

BYZANTINE MUSEUM OF DIDYMOTEICHON: THE COLLECTION OF ARCHIVAL MATERIAL FOR THE DOCUMENTATION OF ITS PERMANENT EXHIBITION

Abstract: Unul dintre principalele obiective necesare pentru realizarea expoziției permanente a Muzeului Bizantin din Didymoteichon, care este încă în desfășurare, a fost de a colecta materialul vizual interpretativ, cum ar fi hărți, desene reconstrucție, fotografii, cărți poștale, gravuri etc. Materialul va servi pentru documentația, interpretarea și ilustrarea expoziției, precum și pentru efectuarea de aplicații digitale legate de aceasta. O parte semnificativă a acestui material este furnizat de materiale de arhivă, studierea și clasificarea acestuia.

Keywords: byzantine, museum, documentation, exhibition.

One of the main jobs required for making the permanent exhibition of the Byzantine Museum of Didymoteichon, which is still on process, has been the collection of the exhibition's interpretive visual material, such as maps, reconstruction drawings, photographs, postcards, engravings etc. This material will serve for the documentation, the interpretation and the illustration of the exhibition, as well as for the making of the related digital applications. A significant portion of this material is provided by valuable archival material, the finding, **study and categorization** of which for the purposes of the exhibition will be the subject of the presentation that follows.

Our research is aimed at collecting rare archival material relating to Thrace and at using this material to address the Museum's needs¹ and create permanent photographic archives at the Byzantine Museum of Didymoteichon for use by researchers and educators. Since the exhibition under preparation at the Museum focuses on Thrace as a whole and not just on Didymoteichon, the archival material reflects the entirety of a region, whose main geographical feature has always been its strategic position straddling East and West.

We began collecting this material in October 2010. The initial stage of our research focused on photographs, postcards and maps; written documents will be collected at a later stage.

The photographs and postcards collected so far cover the period between the late 19th and mid 20th century. In this respect, they document a particularly

* Archaeologist, Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens, September 2011.

¹ See *Museological Report*, Chap.2.2, "The Character of the Museum".

dramatic period in the history of the Balkans and Thrace, in particular, which was marked by wars, treaties², population movements and exchanges, the pillaging and destruction both of cities and monuments (ancient, Byzantine, post-Byzantine and modern), as well as the loss of the infrastructure which had previously played a central role in the local traditions, the culture and the educational system in Thrace.

The acquisition of the archival material

For compiling the corpus of the Museum's archival material, we have sought material from the following archives-collections:

- **Photographic Archive of the Byzantine and Christian Museum.** This archival includes extremely valuable photographic archival material. In all, 29 photographs were acquired from the "G. Lambakis Archive" relating to his journey through Thrace. Lambakis³—pictured in **illus. 1** alongside his wife, Evthalia, and a priest in the church of the Holy Trinity in Moschonisia⁴ (Cunda Adalari near Ayvalik) in 1906—was the inspiration behind the founding of the first Byzantine museum in Greece and the world. Having set up the Christian Archaeological Society Collection with a view to perpetuating the life of the Church, he continued to enrich it until his death in 1914. Lambakis also played a leading role in archaeological research in Thrace (1854-1914), and was supported in his work by Queen Olga of Greece. His travels took him from Sicily to Asia Minor and the Holy Land, where he recorded monuments, cities and people, collected relics and disseminated his knowledge to the local associations founded with the aim to protect the Christian monuments.

- **Photographic Archive of the National Historical Museum.** This archive holds the family photographic collection of Lieutenant General Konstantinos Mazarakis-Ainian. We were granted permission to use 56 digital copies of photographs taken in 1920 during the liberation of Thrace by the Greek army. The incorporation of Eastern Thrace into the Greek state was confirmed by the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920. The material includes valuable images of Thracian cities including Alexandroupoli (Turkish: *Dedeğaç*), Didymoteichon (Turkish: Dimetoca), Soufli, Adrianoupoli (Turkish: Edirn) and Saranta Ekkliseis (Turkish: *Kırklareli*, Bulgarian: Лозенград), as well as valuable information pertaining both to the people of Thrace, their dress and social and economic activities, and to its buildings and monuments, many of which have not survived into the present. The Historical Archival of the Hellenic National Historical Museum also provided us with three rare maps of Thrace dating from between 1908 and 1936., which document Thrace in the period extremely difficult for the region and its inhabitants.

