

Entangled Histories of the Balkans

Volume Three: Shared Pasts, Disputed Legacies

Edited by Roumen Daskalov
& Alexander Vezenkov



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*Volume Three:
Shared Pasts, Disputed Legacies*

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Roumen Daskalov and Alexander Vezenkov



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The Afterlife of a Commonwealth: Narratives of Byzantium in the National Historiographies of Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania

Diana Mishkova

Introduction

It is a well-known fact that the medieval history of the Balkan societies and states was largely shaped in and by their relations with Byzantium, the Eastern Roman Empire. As political entities they were formed on a territory that had for centuries been Byzantine provinces, and in time began to challenge the Empire's political supremacy there, while the Byzantine cultural, political and institutional influence was extremely strong. Thus many aspects of the medieval past of the Greeks, the Bulgarians, the Serbs and the Romanians are the direct outcome of interactions between these peoples and Byzantium. In fact, most historians of the Balkans would maintain that their nations' modern history also bears, to a greater or lesser extent, the hallmark of these political and cultural entanglements.

This chapter deals with the national interpretations of the impact of the Byzantine Empire and the Byzantine legacy in the historiographies of Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania—countries once belonging to the Byzantine political and cultural orbit.¹ Its purpose is not the examination of the Balkan traditions, or the Balkan “history,” of Byzantine studies per se, which is an interesting and worthy but secondary task here. While accounting for the gradual institutionalization and the directions these studies took, the purpose of this chapter is to look into the various projections or appropriations of Byzantium in the national narratives and the assessments of its role and effects by the national historiographies in the region. In 1932 the eminent Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga, who coined the celebrated formula “*Byzance après Byzance*” in order to capture the centuries-old “survivals” of Byzantine culture and institutions in the Balkans, denoted the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence in 1821 as the endpoint of this legacy—of “*l’immuable pérennité byzantine*” that had outlived the collapse of the empire by more than four centuries. In many respects, however, the emergence of the modern Balkan nations and sovereign

1 I would like to thank Roumen Daskalov, Alex-Drace Francis and especially Tchavdar Marinov for their help in tracking down some valuable sources for this topic.

states in the nineteenth century signaled not the endpoint, but the birth of Byzantium as a *subject* of these nations' history. Its heritage has been variously appropriated or evaluated ever since, occasionally asserting, but more often subverting, the idea of a shared past. The role and impact of the Byzantine Empire became, and remained, a central theme in the national-historical narratives and identity politics for the countries of Southeastern Europe. It was implicated heavily in issues like ethnogenesis and collective identity, historical "rights," national patrimony, culture and "mentality." As such, they were exposed to political and ideological deployment.

The interest in Byzantium and its legacy emerged simultaneously with and was closely linked with the interest in the medieval precursors of the Balkan nation-states—an interest itself bolstered by the projects of national awakening and modern state-building. Consequently, Byzantine history—and Byzantine studies generally—long remained subsidiary to or subsumed under the medieval national histories: discussion of it was largely reserved for the occasions when the bilateral relations between the respective medieval nation/state and the Empire were at issue. And since most of these national histories, on the one hand, had evolved within the Byzantine political and cultural sphere and were thus constructed in tandem with the history of the Empire and, on the other hand, depended heavily on Byzantine sources, it has often been argued that the explorations into the national medieval past have contributed considerably to the study of the Byzantine past.² But this "incentive" also imposed a particular perspective in the field: for most of the time since the nineteenth century, Byzantine history has constituted, methodologically if not always institutionally, an essential part of the Balkan national historiographies, and Byzantium and its legacy were, and still are, interpreted from discrete national points of view.

It is conventional to see Southeastern Europe as comprising a fundamental part of what Dimitri Obolenski famously called the Byzantine Commonwealth—a community cutting across linguistic and ethnic boundaries and united by Byzantine traditions and Orthodoxy. Obolenski's term, emphasizing the symbolic geography of Byzantium's political and cultural influence, is useful for our purposes. For however one may interpret the effects of the relations between the Empire and the medieval Balkan states, it is beyond doubt that for a millennium Byzantium exerted a profound impact on their political, juridical and religious concepts and organization and their spiritual

2 See, for example, Ivan Dujčev, "Les études byzantines chez les Slaves méridionaux et occidentaux depuis le XVII^e siècle," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 78–79.

and material culture. My aim, again, is not to trace the *actual* survivals of this commonwealth—their continuity and metamorphoses—after the collapse of the Byzantine polity in 1453.³ It is to show the ways this Byzantine impact and legacy was perceived, interpreted and constructed by the historiographies of the modern Balkan “successor states”—that is, of those tracing their roots back to the polities that participated in the historical Byzantine sphere. While it is largely agreed today that the history and culture of the Byzantine Empire constitute an inherently multicultural field of research,⁴ in the countries occupying its historical area, Byzantine culture and legacy were the subject of (usually warring) national interpretations. Moreover, in some cases, such as that of the Greeks, that culture and legacy still form an assimilated part of the national history.

At the core of the different systems of appropriating Byzantium (and Byzantinism) lay two central themes: those concerning national identity (or

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- 3 The question of Byzantium's *survivances* is an old one for students of the Byzantine Empire and for those concerned with their national effect. Nicolae Iorga, who will be referred to in the present text, is considered the great initiator in this area. Examples from works that are considered classics include: some observations in the conclusion to Charles Diehl's *Byzance. Grandeur et Decadence* (1928); a brief chapter, “The Debt of the Slavs to Byzantium,” in Norman Baynes' *The Byzantine Empire* (1925); in the collective volume *Byzantium: An Introduction to East Roman Civilization*, eds. Norman Baynes and H.St.L.B. Moss (Oxford, 1948), the question of the heritage is addressed in “Byzantium and Islam” (A.A. Vasiliev); “The Byzantine Inheritance in South-Eastern Europe” (William Miller); “Byzantium and the Slavs” (Steven Runciman); “The Byzantine Inheritance in Russia” (Baron Meyendorff and N. Baynes). The final edition of A.A. Vasiliev's *History of the Byzantine Empire, 324–1453* (1952) includes a chapter devoted to “Byzantium and the Italian Renaissance.” Dimitri Obolensky's *The Byzantine Inheritance of Eastern Europe* (London, 1982) is an important reference in discussions of the Byzantine Commonwealth's afterlife. More recently, L. Clucas, *The Byzantine Legacy in Eastern Europe* (New York, 1988), Igor Ševčenko, *Byzantium and the Slavs in Letters and Culture* (Cambridge and Napoli, 1991) and J.J. Giannias, *The Byzantine Tradition After the Fall of Constantinople* (Charlottesville and London, 1991), are devoted primarily to the Byzantine heritage in Russia and Greece. Dimitrios Stamatopoulos' *To Vyzantio meta to Ethnos. To provlima tis synecheias stis valkanikes istoriografies* (Athens: Alexandria, 2009) examines late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century narratives of Byzantium by selecting a confined number of authors and ordering them in contrasting pairs representative of the “canonical” and the “deviating” versions of these narratives. A collection devoted specifically to Southeastern Europe appeared freshly: *Héritage de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est à l'époque moderne et contemporaine*, eds. Olivier Delouis, Anne Couderc et Petre Guran (Athens: Ecole française d'Athènes, 2013).
 - 4 Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon and Robin Cormack, “Byzantine Studies as an Academic Discipline,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, eds. Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon and Robin Cormack (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 8.

character) and those concerning national expansion (or the nation's mission). Subsequently, the discourses that made use of Byzantium permeated a number of disciplines. The "Byzantine factor" is found in various areas of scholarly activity: historiography, literature, philology, theology, architecture, the visual arts, music. But they all draw cognitive validity from history, which puts historiography in a "strategic" position in the field. At the same time, the national schools of medieval and Byzantine studies, as we will see, were often suffused with "meta-political" messages, thus blurring the boundary between public (or political-ideological) and academic discourses.

It is therefore obvious that the modern national representations of Byzantium in the individual Balkan historiographies cannot be treated as monolithic wholes reflecting some overarching consensual narratives about the past. Accordingly, my intention in what follows is to bring to the surface the internal contestations, tensions and dialogue between different interpretations within the given national historiographical tradition and their transnational communication in the region and with Western academic currents. These will be analyzed against the backdrop of and in conjunction with changing political, geopolitical and social contexts. The field thus charted is vast, including four national historiographies across two centuries of development. Although varying in degree, the presence of the "Byzantine factor" in all national histories—either that of the medieval period or in historical syntheses—and the frequent "national references" in the specialized literature on Byzantium proper call for rigorous selection of the sources. Rather than offering an exhaustive survey, I have sought to dig up and present in some depth a representative sample of authors whose writings can help us capture and explain the dynamics of Byzantium's "presence" in the histories of the Empire's heirs.

To allow the major patterns to emerge, the chronological purview of the analysis has been kept wide, emphasizing trends and perspective rather than detail. It has been organized around several historiographical "eras" marked by paradigm shifts in the writing of history or broader intellectual currents: pre-Enlightenment and Enlightenment perspectives; the Romantic era; the late-nineteenth-century turn towards critical ("scientific") historiography and the institutionalization of Byzantine studies; and the interwar period. Not all of these periods present epistemological ruptures, and we often encounter considerable overlapping and "contamination" between periods. But each of them was characterized by a discursive shift, employing different sets of concepts and projecting different "expectations" from the knowledge of the past. The post-World War II narrations have been left out of the scope of this chapter for reasons of size and depth. The author has given preference to conveying the

actual “voices” of the protagonists and heeding the readers’ “feel” for the arguments put forward, rather than to a chronologically exhaustive but necessarily succinct recording of the major directions of interpretations. An attempt has thus been made to strike a middle ground between a broad overview, covering the formative phase and the institutionalization of historical and Byzantine studies, and an in-depth case study of the main sources in an effort to unravel the actual motivating forces and stakes of the debate within a broader transnational framework.

The salience of Byzantium with respect to national symbolism and representation was not the same during the different periods in the different countries. The Romantic era was decisive in devising the hegemonic interpretations of Byzantium in the Greek and the Bulgarian narratives. However, it was far less important in the Romanian and the Serbian cases, where the “critical” historiography, especially during the interwar period, made far greater contributions in this respect. Hence different weight (and space) has been assigned to the various periods in the analysis that follows.

The “Age of Erudition”

Byzantium is a latecomer to European historiography.⁵ Following its fall to the Ottomans in 1453, the history of the Empire evoked scant interest in the Latin West and among the humanists of the Renaissance. Western interest, philological and historical, in the Byzantine world and its heritage originated in the sixteenth century, initially in Italy. Its stimuli were primarily political (the threat from the expanding Ottoman state that served to arouse interest in Byzantine accounts of the Turks, which in turn led to probing into the Eastern Roman imperial past), humanistic (the discovery of the Greek and the Byzantine worlds), and religious (the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation vis-à-vis the Eastern Orthodox doctrine). The flourishing of Byzantine studies in seventeenth-century France was directly connected with the development of French absolutist monarchic ideology and France’s particularly strong diplo-

5 Initial scholarly research in the Byzantine Empire arose from interest in the classical world. The first scholar to recognize the distinctive quality of Byzantine history was the German historian Hieronymus Wolf (1516–1580), who was also the first to use the term “Byzantine” for the later years of the Roman Empire in his collection of historical sources *Corpus Historiae Byzantinae* (1557). The term comes from “Byzantium,” the name of the city of Constantinople before it became Constantine’s capital.

matic and economic relations with the Ottoman Empire.⁶ Closely connected with this political historical interest was the study of the Greek language in its various forms and historical evolution—an interest again “tied in with the very immediate demands of the cultural politics of the period which produced it.”⁷ Collections of Byzantine sources (*monumenta*) first appeared in the seventeenth century and rapidly increased from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. An early example is the *Corpus Historiae Byzantinae* (Paris 1645–1711).

Until the eighteenth century the historiography of Byzantium closely followed the theological, dynastic and annalistic traditions. The historical narratives of the Empire, in the best case, remained focused on the history of emperors, wars and intrigues. The greatest achievement of the humanists of the “Age of Erudition” was the collection of and critical philological work on the sources. According to Agostino Pertusi, the erudite studies on Byzantine history and civilization, which had begun in Italy and Germany and spread to France during the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV, accumulated an impressive amount of materials ready to be used for a monumental work: a history of the millennial Byzantine “civilization.” The rationalism and the skepticism of the Age of Enlightenment transformed this potential into a history of the millennial “decadence” of the Empire. One had to wait until the nineteenth century for the erudite research of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to bear fruit and for the new science of Byzantine studies, freed of prejudices and contradicting the presumptions of the enlightened rationalists, to acknowledge the value of the Byzantine world.⁸

In Russia the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries also saw a revived interest in the history of the Greek Orthodox world. But here, too, this interest was neither purely academic nor unequivocal. The attitude of Muscovite society to Byzantium and its legacy was marked by what Dimitri Obolensky defined as an “ambiguous blend of attraction and repulsion,” and Byzantine history was put to highly selective, didactic and tendentious use in support of power politics or ecclesiastical reform.⁹

6 L. Bréhier, “Le développement d’études d’histoire byzantine du XVII^e au XX^e siècle,” *La Revue d’Auvergne* (January–February 1901), 1–36; Panagiotis A. Agapitos, “Byzantine Literature and Greek Philologists in the Nineteenth Century,” *Classica et Mediaevalia* 43 (1992), 234.

7 Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon and Robin Cormack, “Byzantine Studies as an Academic Discipline,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, eds. Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon and Robin Cormack (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7.

8 Agostino Pertusi, “Le siècle de l’erudition,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 25.

9 Dimitri Obolensky, “Modern Russian Attitudes to Byzantium,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 62–63.

Before the late eighteenth century, the interest in Byzantium in the countries that were part of its heritage in the period of Ottoman control was far weaker and tallied with the long-standing tradition of ecclesiastical history and theological literature. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was some interest among the Greek-speaking literati in editing and publishing Byzantine manuscripts. However, this interest was directed towards certain philological and religious aspects of Byzantine intellectual activity and hardly entailed a systematic engagement with, let alone serious exploration and interpretation of, Byzantine history.¹⁰

Byzantium in the Historiography of the Enlightenment

“By the Enlightenment, *Aufklärung*,” R.G. Collingwood wrote, “is meant that endeavour . . . to secularize every department of human life.”¹¹ In this polemical drive towards all-encompassing secularization, not only the medieval church and clergy but the Middle Ages itself were treated as meaningless. It was from these premises that Byzantium came to be evaluated, most resoundingly in the works of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Schlözer and Gibbon.¹² For Voltaire, Byzantine history was nothing but “a worthless collection of declamations and miracles, a disgrace for the human mind.”¹³ Montesquieu’s *Reflections on the Causes of the Greatness and Fall of the Romans* (1734), and *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1788) by Edward Gibbon, founder of scholarly Byzantine studies in Great Britain, gave expression to the revulsion and “rationalist” hostility many Enlightenment thinkers felt for absolutism and the politics of the medieval Church, both Eastern and Western. For Montesquieu, Voltaire and Gibbon, the decline of the Roman Empire ensued from the spread of Christianity.

For Enlightenment thought generally, Byzantium was the epitome of everything the Age of Reason stood against: despotism, religious fanaticism, corruption, ignorance. From the positions of his evolutionary theory of historical progress, G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831) considered Byzantium a historical aberration.

10 See in this respect Effi Gazi, *Scientific National History: The Greek Case in Comparative Perspective (1850–1920)* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), 67–68, note 38.

11 R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 76.

12 See André Guillou, “Le siècle des Lumières,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 27–39.

13 Voltaire, *Le pyrrhonisme de l'histoire*, chap. 15, quoted in A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, vol. 1 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 6.

tion. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, he saw the “general aspect” of Byzantine history as presenting

a disgusting picture of imbecility; wretched, nay, insane passions, stifle the growth of all that is noble in thoughts, deeds, and persons. Rebellion on the part of generals, depositions of the Emperors by means or through the intrigues of the courtiers, assassinations or poisoning of the Emperors by their own wives and sons, women surrendering themselves to lusts and abominations of all kinds.

Byzantine history, Hegel added, “exhibits to us a millennial series of uninterrupted crimes, weaknesses, basenesses and want of principle.”¹⁴

The opposite side of this contempt for Byzantium (and the “East”) was the absolute admiration and idealization of Greek antiquity, where the “West” believed its cultural origins were located—an ideological view that was not confined to the Enlightenment period but infused most of the Romantic and post-Romantic historical literature devoted to the cultural genealogy of “Europe.”¹⁵

In eighteenth-century Russia, Byzantine history continued to be used as a weapon in the debate over specific policies in church and state rather than as a field of erudite research. In a vein reminiscent of Voltaire or Gibbon, Peter the Great blamed the bigotry of the Byzantine emperors, Byzantine monasticism, civil disobedience and treachery for the unenviable fate of the Empire.¹⁶ Since the 1770s, stimulated by Catherine the Great’s expansionist policies (as epitomized by the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji of 1774 and her “Greek project” of 1782), interest in Byzantine history and the collection and publication of sources had been increasing. Pioneering these studies were a number of German academicians who settled in Russia in the latter half of the

14 G. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (London, 1857), 352. Quoted in Dimitar G. Angelov, “Byzantinism: The Imaginary and Real Heritage of Byzantium in Southeastern Europe,” in *New Approaches to Balkan Studies*, eds. Dimitris Keridis et al. (Dulles, VA: Brassey’s, 2003), 9.

15 See, among others, René Canat, *L’Hellénisme des romantiques*, 3 vols. (Paris: Didier, 1951, 1953, 1955); Romilly Jenkins, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980). On the reception of classical antiquity in the West since the eighteenth century in opposition to the East, see Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, vol. 1, *The Fabrication of Ancient Greece, 1785–1985* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

16 Dimitri Obolensky, “Modern Russian Attitudes to Byzantium,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 63.

eighteenth century and in the nineteenth century—G.S. Bayer, G.F. Müller, A.L. von Schlözer, J.G. Stritter, J.P. Krug and A.A. Kunik.

The late-Enlightenment period in the Balkans set the stage for what later became known as “national awakenings”—a process undertaken by a handful of “enlightened” clergymen and internationally connected intellectuals that centered on the creation of national historical narratives, national languages and national folklore. And if the search for the historical roots of these nations-in-the-making reached back to ancient times, their emergence as real “subjects of history” in the then-prevalent, Hegelian understanding of the term—that is, as political entities or centralized states—was firmly located in the Middle Ages. The Greeks were an exception to this rule, a fact that confronted the “Neohellenic enlighteners” with specific challenges that would ultimately be solved by the full appropriation of Byzantium as a “Greek state.”

Generally speaking, the particulars—geographic, social and political—of the process of medieval state-building, as well as certain methodological shifts in the writing of history, put Byzantium at different removes from the core of the respective national historical narratives. Due to its proximity to Constantinople, relatively early state formation and territorial expansion, medieval Bulgaria was more intensely and lastingly exposed to direct confrontation with and influences by Byzantium than were the Serbs and especially the Romanians. The historiography of the Enlightenment, on the other hand, paid little attention to questions of continuity per se. It was primarily concerned with issues of genealogy and the search for historical models of the modern organization of society, hence with “revivalism.”¹⁷ These two groups of causes made Byzantium a constant, albeit variously valued, key reference in the Greek and the Bulgarian historical canons already at their inception in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For the Serbian and the Romanian historiographies, the Empire emerged as a powerful factor during the late nineteenth century, when the task of asserting ethnic continuity and historical mission amid growing competition over the “legacy” of the Empire began to loom large on the agenda of the “national historians.”

A vital aspect of our theme, especially for the period of “national awakenings,” is the fact that the historical successor to the Byzantine Empire was the Ottoman Empire. The Ecumenical Patriarchate itself—the intact powerful survivor of the Byzantine era—formed an integral part of the Ottoman governing system. This determined in great measure the persisting negative attitude toward Byzantium and its legacy of the revolutionary and most moderate

17 Antonis Liakos, “Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece: Time, Language, Space,” in *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. Katerina Zacharia (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 204–206.

“awakeners,” to which European Enlightenment thought contributed with arguments about the “anti-European” and “regressive” nature of both empires.

...

Present-day Greeks, as Alexis Politis recently observed, have great difficulty grasping that the sense of continuity of the Greek nation, as it is widely shared and taught at school, was the invention of the mid-nineteenth century. Most of the founders of modern Greece felt a cultural and political affinity with the ancient Greeks alone and considered the entire Byzantine period to be one of foreign, Roman, rule and subjugation.¹⁸ Domestic and foreign currents fused to give ancient history and culture a pervasive allure to the mind of the “Neohellenic Enlightenment,” which would be only later and rather slowly tempered, though never surpassed, by the Romantic concept of a Greek Byzantium and the notion of historical continuity.

It is just as remarkable that ancient Greece’s prominence in Greek historical awareness was itself only a few decades old. Until the third quarter of the eighteenth century, all the historical works written or available in the Greek-speaking world espoused a strictly Christian perspective on the past, informed by Orthodox providentialism, and observed ecclesiastical patterns of narration, replicating a Byzantine literary tradition and completely omitting ancient Hellenism.¹⁹ Coming from the most socially (and politically) elevated Greek-speaking Christian stratum of Ottoman society, Phanariot literary culture and historiography is revealing in this sense: the world it was concerned with was not that of *ellinismos*, but of Orthodoxy, with its center in Constantinople, and it was this world that it sought to recreate and that the Christians sought to regain.²⁰ In the traditional historiography, Byzantium constituted the immediate and obvious historical past of the Ottoman Empire and its Christian subjects. From around the 1770s things began to change, as

18 Alexis Politis, “From Christian Roman Emperors to the Glorious Greek Ancestors,” in *Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity*, eds. David Ricks and Paul Magdalino (Farnham and Burlington, 1998), 1.

19 Alexis Politis, *ibid.*, 4–5. The author quotes several examples of this kind of history, of which the following is particularly eloquent: “The good God sent St Constantine and founded a Christian kingdom, and the Christians had this kingdom for one thousand one hundred and fifty years. Then God took the kingdom from the Christians and brought the Turk from the East and gave it to him for our own good . . . For God knew that the other kingdoms do harm to our faith and that the Turk harms us not . . . and God has the Turk as our guard dog”—quoted in *ibid.*, 6.

20 Cyril Mango, “The Phanariots and the Byzantine Tradition,” in *The Struggle for Greek Independence*, ed. Richard Clogg (London: Macmillan, 1973), 49–55.

can be seen in the writings of the Phanariot Dimitrios Katartzis (ca. 1730–1807), an exponent of enlightened despotism and an enthusiast of the *Encyclopédie* and the French *philosophes*. Katartzis is said to be the first to systematically use the term *ethnos* in the singular and to make a clear distinction between the (genealogy of the) Greek-speaking *Romaioi* and the other Christian subject peoples of the Ottomans. Among the illustrious ancestors of the *Romaioi*, he counted Pericles and Themistocles as well as (the Byzantine emperors and military leaders) Theodosius, Belisarius, Narses, the Boulgaroktonos [“Bulgar-Slayer,” the nickname of Emperor Basil II] and Tsimiskes.²¹ Significantly, the descent thus purported did not translate into national (self-)identification: Katartzis posited the existence not of a “Hellenic” but of a “Roman” nation, since religion for him was a much more important criterion of identity than language.²² The Greek-speaking clergymen and historians living in Wallachia, Dimitrie (Daniel) Phillipides and Gr. Konstantas, and Rigas Velesinlis—the long-haired harbinger of revolution and democracy in the Balkans—present interesting “hybrid” cases fusing ecumenist and nationalist visions. The first two contemplated an empire of “enlightened despotism,” freed from the Ottomans by Russian intervention in the Balkans. At the same time, they also spoke favorably of Alexander the Great and introduced the key notion that latter-day “national historians” would use to bring about a re-evaluation of Byzantium in the Greeks’ historical consciousness—namely, the notion that what took place in Byzantium was the “Hellenization” of the Romans. “Those Romans who emigrated to Constantinople abandoned the Roman language and mores and Hellenized themselves.”²³ The celebrated manifestos of Rigas Velesinlis, *Great Map of Greece* and *Constitution*, published in 1797, present a similar compound of different worldviews. Their phraseology is of unmistakable Western aspiration: Rigas speaks of a “Hellenic Republic” and of the “People descended from the ancient Hellenes,” not of *Romaioi*. But this republic and this people was meant to include “Rumeli, Asia Minor, the

21 Anna Tabaki, “Historiographie et identité nationale dans le Sud-Est de l’Europe (xviii^e siècle—début du xix^e). Antiquité et Byzance dans l’exemple grec,” *Etudes balkaniques* 4 (2007), 90–91; Alexis Politis, “From Christian Roman Emperors,” 7.

22 Ioannis Koubourlis, *La formation de l’histoire nationale grecque. L’apport de Spyridon Zambélios (1815–1881)* (Athens: Institut de Recherches Néohelléniques, 2005), 59–60. As Koubourlis adds, “from this point of view, what separates ‘us’ from the ancient ‘Hellenes’ is more essential than what links ‘us’ to them” (60). See also Paschalis Kitromilides, “‘Imagined Communities’ and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans,” *European History Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1989), 153–154.

23 D. Philippides and Gr. Constantas, *Modern Geography* [in Greek] (Vienna, 1791), 121. Quoted in Ioannis Koubourlis, *La formation de l’histoire nationale grecque*, 65.

Mediterranean islands, [and] Vlachobogdania," in other words, the space of the one-time Byzantine Empire. The difference is that religious ecumenism was now replaced by the universalism of human and citizenship rights—"a somewhat dechristianised Byzantine democracy."²⁴ Byzantinism and the "new ideas" sat side by side without apparent tension.

The peaceful coexistence of the Hellenes and the Byzantines did not last long, however, and from the early 1790s onwards, with the Enlightenment anti-medievalist indictments (from Montesquieu, Voltaire, Le Beau and later Gibbon) and the national ideas resonating ever more strongly, the "decline" of Byzantium proceeded alongside the "rise" of the ancient Greeks. For about half a century, the ideal of national purity eclipsed that of historical continuity. Following an anonymous translation of Montesquieu's *Researches into the Progress and Fall of the Romans* (1795), Adamantios Korais (1748–1833) issued, in 1798—the year Napoleon landed in Egypt—a furious denunciation of the lawlessness, greed, bloodiness and theological dependency of the "Greco-Roman kings." "The despots transplanted from ancient Rome [the Byzantine emperors]," he wrote a few years later, "after frittering away, by an administration that was as stupid as it was tyrannical, all the resources of society, hindering the influence of the best climate, defiling and shattering their throne by the most frightful crimes, ended up delivering you to even more stupid and more ferocious tyrants."²⁵ What Korais actually did was to transform the Byzantine state into "a medieval version of the Ottoman Empire."²⁶

The "Orientalizing" of the Byzantines reached its peak during the Greek War of Independence, when Korais castigated the disastrous Byzantine emperors for wishing to acquire the trappings of the Persian and Parthian courts and establishing a court of truly Asiatic luxury. The "church of the monks" was for him a resort for idlers, and the patriarchs of Constantinople cynical manipulators just like his contemporary Phanariots. Indeed, Byzantine emperors, patriarchs and clergy, Ottoman sultans and Phanariots were lumped together in a single parasitic group sapping the material and mental resources of the Greek

24 Rhigas Velestinlis, "Revolutionary Proclamation (1797)," in *The Movement for Greek Independence, 1770–1821: A Collection of Documents*, ed. and trans. Richard Clogg (London: Macmillan, 1976), 149; Cyril Mango, "The Phanariots," 57; Anna Tabaki, "Historiographie et identité," 91–92.

25 Quoted in Dionysios A. Zakythinis, "Le point de vue des épigones," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 92. Korais, a philologist by vocation, spent most of his life in Paris, which augmented his impact on the intellectual life of his home country.

26 Panagiotis A. Agapitos, "Byzantine Literature and Greek Philologists in the Nineteenth Century," *Classica et Medievalia* 63 (1992), 238.

nation. The Turks, however, were credited with having saved the Greeks from both the Byzantine nobles and the papal yoke.²⁷ All this, on the other hand, fit well with not only the heroic neo-classicism disseminated by the Greek War of Independence but also its social undertones and the democratic and anti-clerical leanings of many Greek intellectuals at the time. For the only true but very powerful remnant of Byzantium in the life of the Greeks (and the other Balkan populations) at that time was the Constantinople-based Orthodox Church, which formed an integral part of the power elite of the Ottoman state. The multiethnic character of the empire (hence the “impure” language of Byzantine literature) was another feature distasteful to the father of Greek liberal nationalism.²⁸ The anti-clericalism and nationalism of the rationalist enlighteners thus logically led them to deplore Byzantium and its legacy.

In the end, Korais’s writings depicted the Byzantines as oppressors of the Greeks, as were the Macedonian kings before that, because they had “relegated the Greek nation to barbarism.” By imitating the barbarian Orient rather than the classical Hellenes, the Greco-Roman emperors paved the way for Byzantium’s ultimate surrender to a wholly Oriental conqueror. The name *Romaioi* (or *Romioi*), which the modern Greeks commonly used to designate themselves, was a shameful testimony to their centuries-long enslavement by the Romans (and also, by implication, the Byzantines), so it had to be eliminated and replaced by *Graikoi*—a name that was, according to Korais, older even than “Hellenes” and one by which the Greeks were known in Europe. Significantly, it was Gibbon whom Korais amply cited to verify his polemic against the Byzantine oppressors.²⁹

Korais set the tone for a series of writings where Byzantium was presented as the antithesis of ancient Hellas—an embodiment of corruption, debauchery and decadence, of foreign domination and tyranny by Roman emperors, church hierarchs and wealthy notables. In a speech on the Acropolis in 1841, Iakovos Rizos Neroulos, president of the Athens Archaeological Society and a government minister, portrayed Byzantine history as “a very long and almost

27 Peter Mackridge, “Byzantium and the Greek Language Question in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity*, eds. David Ricks and Paul Magdalino (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 1998), 50.

28 Ibid., 52.

29 Sterios Fassoulakis, “Gibbon’s Influence on Korais,” in *The Making of Byzantine History: Studies Dedicated to Donald M. Nicol*, eds. Roderick Beaton and Charlotte Roueché (Aldershot and Brookfield: Variorum, 1993), 169–173. The suggestion to use *Graikoi* rather than *Romaioi* or *Ellenes* was first made by Evgenios Voulgaris in 1768 for the same reasons that Korais later adduced.

uniform series of foolish and shameful violations of the Roman Empire transplanted to Byzantium. It is the ignominious exemplar of the extreme wretchedness and debasement of the Greeks.”³⁰ Most of the Greek intelligentsia in the first half of the nineteenth century—the Hellenized representatives of the Enlightenment—were committed to divulging the ancient roots of the modern Greeks and the links between modern and ancient Greece, almost completely rejecting the Byzantine and Ottoman past. Official historiography squarely confronted popular “myth-memories” of the Byzantine past bequeathed by a long-standing religious tradition.³¹ Parallel to these intellectual efforts, place names were changed from medieval to (often allegedly) ancient ones, medieval monuments and Byzantine churches were destroyed, and “the language question” emerged, to remain unresolved for the next century and a half. Ancient history thus directly shaped Greece’s modern development.

As we have seen, however, the immense symbolic value of Hellas and the myth of an eternal Greece were not produced by the “Greeks” themselves: they were cultural constructions of Western civilization. Europeans, moreover, found their idealized cultural ancestors in ancient Greece—the original and indigenous “Ur-Europa,” which they saw as imbued with the key values of modernity. Two were the momentous consequences of these entanglements for the emerging Greek state and identity. European Philhellenic thought had led the Greeks to believe that they were different from the other ethnic groups with whom they had been living for centuries, in that their nation had a universally accepted civilized status which set them apart not only from the Ottoman barbarians but also from the other national entities in the Balkans. Cultural Hellenization of these other nations meant, in this perspective, their taking the side of progress, rationality and truth.³² On the other hand, Europe’s essentialist interpretation of its cultural origin and disdain for the Byzantine Empire meant that Greece’s self-identification involved, more dramatically than in other cases, a choice between the West and the non-West, “Europe” and “Asia,” progress and decadence. Much as the aura of grandeur surrounding Greekness

30 Quoted in Effi Gazi, *Scientific National History: The Greek Case in Comparative Perspective (1850–1920)*, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), 68.

31 Marios Hatzopoulos, “Receiving Byzantium in Early Modern Greece (1820s–1840s),” in *Héritage de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est*, eds. Delouis et al., 219–229.

32 Constantine Tsoukalas, “European Modernity and Greek National Identity,” *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans* 1, no. 1 (1999), 7–14. In his famous 1844 speech on the “Great Idea of Hellenism,” Ioannis Kolletis spoke not only of liberating “our still oppressed brothers” but also of the necessity for the Greeks to “civilize [again] the East” on the one-time example of Alexander the Great—a popular formula of contemporary colonialism (Ioannis Koubourlis, *La formation de l’histoire nationale grecque*, 28).

was imported from abroad, so was the horror of being wholly Oriental. Next to the effort to dissociate the new state from its Ottoman past, the reception of the Western model of cultural history, juxtaposing an idealized ancient Greece with the East, determined modern Greece's wholesale initial self-identification with classical antiquity and the West. "By accepting Western culture," Markos Renieris wrote in 1842, "Greece does not renounce its national spirit but rather fulfils it."³³ There was thus a striking convergence of the exigencies of the Greek national emancipation, state-building and legitimation—in brief, Greek nationalism, the expected returns from Western Philhellenism (and Orientalism), and the intellectual dispositions and political values of the late Enlightenment. These different threads were woven together in a historical narrative featuring a resurrected "progressive" Greece after twenty centuries of slavery and darkness and infused with strong anti-Byzantine sentiments.

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Ever since the Enlightenment, interpretations of the relations with Byzantium have stood at the heart of the Bulgarian historical narrative. This is not hard to explain since for seven centuries the Bulgarian *ethnos*, statehood and culture were being formed in constant close interaction and frequent political confrontation with the Byzantine Empire.

The Bulgarian state emerged at the end of the seventh century as a result of the Bulgars, a relatively small but well-organized Turanic tribe from Central Asia, subjugating the Slavs who inhabited the eastern Balkans. This was the first durable barbarian state set up on the lands of the Byzantine Empire. Already before their Christianization, the Bulgarians³⁴ managed to expand their territory, taking over large areas of formerly Byzantine possessions. In 864, after a lost war with the Empire, Prince Boris I (852–889) was compelled to adopt Christianity from Constantinople rather than Rome—a decision that paid off with the setting up of an autocephalous Bulgarian Church and later Patriarchate but that also opened the way for the penetration of Byzantine temporal and ecclesiastical influence. Under Boris's son, Simeon (893–927), the spread of Byzantine culture continued through the introduction of church services in the Slavic language (Old Church Slavonic) and the dissemination of Slavic writing and literature, which crowned the work of two Byzantine missionaries, Constantine (Cyril) and Methodius, and their disciples, and

33 Quoted in Panagiotis A. Agapitos, "Byzantine Literature," 236.

34 In a relatively short time the numerically preponderant Slavic population in the new state assimilated their "state-creating" conquerors demographically and culturally but kept the latter's ethnic name and that of their state.

were championed by the (increasingly Byzantinized) Bulgarian court. The Christianized South Slavs (Bulgarians and Serbs) thus gained an important instrument for establishing permanent states and sustaining individual identities. At the same time Simeon engaged in a protracted struggle with Byzantium for hegemony over Southeastern Europe and, by claiming the title of *basileus kai autokrator* of the Bulgarians and the Romans, made plain his intention to take over the Empire.

The Byzantine *reconquista* of the late tenth and early eleventh century led to the annihilation of the Bulgarian state, turning it into a province under the direct military and administrative control of Constantinople for almost two centuries. In 1186 an uprising against the weakened Byzantium led to the formation of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. However, waning Byzantine political control did not mean fading cultural influence: feeding on the conditions created during the long Byzantine rule, this influence continued to expand until almost the very end of Bulgarian state independence (1396) under the onslaught of the Ottoman Turks.

Predictably, therefore, medieval Bulgarian culture and much of the modern Bulgarian identity—religion, literary heritage, state and historical traditions, art—bear imprints of the civilizational entanglement with Byzantium. In both politics and culture, the Empire was an overwhelming presence and a powerful standard-bearer for the medieval Bulgarian state. Indeed, Byzantium has shaped the Bulgarians' historical canon and self-perception as much as it has shaped that of the Greeks. "Our close proximity to Byzantium," wrote an eminent Bulgarian historian, "charted the directions of our entire medieval life; its influence on us determined, as regards both state and culture, our historical destiny."³⁵ But the interpretations and valuations of this key presence by the Bulgarian and the Greek historiographies are very different.

The national movement of the Bulgarians, it should be remembered, was directed not only against the Ottomans as political masters but also against the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the high clergy, who were (linguistically) either Greek or Hellenized. To the Ecumenical Patriarchate's position as an integral part of the Ottoman system of administration—the common ground for not only the Balkan enlighteners' but also some lower clerics' critical attitude to it—was added, in the age of nationalism, its imputed "anti-Bulgarian," "Greek" character. The Bulgarian "Revival" began largely as a reaction against "Hellenism" and evolved into a struggle against the "Greek" Church and cultural assimilation. The notion of the "double yoke"—political (Turkish) and spiritual (Greek)—became a common trope in the crusade for national mobilization.

35 Petăr Mutafchiev, *Kniga za bălgarite* (Sofia: BAN, 1987), 24.

The early modern Bulgarian historical narrative of the second half of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, still largely anchored in traditional (providentialist) visions, was similar in its treatment of Byzantium to that of the contemporary Greek enlighteners, but for very different reasons. For monk Paisiy Hilendarski (1722–1773), later hailed as the first Bulgarian national “awakener,” the Bulgarians’ chief enemy during their historical peak in the Middle Ages was the “Greeks,” i.e. the Byzantines. His primary aim was to discredit Greek insinuations that the Bulgarians had always been an amorphous ethnic mass subjugated to the Greeks, to demonstrate that they had had their own state, church and high culture, and to show that the military might of Byzantium and the brilliance of its culture were fraudulent. In his *Slavobulgarian History* (1762), Paisiy presented the “Greek emperors” as deceitful and ruthless; they had often been overpowered by the Bulgarian tsars and forced to pay a tribute. Their domination over the Bulgarians in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, won by deceit rather than valor, was branded a “Greek yoke.” Paisiy also blamed them for the Ottoman conquest, as they called on the Turks to fight the Bulgarians.³⁶

Paisiy made no effort to discriminate between the Byzantines and the contemporary Greeks and referred to the “Eastern Greek Empire,” “Greek emperors” and “Greek land” when writing about the Eastern Roman Empire. That was a convenient conflation. Paisiy and his followers reproduced the medieval convention of using “Greek” as a synonym for “Byzantine,” but they gave it an ethnic meaning that it originally lacked. This “re-signification” was instrumental in mobilizing the Bulgarians’ resentment towards the contemporary Greeks by pointing to the age-old confrontation between the two nations.

Why was King Simeon Labas illustrious? Because he waged a severe and unremitting war against the Greek kings and always beat them. Four times he went to Constantinople with an army and seized and burned many areas. During his reign for thirty-five years Bulgarians and Greeks had no peace. From that time much enmity and condemnation remained between Greeks and Bulgarians—and [it continues] until this day.³⁷

The anxieties of the present provided the view of the past: the cultural (and political) role of the “Greek Church” was identified with that of Byzantium, and the ongoing nationalist strife with the Greeks was seen as the legacy (or

36 Paisiy Hilendarski, *Slavyanobălgarska istoriya* (Sofia: Bălgarski pisatel, 1972), 43–44.

37 Paisiy Hilendarski, *Slavyanobălgarska istoriya*, 234–235.

the extension) of the confrontation between the medieval Bulgarian state and the Eastern Roman Empire.

In hindsight it can be argued that Paisiy's rather simplistic and crude representation supplied the matrix for the subsequent historical accounts. In its fundamentals, especially in portraying Byzantium as the eternal nemesis of the Bulgarians, it proved remarkably stable. The next, Romantic period in Bulgarian history would add new aspects without changing it.

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In many ways the Serbs' relations with Byzantium were no less crucial to their medieval history. But in addition to the relatively late foundation of a Serbian state, hence political confrontation with the empire, there was one more important difference. Byzantium was not the only gravitational center for the Serbs; much more intensely and palpably than medieval Bulgaria, the Serbs experienced the rival political and cultural impact of Rome.

Between their settlement in the western parts of the Balkans (in parts of today's Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dalmatia, Montenegro and western Serbia) in the first half of the seventh century and the Byzantine subjugation of the Bulgarian Kingdom in the eleventh century, the Serbian tribes' contact zone with Byzantium was reduced to the Adriatic coast. For about three centuries the empire had practically no direct control over the interior of the Balkan peninsula, while the Bulgarian Kingdom (which included the lands of present-day Serbia) barred its access to the western provinces. As a result, the Christianization of the Serbs came about only gradually, over more than a century, and was carried out by the Dalmatian bishoprics administered by Rome. The Byzantine traits that the Serbs had taken on since the late ninth century, most notably the spread of Orthodox Christianity and the Slavic church service, were largely mediated by the Bulgarians. After the defeat of the First Bulgarian Kingdom in 1018, Byzantium regained its effective control on the peninsula, whereby the Serbs acquired a long frontier with Byzantium for the first time and much of the territory inhabited by Serbs came under the jurisdiction of the "Greek" archbishopric of Ochrid. In political terms, until the second half of the twelfth century, local Serbian military leaders, *župans*, had made several attempts at establishing more consolidated polities, but the results proved ephemeral. Of these "proto-states" only two endured for somewhat long periods—Serbia (later also called Raška) in the interior and Zeta (Montenegro) on the Adriatic seacoast. Both felt the political impact of Constantinople, yet the grand *župan* of Zeta received his royal title from Rome (1077). The second half of the twelfth century saw the rise of the Nemanjić dynasty, "the only true

Serbian dynasty in the Middle Ages,” under which the Serbian medieval state reached its political peak. Serbian medieval state-building, similar to that of the Bulgarians, took place in a context of alternating alliances and wars with Byzantium, although most of the time Serbia was in a vassal relationship with Constantinople. But the Latin South (centered on Dubrovnik) and West posed a greater threat to the Serbian centralization and the Orthodox ecclesiastical structure that the Nemanjić sought to foster.

From around the mid-twelfth century, taking advantage of the conflict between Byzantium and Hungary, the Nemanjić dynasty extended its power over a large territory in the western Balkans, including Raška and Zeta (but not Bosnia). As in Bulgaria a few centuries earlier, the new ruling dynasty embarked on a continuous effort to attain as much independence and legitimacy as it could wrest from Constantinople and Rome.³⁸ In this it went down a well-worn path: following the Crusaders’ capture of Constantinople in 1204, the Patriarch (then residing in the Empire of Nicaea) endorsed the founding of an autocephalous Serbian Church (1219), while the first king of Serbia—Stefan the First-Crowned (*Prvovenčani*)—received his title from Rome (1217). Medieval Serbia reached the height of its political power and territorial expansion under Tsar Stefan Dušan (1331–1355), whose empire incorporated large tracts of formerly Byzantine lands. Dušan claimed that the Njemanjić dynasty originated with Constantine the Great, proclaimed himself emperor of the Serbs and the Greeks (“*car Srba i Grka*”) while elevating the Serbian church to the rank of a patriarchate, and opened the doors of his court wide to Byzantine influence. However, at the hands of his heirs and contenders, this Serbian empire quickly disintegrated into a number of short-lived states.³⁹

Within this framework, charted mainly by political events and institutional evolution, various interpretations about the actual place of Byzantium in the Serbian history and culture emerged, often in conjunction with a corresponding treatment of the role of the “West.” For the Serbian enlighteners this was not yet a central issue: in addition to the paucity of information for the period until the thirteenth century, this first generation of national awakeners was busy attesting to and emphasizing above all the strength and achievements of Stefan Dušan’s empire. The major adversary in this story was Byzantium; Rome, the “Latins” and the Muslims followed suit. Yet unlike the Bulgarians, the Serbs in the Middle Ages, as Konstantin Jireček had long noted, “were at

38 Throughout the twelfth century, despite its attempts to get rid of Byzantium’s tutelage, Serbia remained a vassal state to the empire, whose rulers were treated by Constantinople as imperial functionaries who could be “removed from office” or conferred titles of the Byzantine court.

39 *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. 1 (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1981), 197–211, 251–262.

different times allies, vassals, rivals and opponents of the Byzantines, but never direct subjects of the emperors of Constantinople.”⁴⁰ And since in the formation of the modern Serbian identity the confrontation with the Greeks played a far lesser role, Byzantium never acquired the explicitly negative features and the harmful role it was assigned in Bulgarian historiography. The overriding theme in the Serbian historical narrative during not only the Enlightenment but also the Romantic period was different: the capacity of the Serbs’ rising and fresh forces to take over the decaying Eastern Roman Empire and found on its ruins their own, Serbian (or Greco-Serbian) empire. In this scenario the Serbs were endowed with the potential to lead a new “Serbian Byzantium” that would fuse Byzantine imperial and historical traditions with Slav vitality and energy.

Jovan Rajić (1726–1801), considered the “founder of Serbian historiography,” wrote the *History of the Various Slavic Peoples, Particularly the Bulgarians, the Croats and the Serbs* (1794–1795). This 2000-page work followed the medieval religious historiographical tradition and was influenced by, among others, Caesar Baronius’s *Annales Ecclesiastici* and Mavro Orbini’s *Il regno de gli Slavi*. Using Byzantine sources as well but in Latin translations, Rajić’s *History* chronicles the political relations between Byzantium and the South Slavs, treated as a particular entity. Next to the importance of Byzantine sources for Serbian history, the latter’s close connection with Byzantium was thus acknowledged from the dawn of Serbian historiography. However, before the second half of the nineteenth century, the nature and effect of these relations, and the Empire’s influence in general, failed to attract the interest of the Serbian historians.

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The Latin origin of the Romanians was as central to their modern historical consciousness as Hellenic origins were to the Greeks. And, like the Greeks, the Romanians thus developed a claim to a privileged position in the community of civilized peoples and to partake in the groundwork of European civilization.

