P. Graindor, "Le premier Congrès des études byzantines", *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 3, 1924, p. 673-675; H. Grégoire, "Le Congrès byzantine de Bucarest", *Revue archéologique* 20, 1924, p. 243-246; G. A. Sotiriou, "Α' Συνέδριον τῶν βυζαντινῶν σπουδῶν", *Θεολογία* 2, 1924, p. 184-190; S. Maufroy, "Les premiers congrès internationaux des études byzantines: Entre nationalism scientifique et construction international d'une discipline", *Revue germanique internationale* 12, 2010, p. 229-240; M. Nystazopoulou-Pélékidou, "L'histoire des congrès internationaux des études byzantines – Première Partie", *Βυζαντινὰ Σύμμεικτα* 18, 2008, p. 11-33; F. Fodac, "Le premier Congrès international d'études byzantines (Bucarest, 14-20 avril 2024): Prémisses et context historique d'organisation", *Études byzantines et post-byzantines* 5, 2006, p. 509-522. Grecu later published his papers presented at the Congress as: V. Grecu, "Eine Belagerung Konstantinopels in der rumänischen Kirchenmalerei", *Byzantion* 1, 1924, p. 273-289 [repr. in id., *Byzantinische und neugriechische Forschungen*, ed. O.-A. Negoită, Brăila, 2020, p. 121-130; hereafter *BNF*], and id., "Darstellungen Altheidnischer Denker und Schriftsteller in der Kirchenmalerei des Morgenlandes", *Bulletin de la Section Historique – Académie Roumaine* 11, 1924, p. 1-68 [repr. in *BNF*, p. 11-80].

a specialist on Byzantine art.³³ According to Tafrali, while summarizing the papers presented at the congress, Grecu had mistakenly attributed to Iorga the publication of a Greek inscription found on one of the liturgical described by him, although it had in fact been previously published by Konstantin Jireček (1854-1918) and Eugen Kozak (1857-1933).

The year 1924 was also a turning point for Grecu in terms of his academic topics and future publications. One of the defining features of his scholarship was his sustained interest in the ways Byzantine traditions permeated Romanian literary and artistic culture. He explored the reception of Byzantine chronicles in medieval Romanian literature. His research extended as well to Byzantine painting manuals that shaped local ecclesiastical art. By comparing texts preserved in Greek and Romanian manuscripts – especially the *Manual of Dionysios of Phourna* (18th c.) and its 1805 Romanian translation by Archimandrite Macarie of Căldărușani Monastery – with frescoes and decorative cycles in Romanian churches, Grecu demonstrated the continuity and creative adaptation of Byzantine iconographic norms in the Romanian context.³⁴ He also paid close attention to the presence of classical or “pagan” motifs in church painting – such as the figures of ancient philosophers and Sibyls depicted on exterior walls – interpreting them not as deviations but as signs of a layered dialogue between ancient heritage, Byzantine tradition, and local artistic innovation. As a member of the editorial board of *Candela* (the journal of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Czernowitz) and *Codrul Cosminului* (the journal of the Institute of History and Language, for which he served as secretary from 1924 to 1939),³⁵ Grecu found effective venues for disseminating his research. He would also present his scholarly work at the subsequent international congresses of Byzantine studies

³³ V. Grecu, “Congresul bizantinologilor”, *Junimea literară* 13, 1924, p. 81-89; O. Tafrali in *Viitorul*, no. 4881, 18 June 1924; V. Grecu, “Supărare fără rost”, *Junimea literară* 13.7-8, 1924, p. 380-381. On Tafrali, see L. Ciupercă, *Oreste Tafrali*, Iași, 2016; I. Asăvoaie, *Oreste Tafrali: Activitatea istoriografică, didactică și publică*, Iași, 2016; L. Nastasă, “Orest Tafrali și studiile de bizantinologie”, *Cercetări istorice* 16, 1997, p. 157-172; L. Rados, “‘Supliciiile’ profesorului Oreste Tafrali la Universitatea din Iași: O poveste despre vanități și incompatibilități culturale”, *Archiva Moldaviae* 9, 2017, p. 97-120; and Mihail Mitrea’s contribution in this volume.

³⁴ *Cărți de pictură bisericească bizantină: Introducere și ediție critică a versiunilor românești atât după redacțiunea lui Dionisie din Furna tradusă la 1805 de Arhimandritul Macarie cât și după alte redacțiuni mai vechi traduceri anonime*, ed. and tr. V. Grecu, Chernivtsi, 1936 [initially published in *Candela* 42-46, 1932-1935]. See also BAR 48/1982 [V Varia 1], *Autograph notes about Dionysios of Phourna*, 77 p.; BAR 48/1982 [V Varia 11], *Diverse autograph notes on the Manuals of church painting*, 14 p.

³⁵ On these journals, see I. Hangiu, “Codrul Cosminului”, in *Dicționarul presei literare românești, 1790-1990*, 2nd ed., Bucharest, 1996, p. 96-97; D. Valenciuc, *Candela: Revistă istorică și bisericească. Seria a II-a (1923-1946)*, Ghid bibliografic, Suceava, 1999; M. Păcurariu, “Candela”, in id. et al. (eds.), *Enciclopedia Ortodoxiei românești*, Bucharest, 2010, p. 151.

in Belgrade (1927), Athens (1930), Sofia (1934), and Rome (1936) – that became foundational for the next generations of art historians and scholars of literary studies.³⁶

His assiduous work brought him also other positions in the institutions of research of Bukovina. In August 1924, Grecu was elected member of the Commission of the State Archives in Czernowitz; on 30 November 1925, the Metropolitan of Bukovina appointed him as diocesan representative to the National Church Congress in Bucharest for a six-year term. Owing to his interest in ecclesiastical art, he was also appointed member of the Czernowitz Branch of the Commission for Historical Monuments and subsequently elected to the historical-cultural department of the “Carol II” Museum of Czernowitz on behalf of this commission.³⁷

One of the most significant recognitions of his academic career came on 23 May 1936, when Grecu was unanimously elected a corresponding member of the Historical Section of the Romanian Academy (29 members).³⁸ While at Czernowitz, his scholarly

³⁶ See V. Grecu, “Perspectiva în pictura bizantină”, *Codrul Cosminului* 2-3, 1925-1926, p. 618-620; id., “Originea cronicelor românești”, in *Omagiu lui I. Bianu din partea colegilor și foștilor săi elevi*, Bucharest, 1927, p. 217-223; id., “Die Hermeneia τῆς Ζωγραφικῆς τέχνης im Rumänischen”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 30, 1929-1930 [= *Festgabe A. Heisenberg zum 60. Geburtstag gewidmet*, ed. F. Dölger, Munich, 1929-1930], p. 619-622 [repr. in *BNF*, p. 241-256]; id., “Volksbewusstsein rettete das byzantinische Reich in seinen Anfängen vor den barbarischen Häuptlingen”, in *III^{me} Congrès International des Études Byzantines, Athènes, 1930*, ed. A. Orlandos, Athens, 1930, p. 137-144; id., “Contribuții la studiul izvoarelor Manualului de pictură bizantină”, in *Închinare lui Nicolae Iorga cu prilejul împlinirii vârstei de 60 de ani*, Cluj-Napoca, 1931, p. 189-195; id., “Manualul de pictură al lui Dionisie din Furna în românește”, *Codrul Cosminului* 7, 1931-1932, p. 49-59; id., *Influența bizantină în literatura românească: Conferință ținută la Universitatea Liberă din București în ziua de 23 Noembrie 1932*, Czernowitz, 1933; id., “Byzantinische Handbücher der Kirchenmalerei”, *Byzantion* 9, 1934, p. 675-701 [repr. in *BNF*, p. 81-99]; id., “O ediție critică a Cărții de Pictură Bisericească Bizantină”, *Codrul Cosminului* 9, 1935, p. 103-128; id., “Influențe sârbești în vechea iconografie bisericească a Moldovei”, *Codrul Cosminului* 9, 1935, p. 233-242; id., “Neue Handschriften der Ἑρμηνεία τῆς Ζωγραφικῆς τέχνης”, in *Εἰς μνήμην Σπυρίδωνος Λάμπρου*, Athens, 1935, p. 303-310; id., “Eine kritische Ausgabe der Ἑρμηνεία τῆς Ζωγραφικῆς τέχνης”, *Известия на Българския Археологически Институтъ – Bulletin de l’Institut Archéologique Bulgare* 9, 1935 [= *Actes du IV^e Congrès International des études byzantines, Sofia, septembre 1934*, ed. B. D. Filov, Sofia, 1935], p. 225-237 [repr. in *BNF*, p. 101-115]; id., “Pretinse urme ale cultului lui Mithra în vechea noastră iconografie bisericească”, *Codrul Cosminului* 10, 1936-1939, p. 504-506.

