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ANNE-MARIE CHENY, Le cercle de byzantinistes: Comment bibliothécaires, savants, et voyageurs inventèrent Byzance (XVI^e–XIX^e siècle). Paris: Les Belles Lettres 2024. 301 pp. – ISBN 978-2-251-45578-5

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Imagine a world in which you could go down to your local bookshop and purchase a paperback, sturdily bound with a sewn binding, and beautifully printed with an elegant serif typeface. Picture viridicated headings, quotes, and breaks, all punctuating a text honeycombed with color images: manuscripts in ruddy tones of sienna and ochre; portraits in woodcut, engraving, and oil; black-and-white photographs. Envision an account that elegantly surveys three hundred years of intellectual history with verve, full of entertaining tales of scholars, travelers, and collectors; a story aerated by illuminating digressions on library construction, language pedagogy, and epistolary networks. Even more, imagine you could purchase this book for less than 30 dollars. In America, such a book is a fantasy – if perhaps only the fantasy of scholars – but in France, apparently, there is a market for such accessible and engaging histories, as evidenced by ANNE-MARIE CHENY's new monograph *Le cercle de byzantinistes*.

This book emerges on a flood tide of new studies on the history of Byzantine scholarship in a post-Byzantine world, early modern and modern Europe. In the last decade, new monographs, articles, and volumes have overflowed the narrow banks of the older narratives that belabored the same familiar, epochal moments: Hieronymus Wolf's truculent labor in editing and publishing the first corpus of Byzantine historians; the ambition and erudition of the *Byzantine du Louvre*, the series of Byzantine authors published in Paris with royal support in the second half of the seventeenth century; and the final institutionalization of *Byzantinistik* as an independent discipline with chairs, journals, and seminars.[1] CHENY herself has contributed to this wave with an earlier monograph on the great seventeenth-century

1. See, for instance, ELISA BIANCO, La Bisanzio dei Lumi: l'impero bizantino nella cultura francese e italiana da Luigi XIV alla rivoluzione (Studies in Early Modern European Culture / Studi sulla cultura europea della prima età moderna 8). Bern 2015; NATHANAEL ASCHENBRENNER, Contesting Ceremony, Constructing Byzantium: Reading Pseudo-Kodinos in Early Modern Europe. Dumbarton Oaks Papers 72 (2019) pp. 197–214; BRIAN CROKE, Procopius, from Manuscripts to Books: 1400–1850. Histos

antiquary and savant Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580–1637).[2] Her new book is buttressed by an apparatus that privileges primary sources over secondary literature, that stands full of assured and propulsive accounts of canonical moments in the development of Greek and Byzantine scholarship – including Chrysoloras's revival of Greek instruction, Wolf's *Corpus Historiae Byzantinae*, the enthusiasm of the *Byzantine du Louvre*, and its curdling into Enlightenment scorn for the decadence of the empire in Constantinople. At one level, then, the book appears to be that *rara avis*, a popular history of Byzantine scholarship. Yet lurking beneath these deceptively familiar moments is a history full of new characters, connections, and revelations. If *Le cercle des byzantinistes* does not always exploit the opportunity to converse with, or draw on, the recent histories of Byzantine scholarship, the rest of us – Byzantinists and historians of scholarship alike – nonetheless have a great deal to learn from this study.

The subtitle of the book forecasts an exploration of 'how librarians, scholars, and travelers discovered Byzantium between the 16th and 19th centuries'. As I discovered, this description does not fully anticipate the terrain charted within. In chronology, the book reaches back to the early fifteenth century with its scene-setting account of Chrysoloras and Greek pedagogy in Italy, and substantially ends with a brief discussion of Nicolas de Condorcet (1743–1794), whose *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* (1795) made him famous as an Enlightenment apostle of progress. Though there are gestures forward to the developments of the nineteenth century – in which Cheny sees the Greek Revolution (1821–1830) and a burgeoning philhellenism as transforming the ways Europeans thought about Greece, antiquity, and the eastern Roman empire – these phenomena are not covered in any detail. And while the general framing of the

