

BYZANTINE STUDIES IN KHARKOV: Origins, History, and Perspectives*

One of the major provincial centers of Russian Byzantine studies in the second half of the 19th and early 20th century was Kharkov University, deservedly placed in the works on the history of Byzantine studies at the same level with the Universities of Novorossiysk (Odessa), Kazan, Kiev and Yurievsky (Dorpat). The origins of Byzantine studies at the University can actually be traced to an even earlier time, the beginning of the 19th century, when scholarship in the newly created university (established in 1804) was only making its first steps. The earliest Byzantinological work written in Kharkov was the treatise of the Professor of Jurisprudence I. F. Timkovsky (1772/73—1853) *A Comparison of Justinian's Laws with the Laws of Russia* (1808), which unfortunately has not survived. But this study remained for many decades nearly the only example of Kharkov scholars turning to Byzantine topics.

The real beginning of Byzantine studies at Kharkov University was the mid-to late 19th century. A significant number of works appeared at that time, falling into two main groups:

- 1) Byzantine-Slavic relations.
- 2) Byzantine political and ecclesiastical history.

The first group of scholarly works began with the master's thesis of N. A. Lavrovsky (1825—1899) *On the Byzantine Element in the Russian Language Treaties with the Greeks* (1853). His brilliant philological analysis of the treaties' texts enabled the scholar convincingly to defend the idea that the language of the agreements was largely shaped by the influence of the imperial logothete of the drome office. In this regard, the work of N. A. Lavrovsky has not lost its scholarly value today.

The Byzantine-Slavic (mostly Byzantine-Bulgarian) relations were considered in a historical perspective by M. S. Drinov (1836—1906). His main work

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on this subject was the doctoral dissertation, *Southern Slavs and Byzantium in the 10th century* (1876). The researcher's explicit «anti-byzantine» bias did not prevent him from coming to a number of conclusions that are supported by modern historians. Drinov was one of the most important pioneers of Bulgarian and Byzantine studies in Kharkov.

The second group of studies consists of the books by a notable historian of his time, the Kharkov University professor A. P. Zernin (1821–1866): *Emperor Basil I the Macedonian* (1854), *The Life and Literary Works of Emperor Constantine VII the 'Purple-Born'* (1858), and *The Essay on the Life of Photios I of Constantinople* (1858), as well as the essay by the Professor of General History V. K. Nadler (not a professional Byzantinologist) on *Justinian and the Circus Party in Byzantium* (1876). One thing that united both historians was their greater attention to the internal history of the Byzantine Empire, consistent defense of “Byzantinism,” and apologia for the Byzantine civilization. Another notable figure was A. S. Lebedev (1833–1910), who studied Byzantine church history and published a series of essays on the subject in the 1870s.

The thirty years after the release of V. K. Nadler's book were not marked by any notable works on Byzantine history in Kharkov. Byzantine subjects were present in one way or another in the works of medievalists — the historians of the Western European Middle Ages. They were covered in general lecture courses, such as the “Lectures on World History” by M. N. Petrov (1826–1887). But there was no narrowly focused training of Byzantine scholars at Kharkov University in that period. This is particularly evidenced by the fact that several well-known Byzantine scholars who worked in Kharkov in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were educated in other universities of the Russian Empire: Novorossian University (E. K. Redin, 1863–1908), St. Petersburg University (F. I. Schmidt, 1877–1937), Nezhin Institute of History and Philology (V. I. Savva, 1865–1920, E. A. Chernousov, 1869 – ?).

The study of the Slavic-Byzantine relations and the political history of the Byzantine Empire continued in the works of these scholars, but they also laid out new directions:

1. The study of art and culture of the Byzantine Empire and the Byzantine sphere of influence.
2. Research on the Empire's socio-economic history.

