

## MODERN/ HISTORIOGRAPHY

**Eleni-Anna Chlepa, *Byzantine Monuments in Modern Greece. Ideology and Practice of Restorations 1833-1939*. pp. 255, 232 ills. Kapon Editions: Athens ISBN 6185209918, paperback \$ 63.12.**

This important book was first published in Greek in 2011, and it was immediately obvious that the author had systematically worked through archives and other sources to produce the most detailed account of restorations made in Byzantine monuments since 1833. I should say that the 2011 publication helped significantly to improve articles I myself wrote in 2013 about the mosaics of the monastery at Daphni. With welcome support from the A.G. Leventis Foundation, the Greek publisher Kapon has now brought out this English translation. The text is unchanged and there is (p.248) a list of some related publications which have appeared since 2011. Without doubt it can be said that any work on Byzantine monuments in Greece must check any material evidence recorded in this systematic and detailed survey.

The book is arranged chronologically in order of programmes of restoration, and it is divided into four sections. The first section is an overview of how Byzantine monuments were evaluated within their historical setting by the new Hellenic State. In other words, how did they rate in comparison with Classical monuments? In Athens, the prominence of the Acropolis led to a desire to return to a Periclean golden age, and so the medieval tower was demolished as part of an unwelcome past. Fortunately for Byzantium, it is argued in this section, there was a wider European championship (including the influencer John Ruskin) of the period and its monuments. This was one major element in promoting the desire to record and preserve Byzantine monuments.

The second section of the book records attitudes and activities between 1833 and 1884 with a notable emphasis on recording the state of Christian monuments. When it came to the actual repairs and consolidation of churches and monasteries, the money came not from the State but from parishioners or the monasteries themselves. A major example was at the 11th century monastery of Hosios Loukas where repairs began in 1848 with the replastering of the Panagia church and the

covering of the dome of the katholikon with lead sheets (in 1853). But by 1869 it was realised that this work was unsatisfactory, and the monastery asked permission to sell some of its properties to do further work. As this further work progressed, in 1888 the later exonarthex was demolished, but it was realised that more work would be needed to ensure the stability of the church and its mosaics. In the same period, extensive work was done on churches in Athens. One example was the church of Panagia Gorgoepekoos, where the four columns supporting the dome were replaced with pilasters, its belfry was removed and the wallpaintings on its façade were removed (c. 1875). This operation did cause some academic hostility. But even more contentious was the substantial rebuilding of the damaged church of Soteira tou Lykodemou in Athens from 1852 to 1855, and construction of a belltower in the style of the Pantanassa at Mystras.

The third section of the book covers 1885 to 1909, and this period is designated as a time of more academic study and involvement. The main undertaking of the Archaeological Service was the restoration of the katholikon of the late 11th century monastery at Daphni, where the mosaics were already seriously damaged in 1885 and subject to an earthquake in 1886. The detailed documentation assembled by Chlepa is crucial for an understanding of the history of the church and its mosaics. It has again been subject to a 20-year restoration after the earthquake of 1999. One recurrent question in studying the mosaics is how far we are looking at the original surface and how far we are seeing the late 19th restorations, and this has been one of the issues examined by the recent restorations. But Chlepa's documentation fully covers the story of what happened in the 19th century. It was decided that the best restorers would come from Italy and in March 1889 Carlo Novelli duly came to the church and produced a report but declined to undertake the work. Instead in 1890 two mosaicists came from Venice to undertake the work (Arturo Ambrosi and Giuseppe Zambon). In 1892 Francesco Novo had replaced Ambrosi, but further problems were caused by an earthquake in 1894. Novo signed a new contract in 1894, and finally returned to Venice in 1897. These facts are useful for art historians, because they document the restorers whose work involved so much over-restoration and insertion of new tesserae, that they changed to the appearance of many of the mosaics. Chlepa (pp.102-4) gives her critical assessment of the work at Daphni, though she looks particularly at the architectural changes.