Supplement 9 (2019) pp. 1.1–173; Ivan Foletti – Adrien Palladino, Byzantium or Democracy? Kondakov's Legacy in Emigration: the *Institutum Kondakovianum* and Andrè Grabar, 1925–1952. Rome 2020); Nathanael Aschenbrenner – Jake Ransohoff (eds.), The Invention of Byzantium in Early Modern Europe. Washington DC 2021; Dimitris Stamatopoulos, Byzantium after the Nation: The Problem of Continuity in Balkan Historiographies. Budapest 2022; Benjamin Anderson – Mirela Ivanova, Is Byzantine Studies a Colonialist Discipline? Toward a Critical Historiography. University Park PA 2023; Diana Mishkova, Rival Byzantiums: Empire and Identity in Southeastern Europe. Cambridge 2023. The older tradition of historiography on Byzantine scholarship is surveyed, with additional bibliography, in Aschenbrenner – Ransohoff (eds.), The Invention of Byzantium in Early Modern Europe. In: Invention of Byzantium, pp. 1–23, esp. 3–8.

2. Anne-Marie Cheny, Une bibliothèque byzantine : Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc et la fabrique du savoir (Époques). Ceyzérieu 2015.

title and the early attention to figures like Chrysoloras and Wolf suggest the book will be a synthesis of events across Europe, it is strongly oriented around French scholars. These are by no means criticisms – even with these qualifications, CHENY has set out a stall full of memorable anecdotes, new figures, and surprising connections.

One element the subtitle does accurately foreground is the role of *bibliothécaires* (meaning not only institutional librarians, but also collectors of private libraries) and here we see the most innovative aspect of the book emerge in what becomes a kind of organizing theme. CHENY opens her conclusion with the question: when was Byzantine Studies born? One answer – an older one, though here engagement with more recent literature would have complicated this traditional response – is with the institutionalization of the discipline in the late nineteenth century, when Byzantium was no long seen as a part of classical studies (p. 275).[3] CHENY, however, offers a new way to answer this question: through the study of scholarly libraries. By examining the organizational schemes adopted by figures like Claude Dupuy (1533–1592), Johannes Löwenklau (1541?–1594), Peiresc, Lukas Holste (1596–1661), Montesquieu (1689–1755), and Louis de Rouvroy, Duc de Saint-Simon (1675–1755), CHENY gives us a new aperture through which we can perceive the slow emergence of 'Byzantine' as its own category of books. Here both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are critical. It is in the library catalog of Montesquieu (1731) where CHENY detects the first separate category for *Byzantinae historiae scriptores*, though, since Montesquieu was not really a Hellenist, these were largely editions by the vernacular popularizer Louis Cousin (1627–1707). Elsewhere, however, it is clear that the materiality of the great folio publications of the *Byzantine du Louvre* helped fortify the category of 'Byzantium' for library owners, as CHENY shows in the case of Saint-Simon, courtier and memoirist of the opulent court of Louis XIV. The catalog of his library at his death arranges 'Histoire byzantine' as one of four subdivisions under ancient history, *alongside* Greek and Roman history. Catalogued among this section were 27 volumes from the *Byzantine du Louvre*, among editions from Cousin and others. For Saint-Simon, at least, the publication series helped solidify what had previously been a hazy category. This attention to

3. For two different answers that challenge the nineteenth-century institutionalization, see ANTHONY KALDELLIS, From 'Empire of the Greeks' to 'Byzantium': The Politics of a Paradigm Shift. In: Invention of Byzantium, pp. 349–367; NATHANAEL ASCHENBRENNER – JAKE RANSOHOFF, *Byzance avant Byzance*: Toward a New History of Byzantine Scholarship. Ibid., pp. 369–382.

*bibliothécaires* and their collective, transgenerational labor in constructing the bibliographic category of 'Byzantium' is one of the highlights of the book.

The first chapter introduces Claude Dupuy, the tolerant Catholic jurist and bibliophile, whose library sets the stage for more investigations of book storage and organization. Here CHENY shows a scholar attracted to Roman law (in its Byzantine reconfigurations), Greek patristics, and histories such as the *Corpus* of Wolf. A second chapter traces the fascination, albeit still inchoate, with Greek writings through the history of Greek language education sandwiched between brief accounts of the scholar and traveler Johannes Löwenklau, or Leunclavius – whose philological labors ranged from Xenophon and Zosimus to Manasses, and Gregory of Nyssa to the *Basilika* – to the diplomat Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq (1522–1592), the most successful of the diplomats trawling for Greek books in sixteenth-century Constantinople. A chapter on Wolf and the Fuggers is seemingly obligatory in any book on Byzantine scholarship, and while the details here are familiar, they are compellingly presented in an account that is attentive to the cultural, political, and bibliographic dimensions of the project. In the end, CHENY judiciously attributes patrimony over this project to the combined labor and interests of not only Wolf, but also Hans Dernschwam (as manuscript procurer), the Fuggers (as patrons), and Johannes Herbst/Oporinus (as printer.) The pattern emerging is an interest not just in the ideas, books, and actors that contributed to the project of *inventer Byzance*, but a desire to reconstruct the social relationships in which these projects were situated.