³⁷ BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 88], *Official Address from the Ministry of High Education to V. Grecu confirming his membership in the Commission of the State Archives* (no. 79587, Bucharest, 22 August 1924); BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 89], *Official Address from the State Archives in Bucharest to V. Grecu confirming his membership in the Commission* (no. 267, Bucharest, 23 August 1924); BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 90-91], *Official Addresses from Metropolitan Nectarie about Grecu’s appointment* (Czernowitz, 30 November 1925) [according to BAR 48/1982 (IV Acte 106), this position ended only on 31 March 1949, according to an official address sent by the Patriarch Justinian Marina]; BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 94-95, 99], *Documents of appointment of V. Grecu as member of the Commission* (9 November 1928; 14 February 1937 – reconfirmation of new appointment); BAR 48/1982 [VII Varia 2], *Official address about V. Grecu’s appointment at the Museum* (no. 45/36, Czernowitz, 28 august 1936).

³⁸ D. Rusu, *Istoria Academiei Române în date (1866-1996)*, Bucharest, 1997, p. 263.

work continued unabated: he undertook two research trips to Greece and Mount Athos, in 1934 and 1937, during which he visited the monasteries of Dionysiou, Panteleimon, Pantokrator, and Agiou Pavlou in search of manuscripts about the Byzantine sources of the old Romanian literature and the manuals of church painting.³⁹ At the Agiou Pavlou Monastery, after collating manuscripts from its library—Grecu's archival work during the 1937 visit is well documented in a journal containing notes from Athonite manuscripts⁴⁰ – with Bucharest, Library of the Romanian Academy, ms. gr. 500, which preserves the Byzantine original of the *Book of Wisdom* published by Deacon Coresi (1581), namely the homilies of Patriarch John XIV Kalekas (1334-1347), Grecu was able to complete his edition and Romanian translation of the Greek text. In doing so, he once again underscored the close interconnections between Byzantine literature and early Romanian literary culture.⁴¹

3. Research and teaching in Bucharest: Byzantine texts and old legal codes

After the retirement and subsequent death of Demostene Russo on 5 October 1938, Vasile Grecu moved from Czernowitz to Bucharest, where – most probably at the recommendation of Ion Nistor – he was appointed on 1 December 1938, to the newly reorganized Chair of Byzantine Studies at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy of the University of Bucharest.⁴² Until his retirement in 1947, Grecu devoted his teaching primarily to Byzantine literature, complementing Nicolae Bănescu's courses on Byzantine history.⁴³ Grecu's approach to teaching was grounded in the

³⁹ BAR 48/1982 [IV Varia 1-2], *Permissions to visit Mount Athos* (Karyes, 29 March 1934; Karyes, 23 May 1937).

⁴⁰ See BAR 48/1982 [II MSS 4], *Journal with notes from Mount Athos* (1937).

⁴¹ V. Grecu (ed. and tr.), *Izvorul principal bizantin pentru Cartea cu Învățătură a diaconului Coresi din 1581: Omiliile patriarhului Ioan XIV Caleca (1334-1347)*, Bucharest, 1939.

⁴² For lists of Grecu's teaching activities and publications while at the University of Bucharest, see *Anuarul Universității din București, 1937-1938*, Bucharest, 1939, p. 97 (Grecu's appointment was sanctioned by the order of the Ministry of National Education, no. 231.155 of 8 December 1938, according to the law of 4 November 1938; see *Monitorul Oficial*, 257, November 1938); *Anuarul Universității din București, 1938-1939*, Bucharest, 1940, p. 82-83; *Anuarul Universității din București, 1939-1940*, Bucharest, 1941, p. 88-89; *Anuarul Universității din București, 1940-1941, 1941-1942*, Bucharest, 1943, p. 209-211. For the "promotion mechanisms" of academics in Romania, see L. Năstasă, „Suveranii” universităților românești: *Mecanisme de selecție și promovare a elitei intelectuale*, vol. 1: *Profesorii Facultăților de Filosofie și Litere (1864-1948)*, Cluj-Napoca, 2007, especially p. 509-510. See BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 101], *Official Notification from University of Czernowitz to V. Grecu about his appointment at the University of Bucharest* (no. 342, Czernowitz, 13 December 1938).

⁴³ On Bănescu, see S. Brezeanu, "Bizantinistul Nicolae Bănescu (100 de ani de la naștere)", *Revista de istorie* 31.12, 1978, p. 2221-2233; Biblioteca Centrală Universitară „Carol I” din București, *Nicolae Bănescu, 1878-1971: Biobibliografie*, Bucharest, 2010; Bănescu was invited to teach Byzantine studies at the University of Bucharest alongside Grecu, thus assuming the position previously held by Russo,

direct engagement with primary sources. He introduced students to the works of Byzantine chroniclers, guiding them through the linguistic subtleties of Greek and the conventions of Byzantine historiography. Rather than offering only broad overviews, he emphasized close reading, textual analysis, and the comparison of manuscript traditions, instilling in his students the philological discipline that underpinned rigorous Byzantine scholarship.⁴⁴ His lectures also explored the reception of Byzantine texts in the Romanian Principalities, showing how Greek literary traditions intersected with local cultural expressions and thus making Byzantine literature meaningful within the framework of the national intellectual heritage. Through this pedagogical method, Grecu established a model of instruction that combined erudition with cultural contextualization, ensuring that the study of Byzantine literature was not a detached philological exercise but a living inquiry into the shared past of Byzantium. While at the University of Bucharest, Grecu had one of the most fruitful periods of his career: he published extensively on Byzantine chroniclers in leading academic journals⁴⁵ and collaborated closely with other research institutes in Bucharest, particularly

with whom he had maintained a fierce polemic (see N. Bănescu, *O „celebritate” a științii românești (D. Demosthenes Roussos)*, Bucharest, 1915; id., *O misterioasă reputație științifică*, Bucharest, 1915; id., *Rătăcirile științifice ale D-lui Dem. Roussos: Bizantinist neimprovizat și profesor de recentă improvizare la Universitatea din București*, Bucharest, 1916); M. Hariuc, “Nicolae Bănescu”, in A. Corbea-Hoisie and R. Grăf (eds.), *Limbă și cultură germană în România (1918-1933): Realități postimperiale, discurs public și câmpuri culturale*, Iași, 2023, p. 353-354.