The Romanians discovered their Latin origins over a century before the Greeks discovered their Hellenic roots. Since the seventeenth century the question about the formation of the Romanian people had “become a constant, and even obsessive, preoccupation of Romanian historiography.”⁴¹ Its mythological point of reference was Rome, which fused the two major components of the European tradition—the imperial and the Christian—and lent the Romanian lands nobility and prestige. The story behind it was simple: at the beginning of

40 Konstantin Jireček, *Istorija Srba*, vol. 1 (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1922; first published 1911), v.

41 Lucian Boia, *Romania: Borderland of Europe* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 31–32.

the second century CE, Emperor Trajan had conquered ancient Dacia and his armies had colonized it, annihilating or else completely assimilating the indigenous Dacian population. Byzantium within this framework was seen as an extension and perpetuation of the Roman model—a powerful yet derivative symbol overshadowed by Rome.

The humanist writers of seventeenth-century Moldavia and Wallachia, Grigore Ureche (ca. 1590/95–1647), Miron Costin (1633–1691), Nicolae Costin (ca. 1660–1712), Radu Popescu (ca. 1658–1729), Constantin Cantacuzene (ca. 1640–1716) and “the most brilliant of all humanists,” the Moldavian prince Dimitrie Cantemir (1673–1723), are considered to be “the real founders of national Romanian historiography.”⁴² They were the first to emphasize the greatness of the early Romanians and to engage in the process with the Byzantine sources on Romanian history and Romanian-Byzantine relations. The attitude to Byzantium that transpires from their writings is one of attachment to the memory of the Empire and its civilization. They remained faithful to the traditional view of Byzantium as the lawful continuation of the Roman Empire, the guardian of the Orthodox faith and possessor of political legitimacy. In the same breath they would emphasize the important role of the Romanians in this Byzantine world, their “nobility” and the legitimacy of their political autonomy: Cantemir, for example, sought to prove the Byzantine ancestry of the Romanian states and dynasties as well as the Romanians’ decisive role in founding the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. “In the spirit of the Romanian humanists of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century,” maintains the Romanian Byzantinist Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, “the idea about Orthodox solidarity and the nostalgia for the Byzantine Empire goes along with a very strong feeling of national identity that acquires an important Byzantine dimension.”⁴³

The Latinist orientation of Romanian historiography diverged considerably from this humanist tradition. Its heyday, like that of the Hellenic orientation of Greek historiography, was during the Enlightenment era and was epitomized by what was known as the Transylvanian (or Latinist) school—an intellectual and political movement whose purely Romanian project dominated Romanian history-writing from the late eighteenth century through the 1860s. The three great historians of the Transylvanian School, the Uniater

42 Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, “L’image roumaine de Byzance à l’époque des Lumières,” in *South-East Europe: The Ambiguous Definitions of a Space*, eds. Răzvan Theodorescu and L.C. Barrows (Bucharest: UNESCO-CEPES, 2002), 50.

43 Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, “Byzance dans la conscience historique des Roumains,” in *Héritage de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est*, 269–271, eds. Delouis et al.; idem, “L’image roumaine de Byzance,” 54.

(Catholic of the Eastern Rite) clergymen Samuil Micu (1745–1806), Petru Major (1761–1821) and Gheorghe Șincai (1754–1816), took up the task of demonstrating the Latin purity of the Romanian race. Much like the Neohellenic enlighteners around the same time, their aspiration was to rehabilitate Romanian culture and Romanian ethnicity as ancient, native, established and respectable.⁴⁴ In Dacia and the area south of the Danube, the Romanians were *the* Romans of the one-time Empire of Trajan. Samuil Micu began the history of his people (1800) with the foundation of Rome, and many after him also presented it as a continuation of Roman history.⁴⁵ The dominance of the Latinists in the historiographical canon-building not only in Transylvania but also in Wallachia and Moldavia until the last quarter of the nineteenth century set the framework for the interpretation of Byzantine history during this period.

Despite some nuances, Micu, Șincai and Maior shared essentially the same ideas about the identity of Byzantium, its civilization and its relations with the Romanians. These ideas were informed by Enlightenment nationalism and a determination to assert the Latin origins of the Romanians. Gheorghe Șincai's *Chronicle of the Romans and of Other Peoples* (1807–1809) and Petru Maior's *Early History of the Romans in Dacia* (1812) articulate clearly the new image of Byzantium emerging through these lenses, which would dominate Romanian political thought in subsequent decades. For Șincai a "Byzantine Empire" properly speaking never existed: neither the transfer of the capital from Rome to Constantinople nor the division of the Empire into western and eastern parts nor even the fall of the Western Empire had marked the beginning of a Byzantium and its proper history. The event that, according to Șincai and Micu, marked a decisive break in the history of the Roman Empire was the seventh-century invasions of the Bulgarians and the formation of their state. The latter had separated its Latin-speaking citizens (the Romanians) from the body of the eastern part of the Empire and made the Greeks its only masters. From that moment on, the Empire based on Constantinople became a "Greek state," "Romaic," not Roman:

44 In Wallachia this trend was represented by some "Greek" scholars. In his *History of Romania* (1816) and *Geography of Romania* (1816), the aforementioned Dimitrie Philippide (ca. 1755–1832) spoke of "Romanization" as a key process in the formation of the Romanian nation, closely analogous to the "Hellenization" of the Greek Middle Ages. He argued that the Latin core of the Romanian people was a crucible that absorbed all the barbarian peoples invading the country. Those who had survived, adopting the Romanian way of life, were "Romanized," leaving behind no other traces but a few names.

45 Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 85–89.

After the conquest of the Dacias [*sic*] and Lower Moesia by the Bulgarians, many authors stopped calling the emperors in Constantinople “Romans” [*ai romanilor*] and began calling them “Romaics” [*ai romaichilor*], as the present-day Greeks call themselves, because without the help of the Romanians, the Greeks would not have succeeded in inheriting the glory and grandeur of our ancestors. [...] The Greeks... without any justification had given and are giving to themselves the name Romans only because they later managed to capture the Roman empire of the East and to destroy it.⁴⁶

The transformation of the Roman Empire into the Byzantine Empire in the seventh century, in other words, meant Greek usurpation of the name “Roman” and of the role of custodians of the empire—usurpation that provoked the angry reactions of the Romanian national historians. The name and identity they bestowed on Byzantium was that of an “Eastern Empire” or simply “the East,” “kingdom of the Greeks or the Romaic” or “the Greeks.” Following a different route, the Romanian enlighteners thus came to a view that was identical to that of their Bulgarian counterparts and which underscored the allogeneic, culturally and ethnically Greek character of Byzantium.

Like their Bulgarian counterparts, the Transylvanian enlighteners held in low regard the “Greek Church” and post-Byzantine and contemporary Greek culture, and they saw the Phanariots as remnants of Byzantium. The national underpinnings of this anti-Greek attitude were similar: resistance against both the foreign Phanariot regime and the budding Greek nationalism.⁴⁷ The narrative procedure was also similar—projecting on a distant past controversies unfolding in the present, occasionally through absurd fabrications: “It is not surprising that Saints Cyril and Methodius refused to submit to Patriarch Photius, since he was a Greek, while they, as genuine Romanians, descendants of the colonists of Trajan... who were associated with the Bulgarians, could not bear to have the Greeks as their masters.”⁴⁸ Against this backdrop the fall of Byzantium was portrayed as a just punishment for the Greeks, who had sinned by usurping the Eastern Roman Empire at the expense of its legitimate heirs—the Romanians.

The breach in the erstwhile humanist tradition is obvious: the Latinist school in Romanian historiography rebutted the Roman authenticity of the

46 Quoted in Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, *Bizanțul și românii. Eseuri, studii, articole* (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Pro, 2003), 189–191.

47 Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, *Bizanțul și românii*, 198.

48 Șincai as cited in Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, *Bizanțul și românii*, 211.

Eastern Empire and declared that the Romanians incarnated this authenticity and the legitimacy of the Empire's heirs. And as a sympathetic Romanian analyst put it, "they were the first to pose as a criterion for judging the Greek Byzantine Empire and Orthodox Byzantium the fidelity to the Roman origins which it claimed."⁴⁹

The Latinist historiographic school deserves our attention for yet another reason directly linked with Byzantine history: the important role it attributed to the Romance-language-speaking population south of the Danube. This focus was largely forced upon them by the paucity of sources referring to the area north of the river (the territory of the future principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia) between the withdrawal of Roman rule in 271 and the foundation of the Romanian states in the fourteenth century. During this "dark millennium" the focus of Romanian history shifted to the territory of the "New Rome" and, after the seventh century, to that of the Bulgarian Kingdom. The national Romanian historians unanimously held that Romanians and Bulgarians enjoyed a political symbiosis in the Middle Ages: both the First Bulgarian Kingdom (seventh to tenth centuries) and the second one (twelfth to fourteenth centuries) were said to be "Romanian-Bulgarian kingdoms." For Micu, the Romans who fell under the influence of the Bulgarian state and Slav civilization were transformed into "Vlachs." This name was given to them by the Greeks, who wanted to preserve for themselves the name "Romans" as a symbol of political legitimacy, denying it to the Romanians and the Italians. Șincai, Micu and Maior discovered a multitude of "crypto-Romanians" hiding in the Byzantine sources "under the name of Bulgars, Coumans, and Pechenegs" as well as Scythians. The situation with the term "Vlachs" was completely different, though. As Petre Maior put it, "the name of the Vlachs never meant anything else but Romanians, that is Romans, Latins, Italians."⁵⁰ They were widely dispersed under these various names across the whole Balkan peninsula, from Thessaly and Pindus to ancient Dacia and beyond. Their political force, Micu argued, was displayed by the numerous Vlach uprisings against the Byzantines,

49 Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, "L'image roumaine de Byzance," 72.

50 L. Boia, *History and Myth*, 114–115; Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, *Bizanțul și românii*, 166–167, 171, 176, 184–185, 204; Tanașoca, "L'image roumaine de Byzance," 59–65. Petru Maior was particularly inventive in devising explanations for such misnomers. For example, he argued that the Greeks were jealous of the undeniable Romanity of the Romanians and indignant at the creation of the Empire of Charles the Great. Thus the Greeks, who posed as the only legitimate claimants to the Empire and the name "Romans" (*Romaioi*), had changed the Latin name of the Romanians (*Romanî*) to Coumans (*Comani*), taking advantage of the similarity of the letters *k* and *r* in the Greek alphabet! (Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, "L'image roumaine de Byzance," 63).

the most consequential being those of the eleventh and the twelfth centuries which had led to the creation first of a number of autonomous “Dacias” and then of the (second) “Vlacho-Bulgarian Kingdom”—the actual *translatio imperii*. “All roads lead to Rome”: once again the Transylvanian historians were able to demonstrate that the Romanians, not the Greeks (read Byzantines), were the bearers of *the* authentic imperial tradition.

It should have become obvious that the negative interpretation of Byzantium that the Romanian enlighteners shared with their Western peers had different grounds and pursued different goals. It was not driven by a philosophical critique of Oriental despotism, religious fanaticism and corrupted mores; it was driven by a Latinist orientation and the aspiration to reclaim the history of the Vlachs as an integral part of the Romanian nation. Rather than a debauched continuation of the Roman Empire, justified by natural right, Byzantium was the result of a felony, a theft from the Romanians, the rightful heirs of the Roman glory.⁵¹

National-Romantic Visions of Byzantium

The development of historicism since the eighteenth century entailed the discovery of both the “historicity” of the past and the historical reconstruction as a form of communication—currents that the Age of Romanticism brought together and endowed with perfected means of expression.⁵² The rationalist hostility to Byzantium characteristic of Edward Gibbon’s generation was now replaced by the “prurient moralizing hostility” of writers of the Victorian age such as William Lecky, who, in 1869, wrote:

Of that Byzantine empire, the universal verdict of history is that it constitutes, without a single exception, the most thoroughly base and despicable form civilisation has yet assumed. There has been no other enduring civilisation so absolutely destitute of all forms and elements of greatness, and none to which the epithet mean can so emphatically applied . . . The history of the empire is a monotonous story of the

51 See also Leonidas Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei. Preocupări de bizantinistică în România până la 1918* (Bucharest: Omonia, 2005), 372–373.

52 Friedrich Meinecke, *Historism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook*, trans. J.E. Anderson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972); Panagiotis A. Agapitos, “Byzantine Literature and Greek Philologists in the Nineteenth Century,” *Classica et Medievalia* 63 (1992), 233–235.

intrigues of priests, eunuchs and women, of poisonings, of conspiracies, of uniform ingratitude.⁵³

For Jacob Burckhardt, the famous nineteenth-century cultural historian of the Italian Renaissance, Byzantinism was a “spirit compounded of Church and politics” that “had developed analogously to Islam.”⁵⁴ Burckhardt saw the spirit of Byzantine civilization in the following way:

At its summit was despotism, infinitely strengthened by the union of churchly and secular dominion; in the place of morality it imposed orthodoxy; in the place of unbridled and demoralized expression of the natural instincts, hypocrisy and pretence; in the face of despotism there was developed greed masquerading as poverty, and deep cunning; in religious art and literature there was an incredible stubbornness in the constant repetition of obsolete motives.⁵⁵

All in all, although Romanticism rehabilitated medieval history, it did not end the West's previous stereotypical (Enlightenment) view of Byzantium, despite some initial signs in this direction.

The Age of Romanticism did not generate a synthetic work, a Romantic *chef d'oeuvre*, on the Byzantine Empire comparable with Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Its impact on the development of modern historiography, however, was decisive in that it embarked on “naturalizing” the Middle Ages as the period of the genesis of modern nations, on nationalizing history and on turning the nation and the national genius into its main protagonists. While these new currents, directly confronting the cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment, underlay the inception of the national histories of the Greeks, Bulgarians, Romanians and Serbs, they also stimulated the study of Byzantium and the reassessment of its historical role.⁵⁶

53 William E.H. Lecky, *A History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*, vol. 2 (London, 1869), 13–14 (quoted in Jeffreys et al., “Byzantine Studies as an Academic Discipline,” 8).

54 Jacob Burckhardt, *Force and Freedom: Reflections on History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1943), 202 (quoted in Angelov, “Byzantinism,” 10).

55 Jacob Burckhardt, *The Age of Constantine the Great* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949), 345 (quoted in Dimiter G. Angelov, “Byzantinism,” 10).

56 Dionysios Zakythinos, “Du Romantisme au Nationalisme,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 41–47.

The entanglement of the Western European Romantic tradition with these double-edged developments in the Balkans is best seen in the case of Greek historiography. The Greek War of Independence (1821–1828) led to an eruption of Philhellenic sentiments and a corresponding historiographic strain that animated modern Greece's connection with ancient Greece but also aroused interest in the “Greek Middle Ages” and the “medieval Greek empire” (*Imperium graecum, Imperium Graecorum*). In 1824–1825 Claude Fauriel published in Paris *Chants populaires de la Grèce moderne* (immediately translated into German by Wilhelm Müller as *Neugriechische Volkslieder* [Leipzig, 1825]). Five years later appeared James Emerson's *The History of Modern Greece from its Conquest by the Romans B.C. 146 to the Present Time* (London, 1830). The decisive turning point in this respect was the appearance of Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer's *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters* (vols. 1–2, 1830, 1836), to be discussed in detail later. This work claimed that the Greeks of the Byzantine period were linguistically assimilated Slavs and Albanians who had no connection with the ancient Hellenes. Remarkably, the effort to refute its claims marked perhaps the closest convergence of the Romantic Western European and Greek historiographic schools. In 1832 Johann Wilhelm Zinkeisen (1803–1863) engaged with a substantial rebuttal of Fallmerayer's thesis and started (but did not finish) writing “a complete history of Greece.”⁵⁷ He reproached the historians of Greece before him that

instead of joining [Byzantine history] with the history of Ancient Greece, [they] rather searched for the most striking contrasts between the two; they thereby lost, quite inevitably, the opportunity for an appreciation of the Byzantine imperial era in purely historical terms.⁵⁸

Zinkeisen's thesis of the continuity of Greek history drew on his Hegelian understanding of the *Geist* of a nation, meaning “the power by which a people emerges by itself as a distinct entity and . . . develops to a higher degree its

57 J.W. Zinkeisen, *Geschichte Grechenlands vom Anfange geschichtlicher Kunde bis auf unsere Tage* (Leipzig: Barth, 1832). In Germany this history was followed in the 1860s by Charles Hopf's synthesis of medieval Greece, *Geschichte Griechenlands vom Beginn des Mittelalters bis auf unsere Zeit* (Leipzig, 1867–1868).

58 J.W. Zinkeisen, *Geschichte Grechenlands*, 7. Quoted in Ioannis Koubourlis, “European Historiographical Influences upon the Young Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos,” in *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, Romanticism and the Uses of the Past (1797–1896)*, eds. Roderick Beaton and David Ricks (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 56.

inherent qualities which in turn enable it to sustain its uniqueness . . . ; it is the natural consequence of the descent and original destiny [of the people] . . . ”⁵⁹

The Scottish historian George Finlay (1799–1875), who considered himself to be a historian of the “Greek nation” rather than of the Roman Empire, also stressed the continuity of its history. He opened the preface to the first five volumes of his *History of Greece from its Conquest by the Romans to the Present Time B.C. 146 to A.D. 1864* (London, 1877)⁶⁰ with the following statement: “The history of Greece under foreign domination records the degradation and the calamities of the nation which attained the highest degree of civilization in the ancient world. Two thousand years of suffering have not obliterated the national character, nor extinguished the national ambition.” He then went on to stress:

Neither the Roman Caesars, nor the Byzantine emperors, any more than the Frank princes and the Turkish sultans, were able to interrupt the continual transmission of a political inheritance by each generation of the Greek race to its successors . . . They have maintained possession of their country, their language and their social organization. [T]he preservation of their national existence is to be partly attributed to the institutions which they have received from their ancestors. [...] A combination of causes . . . enabled [the Greeks] to preserve their national institutions . . . even after the annihilation of their political existence . . . These local institutions ultimately modified the Roman administration itself, long before the Roman empire ceased to exist; and even though the Greeks were compelled to adopt the civil law and judicial forms of Rome, its political authority in the East was guided by the feelings of the Greeks, and moulded according to Greek customs.⁶¹

So the discourse about the perseverance and vitality of the “national character,” “national ambition,” “national existence” and “national institutions” of the Greeks across centuries despite political calamities, and the portrayal of Byzantium as a Greek empire, were already forged by the foreign historians of Greece before they came to dominate Greek national-Romantic historiography.

59 Ibid., 57.

60 This full edition consists of seven volumes, but most of them had already been published, starting in 1844.

61 G. Finlay, *A History of Greece*, vol. 1, xxii; 20–21. The original publication of volume 1 of Finlay’s *History*, entitled *Greece under the Romans*, appeared in 1844.

Finlay, at the same time, embarked on rehabilitating the history of Byzantium by pointing out, "The views of Byzantine history unfolded in the following pages are frequently in direct opposition to these great authorities [Voltaire and Gibbon]" and indicating that "the splendid achievements of the emperors, and the great merits of the judicial and ecclesiastical establishments will be contrasted with their faults." He associated the transition from the Roman to the Byzantine Empire with its territorial shrinkage, which had ensured "the prevalence of Greek civilisation and the identification of the nationality of the people and the policy of the emperors with the Greek church."⁶²

Thus both as a "positive" adoption of the Western Romantic thesis of national continuity and as a "negative" counterattack against dissident anti-Hellenic Western voices, the impulses coming from "internal" and "external" Romantic interpretations converged to form the core of what was to become Greek national-historical canon. It is noteworthy that to the extent that Byzantium was rehabilitated in the West, this was done on the assumption that it was the heir of Hellenic civilization, and not because it was recognized as a new, composite Christian civilization.

To a great extent Russian Romantic thought was as important for the Balkan Slavs' national awakening and for the discovery of their medieval roots as German, French and English Philhellenism was for the Greeks. It should be stressed, however, that this current itself owed much to Western European Romanticism and to German idealist philosophy. Nowhere was this more evident than in the heated debate between Westernizers and Slavophiles in the 1830s and 1840s, in which Byzantium was evoked by both parties and with different connotations but typically, though not invariably, as the opposite of Western Europe. While Peter Chaadaev, a radical Westernizer, argued in 1829 that the sterility of Russian culture was due to "miserable Byzantium, the object of profound contempt," another leader of the movement and a professional historian, Timofei Granovsky, maintained in 1850, "We received from Constantinople the best part of our national inheritance, that is religious beliefs and the beginnings of education. The Eastern Empire brought young

62 G. Finlay, *A History of Greece*, vol. 1, xv, 352; vol. 2, 8–9. D. Zakythinos defines this as an essentially provincial view of Byzantium, which "risked reducing one of the most salient features of the medieval Greek Empire: its political ecumenism and the universality of its institutions and its culture"—a tendency that was reversed with the appearance of Alfred Rambaud's *L'Empire grec au dixième siècle. Constantin Porphyrogénète* (1870): Dionysios Zakythinos, "Du Romantisme au Nationalisme," 46–47.

Russia into the community of Christian nations.”⁶³ The Slavophiles’ views were just as value-laden and ambiguous. Some of them contrasted the contemplative culture of the Byzantine world with Western legalism and rationalism. Others, even if not denying its spiritual achievements, also stressed the Roman character of the Empire’s law and state, hence its underlying paganism, formalism and institutionalism. “Rome’s juridical chains,” Aleksey Khomyakov wrote, “clasped and choked the life of Byzantium.”⁶⁴

The political underpinnings of the growing Russian interest in Byzantium were signaled by the Treaty of Kuchuk Kaynarji (1774) and Catherine II’s “Greek project” (1782). Panslavism, the political offspring of Slavophilism, which grew after the Crimean War (1853–1856), made plain the connection between Byzantinism and the Eastern Question. Nikolay Danilevski argued in his book *Russia and Europe* (1869) that Russia’s historical mission was to restore the Byzantine Empire and dominate Constantinople. To this end he advocated creating a federation consisting of the Slavs, the Greeks, the Romanians and the Magyars, under the political leadership of Russia and with its capital in Constantinople.⁶⁵

An ultra-conservative version of this political view was Konstantin Leontiev’s (1831–1891) highly idiosyncratic reading of what he called “Byzantism” (rather than “Byzantinism”), which he saw as made of several components: political autocracy, Orthodox mysticism and ascetics, and the denial that full moral perfection, equality and freedom could be attained on earth. He also contrasted Byzantism to Slavism and rejected the concept of Slavic cultural unity, arguing that the Greeks, the Romanians and even the Magyars were closer to Russia than the southern and the western Slavs. He nonetheless talked of a Greco-Slavic union, which he also called the “Great Eastern Union,” with its cultural center in Constantinople, which had to be in the personal possession of the Russian tsar. This union would be the political expression of a new “Slavo-Asiatic civilization”—fully original and distinct from that of “Romano-Germanic Europe.”⁶⁶

63 Dimitri Obolenski, “Modern Russian Attitudes to Byzantium,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 63–64. Granovsky also believed that only Slav scholars were fully qualified to unravel Byzantine history and, according to Obolenski, “foreshadowed the emergence twenty years later of a genuine tradition of Russian Byzantine scholarship” (*ibid.*, 64).

64 *Ibid.*, 64.

65 *Ibid.*, 65.

66 Konstantin Leontiev, a writer and philosopher, spent ten years in the Balkans as a diplomat. Even if he shared certain views with the Slavophiles and Panslavists, he did not belong to any of the then socio-philosophical currents in Russia. His cultural-historical

Above and beyond the differences between Slavophiles, Panslavists and philosophers of “reactionary Romanticism” like Leontiev, a common thread in their discussions of Byzantium was its “anti-Western” quality as a *positive* alternative to the Western “model.” Their attitude was driven by their nationalism in that they all associated the Byzantine legacy with the cultural and political identity of Russia. However, this pro-Byzantine nationalist mood did not go unchallenged. The attack, remarkably enough, came from a respectable theologian, Vladimir Solovyov, who argued that Byzantium had betrayed Christ’s legacy to mankind, that it was a “pseudo-Christian Empire” that had succumbed to paganism, schismatics and “Caesaropapism” and was therefore deservedly “judged and condemned by history.”⁶⁷



The Romantic period in Greek historiography marked “the transition from one mental structure of historical imagination to another: from the schema of revival to one of continuity.”⁶⁸ This entailed, first and foremost, filling the gap between antiquity and modern times—that is, a complete metamorphosis of attitudes towards the “Greek Middle Ages” and Byzantium. It meant not only a radical restructuring of the Greeks’ historical self-narration but perhaps the most striking development to have taken place in Greek national ideology in the nineteenth century.⁶⁹ In the face of the political and social realities in the first decades after the Greek state was set up, the myth of the resurrected Hellas appeared too weak to sustain a national ideology for at least three reasons: it opened a huge time gap between the ideal past and the present, was incompatible with the Orthodox Christian identity of the “living” Greeks, and could not satisfy the ideological and foreign policy needs of the young state. It could be safely said that the emergence of national Greek history was inherently bound up with the integration of the histories of the ancient Macedonians and the Byzantines in a single “general history of the Hellenic nation,” since it “produces not only a homogeneous historical (national) time—without “falls” or temporal gaps—but also a national space by establishing the geographical

outlook is most fully and coherently revealed in his *Byzantism and Slavdom* (1875). See Vladislav Grosul, “Vizantizm Konstantina Leontjeva,” *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Europeenes* 34, no. 3–4 (1996), 265–273.

67 Vladimir Solovyov, *La Russie et l'Eglise Universelle* [1889], 5th ed. (Paris, 1922), xxiv–li; “Vizantizm i Rossiya” [1896], in *Sobranie sochineny*, 2nd ed., 7 (St. Petersburg, n.d.), 283–325 (quoted in Obolenski, “Modern Russian Attitudes,” 66).

68 Antonis Liakos, “Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece,” 208.

69 Peter Mackridge, “Byzantium and the Greek Language Question,” 49.

limits of the ideal Greek state.” This integration is thus an essential aspect of the nationalization of Greek history.⁷⁰

Behind this shift of historical references, one can easily discern the shifting political-ideological needs and national objectives originating in the Greek present: the classicist orientation of the enlighteners was closely linked with the ideal of national dignity and liberty; the Byzantinist orientation of the national-Romantic school of historiography pursued national integration—that is, territorial expansion. The Byzantine monarchy was a better symbol for unity and statehood than the ancient city-state and democracy.⁷¹ In 1837 the Athens University’s first dean and professor of history, Konstantinos Schinas, in a direct address to King Otho, noted: “Hellas, your Highness, was never an autonomous and indivisible state, but was first small in size and fought with adjoining states, and then a small province of three successive large monarchies, of which only with that of Byzantium did it have so much as language and faith in common.”⁷² Seven years later, Prime Minister Ioannis Kolletis’s speech in the Greek National Assembly (January 14, 1844) completely obliterated this view of a historically fragmented Hellenism. This speech is generally considered to mark the birth of Greece’s “Great Idea” (*Megali Idea*) and set the frame of the ideological discourse of Greek nationalism. Induced by the rift between “inside” and “outside” Greeks—those living within the frontiers of the state and those left outside it—the “Great Idea” became the ideological platform for the Greek state’s efforts to “absorb” the whole “Hellenic Nation” and expand its boundaries in geographical space and historical time.

Kolletis’s nationalist manifesto remained silent on Byzantium: in the political and intellectual climate of the time, evoking it would have been counter-productive.⁷³ Yet both the ideal of the united nation, bringing together the

70 Ioannis Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque. L'apport de Spyridon Zambélios (1815–1881)* (Athens: Institut de Recherches Néohelléniques, 2005), 21.

71 “[I]f the Greek nationalists of the time wanted to appropriate Byzantium, it was not because they venerated everything it represented, it was not because they felt particular affection for the Byzantine civilization . . . It was rather because the Byzantine past, like the Macedonian and the Hellenistic past, was useful for the Greek nationalists of the second half of the 19th century as a ‘past of a conqueror’” (Ioannis Koubourlis, “Augustin Thierry et l’hellénisation’ de l’Empire byzantine jusqu’à 1853: les dettes des historiographes de la Grèce médiévale et moderne à l’école libérale française,” in *Héritage de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est*, eds. Delouis et al., 261).

72 Quoted in Despina Christodoulou, “Byzantium in Nineteenth-Century Greek Historiography,” in *The Byzantine World*, ed. Paul Stephenson (London: Routledge, 2010), 451.

73 Paschalis Kitromilides, “On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism: Paparrigopoulos, Byzantium and the Great Idea,” in *Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity*, eds. David Ricks and Paul Magdalino (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 1998), 27.

Greeks from inside and outside the kingdom, and the vision of Greece's cultural and political hegemony in the "Greek East" led the national ideologue in this direction. In 1833 Kolletis argued: "The capital of the Kingdom of Greece must be Constantinople. It is the city where the foundations of the throne of our old emperors are located and the seat of our religion, the city upon which we should all turn our eyes... we should not desire any other capital than Constantinople."⁷⁴ Kolletis's hints were only one step away from the realization that Greece's claim to rule the East from Constantinople entailed the need to demonstrate that the Greeks had already done this in the past.

However, the immediate push to reorient Greek historiography towards Byzantium came from a different quarter. In the 1830s Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer (1790–1861), a German liberal and historian of the Empire of Trebizond and of Frankish Peloponnese, published his *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters* (vols. 1–2, 1830, 1836). In this work he argued that the massive Slavic invasions of the Byzantine Empire since the late sixth century CE led to total racial assimilation of the Greek population of the Peloponnese. Modern Greeks, according to this theory, were descendants of Slavs—a shocking conclusion for the newly minted Greek nationalism, which not only deprived the Greeks of their illustrious forebears, racial purity and ancient creativity but took away their European credentials as well.⁷⁵ It is noteworthy that Fallmerayer's attitude to Byzantium and its ideological legacy was extremely critical: he denounced both the autocratic emperors of Byzantium and the "reborn" Byzantine autocracy in Russia. In fact, his intention was not to hurt the national feelings of the Greeks but to warn against the danger of a resurrected Greco-Slavic "Byzantine" empire on the Bosphorus subservient to Russia.⁷⁶

What is of interest here is that it was through the endeavor to prove Fallmerayer "wrong" that the medieval "roots" of Greece were discovered and the national Greek historical narrative emerged. Long after this task was accomplished (not without substantial help from Western European scholarship), the Greek historians continued to battle with Fallmerayer. For them it was a battle for the recognition of the "historical rights of Hellenism," which would allow the modern Greeks to reap the benefits of their descent from the

74 Quoted in Christodoulou, "Byzantium in Nineteenth-Century Greek Historiography," 450.

75 On Fallmerayer's theory and the Greek reactions, see Georg Veloudis, "Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer und die Entstehung des neugriechischen Historismus," *Südost-Forschungen* 29 (1970), 43–90.

76 Jakob P. Fallmerayer, "Rom und Byzanz," in *Europa zwischen Rom und Byzanz* (Bozen: Athesia, 1990 [1861]).

ancient Greeks and perform the leading role in the geopolitical reshufflings related to the Eastern Question. In this effort, which was both scientific and diplomatic, the interpretation of the Byzantine past became crucial. The “national historian” Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos made all these connections crystal-clear when writing, in 1852, that to admit that “those calling themselves today Hellenes are nothing other than Slavs, Albanians, Bulgarians and Vlachs” is to admit that

the position of the Greek nation in the East is reduced to that of the Serbs and the Montenegrins, and that this nation cannot claim more important rights than those of the nations and races that live among or alongside them. It is obvious, therefore, that the question is not purely scientific, but also political . . . The true and national history of Hellenism in the Middle Ages is not indifferent to its fate in this century.⁷⁷

In brief, the exigencies of forging a coherent—continuous and encompassing—national history and those of legitimating Greek (geo)political ambitions by “historical right” coalesced to impel Greek intellectuals to develop a new historiographical model capable of filling what Konstantinos Dimaras called “the void of Byzantium.” This was an operation that proceeded in stages during the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.⁷⁸ It posited three successive eras—ancient, Byzantine and modern—with the Byzantine era as the key to the crystallization of a unified Greek nation, and was the work of at least three generations of scholars, mostly historians. Notable among them are Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos (1815–1891), his amateur colleague (and literary scholar) Spyridon Zambelios (1815–1881)—“the two founders of the Greek Romantic historiography, namely the two main theoreticians of Neohellenic nationalism,”⁷⁹ and Spyridon Lambros

77 Quoted in Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque*, 285; see also *ibid.*, 80–81. It has been credibly argued that it was the Greek rebuttal of Fallmerayer's theories that “sparked off a systematic interest in the history of Byzantium”—see Livanios, “The Quest for Hellenism: Religion, Nationalism, and Collective Identities in Greece, 1453–1913,” in *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. Katerina Zacharia (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 263.

78 “A cohesive conception of Greek history, representing the fortune of a people maintaining their national existence and consciousness throughout the ages, came to life very late,” wrote the historian Spyridon Lambros in 1918, quoted in Liakos, “Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece,” 207.

79 Constantinos Th. Dimaras, *Neoellēnikos Diafotismos* (Athens: Ermēs, 1993), 464, quoted in Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque*, 41.

(1851–1919)—the voice of “critical historiography” in Greece at the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

The 1840s and 1850s was the time when this shift in the Greek historical consciousness took place, and it was marked by the parallel existence of contradictory interpretations of the Byzantine past. In 1845, when Th. Manousis and C. Asopios, professors at Athens University, announced the Greek edition of the *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* (inaugurated by B.G. Niebuhr in 1828), they made the then patently unconventional statement that it was during the Middle Ages that the constitutive elements of the modern Greek nation—its language, religion, private law, mores and customs—took shape. They added that “medieval Greek history” was closer to the Greeks “not only in terms of time, but also [in terms of] interests.”⁸⁰ There were two conspicuous propositions thus being made: that the roots of the “Neohellenic” nation lay not in ancient times but in the Middle Ages—the period from the founding of Constantinople until its fall to the Ottomans—and that this realization had a direct bearing on the political, that is, national, interests of the contemporary Greeks. Significantly, this Medieval Greek era was not (as yet) identified with Byzantium. Even in 1850 one could read in a Greek history textbook that “[Greece], crawling under the despotism of the empires of Rome, Byzantium and Turkey, did not exist as a nation,” and that it was reduced to a province in these empires (which was actually the case).⁸¹ The evolution in both Zambelios’s and Paparrigoloulos’s own views is indicative of the timing and the characteristics of the paradigm shift in the Greek historical canon.

Spyridon Zambelios is the person commonly credited with devising the tripartite schema ancient-medieval-modern and including “Byzantine Hellenism” in it. However, in the first of his two major works, *Folk Songs of Greece* (1852), he makes an emphatic distinction between the Romanism of the “monarchy of Constantinople,” the *basileus* and the court on the one hand, and Hellenism, incarnated in the *demos* and the Church, on the other. To him they presented “two different political histories, one which refers directly to the Roman empire, exclusively relating its fortunes, and, as such, remains completely foreign or at least external to the *ethnos*; and the other . . . refers exclusively to Hellenism, noting the terms of its existence and the levels of its development.”⁸²

80 Quoted in Christina Koulouri, *Dimensions idéologiques de l'historicité en Grèce (1834–1914)* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991), 316.

81 Quoted in Koulouri, *Dimensions idéologiques*, 313.

82 Quoted in Despina Christodoulou, “Making Byzantium a Greek Presence: Paparrigopoulos and Koumanoudes Review the Latest History Books,” in *Héritage de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est*, eds. Delouis et al., 245.

In Zambelios's early interpretation, the Byzantine state preserved the familiar repulsive features that the anti-Byzantine tradition had endowed it with. What changed was that he did not discard the medieval period on this basis as one of total decay, but posited the existence of and sought to reveal the culture of the oppressed people as the actual bearer of Hellenism and "acculturator" of the Eastern Roman Empire.

Engagement with Hegelianism and the French Romantic historical school, itself strongly influenced by German historicism, had a great deal to do with Zambelios's approach to all this. His theory about the Hellenization of the Byzantine Empire and the importance he attributed to the Middle Ages in the general explanatory scheme of Greek national history are steeped in these intellectual traditions. Zambelios's perspective was emphatically teleological: taking 1821, the year of the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence, as the master key to Greek history, he interpreted all preceding eras an inevitable movement towards the formation of a Greek national state. What hitherto was presented as a series of national disasters and conquests—by Romans, Franks and Ottomans—Zambelios turned into necessary steps towards an independent Greece. (Indeed, Zambelios believed that had Gibbon and Montesquieu witnessed 1821, they would have had written very different histories of the Eastern Roman Empire.) In this continuous chain Byzantium was the missing but, for him, crucial link between antiquity and modernity, as well as the actual source of the modern Greek nation.⁸³

In a review of *Folk Songs of Greece*, Paparrigoloulos praised Zambelios for having "understood what very few had understood" by postulating the endurance of Hellenism in the Middle Ages. However, he criticized him for considering "the monarchy in Byzantium to be a *foreign element*, and the only national elements to be the people and the Church."⁸⁴ Five years later (1857), in his second major work, tellingly titled *Byzantine Studies*, Zambelios came up with a considerably altered scheme "with a view to a more Greek interpretation," as he phrased it. The Byzantine monarchy (and not just "medieval Hellenism") was rehabilitated and associated with the intellectual heritage of ancient times, and an organic unity was established between people (and language), religion and state:

83 See Koubourlis, "European Historiographical Influences," 60–61; Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque*, 313–314.

84 Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque*, 284–292; Christodoulou, "Byzantium in Nineteenth-Century Greek Historiography," 454.

The Byzantine Middle Age appears once more in its true colours as a system resting firmly on three dominant elements, the ancient Greek, the Christian and the Roman. . . . Instead of the fatalism that hastens the decline and fall of Rome, the operative force in the Byzantine state is the law of Greek intellectual and spiritual revival. This law prevails, to a greater or lesser degree, according to the extent to which each of the three traditions holds its proper place; the ancient Greek tradition uppermost, the Christian tradition in the middle and the Roman lowest.⁸⁵

In 1852 Zambelios forged the term “Helleno-Christian” (*Ellinochristianikos*) to capture this symbiosis, thus uniting two notions that were hitherto (especially during the Byzantine period itself) mutually exclusive. The central idea of “Helleno-Christianity” came to bridge paganism and Eastern Christianity, democratic Hellas and imperial Byzantium, Hellenism and Romanism, but also—in ideological terms—the two separated political worlds of “Modern Hellenism”: that of the “autochthones” (the inhabitants of the Greek Kingdom) and of the “heterochthones” (the Christian subjects of the Sultan).⁸⁶ In 1857 Zambelios firmly implanted the roots of modern Greece in medieval Greece. With this the tripartite scheme of ancient-medieval-modern Hellenism—the backbone of modern Greek historiography ever since—came into place:

The springs of modern Greece...break the surface in the time of Constantine and Theodosius; they seek a more direct and unimpeded channel from the time of Leo the Thracian (457–474) to that of Leo the Isaurian (717–741), and they become an irresistible current in the days of Basil the Macedonian (867–886) and his successors, and from that time onwards they flow straight forward to the revival or our own time.⁸⁷

The key place in the tripartite scheme was thus reserved for the “intermediary”—the “Byzantine traditions, [to which] Greece owes the attachment to religion, the transmission of love for the fatherland, and the preservation

85 Spyridon Zambelios, *Byzantinai meletai peri pēgōn neoellēnikēs ethnotētos apo H. achri I. ekatontaetēridos m. Ch.* (Athens: Nikolaidis Philadelphus, 1857), 33ff, quoted in Zakythinis, *The Making of Modern Greece*, 197.

86 Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque*, 107.

87 Zambelios, *Byzantinai meletai*, 62 ff, quoted in Zakythinis, *The Making of Modern Greece*, 197.

of language”—vital elements for the Greeks’ “happy return to an era of rehabilitation.”⁸⁸

The political implications of these historical speculations transpire compellingly from what D.A. Zakythinos called the mid-nineteenth century “daring vision of the universal Greek empire of the East.” According to Zambelios, this vision highlighted “the fourth age of Greece,” that is, its future:

If ever a New Greece is fated to arise from the ruins of Ancient Greece and Byzantium, two principles will be fused in the nation that will return to life—first, that of the old Greek tradition, bearing also the imprint of the earlier medieval period, and secondly, the principle of the later medieval doctrine of the Nation according to which all the various peoples which made up the Byzantine Orthodox world, when the later Middle Ages began in the ninth century at the time of Basil the Macedonian, will amalgamate to form a single political unit having the same religion.

Within this “great confederation of equal peoples,” Zambelios mused, “the complete fusion of racial elements” may be arrived at.⁸⁹

Zambelios never produced a major historical synthesis that would organically insert Byzantium into the flow of Greek history. That task was left to the Athens University professor of history Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, the creator of the Greek grand narrative. Paparrigopoulos elaborated at length on and fleshed out Zambelios’s tripartite framework, buttressed the national role of Byzantium—the “Greek Empire residing in Constantinople”—and placed this empire back into European history on the premise of the continuity and unity of Hellenism. His early writings from the mid-1840s, significantly enough, were still imbued with the negative late-Enlightenment attitude to Byzantium prevailing at that time. In his first book, *On the Settlement of Certain Slavic Tribes in the Peloponnese* (1843), he described the Byzantine period as the “darkest and most ignorant era,” a “barbaric epoch” and spoke reverently of Gibbon’s “marvellous writings.”⁹⁰ At that time he was convinced that the history of the Byzantine state was not coterminous with what he called the “medieval Greek history.” Therefore Byzantium was not an integral part of (his idea of) Greek history. “Medieval Greek history,” he wrote, “differs very essentially from

88 Spyridon Zambelios, “La poésie populaire en Grèce,” *Le Spectateur de l’Orient* 6 (1856), 238, quoted in Koubourlis, *La formation de l’histoire nationale grecque*, 113.

89 Quoted in Zakythinos, *The Making of Modern Greece*, 200.

90 Koubourlis, “European Historiographical Influences,” 54.

Byzantine history. It is therefore this medieval Greek history that we must teach in detail, not the Byzantine.”⁹¹

Paparrigopoulos’s first book was sparked by the compulsion to refute Fallmerayer. The anti-Slavic hysteria provoked by the Fallmerayer affair coincided, moreover, with the emergence of Bulgarian nationalism and the expansion of the anti-Patriarchalist movement—new phenomena that threatened the realization of the Great Idea and exacerbated the question of the position of the Slavs vis-à-vis the Greek nation. Language as a determinant of ethnicity could, for this reason, no longer serve as a reliable criterion in securing Greece’s political aims. That was the context shaping Paparrigopoulos’s ideas about the edifice of the national history of Greece and the Greeks—and one he saw as his duty to bear upon.

Bringing evidence of “the continuity of the Greek nation across history” was a critical undertaking in this direction. A notable aspect of Paparrigopoulos’s argument is that he did not try to refute the idea of the racial mixture resulting from the settlement of the Slavs. Reversing Fallmerayer’s thesis, however, he argued that the Slavs “were tamed by the Hellenic race and, having adopted its religion and language, they mixed with it.”⁹² As Ioannis Koubourlis has stated, given that the Greek intellectuals could not produce racial nationalism, they had to seek recourse in a nationalism that emphasized “cultural continuity” by connecting the modern Greeks with the ancient via the Byzantine Middle Ages. In an 1846 article the future “national historian” made this strategic choice graphically clear:

The question is not therefore to prove that the modern Hellenic nation descends in a direct line from Pericles and Philopoimen; the battle, as you can see, would have been not only impossible but also futile. What we will, what we have to prove historically is that from the mixture that had been produced and is still being produced between different tribes does not result, as it has been asserted, a brutal, inert and stupid mass, but a nation that contains in itself the elements of a great political existence and, more particularly, that the spirit of Hellenism perpetually animates this new outgrowth of the succession of centuries.⁹³

91 Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque*, 96. Paparrigopoulos at that time also considered the Macedonians to be a distinct nation (*ibid.*, 96–97).

92 Quoted in Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque*, 94.

93 “Introduction to the History of the Regeneration of the Greek People” (1846), quoted in Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque*, 95.

Paparrigopoulos's five-volume *History of the Greek Nation from the Most Ancient Times until the Present* (published between 1860 and 1874) brought these threads together—intellectual and political, domestic and foreign—in an all-encompassing synthesis. It lay at the core of the Greek historical canon and is considered by some to be “the most important intellectual achievement of nineteenth-century Greece,” which managed to “bring Byzantium and Kolletis's conception of the Great Idea together as components of the political culture of ‘Romantic Hellenism.’”⁹⁴ As in the case with the erstwhile Helladocentric discourse, the said culture was not just a “domestic” Greek product. Paparrigopoulos himself acknowledged his debt to several historians who had attempted to write comprehensive histories of the Greek nation from antiquity to the present: the aforementioned James Emerson, Johann Wilhelm Zinkeisen and George Finlay. For Zambelios as well, Johann Gustav Droysen (1808–1884), and German historicism more generally, was another major source of inspiration. As a student of the Hellenistic world, Droysen supplied Paparrigopoulos with numerous arguments about the spread of Hellenic civilization eastwards and, most crucially, with the key concept of the Greek national school of history: Hellenism, denoting in Droysen's (and in his student Otto Abel's) usage a “Hellenic genius,” a *Geist*, with a distinct historical trajectory.⁹⁵

Around the topos of Hellenism, continuously enfolding in time and acquiring a distinct meaning in each period, Paparrigopoulos constructed the monumental “unity” of Greek history. The latter appeared as a teleological succession of Hellenisms—First (Ancient/Classical) Hellenism, Macedonian Hellenism, Christian Hellenism, Medieval Hellenism (the Byzantine Empire), and Modern Hellenism (said to have begun in the thirteenth century). Each marked a specific mission and a specific contribution of the Greek nation to world history without, however, losing its innate identity. As Antonis Liakos has argued, “Paparrigopoulos used the theological concept of the Holy Trinity (the same essence in multiple expressions) as a metaphor for Hellenism: the uniqueness of the perennial nation amidst a multiplicity of temporary Hellenisms.”⁹⁶

94 Kitromilides, “On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism,” 28. For a summary of Paparrigopoulos's views, see his *Histoire de la civilisation hellénique* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1878).

95 Johann G. Droysen, *Geschichte Alexanders des Grossen* (Hamburg: Perthes, 1833); Johann G. Droysen, *Geschichte des Hellenismus*, 2 vols. (Hamburg: Perthes, 1836–1843). See Koubourlis, “European Historiographical Influences,” 60.