² Mudanya Armistice (1922); Treaty of Lausanne (1923).

³ Georgios Lambakis was born in Athens. He Graduated from the Faculty of Theology at the University of Athens and went on to receive a doctorate from Erlang University in Germany for his thesis on the Byzantine Antiquities of Attica. He was a founder member - and the first Secretary General - of the Christian Archaeological Society (CAE).

⁴ Yangakis, G.K., pp.11-12.

- **Photographic Archive of the Benaki Museum**, which holds *inter alia* the archives of professional photographers, including Voula Papaioannou⁵, Dimitris Charissiadis⁶, and the collector Rena Andreadi⁷. This Archive granted us permission to use 41 photographs from the above collections. Taken between 1949 and 1974, these are extremely important professional photographs which depict several of the most significant monuments of Didymoteichon, as well as Byzantine and Ottoman bridges in Thrace, views of public and private educational or industrial buildings, plus elements of local architecture and images of agricultural life.

- **Photographic Archive of the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archival of the Cultural Foundation of the National Bank of Greece (ELIA – MIET)**. Permission was received to use seven digital copies of photographs from the archival's vast collection (500,000 photographs). Dating from between 1913 and 1922, the photographs depict the first session of the Supreme Administrative Council of Western Thrace in 1920, as well as Greeks quitting their homelands in Eastern Thrace and heading for Greece as refugees.

- **Photographic Archive of the Hellenic War Museum**. We received permission from this Archive to use nine postcards from the Antonis S. Maillis Collection dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The postcards depict views of cities in Thrace (Didymoteichon among them), including photographs of public buildings, such as schools and other educational institutions which have not survived up to the present day.

- **Photographic Archive of the Jewish Museum of Greece**. This archive contains a large number of photographs that cover all aspects of Jewish life and tradition in Greece, from the end of the 19th century to the present. Our research is ongoing and will focus on the elaborate Museum's rich photographic collection on Didymoteichon and Thrace.

Study and categorization of archival material

To facilitate the search for the Museum's archival material, we initially defined three main categorization criteria, which were then modified according to the structure of the exhibition narrative. These initial criteria, which assisted us in sorting out the material in significant groups, were the following:

- a) The Byzantine and Post-Byzantine monuments in Thrace.

⁵ Voula Papaioannou (1898-1990): Leading Greek photographer. An adherent of the 'humanistic photography' school which emerged as a reaction against the dissolution of human values during World War Two. She recorded the sufferings of the Greek people during the difficult years of the Axis occupation.

⁶ Dimitris Charissiadis: One of the photographers responsible for the founding of the Greek Photographic Society in 1952.

⁷ A collector and amateur photographer, Andreadi assembled 1955-1970 a noteworthy collection of photographs of Byzantine and post-Byzantine monuments in Greece. She donated her excellently organized and documented collection to the Photographic Archive of the Benaki Museum in 1974.

b) Views of life before and after the incorporation of Thrace into the Greek state.

c) Snapshots of archaeological research in the region.

We then processed and studied the material with a view to distributing it between the sections of the permanent exhibition. It should be noted that the material compiled up to date documents almost every section of the exhibition narrative.

We are not quite sure yet how we will use the collected material; that is why its final categorization will take place during the implementation of the museological report, which is not to start before the beginning of 2012.

We will begin by presenting the archival material which is to be included in the first thematic axis of the exhibition, titled “**Thrace, a region next to the capital of two empires**”. This axis is supported by two sections: the first (A1) explores how Thrace’s important geopolitical position has contributed to its spatial organization by means of a dense transportation network, while the second axis (A2) is a tribute to the people whose lives are linked to Didymoteichon or Thrace. We shall begin with archival material relating to axis A1 “**The key position of Thrace, a parameter for its spatial organization**”.