⁴⁴ For Grecu’s university manuals, see V. Grecu, *Introducere în Bizantologie*, Bucharest, 1940-1941; id., *Literatura istorică bizantină (continuare dela 650 înainte)*, Bucharest, 1940-1941; id., *Literatura istorică bizantină: Epoca a III-a de la Constantin al VII-lea Porfirogenetul (913-959) pînă la venirea în domnie a Comnenilor (1081), adică de pe la anul 900 pînă la anul 1080*, Bucharest, 1942-1943; id., *Literatura istorică bizantină: Epoca a IV-a a Comnenilor*, Bucharest, 1942-1943.

⁴⁵ See, for instance, V. Grecu, “Die Darstellung des Καρπός bei den Byzantiner”, *Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici* 6, 1940, p. 147-154 [= *Atti del V Congresso Internazionale di Studi Bizantini, Roma, 20-26 Settembre 1936*, vol. 2: *Archeologia e storia dell’Arte-Liturgia e Musica. Cronaca del Congresso*, Rome, 1940]; “Scrisoarea de dedicație a istoricului Critobul către Mohamet II Cuceritorul”, in *Mélanges d’histoire littéraire et de littérature comparée offerts à Charles Drouhet par ses amis, ses collègues et ses anciens élèves à l’occasion du XXX^e anniversaire de son enseignement à l’Université*, Bucharest, 1940, p. 197-202; “Die Abstammung des Historikers Petros Patrikios”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 40, 1940, p. 448; “Menander Protiktor und der Persische Gesandtschaftsbericht Petros’ Patrikios”, *Bulletin de la Section Historique – Académie Roumaine* 2.2, 1941, p. 78-84; “Un vechi motiv de folklor italian în românește”, *Revista istorică română* 11-12, 1941-1942, p. 35-45; “Abriß der rumänischen Byzantinistik”, *Südost-Forschungen* 7, 1942, p. 164-201; “Das Geburtsjahr des byzantinischen Geschichtschreibers Nikephoros Gregoras”, *Bulletin de la Section Historique – Académie Roumaine* 27, 1946, p. 56-61; “Zu den Interpolationen im Geschichtswerke des Laonikos Chalkokondyles”, *Bulletin de la Section Historique – Académie Roumaine* 27, 1946, p. 92-94; “Istoricul bizantin Duca: Omul și opera sa: O ediție critică a cronicii lui. Importanța lui Duca pentru istoria românilor”, *Analele Academiei Române – Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice* 29.16, 1946-1947, p. 591-662; “Bemerkungen zu Prokop’s Schriften”, *Bulletin de la Section Historique – Académie Roumaine* 28.2, 1947, p. 233-240; “Hat Georgios Synkellos weite Reisen unternommen?”, *Bulletin de la Section Historique – Académie Roumaine* 28.2, 1947, p. 241-245; “Bemerkungen zu Theophanes Homologetes”, *Bulletin de la Section Historique – Académie Roumaine* 28.2, 1947, p. 246-251.

the Institute of Byzantine Studies and the Institute of Universal History, where he delivered several lectures.⁴⁶ Grecu also maintained contact with the French Institute for Byzantine Studies, run by the Assumptionist fathers, which had relocated from Kadiköy (Istanbul) to Bucharest in 1937, being in contact with Fr. Vitalien Laurent (1896-1973) until the autumn of 1947 and publishing his research and being reviewed in the journals of the institute.⁴⁷

In June 1939, Grecu embarked on a third research trip to Mount Athos, especially to the monasteries of Dionysiou and Koutloumousiou,⁴⁸ in search of new manuscripts related to two texts of paramount importance for Romanian history: the *Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Theodosie* and the *Life of Saint Niphon*. Yet, his work there was not without obstacles:

3 June 1939. Saturday [...]

After the formalities with the police and the *Epistasia*, I go down to Koutloumousiou. I cannot see the testaments of Metropolitan Chariton, as they are kept in the archive, to which several fathers hold keys, and of whom one is always absent – unless you have special interventions and permissions. In the library, Fr. Maxim, who lived in Romania between 1842 and 1914 and speaks Romanian well, gives me the extremely unpleasant and frankly absurd news that nothing may be photographed without special permission, even though I only wish to photograph a summary from Matthew of Myra [fl. 1596-1624], which is of almost no importance. I rush to obtain this permission. With great difficulty, the deputy governor accepts my request and tells me to come the next day at 9:00 A.M. Here, professors of the monastic seminary, with only 35 pupils,

⁴⁶ On these institutes, see R. Filip, *Institutul Român de Bizantinologie*; A. M. Ciobanu, B. Popa et al. (eds.), *Institutul de Istorie „Nicolae Iorga”, 1937-1948*, Bucharest, 2009; C. Vasile, *Un turn de fildes în comunism? Institutele umaniste ale Academiei RPR în România lui Gheorghiu-Dej*, Bucharest, 2004.

⁴⁷ See Paris, Institut Français d'Études Byzantines [IFEB], *Postcard from V. Grecu to Fr. V. Laurent* (4 May 1938) in which Grecu apologises for not honouring the latter's invitation to take part in the opening of the Institute in Bucharest (8 May 1938) – I thank I.-A. Tudorie for bringing this document to my attention. However, Grecu marked this event in a brief article: V. Grecu, "Institutul francez de studii bizantine", *Codrul Cosminului* 10, 1936-1939, p. 667. Grecu published two articles: V. Grecu, "Autour du *De Signis* de Nicéas Choniates", *Revue des études byzantines* 6, 1948, p. 58-66 [rep. in *BNF*, p. 179-186], and id., "Nicéas Choniates a-t-il connu l'*Histoire* de Jean Cinnamos?", *Revue des études byzantines* 7, 1949, p. 194-204 [repr. in *BNF*, p. 187-196]. For reviews of Grecu's publications, see V. Grumel, "Review of *Cărți de pictură bisericească*", in *Échos d'Orient* 36, 1937, p. 251; J. Gouillard, "Review of *Izvorul principal bizantin*", *Échos d'Orient* 39, 1940, p. 232-234; V. Laurent, "Review of *Istoricul bizantin Duca*", *Revue des études byzantines* 7, 1949, p. 140. For the history of the French Institute of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest, see I.-A. Tudorie, "Academic Research and Cultural Diplomacy: The French Institute for Byzantine Studies in Bucharest (1937-1947)", in M.-H. Blanchet and I.-A. Tudorie (eds.), *L'apport des assomptionistes français aux études byzantines: Une approche critique (Actes du colloque de Bucarest, 25-27 septembre 2014)*, Paris, 2017, p. 169-211. On Fr. V. Laurent, see J. Darrouzès, "Le Père Vitalien Laurent (1896-1973)", *Revue des études byzantines* 32, 1974, p. 3-14; "Bibliographie du Père Vitalien Laurent", *Revue des études byzantines* 32, 1974, p. 343-379.

⁴⁸ BAR 48/1982 [IV Varia 4], *Permission to visit Mount Athos* (Karyes, 21 May 1939).

tell me that the Holy *Epistasia*, the monastic committee of Athos, does not allow one to own a radio set. And to think that the Pope delivers sermons to his faithful over the microphone. [...]

5 June 1939. Monday

At St. Panteleimon (Rossikon), I came across a painter from Athens, who promised me for Wednesday a meeting at Dionysiou, to make me a watercolour copy of Neagoe's portrait from the reliquary of St. Niphon. It would be a pleasant reward in place of the prohibition against photographing. [...]