96 Liakos, “Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece,” 211.

Among these various Hellenisms, the Byzantine (or medieval) was not simply one among equals, but the core of Greek history: “to the Byzantine state we owe the conservation of our language, our religion and more generally of our nationality”; “that kingdom saved us from the Slavs, Bulgars, Arabs, Franks.”⁹⁷ Paparrigopoulos pinpointed the outright dangers ensuing from the neglect of this part of “Greek” history: as long as “[the Greeks] talk of [their] medieval fathers in the same way as [they] do about foreigners and recognize as [their] true ancestors only a few like Leonidas and Themistocles,” they abdicate their “will to govern the East” and of being “the sovereigns of a very vast country,” limiting their historical rights to a tiny state—“and this at a time when the Serbs and the Bulgarians . . . are assiduously pressing their historical claims.”⁹⁸ Paparrigopoulos thus made clear that his interest in the Middle Ages and Byzantium was guided by the necessity to lend historical and intellectual legitimacy to Greek irredentism—a commitment the Greek state duly rewarded.⁹⁹

For Paparrigopoulos, Byzantine history became *identical* with national Greek history:

The Greek nation, after its subjugation to the Romans, not only did not lose its language and its traditions, but perpetuated itself by spreading this language and these traditions throughout the whole East. Thus the eastern part of the Roman empire was for a long time entirely Greek; and

97 Quoted in Kitromilides, “On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism,” 28; Christodoulou, “Byzantium in Nineteenth-Century Greek Historiography,” 458. Volumes 3 and 4 of Paparrigopoulos’s *History* covered the Middle Ages until 1204 (the fall of Constantinople to the Latins), while the last volume covered the entire period from 1204 until the War of Independence (1821).

98 Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, *Istoria tou ellinikou ethnous* III (1963), xxii; quoted in Koubourlis, *La formation de l’histoire nationale grecque*, 30. Paschalis Kitromilides contends that as a project for the resurrection of the Byzantine Empire in the shape of a large Greek state, the Great Idea was a late nineteenth-century development and the product of political manipulations of Paparrigopoulos’s theories (“On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism,” 33). He thus seems to play down the extent to which Paparrigopoulos himself helped legitimate, historically and ideologically, this imperial (and imperialist) vision.

99 The Greek state supported large purchases, successive reprints and new editions of the *History* and promoted its distribution (as it did Paparrigopoulos’s schoolbooks), funded its translation into French and offered its author several important positions in state institutions. See Christodoulou, “Byzantium in Nineteenth-Century Greek Historiography,” 456.

after the fall of the western part of the Roman Empire... it became a separate kingdom in the East; that kingdom became necessarily Greek.¹⁰⁰

With a good deal of familiarity, he called Byzantium “our medieval kingdom” and “our monarchy.” He called its rulers “our emperors” and “our medieval forefathers.” In this identification there was barely a place for non-Greeks, if not as “races” then certainly as creative elements, because, as Cyril Mango noted, “the essence of Byzantium is seen to reside in its Greekness and its value as an object of study in the survival of that same Greekness, often threatened and obscured, yet always able to reassert itself.”¹⁰¹ But for Paparrigopoulos Byzantium was even more than that, for in it, “polytheism has been replaced by the unity of Christianity; the variety of dialects by the unity of language; the different tribes by the unity of the nation. Fortified in this three-dimensional panoply, the Greek people is struggling to recover its political unity.”¹⁰²

What Paparrigopoulos came up with, therefore, was not simply a Romantic elegy or a lament for Byzantium. His *History* was, in the sympathetic words of Paschalis Kitromilides, “a Greek epic”: it conveyed an appreciation of “the great empire’s most admirable achievement: the unification of the Greek nation... the realization in the bosom of the Christian Empire of that most noble and most elusive of social ideals, national unity, solidarity and cohesion. That greatest of Byzantium’s accomplishments....”¹⁰³ Rather than a shameful incarnation of foreign domination and decay, as the enlighteners had it, Byzantium was now presented as an age of liberty and unity for the Greek nation. Paparrigopoulos thus consecrated the Byzantine Empire as the model and forerunner of the modern Greek state, providing a standard for unity and expansion.

The remarkable outcome of Paparrigopoulos’s *tour de force* was to canonize Byzantium in Greek political thought as “the *telos* to which the Greek state and Greek destinies were expected to strive to approximate” and to establish the

100 Quoted in Roxane D. Argyropoulos, *Les intellectuels grecs à la recherche de Byzance* (1860–1912) (Athens: Institut de Recherches Néohelléniques, 2001), 43.

101 Cyril Mango, “Discontinuity with the Classical Past in Byzantium, in *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition*, eds. M.E. Mullet and R.D. Scott (Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine Studies), 1981, 48.

102 Quoted in Paschalis Kitromilides, “The Dialectic of Intolerance: Ideological Dimensions of Ethnic Conflict,” *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 6, no. 4 (1979), 13.

103 Kitromilides, “On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism,” 30. Kitromilides argues that Paparrigopoulos’s *History* supplied a model for the other Balkan historiographical traditions, particularly for the multi-volume historical synthesis of Nicolae Iorga and Vasil Zlatarski (*ibid.*). This issue will be discussed further down.

image of the Byzantine Empire (before 1204) as “an ideal territorial and geographical model which was felt in Greek political culture to be a pointer to the future destiny and mission of Greece.”¹⁰⁴

The institutionalization of Paparrigopoulos’s scheme did not pass without debate and resistance. The historian Theodoros Manoussis refuted the thesis that Byzantine history was part of the national history of Greece, while Pavlos Kalligas questioned the criteria (language and religion) Paparrigopoulos had used to prove the Hellenism of the Byzantines as well as the connection between Byzantines and modern Greeks. Two other historians, Georges Theophilos and Ioannis Kokkonis, provided evidence about the Christian but not uniquely Greek character of Byzantium.¹⁰⁵ Most substantive was the critique by Dionyssios Therianos (1834–1897), a Greek scholar living in Trieste, whose detached location may have contributed to the sobriety of his views about the perennial nature of Hellenism. Following Manoussis’s theses, Therianos considered the expression “Byzantine Hellenism” to be unconvincing, as it mixed two historically different phenomena. For him the history of the Byzantine Empire and that of the Greek nation were totally distinct, even if he acknowledged the changes that Christianity brought to the Greeks, and argued that the diffusion of Hellenic culture was one of the Byzantine emperors’ lesser preoccupations.¹⁰⁶ However, Paparrigopoulos’s supporters far outnumbered his critics, and the debate had no lasting consequences other than the efforts to provide further “evidence” for his imposing construction.

The dissemination of the new version of Greek history, particularly via education, was a lengthier process. Paparrigopoulos’s 1852 history textbook set the stage for the gradual “assimilation” of Byzantium, but until 1880 this did not entail re-evaluation of Byzantium’s role in and contribution to national and global history. That came about only after 1882, when Paparrigopoulos’s scheme was officially adopted by the new school curriculum, and Byzantium began to be appreciated for preserving the “Greek nationality,” safeguarding and transmitting ancient civilization to its “barbarous neighbors,” and

104 Kitromilides, “On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism,” 31. As far as the modern Greeks’ political model is concerned, Paparrigopoulos argued that they had followed the Athenians in constructing a parliamentary government but that the Byzantine monarchical form had saved them from the ancients’ disunity (K. Paparrigopoulos, *Istorikai Pragmatiai* [1889], 240–253).

105 Argyropoulos, *Les intellectuels grecs*, 44–45.

106 Ibid., 46. Yet another historian, Konstantinos Sathas, suggested that ancient paganism had survived during the Byzantine period, and the Christianization of the Peloponnese was completed only under the Ottoman domination (ibid., 47).

becoming “a guide and teacher of Renaissance Europe.”¹⁰⁷ Yet even in 1893 the state commission for textbook evaluation found it necessary to press for eliminating the convention of presenting the Byzantine state “as an abode of criminals or the insane.” It is also significant that until World War I, national history education assigned to Byzantium the role of “a bridge via which the spirit of [the modern Greeks’] immortal ancestors is transmitted—through the preservation of language—or . . . a hoop linking the history of the descendants to that of the ancestors,” rather than of a creator of proper heritage.¹⁰⁸ The latter portrayal would only gradually take shape in the following decades.

On a different level, the incorporation of Byzantium into the national narrative can be seen as emancipating Greek history from a view about the nature of the Greeks that had been imposed on them by European classicism. But it was also an attempt to redefine Greece’s contribution to Western civilization. The appropriation of Byzantium was thus at once an act of resistance to the Western canon of history and of the desire to participate in it. Entire historical eras, located outside the Western cultural canon and originally suppressed by the Greeks, were now idealized as distinct cultural features and as contributions to universal civilization.¹⁰⁹

To recapitulate: between 1850s and 1880s the Hellenization of Byzantium, mainly via language and the “transcending” assimilative powers of the Greek race, was completed, and by the 1880s the Greek historical canon postulating the continuity of Greek history was firmly in place. For about a century the basic premises of the scheme—at least in the official version of Greek history—would remain intact. Individual scholars and academic schools contributed some bricks to the tripartite edifice of the canon but did not change the overall construction and Byzantium’s central place in it. Indeed, much of the subsequent scholarship was undertaken with the purpose of reinforcing this edifice.

The forging of the Greek national narrative illustrates the embroilment of political and intellectual currents. The choice of Byzantium or classical Greece as historical references was a dilemma originating not in historiography but in politics and ideology. The new national tasks required—and received—new histories. The doctrine of national unity and continuity is a classic case of an ideological construct, in the Mannheimian sense, in that it veiled profound or

107 Koulouri, *Dimensions idéologiques*, 339–340, 349–350, 359–361.

108 *Ibid.*, 365–366.

109 Liakos, “Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece,” 207–209.

even irreconcilable structural contradictions and cultural antinomies between classical Greece, medieval Christian Byzantium and the Greek nation-state.¹¹⁰

As Christodoulou puts it, “Paparrigopoulos’s unified tripartite schema of national history was overwhelmingly successful on one level: it is how Greeks understand their past today.”¹¹¹ But in another sense it met with failure: the Asia Minor Disaster in 1922 forever buried the Greeks’ vision of a restored “Greek Empire centered on Constantinople.”

...

During the first half of the nineteenth century, medieval Bulgarian history attracted an increasing number of writers. The growing engagement with the medieval past and the Byzantine Empire sprang from pressing questions of the Bulgarians’ present and future that involved the definition of their identity, the outlining of their political borders, and the delimitation of their past. As elsewhere in the region (and beyond), these were questions formulated in the context of the national history that was then under intensive construction.

This mounting interest in the medieval past brought few changes in the general conception of Byzantium set by Paisiy and disseminated through transcripts of his *History*. In contrast to the Greek case, there was a neat continuity between the Enlightenment and Romantic interpretations, the main “difference” being the amplification of anti-Greek associations. Quite suggestive of the actual interaction involved is the fact that most of this historical literature was produced by students of Greek schools (the first Bulgarian-language schools opened only in the 1820s), and some of it was even written in Greek. While advocating the knowledge of Greek as a “noble and quite useful” language, Christaki Pavlovich (1804–1848) reproduced almost literally Paisiy’s narrative: he held “Greek” perfidy and guile responsible for past Bulgarian military defeats, and he attributed the Bulgarian state’s fall to the Ottomans to “Greek treachery.”¹¹²

Ivan Seliminski (1799–1867) was a prominent intellectual and political thinker of the first half of the nineteenth century, a Greek student and par-

110 Paschalis Kitromilides extends this observation to the social and geographical level of the national unity doctrine as well: Paschalis Kitromilides, “‘Imagined Communities’ and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans,” *European History Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1989), 167–168.

111 Christodoulou, “Byzantium in Nineteenth-Century Greek Historiography,” 459.

112 Nadya Danova, “Obrazi na gǎrtsi i zapadnoevropeytsi v bălgarskata knizhnina prez XVIII–XIX vek,” in *Balkanskite identichnosti v bălgarskata kultura*, ed. Nikolay Aretov (Sofia: Kralitsa Mab, 2003), 102–103, 107.

ticipant in the Greek War of Independence. His historical analyses (written in Greek) illustrate the close engagement with contemporary Greek writings, in reference to which the Bulgarian historical narrative began to be fleshed out. Seliminski (like many authors before and after him) considered the Slavs to be the autochthonous population in a territory stretching from Illyria and Moravia to Galicia and Russia, whose “political organization” dated back to 1000 BCE. He affiliated the Bulgarians with these “hundred and twenty million Slavs” bound together by “common nationality, similar language and religion”—a clear replica of (and counterforce to) the “Hellenized East.”¹¹³ Following this line of argument, Seliminski claimed that the Bulgarians’ assaults on Byzantium and occupation of Byzantine lands were not barbarian invasions but acts of “liberation of their enslaved brothers” and punishment for the Byzantine greed for expansion.¹¹⁴ Seliminski questioned whether the greatness of classical antiquity could be attributed to the Greeks. According to him, the ancient Greeks had pirated the achievements of the neighboring “barbarian” peoples—Indians, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Thracians and Scythians—whose pupils they were. Therefore “Greece is not a teacher of the West, but only a bridge, via which civilization moved from East to West, from Asia to Europe.” Likewise, the Byzantine Empire was “Roman, not Greek,” since it was inhabited by many peoples with equal rights and its emperors were not Greek. Orthodox Christianity as well was the shared patrimony of all who professed it, and its dissemination owed little to the Ecumenical Patriarchate.¹¹⁵ These views were evidently informed by the contemporary Greek interpretations but were shaped in reaction to them and adjusted to serve a specific subversive claim. Notably, Seliminski was also the first Bulgarian writer to subscribe fully to, and even “improve” on, Fallmerayer’s theory by stating that “there is no pure Greek nation . . . but a rabble of Egyptians, Assyrians, Arabs, Italians, Slavs . . . proved by archaeology and history.”¹¹⁶ In the following decades, as we will shortly see, the thesis about Byzantium’s non-Greek character would be superseded by the opposite one—with an equally “national” agenda in mind.

113 Biblioteka “D-r Iv. Seliminski” (trans. by P. Chilev and E. Pazheva), vol. 3 (1905), 99.

114 Nikolay Kochev, ed., *D-r Ivan Seliminski. Izbrani sǎchineniya* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1979), 158–161.

115 Biblioteka “D-r Iv. Seliminski,” vol. 2 (1904), 96; vol. 5 (1907), 16–17; Kochev, ed., *D-r Ivan Seliminski*, 284–288.

116 Quoted in Yura Konstantinova, “Myths and Pragmatism in the Political Ideology of Ivan Seliminski,” in *Greek-Bulgarian Relations in the Age of National Identity Formation*, eds. Paschalis M. Kitromilides and Anna Tabaki (Athens: Institute of Neohellenic Research, 2010), 174.

Since the 1840s, when Bulgarian resistance to the ecclesiastical control of the Ecumenical Patriarchate began to intensify, condemnations of not only the Greek priesthood but everything Greek increased visibly. The Bulgarian projections of the confrontation with the Patriarchate back to the Byzantine past were direct responses to a thesis already incorporated in the Greek national narrative: that Orthodox Christianity and the Orthodox Church—the most tangible Byzantine legacy—played a crucial role in preserving Greek identity under the Ottomans and preparing the advent of Greek independence. That the Greek national historians extolled the “national clergy” for safeguarding the Greek identity of its flock during the dark centuries of the “Ottoman yoke” was barely original—all national historiographies developed almost identical narratives in this sense. But they also insisted that the history of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, under whose jurisdiction all Ottoman Orthodox Christians were placed, was inseparably entwined with the national and political history of the Greeks.¹¹⁷ The growing affinities, from the 1850s onwards, between the Greek state’s expansionist scheming and the efforts of the Patriarchate of Constantinople to curtail the nationalist aspirations among its flock, especially in Macedonia, added to the identification between “Greek” Church and Greek irredentism, past and present, in the minds of the Bulgarian patriots.

This explains in large measure why in nineteenth-century Bulgaria, Orthodox Christianity was not perceived as a Byzantine “gift”—as an element of a shared great civilization and a link to the symbolic capital of the Eastern Roman Empire.¹¹⁸ Next to the central place assigned to religion in the emerging national consciousness, the appropriation of the Byzantine Orthodox tradition by the Greeks left little room for the Bulgarians’ identification with it. The reaction was a replay, in a practical sense, of the Greek precedent and, in an ideological sense, of the one established by the medieval Bulgarian state: a “national” Church as a token of sovereignty and a religion bolstering national, not ecumenical, identity. In the 1840s one of the leading Bulgarian intellectuals, Konstantin Fotinov (ca. 1785–1858), coined the expression “Bulgarian religion” (*bolgarskoe veroizpovedanie*)—a formula closely paralleling the contemporary Greek notion of “Helleno-Christianity.”¹¹⁹ There was a similar logic to the idea

117 Koulouri, *Dimensions idéologiques*, 394–395.

118 On the obstacles to accepting the cultural transfers from Byzantium as a way of partaking in its legacy, see Dessislava Lilova, “L’héritage partagé? Byzance, Fallmerayer et la formation de l’historiographie bulgare au XIX^e s.,” in *Héritage de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est*, eds. Delouis et al., 325–327.

119 Nadya Danova, *Konstantin Georgiev Fotinov v kulturnoto i ideyno-politicheskoto razvitiie na Balkanite prez XIX vek* (Sofia: BAN, 1994), 317.

of the “Slavization” of Cyril and Methodius, the Byzantine missionaries commissioned by the Byzantine emperor to devise an alphabet for the Slavs as a vehicle for spreading Christianity among them. Since the ultimate outcome of their (and their disciples’) mission was the adoption by the Bulgarian state and Church of Slavonic as the official language, the two Byzantine missionaries were hailed as Slavs and “Bulgarian enlighteners”—as having, in the words of Petko Slaveykov, “originated from the Bulgarian people” and performed an apostolic mission on its behalf.¹²⁰ Byzantium’s two major cultural legacies to the Bulgarians—the religion and the Cyrillic alphabet—were thus fully alienated from it and assigned to the national patrimony. The logic of nationality, where religion and language played the key role, largely predetermined this outcome.

The political radicalization of the Bulgarian intelligentsia on the eve of and especially after the Crimean War (1853–1856) stabilized the image of Byzantium as a hostile foreign power. Now some new elements appeared. Byzantium was no longer merely the political rival and oppressor of the Bulgarians. Byzantium and its cultural influence were now held responsible for corrupting the Bulgarian national character and causing deep cleavages in Bulgarian society. Vasil Aprilov (1789–1847), a leading national activist, and Georgi Rakovski (1821–1867), another graduate of Greek schools, a historian, writer and revolutionary, were the first to formulate forcefully this thesis. According to Rakovski, the Christianization of the Bulgarians in the second half of the ninth century and the intermarriages between the Bulgarian and the Byzantine courts led to de-nationalization and social disruption. Since then, along with the Greek mitres and titles, “contagious luxury and debauchery crept into Bulgaria.” The Bulgarian nation gradually began to deteriorate, and intrigues and discord came to reign; only the villagers preserved “the almost primeval innocent nature of the old life.”¹²¹ Lyuben Karavelov (1835–1879), a national-liberal writer and influential journalist, vehemently denied that the Greeks had any right to deem themselves heirs of the ancient Hellenes and often made analogies between Byzantium and the Ottoman Empire in terms of “the opulence of the court . . . the anarchy, despotism, corruption and hubris [of the sultans].” The Bulgarians and the Serbs had led heroic “liberating” wars against “the Byzantine plague, which was infecting everything around it.” Like Rakovski,

120 Lilova, “L’héritage partagé?,” 326. The “Slav origin” of Cyril and Methodius was a unanimously shared assumption at that time and was rarely questioned later.

121 Nadya Danova, “Problemăt za natsionalnata identichnost v uchebnikarskata knizhnina, publitsistikata i istoriografiata prez XVIII–XIX vek,” in *Balkanskite identichnosti*, ed. Aretov, 69–70.

Karavelov did not consider the Bulgarian medieval tsars to have espoused Bulgarian identity and stated that only their pre-Christian predecessors and the “simple ploughmen” had the right to claim it. “Anyone would be disgusted,” he wrote, “by the Byzantine habits and customs that were implanted in our semi-Byzantine tsars.”¹²²

Another major step in this direction was made by Hristo Botev (1848–1876), a poet, essayist and radical democrat. For Botev, Bulgarian medieval history in general, and especially the time of Tsar Simeon, when the First Bulgarian Kingdom reached its political and cultural peak, were “our abominable bygone history.” Neither it nor the medieval Bulgarian tsars embodied Bulgarian identity:

Take a look at the history of the Bulgarian kingdom from Boris [the ruler who adopted Christianity from Byzantium as the official religion in 864] until its fall under the Turks [1396], and you will see that the whole historical-political past of our nation was almost entirely purely Byzantine, that it was inhabited solely by tsars, boyars and clerics, while the people itself was always separated by its deep public morality from the debauchery of its government, debauchery that, along with Christianity, slipped into the higher strata of the population.¹²³

With Christianization the alienation of the Bulgarian elite from the commoners reached its zenith, since the Bulgarian people

was forced to become infected by the sickness of the then rotten and lecherous Byzantium. The constant fight for survival, the [establishment of] family relations of the Bulgarian tsars with the Byzantine emperors, and the adoption of the then-Orthodox-idiotic [*sic*] culture of Byzantium, on the one hand, gave our people no time to develop its national character and create a firm foundation for its future and, on the other hand, detached a part of it and turned it into a Bulgarian aristocracy [that became] notorious for its profligacy and lecherousness. . . . At

122 Lyuben Karavelov, *Săbrani săchineniya*, vol. 7 (Sofia: Bălgarski pisatel, 1967), 227, 321, 474–476; vol. 8, 528–529. See also Danova, “Problemăt za natsionalnata identichnost,” 72–76. Karavelov also upheld the theory that the Slav population was autochthonous since “time immemorial,” in “Thrace, Macedonia and Danubian Bulgaria,” Fallmerayer’s thesis and the Bulgarian origins of Emperor Justinian and, of course, of Cyril and Methodius.

123 Hristo Botev, “Narodăt. Vchera, dnes i utre,” *Duma* 1, no. 2 (June 25, 1971), 3 (Hristo Botev, *Săbrani săchineniya*, ed. Michail Dimitrov, vol. 2 [Sofia: Bălgarski pisatel, 1958], 41).

the time of Simeon, that is, the time of Bulgaria's golden age, Bulgaria reached not only the peak of its glory and might, but also the apex of its deadly disease.¹²⁴

The thesis about the split between the elite and the people as a result of the former's "Byzantinization" occupied a key place in the emerging historical (and identitarian) discourse and was propagated by not only the radical but also the moderate wing of the national movement. Like Botev, Petko Slaveykov (1827–1895), an emblematic figure of the Bulgarian cultural revival, believed that from Tsar Simeon and the Bulgarian "Golden Age" onwards, the distance between the democratically organized Slavic communities and the increasingly Hellenized and alienated elite was growing to reach "that ugly anomaly that we see towards the end of our state life": the tsars and nobles, who "had relinquished the people's life," perished under the yataghans of the Ottomans.¹²⁵ This sweeping historical scenario pursued two quite obvious contemporary objectives. On the one hand, it was intended to allude to the ruinous effect that the modern Bulgarian elite's "Hellenization" had on the community. On the other hand, it implied that the Slavs, not the Greeks, were the harbingers of the ideas of equality and democracy and as such were destined to lead humanity towards modernity.¹²⁶

But there was also a third, supposedly less obvious, contemporary reference Botev had in mind when denouncing Byzantium—the effects of the Western European influence on the Bulgarian "self." "Just as by adopting Byzantine culture we displayed ourselves as monkeys and came to be enslaved by Asiatic barbarians," he warned, "so by blindly emulating Europe we will reach the state of being enslaved by ourselves." The Bulgarians first needed to free themselves from "the new Byzantium"—the Ottoman Empire—and "only then borrow from Europe that which we need . . ." ¹²⁷ This striking analogy between Byzantine spiritual domination and that of the West, as we will see, would enjoy wide circulation and receive meta-historical support in the radicalized anti-liberal environment of the interwar period.

124 Hristo Botev, "Izlechima li e nashata bolest," *Zname* 1, no. 11 (March 16, 1875), 22 (Botev, *Săbrani săchineniya*, vol. 2, 142).

125 Petko R. Slaveykov, "Polozhenieto," *Makedonia* 3 (March–April 1869); cited in Desislava Lilova, *Vāzrozhdenskite znacheniya na natsionalnoto ime* (Sofia: Prosveta, 2003), 251–252.

126 Lilova, *Vāzrozhdenskite znacheniya*, 253. Both these themes became commonplace in the Bulgarian political press in the 1870s.

127 Botev, "Izlechima li e nashata bolest," loc. cit., 141.

The interpretations discussed so far were not those of professional historians, but they had a decisive impact on both the historical consciousness of the contemporary Bulgarians and the historical narrative under construction. Romantic historiography, as epitomized by the first generation of trained Bulgarian historians, adopted and elaborated on most of these themes, drawing on the up-to-date historiographical approaches, mainly in Russia, where this generation had received its education. Spiridon Palaouзов (1818–1872), the first professional Bulgarian historian trained in the Romantic tradition, expounded the thesis of the disastrous influence of Byzantium and its “ideology”—“Byzantinism” (a term he was the first to use in Bulgarian history-writing)—on not only the medieval Bulgarian state but the South Slavs generally. Their connections with Byzantium,

as a focal point of diverse and unusual elements of citizenship . . . operated to the detriment of their nationality and independent development . . . Are there still gentlemen who . . . believe that decrepit Byzantinism could contain in its bosom the seeds of its future revival? Did the millennial empire . . . ever try to cultivate in itself at least a fraction of those principles on which the edifice of modern civilization grew? Byzantium, set up by a special commandment of God . . . remained immovable, and this immobility it transmitted completely to Turkish Istanbul, the center of the Ottoman Empire, which has preserved intact the character of medieval Byzantinism.¹²⁸

In his book *The Romanian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* (1858), Palaouзов made almost explicit the connection between the Byzantine Empire, the economic ruin and political venality of the Romanian states under the Phanariots—the “conduits” of Byzantinism—and “the economic and spiritual enslavement” of the Bulgarians imposed by the new Phanariots in his own time.¹²⁹ At the same time, as an acquaintance of Jakob Fallmerayer from the time of his university studies in Munich in 1842–1843, Palaouзов translated some of Fallmerayer’s writings and lent full support to his “Slavic theory.”

The history textbooks reiterated the basic elements of this anti-Byzantinist discourse: the presentation of Byzantium as inhabited by “Greeks”; the harmful impact of Byzantinism on the Bulgarian political and spiritual elite, ultimately leading to subjugation by the Turks; the characterization of the

128 Quoted in Hristo Kolarov and Vasil Gyuzelev, “Spiridon N. Palaouзов kato istorik na sred-novekovna Bălgariya,” *Vekove* 1, no. 6, 1972, 56.

129 Spiridon N. Palaouзов, *Izbrani trudove*, vol. 11 (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1977), 408–428.

Byzantine domination of the eleventh and twelfth centuries as a “Byzantine yoke”; and the treatment of the peasants as the only guardians of the “purity” of the national traditions and mores.¹³⁰

All in all, by the second half of the nineteenth century, the openly hostile image of “Byzantinism” was firmly in place. This was a process whereby Bulgarian and Greek historiography mutually, albeit not symmetrically, constituted and reinforced each other. The Bulgarian late-Enlightenment and Romantic narrative traced the origins of the contemporary Greek-Bulgarian struggle for dominance in the Balkans back to the Byzantine era. In time the historiographical myth that Byzantine history was exclusively Greek history was adopted by many Bulgarian scholars in confirmation of their attitude to Byzantium as a Greek power hostile to their nascent nation-state. It set the framework for their interpretations of the Bulgarians’ cultural and political relations with Byzantium in the past and their strivings for independence in the present. Eventually, the Greeks’ imperious appropriation of the Empire’s cultural legacy and their insistence on the medieval roots of the Great Idea reinforced the Bulgarian writers’ rejection of all things Byzantine which Enlightenment thought had originally spurred. Petko R. Slaveykov went so far as to praise the Ottomans for “breaking the neck of proud Byzantium and putting an end, in political life at least, to the Greeks’ aspiration to destroy the Bulgarians.”¹³¹

It is therefore no exaggeration to state that the Bulgarian national historical narrative, with its strong grounding in the medieval era, was largely forged against the backdrop of and in response to the Greeks’ self-identification with the Byzantines. The Hellenization of Byzantium by the Greeks and its Grecization by the Bulgarians were two closely linked processes. The Bulgarians sought to thwart the contemporary national-political claims of the Greeks as derived from the Byzantine legacy less by contesting the Eastern Empire’s Greek character than by downplaying its historical role and prestige—a ploy that drew heavily on Western European Enlightenment imagery—and by

130 Danova, “Obrazi na gärtsi i zapadnoevropeytsi,” 122–123.

131 Petko R. Slaveykov, “Minaloto, segashnoto i budushteto,” *Makedoniya* 3, no. 3 (December 14, 1868), in Petko R. Slaveykov, *Sächineniya*, vol. 6 (Sofia: Bälgarski pisatel, 1980), 176. As a latter-day Bulgarian Byzantinist, Ivan Duychev, wrote: “This lack of objectivity became the main reason for never treating Byzantium, its history and civilization as a truly scientific subject and recognizing all that which the Slavs owe to it in their secular development” (Ivan Duychev, “Les études byzantines chez les Slaves méridionaux et occidentaux depuis le xvii^e siècle,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 [1966], 73–74).

contriving a rival medieval imperial model, that of the Bulgarian kingdom. The identification of the Byzantines with the Greeks (and the Turks) facilitated the transfer of unpleasant qualities from one group to the other. But it also prevented the nineteenth-century Bulgarians from capitalizing on the benefits they had reaped from having been part of the Byzantine ecumene. Bulgaria, the most heavily Byzantinized Balkan country, ended up as the fiercest critic of Byzantium.

The only attempt at appropriating the Byzantine legacy was prompted by the “findings” of Fallmerayer. It is hardly surprising that the Bulgarian national elite took advantage of the opportunity to indicate that “Byzantium owed its mightiness to people with Greek names but Slav blood.”¹³² The scenario was one of a classical zero-sum game: what was taken from the Greeks was bestowed on the Bulgarians. Denying the national endurance of the Greeks was meant to boost Slav vigor and power, and a number of (Hellenized) “Slav” emperors, patriarchs and military leaders (most conspicuously Constantine the Great, Justinian and Belisarius) took the place of the “Greek.” Such was the balance sheet emerging from the historical writings of leading national figures like Vasil Aprilov, Petko Slaveykov, Georgi Rakovski, Marin Drinov and Dragan Manchoy.¹³³

The latter scenario, however, was haunted by an intrinsic defect: apart from the fact that Byzantium was never, at the time or later, accepted as an unequivocal civilizational model, the crucial question that its “Slavic character” raised was how to explain the continuous wars that the Bulgarian kingdom waged against it—epic wars that, as already noted, served not only to assert the existence of a submerged repository of military might and national energy but also to mobilize the Bulgarians against the socially more powerful and culturally self-confident modern Greeks. (An additional “defect” was the apparent assimilability of the Slavs, who had “rejuvenated” the Greek *ethnos* at the cost of losing their Slav identity.)¹³⁴ Bolstered by the magisterial scheme of Zambelios and Paparrigopoulos, the “Grecization” of the Byzantine Empire in the Bulgarian historical writings since Paisiy had a firm nationalist logic and rationale. The Slav “genes” of some eminent Byzantines and the abundance of Slav blood in the veins of the Byzantine commoners would often be mentioned, but the overall “Greek” complexion of the Byzantine state and culture

132 Lilova, *Vāzrozhdenskite znachenia*, 222. Fallmerayer’s theory was propagated by direct translations in the press and by those of his Russian followers, most notably Alexander Hilferding, which also found their way into the school textbooks (*ibid.*).

133 See Danova, “Problemāt za natsionalnata identichnost,” 47–67.

134 Lilova, *Vāzrozhdenskite znachenia*, 222–223.

would not be questioned. With the exception of the interwar historian Petăr Mutařchiev, until after World War II the Bulgarian historians, unlike their Romanian and Serbian counterparts, were not so interested in proving that Byzantium was as much “theirs” as it was “Greek.” Instead, they sought to transpose the “defects” of the Empire, as contrived by the “Europeans,” onto the modern Greeks. For the Bulgarian historical narrative, Byzantium’s ethnic and cultural “strangeness” was instrumental: it made it possible simultaneously to present the medieval confrontation with the Empire as a national one and to justify the contemporary resistance against the “de-nationalizing” policies of the Greeks and “their” Patriarchate. Here we can see the curious linkage of the same (false) argument—that of the Greek identity of the Byzantine Empire—with two warring national causes and the instrumentalization of the same thesis by two conflicting national narratives.

The reverse impact of the Bulgarian perceptions on the Greek historical narrative was less the result of scholarly interpretations than of political realities. Before the mid-nineteenth century the Bulgarians were still perceived as posing no threat to the “irresistible force” of Hellenism, so Greek historical literature barely touched upon them. They were either mentioned briefly under the category of the (tame and hard-working, yet uncivilized) “Slavs” or treated with indifference.¹³⁵ In the early 1850s Zambelios and Paparrigopoulos remained mute on the history of conflicts between Byzantium and the medieval Bulgarian states and preferred to discuss the assimilative power and cultural “superiority” of “Byzantine Hellenism” vis-à-vis the “barbarian elements” and the common struggles of Greeks and Bulgarians against the Latin West. The Bulgarians and the Romanians were seen as the “adopted children” of the “Hellenic nation” in both its historical past and political present.¹³⁶ (The Serbs already had a state since 1830 and were therefore ignored.) The Greek public and scholarly world began to “discover” the Bulgarians as a rival during the late 1850s, in the wake of the Crimean War and in the midst of the new phase of the Eastern Question and the growth of the Bulgarian movement for ecclesiastical

135 Gunnar Hering, “Die Bulgaren in den Schriften griechischer Intellektueller in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts,” *Müncher Zeitschrift für Balkankunde* 3 (1980), 47–66; Dimitris Livanios, “Christians, Heroes and Barbarians: Serbs and Bulgarians in the Modern Greek Historical Imagination (1602–1950),” in *Greece and the Balkans: Identities, Perceptions and Cultural Encounters since the Enlightenment*, ed. Dimitris Tziouvas (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 71–75.

136 Ionnis Koubourlis, “Les Bulgares dans les premiers textes de Constantinos Paparrigopoulos et de Spyridon Zambelios,” in *Greek-Bulgarian Relations*, eds. Kitromilides and Tabaki, 137–141, 144.

independence. Paparrigopoulos's *History* marshaled this new attitude by transforming the once-submissive Bulgarians into national enemies of the Hellenic nation, who had provoked incessant conflicts and wars against the medieval bastion of Hellenism, Byzantium. In fact, the increasingly assertive nationalist claims of the Bulgarians (and the Slavs) help explain Paparrigopoulos's re-evaluation of Byzantium.¹³⁷ Following the ecclesiastical schism (1872) and the annexation of Eastern Rumelia by the Bulgarian Principality (1885), the Bulgarians definitively replaced the Turks as the prime enemies of the Greeks. Their alienation from the community of modern Hellenism justified their expulsion from the one-time "people of the *Romaioi*," turning it into a purely "Greek people." In 1877 the first Greek history of medieval Bulgaria, written by N. Kokkonis, set the stage for a new historiographical era with a long future. The book described Bulgarian medieval history as an endless series of murders and acts of pillaging and destruction, and the Bulgarians as lacking "national spirit"—a "deficit" that proved particularly hurtful to their budding national awareness. Henceforth the contention that the Bulgarians lacked a sense of nationality and that their nationalism was defective would become a recurrent theme in Greek historiography.¹³⁸ Efforts to refute this contention would propel much of the "scientific" Bulgarian historiography starting in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

...

Greek-Serbian relations in the nineteenth century presented a different picture. The Serbs' political emancipation, contemporaneous with the Greek one, was not perceived as harming Greece's interests, and Serbian irredentism did not clash seriously with Greek irredentism; if anything, Belgrade's anti-Bulgarian position on the Macedonian question drew the two countries closer to each other. Antonios Spiliotopoulos, the author of the first Greek history of Serbia (1912), noted that "there is nothing that divides the two nations" and that their accord "has never, until today, been seriously harmed by the medieval raids of Stefan Dušan against Byzantium or any other historical misdeed."¹³⁹ Consequently, Greek and Serbian historiographies never experienced a major confrontation on the battlefield of the medieval past comparable to the Greek-

137 Ibid., 142–143. On this connection see also above.

138 Livanios, "Christians, Heroes and Barbarians," 76–78.

139 Ibid., 79. See also Basil C. Gounaris, "Constructing and Deconstructing a Common Balkan Past in Nineteenth-Century Greece," in *Developing Cultural Identity in the Balkans: Convergence vs. Divergence*, eds. Raymond Detrez and Pieter Plat (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2005), 205.

Bulgarian one, even though Dušan posed no less of a threat to the “Greek empire” and showed no less ambition to hold its reins than the Bulgarian tsars did. This strange difference indicates once more the politically charged approach to Byzantine history and the considerable weight of particular political expedencies.

The central theme of Romantic Serbian historiography, closely analogous to the Bulgarian historiography of that time, was the rise, expansion and glorious feats of the Serbian state under the Nemanjić dynasty (1159–1367), culminating in the “Greco-Serbian” empire of Stefan Dušan (1346–1355). In this story Byzantium was assigned the role of the chief yet declining adversary, with a prestigious and alluring but aging culture which, in stark contrast with the youthful vitality and creativity of the Serbs, lacked the verve, energy and vision to carry its civilizational mission any further. The personification of this strain of history-writing was Pantelija Srećković (1834–1903), whose two-volume *History of the Serbian People* (1884, 1888) provides an archetype of the genre.

Added to the internal reasons for the failure of the Serbian local dynasts (*župani*) to create a “unified state” was, according to Srećković, the Byzantine Empire’s policy of promoting “state multiplicity” under the *župans* and “help[ing] all the contenders and opponents to national unification.” This political fragmentation continued until the mid-twelfth century and the rise of the Nemanjić dynasty that “united Serbia”—a trope literally replicating that of “united Bulgaria” under Simeon and Ioan Assen II.¹⁴⁰ Srećković interprets the subjugation of the Adriatic bishoprics by Stefan Nemanjić in 1177 as “a victory of the independent national development, a triumph among the Serbian tribes of the Slavonic faith and script, and a victory of the national consciousness over the influence of both Rome and Constantinople.” The newly established Serbian state and church made all Serbian tribes realize that “they were members of a single organism, a single nation.” Thus 1177 marked the Serbs’ freedom from the spiritual power of Rome, and this was followed, forty-five years later, by freedom from the dependency of the Constantinople Patriarchate with the founding of the Serbian archbishopric.¹⁴¹

Srećković describes late-twelfth-century Byzantium as a decaying state where brutal and bloody dynastic rivalries, stupidity and horrors reigned. This not only played into the hands of Stefan Nemanja, who succeeded to expand the Serbian state to the south and east, but warranted the characterization of his wars as “liberating many Serbs from the Greek yoke.” Furthermore, Srećković continually painted Byzantium as a place of growing political and

140 Pantelija Srećković, *Istorija srpskoga naroda*, vol. 2 (Belgrade: Kraljevsko-srpska državna štamparija, 1888), 4–8.

141 Ibid., vol. 2, 31.

moral decay, civil anarchy and economic weakness—the very opposite of the vibrant, irresistible and auspicious Serbian state.¹⁴² From day one, Serbian history, in Srećković's telling, led inevitably to Dušan's empire.

Dušan had been captivated by the idea “to found in the place of the Byzantine Empire a new Serbian empire”—an idea that, after Serbian military victories, “developed naturally in the mass of Slavic people.”¹⁴³ Similar to the Bulgarian case, “[Dušan's] military power and state greatness evolved at the expense of the Byzantine Empire,” hence his idea “to destroy it.” Dušan, Srećković tells us, had more right than anyone else to sit on the throne of “Orthodox Byzantium,” because he had fought against both the Latins and the Muslims and “was the protector and patron of Orthodoxy in the East.” Byzantium had little power and vigor left, but it

lured him as the center of the Orthodox learning and culture, with its forms of imperial power and with that gleam and importance that the Byzantine emperors had had since its founder Constantine the Great [...] Dušan's newly created empire sought to become a second or popular Slavic Byzantine Empire similar to the empire of Constantine the Great, with Orthodox ideals and aspirations whose representative until then was the Byzantine Empire.

In his pursuit “to become the chief of the Serbs and the Greeks,” Dušan saw himself as a “defender of the Orthodox Greek-Slavic world, countering the aspirations of the Western world.” This, according to Srećković, reflected Dušan's “independent political action.”¹⁴⁴

Srećković evidently wavered between seeing Dušan as an alternative to the Byzantine emperor and a contender for the Byzantine throne—in other words, between the idea of a vibrant Serbian empire to be erected on the ruins of a decaying Byzantium and the aspiration for Serbian participation in the running of the Eastern Roman Empire and adoption of its imperial dignity. Either way, there was no doubt for him that by pursuing the Byzantine throne, Dušan was performing a nationally elevating, “patriotic” mission; those who supported him demonstrated “national patriotism,” while his

142 Ibid., vol. 2, 36–42. Srećković argued, for example, that the state created by Nemanja exerted “such a powerful influence on the population of the Balkan peninsula that in 1186, counting on his state, the two Vlachs, Petar and Assen, staged a revolt,” which led to the creation of a “new Bulgarian state” (ibid., vol. 2, 44).

143 Ibid., vol. 2, 344, 360–361.

144 Ibid., vol. 2, 674–675, 483–484.

imperial title and the independent Serbian Church evoked “the pride and joy of all contemporary [Serbian] patriots and the people.” In this totally nationalized medieval context, it is not surprising that Srećković called the Orthodox creed the “Serbian faith” and credited the Serbian clergy for having “defended the interests of the land and the empire” and cultivated Serbian consciousness among the people.¹⁴⁵ The implications of this nationalization of religion, as in the other Balkan states, were crucial in the negotiation of the incipient modern Serbian identity. As another contemporary historian, the author of a book evocatively entitled *The Nemanjić and the Obrenović Dynasties or a Comparison of Two Bright Periods in Our History*, put it, “since [the founding of the independent Serbian church by Stefan Nemanja’s son, Sava] the faith of the Serbs became the popular faith, and faith and nationality merged in the same term.”¹⁴⁶

While acknowledging the great prestige and the magnetism of Byzantine state tradition and culture, Srećković, much like his Bulgarian counterparts, bemoaned their disruptive effect on the traditional social order in Serbian society, which was purportedly based on “organic” solidarity and social harmony. The Byzantinization of Serbian state life, especially after the proclamation of the empire, was the result above all of the vanity, snobbery and selfishness of the Serbian nobility. After accumulating huge wealth during the wars and being “wafted by the breath of Byzantinism,” they began to lead an opulent and sumptuous life. The egotism and lust for power that they had copied from the Greek aristocracy “prevailed over patriotism,” while Dušan’s autocratic rule, “modeled after the Byzantine,” destroyed the last remnants of local self-government.¹⁴⁷

Srećković’s attitude to Byzantinism is basically identical with that of the contemporary Bulgarian historians. He writes that from the moment “when Serbia began to act as the Byzantine Empire, the customary Serbian national life lost its meaning, life in accordance with the Greek ceremonies had begun to the detriment of the Serbian national life.” Since the Serbian nobles became “defenders of the Byzantine way of life” and began to imitate “the rotten bureaucratic Byzantine aristocracy,”

the people had turned its head on them and demanded to recover and rebuilt its previous *županian* life [...] In general we can say that as long

¹⁴⁵ Srećković, vol. 2, 61, 669, 675, 677, 881.

¹⁴⁶ Đ. Vrabac, *Nemanjići i Obrenovići ili upoređenje dva svetla perioda iz naše prošlosti* (Kragujevac: Štamparija Radivoja Jovanovića, 1900), 10. The Obrenović dynasty was one of the two reigning dynasties in nineteenth-century Serbia.

¹⁴⁷ Srećković, vol. 2, 811–816, 952.

as our kings were living the life of the people, their state was growing and advancing. With the adoption of foreign customs there began an anti-national life [that] ended with the collapse of the [Serbian] empire.

The main flaw of Dušan's empire, therefore, appears to have been its failure to "nationalize" the conquered "Greek" realm, and this fault led to its disintegration. However, the state idea that created it lived on and "prepared [the Serbs] for fighting for their survival and *the restoration of their empire*."¹⁴⁸ Srećković did not venture to surmise what would have happened with the Serbian state idea and popular traditions had Dušan ascended the Byzantine throne. However, he did project that, in such a case, by his own era there would have been not four different Slavic states but only one, which would have dominated the whole peninsula.¹⁴⁹

In the end, what modern Serbia inherited from the Middle Ages was not just the medieval Serbian empire but the "Serbian-Greek" (or "Serbian Byzantine") empire—one that had conquered most of the territory and appropriated the imperial dignity of Byzantium but which had exceeded it in political vigor, creativity and social arrangement. The homology between historical discourse and contemporary politics, or more precisely, the use of the past to advance political projects in the present, is readily demonstrated in this case. The first formal political program of the modern Serbian state, which drew the map of its future expansion in the Balkans (*Načertanije*, 1844), reads:

The Serbian state, which had started off well, must strive to expand and become stronger; its roots and foundations are firmly embedded in the Serbian Empire of the thirteenth and fourteenth century and in the rich and glorious Serbian history. Our history testified that the Serbian emperors had plundered the Greek [Byzantine] imperial heritage. . . . Furthermore, they almost demolished the fallen Byzantium in order to rejuvenate the Eastern Roman Empire and to lay the foundations of a new, Serbian-Slavic empire. This venture, however, was disrupted by the Turkish invasion. . . . It is only now that the foundations of the Serbian empire are about to rise from the rubble of its historical base.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 689, 799, 816–817 (italics added).

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 801.