The subsection entitled “**Thrace of the Aegean Sea**” (A.1.2) will make use of a photograph from the G. Lambakis Archive, which Lambakis himself took of the Byzantine fortress of Abdera in August 1902. Abdera, an Ionian colony, was founded in 654 BC and had city walls, a harbour, dry docks and temples which have been unearthed by archaeologists. Renamed Polystylon, the city shrank considerably during the Byzantine era, when it retreated to the area around the ancient 5th century BC acropolis⁸. The photograph is a rare record of the state of preservation of the ancient acropolis in the early 20th century. Including remnants of ancient and Byzantine fortifications, the photograph provides unique archaeological documentation of the ruined city.

Proceeding with the exhibition narrative, the subsection entitled “**Evros River, the navigable bridge between Aegean Sea and Danube**” (A1.3) uses a photograph depicting the aqueduct to the west of the monastery of the Panagia Kosmosoteira, an institution of great significance founded in Ferres (Vera) in 1152 by the Sebastokrator (crown prince) Isaakios Komnenos. The aqueduct carried pure water from local springs to the settlement developed to the east and south of the fortress of Vera after its conquest by the Ottomans in 1271/73.⁹ The gorge shown beneath the aqueduct terminates at the River Evros. It should be noted that the Bishop of Ferres had his own boat for crossing the Evros and carrying monks opposite to Ainos in an era in which the Evros linked Eastern and Western Thrace, rather than dividing them as it does today.

Moving on, we chose a photograph (**illus. 2**) taken in 1974 of the Monastery of the Panagia Kosmosoteira, which was linked, according to Orlandos, with the

⁸ Mantas, A. & V. Horti, p.26.

⁹ Orlandos, A.K., pp.33-32.

aforementioned aqueduct¹⁰. The photograph offers a view of the north-east side of the katholicon along with the precinct (a later addition), and a detail of a cobbled street, which was most probably built during the Ottoman period.

Moving on to the second section of Axis A, titled “**Hommage to the eminent figures of Didymoteichon and Thrace**”, the archival material collected so far may support the subsection entitled “**The Greeks, during the period of the Ottoman Rule**” (A.2.6).

This material highlights both the spiritual and cultural flowering of Thrace in the wake of the Crimean War (1853-56) and the catastrophic impact of the Ottoman occupation on the region’s Greek population¹¹. In Thrace, as in every territory where Greek populations lived under Ottoman Rule, we encounter the founding of numerous educational and benevolent institutions supported by associations dedicated to the support of education, such as the Literary Society of Constantinople (1861) and the Society for the Dissemination of Greek Literature¹². Founded and funded by various wealthy Thracian benefactors, these institutions helped breath new intellectual and cultural life into almost every city in Thrace. By way of illustration, we include a postcard (**illus. 3**) from the Hellenic War Museum in Athens, which illustrates Komotini’s Tsanakleion School, probably in 1880. The school, which was founded by Nestoras Tsanaklis, a local merchant who made his fortune in Egypt, was a fine example of modern Greek architecture in the final phase of Eclecticism. Tsanaklis sent 200 gold sovereigns per month from Egypt to cover the teachers’ salaries during the period of Ottoman Rule. The postcard is unique in depicting the school in the year in which it was built. It should be noted that there were other foreign-language schools in Thrace, including the Alliance Israelite Universelle, based both in Komotini and Didymoteichon¹³, where Greek, French and Jewish people were taught after 1910. At the turn of the century, the Jewish communities of the two cities numbered around 1,000 and 1,200 respectively; the Jewish population of Thrace and the rest of Northern Greece would be decimated by the Nazist Occupation Army during World War Two.

To highlight the high level of education and culture in Thrace brought about by the activities of the educational and literary societies and institutions discussed above, we chose a photograph from the Alexandros Mazarakis-Ainian Collection held in the National Historical Museum (**illus.4**) which depicts young female members of the “Mandolinata”, the Greek Women’s Musical Association of Saranta Ekklisies, in 1920.