7 June 1939. Wednesday

[...] From 6:00 A.M. I collated the *Teachings of Neagoe*. [...] Around 1:00 P.M. I found myself with the Russian painter, Veresinsky, rather drunk. I could not make out whether he had come of his own accord or had been sent by the abbot. I told him to lie down on the bench. He said he never [*jamais*] sleeps, but a few moments later he was snoring, sitting with his head propped somewhere. I do not know what outcome this will bring me; I see trouble lies ahead with him. Outside, it rained like in autumn. My painter went to see what copy he might make for me. He came back saying that the work was very difficult and that Neagoe's likeness was *magnifique*, but that he could not do it for 200 drachmas. I gave him 300. He went, returned, and told me that the monk who had to stay with him also demanded 300 drachmas in advance. I understood what he was after and refused to let myself be fleeced, to give them the money and then have to chase after them.

9 June 1939. Friday

[...] Between 8:00-9:00 A.M. I photographed the pages I had gathered from codices λ 221 and 199. With the Russian painter, whom I could hardly ever find sober, I could achieve nothing. The abbot told me he would allow me to photograph Neagoe's portrait, provided the sun did not hide again, for then it would shrink. I photographed it around 4:00 P.M.; I am curious how it will turn out. It is a very realistic portrait, and it would be a pity if nothing could be seen, as the light was rather dim, and the colours dull. I also photographed the *Life of St. Niphon* in its entirety from manuscript 715, written toward the end of the 18th century. Then from manuscript 610, ff. 148^r-154^r, containing a *logos didaktikos* [*sic*] very similar to, if not indeed the source of [*The Teachings of*] *Neagoe Basarab*, and ff. 163-172 of the 1843 edition. Also from manuscript 610, ff. 19^r-21^r and 39^r-69^v, again the *Life of St. Niphon*. On its last folio the manuscript bears the Greek inscription: “Ἐγράφη τὸ παρὸν βιβλίον παρ’ ἐμοῦ Σαμουὴλ τοῦ ἐλαχίστου ἐν μοναχοῖς καὶ οἱ ἀναγινόμεντοι [*sic*] εὐχεσθε ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ τοῦ ἀμαρτωλοῦ ἀφνδ’ [1754] ἐν μηνὶ Ἀπριλίου ις” [i.e., “This book was written by me, Samuel, the least among monks, and you who read it, pray for me the sinner, in the year 1754, in the month of April, on the 16th”].⁴⁹

⁴⁹ BAR 48/1982 [II MSS 1], *Daily Notes, 1939-1941 and 1943-1969*, p. 2^r, 3^r, 4^{r-v}, 5^{r-v}. For the Greek note, I offer the exact rendering of Grecu.

However, these editions were not published until 1942 and 1944, under the auspices of the Romanian Academy.⁵⁰ Grecu's later career was overshadowed by profound hardships that left a lasting imprint on his life and scholarship. The outbreak of the Second World War and the unstable political climate in Romania created an atmosphere of uncertainty and disruption for academic life. On a deeply personal level, he suffered the tragic loss of his son, Victor, who died on 16 September 1941, from wounds sustained on the battlefield at Odessa. The memory of this loss accompanied him throughout his subsequent work, finding poignant expression in the dedications to his editions of the *Teachings of Neagoe Basarab* and the *Life of Saint Niphon*, which he offered as tributes to his fallen son. But the texts edited by Grecu continued to attract a sustained scholarly attention in Romania over the following decades – which also opened room for academic polemics especially on matters of authenticity and authorship⁵¹ – since both texts are deeply connected to the spiritual and cultural history of the Romanian lands.

The establishment of the Communist regime at the end of 1947, following the abdication of King Michael I (1921-2017), had a profound impact on Romanian scholarship. Ideological control, censorship, and institutional purges curtailed intellectual freedom and severed many of the traditional channels of academic exchange, forcing scholars to work under severe constraints.⁵² Grecu's position at

⁵⁰ *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab, domnul Țării Românești (1512–1521): Versiunea grecească*, ed. and tr. V. Grecu, Bucharest, 1942; *Viața Sfântului Nifon: O redacțiune grecească inedită*, ed. and tr. V. Grecu, Bucharest, 1944.

⁵¹ For instance, Grecu's work on the *Teachings of Neagoe Basarab* was opposed by P. P. Panaitescu (1900-1967). Beside Grecu's edition, see V. Grecu, "Izvor sau prelucrare a uneia din Învățăturile lui Neagoe Voevod", in *Omagiu lui Ioan Lupaș la împlinirea vârstei de 60 de ani, August 1940*, Bucharest, 1943, p. 207-227 [repr. in excerpt with the title *O versiune nouă a unei Învățături a lui Neagoe Basarab*, Bucharest, 1941]; id., "Și totuși Învățăturile lui Neagoe Voevod", *Convorbiri literare* 77, 1944, p. 477-481, 740-767. See also BAR 48/1982 [VI Varia 1], *Notes and articles about the Teachings of Neagoe Basarab*, 1 notebook and 133 p. See P. P. Panaitescu, "Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab: Problema autenticității", *Balcania* 5.1, 1942, p. 137-205; and id., "Review of *Omagiu lui Ioan Lupaș*", *Convorbiri literare* 77, 1944, p. 379-383, who believes that "there is no argument that proves that these texts [i.e., the *Teachings of Neagoe Basarab*], fairly contested so far, belong to the Wallachian ruler". For a detailed discussion of the historiography of this text, see G. Mihăilă, "Originalul slavon al *Învățăturilor lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Theodosie*", in id. (ed. and tr.), *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Theodosie: Ediție facsimilată după unicul manuscris păstrat*, Bucharest, 1996, p. xlv-cxiv; see also D. Zamfirescu, *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Theodosie*, Bucharest, 1970; id., *Neagoe Basarab și Învățăturile către fiul său Theodosie: Probleme controversate*, Bucharest, 1973; D. Zamfirescu and I. Mihăilă (eds.), *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Theodosie*, Bucharest, 2020.

⁵² See, e.g., L. Boia, *Mitologia științifică a comunismului*, Bucharest, 1999; A. Zub, *Orizont închis: Istoriografia română sub dictatură*, Iași, 2000; F. Müller, *Politică și istoriografie în România, 1948-1964*, Cluj-Napoca, 2003; I. Opreș, *Istoricii și Securitatea*, 2 vols., Bucharest, 2004; *Anuarul Institutului de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România*, 4, 2009 [= *Intellectualii și regimul comunist: Istoria unei relații*, Iași, 2009]; N.-Ș. Tanașoca, *Balcanologie și politică în România sec. XX*, Bucharest, 2010; C. Vasile, *Literatura și artele în România comunistă, 1948-1953*, Bucharest, 2010;

the University of Bucharest ended on 1 September 1947, after which he retained only the title of *honorary professor*. In 1948, under the pretext of a “reorganisation” of the Romanian Academy, the Communist authorities revoked the membership of numerous intellectuals, including Grecu.⁵³ Nevertheless, he succeeded in continuing his research as an employee of the Romanian Academy, working under the aegis of various affiliated research institutes.