E. K. Redin opened up the first of these directions, the history of Byzantine art. Prominent specialist, a disciple of N. P. Kondakov, in his Kharkov years (1893–1908) he worked on the study *Cosmas Indicopleustes' Christian Topography According to Greek and Russian Versions*, with special attention to manuscript miniatures. This monumental, well-illustrated book was published by D. V. Aynalov only in 1916, after Redin's untimely death. F. I. Schmidt be-

came a worthy successor who continued Redin's work in the field of Byzantine art studies and headed the university's theory and history of arts department in 1912–1920. The history of Byzantine cultural and ideological influences on Russia was studied by V. I. Savva, who worked at the Department of Russian History and in 1902 defended his master's thesis *Moscow Tzars and Byzantine Basileis: On the Question of the Byzantine Influence in the Emergence of the Idea of the Royal Power of the Moscow Tsars*.

Finally, E. A. Chernousov was another prominent Kharkovian Byzantologist who studied a wide range of subjects in 1906–1918. His research interests included Byzantine culture, politics, and law, the social and economic history of the empire. To the latter he turned more frequently, consistently and thoroughly.

The most important trends in the Kharkovian Byzantinology of this period were the teaching of general and special courses in Byzantine history and the study of ancient Greek and Latin languages, which were the foundation for the emergence of a local, home-grown pool of specialists in Byzantine studies. For example, an important direction of teaching for E. A. Chernousov was the practical, hands-on study of the monuments of Byzantine legislation with senior undergraduates. The intensity and effectiveness of this work was well illustrated by the fact that one of these undergraduates, V. Ziborovsky, prepared the first Russian translation of *The Book of the Eparch*, with notes and comments. He also wrote a scholarly treatise entitled *The Book of the Eparch's Time of Origin*.

With all the very substantial shortcomings of this translation and the accompanying research, rightly noted by V. N. Beneshevich when Ziborovsky was trying to publish his work in 1936, it stood on a good level for a student work and could become a basis for a very serious scholarly publication after serious revision and improvement. Unfortunately, shortly after 1916 virtually all opportunities for Byzantine studies in Kharkov were almost completely lost, and twenty years later, in 1936, Ziborovsky was trying to publish his still raw, incomplete student works without any revisions.

Meanwhile, the high level of Byzantine studies at Kharkov University in the first decades of the 20th century did not remain unnoticed by the leading Russian Byzantine scholars of the time. Consider for instance a 1915 letter from A. Vasilyev to F. I. Uspensky, which dealt with the possibility of creating specialized Byzantine studies departments at the leading universities of the Empire. In this letter, Kharkov was named on the same level with Petrograd, Kiev, Odesa, Yuriev, and Kazan. According to Vasilyev, E. A. Chernousov could organize Byzantinological work in Kharkov with the help of F. I. Schmitt. At the end of the letter he wrote: "If the departments really are set up, then I'm sure students

will be found, no doubt about that. For good beginnings!” Unfortunately, Vasi-lyev’s optimistic forecasts did not become reality, and the upcoming dire hour of revolution and civil war, which ended with the Bolsheviks’ rise to power, was not good for Byzantine studies in Russia.

Everything that happened in academia at the national level was reflected and repeated in Kharkov as if in a mirror, and the local Byzantine studies at this time shared the bitter fate of this branch of knowledge nationally. In the words of G. N. Lozowik, who in the 1920s and early 1930s tried to establish and legitimize in the eyes of the ruling regime a Ukrainian Marxist Byzantinology, “the ideologists of the October Revolution in any case had no reason to show particular attention towards this branch of knowledge. Rather the opposite: the fans of Monomakh’s Cap and of the heritage of the Palaiologoi were bound to look somewhat suspicious in the eyes of the fighters for October, they had to smell like the historical garbage of the menologies and the *Domostroy*, if not worse”.

After F. I. Schmitt’s and E. A. Chernousov’s departure from Kharkov and the reorganization of Kharkov University into a Kharkov Institute of Popular Education, which in fact became the liquidation of the entire system of university education, special Byzantine studies in Kharkov disappeared for a long time. V. P. Buzeskul (1858–1931), who at that time headed the Research Department of Universal History (later — the Department of European Culture), was perhaps the only one in the 1920s who in his works on the history of Russian historical scholarship touched on Byzantinological questions in the historiographical context. His most significant article of that time on the history of Byzantine studies was a critical-biographical essay about F. I. Uspensky, *A General Overview of the Scholarly Activities of F. I. Uspensky*, published in a collection of essays devoted to the memory of the scholar (1929).