Let us now move on to the exhibition’s second thematic axis, which is laid out on the Museum’s second level and focuses on Didymoteichon, a city of key importance during the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine periods. This axis unfolds in the following three subsections: “The lay-out of the city in Byzantine and post-Byzantine times” (B1), “Didymoteichon and Thrace from the end of the 19th

¹⁰ Ibid., p.7.

¹¹ *Thraki* 1994, pp.215-216, 248-255.

¹² *Thraki* 1994, pp.255-259.

¹³ Frezi, P. "Το εκπαιδευτικό έργο των Σχολών Alliance Israelite Universelle", Volos 2000.

c.through today” (B2), and “Life in the city during the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine periods” (B3).

The subsection entitled “**From Plotinopolis to Didymoteichon**” (§B.1.1) will feature a photograph from the Benaki Museum (**illus. 5**) taken by D. Harissiadis in 1962, which renders a panoramic view of the city from the Erythropotamos. This is a perfectly-executed professional shot which portrays in masterly fashion the monuments within the city’s Byzantine fortifications—its churches and mosques, among them the Great Bayezid Mosque built by Mehmed I in the 14th and early 15th century, as well as traditional houses. This exceptional record of the monuments preserves the architectural and historical picture of Didymoteichon in the mid 20th century.

In the subsection entitled “**Churches, a basic spatial element of the city**” (§B.1.2), we document this fundamental element of Didymoteichon’s city planning with historical photographs of churches from the archives of two Athens-based museums, The Byzantine and Christian Museum and the Benaki Museum. It worth’s showing a photograph (**illus. 6**) taken by George Lambakis in August 1902 of the church of Haghia Aikaterini (grave chapel)¹⁴, and a second one (**illus. 7**), which depicts the condition of the same monument in 1974, after its partial reconstruction in 1910. The photographs show the northern and western sides of the church, which was built in the mid 12th century and whose architecture—underscoring Didymoteichon’s importance as a Thracian crossroads—is linked to that of both Constantinople and the Laskarid of Nicaea. Archaeologists have brought to light twelve tombs carved into the rocks above the church.

In the next subsection, which is entitled “**Spaces hewn into the rock: A particular feature of Didymoteichon citadel**” (§B.1.3), we focus on a fundamental feature of the layout of Didymoteichon castle: the hewn-out spaces on which the city of Didymoteichon is built. We selected a photograph from the Alexandros Mazarakis-Ainian Collection (**illus. 8**). Taken in 1920, it depicts the liturgy in thanks for the liberation of Didymoteichon. The photograph includes a crystal clear view of these hewn-out spaces, as well as the citadels walls seen from the West. Since the photograph also portrays a selection of traditional costumes, it could also be used for the interpretation of the subsection B.2.2, titled “People and scenes of everyday life from Thrace”.

In the next subsection, which is entitled “**The modern city of Didymoteichon and aspects of the architecture of Thrace through the photographic lens**” (§B.2.1), we chose a photograph which depicts the centre of the city in what is probably the 1950s. The photograph records architectural elements of the town, as well as aspects of the daily life of its inhabitants. A second photograph has preserved on film a traditional three-storey building, probably from the late 19th century, in the city centre.

Finally, we move onto the subsection entitled “**People and scenes of everyday life from Thrace**” (B.2.2), which focuses on the issue of Thrace’s

¹⁴ Mantas, A. & V. Horti , pp.60-61; Ousterhout, R. & Bakirtzis, pp.102-111.

multiethnic population. The area was home to various ethnicities and religious groups until the Treaty of Lausanne led to the division of Thrace into three parts (Greek, Bulgarian and Turkish), made the river Evros Greek Thrace's eastern border, and set in motion a brutal population exchange on the basis of ethnicity and religion.