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Aleksandar Ignjatović, "Byzantium Evolutionized: Architectural History and National Identity in Turn-of-the-Century Serbia," in *Regimes of Historicity in Southeastern and Northern Europe: Discourses of Identity and Temporality, 1890–1945*, eds. Diana Mishkova, Balázs Trencsényi and Marja Jalava (London: Palgrave-Macmillan,

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The Transylvanian school set the tone for the anti-Byzantine current that would dominate, for the better part of the nineteenth century, Romanian historiography and culture “on behalf of the national idea and Latin solidarity.”¹⁵¹

Similarly to the Bulgarian case, the “Greeks” became an issue in the Romanian context of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century—when a Romanian national consciousness was crystallizing—by virtue of the significant Greek (Phanariot) cultural and political influence. Although they were part of the Ottoman Empire, until 1716 the two Danubian Principalities, Wallachia and Moldavia, were ruled by native princes. Thereafter the Sublime Porte handed over the governing of the principalities to the Greek-speaking and culturally post-Byzantine “administrative nobility” of the Phanariots. For almost a century the Greek language and Phanariot political culture were dominant in the Principalities; this era was also associated with political instability and economic decline. On the other hand, it was largely through (some) Phanariots that the subversive ideas of the Enlightenment reached, and spread throughout, the Principalities. As in Bulgaria, all this deeply embroiled the construction of Romanian national identity (and history) with an assessment of the role of the “Greeks”—a process whereby the prevailing cultural-political orientation of the present gave shape to the interpretation of the past.

The main orientation of the nineteenth-century Romanian cultural and political elite was towards the West. The theory of the Romanians’ Latin purity, avidly promoted by the Transylvanian school, was perfectly consistent with it. As Lucian Boia put it, “Through the Romans, the Romanians could present themselves to the West as the equals of anybody, and the phenomenon of acculturation no longer meant borrowing, but rather a return to the source, to a ground of civilization shared with the civilization of the West.”¹⁵² This orientation and the corresponding “Westernization” of Romanian history implied, according to the then-hegemonic civilizational coordinates, a distancing from the “lethargic” East and its cultural symbols. “The break with the East took the

2014), 260. It should be noted that Srećković considered the Slavs, who were subdued and later assimilated by the ruling Bulgarian chieftains, to have been Serbs (Srećković II, 801). Đ. Vrabac (quoted above) wrote that had Dušan’s empire survived a few more years, the modern Serbs would not have been at the mercy of “the callous powers which unfairly deprived [the Serbs] of purely Serbian lands” such as the areas around Trăn, Vidin and Sofia (in today’s Western Bulgaria) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Vrabac, 13).

151 Tanașoca, *Bizanțul și românii*, 213.

152 Boia, *History and Myth*, 87.

form of a massive devaluing and inculcation of peoples and cultures which had hitherto offered the Romans more models than motives of lamentation. The first victims were the Greeks. . . .¹⁵³ Thus the nationalist drive for emancipation from Greek cultural dominance and regeneration of society through repudiation of the Ottoman-Phanariot past, as well as the drive towards modernization and “Europeanization,” pointed in the direction already charted by the Latinist school: refutation of the post-Byzantine and, by extension, the Byzantine world. For the Romanian Romantic historians, as for the Bulgarian ones, the Ottomans were the heirs of the Empire of the East. Hence their anti-Ottoman ideology largely predetermined their attitude to Byzantium and its survivals.

Most of the Romanian historians of the 1848 generation and the one that followed it simply ignored the topic: Byzantium and its relations with the Romanians were not of interest to those who dominated the humanities and culture in the Principalities until at least the 1880s. Nicolae Bălcescu's (1819–1852) main work, *The Romanians under Prince Michael the Brave* (1849), sought to underpin with historical arguments the union of Wallachia and Moldavia and their right to independence.¹⁵⁴ Mihail Kogălniceanu's (1817–1891) magisterial *History of Wallachia, of Moldavia and of the Transdanubian Vlachs* (1837) and Bogdan Hasdeu's (1838–1907) *Critical History of the Romanians* (1873 and 1875) dealt with the fundamental problems for Romanian historiography at the time, like origins, continuity, ethno-historical space and the strength of the Romanians in the Middle Ages (after the fourteenth century), mentioning only in passing the Romanians' contacts with Byzantium.¹⁵⁵ All of them and most of their fellow historians were extremely critical of the post-Byzantine Greek influence, both sociopolitical and cultural. Their virulent and even obsessive

¹⁵³ Ibid., 158.

¹⁵⁴ Nicolae Bălcescu did not comment on Byzantium (even if he occasionally mentioned the First and the Second Bulgarian Kingdoms) and, perhaps tellingly, called Basil I “Emperor of the Orient.” Starting his narrative from the thirteenth century, the time when the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia emerged as political subjects, he focused his attention on the relations with the Magyars, the Ottomans and the Poles, not the Byzantines, and did not relate the trajectory of the Romanian nation in any way with that of Byzantium. Even in his essay “Romîni și fanarioții” he made no reference to the Byzantine tradition with which many Phanariots identified. See Nicolae Bălcescu, *Opere I. Scrieri istorice, politice și economice, 1844–1847*, ed. G. Zane (Bucharest: Fundația pentru literatură și artă “Regele Carol I,” 1940), 118–123.

¹⁵⁵ Concerning his grand linguistic projects, Hasdeu related the titles of the Romanian princes to those in Byzantium but complained that one could get an only a “faint idea” from the Byzantine authors about the relation of the Romanians north of the Danube with those to the south.

anti-Greek attitude focused primarily on the “Phanariot eighteenth century,” typically portrayed as the darkest period in Romanian history, but was often extended to “Grecism” in general. At the same time, only rarely would these anti-Phanariot and anti-Greek feelings be explicitly associated with Byzantium or the Byzantine-Romanian relations. Those who did it barely went beyond reiterating the clichés bequeathed by the Western Enlightenment, like Mihail Anagnosti, who lamented the transfer to the Phanariot courts of the “ill-famed debris of the old Byzantine court, including the intrigues of servants and the perfidious criminal politics,” or Gheorghe Săulescu, who explained the degeneration of the Eastern Romans by their contact with the harmful ideas of the “Greeks.”¹⁵⁶ More often than not, historians explained the rapacious behavior and detrimental impact of the Phanariots by citing their position as Ottoman functionaries rather than referring to the Byzantine legacy (even if their psychological portraits were often cast in the stereotypical aura of the Byzantines, as in the historical plays of Vasile Alecsandri or the journalistic articles of Bogdan Hasdeu).

It is telling that the exception came from (Habsburg) Transylvania—the historian and journalist George Bariț (1812–1893) made Byzantium an integral part of his anti-Phanariot discourse. In an article published in 1871, fifty years after the end of the Phanariot regime, Bariț argued that the Byzantine nobles, who had saved their lives from the Turkish yataghan by immigrating to the Principalities, were none other but the forefathers of the Phanariots. He thus connected the “character” and the fate of the Ottoman-Greek administrators with that of the one-time Byzantine aristocracy, secular and ecclesiastical. This superimposed Byzantine stratum, Bariț asserted with frequent references to Gibbon, was “bastard, broken, corrupt,” and its “nefarious” and “shameful” deeds were innumerable. The political conceptions of the princes from Phanar were also of Byzantine origin: for them the Principalities were only a means towards restoration of the Byzantine Empire and expulsion of the Turks “as far as the Euphrates.” Like the Magyars with respect to Transylvania, moreover, the Phanariots considered the Principalities to be provinces of the Byzantine Empire conquered hundreds of years before the Turks.¹⁵⁷

Bariț’s liberal-romantic outlook and the political grievances of the Transylvanian Romanians within Dualist Hungary may help us understand

156 Michel Anagnosti, *La Valachie et la Moldavie* (Paris: Imprimerie de R. Fournier, 1837), 18; quoted in Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei*, 136, 139.

157 George Bariț, “Momente din istoria fanarioților,” in *Transylvania* 4, no. 6 (March 15, 1871), 61–64; *Transylvania* 4, no. 7 (April 1, 1871), 73–76; *Transylvania* 4, no. 8 (April 15, 1871), 89–92. See Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei*, 165–169.

the national-didactic pursuits of such genealogical and comparative constructions. They drew on both Western Enlightenment thought and the tradition of the Latinist school of contrasting Romans and Greeks to stress the Romanians' ethnic vigor and imperial legacy. It was these characteristics that made the Transylvanian anti-Greek and anti-Byzantine discourse much more similar to the Bulgarian discourse than to that in the Romanian Principalities.

In the Principalities, preoccupations with Byzantium and post-Byzantinism remained marginal. Interestingly, they were also marginal for the few Greek scholars, like the historian G.G. Papadopol, who bothered to delve into Greek-Romanian relations in historical perspective—a fact that underscores the inconspicuousness of both these relations prior to 1453 and the Byzantine “origins” of the Phanariot issue. The growing preoccupation with “Balkan Romanity,” however—an issue that was hardly new but was becoming increasingly topical and politicized with the exacerbation of the “Macedonian question” in the last quarter of the nineteenth century—was bringing the Romanian historical narrative closer to Byzantium. Following in the footsteps of their Transylvanian predecessors, leading authorities like Bogdan Hasdeu (*Critical History of the Romanians*), Alexandru Xenopol (*History of the Romanians in Dacia Traiana*) and Constantin Erbiceanu “revealed” the great number of Vlachs inhabiting the lands south of the Danube and their even greater role in opposing the Byzantines and founding the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. In doing so they made use of Byzantine sources only to “verify” the unbroken continuity of Eastern Romanity south and north of the Danube.

Byzantium in the “Critical” Post-Romantic Historiography

The mid-nineteenth century marks the beginning of a shift in the general (European) interest in and perception of Byzantium. The Eastern Empire was being gradually re-discovered not only as the heir to, a savior of and a transmitter of the literary and cultural classical tradition of ancient Greece, but also as representing a unique historical development.

This shift involved the institutionalization in the second half of the nineteenth century of “Byzantine studies” as a separate field, comprising a number of sub-fields—history, philology and literature, art history, architecture, law, etc.—first in Germany and France, and then in Russia and England. The most significant step in this direction was made by Karl Krumbacher (1856–1909), who in the 1890s founded an Institute of Byzantine Studies and the specialized *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* in Munich. The progress in the study of Byzantine civilization and the growing recognition of its influence on world culture boosted

the development of Byzantine history and literature in particular. Krumbacher in Germany wrote a general outline of Byzantine literature, Charles Diehl in France wrote the first outline of Byzantine history up to the fall of the empire, and John Bagnell Bury in Great Britain wrote basic works on the Byzantine administrative system. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Byzantology was an established independent field within the historical discipline.¹⁵⁸

The growing appreciation of Byzantine culture, however, was coupled with lingering post-Enlightenment views of Byzantine politics and society as essentially the opposite of Western dynamism and potential for development. This view of Byzantium as fundamentally different from the West was buttressed by some Russian interpretations (by the Slavophiles and, from a different position, by Leontiev).

Between the 1870s and 1917, Byzantine studies also thrived in Russia. According to Russian-born British medievalist Dimitri Obolenski, their high scholarly quality was “probably unrivaled by any other branch of historical studies in Russia.”¹⁵⁹ As we have seen, Russian Byzantine studies grew out of the preoccupation with national history and Slavic studies. The exacerbation of the Eastern Question after the Crimean War added to the political motivations of the scholarly interest in this area. Vasiliy G. Vasiljevskiy (1838–1899) played a major role in the creation of Russian Byzantine studies and in the professional occupation with Byzantine history. In 1894 he founded the annual periodical *Vizantiyskiy Vremennik*, which had become a recognized organizational publication of international Byzantine studies along with *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*. Both he and his younger but prominent contemporary Fyodor Uspensky (Fyodor Uspenskiy, 1845–1928) focused their studies on the social history of the Byzantine Empire. Uspensky was the first to uphold vigorously the view that the Slavs’ occupation of the Balkan Peninsula profoundly altered the social and economic structure of the Empire’s European provinces in the seventh and eighth centuries, a view also espoused by Vasiljevskiy. But even high-profile scholars like him did not shy away from linking “science” with “politics,” thus epitomizing the fusion between academic and political reasoning on the field of critical historiography:

158 See Charles Diehl, “Les études byzantines en France au XIX^e siècle,” in Charles Diehl, *Etudes byzantines* (Paris: Alphonse Picard et Fils, 1905), 21–37; “Les études d’histoire byzantine en 1905,” *ibid.*, 38–106.

159 Dimitri Obolenski, “Modern Russian Attitudes to Byzantium,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 69.

We should be greatly mistaken were we to insist that it is within our power to avoid taking an active part in the settlement of matters connected with the Byzantine heritage. Although it usually depends upon the heir to accept or refuse the heritage left to him, still Russia's part in the Eastern question was bequeathed to her by history and cannot be changed voluntarily unless some unforeseen shock will give us the faculty to forget and stamp out the memory of the things which made us live, strive, and suffer.¹⁶⁰

Historical investigation predominated in the Russian school of Byzantinists from the beginning, and both before and after 1917, they focused on social, administrative and economic history and Russo-Byzantine relations.¹⁶¹ Alexander A. Vasiliyev (1867–1953) is another prominent figure in this field whose influential work straddles the period before and after World War II as well as the Russian and Western schools of Byzantinology.

By the early twentieth century, the methodological conventions of professional historiography were well established in all four Balkan countries under examination here. This, however, did not necessarily entail a radical shift in historiographical discourse, where method was only one, and usually not the decisive, element.¹⁶² There was a visible shift away from the frantic national mythology of the Romantic Age, and direct knowledge of the sources and specialized research figured high on the list of professional credentials. Even so, history remained closely tied to politics—in fact, many historians believed this link was indispensable and beneficial. As Nicolae Iorga memorably put it in his inaugural speech to the Romanian Academy in 1911, “The historian is an old man with the experience of his nation”; his duty is to be “a tireless recaller of national tradition, a witness to the unity of the folk over and above political and class barriers, a preacher of racial solidarity and discoverer of ideas towards which he himself should advance, giving an example to the youth who come after us.”¹⁶³ The positivist, scientific standards of research and “truth” itself, from this point of view, came to buttress the fulfillment of the historian’s

160 Fyodor I. Uspensky, *Istoriya Vizantiiskoy Imperii* (St. Petersburg, 1914), vol. 1, xii; quoted in A.A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire: From Constantine the Great to the Epoch of the Crusades*, vol. 1 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1928), 48.

161 After more than a decade of stagnation between 1928, when F. Uspensky died, and 1944, Byzantine studies regained their prominence.

162 Boia, *History and Myth*, 63–70.

163 Quoted in *ibid.*, 64.

moral duty to his nation, with all the decisive judgments of the past this duty entailed.

The introduction of the critical method in the national historiographies coincided with the emergence of the first cohort of professional Balkan medievalists and Byzantinists in all four countries. Departments or seminars for Byzantine studies were set up at Belgrade University (1906), Bucharest University (1907), Athens University (Chair of Byzantine Art and Archaeology, 1911), and 1921 (Sofia University, as part of a Chair in East European History). It is important to note, however, that the advances in this new field were confined to a framework set by the institutionalized Romantic historical discourse, that is, by the convergence of the historical canon with national Romanticism. In many ways the historians discussed below inherited the main tenets of Romantic historiography while bringing in some new themes and perspectives.

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In Greece, as elsewhere in the Balkans, the last quarter of the nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth century marked the heyday of irredentist nationalism. The Great Idea was now unambiguously associated with the resurrection of the Byzantine Empire in the form of a great Greek state by most of the Greek political class, buoyed by the arguments of the most prominent Greek scholars. The leading Greek medievalist (and member of the nationalist *Ethnike Etairia*, founded in 1894), Spyridon Lambros, stated in 1886 that “historical Greece also contains Epirus, Thrace, Macedonia and Asia Minor. Any place that has been inhabited by Greeks, any place that has received the influence of Greek civilization, is Greece.”¹⁶⁴ Nikolaos Politis, the founding father of Greek folklore studies, believed that “to reoccupy Constantinople and again turn Saint Sophia into an Orthodox church—this is the apex of the Great Idea.”¹⁶⁵ Consequently, the center of gravity in historical production moved from Hellenism to Byzantinism. Or, as the historian Dimitrios Vikelas put it in 1885, “the center of Hellenism has been displaced. It has moved from Athens to Constantinople”¹⁶⁶—“the dream and hope of all

164 Spyridon Lambros, *Istoria tes Hellados*, Athens, vol. 1, 1886, 1; quoted in Effi Gazi, *Scientific National History: The Greek Case in Comparative Perspective (1850–1920)* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), 119–120.

165 Nikolaos Politis, “Croyances populaires sur le rétablissement de la Nation Hellénique,” *La Revue de Grèce* 1 (1928), 153.

166 Demetrius Vikelas, *Le rôle et les aspirations de la Grèce dans la question d'Orient* (Paris: Cercle Saint-Simon, 1885), 24.

Greeks," as Ioannis Kolettis called "The City" back in 1844. For all these and many other intellectuals, scholarly vocation and scientific method were strongly interwoven with commitment to a political idea. Pavlos Karolidis (1849–1930), one of the most eminent historians and Orientalists at the time and successor of K. Paparrigopoulos at the chair of Greek history in the University of Athens, explained the direct political implications of scholarly Byzantinism when stating that before and after the revolution of 1821, the Great Idea "had as its guidelines for national and political unity Byzantine Hellenism and Byzantine traditions"; modern Hellenism looked upon Byzantium as its "religious and at the same time national centre."¹⁶⁷

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the continuous history of the Greeks, with the organic "middle bond" of Byzantium, had been definitively consolidated. Western European scholarship contributed to it: Karl Krumbacher's history of Byzantine literature was translated into Greek between 1897 and 1900, as were some of the major works of the French Byzantinist Gustav Schlumberger on Byzantine history. An increasing number of Greek scholars were looking for the origins of Greek institutions, customs, and mentality in the Byzantine past. But as A. Liakos observed, a lengthy period of time passed between the acceptance of Byzantium as a part of the national narrative and the actual interest of historians in Byzantium and their use of it in national symbolism and representation. Byzantium was not rehabilitated in school textbooks until the end of the nineteenth century; the Byzantine Museum was not established until 1914, and the Association for Byzantine Studies until 1918; the first professors of Byzantine art and Byzantine history were only appointed at the University of Athens in 1912 and 1924, respectively. It was only after World War I that the Greek Archaeological Society began to turn its attention to the Byzantine monuments. The first decrees classifying Byzantine churches and fortresses in Greece as archaeological monuments were issued in 1921, which led to the foundation, in 1935, of the Archive of the Byzantine Monuments in Greece.¹⁶⁸ Appropriation took place not only in stages but also in different fields. The theory of the unity of Greek history was transferred from the

167 Quoted in Augustinos, *Consciousness and History*, 27. Greece's imperial self-projection on a geopolitical level came to a head during the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, when Greek official documentation and propaganda made explicit references to Byzantium. (See Anne Couderc, "Byzance à la Conférence de la Paix (1919). Vénizélos, les revendications de la Grèce et l'idée d'Empire," in *Héritage de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est*, eds. Delouis et al., 383–401.

168 Vangelis Karamanolakis, *I sygkrotisi tis istorikis epistimis kai i didaskalia tis istorias sto Panepistimio Athinon (1837–1932)* (Athens: Istoriko Archeio Ellinikis Neolaias, Institutou Neoellinikon Ereunon, 2006), 320–324.

field of political history to the field of language (whose leading figure was Georgios Hatzidakis, the founder of Greek linguistics), and folklore (starting with Nikolaos Politis, the founder of Greek ethnography, or *laografia*). “In the case of Byzantium,” Liakos wrote recently, “this process took several decades to complete, and new images are still in play.”¹⁶⁹

The language question—a major intellectual debate in modern Greece between purists, advocating the more archaic form of Greek (*katharevousa*), and demoticists, arguing for the literary codification of the vernacular—involved not just language but two different interpretations of the past.¹⁷⁰ The former insisted on Hellenism as the key notion capturing the connection to the glorious classical past, while the latter espoused the notion of *Romiosyne*, emphasizing the central place of Byzantium in Greek history, which they considered to be the birthplace of the demotic language and popular culture. Or, as Ioannis Psycharis (1854–1929), the most influential figure in the demoticist movement, phrased it, “the language question comprises everything—country, religion, the whole national heritage. . . . Language and fatherland are one.”¹⁷¹

It is noteworthy that this long-standing controversy did not impinge on the official national historiography. Both sides promoted the idea of continuity and racial kinship with ancient and medieval (“Byzantine”) Greece and upheld the “Great Idea.” What was new in the latter half of the nineteenth century was that interest in the Byzantine period was buttressed by the discovery of folklore as a repository for ancient customs and beliefs surviving into modern times and the institutionalization of linguistics and ethnography as national sciences. In late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Greece, popular culture and memory, rather than political history, legitimized the study of Byzantium.¹⁷² In 1891 the ethnographer Nikolaos Politis (1852–1921) insisted that Byzantium had contributed to both the transmission of Greek popular culture from ancient to modern times and the formation of a distinctive Greek *ethnie* via Christianity and the Hellenization of the Empire. The new discipline of *laographia* (folkloric studies) was intended to provide evidence of this by unearthing the “national epic” of the Byzantine period.¹⁷³ And although

169 Liakos, “Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece,” 210.

170 For a concise account of this issue in linguistic terms, see Robert Browning, *Medieval and Modern Greek* (London: Hutchinson, 1969), 103–118.

171 Quoted in Gerasimos Augustinos, *Consciousness and History: Nationalist Critics of Greek Society, 1897–1914* (Boulder, CO: East European Quarterly, 1977), 33.

172 Gazi, *Scientific National History*, 72. “Demoticism was basically aiming at the transformation of the discourse of national identity through literature and linguistic change and not exclusively through historical writing. . . . In their discussions, they preferred sociology to history” (Liakos, “Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece,” 214).

173 Argyropoulos, *Les intellectuels grecs*, 48–49; Gazi, *Scientific National History*, 108–110.

the *katharevoussa* remained in official usage for decades to come, in about 1880 the demoticists' conception of the past won the day and held sway for the following fifty years. The established tripartite structure of Greek history demanded equivalent treatment of all its periods, but the ecumenical ideal ultimately devoured the narrow "classicist" concept of Hellenism.¹⁷⁴

The emphasis on cultural history, already noticeable in Paparrigopoulos's intention to downplay Fallmerayer's assertions about the racial makeup of the Greeks, was accentuated by the historical appropriation of the periods after the disintegration of the Byzantine Empire in 1204—the Frankish occupation (1204–1261), the Venetian occupation (which in certain areas lasted until 1797) and the period of Ottoman rule. Greek historiography, without the central backbone of political history, used cultural history as a substitute. Byzantine scholars' contribution to the Italian humanism of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was extended to the myth that the Greeks were the cause of the revival of civilization in modern Europe. This powerful myth largely influenced the formation of the Greek national myth, the Great Idea.¹⁷⁵ "Greece is destined to enlighten the West with its decline and the East with its resurrection. The former task was fulfilled by our ancestors; the latter falls to us," Prime Minister Ioannis Kolettis stated in 1844.¹⁷⁶

Among the historians of the time, Dimitrios Vikelas (1835–1908) perhaps best epitomizes this integrative cultural perspective on Greek history. In Vikelas Byzantine Hellenism found one of its most passionate purveyors, not only in Greece but also abroad.¹⁷⁷ He made plain his admiration for Paparrigopoulos's monumental edifice and committed himself to boosting the edifying aspects of Byzantine "Helleno-Christian" civilization, whose existence, he argued, "guaranteed the preservation of the most precious interests of real civilization." Vikelas attributed a specific mission to Byzantium in that it had preserved civilization at a time of barbarian onslaught on "the rest of the world" and bequeathed it to the European Renaissance. The empire's main task "was not to create but to save; and that mission she fulfilled for the benefit

174 Koulouri, *Dimensions idéologiques*, 385–386. See also Roderick Beaton, "Romanticism in Greece," in *Romanticism in National Context*, eds. Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 96–99.

175 Liakos, "Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece," 212.

176 Quoted in Konstantinos Th. Dimaras, *Ellinikos Romantismos* (Athens: Hermes, 1982), 406.

177 Some of Vikelas's major works were translated into French, German and English (see, e.g., his *Seven Essays on Christian Greece* [London: Alexander Gardner, 1890] and *La Grèce byzantine et moderne. Essais historiques* [Paris: Librairies de Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1893]). He also published regularly in widely read scholarly journals like *La Nouvelle Revue*, *Scottish Review* and *Revue des deux mondes*. Vikelas collaborated closely with Karl Krumbacher.

of the Europe of the future." It was hardly the decaying organism described by Montesquieu and Gibbon; its endurance demonstrated organizational power and vitality. The modern world owed it lasting gratitude, first, for continuing and handing down to posterity "the civilization of the ancients, modified by the Christian Religion" and second, for saving Christian Europe from "a slavery where the religion of the Koran would have been propagated by the sword." Thanks to Byzantium, "a martyr in the cause of the human race," and its centuries-long battle against the Muslims, Western Europe had the time to develop its strength.¹⁷⁸ Sadly, however, "the fall of Constantinople [under the Ottomans] was in great part the work of that very Europe which owed and owes her so much." For Vikelas "the most deplorable epoch in the history of the Byzantine Empire . . . was that in which it was exposed to the influence of the Crusaders, and thus brought into contact with Western Europe." He is ultimately grateful for the failure of the Western Crusaders to take permanent possession of Constantinople. Otherwise, he says, "the consequences might have been even more fatal to the free development of the purely Hellenic genius than has been the Ottoman sword": the Greeks "would have lost the traditions and memories of their own ancient glories" and their faith and would have become a "hybrid mixture of Eastern and Western races."¹⁷⁹

Significantly, Vikelas declared that his fellow countrymen had given Fallmerayer's theory a great deal more attention than it deserved and invested too much patriotic zeal in refuting "the whimsical fancy in question, and denounce[ing] its author, upon every possible occasion." Even supposing, for the sake of argument, that Fallmerayer was right in asserting that Hellas was flooded by Slav immigration, Vikelas maintained, it would have been no disgrace to the Hellenes to receive an infusion of foreign blood. On the contrary, such mixtures provided many great nations in modern history with the union of qualities that had raised them so high. Moreover, regardless of whether the Slavs spread across Greece or not, they had since been completely absorbed. "The entirely and exclusively Hellenic character of all the features, physical and intellectual, presented by the present inhabitants of the country, is a most striking fact, almost unique in history, a glorious mark of our race, and a wondrous proof of the intensity of our national vitality." Far from violating historical continuity, therefore, the fact that even the Byzantine emperors lacked racial ties to Pericles or Philopoimen underscored the power "of the solidarity which Byzantinism had effected with Hellenism," for it was the transmission not of the pure Hellenic stock but of "the spirit of Hellenism" that

178 Demetrios Bikelas, *Seven Essays*, 3–4, 27–34.

179 *Ibid.*, 12, 18–19, 34, 39–40.

really mattered.¹⁸⁰ Judging from the continued hysterical reactions on behalf of Greek racial continuity and against Fallmerayer's thesis, this argument seems not to have gained much traction at the time. But it definitely spelled out the actual problem the Bulgarian argument faced when trying to exploit the thesis to its own ends—namely, the historical reality of the Slavs' complete assimilation in the territories later constituting the Kingdom of Greece, a reality that reverberated painfully with the cultural assimilation of many well-off Bulgarians in the Greek *ethnie* in more recent times.

The philosopher Petros Vrailas-Armenis (1812–1884) took the Hellenization of Christianity one step further by positing Orthodoxy as a national prototype. If Byzantine art was necessarily religious, Vrailas-Armenis wrote in a forcefully Hegelian line of argument, it was because religion represented the highest expression of truth. In his essay *On the Historical Mission of Hellenism* (1871), he contended that, in 1453, “the Byzantine state was destroyed and the nation was enslaved, but Hellenism did not die; it was transmitted to the West and in the end it rose up by itself.”¹⁸¹

Spyridon Lambros—a Byzantinist and the leading representative of the “scientific study” of Greek history—did not challenge the hegemonic master narrative as contrived by Zambelios and Paparrigopoulos (whose disciple he was). But drawing on the theoretical and methodological principles of German historicism and the French positivist school, he transformed the Romantic historical discourse into a coherent taxonomic system.¹⁸² Lambros sought to display, through meticulous and “critical” use of sources, the organic link between the different periods of Greek history, among which Byzantium loomed large: “Christian Greece, which, under the banner of the cross, fought for freedom is more important than ancient Greece. The Roman domination, the Byzantine kingdom and Christianity unified the differences and assuaged the passions.”¹⁸³

Sharing Paparrigopoulos's assumption that “the desire for national unity... has its roots in our medieval history,” Lambros saw the Byzantine era as crucial for the self-definition of the Greeks, the locus of their national

180 Ibid., 22–23, 61.

181 Quoted in Argyropoulos, *Les intellectuels grecs*, 57; see also 51–52.

182 During his studies in the 1870s at the University of Berlin and the University of Leipzig, Lambros attended the seminars of the leading representatives of German historicism (Th. Mommsen, J.G. Droysen, H. von Treitschke, etc.), and their influence on his work is evident. He also translated, in 1902, the basic “manual” of French positivism, Ch. Langlois and Ch. Seignobos's *Introduction aux études historiques* (Paris: Hachette et Cie, 1898).

183 Spyridon Lambros, *Logoi kai Arthra 1878–1902* (Athens: P.D. Sakellarios, 1902), quoted in Argyropoulos, *Les intellectuels grecs*, 64.

identity. He was therefore frustrated by the Byzantines' own deficit of historical consciousness, stating, "analysing the Byzantines' national feelings (*sic*) in their historiography and the rest of their literature, we come across major inconsistencies. Although as linguists, orators, and scholars they were *perfect Greeks*, as far as their historical consciousness is concerned they were simply Christians and members of the Roman *civitas*."¹⁸⁴ Though they described themselves as Roman and Christian, the Byzantines' *actual* cultural identity was Greek. Lambros devoted himself to proving this "fact," while at the same time seeking to put his work, and Byzantine studies generally, on a solid "scientific" basis in terms of collecting and analyzing primary sources—"a scientific work," he wrote, "that I am glad to describe as a purely Greek one."¹⁸⁵

A major focus of Lambros's research was the history of the Peloponnese—the core province of the new nation-state and the "case study" of Fallmerayer's theory. However, Lambros's interest was spurred by ambitions greater than a mere rebuttal of Fallmerayer. He aimed to demonstrate that, following the capture of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade in 1204, the Peloponnese became the center of activity of the last Byzantine dynasty, the Paleologues, thus making a case for the continuation of the Empire, along with Greek ethnic dominance, in the area. The core of the future nation-state was thus highlighted as the legitimate successor of Byzantium after its disintegration.¹⁸⁶ In this way Lambros set the frame for a key argument, widely shared by later generations of Greek (and foreign) historians, that the Greek "national idea" had emerged at the time of the Paleologue dynasty and was focused on the future national center of the Greeks.

Lambros saw his efforts at securing "scientific" status and quality for Greek "Byzantinism" as an important national task. It was also intended to establish a respectable place for Greek scholarship in "historical science abroad" which, as Paparrigopoulos had bitterly noted in 1879, "had not yet admitted the historical unity of the Greek nation."¹⁸⁷ Lambros made explicit this connection when stating, "Western scholars have undertaken the systematic illumination of a past which is the past of the Greek nation itself. For this reason, it is our obligation, for reasons not only scientific but also national, to construct this

184 Quoted in Gazi, *Scientific National History*, 93 (italics added).

185 Quoted in *ibid.*, 94 (italics added). Lambros spared no effort in collecting manuscripts and other sources, introduced a course on palaeography at the University of Athens and set up a specialized journal in Byzantine and post-Byzantine studies, *Neos Hellenomnemon*, which became one of the most influential Greek historical periodicals.

186 Gazi, *Scientific National History*, 97–98.

187 Konstantinos Paparrigopoulo (*sic*), *Les évolutions de l'histoire grecque à notre époque* (Athens: Messenger d'Athènes, 1879), 7.

building to which so far we have made only small contributions.”¹⁸⁸ This appeal and the Byzantinist school that Lambros left behind did not go unheeded inside or outside of Greece: his “prodigious activity” is closely associated with the inception of the professional Byzantine studies in Greece and was acclaimed for having “given substance to what had hitherto been isolated, groping, crumbled-into-dust research efforts.”¹⁸⁹

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, Byzantine studies, which until then had focused mostly on history, linguistics and ethnography, began to infiltrate neighboring humanities such as philosophy, literature, art history, theological and political thought (as shown in the works of Athanasios Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Konstantinos Sathas and Ioannis Sakellion). K. Sathas, a leading philologist, initiated a “Medieval Library” that presented various Byzantine authors to a broader public. The aforementioned D. Vikelas founded the Society for Dissemination of Useful Books in order to publicize the works of scholars delving in Byzantine topics.¹⁹⁰ It is noteworthy that the years between the Greek military debacle in 1897 and the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, experienced by the Greeks as a period of national humiliation, was a time when the “memory” of Byzantium spilled far beyond the world of scholarship into a much broader intellectual and performative field. Byzantine themes and admiration for what Constantin Cavafy called “our glorious Byzantinism” entered poetry (such as that by Kostis Palamas and Constantin Cavafy) and historical novels (like those by Alexandros Papadiamantis and Penelope Delta). In the traumatic post-1897 years, this broader interest in Byzantium was connected to the rise of a new kind of nationalism—neo-Romantic and anti-rationalist—that rejected the supremacy of classical Greece and the emulation of the West.¹⁹¹

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Marin Drinov (1838–1906) is considered the first representative (along with the Czech Konstantin Jireček) of the “critical-historical method,” who had

188 Quoted in Effi Gazi, “‘Europe’: Writing an Ambivalent Concept in 19th Century Greek Historical Culture,” in *Die Griechen und Europa* (Zur Kunde Südosteuropas 11/25), eds. Herald Heppner and Olga Katsiardi-Hering (Vienna: Böhlau, 1998), 119–120.

189 Vitalien Laurent and Eugenio Dalleggio, “Les études byzantines en Grèce (1940–1948),” *Revue des études byzantines* 7 (1949), 91.

190 Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei*, 50–51.

191 Augustinos, *Consciousness and History*. As the case of the essayist Perikles Giannopoulos indicates, however, the new nationalism did not necessarily look to Byzantium as a model but could be premised on cultural autarchy drawing on race and nature (*ibid.*, 66–83).

overcome the Romantic phase in Bulgarian historiography and imposed an “impartial and critical attitude toward the [historical] sources.”¹⁹² As in the Greek case, however, this “paradigm shift” did not lead to amending the key notions pervading Romantic history-writing. Drinov fully subscribed to both Fallmerayer’s “compelling evidence” confirmed by “the unbiased science” and the idea on the deleterious effects of Byzantinism on medieval Bulgaria. The main conduit of the latter was the high clergy, with its wasteful life and penchant for intrigues—a reflection of the era in which Drinov was writing (the 1860s saw the peak of the Greek-Bulgarian ecclesiastical conflict) rather than of his “unbiased method.”¹⁹³ He stuck to the dominant thesis about medieval Bulgaria’s relentless fight with Byzantium for the preservation of its political and cultural independence. Several Bulgarian tsars—Simeon, Samouil, Assen and Ioan Assen—tenaciously strove to capture the capital of the Empire, “which they wanted to turn into a Slavic capital.” The Bulgarians were the first among the Slavs to confront and begin absorbing Byzantine civilization. Unlike most of his predecessors, however, Drinov insisted that the medieval Bulgarians “assimilated but did not blindly obey” this civilization. In contrast to other “new-European nations” which, by adopting Christianity, surrendered their conscience to Rome or Byzantium, the Bulgarians “immediately endeavored to establish their own national Church as entirely independent from both Rome and Byzantium.” They also acquired a “national alphabet that, as far back as the tenth century, tried to catch up with Byzantine literature, the richest and, so to say, the most fashionable at that time.”¹⁹⁴

Detrimental Byzantinism was largely restricted to the clerics, whose economic and cultural oppression, Drinov argued, caused Bogomilism to emerge in Bulgaria.¹⁹⁵ In the following decades this thesis would incorporate Byzantinism in all its ramifications—not only ecclesiastic but also social, political and cultural—and, at the same time, present Bogomilism as the genuine (democratic, progressive, rational) national religion, the precursor of the Western European

192 Petăr Nikov, “Zadachata na dнешnata bălgarska istoriografiya,” *Godishnik na Sofiyskiya universitet*, Istoriko-filologicheski fakultet, vol. 17 (1920–1921), 300–301; Ivan Dujčev, “Les études byzantines chez les Slaves méridionaux et occidentaux depuis le XVII^e siècle,” *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 77.

193 Marin Drinov, *Trudove na M.S. Drinov po bălgarska i slavyanska istoriya* (Sofia: Dărzhavna pechatnitsa, 1909), 42–44.

194 Marin Drinov, *Săchineniya na M.S. Drinov*, vol. 3, ed. Vasil Zlatarski (Sofia: Dărzhavna pechatnitsa, 1915), 24–26.

195 The thesis that Bogomilism emerged as a Bulgarian reaction against the “Byzantine yoke” was set forth by the Russian Slavacist Yuriy Venelin in 1838 and was later taken up by Hristo Botev and Marin Drinov.

Reformation. This interpretation displays close parallels with the Greek one about iconoclasm in eighth-century Byzantium: Paparrigopoulos considered the iconoclasts to be progressive and rational, defying religious fanaticism, and promoting reforms and secular education; despite their defeat, their legacy lived on and strongly influenced the character of the Byzantine Empire. Dimitrios Vikelas, who sought to explain the overwhelming place of religion in Byzantine history, went one step further: for him iconoclasm was a reformist movement that not only exercised strong influence on the Byzantine society and history but was a point of departure for the Reformation in the West.¹⁹⁶ The Bulgarian and the Greek historical narratives thus also clashed on the issue of “parenthood” of the European ecclesiastical reform.

Vasil N. Zlatarski (1866–1935) was the most prominent Bulgarian medievalist and the personification of the “critical (scientific) school” in historiography at the beginning of the twentieth century. His contribution to the foundation of the Bulgarian historical canon, crowned by his three-volume *History of the Bulgarian State in the Middle Ages* (1918–1940), was comparable to that of Paparrigopoulos’s *History* to the Greek national narrative. Against the backdrop of Zlatarski’s systematic training (he was a student of the Russian Slavist V.I. Lamansky and the Byzantinist V.G. Vasiljevskiy) and critical method, it is astonishing to see how much he had inherited from the notions of the Romantic generation of historians and from the “national” construal of Byzantium, which had taken shape between Paisiy and Drinov.

In his introductory lecture to the Bulgarian history course at the University of Sofia in 1895, devoted to “The Main Periods in Bulgarian History,” Zlatarski prefigured some of the main theses—or, to be more precise, ideological positions—that would form the bedrock of his *History*. He drew attention to the “striking similarity” in the history of the First (861–1018) and the Second (1185–1396) Bulgarian Kingdoms, most notably the spectacular rise and tragic fall of both. He began the search for the underlying reasons for this “peculiar phenomenon” by noting the “global-historical importance” of the lands that the Bulgarians came to occupy—Thrace and Moesia, where “the centuries-old antagonism between Hellenism and Romanism, between East and West [had begun], an antagonism that continues until today.” The settlement of the Slavs in these lands was tolerated at first by Byzantium because the Empire aimed “to use them as a shield against new barbarian invasions and attacks . . . hoping that they would bow down before Byzantinism and would merge with the [other] peoples of the empire.” However, these hopes were not fulfilled—the Bulgarians managed “to create their own national foundations . . . [the]

196 Gazi, *Scientific National History*, 92; Argyropoulos, *Les intellectuels grecs*, 53.

beginnings of an independent culture and to differentiate themselves politically.” Against this “nationally consolidating and politically robust” state, Byzantium’s military power was helpless, so it resorted to another weapon—Christianization. However, according to Zlatarski, the conversion to Christianity was “not the fruit of [Byzantium’s] missionary activity,” and still less a foreign import, but a conscious and carefully considered act aimed at accomplishing a threefold program of national consolidation: “political and cultural unification of the Balkan Slavs under the scepter of the Bulgarian master,” “strengthening of central power” against the nobility, and “jolting the ethnic dualism [between Bulgars and Slavs] in favor of the Slav element.”¹⁹⁷ The main result of the adoption of Christianity from Byzantium (rather than Rome) was the “establishment of a national church, through which the Bulgarian nationality was preserved” and the “opening of a wide road to our people for a unique (*samobitno*) cultural-educational development on a national basis.” Likewise, the Cyrillic (“Slavic”) alphabet—the other “milestone in the imminent struggles of the Bulgarians for spiritual freedom”—was created by Cyril and Methodius who acted not as Byzantine missionaries but as “Slav apostles” and who partook in the creation of a “new cultural-historical type, the Slavobulgarian, which became a model for all Slavic- and non-Slavic Eastern European countries that were under the cultural influence of the Eastern Church.”¹⁹⁸ Thus the robust medieval foundation of the Bulgarian “national spirit” that the contemporary Greek historians found wanting was forcefully asserted, and the universalistic cultural pretenses of the “Greeks” were dispelled.

In a salient agreement with the revolutionary Romantics of the previous period, Zlatarski considered the reign of Tsar Simeon—the time when the First Bulgarian Kingdom (681–1018) reached the peak of its territorial expansion and political strength—to be a betrayal of the “national spirit” and of the “political and social life of the Slavo-Bulgarians.” It concerned Simeon’s absolute autocracy and bureaucratization, “fully adopted in [their] Byzantine form,” the glittering pomp and the privileges of the boyar estate, “now dressed in the form of the Byzantine aristocracy with all its rights and prerogatives,” and the clergy who “adopted the Byzantine church hierarchy with all its privileges... and

197 Vasil Zlatarski, *Istoria na bălgarskata dărzhava prez srednite vekove*, vol. 1, part 2 (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1971) (1st ed., 1927), 56–65. It is worth noting that to this day, these three domestic motives, plus the one about the international legitimization of the Bulgarian state, constitute the fundamental explanation for (and any schoolbook lesson about) the Bulgarians’ adoption of Christianity. See also Vasil Zlatarski, *Glavnite periodi v bălraskata istoria* (Sofia: n.p., 1895), 4–11.

198 Zlatarski, *Istoria na bălgarskata dărzhava*, vol. 1, part 2, 159–165.

vices.” All this, according to Zlatarski, caused deep social disruption and cultural estrangement that severed the political and spiritual elite from the people.¹⁹⁹ Since the Empire proved unable to defeat the Bulgarian state, it set out to conquer it from the inside by infiltrating the Bulgarian court and the government of the country. After Simeon’s death (927), this became “the main task of Byzantine policy towards Bulgaria and remained so until the final demise of the empire.” The marriage of Tsar Peter (927–969) to the granddaughter of the Byzantine emperor ushered in a period of intensive penetration of Byzantinism throughout the state machinery and a deepening of the split between the nation and its leaders. This rift led to the emergence and fast spread of the heretical teachings of Bogomilism—an expression of “the popular protests . . . against the moral decay and indiscriminate imitation of everything non-Bulgarian, which the alien Byzantine influence harmful to the state had brought in.” The decadence at the top and the subversion at the bottom ultimately caused the country to fall under Byzantine domination in the eleventh century, “when the full routine of the decaying empire came to reign.”²⁰⁰ Zlatarski’s reading of the significance of the long resistance of the “Western Bulgarian Kingdom” under Samuil to Byzantine military pressure is meaningful:

The main importance of Tsar Samuil in our history lies not only in the fact that he defended the independence of Bulgaria [for forty-five more years], but also in the fact that . . . he succeeded, through his many years of stubborn struggle with Basil II, to educate and raise his people in the spirit of freedom by opposing the destructive foreign influence, and to inspire in them a strong hatred for the cruel and ruthless conqueror of Bulgaria—Byzantium, and to everything Byzantine—a merit to which the preservation of the nationality of the Bulgarian people during the onerous Byzantine domination undoubtedly owes a great deal.²⁰¹

Zlatarski went on at length about the Bulgarians’ suffering and exploitation during the Byzantine domination of the former Bulgarian lands (1018–1185), especially with Byzantium’s relentless pursuit of what he called a “[policy of] Romeization,” that is, cultural Hellenization carried out, according to him, since the late eleventh century mainly by the Church of Constantinople. This Romeization, however, failed to strike deep roots, and “the Byzantine government and the Constantinople Church failed to achieve their ultimate goal—to

199 Ibid., 520–525.

200 Ibid., 532–537, 600–602; Vasil Zlatarski, *Glavnite periodi*, 13.

201 Zlatarski, *Istoria na bălgarskata dărzhava* vol. 1, part 2, 702–703.

denationalize the Bulgarian people through [their] cultural influence.”²⁰² The Second Bulgarian Kingdom (1185–1396), Zlatarski argued, displayed the same pattern as the first one: as long as Byzantium was weakened by the Crusades, Bulgaria grew in prosperity and strength; once the empire was re-established and its influence in the Bulgarian court resumed, the Bulgarians headed down the road to their destruction: “The Byzantines, by transferring to the Bulgarians their laws and literature, mores and vices, dragged their followers and disciples along with them in the common grave—under the Turkish yoke.”²⁰³

For Zlatarski, therefore, the political ascendancy, prosperity and cultural flourishing of the Bulgarian state were possible only during periods “free of Byzantine influence.” Conversely, Bulgaria’s decline and ultimate demise became inevitable once its doors were open to the rotting power of Byzantinism. All this is a remarkably faithful reiteration of the “pre-professional” and “unscientific” Romantic interpretation of Bulgarian medieval history, as is Zlatarski’s other main thesis: that the Byzantine influence infected only the court and the boyars, while “the people always stayed away from it; [the people] were always hostile to it and upheld their [national] ideal.”²⁰⁴ Bulgarian history thus ensued, according to Zlatarski, from the confrontation between “two diametrically opposite currents”: an “internal,” pushing towards ethnic differentiation, unification and development of national culture; and an “external,” with “the constant pressure of foreign influence” always aimed against and aspiring to destroy the first current. Combined with the special position of Bulgaria in the eternal antagonism between East and West, these two currents defined the permanent features of Bulgarian history, which were also observable in Bulgaria’s present.²⁰⁵

The interpretation of Bulgarian history and Byzantium’s role in it, which Zlatarski elaborated on with the techniques of professional historiography, remained remarkably stable all the way from the 1890s—which saw an upsurge of Byzantine studies in Europe and Russia—through the wartime years to the radically altered political and intellectual context after World War I. But it also reveals a deep ambivalence, almost a schism, between two largely incompatible images of the Bulgarian medieval past—the political and

202 “Romeization,” according to Zlatarski, was pursued mainly through the substitution of Church Slavonic with Greek and through the “persecution of Bulgarian books.” See Vasil Zlatarski, *Istoria na bălgarskata dărzhava prez srednite vekove*, vol. 2 (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1972; 1st ed., 1934), 252–366; 399–409.