Though the book ranges widely from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, it really sparkles in the chapters on the seventeenth century. Here the engagement with the texts is deepest, the networks of friendship and erudition most crisply drawn, the ideological commitments most fully explored. The center of gravity here is the prodigious learning and enterprise of Peiresc. Of the ten chapters of the book (exclusive of the introduction and conclusion; the chapters are, oddly, unnumbered), five of them either center or discuss Peiresc and his contributions extensively. These include chapters on Peiresc's life and – naturally – library (pp. 108–160); the dispersal and recollection of his papers, alongside the epistolary network he cultivated (pp. 162–185); his connections to Lukas Holste, one of the librarians at the Vatican, and Holste's broader engagement with Byzantine texts (pp. 187–207); a rich account of the genesis of Philippe Labbe's *Byzantine du Louvre* and subsequent projects to publish and disseminate Byzantine his-

tories (pp. 209–231); and a recursive exploration of the scholarly networks – again centering Peiresc – that laid the groundwork for Labbe's edifice of learning (pp. 233–250). Throughout, we gain a sense of the Provençal scholar's boundless energy and curiosity. Here we see Peiresc compiling a dossier on the 'kingdom of Constantinople' as part of a broader interest in crusading in seventeenth-century France (pp. 170–178); there we see him corresponding with Holste on the geography of the empire as part of the Vatican librarian's research project on the origin of the *themata* (pp. 187–203); once more Peiresc appears in the competition between French and Italian scholars to purchase the manuscripts required to print a full edition of the *Basilika* (pp. 140–160). Even if Peiresc's outsized presence in this account is undoubtedly a consequence of CHENY's previous familiarity with the Provençal scholar and his archive, we cannot but agree that he justifies this centrality with the breadth of his learning, the range of his correspondence and contacts, and his position at the center of networks of sociability and erudition.

Throughout, CHENY positions Peiresc as a figure standing athwart of an older tradition of privately funded scholarship on the Byzantine world and an emergent framework of state support for these projects, evident first in the race to publish the full corpus of Chrysostom between Catholic France and Anglican England after the Fontainebleau Affair of 1600. This transition to scholarship as a form of state propaganda is most pronounced in the program of the *Byzantine du Louvre*, the lavish series of editions supported by the French monarchy and produced under the leadership of Philippe Labbe and later Charles Du Cange in the second half of the seventeenth century. Though most of this work was completed after Peiresc died in 1637, CHENY deftly and convincingly traces the origins of an idea for a complete corpus of works emanating from or relating to the empire in Constantinople to a group of scholars in the generation before Labbe announced the publication series in his *Protreptikon* of 1648.

Here again, CHENY's method, something like a social history of knowledge production, shines. By examining the contacts among a series of Provençal scholars – including Joseph Marie Suarez (1599–1677), Bishop of Vaison; Charles-Annibal de Fabrot (1580–1659); as well as Peiresc – CHENY shows that initial plans for a series of works on *Constantinopolitana* were incubating in southern France in the early seventeenth century. Suarez had corresponded with Leone Allacci (1586–1669) for information about the manuscripts necessary for this project in 1633, while Fabrot published pioneering editions of the Theodosian Code before turning to historians such

as Kedrenos, Kantakouzenos, Choniates, and Theophylaktos Simokatta, all of which were published before Labbe's *Protreptikon*. In this short treatise, Labbe boldly announced the new series, while largely effacing the labors of Suarez and Fabrot. CHENY plausibly suggests, though the argument must remain provisional, that Labbe may well have appropriated the idea for the series from this group of earlier French scholars. Even if we are not looking at scholarly brigandage, CHENY convinces in attempting to nuance CHARLES DIEHL's bold proclamation that 'France founded the science of Byzantine history' after 1648 with the inception of the *Byzantine du Louvre*.[4] This publication series was a project with complex history that began at least a generation before Labbe and is full of previously unacknowledged contributors.