This subsection will make use of a photograph (**illus. 9**) which depicts the church of Haghios Spyridon in Sylymvria (Turkish: Silivri) in Eastern Thrace. The photograph was registered to the Christian Archaeology Society Archival ledger in 1903. Local people are portrayed in their traditional costumes in front of the NW aspect of the 11-12th - century church of Haghios Spyridon, a unique octagonal Byzantine structure. The photograph documents the peaceful coexistence of different ethnicities in Thrace. Unfortunately, the monument was destroyed after 1922.¹⁵ Next is a photograph (**illus. 10**) which depicts inhabitants of Eastern Thrace in traditional costumes during celebrations to mark the liberation of Thrace in 1920. The photograph provides a wealth of sociological, ethnological and folkloric information about the people of Thrace in the early 20th century. Moving on, the next photograph used (**illus. 11**) is an extremely important record of the participants (French officers and local leaders) to the first session of the Supreme Administrative Council of Western Thrace, which took place in Komotini on April 4, 1920. The photograph provides a sample of the broad representation of the social national and political groups in the local population. Finally, we will use two more photographs of great significance. The first photograph (**illus 12**) depicts the dramatic uprooting of the Greeks of Thrace¹⁶, it shows the local inhabitants of the Ganochoria villages fleeing their ancestral Thracian home in 1923, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne. The second photograph (**illus 13**) depicts the deportation of the Jewish inhabitants of Didymoteichon possibly also of Orestiada, through Alexandroupolis to Thessaloniki in May 1943. From there, they were deported to Auschwitz, possibly on May 10, 1943, by the German Occupation Army. Such photographs illustrate vividly the tragic sufferings of the past generations of Thrace and, subsequently, contribute to averting the younger generations from hatred to other ethnicities, thus, encouraging ethnic and cultural tolerance. Indeed, they teach us all how we can avoid the mistakes of the past, in order to build a common trust and a peaceful cooperation for our welfare and the welfare of the entire Europe.

A section focusing on **Archaeological Research in Thrace** will be staged outside the exhibition narrative but inside the Museum, in the Multipurpose Hall, situated at the ground floor and furnished adequately to host lectures, temporary exhibitions, video screenings and other cultural events. This section will use a photograph taken by the archaeologist and founder of the Christian Archaeological Society, George Lambakis, during his 1902 tour of Thrace, at the chapel of the Holy Trinity to the south-east of the Skaloti monastery (1632) in Amygdalia

¹⁵ Mantas, A. & V. Horti, pp.74-75.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, n.2.

(Cavuskoy)¹⁷ in the Ainos area. The image is indicative of the work of the pioneering archaeologist who, having dedicated his life to his chosen discipline and to saving Christian relics and monuments, overcame the many obstacles he encountered along the way. Founding societies wherever he travelled for the protection of monuments, he also collected liturgical vessels which are now on display at the Byzantine and Christian Museum. Lambakis used the most up-to-date methods available at the time, including photographic documentation. His lens captured monuments which have not survived into the present day, along with the liturgical vessels, relics and inscriptions which he published regularly at the Christian Archaeological Society Bulletin. The 29 photographs from his 1902 journey to Thrace, which are to be incorporated into the above section, reflect the systematic manner in which he documented monuments dating from antiquity until the present.

Assessing the collected material

The contribution of archival material to the preservation of the architectural heritage and popular tradition of Thrace

The collected material includes photographs of a single monument in different eras, which assists archaeologists to document such monuments accurately. For example, the material comprises two different photographs of the church of Haghia Aikaterini in Didymoteichon, the first (**illus. 6**) taken by George Lambakis in August 1902, the second (**illus. 7**) shot by the professional photographer Dimitris Harissiadis in 1974.¹⁸ In the first, the church is roofless; in the second, we see the church after the rebuilding of its southern wall and the addition of a pitched, tiled roof in 1910. In other cases, photographs are our only record of the architecture and appearance of monuments which no longer exist, as in the case of the church of Haghios Spyridon in Sylymvria (**illus. 9**), which was destroyed after 1922. Sparse architectural members are all that now remains of the church on the site where it once stood.¹⁹

Photographs' contribution to the preservation of our modern cultural and architectural heritage is also worthy of note, given that until 1975, when a law was passed protecting traditional buildings, a number of such structures had already been destroyed, either during the war or after it. In subsection B.2.1, which addresses "**The modern city of Didymoteichon and aspects of the architecture of Thrace through the photographic lens**", we describe one of these traditional buildings²⁰ which was still standing in Didymoteichon in 1974.