The final section of the book looks at restorations between 1910 and 1939. Further work was done

at Hosios Loukas and other monuments, and particular attention is focussed here on the work at Mystras, covering the churches one by one. Also important during this period was the restoration of the church of St Demetrios at Thessaloniki, which was substantially destroyed in the fire of 1917. Photographs before the fire are included, and then of the reconstruction work between 1924 and 1939 by Aristotelis Zachos. The documentation is thorough and also recorded are the discussions about the controversial masonry materials used in the reconstruction (it is no longer a brick building). The epilogue to this section draws attention to some of the principles of conservation of Byzantium, such as the use of new materials like concrete to strengthen buildings but also the practice of removing later but historical elements (like belltowers). In all, this book is an essential tool for the study of many Greek monuments, though not all - Athos and the islands are less covered, with Nea Moni on Chios receiving only a mention. It is nevertheless a major and engrossing achievement.

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**Anna Frangoudaki and Caglar Keyder (eds), *Ways to Modernity in Greece and Turkey. Encounters with Europe, 1850-1950*. (Library of European Studies 1). pp. 271, 7 tables, 6 graphs, 10[+14] figures, index. London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. ISBN 978135017396-5, paperback \$ 44.95.**

This book is the second volume in the series “Social and Historical Studies on Greece and Turkey,” which aims to provide a platform for dialogue between Greek and Turkish social scientists and historians on “issues of major theoretical importance” that concern the international academic community, by conveying and commenting on experiences from both sides of the Aegean. The first volume explored institutional aspects in the course of nation formation and the emergence of civil society. The second volume delves more into the experiential aspects of this process from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century. Specifically, this volume focuses on the experience of modernity, the reaction to an unqualified Europeanization perspective, and the convergence through a nationalism-forged “tradition.”

In the Introduction, the editors emphasize the differences and similarities through which the two societies approached the modernization narrative. They argue that, unlike the Muslim population, the Greek subjects of the Empire developed a dynamic exploitation of the new economic conditions and moved towards the establishment of a modern constitutional state without significant ethnic issues, at a time when the declining Ottoman state was implementing minor reforms, and any modernization efforts undermined its integrity. However, they note certain key points of convergence between the two sides that served as bulwarks of reaction against European modernity, such as their state traditions, distrust of liberalism, and prioritization of political choices over social reforms. These factors allowed nationalism to infuse modernity with a vague reference to tradition, maintaining a peculiar relationship of approach and withdrawal between East and West (for this topic, E. Skopetea’s book “*Η Δύση της Ανατολής* [The West in the East],” 1992, Athens: Gnosi, remains relevant).

The articles are grouped into four sections. The first section explores how modernizing principles are expressed in legislation. Tassopoulos takes the Constitution of 1864 as an example to comment on the course of constitutionalism in Greece. As is well known, the Constitution of 1864 was one of the most democratic constitutions in Europe at the time and should perhaps be seen as an attempt to reconnect with the rationale behind the progressive but short-lived revolutionary constitutions, whose development was halted during the governance of Kapodistrias and King Otto, while its continuation can be traced to the Constitution of 1875, which introduced the principle of proclaimed confidence (for a general discussion on Greek constitutions, see: M. Mousmouti (ed.) 2012, *The Greek Constitutions and Their History 1797-1875*, Athens: Centre for European Constitutional Law). During the same period, however, the rise of nationalism and the fostering of the Great Idea created a serious counterbalance that favored the monarchy as a symbol of national unity, but the author argues that parliamentary institutions were not completely overthrown, so we cannot speak of a case of “transformation” but rather of a simple “conversion.”

Toprak traces the evolution of legislation and jurisprudence in the late Ottoman Empire, beginning with the Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876), which were initiated in response to the need for modernization of the collapsing state and to address new challenges arising from both international and domestic circumstances. Drawing inspiration from French legal concepts, Ottoman reformers adopted