Two final chapters, on Montesquieu and Condorcet, show us the fate of this new 'science of Byzantine history' in France as the cultural and intellectual imperatives for studying the Byzantine world changed. For Condorcet, writing amid Revolutionary fervor and a rejection of the *ancien régime*, the Byzantine world constituted a useful analog to the opulence of Bourbon France in the seventeenth century, seen in retrospect as a world in the thrall of despotic rulers and clerics. Yet his genealogy of Greek wisdom credits the Byzantines (called 'Greeks') for their role in preserving and transmitting Greek language and learning. Perhaps, CHENY asks, we should see Condorcet as a *philhellene avant le lettre*?

For all its merits, the apparatus in the book is selective. It is rich in primary sources and archival documents, particularly from the seventeenth century, but relatively spare and lacunose especially when it comes to recent scholarship. The omission of any of PETER N. MILLER's publications on Peiresc seems odd, given the prominence of this latter scholar to the story here.[5] TERESA SHAWCROSS's recent articles on Du Cange would

4. Quoted on p. 160.

5. PETER N. MILLER, Peiresc's Europe: Learning and Virtue in the Seventeenth Century. New Haven 2000; IDEM, Peiresc's Orient: Antiquarianism as Cultural History in the Seventeenth Century. Farnham 2012; IDEM, Peiresc's Mediterranean World. Cambridge MA 2015.

have been useful as well.[6] CHENY's consideration of the ways Peiresc's literary legacy was dispersed and then reconstituted would have a provided a fruitful comparison for the ways Du Cange's papers – and his very identity as a scholar – was remade in the eighteenth century. Indeed, the fate of Du Cange helps answer one of the questions that CHENY leaves unanswered in her turn to the eighteenth century. Why, after a hundred years of pioneering and enthusiastic engagement with the Byzantine world, did this subject fall out of fashion? One answer, surely, is the diminished Ottoman threat to Christian states in Europe from the early 1700s onward, which dissipated the crusading fantasies that had long served as one of the chief inducements for reading Byzantine histories.[7] ELISA BIANCO's work on Byzantine historians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries would also have been a valuable touchstone: not only for the figures they both consider, such as Montesquieu, but even more for the scholars BIANCO examines that do not appear in CHENY's account: Louis Maimbourg (1610–1686), Claude Fleury (1640–1723), Jean Lévesque de Burigny (1692–1785), all historians writing in French like Cousin.[8]

Any synthesis is bound to be idiosyncratic and shaped by the author's distinctive interests and expertise, and CHENY's book is no different in this regard. You would only be half wrong to perceive it as a history of Byzantine scholarship through French bibliophiles and librarians, though it does recount important developments among non-French contributors such as Löwenklau, Herbst, and Holste. Yet these features hardly diminish the book's virtues. CHENY has added new features to the map of the rambling, fascinating, and still only dimly perceived terrain of Byzantine scholarship in early modern Europe. If anything, I hope it prompts further comparable explorations: perhaps a study of budding Byzantine scholarship in the Low Countries with figures like Bonaventura Vulcanius (1538–1614), Johannes Meursius (1579–1639), Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), and Gerardus Vossius (1577–1649)? Were there similar (or different) concentrations of interest in Spain, England, Denmark, Sweden, or the Ottoman Empire? If

6. TERESA SHAWCROSS, Editing, Lexicography, and History under Louis XIV: Charles Du Cange and *La byzantine du Louvre*. In: Invention of Byzantium, pp. 143–80; EADEM, The Eighteenth-Century Reinvention of Du Cange as the French Nation's Historian. Ibid., pp. 181–203.

7. Explored in SHAWCROSS, Eighteenth-Century Reinvention; NATHANAEL ASCHENBRENNER, Turning the Page: Reading Byzantine Literature in Early Modern Europe. Medieval Worlds (forthcoming).

8. BIANCO, La Bisanzio dei Lumi.

we still await the answers to these questions, we at least perceive with new acuity how French scholars and librarians contributed to the invention of Byzantium.

**Keywords**

history of Byzantine scholarship; Renaissance; Enlightenment