However, even the fate of this new, historiographical direction of Byzantine studies in Kharkov is illustrative. Already about the above-mentioned essay on Uspensky Buzeskul wrote in a private letter to S. Zhebelev: “I expect troubles because of the “Memorandum” Now it is not convenient to talk about Byzantine and Byzantinologists”. The truth of these words was confirmed by the fate of Buzeskul’s last monographic study. Having published the first two volumes of his *World History and its Representatives in Russia in the 19th and early 20th Century*, devoted mainly to classical history and medieval studies, he found it utterly impossible to publish the third and final volume, which dealt with the history of Byzantine studies in Russia. It was finally released only in 2008 in a thorough edition prepared by I. V. Tunkina.

The re-establishment of Kharkov University in 1933 did not lead to a revival of Byzantine studies there. In the same year, the last academic structure in Ukraine concerned with Byzantine studies, the Commission on the Study

of the Middle East and Byzantium (Middle East Commission) was eliminated, and it was only natural that the Soviet regime, which had its own ideological prejudices and suspicions about Byzantine studies, did not support the timid attempts to revive them in Kharkov. Ziborovsky's plan to publish his translation and study of *The Book of the Eparch* in Moscow in 1936 at least testifies to the existence of such attempts.

The same is confirmed by the description of the Greek manuscripts kept at the library of Kharkiv University, undertaken by the local classical scholar A. S. Kotsevalov (1892–1960) in 1941. Apparently he collaborated on this issue with M. A. Shangin, providing him with information about the manuscript of the poem *Phenomena* by Arat from the collections of Kharkov University, which Shangin needed for the twelfth volume of the *Catalogue of Greek Astronomical Manuscripts*, covering the manuscripts in the USSR collections.

The Byzantine revival in Russia, which began in the mid-1940's, had almost no impact on the situation in Ukraine as a whole and at Kharkov University in particular. There were no Byzantine studies specialists there from the post-war period until the mid-1980s and early 1990s. Only occasionally did Kharkov scholars address the problems of Byzantine history when they were relevant in the context of their main fields of research.

In this incipient movement of some Kharkovian historians towards Byzantine studies we can distinguish two directions: historiographical and classical-archaeological.

The historiographical approach to the Russian and Soviet Byzantine studies, inherited from V. P. Buzeskul, continued in the works of the expert on Slavic studies A. I. Mitryaev (1922–1998). Studying the historiography of medieval Slavs, he inevitably encountered Byzantine topics, which eventually led him to write a number of works on the history of Byzantine studies in Ukraine. Of these works, we should mention the article on the historiography of the medieval history of foreign Slavic peoples and Byzantium in the academic institutions of the Ukrainian SSR in the 1920s, as well as the critical-biographic essay on the already-mentioned G. N. Lozowik. In the 1990's and 2000's, this direction in Kharkovian Byzantinology was firmly established in the works of Mitryaev's disciple S. I. Liman. He published a number of important articles on the history of Byzantine studies in the Ukrainian provinces of the Russian Empire from 1804 until the first half of the 1880s (mostly in collaboration with S. B. Sorochan) and devoted to this subject a section in his doctoral dissertation and the subsequent book on the development of Russian medieval studies in this period.

But the second of these directions, conventionally called classical-archaeological, was more important. It was from this point of view that the lead man of

Kharkov classical archeology V. I. Kadeev and his disciples turned to subjects from early Byzantine history, particularly in their studies of the materials from the excavations at Chersonesus. S. B. Sorochan went furthest in this direction. Already in his candidate thesis and the book based on it and published in collaboration with Kadeev, *The Economic Connections of the Classical Cities of the Northern Black Sea Region, First Century B. C. to Fifth Century A. D.* (1989), he turned to the early Byzantine subjects in the trade history of Chersonesus.

