

Un siècle d'études sud-est européennes en Roumanie. Bilan historiographique

volume edited by Andrei Timotin, *Carol I* Museum of Brăila

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The seventh volume in the Institute for South Eastern European Studies at the Romanian Academy's collection coordinated by Andrei Pippidi and Andrei Timotin compiles the proceedings of the Second Edition of the Institute's Annual Colloquium, held in the Aula of the Academy Library on the 15th and 16th of October 2018.

According to its editor, Andrei Timotin, the purpose of the volume is - as stated in its title – to create an account outlining the evolution of research trends in South-Eastern European studies, to identify elements of continuity and of discontinuity from one generation to the next, and to seek future directions for research (p.5).

The Institute for South-Eastern European Studies was established in 1963 as a successor to the Institute of the same name founded by Nicolae Iorga, Gheorghe Murgoci and Vasile Pârvan in 1914, and to the Institute for Balkan Studies and Research, founded by Victor Papacostea in 1937. It brought together heretofore neglected scholars from across the academic environment, and began to trace its own avenues of inquiry, all the while maintaining an interdisciplinary approach to comparative studies on the histories of the peoples of South-Eastern Europe. This holistic outlook is thoroughly demonstrated throughout the twenty studies that comprise the volume, on a range of topics such as historiography (A. Pippidi, O. Cristea, M. Țipău, D. Cain, F. Țurcanu), Greek epigraphy (A. Robu), Classical archaeology (V. Lungu), Byzantinology (A. Timotin, S. Nicolae), Neo-Hellenic studies (L. Brad Chisacof, Ș. Petrescu), Slavic culture (Radu G. Păun), Christian Arab civilization (I. Feodorov), the Ottoman Empire (V. Panaite), Byzantine Law in the Romanian Principalities (E. Popescu-Mihuț), Slavonic texts (Z. Mihail), Balkan linguistics (C. Vătășescu), South-Eastern European comparative folklore (Ion Taloș) and sociology (S. Șerban, I. Livadă-Cadeschi).

The first study of the volume, *One hundred years of South-Eastern European research in Romania*, is penned by the sole foreign scholar that took part in the Colloquium, Academician Oliver J. Schmitt of the Austrian Academy of Science in Vienna, Professor at the Department of South-Eastern European History of the University of Vienna and a specialist in the history of the Legionary movement in interwar Romania. His address was a eulogy of the rich history of South-Eastern European studies in Romania, showcasing the way in which Nicolae Iorga's private initiative, which did not initially curry much favour with the King, would coalesce in the interbellum period. He shows how, in Romania, South-Eastern European research was circumscribed to regional politics, continuously defending the country's national history

in the face of the world's Great Powers. As such, Romanian research gravitated around the following question: "What is South-Eastern Europe?" (p. 17). To this question, N. Iorga proposed an answer in his book, *Byzance après Byzance*, in which he advocated for a transdisciplinary model characterised by cooperation between the history of cultures and that of ideas, palaeography, philology, history, history of art, Slavistics, Ottoman studies and Byzantinology. Romania had long yearned to trace its own school of Byzantine studies; and it is in this light that in 1924, at Iorga's initiative, the first International Congress of Byzantinology was held in Bucharest.

However, after 1989, South-Eastern European studies fell out of fashion across Western Europe and North America, while the Balkans began to receive negative stereotypes in the optical vein proposed by Edward Said's Orientalist approach. In the article under review, the author argues that a significant number of European political scientists are now working in this field without possessing even a working knowledge of Byzantinology, Slavistics or Ottoman studies, whilst Romania yet maintains a degree of continuity within the field. Schmitt praised those Romanian researchers that choose to gain daunting philological expertise to the detriment of the more facile social sciences, and remarked on their thorough grasp of secondary bibliography, keen philological instruments and their advantage in working with isolated manuscripts. At the same time, he also illustrated the weaknesses of Romanian research: proposed research themes are often in counterpoint to the Western mainstream, while the results of Romanian research are poorly disseminated at an international level.

Byzantine and post-Byzantine studies are given pride of place within the volume. A. Timotin presents *The Place of Byzantine Studies in the History of the Institute for South-Eastern European Research*, showing how, in Romanian historiography, Byzantium was portrayed as the privileged space illustrating relationships between the East and the West, while in Iorga's work – including his *History of the Byzantine Empire*, written at 35 years of age and published in London – Byzantium takes the universal form of the undefined, and constantly-expanding, Empire. In the view presented in his *Byzance après Byzance*, the ideal Byzantium, whose institutions all other states attempt to imitate, is synonymous with (and easily mistaken for) Orthodoxy at large. Iorga's successors in the field – N. Bănescu, the renowned Petru Șerban Năsturel, Alexandru Elian and the late Șerban Tanașoca expanded on his visionary work. The latter left invaluable contributions to Byzantinology and Balkanology to posterity, translating and commentating not only

important works such as those of Digenis Akritas, Anna Komnena's *Alexiad* and Mikhail Psellos' *Chronographia*, but also notable tomes of secondary literature. Moreover, along with E. Stănescu, he launched and edited the *Études Byzantines et Post-Byzantines* journal, which would become the mouthpiece of the Romanian Society of Byzantine Studies.

S. Nicolae presented the history of the *Scriptores Byzantini* collection, which published Romanian translations of important Byzantine authors such as Mikhail Doukas, Laonikos Chalkokondilos, Sphrantzes, Kritobos of Imbros, Mauricius, Constantine VII Prophyrogenetos, Theophilaktos of Simocatta or Procopius of Caesarea. The collection was recently resumed, through the review author's translations from Manuel Palaiologos.

It is worth mentioning that, in his article titled *Christian Arab civilization, a field of interest for South-Eastern European Studies*, I. Feodorov highlighted the continuity between the *Levantine man* and the *Byzantine man*. (pp. 136-137).

The present volume is, however, more than its title might suggest – it is a warm plea for the resurgence of South-Eastern European studies in Romania, well entrenched in the respectful tradition of its illustrious forebears centred around the luminous figure of Nicolae Iorga, but unfortunately often insufficiently known outside of a small, select circle: Mustafa Mehmet, Valentin Alexandru Georgescu and Cornelia Papacostea-Danielopolu. The volume also serves a didactic purpose, as, at least in certain sections, it offers robust methodologies and instruments of study. At the same time, it is a plea for the study of the sources' languages and for archival work, in the context of South-Eastern European research; but also, a self-promoting material, through which the Institute's researchers also present their own interest and projects, alongside their results.

It is meritorious that this volume sees publication less than a year from the Colloquium itself. Given the variety and the depth of the topics tackled, as well as the millennial time-frame it spans, the volume would have warranted the inclusion of an index of given names, of subjects tackled and of place names, especially if targeted for an international audience, given that most of the studies were written in French and only a few in English. We can only hope that the volume sees as extensive dissemination across the globe as possible, in order to counteract the dearth of Romanian South-Eastern European studies' international visibility.