One of the most enduring legacies of Grecu’s scholarly career was his collaboration with the eminent classical philologist Haralambie Mihăescu (1907-1985)⁵⁴ in founding the series *Scriptores byzantini*, launched under the auspices of the Romanian Academy in 1958.⁵⁵ Conceived at a moment when Byzantine studies in Romania were undergoing both institutional consolidation and political constraint, this editorial project quickly acquired significance well beyond national borders. Its aim was twofold: to produce critical editions of major Byzantine historians, accompanied by reliable Romanian translations, and thus to make accessible to scholars and students

L. Boia, *Capcanele istoriei: Elita intelectuală românească între 1930 și 1950*, 2nd ed., Bucharest, 2012; S. Stoica, *Istoriografia românească între imperativele ideologice și rigorile profesionale, 1953-1965*, Bucharest, 2012; C. Vasile, *Un turn de fildeș în comunism?*

⁵³ On 28 June 1990, Grecu – together with many other intellectuals who had been expelled from the Romanian Academy in 1948 – was posthumously reinstated as a member. See D. Rusu, *Istoria Academiei Române...*, p. 476-479.

⁵⁴ On H. Mihăescu, see T. Diaconescu, “H. Mihăescu: In memoriam (1907-1985)”, *Philologica Jassyensia* 3.1, 2007, p. 289-297.

⁵⁵ Grecu and Mihăescu published nine volumes in the *Scriptores byzantini* series between 1958 and 1985, the year of Mihăescu’s death, which also marked the suspension of the series. However, it was revived in 2015 and is currently hosted by the Institute of South-East European Studies. The volumes of the series are as follows: Ducas, *Istoria Turco-Bizantină (1341-1462)*, ed. and tr. V. Grecu (*Scriptores byzantini* 1), Bucharest, 1958; Laonic Chalkokondil, *Expuneri istorice: Creșterea puterii turcești – Căderea împărăției bizantine și alte istorii despre felurite țări și popoare*, tr. V. Grecu (*Scriptores byzantini* 2), Bucharest, 1958; Procopius din Cezareea, *Războiul cu goții*, tr. H. Mihăescu (*Scriptores byzantini* 3), Bucharest, 1963; Critobul din Imbros, *Din domnia lui Mahomed al II-lea: Anii 1451-1467*, ed. and tr. V. Grecu (*Scriptores byzantini* 4), Bucharest, 1963; Georgios Sphrantzes, *Memorii, 1401-1477: În anexă Pseudo-Phrantzes – Macarie Melissenos, Cronica, 1258-1481*, ed. and tr. V. Grecu (*Scriptores byzantini* 5), Bucharest, 1966; Mauricius, *Arta militară*, ed. and tr. H. Mihăescu (*Scriptores byzantini* 6), Bucharest, 1970; Constantin Porfirogenetul, *Carte de învățătură pentru fiul său Romanós*, tr. V. Grecu (*Scriptores byzantini* 7), Bucharest, 1971; Procopius din Cezareea, *Istoria secretă*, ed. and tr. H. Mihăescu (*Scriptores byzantini* 8), Bucharest, 1978; Teofilact de Simocatta, *Istorie bizantină: Domnia împăratului Mauricius (582-602)*, tr. H. Mihăescu (*Scriptores byzantini* 9), Bucharest, 1985. After its renewal in 2015, two further volumes have appeared: *Manuel Paleologul, Sfaturi pentru educația împărătească*, ed. and tr. S. Nicolae (*Scriptores byzantini* 10), Bucharest, 2015; *Antologia Palatină. Cartea a V-a: Poemele iubirii*, ed. and tr. S. Nicolae et al. (*Scriptores byzantini* 13), Bucharest, 2022. For the history of this series, see S. Nicolae, “*Scriptores byzantini: histoire d’une collection*”, in A. Timotin (ed.), *Un siècle d’études sud-est européennes en Roumanie: Bilan historiographique*, Brăila, 2019, p. 77-87. T. Diaconescu, “H. Mihăescu...”, p. 297, notes that Mihăescu’s editions and translations of Niketas Choniates and Kekaumenos remain in manuscript.

alike a corpus of texts that had previously circulated only in foreign editions. The importance of the series lay first in its dual orientation. On the one hand, it addressed a national scholarly need, providing Romanian readers the linguistic tools and textual foundations necessary for engaging with Byzantium in their own language; on the other hand, by adhering to the methodological standards of international philology – collating manuscripts, providing textual apparatus, and situating each work in its historical context – *Scriptores byzantini* entered into dialogue with the broader academic community.⁵⁶ The series soon gained international recognition as a major contribution to Byzantine studies, attesting to the mastery of Romanian philology. For his outstanding work on the edition of Kritoboulos of Imbros, Grecu was awarded the “Vasile Pârvan” Prize of the Romanian Academy on 4 February 1965.⁵⁷

The emergence of this series under the Communist regime in Romania is all the more remarkable. Access to foreign libraries and manuscripts was restricted, and scholarly exchange was tightly controlled. Yet, within these constraints, the editors succeeded in producing editions that combined accuracy with accessibility. Their work reflects not only philological rigour but also a remarkable resourcefulness, drawing on the materials available in Romanian collections and relying on painstaking editorial labour. In this sense, *Scriptores byzantini* stands as a testament to the resilience of Romanian scholarship under adverse political conditions, a quiet assertion of intellectual continuity in a period otherwise marked by ideological rupture. The scholarly achievement of the collection is confirmed by its long-term utility. Several of the editions published within *Scriptores byzantini* continue to be cited and used today in academic circles, both in Romania and internationally.⁵⁸ More than sixty years

⁵⁶ I find R. Maisano’s criticism of Grecu’s work somewhat harsh, considering the historical conditions under which the Romanian scholar produced his edition; see R. Maisano (ed.), *Giorgio Sfranze, Cronaca*, Rome, 1990, p. 79-80. It is, however, worth noting that in Grecu’s personal archive preserved at BAR, there survives a copy of his edition of Doukas that features his autograph notes upon the printed text, indicating his intention to prepare a revised version of the text. See BAR 48/1982 [IX impr. 2].

⁵⁷ BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 70], *Diploma* (2 February 1965).

⁵⁸ Since the publication of Grecu’s and Mihăescu’s editions, new editions and translations into modern languages were published. See, e.g., H. J. Magoulias, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks by Doukas*, Detroit, MI, 1975; M. Philippides (tr.), *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes, 1401-1477*, Amherst, MA, 1980; D. R. Reinsch (ed.), *Critobuli Imbriotaie Historiae*, Berlin, 1983; M. Carroll (tr.), *A Contemporary Greek Source for the Siege of Constantinople 1453: The Sphrantzes Chronicle*, Amsterdam, 1985; R. Maisano (ed.), *Giorgio Sfranze...*; N. Nicoloudis (tr.), *Laonikos Chalkokondyles: A Translation and Commentary of the “Demonstrations of Histories”, Books I-III*, PhD thesis, King’s College, London, 1992; J. Dayantis, *Doukas, Histoire Turco-Byzantine: Introduction, traduction et commentaire*, PhD thesis, Université Paul Valéry – Montpellier III, 2004; A. Kaldellis (tr.), *The Histories of Laonikos Chalkokondyles*, 2 vols., Cambridge, MA, 2014; D. R. Reinsch (ed.), *Dukas, Chronographia: Byzantiner und Osmanen im Kampf um die Macht und das Überleben (1341-1462)*, Berlin, 2020. Currently, the following editions have been announced for publication in the *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* series: S. Kotzabassi (ed.), *Ducaie Historia: Prolegomena, Textus et Indices*, Berlin, 2026; see her preliminary

after its inception, the series has not lost its relevance, embodying both a milestone in the history of Byzantine studies in Romania and an input of lasting significance to the global community of Byzantinists.