203 Zlatarski, *Glavnite periodi*, 12–14.

204 *Ibid.*, 14.

205 *Ibid.*, 14–15. See also Vasil Zlatarski, “Istoricheskoto znachenie na Bălgaria s ogleđ kăm neinoto mezhdudărzhavno položenie,” *Slavianska biblioteka* 1 (1920), 30–56.

cultural prominence of the First and the Second Bulgarian Kingdoms and their imputed “anti-national,” “Byzantine” character. The Bulgarian case perhaps best exemplifies the inherent and insurmountable problems of building a national narrative out of imperial material. The proposed “compromise”—pitting the “national” popular masses and the “Byzantinized” elite against each other—only aggravated the problems. There was still a long way to go before the claims to the symbolic capital of Byzantium—seen not as Greek but as Slavo-Byzantine—would attempt to redeem the Bulgarian historical imagery from its Procrustean bed.

Meanwhile, gestures in this direction were not altogether missing. Significantly, however, they did not come from historians. In an extensive review of D. Vikelas’s *Historical Essays*, Ivan Shishmanov (1862–1928), a prominent Bulgarian literary scholar and ethnographer, outlined a perspective towards Byzantium and its impact consistent with that of the Greek author (and the budding Byzantine studies in Western Europe and Russia) but still unpopular with the Bulgarian historians. Shishmanov applauded that attitudes toward the Byzantine Empire had shifted from regarding it as “a political monster” and “cultural swamp” (an attitude that he, too, attributed to the “witty dialectics of Montesquieu and the subjective criticism of Gibbon”) to being informed by “a more sober look at the history of Byzantium and its importance to medieval culture.” “The most recent historical critique,” he wrote, “arrives at results that are not far from a complete rehabilitation of the state that, until recently, bore the contemptuous name ‘*Empire de la décadence*.’” This change of attitude was, according to him, “a good sign of a sound, unbiased critique [and] well-founded objectivity.” It was beginning to implant the idea that “Byzantium is far better than its reputation” and form “a broad recognition for the benefits that Byzantium undoubtedly offered to Europe in its darkest times.” As far as the Slavs were concerned, Shishmanov saw Byzantium as their “teacher and civilizer.” Interestingly, next to such forums of this new, “scientific” attitude like *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* and *Vizantiyskiy vremennik*, Shishmanov named as “the most sober Greek scientific historians” Paparrigopoulos, Sathas, Zambelios, Lambros, Skarlatos and Byzantios.²⁰⁶ Yurdan Ivanov (1872–1947), a student of Shishmanov and an authority on Byzantine and Bulgarian medieval literature, used to stress the beneficial “strong and multidimensional impact of the Byzantine culture” and the “advanced Byzantine empire” on the historical life of the Bulgarians.²⁰⁷

206 Ivan D. Shishmanov, “[Review of] La Grèce byzantine et moderne. Essais historiques par D. Bikelas,” *Bălgarski pregled* 2 (1894–1895), 4–5, 210–212.

207 Yordan Ivanov, “Grătsko-bălgarski otnosheniya predi tsărkovnata borba” (1911), in Yordan Ivanov, *Izbrani proizvedenia*, vol. 1 (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1982). Significantly, on the

At the same time, in an essay discussing the “tragedy” of the Balkans having skipped that “great cultural-historical process,” the Renaissance, Shishmanov attributed responsibility to more than just the Ottomans. Byzantium, he claimed, also had a share in this, since it

failed to elevate humanity in Eastern Europe to new spiritual, artistic, moral and social heights, as this took place in Italy during the Renaissance and [the Age of] Humanism. Its merit lies elsewhere: in contrast to Rome, it converted to Christianity and civilized specifically the barbarian tribes *by using their native dialects*, which was later of great importance for the development of their national literatures.²⁰⁸

But in Byzantium and the Balkans, even before they fell to the Ottomans, there failed to develop the large-scale and deep socioeconomic changes that had conditioned and prepared the Western Renaissance—above all the transition from subsistence to capitalist economy and the emergence of a “conscious citizenship.” The “weak socioeconomic development” was what made these areas too “immature to embrace the innovative ideas of the Renaissance,” a fact most clearly demonstrated by “Byzantium, which really has certain merits for the genesis of the Italian Renaissance, [but] could not release itself for a long time, even after the fall of Constantinople, from the medieval scholastics. For the influence of one culture over another always involves some similarity in social psychology and in the social order.”²⁰⁹ Shishmanov thus moved the beginnings of the Balkan “socioeconomic backwardness” back to the pre-Ottoman, Byzantine past—a thesis that would come to the attention of (mostly economic) historians only during the last quarter of the twentieth century.

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The new generation of Serbian historians, who came of age professionally at the turn of the century, lived at a time of intense national-political ferment. Serbia had emerged victorious from the Customs War with Austria-Hungary, which added to the assertiveness and nerve of Serbian nationalism. In 1905 the Croats and the Serbs of the empire concluded a coalition that made a

other hand, Ivanov was among the Bulgarian scholars commissioned by the Bulgarian state to counter the Greek (and Serbian) propaganda and territorial claims as regards Macedonia during and after the World War I.

208 Ivan D. Shishmanov, “Zapadnoevropeysko i bălgarsko vāzrazhdane” (1928), in Ivan D. Shishmanov, *Izbrani sāchineniya*, vol. 1 (Sofia: BAN, 1965), 76–77.

209 *Ibid.*, 78.

future South Slav union look less unlikely. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was administered since 1878 and annexed in 1908 by the Habsburg monarchy, agitation was rising, not without considerable help from the Serbian state. The “military propaganda” in Ottoman Macedonia and the adjacent areas (also called “Southern” or “Old Serbia”) was in full swing. As could be expected, few Serbian historians could, or wanted to, remain detached from the contemporary “needs and interests” of their nation in such critical times. The way they interpreted these interests and the “lessons” they drew from the medieval past were not always congruent, but they were all motivated by the ambition to buttress with the instruments of modern science the role that Serbia was supposed to play in the impending transformations in the Balkans.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Romantic approach to history, and Srećković in particular, encountered severe criticism from the critical school of Serbian historiography.²¹⁰ Its founder, Ilarion Ruvarac (1832–1905), challenged the Romantic glorification of the medieval past and pleaded for an objective knowledge and critical use of historical sources. Among his illustrious followers were Stojan Novaković, Ljubomir Kovačević, Jovan Radonić and Stanoje Stanojević, who, more insistently and explicitly than their predecessors, identified Serbian history as inseparable from that of Byzantium. In 1890 a group of historians at the Great School, the predecessor of Belgrade University (1905), proposed the creation of a new chair with the unusual title “History of the Middle Ages, with a View to the History of Byzantium.” The idea was not realized due to lack of resources but was suggestive of, as the supporting argumentation went, “the various permanent and close connections of the Serbian lands with Byzantium.”²¹¹ A Seminar for Byzantine Studies was set up in 1906, which until after World War I focused primarily on Greek language and paleography.²¹²

210 The critical historians accused Srećković above all of using as historical sources national epics and folklore, the bulk of which had been collected during the nineteenth century.

211 Ljubomir Maksimović, “Razvoj vizantologije,” in *Univerzitet u Beogradu 1838–1988. Zbornik radova* (Belgrade: Univerzitet u Beogradu i Savremena administracija, 1988), 655–656; Srđan Pirivatrić, “A Case Study in the Emergence of Byzantine Studies: Serbia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” in *The Byzantine World*, ed. Paul Stephenson (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2010), 483.

212 The first head of that chair was the philologist Dragutin Anastasijević (1877–1950), another disciple of Karl Krumbacher (Maksimović, “Razvoj vizantologije,” 658–659; Pirivatrić, “A Case Study in the Emergence of Byzantine Studies,” 483–484).

One of the foremost Serbian medievalists at that time and into the interwar period, Stanoje Stanojević (1874–1937),²¹³ had the ambitious idea of writing a ten-volume history of *Byzantium and the Serbs*. The first nine volumes were to survey political relations from the settlement of the Slavs until the fall of Constantinople in 1453, while the last one was to be devoted to “the overall cultural impact of Byzantium on the Serbian people.” Only the first two volumes ultimately saw the light of day (in 1903 and 1906). However, in his general introduction, Stanojević spelled out with clarity and force the importance of the Serbs’ historical relationship with Byzantium:

The entire state organization of the Byzantine Empire and its whole culture, material as well as intellectual, with all their results, had exerted a strong influence on the Serbian people right from the moment of its arrival in its new homeland.... Undoubtedly, the Byzantine Empire impacted more strongly than all other factors both its political and cultural history.... The entire political and cultural life of the Serbs until the arrival of the Turks is so intertwined with Byzantine history and imbued with Byzantine influences that [one can say that] Byzantine-Serbian relations during the first ten centuries of Serbian history constitute the core of the history of the Serbian people.²¹⁴

Almost the entire political history of the Serbs during the first five centuries after their settlement in the Balkans, Stanojević argued, was “filled with struggle for freedom and independence, struggle for emancipation from Byzantium”; that was a period when the Serbian nation “moved more and more into the History of Europe and the History of Mankind.” And even if the Serbs’ connections with the West also grew during this period,

the political relations with Byzantium, the struggle against its dominance and the internal disputes in the individual Serbian states around the cultural and political relations with Byzantium continued to absorb the main forces of the Serbian People.... The organization of the state, church, army and administration, religion, literature, education and many elements of material culture the Serbian people had borrowed

²¹³ Stanojević studied under the renowned Slavist V. Jagić and the historian K. Jireček in Vienna. He worked with the Byzantinists F. Uspensky at the Russian Archaeological Institute in Istanbul and K. Krumbacher in Munich. See Jovan Radonić, *Slike iz istorije i književnosti* (Belgrade: n.p., 1938), 509–521.

²¹⁴ Stanoje Stanojević, *Vizantija i Srbi*, vol. 1 (Novi Sad: Matica Srpska, 1903), i, iii.

from Byzantium—either completely or by grafting them onto their national institutions, onto their distinctive national features.²¹⁵

It is remarkable that by “Byzantine culture” Stanojević meant the combination of several disparate elements: the material culture of the Thraco-Illyrian tribes, Celtic culture, Hellenic culture imbued with Eastern elements, and Roman culture. It was this “aggregate” of legacies that impacted the Serbs so massively. Like almost all Balkan historians at the time besides Greek ones, Stanojević believed that the Eastern Roman Empire “had almost nothing in common with the ancient Hellenic states: it was a Roman state with Hellenic culture.” By the seventh century the characteristic features of “Byzantinism”—the Greek language, Hellenic culture and Christianity “as it was understood and developed in the East”—overshadowed the Roman traditions, and the Eastern Roman Empire became a Byzantine Empire.²¹⁶ Stanojević saw this state as a controversial permutation of creative and destructive factors that constantly fought for predominance, hence its continuous oscillation “between strength and malaise, vigor and decay.” But despite the great ordeals and crises it had been through over its long history, the Empire had always managed to withstand them and recover its forces. The reason, according to Stanojević, was that “it was constantly resuscitated by the fresh blood of the various tribes that settled on its territory.” From them it drew not only its strength and tenacity but also its “unusual capacity for recuperation, revival and rejuvenation.”²¹⁷

Not all Serbian historians agreed that there had been such an overwhelming Byzantine presence in Serbian history. Jovan Radonić (1873–1956), another major representative of the critical historiographical school, organized his book *The Past of Ancient Serbia* around well-known milestones of the historical narrative. These included the growing independence, expansion and strengthening of the Serbian state under Stefan Nemanja, Stefan the First-Crowned and Stefan Uroš I, which had brought it within the Byzantine cultural sphere; the organization and later independence of the Serbian Church, whereby “already at that time the Serbian nationality began to identify with Orthodoxy” (though this caused problems for the tighter incorporation of the Serbian lands on the Adriatic); and Serbia’s rise to “the chief power in the Balkan peninsula” during the reign of Stefan Uroš II Milutin (1282–1321), which had brought about rapid

215 Ibid., iii–iv.

216 Ibid., ii–iii; Stanoje Stanojević, *Vizantija i Srbi*, vol. 2 (Novi Sad: Matica Srpska, 1906), 110, 119.

217 Stanoje Stanojević, *Vizantija i Srbi*, vol. 1, 112; vol. 2, 128.

penetration of the Byzantine “culture and fine and sophisticated way of life.”²¹⁸ However, he pointed out that although Byzantium, then the main cultural center in Eastern Europe, exerted a powerful influence on the spiritual and material culture of the “young and fresh Slavic peoples,” the Serbian spirit at that time was not content with simply imitating the Byzantine style and demonstrated a “striving for independent creativity in literature, legislation and architecture.”²¹⁹ Stefan Dušan “came forward as a successor to the Byzantine emperors” aiming at the conquest of the remaining part of Byzantium.²²⁰ Radonić admitted that Dušan arranged his court “fully in a Byzantine fashion” and that the incorporation of numerous Greek populations impelled him to adopt new legislation that took into account the different (from the Serbian) structure of Byzantine society. Even so he chose to compare medieval Serbia not with Byzantium but with the Franks’ state and other medieval states in “Western Europe.” This was also the case when he discussed the rigorously centralized political structure of Dušan’s empire or Serbia’s social strata in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In contrast to Novaković, as we will shortly see, he juxtaposed the rule of the Nemanjić dynasty with Byzantine absolutism, stressing the role played in state affairs by “the court dignitaries and the state assembly.”²²¹ In the realm of culture—the area conventionally considered to have been most strongly influenced by Byzantium—Radonić preferred to emphasize the intermediary location of Serbia between the two great cultural centers at the time, Rome and Byzantium. Byzantine influence on Serbian architecture and religious paintings was “crucial,” yet Romanic influence was also present. And most importantly, since the latter half of the fourteenth century, the aspiration for a proper Serbian creativity was becoming increasingly visible. The same trend of growing emancipation from Byzantine patterns was noticeable in literature. This tendency, however, was “stalled” after Dušan’s death, when separatism prevailed over the idea of centralization. Radonić, like Novaković, did not blame Byzantium for submission to the Ottoman Turks. Instead he blamed the inability of “corrupted Serbia” to put up effective resistance.²²²

218 Jovan Radonić, *Prošlost Stare Srbije* (Belgrade: Nova Štampanja “Davidović,” 1912), 6–8, 10–12.

219 Ibid., 11–12.

220 The proclamation of the Serbian Patriarchate received the consent of the Bulgarian Patriarchate in Târnovo and of the Ochrid Archbishopric.

221 Radonić, *Prošlost Stare Srbije*, 14–18, 21. Radonić also discussed the trade relations only with the “West.”

222 Ibid., 19–21. Radonić abandons his moderate attitude and critical sense when discussing the Albanians—the hot issue of the day when he was writing his history of Old Serbia and when Austria-Hungary was championing the creation of an independent Albanian

Radonić, therefore, appeared reluctant to either demonize Byzantium or appropriate its symbolic cultural status for Serbia. He was keen instead to assert Serbia's pivotal place between East and West, having benefited from the culture of each yet ultimately moving towards its own original culture and patrimony. This line of interpretation, remarkably enough, would re-emerge in the works of some present-day Serbian Byzantinists (like Ljubomir Maksimović) in reference to a different geopolitical configuration.

The most unorthodox perspective on our subject matter around the turn of the century came from Stojan Novaković (1842–1915). From the 1880s to the first decade of the 1900s he was, next to Ruvarac, the greatest authority in the study of the Serbian past. His dissenting position, one that impacted his interpretation of the role of Byzantium in Serbian history, concerned above all the national consciousness and its relation to state-building in the Middle Ages.

Without confronting the Romantics directly, Novaković sought to expose the irrelevance of projecting modern notions about nation and state into the past. Srećković, for example, had argued that the Serbian kings had launched wars not to invade and conquer but to “liberate and unify the Serbian lands . . . [into] a single organic state,” and that the Serbian “state organization derived from purely national principles.”²²³ Novaković, however, challenged the very idea that the congruence of ethnic and state boundaries was at all relevant for the medieval Balkans and hence that “national unification” had anything to do with state interests.

The Eastern Roman Empire, he argued, was built on the monarchic, imperialistic and centralist basis of Roman law. The major defect of this system was that it soon turned into a personal and despotic rule, where the only source of power was the emperor. That same principle of state was adopted “as dogma” by all those who aspired to the Byzantine throne, whereby “autocracy seized and became entrenched in the whole Balkan peninsula.” For Novaković this autocratic principle was responsible first for the inability of either the Greeks or the Slavs to assimilate and unify the various ethnicities (e.g., the Vlachs or the Albanians) into bigger national entities, in contrast to the developments in the other parts of the former Roman Empire, and second, for the failure of

state on lands once incorporated into the Serbian medieval state. He firmly refuted the existence of an “Albanian people as an entity” and of an Albanian national sense (or even the potential to develop one) “both in the past and the present” (*ibid.*, 8–10; 21–29).

223 Srećković, *Istorija srpskoga naroda* 2, 810–811.

feudalism to develop and strike root in these areas.²²⁴ The local nobilities drew their strength not from their status, as in the West, but from the riches and the lands they could capture. Under such conditions, it was only natural that all Balkan monarchs should pursue the imperialist idea, striving to gain control of the whole peninsula, without much heed for the mutual exclusion of their designs—a fact that opened the door for outside invaders.²²⁵

Nationality had little role to play in this situation: it served only to distinguish the origins of a king, emperor or state, but the people were fully subdued and “did not count for anything.” A conquered land always followed its new master, and the nationality to which this master belonged was also the nationality of the populations inhabiting his lands.²²⁶ “Ethnic consciousness” was thus restricted to the higher echelons of the ruling class and was manifested in the language of the church and the liturgy (e.g., Greek or Slavic). However, that was not the popular language which, just like the ordinary people, was assigned an inferior place. The spoken language drifted away from the language of the church (and “high culture”), as the conservative stasis of the latter increasingly isolated it from the nationality. Hence Novaković’s dissenting observation: “We should never disregard the state of subdued passivity in which the sense of nationality existed at that time. The main characteristic feature of the Middle Ages was the noble, aristocratic supremacy or organization.” What mattered was the state, not the nationality that, by providing the material (productive) base of the state and the ruler, “was a historical factor deprived of any moral initiative.” Novaković’s final conclusions, running against the general historiographical context of the time, sound baldly unorthodox. First, he says, “the

224 Novaković here echoes the then-prevailing views in Byzantine studies in Europe about the “lack” of feudalism in Byzantium, views that were later challenged from both Marxist and non-Marxist positions.

225 Stojan Novaković, *Nekolika teža pitanja srpske istorije*, in Stojan Novaković, *Iz srpske istorije* (Novi Sad and Belgrade: Budućnost, 1966 [1912]), 87–91.

226 Novaković illustrated this point by citing the examples of the Bulgarian Kingdom, which kept its “ethnic” name despite the complete assimilation of the Bulgarians into the Slav mass, and Dušan’s empire, where the Greek dignitaries had no problem agreeing to obey their new Serbian sovereign as long as their privileges remained in place. The Slavic tribes in the northern half of the Balkans, he also argued, were of the same “nationality” and constantly oscillated between the Bulgarian and the Serbian centers, depending on the “identity” of the state that came to contain them: “The mass of these tribes was worth nothing; it only followed the masters who came to it or imposed themselves on it.” A major consequence of this “oscillation and indeterminacy” was the ethnographic and linguistic mixture of populations (Novaković, *Nekolika teža pitanja*, 92–95).

sense of nationality among the masses during the Middle Ages was missing completely." Second, this sense was embodied only by "the high classes, the rulers, the nobles (aristocracy) and the clergy." Third, and as a result, the state borders between the Bulgarians and the Serbs, who showed almost no national differences at that time, "had always indicated the borders between their nationalities as well." Therefore, Novaković inferred, if history was to serve its purpose of *magistra vitae*,

we should instantly accept as a first teaching, a final rule for all modern tasks [that] the Middle Ages must be left aside; we must seek [to define] our position on the basis of the contemporary state of affairs, regardless of what had been in the past; we must rely on a real and living power if we want to respond to the people's aspirations about the future... The unsavory past should remain history: the life of the people must be rearranged freely and, without second thoughts, be directed to where the fundamentals of modern criticism lead.²²⁷

At that time, such an a-Romantic attitude was characteristic not only of Novaković, as the writings of Ivan Shishmanov in Bulgaria and of members of the *Junimea* circle in Romania indicate. This does not mean that these dissident critical scholars were not complicit in linking historiography (and scholarship in general) and nationalism. What they pleaded for was shifting the battlefield of competing national programs from "historical" to "ethnographic" and "linguistic rights," which also had their (usually more recent) "history." And this shift as well was hardly free of political goals and implications.²²⁸

Novaković's viewpoint on the irrelevance of the South Slavs' medieval past to their present was only one aspect of his revisionist approach to the history of not only the Serbs but the Balkan Slavs generally. He critically "revisited" a

227 Novaković, *Nekolika teža pitanja*, 96–97. Elsewhere in the same book, Novaković wrote: "An educated people at the present time should pursue unity solely on the basis of completely different bases, adhering to ethnographic data and guidance, with the means of modern culture, without any consideration for dogmatic discussions and medieval traditions" (Novaković 1966, 72). He reiterated the thesis about the irrelevance of the "national feeling" and the incongruence of political and cultural borders in the medieval age in Stojan Novaković, "Les problèmes serbes," *Archiv für slavische Philologie* 32 (1911), 457.

228 While Novaković's purpose was to downplay the historical divisions between Serbs and Croats, Shishmanov's purpose was to prove the Bulgarian character of Macedonia by using ethnographic and linguistic "data" as a more legitimate weapon than the historical claims of Greek propaganda.

series of taken-for-granted issues that shaped the mainstream historical plot. Thus he subtly ironized Srećković's denomination of Eastern Orthodoxy as a "Serbian faith" by noting that the Serbs "took pride in an adopted [Byzantine] culture as if it was their own and very persistently stuck to it." Novaković admitted that "Serbdom and Orthodoxy formed an indivisible whole." Yet at the same time he bemoaned the fact that, at least from the tenth century, the two rival religious propagandas, the Byzantine and the Roman, had split "the same people with the same language into two distinct cultures and two distinct literatures." Since then the Serb people and the Croat people had been at loggerheads and fighting a life-and-death combat, "one for the love of Byzantium, the other for the love of Rome, while at the same time Byzantium and Rome never ceased to treat both with contempt."²²⁹ (Interestingly, Novaković considered the Bulgarians to have been far more fortunate in this respect: because they had come under the exclusive influence of the Byzantine culture from the very beginning, it was natural that all their rulers looked towards the Eastern Roman throne; "the rivalry between Constantinople and the Bulgarian state concerned not civilization but only politics."²³⁰)

More importantly, Novaković directly challenged two myths underpinning the Serbian national narrative—the myth of the ethnic self-awareness and communal feeling of the Slavic multitude that flooded the Balkans from the sixth century, and the myth of the Serbian kings' perennial drive to unify all the Serbs in a single and unitary Serbian state as the rationale for their continued confrontation with Byzantium.

Novaković stressed that the Slavic tribes that invaded the lands of the Byzantine Empire as far as the walls of Constantinople and the southern borders of Morea were fully missing both an "ethnic sentiment" and a "sense of community." Apart from plundering and pillaging, this Slavic multitude did not leave behind a single great deed. They were "an ethnic mass without any form or organization," "*not Slavs but Slavic tribes and brotherhoods*," who lived in a blissful state of anarchy and were strongly attached to their "particularistic tribal life." There was no attempt at any kind of political or national consolidation, "no trace of any kind of political ideas that would have suited such a numerous people." Had the Byzantine statesmen showed a bit more skills and diligence, they would have found it easy to vanquish and organize these

229 Novaković, *Nekolika teža pitanja*, 69–70. It should be noted that Novaković was inclined to overrate neither the Serbs' state-building potential nor their "primordial" culture and emphasized the anarchy, poverty, "primitive civilization" and lack of culture reigning in the Serbian lands until at least the eleventh century (*ibid.*, 104–108).

230 *Ibid.*, 104.

Slavic settlers as they wished. As it happened, they “tried with all the means of their civilization to subdue the barbarians,” and their effort did not miss the mark: lacking unity, the Slavs readily adapted to the Roman administrative system and adopted the Byzantine civilization, a fact that “exerted a strong impact on the development of this ethnic mass” and on “the very formation of its nationality.”²³¹ The idea of the state was introduced among the Slavs of Byzantium by the “Turanian Bulgars,” who supplied them with the “adhesive” they were lacking and a common orientation—first towards building a powerful state and then towards “conquering the entire Eastern Roman Empire.” In this “the Bulgar chiefs did not think in the least of the South Slavs, of their convergence or national idea. They thought about how to get their hands on power in Constantinople, such as it was, with all its elements and entire organization.” Without openly stating it, here Novaković challenged one of Zlatarski’s main theses: the Christianization of the Bulgarian Slavs and the adoption of Byzantine learning in a Slavic form, according to him, had nothing to do with nation-building; they were adopted in order to sanction the Bulgarian tsars’ exercise of power and conquest of Constantinople. At stake was into whose hands, Bulgarian or Greek, the entire government of the Empire would fall, and nothing else.²³²

Remarkably, Novaković considered not the direct emulation of Byzantium, but the “example and political concepts of the Bulgarians and their tsars Simeon and Samuil,” to have been decisive not only in building the Serbian state but in charting its relations with Constantinople. Ever since its inception, he repeatedly stressed, Serbia had followed in Bulgaria’s footsteps in pursuing a fully independent power that would strengthen and expand the state and thus “satisfy the selfish whims of medieval proprietors [i.e., the Serbian rulers].” And since the Magyars, Germans and Venetians were barring the Serbs’ advancement to the northwest, the only option was expansion to the southeast, towards the center of the Byzantine Empire and Macedonia. Despite the belief of many Serbs to the contrary, Novaković pointed out, none of their leaders at that time were at all concerned about the “sense of nationality” or were moved by the vision of uniting all the Serbs in a single “national state.” What they cared about was the seizure of power and the existing titles (for new ones

231 Novaković, *Nekolika teža pitanja*, 128–131. Novaković used to stress the role in this respect of the adoption of “Byzantine Christianity” not just as a system of values and social cohesion but above all as a “life-world” molding every aspect of individual and social life, hence nationality was closely identified with the Orthodox faith (see also Stojan Novaković, “Sloveni balkanski i njihova obrazovanost,” in Novaković, *Iz srpske istorije*, 139–140).

232 Novaković, *Nekolika teža pitanja*, 132–133.

were not allowed); the imperial title came along with the capture of the bigger part of the Empire.²³³ Similarly to Zlatarski, Novaković thus also implied the existence of a gap between the Serbian people (“nation”) and elite that had been caused by the elite’s Byzantinization. But for him that gap was not caused by cultural alienation (as it was for Zlatarski)—indeed, in his analysis Orthodoxy stands out as the only binding social glue in the Serbian society of that time. For him a gap had emerged from the non-democratic and non-national principles of the statehood emanating from Byzantium and imitated by its rivals.

These were the ideas that, according to Novaković, connected the Serbs with Byzantium and that “grew from the complete adoption of the Byzantine civilization and the Byzantine religious ideas.” The emerging picture, although not fully dark, was fairly gloomy:

Thus the Eastern Roman Empire had come to resemble a fenced battleground in which the competitors fought each other for the supreme power. As soon as they came out of the borders of second-order small states, as soon as they, so to speak, expanded a bit, the Balkan Slavs succumbed to the infection of Greek megalomania. In the Eastern Roman Empire itself, that infection raged continuously. [...] To the observer this centuries-old Eastern Roman Empire presents an odd sight: with its weaknesses and its internal unrest it constantly inspired in its generals and rebel vassals the idea to destroy or seize it. In this odd empire everyone without distinction, Greek or Slav, thought only about how to become its master, but no one ever thought to abandon the Byzantine religion or faith. The great achievement of [Stefan] Nemanja is that he definitively elevated the Serbs into the ranks of the known competitors for the throne in Constantinople and placed them among the acolytes of Byzantium, thus detaching them once and for all from the West and from Latinism.²³⁴

The Byzantinization of Serbia during the reign of the Nemanjić dynasty, Novaković argued, went hand in hand with the rise of its “imperialist idea.” The model of the Bulgarian Kingdom of Simeon and Samuil (“whose traces were everywhere”) enthralled Stefan Dušan and became the source of his own “megalomania.” The outcome was similar: lacking practical political ideas to serve the genuine national interests, both empires died with their creators.

233 Ibid., 117–118, 120–121, 133.

234 Ibid., 119–121.

And since “all Serbian state creations were purely personal, without strong internal organization [and] a feeling of unity,” soon after Dušan’s death the “particularistic and individualistic atavism” of the Serbian lords predominated: “The idea of a great empire or a great state was not alive either in the people or among the nobles of that time. This idea was purely Dušan’s...” Political arbitrariness and disrespect for law and order were the other side of this “personal rule,” which also made any political success transitory. Here Novaković not only demonstrated his customary imperviousness to Slavic sentimentality but also proposed a radical revision of the teleological Romantic story about the “preordained” rise of Dušan’s empire to the height of power and about the Serbs’ potential to succeed Byzantium had the Turks not invaded. All of this led to a conclusion that must have startled many of his followers:

For the needs of our age we have nothing to learn or resurrect from what the Middle Ages left us; the principles of our times have nothing in common with the principles of that time. There is nothing to be particularly recorded or highlighted of these sorrowful times; by the deeds or examples of that time one should pass with eyes closed... Today we should look at this past only in order to understand the mistakes made or the examples we must avoid.²³⁵

Novaković did not see his task as determining who to blame for this unsavory legacy, Byzantium or its Slavic imitators—an issue that continued to preoccupy many Bulgarian historians. Both his critical historical method and his political leanings as a voice of the Serbian Progressives led him instead to underline the inherent difference between the medieval and the modern world. His modernist nation-building project found little it could draw on in either the Byzantine polity or its “Serbo-Byzantine” incarnation in the empire of Stefan Dušan.

But despite Novaković’s wide scholarly (and political) reputation, most “critical” Serbian historians were not swayed from their patriotic mission to bring the medieval (imperial) past to bear on the contemporary construction of the Serbian nation. As in the Romantic period, the main actor in the histories of the medieval Serbian state was the “Serbian people,” and the leitmotiv was its “centuries-old” aspiration for “full national freedom” and “state independence” from Byzantium, which continued to act as the main enemy of Serbian unification. Rather than imitating the imperialistic goals of the Byzantine emperors, the Serbian rulers worked “consciously, systematically and hard,” together with the people, to strengthen Serbia politically, economically and culturally, preparing it for the time “when the destiny of the Balkan peninsula would be

235 Ibid., 69, 133–137.

decided." Furthermore, the overall teleological scheme of nineteenth-century historiography remained intact: nothing could stop the "young state" and nation from displaying their full intrinsic potential and rising to prime contenders for the Byzantine legacy.²³⁶ But certain generic differences in interpretation between the Romantic and the critical currents are nonetheless evident.

All Serbian historians discussed so far saw Serbia's history between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries as an "evolution towards Byzantium" (Novaković), peaking with Stefan Dušan's empire. Dušan's ideal, Stanoje Stanojević tells us, was that "Serbia should inherit Byzantium, which had shown itself incapable of life"; he "wanted to create a Serbian-Byzantine empire, a state which would be based on the Byzantine traditions, with a Byzantine culture, and in which the Serbian people and its state would dominate and be the master."²³⁷ But while the national-Romantic canon viewed Dušan's ambitions as both morally justified and politically feasible, the critical historiographic school was skeptical. Through a different route S. Stanojević came to a conclusion similar to Novaković's: that Dušan "had neither the strength nor the talent to carry out the consolidation of the heterogeneous elements" that came to constitute his empire; his plan was "impressive from a political but not from a national point of view."²³⁸ After the Great War, Stanojević would dedicate a special study to this issue, to be discussed in the next section.

...

Alexandru D. Xenopol (1847–1920) was the scholar who dominated the field of Romanian history-writing at the end of the nineteenth century. His great work of synthesis, the multi-volume *The History of the Romanians in Dacia Trajana* (1888–1893), covered the entire history of the Romanian people from 513 BCE,

236 See, as most authoritative, Stanoje Stanojević, *Istorija srpskoga naroda* (Belgrade: Štamparija "Dositej Obradović," 1908), esp. 95, 101, 106, 112–13, 116, 123, 163. See also M.S. Ubavkić, *Istorija Srba*, vols. 1–2 (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1887, 1891); Ljubomir Kovačević and Ljubomir Jovanović, *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vols. 1–2 (Belgrade: Državna štamparija Kraljevine Srbije, 1894)—this study is considered to be the first synthesis of Serbian history, but it deals only with the period before 1020.

237 Stanojević, *Istorija srpskoga naroda*, 169, 175, 179.

238 Ibid., 187. Stanojević also noted the resistance the proclamation of the empire and especially the independent Serbian Patriarchate evoked among the clergy and parts of the society, particularly after Dušan's death, for having led to the Constantinople Patriarchate's anathema on the Serbian church and state and to numerous misfortunes. Added to the unsustainable internal heterogeneity of the empire, this resistance contributed greatly to the disintegration of Dušan's empire and the reconciliation of the Serbian Church with the Patriarch in Constantinople (ibid., 182–183).

the first mention of the Getae by Herodotus, to 1859, the year of the union between Wallachia and Moldavia. The second volume, entitled *The Barbarian Invasions* (270–1270), dealt with relations with the Slavs, the Magyars and other “newcomers,” embroiled with the theories about Romanians’ migrations and continuity.²³⁹ Xenopol called the whole period between 900 and 1650, which he defined as the medieval period of Romanian history, the “Era of Slavonism.” Throughout this whole era Byzantium is mentioned only in passing, and its direct impact appears negligible compared to that of Bulgarian political tradition and culture.²⁴⁰ The political institutions in the emerging Romanian principalities, Xenopol explained, had their roots in and were modeled after the Bulgarian (and partly the Hungarian) ones; the legal system was “Romano-Bulgarian”; and the Romanian church “remained steadfast in [its] Slavic form of worship,” while the Patriarchate of Constantinople’s attempts to establish its supremacy are qualified as “tendencies of usurpation” and as impinging on the principalities’ sovereignty. Rather than abating, “Slavic Orthodoxy” was strengthened after the Turkish conquest of the Balkans, as many Bulgarian prelates found refuge in the Principalities. Slavic language and culture (*slavonismul*) thus remained dominant until at least the mid-seventeenth century, when it was replaced by the *grecismul* of the Phanariots and, in Xenopol’s own day, by French influence.²⁴¹

In the perspective of our topic, this is perhaps the most interesting aspect of Xenopol’s *History*: the almost complete overshadowing of Byzantine legacy by that of the Slavs. Xenopol deviated from what would soon become the conventional interpretation, which regarded the Bulgarian political and cultural presence to the north of the Danube as little more than a channel for the massive penetration of Byzantine influence among the Romanians before

239 The main objective of Volume 2 of Xenopol’s *History* was to rebuff the Austrian scholar Robert Roesler’s “immigrationist theory” (1871) positing the late migration (in the ninth or even the thirteenth century) of the Romanians from the Balkans towards the lands to the north of the Danube. As in the case of Fallmerayer in Greece, this outside challenge galvanized a series of historical “rebuttals,” which gave a strong push to the crystallization of the Romanian historical canon.

240 Literature in Church Slavonic spread from Bulgaria and Serbia to Wallachia and Moldavia as early as the eleventh century. From the establishment of the two principalities and of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the fourteenth century until the mid-seventeenth century, Church Slavonic was the language of the chancellery and of the liturgy. It was also the language of the educated and the nobility.

241 Alexandru D. Xenopol, *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiană*, vol. 3: *Primii domni și vechile așezăminte: 1290–1457* (3rd ed., in 14 vols.) (Bucharest: Editura “Cartea Românească,” 1925), 146–205.

and after the creation of the principalities. Ioan Bogdan, who, like Xenopol, emphasized the “overwhelming impact” of the Slavs on Romanian culture, insisted on the positive aspects of Byzantine influence that had reached the Romanians through the Bulgarians during the latter’s domination north of the Danube between the seventh and the tenth centuries. While the Romanians, he wrote, “were departing more and more from Roman culture and becoming savage,” the Bulgarians, “who came like barbarians over us, took from their Byzantine neighbors, under the protective wings of an organized and powerful state, a civilization which was then advanced, that of Byzantium, which was none other than the continuation, in a Greek form with oriental influences, of the old Roman civilization.”²⁴² The historian Demostene Russo went much further by stating, “Even at the time when Slavic influence was omnipotent in the principalities . . . it was Byzantine influence that reigned. For a good part of the Slavic civilization was borrowed from Byzantium . . .”²⁴³ For his part Xenopol referred solely to “Slavonism,” not to “Byzantinism,” and—remarkably—his evaluation of the impact of this Slavic dominance on Romanian culture was not unlike that of the contemporary Bulgarian historians about the effect of Byzantine dominance on Bulgarian culture.

The Slavic language and the cultural forms related to it, according to Xenopol, were “foreign to the nature and [way of] thinking of the Romanian people.” As such they presented, over a full eight centuries, an obstacle to Romanians’ intellectual creativity and advancement. It could not be compared with Latin in the West, since it was “a language of a barbarian people” and was later responsible for the “undivided dominance of the religious ideas on the spirit and consciousness [of the Romanians].” Indeed, cultural Slavonism was one of the main causes for the historical retardation of the Romanians compared to the Latin peoples of Western Europe. On the other hand, the Slavization of Romanian language and culture concerned the “high strata of society” only—the court, nobility and church—not the ordinary people. Xenopol saw in this

242 Ioan Bogdan, *Românii și bulgarii* (Bucharest: Socec, 1895), 15, quoted in Boia, *History and Myth*, 107. On the Romanian “borrowings” from the Slavs in terms of language, literature, popular customs, and state institutions, see Ioan Bogdan, *Însemnătatea studiilor slave pentru români* (Bucharest: Editura Librăriei Socecu, 1894). It should be noted that the Romanian scholars from the “critical school” and later periods used to privilege either the Slavic or the Byzantine impact. Thus Bogdan tended to minimize the broader Byzantine impact, believing that “medieval Europe was conceived in its west and center” (quoted in Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei*, 308–309).

243 Demostene Russo, “Bizațul reabilitat” (1915), in Demostene Russo, *Studii istorice greco-române. Opere postume*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Fundația pentru literatură și artă “Regele Carol II,” 1939), 11.

the beginning of a lasting and destructive tendency: "Thus we encounter, as early as this era, that dualism with respect to culture that will not leave us in any of the periods of our history: a high class [that is] usually alienated from the mentality of the people, thus tearing apart its moral unity"—first adopting Slavic culture, then Greek, and finally French (the latter being the only one corresponding to the "Latin mentality" of the Romanian people). In the 1650s, according to Xenopol, the modern period of Romanian history began, "which was characterized by the predominance of Greek influence (*grecismul*), first in culture and soon after in the whole political and social life of the high strata [of society]."²⁴⁴ The parallels with Zlatarski's interpretation of the impact of Byzantine cultural influence on the Bulgarians are remarkable. But even if Xenopol shared the Romantic negativism towards the Greeks, he was not interested in projecting their "harmful" impact back on Byzantium (whose direct influence on the Romanians he never considered to be significant anyway). Xenopol had no serious interest in Byzantine-Romanian relations and preferred to measure the Greek factor in the context of the Ottoman system of administration and the modern history of the Romanians, not as a revived remnant of a distant past.

Significantly, his engagement with Byzantine history came about only in reaction to a provocative Greek stance on the question of the Balkan Vlachs ("Aromanians"). In 1890 the Parisian journal *Revue de géographie* published an article, "Les Roumains," in which the anonymous author ("un Hellène") maintained that the historical research of Greek scholars indicated that "there was nothing in common between these "Greco-Vlachs" [*sic*] and the populations north of the Danube." The Romanians could not allow such an argument to go unanswered.²⁴⁵ Following the division of the Roman Empire, Xenopol retorted,

244 Xenopol, *Istoria românilor*, vol. 3, 205–206; vol. 6, 178–179; vol. 7, 7; vol. 8, 171–172. Xenopol argued that a similar process of "Grecization" of culture, mainly through the church, had been underway in the Bulgarian lands as well during that period (*ibid.*, 71–72). He also considered Grecism much more dangerous than Slavonism precisely because the latter was "a form of thought, uncoated with political goals to dominate and oppress," while the former used political power to strengthen its domination and "suppress Romanian culture" (*ibid.*, vol. 8, 237; vol. 9, 6).

245 "Needless to say, no one in Bucharest was naive enough to suppose that the Vlachs of Perister or Pindus could ever be united with Romania, in however loose a form; and the money expended on this propaganda was in the nature of bread cast upon the waters... When Count Goluchowski [the minister of foreign affairs of Austria-Hungary, 1895–1906] bluntly asked Take Ionescu [Romanian minister in several cabinets] what possible use a group of Romanians in the Pindus could be to Bucharest, that statesman replied that they might become 'an element of compensation at the right moment'"—

the space inhabited by the Romans south of the Danube fell within the Eastern part. However, even if this part was Hellenized, thus becoming a Byzantine Empire, this was a cultural, not an ethnic phenomenon. Furthermore, after 1185 (the year of the “Vlach uprising,” after which the “Vlach-Bulgarian Kingdom” was set up) the territories inhabited by the Vlachs split from the Empire and the dependent relations disappeared. Therefore, the Romanian historian concluded, the Greeks, who claimed the inheritance of Byzantium, had no right to vindicate domination over the Macedono-Romanians, since the latter overthrew Byzantine rule and were later subordinated to the Ottomans.²⁴⁶

Xenopol's prominent work, therefore, was far from integrating Byzantium into the Romanian narrative and even further from the Byzantinist discourse that his students and successors were soon to develop. He was perhaps the most outstanding representative of that cohort of Romanian historians who, ever since the Enlightenment, saw the (Slavo)-Byzantine influence on Romania as the major cause of its inferior position vis-à-vis the Latin West and as having disrupted its “organic” development as a Latin country. This construal did not end with Xenopol; after him, however, it had to coexist with and confront a range of contesting interpretations.

The dawn of the twentieth century saw the signs of a radical re-evaluation of the place of Byzantium in Romanian culture and history. Byzantine studies were introduced as an academic discipline in 1907, when a Chair of Byzantine Philology was founded at the Faculty of Literature in the University of Bucharest led by Constantin Litzeica, who had specialized in Byzantine literature under Karl Krumbacher. In 1913 it was renamed the “Chair of History of Byzantine-Romanian civilization.”²⁴⁷ Behind this institutional thrust was the conviction, formulated already by C. Erbiceanu, C. Litzeica and G. Murnu, that research in the “national language, literature and history” was impossible without knowledge of Byzantium and the Byzantine sources.

It should be noted that the interest in Romanian-Byzantine themes evolved concurrently with a “regionalist turn” in Romania's political agenda. The early twentieth century was the period of a very active Balkan policy, when Romania aspired to the role of principal regional power and arbiter of the Balkans and

Robert W. Seton-Watson, *A History of the Romanians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 384.

246 Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei*, 266–268.

247 The decision for this name came from the Greek parliament, despite the critiques of several Romanian historians, including Ioan Bogdan, the then-dean of the Faculty of Literature, who commented on the absence of an object of study since “such a civilization had never existed” (Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei*, 320).

when it was establishing itself as the protector of the Aromanians who inhabited some parts of the peninsula. An imperial vision of the Romanian past fit these new horizons. The ultimate triumph, just around that time, of the Daco-Roman synthesis as the accepted formula of the Romanians' ethnogenesis indicated the need for a wider perspective on Romania's history, bringing together indigenist and universalist elements.

The first strong impetus in this direction came from a Greek. Since 1915, Litzica's successor at the Chair of Byzantine Philology was Demostene Russo (1869–1938). Russo was a native of Ottoman Eastern Thrace who moved to Romania in 1894; he was also a student and follower of Spyridon Lambros.²⁴⁸ Russo was among the first to venture into rehabilitating the historical role of Byzantium generally and for Romanian history in particular. In his book *Hellenism in Romania* (1912) and his inaugural university lecture of 1915, suggestively entitled "Byzantium Rehabilitated," Russo set out to elucidate the historical justification for such rehabilitation and chart the "desiderata of Romanian Byzantinology."²⁴⁹ With arguments reminiscent of those of Dimitrios Vikelas and Ivan Shishmanov, he attributed the long-standing negative attitude toward the Eastern Roman Empire to the fact that, until a few decades earlier, knowledge about it had been drawn "from the surveys of the Western Catholics—the mortal enemies of the Orthodox East—and from the epigrams [sic] of Montesquieu, Voltaire and Gibbon." More than anyone else, Gibbon had contributed to the slandering and denigration of Byzantium, due to his inability to overcome his prejudices against Christianity and acknowledge the political importance of theological problems. Gibbon's fundamental error, according to Russo, was that in the millennial history of the Byzantine Empire he saw nothing but continuous decay. "In what kind of decline is an empire," Russo asked rhetorically, "which produces the most significant civilization of the Middle Ages, which Christianizes and civilizes a large part of Asia and Europe?" Equally responsible for the denigration of Byzantium were classical philologists and art historians, who "were disgusted" when failing to discover the pure Attic forms in Byzantine literature and art.

248 Demostene Russo received his philological and historical education in Athens, Berlin and Leipzig. He became a professor in 1915, director of the Seminar of Byzantine Philology at the University of Bucharest, and a corresponding member of the Romanian Academy in 1919.

249 Demostene Russo, *Elenismul în România. Epoca bizantină și fanariotă* (Bucharest, 1912), reprinted in Demostene Russo, *Studii istorice greco-române*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Fundația pentru literatură și artă "Regele Carol 11," 1939), 487–541; Demostene Russo, "Bizanțul reabilitat" (1915) in *ibid.*, 3–15.