Many of the photographs described above from the late 19th and early and mid 20th centuries also include local people wearing their traditional costumes in scenes

¹⁷ Mantas, A. & V. Horti, pp.58-59; Ousterhout, R. & Bakirtzis, pp.45-46; Samothraki, A.T., p.308ff.

¹⁸ See p.8 (§B.2.1).

¹⁹ Mantas, A. & V. Horti, n. 11.

²⁰ See pp.7-8 (§B.1.2).

from their everyday lives. As such, these documents also have an important role to play in fostering our knowledge of popular traditions and their preservation.

The Museum as an institution open to research and dialogue

The digital documents which were acquired during our research have served to bring memories to life and to shed light on the architecture, culture, customs and traditions of cities and regions in Thrace. In this way, they will add to the exhibition narrative and help the people of modern-day Thrace to relate themselves to their forefathers. They, thus, encourage anyone who lives in or is descended from Thrace, irrespective of religion or lineage, to visit the Museum's collections and play a creative part in its future activities.

Abbreviations

Byzantine and Christian Museum: B.C.M
Benaki Museum: B.M. Hellenic War Museum: H.W.M
Christian Archaeological Society: C.A.E
Hellenic Literary and Historical Archival, HLHA
Jewish Museum of Greece, Athens: JMG
National Bank's of Greece Cultural Foundation: E.L.I.A.- M.I.E.T.
National Historical Museum: N.H.M

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1. © Byzantine & Christian Museum (BCM- C.A.E 6024). Church of the Holy Trinity, Moschonisia. G. Lambakis is shown with his wife, Evthalia. 1906.



2. © Benaki Museum (116/29), Rena Andreadi collection. Monastery of the Panagia Kosmosoteira, Vera. 1974.



3. © Hellenic War Museum (No. 7). Post card depicting the Tsanakleion Urban School, Komotini. c. 1880.



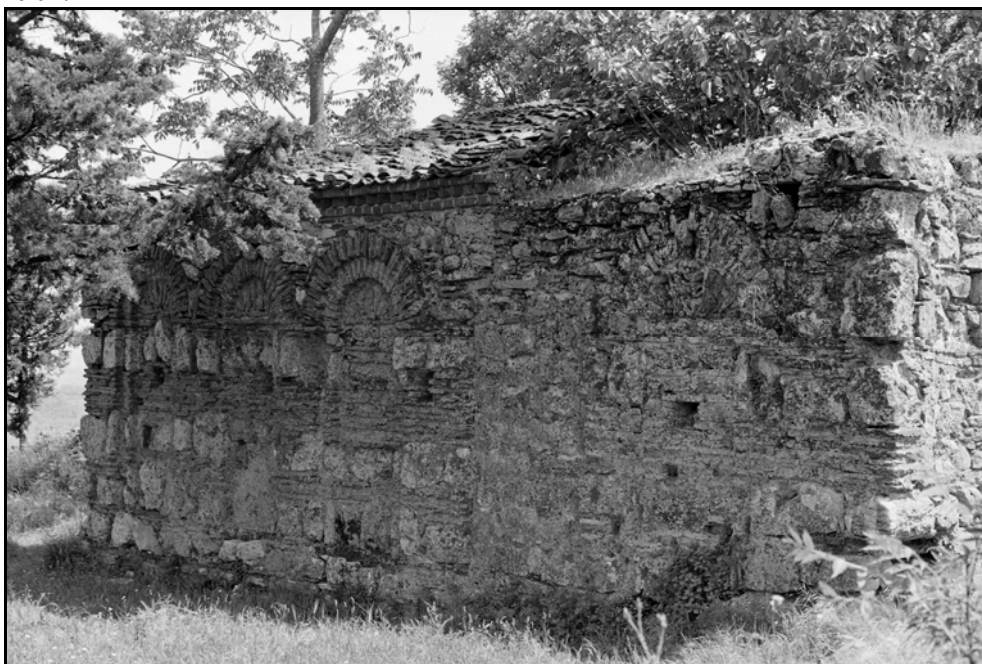
4. © National Historical Museum (No.26α), A. Mazarakis-Ainian collection. Saranta Ekklisies. Young Ladies members of the Mantolinata, the city's Musical Society. 1920.