Grecu's work as an editor of Greek texts is also shown in his activity as a member of the Committee for the Study of Old Romanian Law, an academic body established within the Romanian Academy and presided over by the distinguished jurist Andrei Rădulescu (1880-1959), former president of the High Court of Cassation and Justice and a leading authority on Romanian legal history.⁵⁹ The Committee's purpose was to recover, edit, and publish the fundamental juridical texts of the premodern Romanian Principalities, thereby providing scholars with the documentary foundations for the study of institutional, social, and legal history. Within this framework, Grecu contributed his philological expertise to the preparation of critical editions of important codes such as *Carte românească de învățătură* (1646), *Îndreptarea legii* (1652), *Pravilniceasca condică* (1780), *Sobornicescul hrisov* (1785, 1835, 1839), *Manualul juridic al lui Andronachi Donici*, *Codul Calimah* (1817), and *Legiuirea Caragea* (1818). These publications, issued in carefully annotated editions, offered for the first-time reliable access to sources that had long circulated only in manuscript form or in defective printings, and they remain indispensable for historians of law and society.

Grecu's involvement in the Committee thus demonstrates the breadth of his scholarly activity: while his international reputation rested on Byzantine philology, he also made decisive contributions to the understanding of Romania's legal heritage, bridging classical erudition with the demands of national historiography. Although he worked with the Committee since 15 May 1950, it was only on 1 June 1951 that he was appointed *scientific referent* by decision of the Romanian Academy (no. 60/1951) at the recommendation of Andrei Rădulescu.⁶⁰ In 1957, he became *principal researcher*

studies: "Der Kopist des Geschichtswerkes von Dukas", in F. Berger et al. (eds.), *Symbolae Berolinenses für Dieter Harlfinger*, Amsterdam, 1992, p. 307-323; "Ist der Kopist von Dukas Dukas selbst?", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 96, 2003, p. 679-683; "Doukas and Codex Vat. gr. 12", *Travaux et mémoires* 23.1, 2019 (= *Mélanges Bernard Flusin*, ed. A. Bingelli and V. Déroche), p. 399-406; "The Narrative Techniques of Doukas' *History*: Anachrony and Synchronicity", in I. Grimm-Stadelmann, A. Riehle, R. Tocci, and M. Vučetić (eds.), *Anekdotia Byzantina: Festschrift für Albrecht Berger anlässlich seines 65. Geburtstags*, Berlin, 2023, p. 335-344; and "Textkritische Bemerkungen zum Geschichtswerk von Dukas", in G. De Gregorio, G. Prinzing, and R. Tocci (eds.), *Folia Byzantina: Schrift- und Buchkultur in Byzanz und in der Frühen Neuzeit. Festschrift zu Ehren von Erich Lamberg*, Berlin, 2025, p. 451-460; see H. Wurm and M. Grünbart (eds.), *Laonikos Chalkokondyles, Historiarum demonstrationes*, Vienna, forthcoming.

⁵⁹ On A. Rădulescu, see id., *Pagini de Jurnal*, Bucharest, 1993; id., *Amintiri*, ed. I. Rădulescu-Valasoglu, Bucharest, 1995; D. Rusu, "Rădulescu, Andrei", in *Membrii Academiei Române, 1866/2003: Dicționar*, 3rd ed., Bucharest, 2003, p. 710; D. Berindei, "Locul lui Andrei Rădulescu în istoriografia română", *Academica: Revistă de știință, cultură și artă* 16.45, 2005, p. 22-23; D. Gruia Dufaut (ed.), *Andrei Rădulescu, 1880-1959: Album*, Bucharest, 2015; D. Gruia Dufaut (ed.), *A. Rădulescu, Corespondență*, Bucharest, 2024. On this Committee, see M. Duțu, "Izvoarele vechiului drept românesc", *Pandectele romane* 2, 2019, p. 245-247.

⁶⁰ BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 107-108], *Official documents from the Romanian Academy* (10 May 1950).

of the Committee, a position he accepted immediately, while on 1 March 1960 he was appointed in the same position by transfer from the Committee to the Institute of Juridical Studies of the Romanian Academy (decision no. 77/960).⁶¹ Grecu's private archive at BAR preserves several documents attesting to his work for the Committee. In one of his journals, which served rather as a report-notebook, Grecu summarized his daily activity concerning the edition of *Caragea's Law*:

17 July 1950: I worked, in the morning and afternoon, on the notes and the critical apparatus for the Greek and Romanian texts of the *Law of Caragea-Vodă*, Part I, Chapter 3: "On the elderly and the young"; Chapter 4: "On those without reason"; Chapter 5: "On spendthrifts"; and Chapter 6: "On those free".

18 July 1950: I continued, in the morning and afternoon, the notes and the critical apparatus for the Greek and Romanian texts of the *Law of Caragea-Vodă*, Part I, Chapter 7: "On slaves or gypsies"; and Chapter 8: "On the freed".

19 July 1950: I wrote, in the morning and afternoon, the notes and the critical apparatus for the Greek and Romanian texts of the *Law of Caragea-Vodă*, Part II: "On things"; Chapter 1: "On the ownership of things"; Chapter 2: "On servitude", §§1-2. [...]

31 July 1950: Before lunch, I worked in the Library of the Academy, the manuscript section, collating the Greek and Romanian texts transcribed from the *Law of Caragea-Vodă* with the original official manuscripts, nos. 2322 and 2323, in the repository of Romanian manuscripts. I finished collating Part I: "On persons." After lunch, I worked on the notes and the critical apparatus for the Greek and Romanian texts of the *Law of Caragea-Vodă*, Part III, Chapter 2: "On sales", §§43 and 44, 1-9.⁶²

These repetitive brief reports by Grecu were approved by Rădulescu, as attested by the jurist's monthly signature in Grecu's notebook, and by his reports on Grecu's activity in the Committee.⁶³ Grecu's work on the Greek texts relevant for the Committee's activity has received confirmation within the Romanian academic circles by two diplomas granted by the Ministry of Education of the Popular Republic of Romania that conferred Grecu the title of *doctor of historical sciences* (no. 766, 4 September 1964) and *doctor of sciences* (Ser. MI-SI, no. 791, 8 September 1964), respectively.⁶⁴

Grecu also played an active role in the institutional life of the Romanian Society of Byzantine Studies, serving as one of its chief international representatives – he was president of the Society starting with 1963. His international role is further reflected in the correspondence preserved between 1959 and 1960 with leading Byzantinists

⁶¹ BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 109], *Official document from the Romanian Academy* (25 July 1957); Grecu confirmed the position by writing his answer with pencil on the bottom of this official address. BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 110], *Official document from the Romanian Academy* (17 March 1960).

⁶² BAR 48/1982 [II MSS 2], *Daily Notes, 1950-1954*, p. 1, 4.

⁶³ BAR 48/1982 [II MSS 2a], *Activity Report on the 3rd Trimester: April, May, June 1953*, 2 p.