Like Vikelas, Russo launched his “rehabilitation campaign” by pointing out that the “defects” attributed to the empire—or rather the reasons why Byzantine and Byzantinism had acquired a pejorative meaning—were not at all limited to Byzantium. Most crucially, due to the accumulation of sources and the upsurge of Byzantine studies—notably in Germany (around Krumbacher), Greece (Lambros) and Russia (Uspensky)—scholars “have reached a completely different opinion of Byzantinism” and “a different appreciation of Byzantine culture and history.”²⁵⁰ The empire was no longer compared to Hellas but was “studied in itself as a creation of the environment in which it was produced.” It began to be valued not as a continuation of Hellas and Rome but as a “freestanding unity” whose culture had its “moments of decline, but also brilliant periods of rebirth and glory.” The millennial survival of the empire against incessant barbarian assaults testified, according to Russo, to its “extraordinary vitality, civic virtues, and superior organization.” And if it ultimately succumbed to the Turks, “the blame largely belonged to Western Europe, whose Fourth Crusade had delivered it a blow from which it never recovered.” Commenting on the shift of attitude, Russo noted that Byzantinophobia was being replaced by Byzantinolatry—a trend he himself was actually an accomplice to. He pointed to the “inestimable services” that Byzantium rendered to humanity and Europe in particular by resisting and weakening for a century the aggressive Turks. Otherwise, Turkish armies would have reached London unimpeded and “imposed on the whole of Europe the Koran instead of the Gospel.” The empire had also Christianized and civilized the peoples with whom it came in contact and had kept the first reliable testimonies about their past. Finally, thanks to Byzantium, “the masterpieces of Hellas were transmitted to Western Europe.”

It is easy to notice the close alignment of Russo’s views with those of Vikelas and Shishmanov and, as elsewhere in the region, the inspiration they drew from the upsurge and new status of Byzantine studies in Europe. But they are also of interest to us because they come from a Greek scholar specialized in Byzantine-Romanian relations and are thus indicative of the contemporary Greek interpretation of these relations. Greek-Romanian connections, claimed Russo, had begun long before the fall of Constantinople in 1453: “for many centuries the Danubian Principalities were under Greek influence and have received from Byzantium plenty of cultural borrowings” related to language, customs, faith and institutions. These borrowings took place, on the one hand, via direct contact of the Romanians with the empire

250 Russo also mentions Rambaud, Schlumberger, Diehl, Gelzer, Neumann, Finlay, Bury and Sathas as having contributed to the “full rehabilitation” of Byzantium (*ibid.*, 3).

(though Russo did not specify when and where these direct contacts took place), then the Greek immigrants to the Principalities after 1453, and continued “to a more pronounced degree” during the Phanariot era. Most crucially, the influence of Byzantine culture reached the Romanian space in the garb of Slavonism, which, Russo argued, contrary to Xenopol, was merely a form of Byzantine culture. “Even at the time when the Slavic influence was omnipotent in the Principalities, it should not be forgotten that it was the Byzantine influence that reigned”; “in reality Byzantinism held sway, initially under Slavic etiquette.”²⁵¹

Thus instead of minimizing the weight of Byzantine culture during the (late) Phanariot domination in favor of that of the Enlightenment—a strategy adopted by most Romanian “revisionist” historians—Russo recalibrated its value and status. Instead of emphasizing Byzantium’s intermediary function between ancient and modern Hellenism, as most of his compatriots were doing at the time, he advocated the “freestanding” eminence of Byzantine culture which, although inherently Greek in character, deserved to be appreciated and studied in its own right. There is much to commend about Russo’s de-stigmatization of Byzantium and insistence on the collection and critical edition of “Greek” sources as an indispensable resource for the understanding of Romanian history. At the same time, his radical devaluation of the Slavic cultural and political heritage as merely nominal, without engaging with the opposing arguments of Ioan Bogdan or Alexandru Xenopol, reflects a political rather than a “positivist” stance, which more accurately reflected the imperial visions of the Greek state than the actual state of historiography in Romania.

The reassessment of the “Byzantine factor” in Romanian history was closely linked with the increase of literature in a number of related academic fields. In 1914 Oreste Tafrali (1876–1937), a professor at the University of Iași, an archaeologist and historian of art trained in the French school of Byzantine studies under Charles Diehl, published his *Byzantium and Its Influence on Our Country*, where he discussed both direct Byzantine influences and those “brought by other peoples won over by the Byzantine culture.”²⁵² Research in medieval philology, theology and church history, law, art history, the Romance-speaking population south of the Danube, numismatics, and even national

251 Ibid., 10–11.

252 Orest Tafrali, *Bizantul și influențele sale asupra țării noastre* (Bucharest: Institutul de arte grafice, 1914). In this largely popularized account, the author focuses on the growing Byzantine influence after 1453 and especially during the Phanariot period.

psychology (Dumitru Drăghicescu) considerably broadened the sphere in which Romanian and Byzantine studies interacted.²⁵³

Before World War I, Nicolae Iorga (1871–1940), the most influential Romanian historian in the first four decades of the twentieth century, became the emblem of the new view of Byzantium in association with Romania's new regional role. Significantly, Iorga disagreed with many of Russo's assertions, although he himself was the main champion of incorporating the Byzantine legacy in the Romanian historical canon. He accepted neither the thesis of the centuries-long Greek influence on the Principalities ("significant and valuable" as it had been) nor that of the purely nominal Slavic influence "only because at the basis of the South Slav culture was the Byzantine model." All in all, Iorga (and Vasile Pârvan) accused Russo of having infused "Greek nationalist spirit" and "pan-Hellenic propaganda" into his interpretations of Byzantine history and Greek-Romanian relations, as well as of "lack of knowledge about Romanian history."²⁵⁴ Given Iorga's own interpretations, which will be discussed below, one can understand his annoyance at the fact that a "foreigner" should have taken up these, for him, crucial issues and given them a nationalist slant contradicting his own nationalist one.²⁵⁵

To understand Iorga's interpretation of Romania's relation to Byzantium, we have to bear in mind his complex and seemingly contradictory profile as a scholar. On the one hand, he was the model and standard-bearer of Romanian nationalism, who had authoritatively elaborated on the autochthonism, continuity, national specificity, and unity of the Romanians. On the other hand, he championed Romanian civilization's European belonging and mission, which prevented him from relapsing into cultural autarchy and isolationism and stimulated him to emphasize the "reciprocal dependence of civilizations" resting on "most ancient common bases."²⁵⁶ One might argue that it was his virulent nationalism, seeking to create an honorable place for the Romanians in European history and civilization, that led him to look for a "broader integrative space," to stress interdependencies and cultural exchanges, and to try to associate the Romanians with the big "universalisms"—Latin identity, Byzantium and East-West transmissions. Such scholarly projections, at the same time, mirrored Iorga's concerns as a political figure, where the national

253 For an overview, see Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei*, 349–359.

254 Nicolae Iorga, *Un om, o metodă și o școală* (Bucharest: n.p., 1940).

255 Iorga's final judgment on Russo is eloquent: "He did not like this country. Having been linked to the church, the school, the press in his country, he had nothing in common with us but this [university] chair" (*ibid.*, 21).

256 See Boia, *History and Myth*, 65.

and the supranational coexisted in an apparently uncontroversial way. "The new state of affairs in the Balkans" following the two Balkan wars (1912–1913), he argued, had brought home a new realization of the commonalities between the peoples of Southeastern Europe. In this process the Romanians had to redefine their regional role "in accordance with the historical development of the Romanians and with a tradition that no one can seriously think to deny [them]."²⁵⁷

In weaving his Romanian-Byzantine narrative Iorga pursued, often together or in parallel, several mutually reinforcing strategies. One was to refute that the South Slavs had a right to consider themselves adequate counterparts of or rightful heirs to the Byzantine tradition and culture. Another one was encapsulated in the notion of *Romanité orientale* as a historical unity bringing under a single national category the Romance-speaking population, which was scattered throughout the Balkan peninsula and politically circumscribed by the Byzantine, the Bulgarian and the Serbian medieval states, and the Romanians north of the Danube. The third, and key, strategy concerned the Byzantine survivals in the post-Byzantine era and was captured by Iorga's acclaimed (often for reasons only superficially related to its original meaning) formula "Byzantium after Byzantium." It should be noted that, in his case, the division between pre-war and interwar periods is hardly applicable, as many of the themes he would elaborate on at length in the 1920s and 1930s were already present in different programmatic texts at the beginning of the century. Therefore, in what follows, both the separate examination of the aforementioned strategies and the chronological split between discrete periods is undertaken solely for analytical purposes and for the sake of chronological consistency.

Iorga was the first regional historian to highlight the significance of the shared history and culture of Southeastern Europe for the understanding of national histories. A major component of this common legacy, next to the Daco-Thracian-Illyrian substratum and the Roman "order," was the "neo-Roman" one—the Byzantine tradition. On many occasions since the 1910s Iorga would insist that this tradition and the Orthodox Christianity played a considerable role in the "particular [culture] common to all Southeast Europe," in the essential unity and civilizational "synthesis" between all those peoples. At the same time, however, he made it clear that this fact did not mean that all the peoples in question had contributed to (the perpetuation of) this common culture or that they were entitled to an equal share of its heritage. After the Slav language

257 Nicolae Iorga, *Les Roumains et le nouvel état de choses en Orient* (Vălenii de Munte: Neamul Românesc, 1912), 19 ff.; Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria statelor balcanice în epoca modernă* (Vălenii de Munte: Neamul Românesc, 1913), 5.

gained the upper hand over Greek, Iorga stated at the International Congress of Historical Studies in London in 1913, the Bulgarians and later the Serbs had failed to produce a single great poet, a single chronicler or religious literature comparable to those of the Byzantines: “these converts and imitators,” as Iorga called them, were “completely lacking” an original high culture.²⁵⁸ Nor had they contributed to the salvation of the Byzantine legacy: “The Bulgarians and the Serbs are not successors but imitators of Byzantium of Constantinople, since their states coexisted with the original Empire, and their downfall is contemporaneous with that of this Empire.”²⁵⁹ The Romanians, on the other hand, had an “undeniable tradition” of Byzantine succession. In a book on the modern history of the Balkan peoples, published in the wake of the Balkan wars in 1913, Iorga wrote, “There was a time when it appeared that the entire Byzantine Balkan legacy would be inherited by the Romanian princes who, as the only ones who remained standing among the Christians, showed that they wanted to preserve it and that they were capable of sacrificing themselves for it.”²⁶⁰ In the 1930s he would elaborate further on this thesis and devote a special study to it.

It should be noted that Byzantium for Iorga provided the form, the exterior enfolding a living yet foreign content—the nations inhabiting the Balkan lands. His aim, therefore, was “to elucidate the relations which existed between this great *theoretical reality of the Empire* and the *national realities* . . .”²⁶¹ Considering the late appearance of the Romanians in the historical records, this task was neither easy nor unproblematic. It took Iorga’s highly speculative bravura, visionary flair and opaque and ornate style to accomplish it with such a resounding effect.

Two thematic focuses were of paramount importance in building the Romanians’ connection to Byzantine history. Like the Transylvanian and Romantic historians before him, Iorga made much of the Romance-language-speaking populations (the Vlachs) south of the Danube, whom he saw as an integral part of the Romanian ethnos. These large populations (larger than the

258 Nicolae Iorga, *Roumains et Grecs au cours des siècles à l'occasion des mariages princiers* (Extraits de “Deux communications au troisième congrès international d’études historiques, à Londres,” par N. Iorga; Bucarest 1913) (Bucharest: Cultura Neamului Românesc, 1921), 12. It should be noted that Iorga could read neither Bulgarian nor Serbian.

259 Nicolae Iorga, *Choses d'Orient et de Roumanie* (Bucharest: P. Suru, 1924), 40.

260 Iorga, *Istoria statelor balcanice*, 8.

261 Nicolae Iorga, *Influences étrangères sur la nation roumaine. Leçons faites à la Sorbonne* (Paris: Librairie universitaire J. Gamber, 1922), 31 (italics added). This is how Iorga entitled one of his studies, *Formes byzantines et réalités balkaniques* (1922).

Bulgarians and the Serbs, as he rarely neglected to hint) played a major role in the history of both Byzantium and the Bulgarian state. The Romanians, he said, could be considered “latecomers” on the Balkan political scene only concerning the creation of a “state in proper national, independent forms,” because “long before 1300 . . . they were taking part, under the names of their barbarian masters Pechenegs, Cumans and Tartars, in the wars for the possession of Constantinople.” The Byzantine emperors and the Bulgarian tsars recruited their armies from among these “brave and enduring” descendants of the “Thraco-Romans,” who had preserved “the memory of their special condition, which was in no way inferior to that of the *homines romani* in the West under the old [Roman] Empire and after its fall.”²⁶² The other related theme concerned what Iorga called “demotic Romanias” (*Romanii populare*), that is, the allegedly autonomous organization of the indigenous Romanized (therefore, in Iorga’s reading, Romanian) population north and south of the Danube and its survival in the face of the numerous and massive barbarian invasions during the early Middle Ages.²⁶³ Their existence was made possible by the “great tolerance of Byzantium” for the local autonomy of the diverse Byzantine populations, while their democratic foundations and principles of government versus the autocratic principle of the East constituted a major distinction of the Latin West.²⁶⁴

Both themes converged in Iorga’s notion of “Romania”—the vast space of a continuous eastern Romanity, whose centers were the Adriatic littoral and the two banks of the Danube River, and whose enclaves were spread all over the Balkan peninsula in between.²⁶⁵ There Latinism “continued to live . . . according to the ancient traditions.” It continued to nourish the “creative power of the Roman element,” from which the originality and all the transformations of the Middle Ages derived, as well as the idea of the restitution of the “single” Roman empire. As such, it partook in what he called “the true unity of the history of the Middle Ages.” By upholding the “spirit of the West” in the East, this

262 Iorga, *Roumains et Grecs*, 13–14. See also Nicolae Jorga, *The Byzantine Empire* (London: J.M. Dent), 1907.

263 See, for example, Iorga, *Etudes byzantines*, vol. 1, 220–221.

264 Iorga, *Etudes byzantines*, vol. 1, 286.

265 According to Iorga, Eastern Romanity was the outcome of the massive demographic influx of and colonization by Italian peasants already before the incorporation of the Balkan provinces and Dacia in the Roman state, which led to the de-nationalization (that is, Romanization) of the Thraco-Illyrians. Demographically, therefore, these Roman colonists far outnumbered the local population.

Romania constituted an important “element of integration” of the East and the West.²⁶⁶ In this perspective, the Romanians appeared as bearers of the same imperial tradition as the Byzantines. They were neither rivals nor imitators of the Roman imperial idea (as the Bulgarians and the Serbs were)—they were its embodiment and carriers, along with the Byzantines.

These same themes, on the other hand, outlined fields of contention with the Bulgarian and the Serbian historiographies (discussed elsewhere in this volume), with which we are not directly concerned here. It is noteworthy, however, that by claiming that the Vlachs participated meaningfully, at times decisively, at the highest level in the structure of the First and the Second Bulgarian Kingdoms, Iorga practically “smuggled” the Romanians into Byzantium via Bulgarian history and opened up another channel of communication and “interpenetration” of Romanian and Byzantine culture. To a large extent Iorga’s narrative about the Romanian past, prior to the creation of the Romanian states, fed off the Bulgarian narrative.²⁶⁷ The aforementioned distinction between “Byzantine forms” and “national realities” was important in this strategy. Byzantium provided the “forms” (“theoretical reality”) for its various peoples, which the medieval Bulgarian and Serbian states had failed to fill with national reality: their forms were “borrowed” from Byzantium and, as such, alienated the people and doomed these states to “a great tragedy”—the ruinous ambition to conquer Constantinople. The “definitive forms” of the Romanian state as they had emerged in the fourteenth century, on the other hand, rested on a completely different basis: that of “the *popular conception of an Empire* with no seat in either the Ancient Rome or the New Rome, but *whose ideal seat was in the very consciousness of [the Romanian] nation.*” The leader of such a state—“a local emperor, a *domn*, created from the midst of the popular life”—linked his imperial dignity not to the possession of Constantinople but to his own national milieu and the benefit he could render to his nation. Thus, while the Slavs were completely exhausting their

266 See Iorga, *Etudes byzantines*, vol. 1, 178–180, 193; Mihail Berza, “Nicolas Iorga, historien du moyen âge,” in *Nicolas Iorga. L’homme et l’oeuvre*, ed. D.M. Pippidi (Bucharest: Editions de l’Académie RSR, 1972), 141–144.

267 The collection of lectures, *Formes byzantines et réalités balkaniques. Leçons faites à la Sorbonne* (Bucharest and Paris: H. Champion, 1922), can serve as one of the many examples. In fact, the majority of the leading Romanian historians at the time—E. Hurmuzaki, A.D. Xenopol, Dimitrie Onciul, Constantin Erbiceanu, George Murnu—compensated for the lack of reliable evidence about the “core” Romanian lands by focusing on the history of the Balkan Vlachs and their role in the Second “Romanian-Bulgarian” Kingdom. (See also Roumen Daskalov’s chapter in this volume).

race in pursuit of the impossible possession of Byzantium, “the Romanian patriarchal organism conserved in popular, naive, rural garments the traditions of the [Roman] Empire, anticipating in the Carpathians the principles that would steer the modern era across Europe. . . . It was at the same time an *indelible memory of the imperial dignity* and a *modern creation* coming from the midst of the popular masses.”²⁶⁸

Thus the imperial and the national, the ancient and the modern permeated each other harmoniously in Iorga’s metahistorical narrative about “Romania before Romania.” The negative Bulgarian (and to a lesser extent Serbian) references had a vital function here. In fact, one would think that Iorga had stolen Zlatarski’s interpretation concerning the destructive effects of Byzantium on Bulgaria and reformulated it to serve his own ends. On the one hand, he belittled what Zlatarski (and many after him) considered the Bulgarians’ greatest cultural achievements—the adoption of the Slavonic script and Christianity—while attributing their military feats and imperial growth to the Vlachs. On the other hand, the Byzantinization of medieval Bulgaria, which Zlatarski bemoaned, served as the “bad example” against which the Daco-Roman purity and authenticity of the Romanians could be celebrated along with their deep awareness of being heirs to the Roman tradition. The blind emulation of Byzantium by the Bulgarians and the Serbs had foreshadowed their demise. By contrast, the Romanians’ consciousness of their nationality and imperial legacy made them capable not only of “creatively” continuing another imperial tradition, that of Byzantium, but also becoming heralds of the modern age.

Apart from Iorga, Romanian historiography’s discovery of Byzantium came late. Until after the Great War, scholars in the field focused on philological issues and those related to the history of Romanian medieval literature. This bias was largely embedded in a crucial need: to write the history of the Romanians. As the first Romanian university professor in Byzantine studies, C. Litzica, put it, “for us, Byzantine studies are important for the light they can throw on Romanian history.”²⁶⁹

268 Iorga, *Influences étrangères*, 40–44 (italics added).

269 Quoted in Rados, *Sub semnul acvilei*, 360.

Interwar Historiographic Perspectives between Specialization and Metahistory

During the interwar years, medieval history retained its central place in historical writing. In all four countries the most prominent and prolific national historians, particularly those who embarked upon producing national syntheses, were trained as medievalists. At the same time this period saw the further professionalization and institutionalization of Byzantine studies in the region and abroad. It should be noted that almost the entire first generation and many in the second generation of Balkan Byzantologists in these four countries received their specialized education with Karl Krumbacher or August Heisenberg, Krumbacher's student and successor at the head of the *Institut für Byzantinistik und Neugriechische Philologie* in Munich; many of them contributed regularly to the Institute's respectable *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*.²⁷⁰ Other important forums for international exchange and professionalization included the four international congresses of Byzantine studies that took place in Bucharest (1924), Belgrade (1927), Athens (1930) and Sofia (1934). The continuing work on the collection and publication of Byzantine sources and the increasing number of studies dedicated to (issues of) Byzantine history properly speaking were now accompanied by cumulative specialization in the sub-fields of the history of law, institutions, art, and architecture, alongside the traditional preponderance of philology and literature. In the process the amount and quality of "Byzantine studies" rose but at the cost of their increasing compartmentalization. This situation goes some way toward explaining the relatively weak impact of this expert empirical knowledge on (the perpetuation of) the mainstream historical discourses that had taken shape until then.

Until at least the mid-1930s, the (geo)political context operated in the same direction. In each individual national case, the post-World War I peace arrangements solved certain old problems and engendered new ones, which, throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, continued to foment intraregional tensions and historical disputes. If anything, the general anti-liberal intellectual climate and integrationist national projects stiffened the erstwhile nationalist orientation of scholarship, which proved capable of accommodating various ideological positions. It was only in the face of the growing hegemonistic

270 On the Serbian side this cohort included S. Stanoejević, V. Ćorović, J. Radonić, N. Radojčić and D. Anastasijević; on the Greek side, Dimitrios Vikelas, Spyridon Lambros and Georgios Hatzidakis; on the Romanian side, C. Litzeica, G. Marnu, N.G. Dossios and N. Bănescu; and on the Bulgarian side, P. Mutafchiev and P. Nikov.

pressure on the region after 1933 that new regionalist political projects began to emerge, which brought with them new, non-nationalist frameworks of history. Significantly, both the nationalist and the non-nationalist historical schemes drew arguments from particular readings of the “Byzantine legacy.”

• • •

The “Asia Minor catastrophe,” or simply the “Catastrophe,” is the expression Greeks use to describe the crushing of the Great Idea following the rout of the Greek army from Asia Minor under the onslaught of the nationalist forces of Mustafa Kemal in 1922 and the exodus to Greece of more than a million (mostly destitute) Greeks fleeing this area. The dreams of a reconstituted Byzantium, which had united most Greeks for almost eighty years, were over. A whole chapter of Greek history, filled with optimism and expansionist dreams, was closed. But did this entail a “paradigm shift” in the conceptualization of Greek history?

The tension between “Hellenism” (*Ellinismos*) and “Romanism” (*Romiosyne*) continued to reverberate in various public spheres and foment heated scholarly disputes. That was definitely the case with the perennial language question, which kept pitting “purists” and “demoticists” against each other until well into the 1970s. (After World War II and most tangibly in the 1960s, the demoticist movement would migrate to the arts—particularly to poetry and music—and acquire left-wing connotations.) But as far as historiography is concerned, this conflict appeared to have terminated with Zambelios’s impressive “Helleno-Christian” construction, Paparrigopoulos’s historical rehabilitation of the Byzantine Empire and Lambros’s post-Romantic positivist translation. Far from corroding the political and ideological underpinnings of that style of historiography, the Asia Minor disaster amplified Greece’s Balkan sensitivities and the concerns about the security of its territorial acquisitions especially in Macedonia. Paparrigopoulos’s heirs remained doggedly attached to his canon, making only marginal methodological and organizational changes. The leading fora of this mainstream were Nicos Veis’s *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher* (published since 1920) and K. Amantos and S. Kougeas’s *Hellinika* (since 1928), along with the Medieval Archive at the Academy of Athens. In the 1930s historical studies in Greece remained under the sway of the nationalist school as shaped by the nineteenth-century models. “With historiography mired in its past and the social sciences virtually nonexistent, it appeared unlikely, if not impossible, that historical writing could experience any sort of revival.”²⁷¹

271 Christos Hadziiosif, “The Historian Nicos Svoronos and His Relationship to the Historiography of Modern Greece,” *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 17, no. 2 (1991), 37–38.

The story of the institutionalization of Byzantine studies in Greece tells us a great deal about the way Byzantium and its place in Greek history came to be conceptualized during this period. Between 1911 and 1931 at the University of Athens three chairs were established that focused on the Empire—of Byzantine art and archaeology (1911), of Byzantine history (1924) and of public and private life in Byzantium (1931)—and another one combining the study of “middle [Byzantine] and modern Greek philology” (1925). At the same time, the first chair in modern history was established only in 1937. Until then, modern Greek history had been largely regarded as a continuation of Byzantine studies, and the Ottoman period had been described as one of post-Byzantine continuity.²⁷² The interest of the state in strengthening this new field of education and research had already led to the founding, in the 1910s, of the Museum of Byzantium in Athens and the Association of Byzantine Studies. This trend continued in the interwar period with a series of state decrees sanctioning the status of the Byzantine churches and fortresses as archaeological monuments, supporting their restoration and the excavations of Byzantine monuments. Thus, in the 1920s and 1930s, Byzantium, though still far from superseding the glow of classical Greece, moved to the forefront of state-sponsored cultural heritage, scholarly research and public attention.

The focus of this wide network of institutions, as their names indicate, was the study and display of Byzantine culture. During the “long nineteenth century” Byzantium was valued above all for having preserved and transmitted ancient Greek culture and Christian faith to the modern Greeks. The Greek historians’ prime preoccupation at that time was to demonstrate the survival of the ancient legacy through the Byzantine Empire, while remaining skeptical, in the vein of the Enlightenment, of the Empire’s own cultural achievements. After World War I the connection between Byzantium and modern Greece, which Sp. Lambros was among the first to emphasize, became far more important for the Greek historians, thus compensating partly for the fixation on the transmission from ancient times to the Middle Ages. The nature of Byzantine culture changed accordingly. Now it acquired a proper value and was credited with a proper contribution to world culture: Byzantine literature and art, the

272 Vangelis Karamanolakis, *I sygkrotisi tis istorikis epistimis kai i didaskalia tis istorias sto Panepistimio Athinon (1837–1932)* (Athens: Istoriko Archeio Ellinikis Neolaias, Institutou Neoellinikon Ereunon, 2006), 317–320, 379–380; Aikaterini Christophilopoulou, “Oi vyzantines spoudes sto Panepistimio Athinon kata ti diarkeia tou Mesopoleμου,” *Nea Estia* 1610 (1994), 983–99; Antonis Liakos, “Modern Greek Historiography (1974–2000): The Era of Transition from Dictatorship to Democracy,” in *(Re)Writing History: Historiography in Southeastern Europe after Socialism*, ed. Ulf Brunnbauer (Münster: LIT, 2004), 357.

Christianization of the neighboring peoples, and above all, its role as a shield for European civilization against foreign invaders were the main elements of its avowed contribution to the world. The Empire was no longer just the savior of the ancient heritage; it itself became a generator and a source of a proper heritage, rendering “services comparable to those of ancient Greece,” as a leading historian put it.²⁷³ All this went hand in hand with the assertion of Greece’s “sovereignty” over this cultural patrimony. Only those elements that attested to the Hellenic character of the empire were worthy of investigation and exhibition. Phaidon Koukoules (1881–1956), the founder of the Association of Byzantine Studies and a head of the Chair of Public and Private Life in Byzantium, in fact paid little attention to the “public” life in the empire, as it was closely associated with Roman institutions. He instead devoted himself to the study of “private” life, which, according to him, embodied the continuation of the popular Greek culture and could serve as “scientific” evidence of its antiquity and continuity.²⁷⁴

As could be expected, the discipline’s expansion was linked to political concerns. After World War I Greece was busy attending to its “legitimate” rights on the newly acquired territories, particularly Macedonia, to which its neighbors also laid historical and ethnographical claims. With the centers of ancient Greece lying further to the south, it was through Byzantium that scholars hoped to confirm the Hellenic character of these lands. The younger generation of Greek historians ardently took up the task of highlighting the Greek nature of the Byzantine monuments and of putting it in a scholarly context. In his September 1913 memorandum recommending the founding of the first museum of Byzantine art in Thessaloniki, only a few months after these lands were conquered by Greece, Adamantios Adamantiou (1875–1937), a student of Lambros and the first head of the Chair of Byzantine Art and Archaeology, pointed out that such a museum would be “a temple of the art and history of medieval Greece” and that the Byzantine monuments gathered in the museum would “bear the imprint of the thought and soul of medieval Greece, passed on throughout the centuries, as an eternal flame of the artistic and historical tradition of the united and indestructible national whole.”²⁷⁵ Adamantiou

273 Constantine Amantos, *Prolegomena to the History of the Byzantine Empire*, trans. Kenneth Johnstone (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hekker, 1969), 176.

274 Phaidon Koukoules, *Byzantinon bios kai politismos*, 6 vols. (Athens: Ekdoseis tou Gallikou Institoutou Athenon, 1948–1957); Karamanolakis, *I sygkrotisi tis istorikis epistimis*, 321–322, 325.

275 Cited in Karamanolakis, *I sygkrotisi tis istorikis epistimis*, 322.

considered Byzantine studies to be a “terrain of political antagonism with the Russians and the peoples of the Balkans.” He lamented the fact that first the Romanians and then the Serbs had organized international congresses of Byzantine studies, thus boosting their claims to the Byzantine legacy, while the Greek delegation had not been very convincing in demonstrating the Greekness of Byzantium and had failed to leave a “dignified impression of the Hellenes.”²⁷⁶ His pleas with the Greek government were heeded, and the third congress was convened in Athens in 1930.

Within the system of Byzantine culture, art came to occupy a key place. Adamantiou’s successor at the head of the Byzantine museum in Athens, the archaeologist Georgios Sotirios, stated in 1924 that as “art [is] the highest expression of the culture of a country, it is understandable that the Museum of Byzantium, which holds Christian objects of Greek art, represents the culture of our fathers in the same way as the Archaeological Museum represents the culture of our grandfathers.”²⁷⁷ What the erstwhile historians of Byzantine art, like Georgios Lambakis, considered to be an essentially Christian Orthodox artistic tradition, the new generation of Greek historians reformulated as an intrinsic part of Greece’s national contribution to world culture. Byzantine art, which epitomized the highest achievements of Byzantine culture, was the continuation of ancient Hellenic art and part of the national Greek patrimony.

As in the previous period, however, the structuring of the historical field in interwar Greece continued to be dominated by the confrontation on the language question. The late institutionalization of Byzantine history as a separate sub-discipline (1924) was due mainly to resistance on the part of the champions of the *katharevousa* (the purists), who identified the preoccupation with Byzantium with the demoticist agenda and insisted that Byzantine history should be part of the general university course on Greek history.²⁷⁸ As the leading Greek linguist, Georgios Hatzidakis, saw it, it was imperative to counter the theories disputing the origins and the purity of the Greek language. The creation of the Chair of Byzantine and Modern Greek Philology (1925) was intended to underscore the link between Byzantium and modern Greece and the importance of *laographic* (ethnological) heritage, especially the “popular

276 Tonia Kioussopoulou, “La délégation grecque au 11e Congrès international des études byzantines (Belgrade, 1927), in *Héritage de Byzance en Europe du Sud-Est*, eds. Delouis et al., 405, 409.

277 Karamanolakis, *I sygkrotisi tis istorikis epistimis*, 338.

278 Maria Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, “Oi vyzantines istorikes spoudes stin Ellada. Apo ton Spyridona Zambelio ston Dionysio Zakythino,” *Symmeikta* 9 (1994), 169.

literary tradition,” as the transmitter of this national tradition. The Chair’s first head, Nicos Veis (1887–1958), an ardent demotist and an editor of *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher*, has been credited for cementing the link between Byzantine, or what he also called the “middle,” and modern Greek philology through the ages of Ottoman domination.²⁷⁹

Language and ethnography lay at the core of the historical method of Konstantinos Amantos (1874–1960), a student of Lambros, Krumbacher and Diehl, professor of Byzantine history, and member (in 1944, president) of the Academy of Athens. His two-volume *History of the Byzantine State* (1939 and 1947), which was his major work, made little contribution to the field of Byzantine studies. But it won him the recognition of his contemporaries for going one step further than Paparrigopoulos in underwriting the image of Byzantium as a proto-national Greek state and raising it a few rungs higher on the ladder of world culture. In 1923 Amantos made his premises clear when stating that “two thousand years before the Slavs came to its northern borders, the Greek nation was living in Greek lands, and after their settlement the Greek state of Byzantium existed for another thousand years.”²⁸⁰ The underlying theme in his *History* was, unoriginally, the continuity of the Greek nation, whose unity in space and time persisted from one century to the next due to its ineradicable civilizing power. The transference of the capital of the Roman Empire to Constantinople took place, Amantos tells us, “by degrees to deliver its eastern half to the Greeks.” Originally it was Greek in terms of culture and language (whose spoken forms “might be termed Modern Greek since it . . . had acquired almost all its modern characteristics”), and from the seventh century, with the loss of Egypt and Syria, it became “Greek from the racial point of view.”²⁸¹

With Amantos, however, the stress was not on continuity per se but on its application. Byzantium’s greatest accomplishment, according to him, was the long-standing resistance it put up against various Asiatic, especially Muslim, invaders, thus “rendering supreme service to Europe, to which it afforded time to take shape and develop.” Together with “rescu[ing] the works of the ancient Greek genius and preserv[ing] them for the perpetual use of mankind,” the “defense against Asiatics” made the Byzantine Empire an integral part of European civilization. The incessant wars, however, had prevented the “transformation of the monarchic constitution into a democratic one” and made it

279 Karamanolakis, *I sygkrotisi tis istorikis epistimis*, 225–226.

280 Konstantinos Amantos, *Oi Boreioi geitones tis ellados* (Athens, 1923), 327; cited in Dimitris Livanios, “Christians, Heroes and Barbarians,” 81.

281 Amantos, *Prolegomena*, 174–176.

essential to uphold military rule, which was often arbitrary, causing frequent dissensions and rebellions. But if the latter “never led to more radical political or social upheavals,” it was thanks to the philanthropic activity of Greek Christianity:

[its] multitude of charitable foundations . . . sufficed to meet all the needs of the community and relieved the social distress which was caused by the injustices of military rule. Without the realization of this characteristic work of the Church we cannot properly understand the history of Byzantium or the number of the monasteries that were founded. It was the meeting of charitable needs which alone rendered the monasteries tolerable and indeed indispensable.²⁸²

Rather than a liability, as Gibbon argued, the religious character (and much-castigated monasticism) of the Empire became an essential condition for its social cohesion and political endurance.

Re-evaluating Byzantine literature and art was another focus of Amantos’s narrative that went beyond purely political history. He paid special attention to Byzantine poetry, the “Acritic songs” (heroic epics) in particular, which he, following Politis and a long line of Greek “laographers,” deemed to have had survived thanks to the Greeks’ oral tradition.²⁸³ The weight that Amantos gave the questions of oral tradition and language was directly linked with the ongoing Bulgarian dispute over the “ethnographic identity” of Macedonia as well as the Greek Communist Party’s support for Macedonia’s secession based on the right of self-determination. In both his work as a historian and public pronouncements, he set out to prove, with historical, ethnographic and “popular” linguistic materials, the Greek character of Macedonia and thwart “all those conspiring against Hellenism in the recently acquired territories” that were once part of Byzantium. K. Dimaras was probably right in this sense when he

282 Ibid., 177–178.

283 Karamanolakis, *I sygkrotisi tis istorikis epistimis*, 327–330. Present-day literary and anthropological research has refuted this assumption. See, for example, Roderick Beaton, *From Byzantium to Modern Greece: Medieval Literature and Its Modern Reception* (Aldershot: Variorum, 2008). On nineteenth- and twentieth-century Byzantine studies in Greece, see also Tonia Kiousopoulou, “Oi vyzantines spoudes stin Ellada (1850–1940),” in *Apo ti Christianiki syllogi sto Vyzantino mouseio (1884–1930)* (Athens: Ypourgeio Politismou, 2006), 25–36.

stated in his speech at Amantos's funeral that "there has barely been another Greek who had served the national interests in a more scientific way."²⁸⁴

This is not to say that dissenting voices were altogether missing. Ioannis Kordatos (1891–1961), the founder of Greek Marxist historiography, issued the first serious challenge to the conventional scheme of Greek history.²⁸⁵ Starting from a crude Marxist analysis of modern Greek nationalism, in several writings since the 1930s he disputed the continuity of the Hellenic nation. Kordatos argued that the founders of modern Greek historiography, K. Paparrigopoulos and his followers, used false arguments to support their claim that the modern Greek nation was directly descended from the ancient Hellenes and that the Byzantine Empire was Greek. In his *History of Later Greece* Kordatos wrote:

If Metropolitan Greece (Hellada) had lost the glory of ancient Hellenic culture and become a land which, from an economic and social standpoint, had declined, with only the marble tablets left to remind us of an ancient culture, then how can we talk of a medieval Greek state and claim that the Byzantine state was the Greek nation? . . . The name Hellene became a synonym for an evil person, an anti-Christian, and was despised, which is why the name Graeco was accepted, though it also was considered to be something humble . . . It was only after 1054, when the Schism between Catholic and Orthodox took place in the Church, that the term Graecos acquired a religious meaning and was used to signify something that was not Roman . . . ("His mother was a Christian, his father was a Hellene"—Cypriot proverb) . . . Until the fourteenth century the terms Hellene and Hellenic were not encountered in the state language. These names came into use later on . . . And since they lived in the same land as the ancient Hellenes, and Hellenic history was full of Hellenic feats, they regarded the ancient Hellenes as a magnificent people possessing great capabilities, including a great trading ability . . . even the Macedonian campaign of Alexander the Great and his great victories were considered achievements of the Hellenes.²⁸⁶

284 Karamanolakis, *I sygkrotisi tis istorikis epistimis*, 332–334.

285 Kordatos was a member of the Central Committee of the Greek Communist Party but was expelled in 1927 due to his dissenting position on the Macedonian question. While basing his analysis on historical materialism, Kordatos upheld the professional standard of objectivity—a principle vilified by Soviet Marxism at the time as a "bourgeois disease."

286 Ioannis Kordatos, *Istoria tis Neoterias Eladas* 1 (Athens: Ekdoseis "200s aionas," 1957), 20.

Kordatos held that the nation was a historical phenomenon that originated in the late Middle Ages, when feudalism began to recede and the bourgeois class was rising. Catalyzed by long-term social and economic changes, the Greek national consciousness began to emerge among the inhabitants of the great commercial and economic centers of Byzantium no earlier than the fourteenth century.²⁸⁷ In brief, Kordatos questioned the idea of a three-thousand-year-long continuity in Greek history, which posited the ancients and the Byzantines as modern Greeks' precursors and deliberately concentrated on the study of Greece rather than the Greeks. In the interwar milieu, however, his dissenting voice was a lonely one. Even so, it did not fade without reaction—K. Amantos took it upon himself to strongly denounce Kordatos's subversive views.²⁸⁸

All in all, between the two world wars, inquiries into the history of Byzantine art, daily life, folklore, philology and archaeology brought to light new aspects of the "Byzantine period of Greek history." These new directions of research reflected the need for a new understanding of Byzantine culture, impelled by continuing nationalist strife over post-imperial territories in the interwar period and the related rival interpretations of the Byzantine past. Under such conditions, neither the rise of Byzantine studies nor the association of these studies with demoticism brought about any visible change in the tripartite scheme of Greek history bequeathed by the nineteenth-century historians. The inner balance had shifted somewhat away from the obsession with the connection between Hellas and Byzantium towards the unity (and continuity) of Byzantium and the modern Greek culture, but the overall construction and its underlying ideology remained intact. As Amantos brazenly formulated it: "It was only because this Byzantine Empire was based upon the Greeks of Europe and Asia Minor that it was able to confer supreme benefits on European civilization and on a multitude of nations, services comparable with those of ancient Greece."²⁸⁹ The emergence of "Byzantinology" as an autonomous field of research with venues in all four states and international fora came

287 Yanna Katsiamboura, "Marxistikes proseggiseis tou Vyzantiou apo tin elliniki istoriografia," *Kritiki epistimi kai ekpaideusi* 1 (2005), 73.

288 On the Kordatos-Amantos debate, see Livanios, "Christians, Heroes and Barbarians," 80–81. More resounding and consequential was Kordatos's unconventional reading of the Greek Revolution in his book *The Social Significance of the Revolution of 1821* (1924), which provoked an intense political debate on the revolution's origins and agency.

289 Amantos, *Prolegomena*, 178.

to subvert precisely this notion of the Greekness of Byzantium and of the Greeks as its exclusive inheritors and privileged custodians.²⁹⁰

...

The postwar period was a traumatic one for the Bulgarians, who regarded themselves as the great losers of the geopolitical order established after the Second Balkan War and World War I. The distress was all the stronger as the “national disaster” had struck at a moment of growing self-confidence for Bulgarian nationalism both at home and abroad, in the coveted “Bulgarian lands,” especially in Macedonia. Combined with the postwar social and political crisis, this feeling spurred a painstaking search for the roots of the disaster and a remedy for the social and political disruption. While most of the new intellectual “offers” to this end originated outside history-writing, typically in the burgeoning field of “national characterology,” Bulgarian historians were anything but impassive observers.

In Bulgaria the (relative) emancipation of Byzantine studies from the grasp of national history proceeded even slower than in the other three countries. The past tendency of engaging with Byzantine history almost exclusively for the sake of illuminating certain aspects of national history continued to predominate. Byzantine studies were not institutionalized as an autonomous part of education and research.²⁹¹ “The inherent, intimate relationship of medieval Bulgaria with Byzantium,” as V. Zlatarski called it in his opening speech to the Fourth International Congress of Byzantine Studies, which took place in Sofia in 1934, seems to have impeded rather than stimulated the independent development of Byzantine studies in Bulgaria.

All these trends converged in the works of Petăr Mutaſchiev (1883–1943), the most important Bulgarian historian and Byzantinist of the first half of the twentieth century. Mutaſchiev’s starting point was the recognition that despite Byzantium’s huge impact on the “historical fate” of Bulgaria and the need, for this reason, to know its history, “hardly any perceptions elsewhere

290 See Kioussopoulou, “La délégation grecque au 11e Congrès international des études byzantines,” 403–411.

291 In the words of V. Zlatarski, Byzantine history was taught “in its connection with the history of other East European peoples who had been in contact with Byzantium” in the frame of the “Chair in East European history (Byzantium, Turkey, the Balkan peoples, Hungary, Poland and Russia),” which was set up in 1921 at the Faculty of History and Philology of Sofia University (*Actes du 14^e Congrès International des études byzantines*, vol. 1 [Sofia: Imprimerie de la Cour, 1935]), 22.

about Byzantium and its culture are as untrue as they are in our country.” He found their source in the national Revival period, when the fight against Greek cultural assimilation on the one hand, and the Greek appropriation of the Byzantine Empire “far exceeding the limits of the objective truth” on the other, engendered a correspondingly overinflated Bulgarian self-image and a distorted image of Byzantium. Remarkably, the reason why Mutaſchiev sought to “correct” these misconceptions was by no means less nationally minded: by presenting the Empire, the main and often only adversary of Bulgaria, as a “feeble organism,” the Bulgarians were denying their own “qualities of a healthy, strong people, capable of development.” Therefore, “in order not only for the historical truth to be restored but also to rehabilitate ourselves in our own eyes as a people whose past is not devoid of values, the conceptions about Byzantium accumulated in our country should be corrected.”²⁹²

Mutaſchiev’s rehabilitation of Byzantium, conducted with lucidity and erudition, encompassed almost every aspect of its millennial existence and activities: political arrangement and *raison d’état*, cultural and religious prominence, economic, financial, and military power. Despite its enormous wealth, he argued, Byzantium never became a plutocracy (unlike Venice). Nor was its political power used for the accumulation of private wealth or the promotion of “crude mercantilism.” Despite his absolute power, the emperor, who was “a temporary conductor of the providential mission” and whose duty was to look after the interests of the state community, never became a despot. In no other medieval or even early modern society were the popular masses as free to openly challenge or even insult their ruler when he performed badly; no other medieval state had recognized equality before the law and meritocracy in recruiting its higher classes (rather than hereditary privilege). Indeed, in contrast to Novaković (and a long line of post-Enlightenment intellectuals, Western and Balkan), Mutaſchiev maintained, “In its deep essence the Byzantine monarchy remained democratic; its supreme task was the preservation of the Eastern Roman community.” In many respects it “was centuries ahead of the medieval Western European societies”: while in the West feudalism flourished and the right of force reigned, “Byzantium was aware that it could rest as a state only on the economically independent rural population.” Hence it was the first and only state that, already in the tenth century, had adopted a law for the protection of the small rural property against the encroachment of rich landowners, as well as the first to practice public

292 Petăr Mutaſchiev, *Kniga za bălgarite* (Sofia: BAN, 1987), 24–25. This book, synthesizing Mutaſchiev’s previous publications and ideas, was written in the late 1920s and the 1930s. However, due to his ostracism by the Communist regime, it was published only in 1987.

charity.²⁹³ Like Vikelas, Russo and Shishmanov before him, Mutaſchiev denied that the much-castigated “Byzantine” mores and conducts were specifically Byzantine and evoked the history of the Italian Renaissance states, the papacy and the Catholic Church and even present-day “so-called civilized nations” as analogous examples. Moreover, alongside the vicious and corrupted Byzantium, he argued, there was another one consisting “of daring thought and internal discipline, of iron will and indomitable energy, of puritanism and selfless performance of [its] duty.” The Empire owed its might and millennial survival to these moral forces and to its military power, supported by peasant-soldiers defending their own lands.²⁹⁴ To this Mutaſchiev added its unmatched cultural and economic prosperity as well as knowledge and the “complex science” of statesmanship.

While all this was meant, as he himself indicated, to point out what kind of adversary the Bulgarians had to confront and coexist with, Mutaſchiev also took pains “to dispel the widely held delusion that Byzantium had *always* been a Greek empire.” Until the last two or three centuries of its existence, it had been an “empire of the Romans,” where the self-designation “*Romaioi* indicated a state, not a national belonging.” Similarly to Iorga and Novaković, Mutaſchiev maintained that “in the Byzantines’ worldview the question about race and origins was irrelevant.” What mattered was Roman citizenship and submission to the law—embodied by the emperor—and to Orthodox Christianity. And if, after the sixth century, Greek took the place of Latin as the official language, it was not due to Greeks constituting a majority or holding a dominant position in the political life of the Eastern Empire. Instead it was the fact that, since the time of Alexander the Great, Greek had become “the main binding link between the component parts of Eastern Roman society.” It was by virtue of “this external but at the same time visible to everybody feature” that, since the seventh century, the Eastern Empire “appeared to its close and distant neighbors as a Greek state, and its population as Greeks”—a perception further reinforced by the fact that in the thirteenth century, when its territories shrank to the Balkan littoral, Byzantium also became ethnically Greek.²⁹⁵ Mutaſchiev’s

293 Mutaſchiev, *Kniga za bălgarite*, 29–32. In his study “East and West in the European Medieval Era” (*Godishnik na Sofiyskiya universitet*, IFF 21 [1925], 1–34), Mutaſchiev saw the absence of feudalism in this part of Europe as among the key factors making Byzantium, and the countries under its influence, different from the West. This thesis was later criticized, most intensely from Marxist perspectives.