5. © Benaki Museum (X.62_206_198), D. Harissiadis. Panoramic view of Didymoteichon from the Erythropotamos. 1962.



6. © Byzantine & Christian Museum (BCM- C.A.E 3435), George Lambakis collection. 14th-century Church of Haghia Aikaterini, Didymoteichon. August 1902.



7. © Benaki Museum (114/8 RA), D. Harissiadis. Church of Haghia Aikaterini, Didymoteichon. 1974.



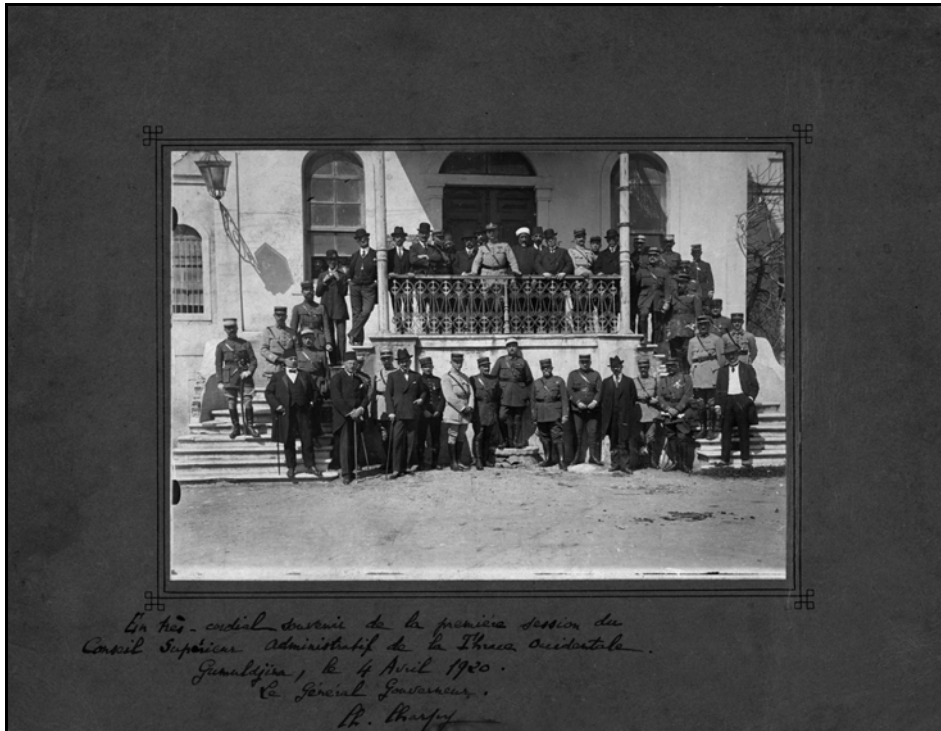
8. ©Hellenic National Historical Museum (No.10). A. Mazarakis-Ainian collection. Doxology for the liberation of Didymoteichon. 1920.



9. © Byzantine & Christian Museum (BCM- C.A.E 3455), A.K. Stamoulis archival (donated to the CAE archival in 1903). Church of Hagios Spyridon (11th-12th c.), Sylymvia, Eastern Thrace.



10. © National Historical Museum (No.29), A. Mazarakis-Ainian collection. Inhabitants of Eastern Thrace celebrating the liberation of Thrace in local dress. 1920.



11. © Hellenic Literary and Historical Archival (E.L.I.A.- M.I.E.T. 6 K00.101). First session of the Supreme Administrative Council of Western Thrace, Komotini. 4 April 1920.



12. © Hellenic Literary and Historical Archival (E.L.I.A.- M.I.E.T. L038.061). Greeks fleeing their ancestral homes, Ganochoria, Thrace. 1923.



13. ©Jewish Museum of Greece, Deportation of the Jewish population of Didymoteichon to Thessaloniki. From there, they were deported to Auschwitz, possibly on May 10, 1943, by the German Occupation Army.