⁶⁴ BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 70], *Diplomas* (4 and 8 September 1964).

such as George Ostrogorsky (1902-1976), Đurađ Bošković (1904-1990), and Nikolaj Mandić, in the context of preparations for the 12th International Congress of Byzantine Studies held in Ohrid in 1961.⁶⁵ In this exchange, Grecu was invited to put forward proposals for themes of interest on behalf of the Romanian committee, and he responded by transmitting both his own suggestions and those of Nicolae Bănescu, which were subsequently considered in shaping several of the congress sessions. In the aftermath of the 13th International Congress of Byzantine Studies held in Oxford in 1966 – about which he also corresponded briefly with Joan M. Hussey (1907-2006)⁶⁶ – Grecu sent a report about this congress and its sessions, stating that, at the proposal of the Romanian delegation, the next congress of Byzantine studies should be organized in Bucharest, considering the “Romanian tradition of Byzantine studies, the results of the new Romanian school of historiography, and that the next Congress would commemorate also fifty years since the first Congress of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest”. Grecu added that the date of the next Congress in Bucharest would coincide with the centenary of Iorga’s birth, which ought to be taken into consideration by the organizing committee.⁶⁷ In a second report, Grecu also outlined the main themes proposed for the congress: (1) *Society and Intellectual Life in the 14th c.* (I. Ševčenko, E. Werner, H. G. Beck, and H. Hunger); (2) *Issues of Historical Geography in Byzantium: The Frontiers and the Frontier Regions (7th-12th c.)* (H. Ahrweiler, D. Obolensky, N. Oikonomides, N. Pigulevskaya, and C. Mango); (3) *Prophane Art in Byzantium* (A. Grabar, J. Beckwith, W. F. Volbach, C. Estopanian, and A. Geiger); (4) *Byzantium and Romania* (participants were to be announced).⁶⁸ Grecu was elected honorary vice-president of the International Association of Byzantine Studies in 1971 and presided over the fourteenth International Congress of Byzantine Studies, held in Bucharest between 6-12 September 1971.⁶⁹

Grecu passed away only a few months after the congress, on 26 May 1972.⁷⁰ Throughout his career, he produced an impressive corpus of scholarship that is

⁶⁵ BAR 48/1982 [VII Varia 14], *Official correspondence* (Belgrade, 5 May, 26 June, 23 July, 7, 16 October, 8 November 1959; 28 January, 22 March 1960).

⁶⁶ BAR 48/1982 [VII Varia 16], *Official correspondence* (Oxford, 26 May 1966).

⁶⁷ BAR 48/1982 [VII Varia 16], *Report I* (without date), p. 2-3.

⁶⁸ BAR 48/1982 [VII Varia 16], *Report II* (without date), p. 1-2.

⁶⁹ See M. Berza and E. Stănescu (eds.), *Actes du XIV^e Congrès international des études byzantines, Bucarest, 6-12 septembre 1971*, 3 vols., Bucharest, 1974. According to the testimony of the late professor Irfan Shahid (1926-2016), who attended the congress in Bucharest in 1971 and met Grecu on that occasion, the Romanian scholar – due to his advanced age – was unable to contribute more than a brief opening remark; he also did not take part in the funeral of his colleague and friend Nicolae Bănescu, who died on 11 September 1971 (testimony given to the author of this paper in 2014 at Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.).

⁷⁰ BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 62], *Copy of the death certificate* (Bucharest, 27 May 1972). For condolences received by Grecu’s family from Mihai Berza, Alexandru Elian, and others, see BAR 48/1982 [VII Varia 6], *Condolences*, 4 p.

foundational for many generations of historians. Apart from many distinctions received – the Order *Coroana României în grad de ofițer* (1922), the Medal *Ferdinand I cu spade pe panglică* (1931), the Order *Ferdinand I în grad de ofițer* (1935), or the Medal *Răsplata Muncii* (1944)⁷¹ – Grecu remained throughout his life a devoted scholar and a gracious individual who left a distinctive and lasting mark on the development of Byzantine studies.

4. Conclusions

Vasile Grecu's legacy occupies a pivotal space in the development of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies in Romania and, more broadly, in South-Eastern Europe. At a time when the academic study of Byzantium was still in the process of institutionalization, Grecu established himself not only as a translator and commentator of Byzantine texts but as a system-builder, helping to shape the very contours of the field in Romania. His work provided the philological and methodological foundations upon which later generations of Romanian Byzantinists would build. Grecu's deep engagement with primary Greek sources and his insistence on rigorous philological precision enabled him to produce scholarly editions that remain of reference value today. By editing and translating texts by Doukas, Kritoboulos, Sphrantzes, and Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus or both Romanian and international audiences, he expanded the historiographical horizons of scholars who had previously relied on uncritical translations of Byzantine sources. Furthermore, his translations were not neutral or mechanical; they were interventions designed to mediate between linguistic traditions and historical narratives, often accompanied by extensive commentary, critical apparatus, and contextual essays that helped situate these works within the broader tapestry of Byzantine political, intellectual, and ecclesiastical life.

Grecu's role as a bridge between classical Greek philology and Modern Greek Studies is equally significant. While his primary scholarly identity was forged within the domain of Byzantinology, his translations and interpretative studies also provided important linkages between ancient, medieval, and modern Greek literary and linguistic traditions. His scholarly attention to the continuity and transformation of the Greek language from classical antiquity through the Byzantine and post-Byzantine eras allowed him to contribute to the larger European discourse on Hellenism and cultural identity. In particular, his translation of Neagoe Basarab's *Teachings* from Greek into Romanian not only exemplified his philological prowess but also illuminated the reception of Byzantine political theology in early modern South-Eastern Europe. Moreover, his discovery and analysis of Byzantine sources behind Romanian liturgical and didactic texts demonstrated a method of source criticism and textual genealogy that anticipated many of the techniques that would only later become standard in comparative philology and reception studies. In doing so, he anticipated current trends

⁷¹ For these distinctions, see BAR 48/1982 [IV Acte 65-68], *Diplomas of investiture from Kings Ferdinand I and Carol II* (Bucharest, 30 December 1922; 4 December 1931; 8 June 1935).

in transnational and intercultural scholarship by decades, showing how Greek philology could serve as an instrument for exploring wider questions of identity, transmission, and historical memory in Eastern Europe.

In assessing Grecu's overall contribution to Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, one must consider not only his scholarly output but also his broader institutional and pedagogical influence. As an academic, Grecu was committed to fostering a Romanian school of Byzantinology capable of engaging on equal terms with its Western and Slavic counterparts. His leadership roles – as professor of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest, as dean in Czernowitz, and as a founding member and president of the Romanian Society for Byzantine Studies – demonstrate a lifelong dedication to academic institution-building. His efforts to integrate Romanian research into international scholarly networks culminated in his position as Vice-President of Honour of the International Association of Byzantine Studies. Yet his contributions extended beyond the university. Through his editorship of journals such as *Candela* and *Codrul Cosminului*, and through active collaboration with renowned journals as *Byzantinoslavica* and *Revue des études byzantines*, Grecu created forums for intellectual exchange across ideological and linguistic borders. At a time when the academic world was increasingly fragmented by nationalist politics and, later, by Cold War divisions, Grecu's scholarship embodied a cosmopolitan ethos grounded in shared humanistic values. In today's academic climate, where the value of the humanities is frequently called into question, Grecu's life and work stand as a compelling reminder of the enduring importance of scholarly dedication, cross-cultural engagement, and institutional commitment to the pursuit of knowledge.

Appendices: The List of Vasile Grecu's scholarly works

The following list includes only Vasile Grecu's scholarly works, excluding his articles on politics and nationalism in Bukovina, published in newspapers and other magazines (whether under his own name or pseudonyms), which could easily make the subject of a separate article. To better illustrate Grecu's contribution to Byzantine studies, the entries are organized by type of publication and, within each section, arranged chronologically. Due to Grecu's non-standardized formats for the titles of the books and articles he reviewed, I have chosen in the section "Reviews and Book Presentations" to reformulate the entries, providing concise and consistent bibliographic information in order to offer a coherent reading that would align with modern academic standards.

University manuals

Introducere în Bizantologie, ed. R. Şoimescu, Bucharest, 1940-1941.

Literatura istorică bizantină (continuare dela 650 înainte), ed. R. Şoimescu, Bucharest, 1940-1941.