294 Mutaſchiev, *Kniga za bălgarite*, 33–38.

295 *Ibid.*, 26–28. Mutaſchiev came up with a detailed rebuttal of the modern Greeks’ appropriation of Byzantium and its legacy in an extensive article, “Gărtsi, vizantiytsi i elini,” *Demokratiya* 3, no. 1 (1922), 58–63; and *Demokratiya* 3, no. 4 (1922), 84–89.

conclusion, consequently, did not derive from Fallmerayer but aimed to open the access of the Balkan and Near-Eastern “non-Greeks” to the symbolic capital of the Empire and its legacy:

If, therefore, claims to the Byzantine heritage can be raised today and if the arguments of history can be at all relevant where the distinct and awakened nationality with its imperative wants and needs has already risen—this heritage belongs not so much to the present-day Greeks, whose ancestors were a small minority, as to the various other peoples who then inhabited it and who still live in its former lands. For if the merit of the said Greek or Grecized minority to the Eastern Empire lay in the fact that it had given it the official language, the peoples alien to Grecism cemented it with their blood and propped it up with their swords and with the creative genius of their best sons.²⁹⁶

In all these respects Mutafchiev's reading of the “constitution” of Byzantium signals a clear break with the national-Romantic tradition in Bulgarian historiography. It was informed as much by his erudition as by contemporary developments in Byzantine studies. At the same time, his evaluation, as a national historian, of the Empire's impact on the “historical life of the Bulgarians” rendered a very different picture, one that maintained a substantial continuity with the revolutionary Romanticism of Rakovski and Botev and the post-Romantic “critical historicism” of Drinov and Zlatarski. Mutafchiev took one big step further in this direction in that he transformed the “Byzantine factor” into the (evil) demiurge of all Bulgarian history. In an essay entitled “Towards the Philosophy of Bulgarian History. Byzantinism in Medieval Bulgaria,” he sought to answer a question similar to the one Zlatarski had raised more than thirty years earlier when seeking the reasons for the meteoric rise and similarly abrupt fall of the First and the Second Bulgarian Kingdoms. Mutafchiev formulated the question in more dramatic, metahistorical terms, seeking to explain what he defined as “the strange absence of continuity, consistency and gradualism in the political and spiritual life of the Bulgarians,” which was marked by “abrupt turns of might and weakness, contradictions, extremes and crises, impetuous and unexpected rises and rapid falls.” The root cause for this “abnormal” dynamism of Bulgarian history was, according to Mutafchiev, “the influence of Byzantinism [meaning the various Byzantine influences] on medieval Bulgaria.”²⁹⁷

296 Mutafchiev, “Gärtsi, vizantiytsi i elini,” *Demokratiya* 3, no. 4 (1922), 87.

297 Petär Mutafchiev, “Käm filosofiyata na bälgarskata istoriya. Vizantinizmät v srednovekovna Bälcaria,” *Filosofski pregled* 3, no. 1 (1931), 27–36 (originally published as “Der

Due to their proximity to Byzantium, or what Mutaſchiev called “geographic fate,” the “self-preservation” of the Bulgarians and that of their state doomed them to constant conflict with the Empire. In this conflict “the Bulgarian political and spiritual leaders were forced to borrow *deliberately* from [Byzantium] everything to which, according to their understanding, it owed its superiority.” The growing political rivalry thus led to growing political and cultural imitation. This process pushed the country onto an unnatural path of development, eliminating the possibility of creating anything healthy and durable. The inorganic nature of this path manifested itself in both the mental and the social condition of the people.

For Mutaſchiev, as for most of the historians before him starting with Rakovski, the conversion to Christianity in the mid-ninth century signaled the triumph of Byzantinism:

The adoption of Byzantine Orthodoxy was inevitably accompanied by the spontaneous flooding of the entire Bulgarian land with Byzantine culture, and mainly with those of its features that could be more easily assimilated by a people that had just left paganism. . . . Precisely this rather unilateral cultural influence had fatal consequences for the Bulgarian people.²⁹⁸

Byzantine theological thought, Mutaſchiev stated, “failed to fertilize the popular spirit for true creativity.” It brought confusion in the “people’s consciousness, cut[ting it] off from the faith of the ancestors.” While the conversion to Christianity accomplished the great mission of creating the ideological conditions for the complete merger of Bulgars and Slavs, “the Byzantinism that burst in along with it led to exactly the opposite results: in place of the old ethnic dualism, it created a new division—a spiritual one.” The result was a new dualist situation, where the “vibrant and ever-active” Byzantine cultural model undercut national authenticity and provoked the hardy resistance of the “popular mass that kept its attachment to the past.”²⁹⁹ Along with this cultural and political dualism was a disruption of the nation’s social coherence as a result of what Mutaſchiev called “the law of imitation”: the “unconscious and spontaneous infatuation with the Byzantine models” affected only the highest, ruling strata of Bulgarian society. Having “breached the continuity

Byzantinismus im mittelalterlicher Bulgarien,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 30 [1929–1930], 387–394).

298 Mutaſchiev, *Kniga za bălgarite*, 189.

299 Mutaſchiev, “Kăm filosofiyata na bălgarskata istoriya,” 31–33.

in the state and the spiritual tradition,” Byzantinism caused the “crumbling of the internal structure of the once-homogenous Bulgarian society, its cohesion [and] material base.” The nation saw in its spiritually alienated leaders “representatives and vehicles of a hostile destructive force.” Thus, in its striving to catch up with and become equal with Byzantium, “the medieval Bulgarian state committed treason against itself,” each upsurge of high culture foreshadowing alienation of the elite from the nation, and each rise containing the seeds of a future fast decay.³⁰⁰

Under such conditions the “instinct for national self-preservation and authenticity [*samobitnost*]” found expression above all in the heresy of Bogomilism, which was not a simple religious sect but an embodiment of a “particular socio-political outlook.” As Orthodox Christianity was “at once the ideology and the weapon of Byzantinism,” Bogomilism came to represent the ultimate “repudiation of all expressions of this Byzantinism in the political and social life of medieval Bulgaria and to stand in overt opposition against the Byzantinized Bulgarian state.” Unlike most of his predecessors and contemporaries, Mutaſchiev saw no creative or constructive ideal underlying the Bogomils’ “socio-political outlook.” He characterized it as a “veritable religion of despair” able to subvert and destroy but not to create—a “social philosophy of total negation.”³⁰¹ Having emerged in opposition to Byzantinism, the Bogomils’ resistance, as Mutaſchiev saw it, proved incapable of spawning a viable alternative to the “decay” of the Bulgarian society, which was sapped by Byzantium’s gravitational pull. The barrenness of Byzantinism, it turns out, plagued even its opponents.

It is through this prism that Mutaſchiev assessed the “Golden Age” of Tsar Simeon—the *ventus loco* of the national historical canon. While admitting that the time of Simeon “was in every respect the most brilliant era in all of Bulgarian history,” his assessment was far gloomier than such an admission should have entailed. Even if the literature produced in Bulgaria during that time had become the venerable heritage of the whole Orthodox Slavic world, Mutaſchiev argued in his unfinished “History of the Bulgarian People,” for the Bulgarian nation the best part of this literary repository produced no benefits. With its abstract and “cosmopolitan-Christian character,” it was “a spiritual product of Byzantinism, which was distinguished precisely by its

300 Ibid., 32–34.

301 Petăr Mutaſchiev, “Pop Bogomil i sv. Ivan Rilski. Duhăt na otritsaniето v nashata istoriya,” *Filosofski pregled* 6, no. 2 (1934), 97–112. See also Petăr Mutaſchiev, *Istoriya na bălgarskiya narod* (Sofia: BAN, 1992), 216, where the author contested the widely shared thesis that Bogomilism was an “ideology of national authenticity.”

anti-national tendencies." The transfer of this literature to Bulgaria stifled the elite's interest in the "national reality" and "drained the living streams carried by folklore." Thus Old Bulgarian literature, captivated by foreign models and values, was alienated from "Bulgarian reality," while the "national consciousness was denied the food without which it could not . . . serve as a bulwark of Bulgarian statehood."³⁰² The political consequences of the spectacular rise of Simeon's empire were no less hazardous. The Bulgarian king's ambition for cultural development and creativity "independent of Byzantium" was overshadowed by his aspiration "to raise Bulgaria in every respect to the level of Byzantium . . . to eliminate the cultural border separating them." In this he greatly overestimated the forces of his people by entrusting it with the mission to replace Byzantium and, consequently, take over its state and cultural heritage—"a task that at that time was outside the reach of any European nation." Had Simeon fulfilled his dream, Mutafchiev maintained, "it would have led to the disappearance of our national individuality," as he would have then become a "Roman emperor" and been "doomed to forget that he was tsar of the Bulgarians." The Bulgarians were therefore lucky that Simeon's desire to sit on the throne of the Byzantine *basileus* was never realized.³⁰³ (To Mutafchiev's exasperation, Iorga, as we could see, made exactly the same argument only to underwrite the "advantages" of the "nationally embedded" Romanian rulers.) Finally, the failure of the Bulgarian state to establish permanent rule over the lands "that ethnically belonged to us" and "become a political organization of the entire [*tselokupniya*] Bulgarian nation" was yet another tragic consequence of the fatal proximity and involvement with the Byzantine Empire.³⁰⁴

To sum up, Mutafchiev extolled the cultural and political grandeur of Byzantium and, in the same breath, bemoaned its ruinous impact on the Bulgarians as "a foreign culture" whose spread "had left behind only depravity or ruins." Byzantium thus appeared as the primordial Other to the Bulgarians, who had set the pattern and mapped the checkered trajectory of their later development. Following a long-standing historiographic tradition, Mutafchiev projected the cultural and political dilemmas of Bulgaria's modern development, especially those emanating from its "inorganic" Westernization, onto the country's medieval past. But while building on the interpretations of Rakovski, Botev, Drinov and Zlatarski about the de-nationalizing and socially disruptive impact of Byzantium, he weaved them into a

302 Petăr Mutafchiev, *Istoriya na bălgarskiya narod* (Sofia: BAN, 1992), 194–195 (first published in 1943).

303 Mutafchiev, *Istoriya na bălgarskiya narod*, 195–196.

304 Mutafchiev, *Kniga za bălgarite*, 103–138, esp. 137.

“philosophy of Bulgarian history,” which allowed him to connect the nation’s past and present more explicitly and forcefully in a single metahistorical narrative marked by cyclical repetitions. On various occasions Mutafchiev spoke of the “amazing recurrences” pervading Bulgarian history and drew analogies between the fate of the first two (medieval) kingdoms and that of the third (modern) one.³⁰⁵ In this narrative the role of Byzantium in Bulgaria’s Middle Ages prefigured that of the contemporary “West” in the country’s modern history, in that it had engendered a tragic split in the nation’s social body and “psyche” and launched a long-term historical process of inorganic imitation and denationalization. Byzantium, in this sense, appeared to the Bulgarians to be the original “West.”

Interestingly, as a positive contrast to Bulgaria’s “unnatural” dynamism, Mutafchiev pointed to medieval Serbia, which he saw as an example of delayed, slow and “glamorless” yet gradual and sound “progressive development.” His explanation, again, rested with the relatively weak role of the “Byzantine factor” in Serbian history. Due to Serbia’s geographical location, the Byzantine influence there was never as direct and strong as it was on the Bulgarians, and its political rivalry with Byzantium was never as “inevitable and acute.” The Serbs’ “normal development” was disrupted only under Tsar Dušan, hence the fast disintegration of his empire after his death; yet even Dušan’s Serbia “was not as thoroughly permeated and as deeply corroded by Byzantinism as was the case with Bulgaria under Simeon, Peter and Ioan Assen II.”³⁰⁶

Later academic literature, especially after World War II, would revise and mitigate Mutafchiev’s portrayal of Byzantium as the evil mastermind of Bulgarian history. However, his “historical-philosophical” interpretation—which, as we have seen, took up a number of pre-existing Romantic themes in Bulgarian historiography—continued to exert a strong, diffuse influence both on the popular perception of the Empire as the archenemy and cultural Other of the Bulgarians, standardized in the teaching of history, and on a wide range of academic and quasi-academic literature debating the Bulgarian *Sonderweg* or national character. Thus, to give just two examples among many, when examining the origins of the relationship between the people and the intelligentsia in post-1878 Bulgaria, Ivan Ormandzhiev (1891–1963), a historian and

305 “If in our historical life, devoid of continuity and durability, there is something regular and permanent, it is precisely the rhythmic alternation of conditions and manifestations fully similar with those experienced in the past” (*Kniga za bălgarite*, 149). See also *ibid.*, 139, 149–151; “Gradăt i seloto,” *Prosveta* 5, no. 5 (1940), 513–530.

306 Mutafchiev, “Kăm filosofiyata na bălgarskata istoriya,” 36; see also Mutafchiev, *Kniga za bălgarite*, 152–154.

author of secondary-school history textbooks, resorted to a set of familiar arguments in the vein of Mutaſchiev:

Simeon continued the work of his father and created a single state and a single nation but failed to achieve an internal, national-cultural unification. The Slavic teaching of Christianity encompassed solely the upper crust of Bulgaria—the minority; the lower strata of its nation remained alien to the faith. The unlimited autocracy of Bulgaria, on the Byzantine model, remained alien to the democratic Slavs. . . . The nobility of Simeon's Bulgaria, following the example of the king, developed on the model of the Byzantine aristocracy. . . . Under Byzantine influence, too, the higher clergy turned into a privileged class cut off from the people.³⁰⁷

Lyubomir Vladikin (1891–1948), a legal scholar with pro-fascist leanings, adopted Mutaſchiev's metahistorical model when discussing the historical definition of the Bulgarian nation. He stressed the alienation of the court and the nobility, “steeped in artificial Byzantinism,” from the people and the “nationalist” character of Bogomilism as a “protest of the nation that had preserved its [authentic] lifestyle against the Byzantinism of the ruling elite.” In his parallels Vladikin was even more unequivocal: “For medieval Bulgaria Byzantium was the same as Europe is for the newly liberated and even present-day Bulgaria.”³⁰⁸

Nevertheless, the master narrative of Bulgarian history proved relatively resistant to Mutaſchiev's historiosophic scenario. Though intended to urge the Bulgarians to “turn to themselves” and rediscover their “organic” potential, this scenario was too bleak to serve the purposes of patriotic education and mobilization. In their national-historical syntheses, interwar historians such as Nikola Stanev (1862–1949), one of the most prolific popularizers of history during that period, were far closer to the affirmative post-Romantic reading of Zlatarski than to the meta-historical gloominess of Mutaſchiev. In his *Medieval Bulgaria* Stanev was preoccupied with reiterating the major *topoi* of Bulgarian pride. These featured the “unified and independent Slavo-Bulgarian state” (which had saved the Balkan Slavs from “Byzantine influence and Romanization [and] directed them toward authentic life”); its remarkable rise; the state- and nation-building effects of Christianization and the adoption of the Cyrillic literary code (whereby “the people appeared unified, nationally uniform, as

307 Ivan Ormandzhiev, “Inteligentsiya i narod v nasheto minalo, nastoyashte i badeshte,” *Otets Paisy* 14 (1941), 10, 441.

308 Lyubomir Vladikin, “Natsionalizmăt kato kulturno-politicheski factor,” *Prosveta* 2, no. 3 (1936), 301–302.

purely Slavic in language, faith and spiritual culture"); and Simeon's dedication, yielding to the "yearnings of his people for full independence," to "the complete liberation of the Slavs from Byzantine domination" and to "erecting the edifice of the *third civilization* [after the Greek and the Roman/Byzantine]." Without confronting Mutafchiev's interpretation directly, Stanev stressed that there was no evidence that Simeon's wars were "anti-popular." Following in the steps of the nineteenth-century tradition, he attributed both the downfall of the First Bulgarian Kingdom and the defeat of the second one to the "imitation of the Byzantine social and economic arrangement" and "the Byzantine character of the state power" alienated from its "national population."³⁰⁹

Petăr Nikov (1884–1938), a high-profile historian and Byzantinist, as well as chairman of the Bulgarian Historical Association, emphasized the "magic power," the "unusual and irresistible vitality" of "the Bulgarian idea" and the "glamorous and attractive image of the former Bulgarian state with all its contents" during the time of the "Byzantine yoke" (the eleventh and twelfth centuries), while not alluding to the corrosion of this "state-creative Bulgarian idea" caused by Byzantinism. Nikov disproved the thesis (espoused by Zlatarski) that the Byzantine domination after the fall of the First Kingdom had been accompanied by an "intensive Hellenizing policy in our lands with the specific purpose to Grecize [*pogărchi*] our people." He pointed out both the irrelevance of the modern understanding of the "national principle" at that time and the fact that the Byzantine Empire "had not been a national Greek state, but had a widely international character." "In this state the Bulgarian element was preserved and could develop."³¹⁰

In his analyses of the social classes and conditions in Simeon's Bulgaria, published in *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Stefan Bobchev (1853–1940), a renowned historian of law, barely made any reference to the impact of the Byzantine model.³¹¹ As regards the organization of "supreme power," Bobchev contested the thesis that "the Byzantine doctrines concerning the divine origin of authority made any radical change in the system of Bulgarian rule, which derived from the Bulgarian Slav's interpretation of customary law." In implicit contrast to the situation in Byzantium, the power of the monarch was limited by "the [democratic] traditions of the Slav communal outlook on life," embodied in the councils of nobles and the national assemblies. Bobchev also stressed that "a complete understanding always existed between Church

309 Nikola Stanev, *Srednovekovna Bălgariya* (Sofia: St. Atanasov, 1934).

310 Petăr Nikov, *Vtoro bălgarsko tsarstvo 1186–1396* (Sofia: Istoricheskoto druzhestvo, 1937), 5–14.

311 Stephen Bobčev, "Bulgaria under Tsar Simeon—I," *Slavonic and East European Review* 7, no. 21 (1929), 621–633.

and State, while the Bulgarian monarch showed invariable respect for the head of the national clergy.”³¹² Despite the extensive borrowing of Byzantine law, important parts of it were “Bulgarized” to fit the local legal concepts and, generally, in the promulgation of laws, “Simeon showed the creative ability of many a German ruler.”³¹³ “In ancient Bulgaria,” he wrote, “the only conventional law among the popular classes was the customary law.” Despite some “external and accidental foreign borrowings” that had failed to penetrate its depths, the customary law had always remained “an ardent defender of its originality and particularity.” Bobchev added that it “fought with energy and perseverance against foreign influence, especially Byzantine, and refused either to bend under this influence or to borrow anything serious from the Byzantine codes and laws.”³¹⁴ Occasionally Bobchev would indicate certain parallels between Bulgaria and Byzantium, but nothing remotely reminiscent of the reckless infatuation or “inorganic” importation Mutafchiev was so concerned about. If anything, he was at pains to demonstrate, wherever possible, the continuity and strong presence of the “Slavonic traditions,” “concepts,” “self-government” and “customary law” that “battled against the Byzantine influence.” Thus immediately after the conversion, King Boris saw to it that there was “a national Bulgarian priesthood, with liturgical books in Bulgarian” and a “national, independent and autocephalous Bulgarian Church”—privileges that were not obtained by the Russians on their conversion to Christianity (in 988), nor by the Serbs (when they converted in the ninth century). Far from opening the door to the sweeping Byzantinization of the state, Bobchev tells us, the Bulgarian Church “did wonderful work for the development of Bulgaria, above all in the field of culture and education [...] We might almost venture to call this Cyril and Methodius’s idea of cultural unity.”³¹⁵

Here was, although in a more even-handed form, a classical nationalist narrative in a progressive mold. Medieval Bulgaria, Bobchev intimated in

312 Stephen Bobčev, “Bulgaria under Tsar Simeon—II,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 8, no. 22 (1930), 99, 110.

313 Ibid., 104–105. Bobchev devoted special studies to the “transfer” and “Bulgarization” of the Byzantine law (e.g., *Rimsko i vizantiysko pravo v starovremenska Bălgaria* [Sofia, 1925]), which remained a standard reference for the scholars in the field in the following decades (see, for example, Kamen Vitchev, “Influences byzantines sur le droit paléo-bulgare,” in *Actes du IV^e Congrès International des études byzantines*, vol. 2 [Sofia: Imprimerie de la Cour, 1936], 83–86).

314 Prof. S.S. Bobčev, “Quelques remarques sur le droit coutumier bulgare pendant l’époque de la domination ottomane,” *Revue internationale des études balkaniques* 1, no. 2 (1934), 34–36, 44.

315 Bobčev, “Bulgaria under Tsar Simeon—II,” 109–110.

the vein of Drinov, did adopt the outward trappings of power and the ornaments of Byzantine civilization, but beneath these were concealed the genuine and unspoiled Slavic social and political organization. For Stanev, Nikov and Bobchev, substantiating the continuity of the fundamental structures of medieval Bulgarian society and their potential to survive and progress was more important than pointing pedagogically at their corrosion—and therefore intrinsic frailty—under the impact of Byzantinism (and, by extension, the “West”).

To complete the range of interpretations, Bogdan Filov (1883–1945), a leading archaeologist, art historian and politician, deployed the arguments about the discontinuity between Hellas and Byzantium for the purpose of “explaining” the division between Eastern and Western Europe.³¹⁶ Filov agreed with the majority of Balkan Byzantinists that in terms of ethnic composition, political representation, military participation and state structure, the Empire’s “Hellenic” character was highly problematic. Regarding culture, it was the strongly Orientalized Hellenistic culture rather than classical Hellenism that impacted Byzantium. Byzantine culture, Filov stressed, was “principally a Christian-Oriental culture,” with the Greek and Roman elements, or what he called “pagan-European” culture, playing a secondary role. The “spirit of Byzantinism” could be better understood if we looked not for what connected it with antiquity and Hellas but for what distinguished it from them. “Because the value of Byzantinism as a cultural and political factor lies much more in what it succeeded in newly creating than in that which it could have preserved from the past.” According to Filov, while modern Western and Central Europe was raised in the traditions of the ancient culture, present-day Eastern (or Orthodox) Europe was the child primarily of Byzantium.

Byzantium and Hellas are not therefore two stages in the development of the same historical process; they are two opposite poles, two different worlds, two contrasts. Byzantium and Hellas are the scions of two different civilizations; they are the embodiment of the eternal conflict between East and West—a conflict that emerged at the dawn of European history and that, in one form or another, continues to this day. This explains the differences between present-day Western and Eastern Europe . . .

The “dualism” in contemporary European culture would disappear and its unification would be accomplished, concluded Filov, “only when in the

316 Bogdan Filov, “Vizantiya i Elada,” *Bălgarska misāl* 2, no. 1 (1927), 32–41; *Bălgarska misāl* 2, no. 2 (1927), 125–135.

all-European civilization enter all lasting values that humankind had created so far during its entire existence.”³¹⁷

...

In the new, “Yugoslav” phase of Serbian historiography before World War II, interest in the medieval past drifted away from close engagement with the Byzantine “component” in the Serbian history and culture, despite certain advances in the proper field of Byzantine studies.³¹⁸ At the center of attention were themes and (re)interpretations underscoring the community between the three constitutive nationalities of the state. Cultural and historical differences between Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were impossible to erase but could be reconfigured. Instead of emphasizing the Serbian medieval state’s oscillation between the Byzantine and the Latin cultural-political spheres and its expanding “Byzantinization,” the Serbian historians of the 1920s and the early 1930s preferred to present it as the site of “reconciliation” and unison of these apparently contradictory orientations. The growing disillusionment with the Yugoslav idea in the 1930s marked a return to a narrower national focus but no revived interest in Byzantine themes. The most significant Serbian historians of the interwar period, Stanoje Stanojević, Vladimir Ćorović, Jovan Radonić and Nikola Radojčić, although trained as Byzantologists, either turned away from Serbian-Byzantine themes towards other medieval topics (Radojčić, Stanojević), switched to more specialized studies (Radonić) or rarely touched upon the Byzantine presence in Serbian history except for purely political aspects (Ćorović). Byzantium and its legacy were not a popular topic in interwar Serbian history-writing. Research in this direction, as we shall see, largely fell upon a non-local, immigrant community of Byzantinist scholars.

One can detect the general mentality underlying these postwar developments in the work of a Serbian geographer with a strong impact on the historical field. Jovan Cvijić (1865–1927) was not only a paramount figure in Serbian geology, geography and anthropogeography but a major state-builder, whose international scholarly reputation lent invaluable support to Serbia’s, and later

317 Filov, “Vizantiya i Elada,” *Bălgarska misāl* 2, no. 2, 130, 133, 135.

318 The work of the first Serbian Byzantologists, the aforementioned Dragutin Anastasijević and Filaret Granić (1883–1948), was acknowledged already at the time as erudite and rigorous but too specialized, and the bulk of it remained accessible to only a narrow circle of specialists. During the whole interwar period only two doctoral dissertations in Byzantine studies were defended at Belgrade University (Maksimović, “Razvoj vizantologije,” 661–663).

Yugoslavia's, political claims.³¹⁹ In several of his works, written in the late 1910s and early 1920s, he dealt with, among other things, the "zones of civilization" and "psychological types" in the Balkans from a historicized anthropological perspective. Byzantine high culture, according to Cvijić, had been completely obliterated by his own time. Certain "remains of the civilization of the middle and lower classes" had survived but "in a changed, almost corrupted form." The "corruption" began in the Middle Ages through the assimilation of elements from Oriental civilization and intensified during the Turkish period, when Levantine influences were added. "Thus modified, Byzantine civilization spread during the Byzantine and Turkish periods over the larger part of the peninsula, and even in regions which are today outside its confines. Byzantine civilization has thus become Balkan civilization par excellence, Balkanism in the true sense of the word."³²⁰ During the period of Ottoman rule, the "material civilization and the moral conceptions that emanated from Byzantium, particularly those of the Byzantine period of decadence, continued to spread throughout almost the entire peninsula." Indeed, the Ottoman Empire ensured the "Byzantinization" of the region on a scale that was unthinkable prior to its inclusion in the Ottoman political realm: "The ancient frontiers which hindered the advance of Byzantine civilization had disappeared, and the means of transmission remained as effective if not more so."

Nonetheless, Cvijić was not inclined to overrate the pervasiveness and the impact of the Byzantine-Ottoman culture. For even in the southern parts of the peninsula, the spread of Byzantine civilization, he held, was interrupted by numerous enclaves of the patriarchal regime—"the opposite [of Byzantine civilization] in a material as well as spiritual sense." The zone of patriarchal culture (whose "core" was formed by Montenegro and the adjacent areas of Herzegovina and northern Albania) presented the authentic Balkan Slav culture; there lived "physically the strongest and ethnographically the most vigorous tribes and peoples in the Balkan peninsula... These are peoples of strength and power... the best species in the Balkan Peninsula [endowed

319 Many of Cvijić's scholarly works vindicated, alternately or in parallel, pro-Serbian or pro-Yugoslav positions. Between 1915 and 1919 he published nine books in French and English, most of them with the support of the Serbian government, which furnished scholarly legitimacy to the territorial claims of the planned Yugoslav state. At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, he was one of six senior experts heading the Ethnographic and Historical Section and, as such, was closely involved in both the formal creation of Yugoslavia and the postwar territorial settlement in Southeastern Europe.

320 Jovan Cvijić, "The Zones of Civilization of the Balkan Peninsula," *Geographical Review* 5, no. 6 (1918), 471–472.

with] a healthy, highland morality and a deep sense of community and self-sacrifice." Although various cultural elements were present in this zone, all of them had been fully assimilated without changing the nature of the patriarchal civilization.³²¹ The patriarchal culture had reared the (largely Serbian) Dinaric psychological type that Cvijić credited with the potential to become the dominant regional type. Outside the scope of, and opposite in character to, this expanding core of heroic, state-creative Dinaric Serbs, "untouched by contact with foreign peoples or civilizations," were the Eastern Balkan, strongly Byzantinized and Orientalized Bulgarian *raya*. Remarkably, the "complete antipode in every respect to this patriarchal core" was not, in Cvijić's view, the Western civilizational zone, but the peoples of Byzantine-Tzintzar culture characterized by "petty Byzantine-Tzintzar morality," such as Greeks, Vlachs and Bulgarians. "The most pronounced boundary in this region," Cvijić maintained, "is not the boundary between Byzantine and Western civilization, but that between the patriarchal regime and the Byzantine civilization."³²² The politically loaded ideology behind Cvijić's cultural taxonomy was not necessarily shared by all Serbian historians; still, many adopted, and others drew on or instrumentalized, parts of his argument.

Vladimir Ćorović (1885–1941), the most prolific and high-profile Serbian historian of that time (born in Herzegovina), wrote his *History of Yugoslavia* (1933) in the spirit of Yugoslavism and in defense of "Yugoslavdom." He tried to weave the medieval history of the three recognized nationalities that came to constitute interwar Yugoslavia (also encompassing the "Macedonian Slavs" and "Serbo-Croatian" Bosnia) into a narrative of a single people with different (historically contingent) cultural-political trajectories. Against this ambitious canvas Ćorović seemed uninterested in assessing the relative importance of the Byzantine "model" for the Serbs, despite his minute survey of Serbian-Byzantine political relations. That was also the case in his other synthetic study, *History of the Serbs* (written on the eve of World War II and published posthumously). In his coverage of the "seminal" achievements of medieval Serbia—the emergence of the "state idea" and state tradition, the organization of the church, the creation of religious architecture and art—Byzantine influence was barely mentioned. True, Ćorović tells us (as others did before him) that the state formation among the Serbs came as a reaction to an outside pressure or threat; that on the "Serbian lands" (Zeta and Raška) "Eastern and Western influences intersected"; and that after the tenth century the Serbs' "not only political but also religious-civilizational" orientation towards Constantinople

321 *Balkansko poluostrvo*, vol. 1, 85–86.

322 Cvijić, "The Zones of Civilization," 481.

and Byzantium definitely prevailed and predominated for the next “several centuries.” However, his narrative does not indicate that either of these was directly effectuated by Byzantium or that “importation” of Byzantine models had much to do with the Serbian state and culture.

Thus Ćorović maintained that the Serbs’ political and cultural reorientation towards Byzantium came about with the “mediation of their kinsmen from Macedonia.” If by the mid-twelfth century Raška “was in the main a purely Orthodox domain,” this was the result of the activity of the “Slavic Macedonian element.”³²³ The influence of the Byzantine model on the formation of the Serbian state and the institutionalization of its autocephalous Orthodox Church remained unaddressed. Stefan Nemnaja is said to have been the first to develop a “state idea” in a land of “strong [particularistic] ambitions and bloody atavism” and created the “condition for a spiritual civilization, which . . . [had] to educate the raw instincts of the still-primitive Serbs.” Yet one is left with the impression that this idea and the notion of civilization were sheer Serbian creations testifying to “the state growth and high cultural aspirations of medieval Serbia.” Similarly, the autocephalous Serbian church set up by Sava Nemanjić in 1219 with the sanction of the Constantinople Patriarchate had a “purely national character”: “Sava made the Orthodox faith the state religion of Serbia and tied it closely with the interests of the state and the people,” said Ćorović; Sava’s church was and remained “popular and national,” “actively, lively and directly concerned with the overall progress of the people,” and this was its “greatest significance.” Therefore, Ćorović concluded, “The Serbian state idea was created physically by Nemanja and intellectually by Sava.”³²⁴ As in the Bulgarian storyline, “Slavic Orthodoxy” is said to have been intended to achieve “the full homogeneity of the Serbian state.” The important difference is that the Bulgarian historians’ assessments of the national role of the clergy were often ambivalent, seeing it as susceptible to “Byzantinization,” that is, cultural de-nationalization and social estrangement from the people. In Serbian historiography, by contrast, the Serbian clergy invariably featured as *the* prime “patriotic element,” a firm repository of the Serbian state idea, national patrimony and love for freedom. Typical of this narration was the complete harmony between church and state.³²⁵

323 Vladimir Ćorović, *Istorija Jugoslavije* (Belgrade: Narodno Delo, 1933), 58–59, 102–103; Vladimir Ćorović, *Istorija srpskog naroda* (originally titled *Istorija Srba*) (Belgrade: BIGZ, 1989), 72–73.

324 Ćorović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, 121, 129–130.

325 *Ibid.*, 331. The (overwhelmingly religious) Serbian art and architecture were likewise presented as essentially Serbian despite some “minor” Romanic or Byzantine elements. See,

All things considered, until the proclamation of Stefan Dušan's empire in the mid-fourteenth century, Byzantium appears in Ćorović's *History* as a formidable adversary to the Serbs, but not as their civilizational model. Even their cultural "export" to Romania was defined as "perpetuation of the Serbian-Bulgarian [not Serbian-Byzantine] civilization."³²⁶ It was only after overtaking Southern Macedonia and entering deep into properly Greek areas that the Serbs were exposed to the influence of Greek culture: "It appears that the Byzantinization of Serbs started in the fourteenth century and first affected the court and higher society."³²⁷ Echoing Cvijić, we may read Serbia's de-Byzantinization by Ćorović as an attempt to underscore the state-building and creative genius of the Serbs (and the Slavs). But it could also indicate an attempt to downplay the importance for the Yugoslav nations of their imperial legacies—Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman and Habsburg—which continued to divide rather than unite them.

This being said, we should acknowledge Ćorović's lack of Romantic élan and of a tendency to operate with the collective agency of "the Serbian people." At the same time, Novaković's central critical theses—about the imitative imperialism of the Serbian state class, hence the insignificance of the principle of nationality, and the irrelevance of the historical precedent for the present—were not adopted by either Stanojević or Ćorović. For the period before Stefan Dušan's empire, none of them used the notion of a (Byzantium-inspired) imperialist idea—quite the contrary. Stanoje Stanojević stressed that in the strategic direction of Serbia's expansion—the Vardar River valley and Macedonia—it met with the resistance of both Byzantium, the traditional possessor of this area, and Bulgaria, which claimed it by state right. Against these historical and state rights, he argued,

Serbia opposed the right of life [*životno pravo*] for its state interests and national power. At Velbužd [where the Serbs defeated the Bulgarians in a 1330 battle] a fight was waged between Byzantine-Bulgarian state-legalistic theories and Serbian national and state life. With its enduring forces, Serbia swept to victory, and the question of supremacy in

for example, Ćorović's discussion of church architecture and painting during the reign of King Milutin (*ibid.*, 164–165).

326 *Ibid.*, 317.

327 Ćorović, *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 158.

the Vardar valley and Macedonia was definitively solved in favor of the Serbian people.³²⁸

Ćorović borrowed wholesale this remarkable declaration of the Serbs' right to *Lebensraum* in Macedonia:

Whole new areas were included in the Serbian state which until then had never belonged to it and became, if they had not already been, our national possession in an ethnic sense as well. [...] The battle of Velbužd was one of the most absolute Serbian victories in the Middle Ages. . . . Bulgaria was reduced to its natural borders from the Danube to the Rila Mountains and Maritsa River and never again dared to go beyond them at the expense of the Serbs to the west . . . Serbian domination in northern Macedonia was thus fully secured by this victory, while in the south the field was prepared for Dušan's further work.³²⁹

For both Stanojević and Ćorović, the Bulgarian claims to Macedonia were more important than the traditional opposition to Byzantium precisely because of their "relevance" for the contemporary Serbian-Bulgarian controversies over this region. Nothing remained of the ethnic indistinguishability between the medieval Serbs and Bulgarians and of the worthlessness of the historical right on which Novaković had repeatedly insisted.

Since it constituted the height of Serbian medieval power and, accordingly, a key turning point in the national historiography, the empire of Stefan Dušan encapsulated the different interpretations of the nature and long-term consequences of the Serbian interaction with Byzantium. Tellingly, while Stanoje Stanojević ceased the work he had begun at the beginning of the century on *Byzantium and the Serbs*, he wrote a study dedicated to *Car Dušan* (1922). Stanojević was not inclined to overrate Dušan's strength or the Serbs' potential to master a successor empire. He attributed Dušan's "easy victories" to the weakness of and lack of serious resistance from Byzantium ("a shadow of the once strong state"). According to him, Dušan had no preconceived plan to create a Serbian-Byzantine empire: his political concept had taken shape gradually, "under the influence of the development of events and under the influence of his successes." "The easy successes, vanity and state interests impalpably dragged him ever further," Stanojević added, "and he was increasingly losing

328 Stanoje Stanojević, *Car Dušan* (Belgrade: Izdavačka Knjižara Napredak, 1922), 6, 7.

329 Ćorović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, 165, 171–172; Ćorović, *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 144.

the feeling that he was leaving the real base under his feet and was leading the state towards an uncertain future.”³³⁰ Dušan’s solution to the “hard question of how the Serbian kingdom could take the place of Byzantium”—the creation of a “Serbian-Byzantine state”—was the result of his awareness that Serbia was “still too weak” and that military victory was not enough. His idea of a Serbian-Byzantine empire to replace and succeed Byzantium meant that “in the territories once ruled by Byzantium, Byzantine culture and Byzantine state arrangement would [continue to] dominate” but that “all military, administrative and ecclesiastical executives and dignitaries would be taken from the areas that constituted the core of the original Serbian state.” The choice of Skopje for the site of his coronation as “Emperor of the Serbs and the Greeks” was another demonstration of his intention “that in the new empire the Serbian element would be the bearer of the entire state life.”³³¹ This “great plan and heavy task” ultimately failed because, according to Stanojević, it lacked the necessary preconditions and abilities. The biggest problem was the great differences between the northern (“Serbian”) and the southern (“Greek”) provinces of the Serbian-Byzantine state, which “were the consequence of different races, a different past and culture and different cultural influences.” Stanojević blamed this internal chasm on more than just a shortage of time to level the differences. Like Mutafchiev in regard to the Bulgarians, he seemed to believe that neither the Serbian state nor the Serbian people had the forces needed for it. Logically, the state built on such “crumbling foundations” disintegrated after Dušan’s death, leaving the Serbian people with “only the memory of an episode of glory and power, which later, especially during the [Ottoman] yoke, influenced through tradition the national education and the strengthening of the moral forces of the nation.”³³²

For his part, Vladimir Ćorović assumed that Dušan had come naturally to the idea “to replace enfeebled and worn-out Byzantium with the fresh empire of his own people.” Having conquered most of the Balkans, Dušan believed that the imperial title belonged to him by right and that the state he had created was not a competitor to but “almost a master of the Eastern Roman Empire.”³³³ While Ćorović agreed that the Serbian-Byzantine empire was a “hybrid creation,” he still considered it a “national [project] in the true sense

330 Stanojević, *Car Dušan*, 12–13, 24.

331 Ibid., 13–18.

332 Ibid., 23–25. Stanojević argued that in combining realism and wishful thinking, “crude actions and sentimental-romantic outbursts,” Dušan was “a true son of his people” (ibid., 24).

333 Ćorović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, 179–180; Ćorović, *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 167.

of the word, having made the Serbs the main pivot of the state.” Moreover, according to him Dušan had invested considerable effort into trying to make a unified whole out of the disparate parts of his empire, his “Legal Code” being the best proof. However, during this period the Serbian upper classes (Ćorović makes no mention of the popular masses) came under the strong impact of the incorporated Greek population, of its culture and customs, while the royal court, the church architecture and art replicated the “Greek forms.” Up to that point, Serbia, despite being an Orthodox state, had felt “the strong influence of the West.” However, from the time of Dušan, due to the establishment of direct connections to the “Greeks” and the deeper penetration into Byzantine areas, “Serbia was increasingly acquiring a Balkan-Byzantine character.” Like Stanojević, Ćorović found that the biggest problem was not that Dušan’s policy was becoming “too imperialistic.” The problem was, first, that his state and Serbian culture in general were “lacking sufficient skills, traditions and time to introduce their spirit into the new lands,” that is, “to assimilate, nurture and really adopt them.” Second, and more critically, while Serbian strength was being worn out far in the south, “the Serbian element in the west was being progressively suppressed” by the Germans and the Magyars.³³⁴

Both Stanojević and Ćorović thus blamed Dušan for the same thing the Bulgarian historians blamed Simeon for: that is, for seeking to create not a big national state, but “another” Byzantine Empire, and for thus succumbing to, rather than assimilating, the “Greek forms.” The fact that through his legislative work he sought to establish a “legal monarchy” different from the Byzantine autocratic model—a “rule of law” of sorts—was commendable but fruitless. Yet in the end, Ćorović’s balance sheet favored the Serbs at the expense of the Byzantines (and the Bulgarians). On the one hand, “from the fourteenth century,” he maintained, “the Morava was a purely Serbian river and the Serbian ethnic boundary extended to the Timok River; to the south, Macedonia acquired a Serbian character.” Unsurprisingly, these historical borders overlapped perfectly with Yugoslavia’s postwar political geography to the east and south, that is, in the one-time Byzantine and later Dušan’s realm. On the other hand, the Serbs are said to have been the only ones who resisted and fought the advancing Turks instead of “bowing down” like the Greeks and the Bulgarians.³³⁵ The complete disappearance from this narrative of Byzantium as a factor in Balkan politics, starting with Dušan’s imperial coronation, is indeed striking. Somehow Serbia appears as having taken the place of Byzantium, first as a prime force on the Balkan peninsula and then as a

334 Ćorović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, 173–174, 179–182, 193; Ćorović, *Istorija srpskog naroda*, 167–170.

335 Ćorović, *Istorija Jugoslavije*, 238–239.

major barrier against the Turkish advance. Ćorović quite unambiguously suggested that the role of defenders of Christianity, imperial dignity and freedom fell to the Serbs. In any event, he added, “Serbian corpses, numbering in the thousands, filled the defense trenches of Europe to safeguard it from Turkish invasion.”³³⁶

The actual implications of the theories of the interwar Yugoslav historians about Serbia and Byzantium become apparent when we look at the way other contemporary intellectuals instrumentalized them. The well-known philosopher and foremost “national psychologist” in interwar Yugoslavia, Vladimir Dvorniković (1888–1956), came up with an interpretation whose meta-historical characteristics were comparable to Mutaščiev’s. According to him, Stefan Nemanja’s sons, Stefan the First-Crowned and Sava, realized “an ingenious division” not only of political roles but of civilizational spheres, the first taking his crown from the West, the second taking the church from the East.

With his autocephalous church St. Sava became the founder of Serbian nationalism and of the continuity of the Serbian state idea. With Sava, Serbdom stepped onto the historical scene as a conscious subject and bearer of its proper national and state idea. The coalescence of church and state, on the Byzantine model, became the main organizational principle and a guarantee of state continuity.

The importance of their “mighty state-building and organizational work” was that, while until then Serbia had continuously oscillated between the Greek-Byzantine and Western-Latin political and cultural spheres, “Stefan and Sava’s action, in an apparent inner contradiction, brought about the fortunate reconciliation of these spheres through a formula that provided an orientation line for centuries [ahead], which is: material-technological adherence to the West and spiritual-cultural [adherence] to the East.”³³⁷

The state the Nemanjićs had created “at the intersection of East and West,” Dvorniković argued, was at base “a Byzantinoid state”—neither a bureaucratic, Roman-law-based Byzantine state nor a feudal one in the Western sense, but something outside these categories. It drew on the “*županian* atavism” that counteracted the “Byzantine-Oriental theocratic principle” but at the same time was acquiescent to strong leadership. The Nemanjićs, he wrote, were led by the desire to “erase the Greek name” from the territory of the Serbian state—which indicated “that there was, although not in the present-

336 Ibid., 239, 291.

337 Vladimir Dvorniković, *Karakterologija Jugoslovena* (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1939), 852–853.

day sense, something nationally conscious and opposed to the Greek spirit in the souls of all the strong state-building Nemanjićs—except Dušan.” With the latter, imperialism entered Serbian medieval history: “instead of bringing the idea of the ‘unifier’ of the Serbian lands, [Stefan] Nemanja, to completion, Dušan tied to the state framework new Greeks and Albanians.” The essence of the proclamation of the Serbian-Byzantine empire, according to Dvorniković, was “in the continuity of the Eastern-Christian idea, whose bearer was the Byzantine *basileus*, and the Romaic state nation. The Nemanjićs . . . began to feel they were carriers of and fighters for the Christian, Orthodox-religious idea.” In its internal organization this empire was a “*mixtum compositum* of ancient remnants and new reformist beginnings.” However, “this legal-Byzantine and Western-feudal state arrangement did not fit the Serbian people. After its healthy beginnings Nemanjićs’s Serbia degraded into an artificial Serbian-Greek symbiosis”; as such it was doomed to fail.³³⁸ Here we can detect close similarities with Mutaľchiev’s portrayal of the “organic” pagan phase of Bulgarian medieval history and the “inorganic” one following the infiltration of Byzantinism.

The most dynamic presence in the historians’ guild of interwar Belgrade, however, was a Russian émigré community. In 1933 George Ostrogorsky (Georgiy Ostrogorski, 1902–1976), a promising young Byzantologist at the time and one of the leading figures in the discipline after World War II, settled down in Belgrade, where he spent the next forty-odd years researching Byzantine history and the cultural limits of *Slavia Orthodoxa*.³³⁹ The Byzantinist school that he created there and which was institutionalized in 1948 with the setting up of the Byzantine Institute played a major role not only in the formation of a whole new generation of Serbian Byzantologists but in promulgating new approaches and thematic fields to the study of the Slavs’ medieval past and culture.³⁴⁰

338 Ibid., 853–856.

339 G. Ostrogorsky was born in St. Petersburg but fled in 1917. Before arriving in Belgrade at the invitation of Stanoje Stanojević, he had studied in Heidelberg and Paris and taught at the University of Breslau (today Wrocław, Poland). In Belgrade he worked in, and in 1940 became the chair of, the Seminar for Byzantine Studies. In 1948 he founded and became director of the Byzantine Institute in Belgrade. Other émigré members of this school were Vladimir Mošin (1894–1987), Teodor Taranovski (1875–1936) and Aleksandar Soloviev (1890–1970).