Literatura istorică bizantină: Epoca a III-a de la Constantin al VII-lea Porfirogenetul (913-959) pînă la venirea în domnie a Comnenilor (1081), adică de pe la anul 900 pînă la anul 1080, Bucharest, 1942-1943.

Literatura istorică bizantină: Epoca a IV-a a Comnenilor, Bucharest, 1942-1943.

Critical editions

Cărți de pictură bisericească bizantină: Introducere și ediție critică a versiunilor românești atât după redacțiunea lui Dionisie din Furna tradusă la 1805 de Arhimandritul Macarie cât și după alte redacțiuni mai vechi traduceri anonime, ed. and tr. V. Grecu, Czernowitz, 1936 [initially published in *Candela* 42-46, 1932-1935].

Izvorul principal bizantin pentru Cartea cu Învățătură a diaconului Coresi din 1581: Omiliile patriarhului Ioan XIV Caleca (1334-1347), ed. and tr. V. Grecu (Academia Română – Studii și Cercetări 35), Bucharest, 1939.

Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab, domnul Țării Românești (1512-1521): Versiunea grecească, ed. and tr. V. Grecu (Academia Română – Studii și Cercetări 60), Bucharest, 1942 [repr. in an anastatic edition by Teșu Publishing House in 2007; the Greek text is reproduced in *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Theodosie – Neagoe Basarab's Teachings to His Son Theodosie*, Oiești Pământeni, 2021, p. 550-653].

Viața Sfântului Nifon. O redacțiune grecească inedită, ed. and tr. V. Grecu, Bucharest, 1944.

Legiuirea Caragea, ed. and tr. A. Rădulescu, V. Grecu et al. (Adunarea izvoarelor vechiului drept românesc scris 1), Bucharest, 1955.

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Codul Calimah (1817), ed. and tr. A. Rădulescu, V. Grecu et al. (Adunarea izvoarelor vechiului drept românesc scris 3), Bucharest, 1958.

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Fig. 1. Portrait of V. Grecu from P. Ș. Năsturel, "Le 80° anniversaire du professeur Vasile Grecu", image placed before the study



Fig. 2. V. Grecu's *Meldungsbuch* from his studies in Vienna.
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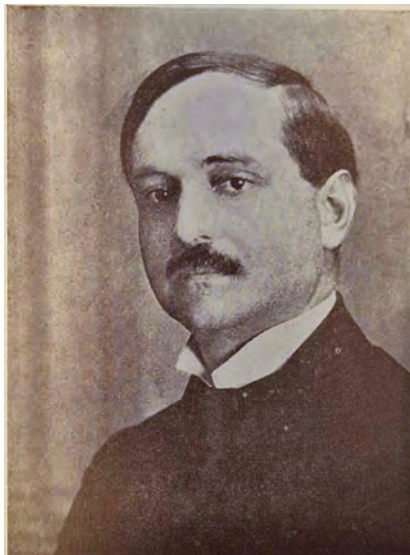


Fig. 3. V. Grecu's portrait from I. Nistor, *Amintiri răzlețe din timpul Unirii*, Czernowitz, 1938



Fig. 4. V. Grecu with N. Iorga during the summer school of Vălenii de Munte.
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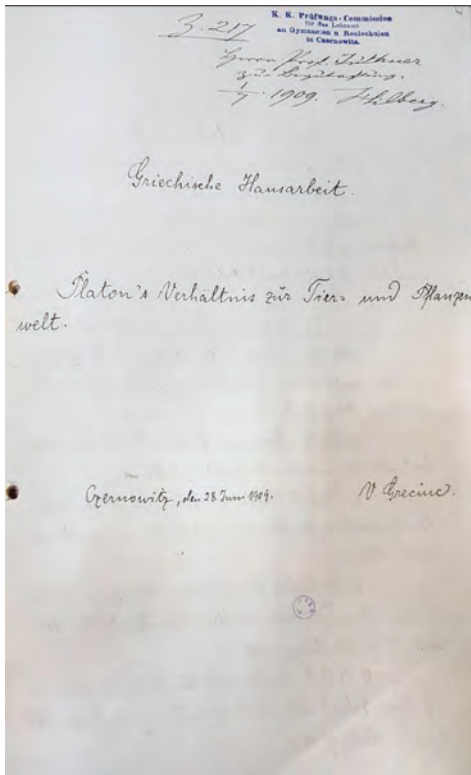


Fig. 5. Title page of V. Grecu's doctoral thesis *Platons Verhältnis zur Tier- und Pflanzenwelt*. © BAR 48/1982 [III MSS 8], Czernowitz, 28 June 1919



Fig. 6. Doctoral diploma of V. Grecu. © BAR 48/1982 [III Acte 2a], 5 June 1919



Fig. 7. A group of scholars at the First Congress of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest. V. Grecu is the third person on the second row from right to left. © C. Marinescu, *Compte-rendu du premier Congrès international des Études Byzantines, Bucarest, 1924*, Bucharest, 1925



Fig. 8. A group of scholars of the First Congress of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest in front of the Romanian Academy. V. Grecu is the third on the second line from left to right. © C. Marinescu, *Compte-rendu du premier Congrès international des études byzantines, Bucarest, 1924*, Bucharest, 1925

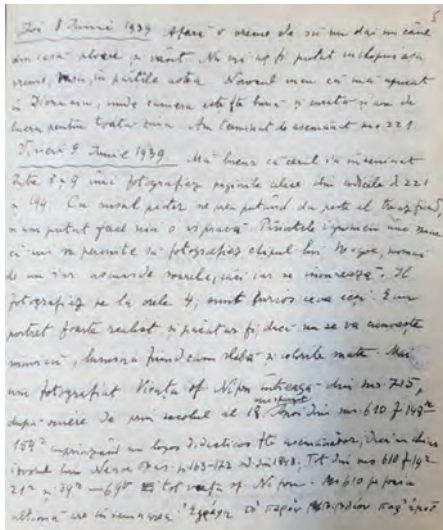


Fig. 9. Page 5^r of V. Grecu's *Journal* of 1939-1941, 1943-1969. © BAR 48/1982 [II MSS 1]

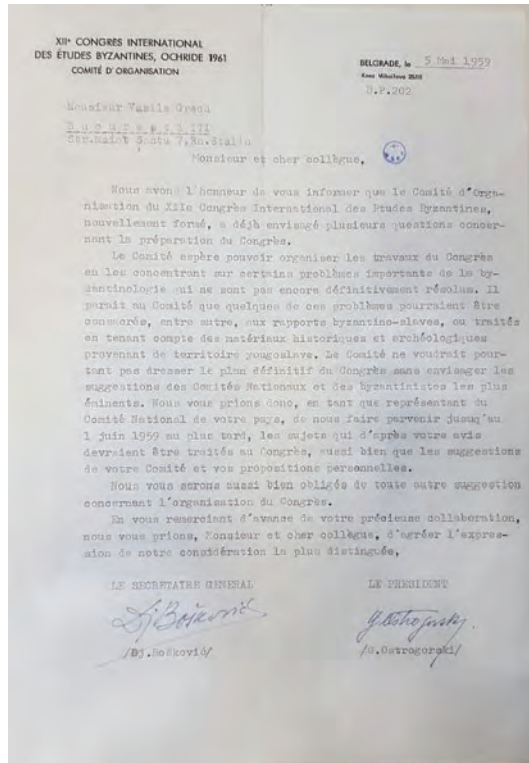


Fig. 10. Official letter to V. Grecu from Dj. Bošković and G. Ostrogorsky. © BAR 48/1982 [VII Varia 14], Belgrade, 5 May 1959

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