340 Ostrogorsky’s research covered a wide range of topics related to the social, political and cultural history of Byzantium and its relations with the Slavic world (see Maksimović, “Razvoj vizantologije,” 667, for a list of topics and quoted bibliographies). The actual crys-

It has been rightly noted that Ostrogorsky did not regard the history of Byzantium as the story only of the Greek speakers. Nor did he consider the history of the Balkan Slavs to be merely a chronicle of resistance to Greek hegemony. For him Slavic society and culture were more than just products of the Byzantine political and cultural model. While Serbian historians before him (such as J. Radonić and S. Stanojević) did not go further than postulating the ability of the Serbs to, in the words of Stanojević, “fully assimilate and adapt [Byzantine culture] to itself and its own properties and needs, adding to it that which it had created itself until then,”³⁴¹ Ostrogorsky essentially reversed the perspective and sought to cast light on the Slavs’ contribution to Byzantine society and culture. The preface to the first edition of his *Hauptwerk* reads: “This book sets out to trace the development of the Byzantine state and to show how this was determined by the interaction of changing internal and external forces. . . . [A]n attempt is made to bring out the essential interdependence of events at home and abroad, political, ecclesiastical and cultural”.³⁴² Ostrogorsky considered the Slavs to be a, if not *the*, principal external force that shaped the Byzantine state.³⁴³

In an extensive review of Vasil Zlatarski’s *History of the Bulgarian State in the Middle Ages* (vols. 1 and 2, 1927, 1934), Ostrogorsky also commented on his and Mutaſchiev’s thesis about the ominous Byzantine influence on Bulgaria and their negative assessment of Simeon’s rule for basing itself fully on the Byzantine idea and opening the door to Byzantine influence:

It seems to me [Ostrogorsky wrote] that this policy, like the similar policy of Dušan later, cannot be contemplated from the point of view of modern national ideas. In the Middle Ages the aspiration for hegemony expressed itself in the aspiration for empire, whereas as an actual empire it was considered only the Roman Empire, tied to Rome or to the New Rome—Constantinople.³⁴⁴

tallization of the “Belgrade Byzantinist school,” however, took place only after the setting up of the Institute and especially starting in the 1960s.

341 Stanojević, *Istorija srpskoga naroda*, 157.

342 Georgy Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980) (originally published as *Geschichte des byzantinischen Staates*, Munich, 1940), vii. This book, published in more than ten languages and numerous editions, enjoyed a lasting international reputation.

343 Paul Stephenson, “The Byzantine Frontier in Macedonia,” in *Dialogos: Hellenic Studies Review* 7 (2001), 33.

344 [Review of V.N. Zlatarski, *Istoriya na Bălgarskata Dărzhava prez srednite vekove*], *Jugoslovenski Istoriski Časopis* 1, nos. 3–4 (1935), 515.

Stojan Novaković would have fully agreed with this observation.

It is no exaggeration to say that the scholarly interest in Byzantium and Serbian- (or Slavic-) Byzantine relations in interwar Yugoslavia was largely the territory of the Russian émigré circle. Most of its members delved into specific sub-fields, most conspicuously legal history, as is testified by the work of two prominent legal scholars, Teodor Taranovski (1875–1936) and Aleksandar Soloviev (1890–1971), which focused on the “exegesis” of Dušan’s Code. Taranovski was not inclined to read the Code as a reflection of a highly developed Serbian society, as post-Romantic Serbian historiography tended to do. For him the provisions placing the rule of law above the tsar was an expression of Dušan’s imperial legal ideology, with roots in Byzantine law, rather than an expression of legal practice.³⁴⁵ Soloviev contradicted Bobchev in arguing that the Slavs did not bring with them a developed system of customary law and that they put together their juridical codices quite late (at the end of the thirteenth century) in the form of a “mixed system of Byzantine-Slavic law.” Until then Byzantine law had been fully adopted by the Bulgarians as “sacred, perfect, complete and civilized,” with the penal code presenting the only instance of “serious divergences and contradictions between the Slav and the Byzantine points of view.” According to Soloviev it was unwarranted to assume that the Bulgarian tsars had governed and judged according to the customary law, especially after the Byzantine domination in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. He credited Dušan’s state for having engendered “an original Serbian code . . . based on the best principles of the Roman-Byzantine law” which, at the same time, harmonized with the Slav character and social organization. The *Corpus Juris* of the “composite Serbo-Greek Empire” that Dušan had initiated sought “to create a great state, based on the force of the Serbian race and on the Roman-Byzantine tradition, a legal state, in which the conqueror and the conquered would be equal [and] in which everyone, including the emperor himself, had to respect the principles of the objective law.”³⁴⁶ Unlike Taranovski, Soloviev made no distinction between ideology and practice and

345 Teodor Taranovski, *Istorija srpskog prava u Nemanjičkoj državi*, vols. 1–4 (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1931–1935); Teodor Taranovski, *Dušanov zakonik i Dušanovo carstvo* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 1926).

346 Alexandre Soloviev, “Aperçu historique du développement du droit dans les Balkans (jusqu’au xv^e siècle),” *Revue Internationale des Etudes Balkaniques* 1–2, nos. 3–4 (1936), 437–445. See also Aleksandar Soloviev, *Značaj vizantijskog prava na Balkanu* (Belgrade: Izdanje Čupićeve zadužbine, 1928); Aleksandar Soloviev, *Zakonodavstvo Stefana Dušana, cara Srba i Grka* (Skopje: Skopsko naučno društvo, 1928); Aleksandar Soloviev, *Značaj vizantijskog prava na Balkanu* (Belgrade: Izdanje Čupićeve zadužbine, 1928).

lent his authority to the thesis upheld by the “critical” Serbian historiography about the “high juridical consciousness” transpiring from Dušan’s Code. For his part, Vladimir Mošin (1894–1987), another prominent Byzantinist and Slavacist in this circle, contested the widely held view that Byzantine influence peaked at the time of Dušan’s conquests in the south. This peak, according to Mošin, was only the “logical conclusion of the previous development of the Serbian political history” associated with King Milutin’s reign and the first conquests of Byzantine areas (the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries).³⁴⁷ Mošin thus dated the process of massive “Byzantinization” of Serbian political life half a century earlier—an adjustment that would thereafter be accepted as authoritative.

...

Romania emerged as the great geopolitical victor of World War I in the region. The peace treaties of 1918 fulfilled almost all the dreams of the prewar irredentists of uniting the ethnic Romanians and the territories where they lived into a unitary Greater Romania. Romanian nationalism’s success was perceived as confirmation of, and further boosted the *élan* for, Romania’s historical “mission” as a regional (and even global) power and civilizer. This very triumph, on the other hand, brought to the surface unanticipated problems regarding the unification of populations and territories that had belonged to various empires (Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian), encompassed substantial ethnic minorities and embodied different historical, cultural and institutional traditions. The ensuing efforts at national integration of Greater Romania enhanced the presence of ethnic nationalism in politics and culture and were in turn underpinned by the megalomaniac, “post-imperial” visions of many Romanian intellectuals.

In Romanian historiography, in contrast to Bulgarian and Serbian historiography, the fall of Byzantium in 1453 marked not an end but a new beginning: the rise of a fresh Orthodox power, the Romanian principalities—the real heir of Byzantium.³⁴⁸ As before the war, Nicolae Iorga largely set the frame and the terms of the debates on the Romanian past in a wider—regional and global—

347 Vladimir Mošin, “Vizantiski uticaj u Srbiji u XIV veku,” *Jugoslovenski istoriski casopis* 3, nos. 1–4 (1937), 147–160 (italics original).

348 The Ottomans conquered Wallachia in 1462 and Moldavia in 1513. However, neither province fully lost its independence. The two provinces paid an annual tribute to the Sublime Porte, and their princes (elected by the boyars) were formally approved by it, but otherwise the Porte did not interfere in their internal affairs, except in extreme cases.

context. The convening of the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest in 1924 and the founding of the Romanian Institute of Byzantine Studies in 1934 were also his initiatives.

For Iorga the Byzantine Empire was “an international formula, consecrated by imperial legitimacy and propped by Roman law and the Eastern Christian Church.”³⁴⁹ The dominance of the Greek language and the prestige of the Hellenic heritage did not mean the dominance of Greek culture, least of all the national character of the state:

Greek scholars usually make a mistake as bad as the one that considers the Byzantine Empire a “Bas-Empire.” By connecting classical Greece, a completely different world, to Byzantium, which was of Roman descent in both its origins and principles, they attribute to what should only be considered as a stage in their national development an exclusively national, unchangeable, nature that, despite instincts natural to most races, did not exist at all. [...] Byzantium excluded, until the end, everything related to nationality.³⁵⁰

As in the case of Zlatarski or Mutařchiev, however, the soundness of such pronouncements was not replicated in discussions dedicated to the contemporaneous “vast ‘Romanian country,’ ‘Romanian Fatherland,’ a term imbued with a deep ethnic instinct.”³⁵¹ Iorga also tirelessly highlighted “the role that the Romanians played in the East, not as a bellicose element [like the Bulgarians and the Serbs], but in the higher terms of civilization, of ideas and above all *of conservation of the ancient ideals of unity and ancient links with the other world, the West.*”³⁵² This perennial role of the Romanians was amplified after the fall of Constantinople.

Iorga’s most celebrated contribution to the field of Byzantine studies, which reached its fully developed form in the 1930s, was his idea of “Byzantium’s continuity” after the Empire’s political demise in 1453. His felicitous formula “Byzantium after Byzantium” provided a new perspective on the institutional

349 Iorga, *Formes byzantines et réalités balkaniques*, 34–35.

350 Nicolae Iorga, *La place des Romains dans l’histoire universelle*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Edition de l’Institut d’études byzantines, 1935), 18–19; Nicolae Iorga, “Byzance en Occident,” in Nicolae Iorga, *Etudes byzantines*, vol. 1, 329.

351 Nicolae Iorga, *Histoire des Roumains et de leur Civilisation* (Paris: Henry Paulin, 1920), 49.

352 Nicolae Iorga, “Deux traditions historiques dans les Balkans: celle de l’Italie et celle de Roumains,” *Académie Roumaine. Bulletin de la Section Historique* 1 (1912–1913), 170 (italics original).

and cultural landscape of not only the Balkans but the entire Near East. The longevity he had in mind concerned the institutions, the political system, the religious formation and the type of civilization that it had created and which, far from being immutable, kept on evolving and assimilating new forms of civilization. Byzantium, wrote Iorga,

namely that which formed, beyond outward appearances, its essence not only maintained itself... but continued its millenary action... through which this political and cultural unity, always evolving, was accumulating on its own, appearing to remain the same, all that entered its wide area of action.... Many new things would come to light, but deep down the unyielding Byzantine continuity would remain.³⁵³

Even if it encompassed a vast area, stretching from Italy to Georgia and Syria, “the essence of Byzantine life” was preserved mainly in the Balkans. And although the Ottoman Empire and the Patriarchate of Constantinople took over many of its functions, the actual successors, spiritual and institutional, of Byzantium were the Romanians:

For five hundred years we gave asylum to the whole higher religious life, to the whole cultural life of the peoples from across the Danube. Greek Byzantium and Slav Byzantium, which derived from it, thus lived for another half-millennium among us and through us, if not for us... There was a time when the entire Byzantine Balkan legacy seemed destined to pass on to our princes...³⁵⁴

The process of creating this “new Romanian Byzantium”³⁵⁵ went through stages. The first stage coincided with the Ottoman expansion, when Byzantine notables took refuge in the Principalities and infiltrated the nascent Romanian elite. Thus, from the fourteenth century, the Romanian provinces came to represent “the Byzantine and Slavo-Byzantine political civilization in the entirety of its diverse elements,” while the Romanian princes assumed the role of “legitimate heirs of the Eastern Caesars.” The second phase began with the Ottoman

353 Nicolae Iorga, *Byzantium after Byzantium* (Iași, Oxford and Portland: Centre for Romanian Studies, 2000) (first published as *Byzance après Byzance. Continuation de l'Histoire de la vie byzantine* [Bucharest: Edition de l'Institut d'études byzantines, 1935]), 25–26.

354 Nicolae Iorga, *Histoire des Etats balkaniques à l'époque moderne* (Bucharest: C. Sfetea, 1914), 11.

355 Iorga, *Byzantium after Byzantium*, 166.

conquest first of the independent Balkan states and then of Constantinople. During this period the cultural life of all of Southeastern Europe was concentrated in the Romanian lands, "which was to last for centuries and to bestow on the Romanians the role of guardians of the Christian unity in a world subjected in a political sense to Islam and in civilizational sense to Hellenism... *That which was still preserved of the Slavo-Byzantine religious life now passed into the Romanian countries, and there alone.*" The third phase was the time when Hellenism, revived by the new commerce and the opportunities offered by global interactions, found in the Romanian Principalities what it was lacking in Constantinople: "security, a Christian milieu superior in civilization and wealth, supreme honors and, finally and especially, the illusion of that Empire which had perished in Byzantium, but which the scholars of the [Romanian] nation hoped to bring back." It was the time when the Romanians, in the person of their princes, "appeared before all Eastern Christians as the guardians of the tradition of the one-time Byzantine emperors."³⁵⁶ The arrival of the Phanariots caused no break since they assumed "the task of continuing Byzantine traditions within the confines of the territory under the authority of the sultan"; they had come to Romania "not as Greeks tending to Hellenize, but as successors of universal civilization of the Greek language" who "endeavored to attract any Orthodox believers to their Byzantine Hellenism."³⁵⁷ Thus, thanks to the Romanians, Byzantinism survived until "the dawn of the nineteenth century," when it was stripped of its essence by the new ideas of philosophy, "the enemy of the religious influences and of historical authorities," and by national consciousness. "Post-Byzantine" Byzantium died only in 1821, when "the Hellenic Phoenix of the Heteria killed, in its daring enthusiasm, the Byzantine eagle."³⁵⁸

In Iorga's reading, therefore, Romania was the real *Byzance après Byzance*, having fulfilled a universal mission and safeguarded the distinctive post-Byzantine civilization of Southeastern Europe. What the Bulgarians and the Serbs had long fought for in vain, the Romanians received by right, since deep

356 Iorga, *Histoire des Etats balkaniques*, 46–50; 52–58 (italics original); Iorga, *Byzantium after Byzantium*, 129–154, 166, 200. See also Olga Cicance, "Conceptia lui Nicolae Iorga despre 'Byzance après Byzance,'" in *Nicolae Iorga—istoric al Bizanțului*, ed. Eugen Stănescu (Bucharest: Editura Academiei R.S.R., 1971), 219–228; Virgil Căndea, "Nicolas Iorga, historien de l'Europe du Sud-Est," in *Nicolas Iorga. L'homme et l'oeuvre*, ed. D.M. Pippidi (Bucharest: Éditions de l'Académie de la R.S.R., 1972), 193.

357 Iorga, *Byzantium after Byzantium*, 205, 213.

358 *Ibid.*, 231–234; Iorga, *I. Les bases nécessaires d'une nouvelle histoire du moyen-âge. II. La survivance byzantine dans les pays roumains* (Bucharest: Ed. du Ministère de l'instruction publique; Paris: Librairie H. Champion, 1913), 47–48.

down they had never relinquished the Roman idea of empire and their Roman “awareness”:

If this Byzantium could come close to us, thus causing our deviation from the old popular life and from the Western life . . . if Byzantium could reign among us, this was neither because of its Greek character nor because of our special devotion to Orthodoxy . . . but because, due to the Roman inception preserved in the instinct of our popular classes, we recognized its Roman basis.³⁵⁹

Ultimately, therefore, it was the synthesis between Byzantium and Rome, between the “traditional monarchic order” of the East and the “creative spontaneity” of the West, grafted on the imperial predilections and democratic organization of the popular masses that shaped the unique character of Romanian civilization. And it was this synthesis that secured the Romanians’ place in world history.³⁶⁰

Most postwar Romanian medievalists and Byzantinists were students of either Iorga or Russo. Nicolae Bănescu (1878–1971), a student and lifelong aficionado of Iorga, was another leading figure of Romanian medieval studies. Bănescu led the Chair of Byzantine History at the University of Cluj (1919–1938) and later succeeded D. Russo at the University of Bucharest (1938–1947) and Iorga as director of the Institute of Byzantine Studies. Unlike Iorga, Bănescu was not a visionary tempted by grand generalizations and syntheses. He began his academic career as a Byzantine philologist in the rigorous school of August Heisenberg in Munich. Later, he moved to the history of the military-administrative organization of the Lower Danube lands, engaging in fierce debates with Bulgarian opponents over the issue of the political status and “ethnic” character of Southern Dobrudja in the Middle Ages.³⁶¹ Taking for granted Iorga’s assertions that the first Romanian “crystallizations of state” took place in the eleventh century in the Lower Danube, Bănescu set out to identify the political and administrative conditions promoting such crystallizations which, according to him, replicated the Byzantine model. Tatos, Sesthlay and

359 Nicolae Iorga, *Ce e Bizanțul* (Bucharest: Institutul de studii bizantine, 1939), 21–22.

360 Iorga’s aspiration to integrate Romanian history into world history was crowned by his monumental *La place des Roumains dans l’histoire universelle* (3 vols., 1935–1936). See also Iorga, “Relations entre l’Orient et l’Occident,” in Iorga, *Etudes byzantines*, vol. 1, 161–163. Against this backdrop, it is barely surprising that Iorga completely ignored Russia as another contender for the Byzantine legacy.

361 See Roumen Daskalov’s chapter in this volume.

Satzas, the three rulers presiding over this process—argued Bănescu, based on very shaky evidence—were Romanians until then integrated in the provincial life of the Byzantine *thema* of Parastrion, who, by rebelling against Byzantium, had made plain their desire for political independence. At the roots of the medieval Romanian state, Bănescu implied, was an uninterrupted political tradition built on the imperial pattern of Byzantium. While the Old Rome left its indelible mark on the formation of the Romanian identity, the New Rome made a key contribution to the maintenance of this national identity by directly supplying it with a civilizational model.³⁶² Bănescu's many years of research on the Byzantine *reconquista* of the north Balkan lands in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, on the Byzantine domination of the Lower Danube and the northeastern coast of the Black Sea, and his sustained effort to prove that the Bulgarian state never effectively reigned over the "Romanian-inhabited" lands north of the Danube (despite the evident "Slavization" of medieval Romanian society), pointed in the same direction.³⁶³ Asserting Byzantium's presence in these lands was vital for his project of proving Iorga's state-building hypothesis right.

A rather different picture of the factors leading to the Romanians' political maturation and of Byzantium's role thereof emerges from the writings of George Murnu (1868–1957), a highly reputed classical philologist, who dealt extensively with the history of the Balkan Vlachs (Aromanians). Analyzing *The First Appearance of the Romanians in History* (1913), as his study about the earliest mention of the Vlachs in a late tenth-century Byzantine chronicle was entitled, Murnu concluded that the relative social and political autonomy the Vlachs enjoyed in the Byzantine Empire was a legacy of their political status in the First Bulgarian Kingdom and thus had a pre-Byzantine origin. The same thesis was already present in his major work, *Kekaumenos and the*

362 Nicolae Bănescu, "Cele mai vechi știri byzantine asupra românilor de la Dunărea de Jos," *Anuarul Institutului de istorie națională din Cluj* 1 (1921–1922), 138–160, quoted in Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, *Balcanologi și bizantiniști români* (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Pro, 2002), 102–103. Tanașoca prudently adds that the available evidence does not make it possible to define the ethnic and political character of these formations, also given that the populations living there were extremely mixed. He points out that the political maturation of the Romanians, as demonstrated by their desire for autonomy, came about later, at the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century, obviously implying the "Vlach-Bulgarian Tsardom" (*ibid.*).

363 See Tanașoca, *Balcanologi și bizantiniști*, 115–116 (notes 40, 43, 47–50). Other leading Romanian historians, like A. Xenopol, D. Onciul and P.P. Panaitescu, insisted that the lands north of the Danube had been politically incorporated in the Bulgarian state under Khan Krum in the ninth century.

Romanians in the Eleventh Century (1905), discussing the history of the Balkan Aromanians in their relations with the Byzantines. In the interwar period, this thesis would develop into a general theory of Romanian-Bulgarian solidarity against Byzantium.³⁶⁴ The Byzantine chronicler Kekaumenos's disparaging attitude toward the Vlachs was interpreted by Murnu as an expression of the Byzantine imperialist mentality. This mentality, resting on political, ideological and sometimes also economic foundations, was marked by deep-seated animosity to "other nationalities" (Bulgarians, Armenians, Jews and Western peoples), frequently described as "barbarians," and their aspirations to independence. The "barbarians" in turn had reacted with a comparable hostility against Byzantine imperialism. Adopting the vocabulary of ethnic psychology, Murnu spoke of "racial aversions" and "deep racial instincts" that had added to the politically and economically motivated antagonism between the Byzantine Greeks and the other Balkan nations.³⁶⁵ The "dictatorial and centralist tendency of the detestable Byzantine autocracy" had engendered a long-standing anti-Byzantine tradition, based above all on the "close solidarity" of ethnic and political interests between the Bulgarians and the Vlachs culminating with the Second Bulgarian ("Vlach-Bulgarian") Kingdom. The Bulgarian tsars of both the First and the Second Kingdom had a vital interest in forming "a single political and military structure" with the Vlachs because they had recognized the Balkan Romanians' numerical power and military valor ("a vigorous, free and freedom-loving mountaineer population" that held the equilibrium between Bulgaria and Byzantium) and, unlike the Byzantines, were ready to reward them with self-government and respect for their "infallible instinct for ethnic preservation." Not only had the Vlachs participated in all the uprisings against Byzantine oppression, but the "Vlach-Bulgarian" Kingdom itself had been, according to Murnu, "the exclusive deed of Romanian will, intelligence and energy." The cases of the Vlachs' "solidarity" with Byzantium against the Bulgarians were offhandedly dismissed. They were impractical for Murnu's strategy of "smuggling in" the Vlachs as the Empire's major and ethnically assertive opponent in the Balkans once the Bulgarians lost their "indigenous vigor" in the late tenth century. There is no reason to downplay the actual stakes of such a strategy: as Murnu put it, that was the occasion when "the Romanian people for the first time manifested

364 Murnu's contributions to the history of the Balkan Vlachs were collected in the volume *Studii istorice privitoare la trecutul românilor de peste Dunăre*, ed. Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR, 1984).

365 Tanașoca, *Balkanologi și bizantiniști*, 41.

itself in the most brilliant manner in the light of universal history,” signaling the beginning of “the fulfillment of its mission by the definitive founding of the purely Romanian states on the other side of the Danube.”³⁶⁶

Here is a characteristic Aromanian portrayal of Byzantium and its role in the destiny of the Romanians. In it one can easily detect the points of divergence from the mainstream Romanian narrative, stressing the beneficial impact of the Empire’s presence in the Lower Danube. One can also find the affinities with the Bulgarian interpretation, focusing on Byzantium’s “de-nationalizing” oppression and imperialism. The reasons for both are found in the evolution, since the early twentieth century, of the “Aromanian question,” which Murnu and other scholars of Aromanian descent perceived in ways very similar to those advocated by their Bulgarian peers a few decades earlier. They aspired to cultural autonomy—that is, national schools and a national church—for the Aromanians as a shield against their denationalization and contestation of identity, mainly by the Greeks.³⁶⁷ Similar conditions and attitudes, however, could lead to rather different conclusions. Moreover, once the major Aromanian grievances were satisfied, the attitude toward the “Greeks” became more nuanced. In a lecture dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Greek independence in 1931, Murnu took care to distinguish between two mentalities, “two contradictory *psyche*”—that of the Byzantine “race,” of the ethnically heterogeneous, oppressive, bureaucratic, sterile, in a word reactionary political class of the Empire, and the authentic, liberal, vigorous and creative, and therefore progressive, Greek people. The latter had suffered no less than the Romanians and the Bulgarians under the yoke of this Asiatic-tinged Byzantinism, whose later embodiment, even more impure because it served an inferior culture—the Ottoman—was the Phanariots.³⁶⁸

The younger generation of historians, grouped around *Revista istorică română* (C.C. Giurescu, V. Papacostea, Gh.I. Brătianu, P.P. Panaitescu), sought to infuse a new spirit in Romanian historiography by reforming it into a more

366 George Murnu, “Les roumains de la Bulgarie médiéval,” *Balcania* 1 (1938), 1–21.

367 Murnu himself was actively involved in the lobbying for the Aromanians’ cultural and political rights, both as a member of the Society for Macedono-Romanian Culture and a delegate, on behalf of this society, to the London Peace Conference in 1913 and the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 (Tanașoca, *Balcanologi și bizantinști*, 31–32). For a contemporary Greek challenge to the idea of the Aromanians’ Roman(ian) origin and their kinship with the Romanians, see Keramopulos, “Que sont les Koutzovalaques? Un problème ethnologique,” *Le Messager d’Athènes*, nos. 5193–5200 (1939).

368 George Murnu, “Românii și grecii,” *Revista macedoromână* 3, nos. 1–2 (1931), 3–9 (see also Tanașoca, *Balcanologi și bizantinști*, 53–55).

rigorously “scientific” and “objective” field, detached from politics and emotion. But as in contemporary Greece, Bulgaria or Yugoslavia, this did not necessarily imply subverting the historical canon: all in all, Iorga’s construction of Romanian history survived undamaged, despite strident critiques by “new historians” about his “metahistorical” method.

Not all national historians of this generation, however, were enthralled by Byzantium and its “Romanian” continuation. For Constantin C. Giurescu (1901–1977), as for Xenopol and Ioan Bogdan before him and Petre P. Panaitescu in his own day, the role of Byzantium in Romanian history was derivative of or else mediated by that of the Slavs. The latter, Giurescu maintained, had influenced the Romanians more strongly than any other population “in terms of *race, of language, of social and state organization, in cultural and ecclesiastical terms*”; indeed, by being precisely a “Romanic people of Slavic coloratura,” the Romanians represented “a distinct, characteristic nuance and a possibility for *unique* civilization and culture among the large Romanic family.”³⁶⁹ Unlike Murnu or Bănescu, Giurescu was also disinclined to overrate the demographic or political significance of the Vlachs in the Second “Vlach-Bulgarian” Kingdom, emphasizing its rapid transformation into an “exclusively Bulgarian state.”³⁷⁰ The first reliable evidence about the existence of Romanian states, he pointed out, dated from the second half of the thirteenth century,³⁷¹ a time dominated by the invasions of the Tartars and the Turks. Byzantium and Romanian-Byzantine relations at that time are barely considered. Even more significantly perhaps, Giurescu made only fleeting references to the Byzantine legacy when discussing the organization and the culture of the medieval Romanian states, except for the religious architecture and art. Furthermore, he was generally careful not to make sharp distinctions between the direct Byzantine influences and those exercised via the Bulgarian or the Serbian courts.³⁷² All this does not mean that Giurescu’s historical discourse was anti-nationalist: he was no less a national prophet than Iorga, whom he

369 Constantin C. Giurescu, *Istoria românilor* (5 vols., 1935–1946), vol. 1: *Din cele mai vechi timpuri pînă la moartea lui Alexandru cel Bun (1432)* (Bucharest: Editura Fundației pentru Literatură și Artă, 1946; first ed. 1935), 246 (italics in the original). Giurescu stressed that the influences he had in mind concerned “the most ancient Slavic legacy” from the fifth to the seventh centuries, preceding the cultural influences after the establishment of the Romanian states in the fourteenth century (*ibid.*, 267).

370 *Ibid.*, 333.

371 Constantin C. Giurescu, *Istoria românilor, din cele mai vechi timpuri până la moartea regelui Ferdinand I* (Bucharest: Editura Cugetarea-Georgescu Delafras, 1943), 148.

372 *Ibid.*, 242–263. Giurescu mentions only in passing that by his style of government, Prince Vasile Lupu “could be considered a veritable successor of the Byzantine emperors” (*ibid.*,

severely criticized on mythological grounds but whose championship of Romanians' protochronism, autochthonism and uninterrupted continuity he shared completely.³⁷³

Petre P. Panaitescu (1900–1967), perhaps his generation's most outstanding historian of Romanian culture, came up with a far more straightforward, "realist" and essentially sociological interpretation of the origins and value of what he called the "Slavo-Byzantine" culture of medieval Romania. This culture was not purely Byzantine, which was essential for its adoption by the Romanians, but a form of "popular Byzantinism" filtered through the social and cultural conditions of the Slavs. In this form it dominated Romanian society all the way from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century. Its Byzantine origin showed in the Eastern Orthodox faith, a religion of the anonymous masses with a tradition in humility and fraternity; in the predominance of classicism in art and of the concrete over the abstract and intellectualism; in the centralized state as distinct from the Western knightly feudalism; and in the ancient Greek and Roman tradition in literature that was interrupted in the West. This Byzantine culture, however, was created for an empire, for the New Rome, while the Slavs were primarily villagers, with patriarchal and agricultural monarchies, whose potential for assimilating a culture was limited. From the vast Byzantine culture, Panaitescu argued, the Slavs had adopted what they could understand and assimilate in accordance with the level and structure of their society—that is, only its popular forms: "the Slavic culture is a Byzantine culture for the people," or, since it had an ecclesiastical bent, as the Byzantine original did, "we can characterize it as a religious culture of Eastern-Byzantine origin adapted to an agricultural-patriarchal people. Such was the nature of that culture, in which only the outer garment was Slavic [and] which the Romanians adopted and maintained for nine centuries."³⁷⁴

Panaitescu set out to expose the flawed reasoning of all those Romanian historians (and they were the majority) who saw the period of the domination of "Byzantine and Orthodox Slavonism" as a huge historical misfortune—first, for severing the links between the Romanians and the "superior culture of the West," keeping them in an inferior position to the other

330, 333). See also Giurescu, *Istoria românilor*, vol. 1, 438, 497; vol. 2: *De la Mircea cel Bătrân și Alexandru cel Bun până la Mihai Viteazul*, 354–355, 367, 382–386.

373 See also Daskalov and Marinov in this volume.

374 Petre P. Panaitescu, "'Periada slavonă.' La români și ruperea de cultura Apusului" (1944), republished in Petre P. Panaitescu, *Contribuții la istoria culturii românești* (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1971), 37–41.

Romanic peoples and preventing any progress; and second, for severely disrupting the course of development and the cultural destiny of the Romanians as a Latin people. If the Romanians had adopted Byzantine culture in its Slavic form, and not the Western one, Panaitescu affirmed, it was because it accorded with the social, economic and spiritual conditions of the Romanians that prevailed between the ninth and the eighteenth centuries, unlike Western culture, whose technical and urban character was alien to them. Slavo-Byzantine culture “was thus a necessity” rather than “a misfortune or disgrace” of history. “Slavonism (that is, popular Byzantinism),” Panaitescu concluded, “was not the cause for our rupture with the West, but the result of this rupture, produced by the contrast in the economic and social life.” Nor was it lacking, according to him, in significant services to the Romanian people: this culture had stirred the social and moral solidarity of the Romanians, the unity of their three historical provinces and their ability to unite to resist foreign invasions, dominance and denationalization. The Slavo-Byzantine culture and the identity it conferred on the Romanians “ensured the cohesion and consolidation of the people during the hardest times of the past.” The centuries of its domination, Panaitescu contended, needed to be fully rehabilitated as “a glorious period in our history . . . rich in moral values”; for “a culture that is adapting to the spiritual needs of the whole people, in a certain stage of its evolution, is a spiritual good that the inheritors have to respect.”³⁷⁵ Panaitescu’s reading of the Slavo-Byzantine “factor” in Romanian history thus differed fundamentally from more than just the prevailing post-Enlightenment one as authoritatively enunciated by Xenopol. His rehabilitation of the Slavo-Byzantine period in Romanian history submitted to a logic that differed considerably from that of Russo or even Iorga in that it built on an organic sociological understanding of the relationship between culture and society. Of particular interest to our topic is his inference, clearly at odds with Iorga’s, that Byzantinism never reached Romania in a pure and direct form and that its “Slavicization” was precisely what made it adequate and efficient in the Romanian context.³⁷⁶

375 Ibid., 34–37, 41–50. According to Panaitescu, Slavo-Byzantine culture was displaced by a new, French-oriented cultural phase only when this became natural from a social point of view, that is, when society itself entered a new phase of development.

376 Panaitescu directly challenged Iorga’s thesis, stating, “The Greek culture did not penetrate the Romanian lands due to the survival of the Byzantine ideas [as Iorga claimed in *Byzance après Byzance*] but due to the predominance of the rich Greeks in the cities of the Ottoman Empire”; neither the direct religious ties initially, nor the fall of Constantinople, which actually failed to produce a big wave of Greek emigrants to Romania, laid the basis for Greek influence on Romanian culture, since both Byzantine theology and the Byzantine legal system were introduced through their Slavic iterations

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The 1930s saw the rise of a parallel, “supra-national” paradigm of interpreting Byzantium and the Byzantine legacy, which its practitioners dubbed “the new science of Balkanology.” This epistemological approach came to underwrite and reinforce a geopolitical one: in the face of rising international insecurity and a mounting sense of small-state defenselessness during those years, regional solidarity was increasingly seen as an indispensable option; its pinnacle was the conclusion of the Balkan Pact in 1934. Geopolitics and historiography converged again, this time on behalf of an anti-hegemonistic regional agenda.

The founders of the Belgrade-based Balkan Institute, the Croat Petar Skok (1881–1956) and the Serb Milan Budimir (1891–1975), defined the task of the new science as elucidating regional commonalities and orienting national academic research “towards the study of a Balkan organism that had constituted one whole since the most distant times.”³⁷⁷ In this they were led by the conviction that only an inter-Balkan perspective could properly shed light on major historical processes that, when placed in a strictly national framework, remained incomprehensible. This credo had already been enunciated by Nicolae Iorga, who was the first to speak of a “fundamental unity resting on archaic traditions,” a “particular [culture] common to all of Southeastern Europe,” and a particular historical, ethnographic and civilizational “synthesis” between all Balkan peoples. This specificity, Iorga argued while simultaneously weaving his nationalist project, drew upon the great Thraco-Illyrian-Roman tradition and was epitomized by Byzantium, which later passed it on to the Ottoman Empire. This specificity constituted the heritage that all the Balkan peoples shared.³⁷⁸

Following in Iorga’s footsteps, Budimir and Skok contended that two historical tendencies—unification and particularism—had crystallized into “a unique law of the Balkans” guiding its overall history. A major force of “Balkan aggregation” (next to the Macedonian dynasty, the Romans, and the Ottoman

(Petre P. Panaitescu, “Cultura feodală,” in *ibid.*, 84–85). In other, more specific studies, Panaitescu reiterated this understanding of the issue.

377 Milan Budimir and Petar Skok, “But et signification des études balkaniques,” *Revue internationale des études balkaniques* 1, no. 1 (1934), 2–3.

378 Nicolae Iorga, *Le caractère commun des institutions du Sud-Est de l’Europe* (Paris: J. Gamber, 1929); Nicolae Iorga, “Éléments de communauté entre les peuples du Sud-Est Européen,” *Revue Historique du Sud-est européen* 12 (1935), nos. 4–6; Nicolae Iorga, *Ce este Sud-Estul european* (Bucharest: Datina Românească, 1940).

Empire) was the Byzantine Empire: it had “maintained the Roman cohesion of the Balkans while fighting against the Balkan particularisms that had emerged after the establishment of the Slavs in the peninsula.” Byzantium, the Yugoslav scholars maintained, far from continuing the particularistic life of the ancient Greek cities, represented “the Christian continuation of the Roman Empire”—it was a Christian, not a national, empire. The modern Greeks had as much right to claim direct Byzantine origin as the different Romance peoples had with respect to the ancient Romans: “under Byzantine and Turkish domination they had absorbed different Balkan elements.” Hence it fell to Balkanology, not national science, to “disentangle the constitutive elements in the formation of modern Greece.” Tellingly, the particularisms of the Slavs, once they had become aware of their force, are said to have succumbed to the same “law of Balkan aggregation”: the two Bulgarian kingdoms and that of Stefan Dušan sought to impose their own unification of the region while upholding its ethnic diversity. This was a crucial point in Balkanological reasoning: unlike “Pax Romana,” with its “uniform unity,” Budimir and Skok argued, the Balkans of both the Byzantine and the Ottoman eras “tended towards unity in variations, a diverse unity,” in implicit contrast to the situation in the West. This was beneficial since “varied commonality is more efficient and more durable than uniform unity, since organized variety has, properly speaking, more ‘biological’ value than unity without variations.”³⁷⁹ The Yugoslav Balkanologists thus tried to reconcile the ethnic plurality of the region, and hence the centrality of the national principle, with the idea of regional “interconnectedness” and “commonality,” where Byzantium and its legacy were assigned a key role.

The Romanian medievalist Victor Papacostea (1900–1962), another ardent champion of the transnational approach to the past of this part of Europe, further bolstered the prominence of Byzantium as the single most important unifying factor of the Balkan world. On the level of military and political history, he wrote, its very existence spurred “more than once a great grouping of Balkan interests.” Even when its social cohesion was weakened, thus opening the way for the emergence of various “nationalities,” the latter did not act in isolation but formed “veritable ‘Balkan leagues’ ” of “Serbo-Albano-Bulgarian-Vlach” complexion. It was a great mistake for historians to see the Bulgarian or Serbian empires as national states in the modern sense of the word. On the contrary, the heads of these “associations” were haunted by the idea of a universal empire, which Byzantium embodied, and their initiatives had an “inter-

379 Budimir and Skok, “But et signification des études balkaniques,” 4, 10–11; Milan Budimir and Petar Skok, “Destinée balkaniques,” *Revue internationale des études balkaniques* 2 (1936), no. 4, 602–604, 607.

Balkan character" (even the Greeks in places like Salonica had often joined the revolts instigated by the Bulgarians against the imperial power of Byzantium). Inspired by the Byzantine model and seeking to replace Byzantium, the Slavic empires acted as unifying forces by "Balkanizing" Byzantinism. On the level of culture, administration, political, ecclesiastical and juridical organization, the Empire had demonstrated a remarkable capacity to adapt to local and ethnic particularities, safeguarding the proper traditions and customs of the invaders and, above all, transforming the national languages into instruments of culture. In all of this it often took on the appearance of a "grouping of Balkan interests": the political and cultural model of Byzantium was creatively reworked by all Balkan peoples, thus ensuring their uniformity and stimulating their originality.³⁸⁰

The authority of foreign Byzantinology was also brought to bear in this supra-national re-conceptualization of the Byzantine factor in the history of the Balkans. The aforementioned Russian émigré scholar, Vladimir Mošin, undertook to highlight the great contributions of Russian Byzantine studies to the development of "the new scientific discipline: inter-Balkan studies." To him the achievements of the founders of Russian Byzantinology—Visilievskiy, Uspenkiy and Kondakov—supplied a solid base for "the systematic studies of inter-Balkan relations," especially as regards social, cultural and art history. Their studies "provided a strong impulse for the development of autonomous Balkan sciences," attesting to the "civilizing emanation of Byzantium." According to Mošin, by throwing light on "the huge heritage left behind by Byzantium, on which the civilization of the Balkan peoples thrives," the study of Slavic-Byzantine relations was making ever more plain "the community of [the Balkan peoples'] spiritual interests" and the imminence of "big synthetic constructions."³⁸¹ Franz Dölger (1891–1968), a leading German Byzantinist and the editor-in-chief of *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* from 1931 to 1963, likewise spoke of an "exceptionally close cultural community of the Balkan peoples," "resting mainly on the fundament of the Byzantine processes of development."³⁸²

This last metamorphosis of Byzantium, which aimed to underwrite, in the words of Papacostea, a regional "synthesis drawing on the elements of Balkan

380 Victor Papacostea, "La Péninsule Balkanique et le problème des études comparées," *Balkanica* 6 (1943), iii–xxi. See also Tanașoca, *Balkanologi și bizantinisti*, 174–188.

381 Vladimir Mošin, "Les études byzantines et les problèmes de l'histoire interbalkanique," *Revue internationale des études balkaniques* 1, no. 1 (1934), 314–319.

382 Franz Dölger, "Die mittelalterliche Kultur auf dem Balkan (die Periode von der Gründung der unabhängigen Staaten bis zur Türkenherrschaft)," *Revue internationale des études balkaniques* 1, no. 2 (1935), 108–124.

interdependence and unity,” remained marginal in the prewar Balkan historiographies. But it laid down the methodological premises and served as the basis for institutionalizing Balkan studies as a discrete field of research, one that would exert a certain pressure on the national framework of history-writing after the war. The story of how this field came to conceptualize the Balkans as a historical region—a process in which interpretations of Byzantium and its legacy continued to occupy an important place—is a topic we will examine in the last volume of this book series.

Conclusion

The diversity of interpretations and instrumentalizations of Byzantium surveyed above had emerged as a result of various and changing, and at the same time closely entwined, political-ideological and epistemological orientations. Exigencies of cultural politics, ethno-history and the continued role of the Orthodox Church combined with contemporary political issues of identity, geopolitics and relations with neighboring states to affect the ways in which Byzantium was appropriated, studied and re-presented in the four countries. A significant exception was the “national historians” who deemed the medieval past irrelevant for the modern nation-building or irredentist projects. As a rule, warring expansionist agendas interlaced with intellectual currents and historical (re-)interpretations, and an imperial mystique (or “memory” or “legacy”) of Byzantium (the “Second Rome”), came to underpin actualized programs for political expansion.

The interpretations oscillated between (identifications with) the prestige or the stigma of Byzantium, between fighting against and emulating it, between appropriation of and dissociation from its legacy. Different readings often coexisted and competed with each other as parallel scenarios, and some underwent dramatic changes over time. Certain narratives became privileged by the national canons of history, and they demonstrate the markedly different ways in which the four historiographic traditions accommodated the “Byzantine factor” in their histories. Greek historiography devoured the Empire and its cultural heritage wholesale, turning it into an integral part of national continuity. For the Bulgarians Byzantium featured as the main adversary in confrontation with whom the Bulgarian national state and identity had crystallized and were sustained. The Serbian historians tended to stress the role of the medieval empire of Stefan Dušan as the actual heir and improved version of the Eastern Roman Empire. Romania, the latecomer on the Balkan

political scene, never relinquished its claims to represent the Latin West in the Byzantine East, and its historiography conceived of Byzantium mainly as a cultural and institutional legacy that had survived, thanks to the Romanians, long after its political extinction.

The clash between political rivalry with and cultural appropriation of Byzantium was a typical one, but the real stakes of the debate lie beneath this general observation—in the nuances of the interpretation. Different sensitivities became grafted onto the hegemonic national narratives of ethnic continuity, Golden Age and cultural agency vis-à-vis Byzantium, which often came to buttress diametrically opposed political values. What faces us, therefore, is a range of “competing Byzantinisms” where identification with or dissociation from Byzantium was a function of the needs felt by the modern Balkan nations.

These mutually warring national images were formed in constant dialogue and reciprocity with each other. A common element in the Bulgarian, Serbian and Romanian interpretations was their opposition to the “national imperialism” of the Greeks which disregarded their “historical rights” and denied them a share in the making of the Empire. (It should also be noted that, from among the Balkan “heirs” of Byzantium, Greece was the only one whose national program envisaged the “re”-conquering of Constantinople and the resurgence of the Byzantine Empire.) Even when portraying Byzantium as the prime adversary, all contested the Greeks’ claim that it belonged to them alone. The competition between Greeks and Slavs, Bulgarians and Romanians (or Vlachs) over ethnic predominance and imperial “contribution” was a recurring one, which stoked the flames of historiographic conflict. Throughout the whole period studied here, the Bulgarian interpretations most closely mirrored the Greek ones—the Bulgarians’ perception of Byzantium as their political and cultural Other was largely shaped and recycled as a counter-story to the Greeks’ self-identification with the Empire. The Romanian narratives often “kidnapped” the Bulgarian ones, counter-ethnicizing and assimilating them as an integral part of the Romanian continuity on both sides of the Danube. The Serbian scenarios drew on both the Bulgarian and the Greek narrations by featuring medieval Serbia as both a major rival of Byzantium and the superior—fresh and vibrant—recipient of its legacy.

But there was also another layer of formative interaction: that with the Western and Russian perceptions of Byzantium, which were themselves controversial (treating Byzantium as both part of European civilization and its cultural opposite). Western Philhellenic thought was decisive for the original estrangement of the Greeks from their Byzantine past. So were later Western Romanticism for the discovery of the Greek “continuity” and the Russian and German Byzantinistics for the Bulgarian and Serbian “Byzantine” perceptions.

In the process, certain “borrowed” conceptions and interpretations were reconfigured to serve specific national needs. The Latinist school in Romania adopted the Western Enlightenment notion of Byzantium in order to advance the Romanians’ claim of being the only rightful heirs of the Roman imperial tradition and divest Byzantium of such a role, while the Greeks’ appropriation of Byzantium came to serve both as an act of emancipation from the Western canon of history and an attempt at its subversion. From around the turn of the century and especially during the interwar period, the (institutionalized) study of Byzantium in the Balkan countries began to exert an increasing reverse impact on Western and Russian Byzantine scholarship.

Significantly, much of the actual confrontation between the Balkan historical narrations fed on a set of shared assumptions revolving around key common *topoi*, such as “historical right,” uninterrupted ethnic continuity (occasionally autochthony), national cohesion and integration (or unity), resilience, and the vigor and creativity of the nation in “assimilating” allogeneic influences. The perseverance of these *topoi* testifies to and is the product of the *longue durée* of the national-Romantic canon in all four historiographies. Mainstream history-writing, as featured by the positivist (scientific and professional) historiographical schools or the interwar metahistorical narratives, was steeped in it—arguably an outcome of the protracted process of nation-state building in the region. The Balkan historians shared the conviction that embracing “objective” or “conjectural” history did not mean writing “non-nationalist” history. This logically led them to suppositions drawing on the same ideological concepts but underwriting the fragmentation of history into national chunks and the primeval supremacy of the nation as the agent of history. In this sense, the non-national empire would inevitably be set in opposition to the national state. The positive attitude to Byzantium was reserved for those of its achievements or effects that could be nationalized or made to serve the cause of the nation (the conversion to Christianity being one eloquent example among many). The only remarkable exception was the supra-national post-imperial agenda of the budding “science” of Balkanology, but its theoretical and programmatic acumen was barely matched by actual historical research. The dominant national readings continued to undercut the idea that a common imperial legacy could provide a basis for a common regional history. Ironically, the Universal Empire and its ecumenical legacy ended up buttressing discrete national identities and projects.

Some present-day authors maintain that “it is highly doubtful that anything like a ‘Middle Ages’ existed at all in south-eastern Europe... [T]he heritage of Byzantium, the leading political formation of the region, left a memory that was very difficult to incorporate into any kind of ‘national’

patrimony.”³⁸³ As our survey has demonstrated, the actual situation is far more complex. Rather than outright rejection we are faced with a multifaceted process of negotiating the place of Byzantium in the individual historiographical traditions. These negotiations were premised on the inherent ambiguity of the empire’s role in devising the “national patrimony” and involved interpretations originating with different generations of historians (and their networks), varying cultural-political contexts and epistemological perspectives shaped in constant dialogue and competition.

383 Johannes Niehoff-Panagiotidis, “To Whom Does Byzantium Belong? Greeks, Turks and the Present in the Medieval Balkans,” in *The Uses of the Middle Ages in Modern European States*, eds. R.J.W. Evans and Guy P. Marchal (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011), 149.