His final transition to the purely Byzantine problems was marked by the articles on the history of Byzantine trade in the early Middle Ages and the monograph *Byzantium in the Fourth to Ninth Centuries: Studies in the Market. The Structure of Exchange Mechanisms* (1998, 2001), which became the basis for his doctoral dissertation. These works became the basis for the revival of the socio-economic direction in the study of Byzantine history in Kharkov, interrupted in the early 1920's. At the present moment, it continues to be actively developed by Sorochan's disciples who defended dissertations under his direction: K. Y. Bardola ("The Taxation System in Byzantium in the Fourth to Ninth Centuries," 2003) and A. M. Domanovsky ("The State Control and Regulation of Trade in Byzantium, Fourth to Ninth Centuries", 2007).

At the same time, Sorochan continued his archaeological and historical work in Chersonesus, focusing now on the Byzantine period in the history of the city. This research led to multi-year excavations in the "Citadel" of Chersonesus, a series of articles and a comprehensive book entitled *Byzantine Chersonesus (second half of the Sixth — first half of the Tenth Century): Essays on the History and Culture* (2005, 2013). These works laid the basis for the emergence of a new direction of Byzantine studies in Kharkov — the comprehensive explorations of Byzantine Chersonesus. This direction is already represented in dissertation-level research by Sorochan's students: A. V. Latysheva ("The Christian Church and Religious Life in Byzantine Chersonesus, Sixth to Tenth Centuries", 2009) and M. V. Fomin ("The Burial Tradition and Ritual in Byzantine Chersonesus, Sixth to Tenth Centuries", 2010).

The history and archeology of the Khazar Khaganate, actively pursued in Kharkov and represented primarily by V. K. Mikheev (1937–2008) and his student A. A. Tortika, also closely touches on the problems of Byzantinology. Tortika, in the context of his dissertation study of the Alano-Bulgarian population of the north-western Khazaria in the ethno-social and geopolitical space of Eastern Europe, devoted many pages to the various aspects of the Byzantine-Khazar relations (see his book *North-Western Khazaria in the Context of Eastern European History: Second Half of the Seventh — Third Quarter of the Tenth Century*, 2006). We should note that the doctoral dissertations of both Tortika

and Liman were prepared in close cooperation with S. B. Sorochan, who acted as an academic consultant for both scholars.

Thus the Department of Ancient and Medieval History of the V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, now headed by Professor Sorochan, has become the main center of the revival of Byzantine studies in Kharkov. Scholars from all the academic institutions in the city working on related subjects are drawn to the Department, take part in its activities and publicize their research in the collections of essays published with the active participation of the Department.

Among such researchers we must mention R. I. Filippenko, who explores the scholarly heritage of E. K. Redin (Ph.D. dissertation: "Life, Social Activities, Scholarly and Historical Heritage of the Kharkov University Professor E. K. Redin (1863–1908)", 2004). His work is thus in line with the historiographical direction of Kharkovin Byzantinology, but at the same time touches on art history. Y. G. Gridneva (Matveeva) works mostly in Byzantine art (Ph. D. dissertation: "Evolution of the Byzantine Tradition in the Iconography of Late Medieval Liturgical Embroidery", 2008) and thus revives the tradition established by E. K. Redin and F. I. Schmitt. P. E. Mikhailitsyn's Ph. D. dissertation: "The Literary Heritage of Gregory of Nazianzus as an Early Byzantine Cultural Historical Phenomenon (The Case of the tragedy "Suffering Christ")", 2012.

Due to active cooperation with colleagues from other research centers (Sevastopol, Simferopol, Sudak, Kerch, Belgorod, Lviv, Odessa, Chernovtsy, and others), panels on the history of Byzantium became regular (in conjunction with the history of the medieval Slavs, or nomads, or the Genoese colonies in the Crimea) on the traditional since the mid-1990s conferences held by the Kharkov Historical and Archaeological Society. The Kharkov University Department of Ancient and Medieval History is one of the main centers of the Society's activity.

The panels and roundtables on Byzantine studies at the Drinov Readings, regularly organized by the M. Drinov Center for Bulgarian and Balkan Studies at Kharkov University, have also been quite successful. On July 1st 2010, drawing on the experience of the previous meetings (in 2006 and 2007), the Department of Ancient and Medieval Studies in cooperation with the Drinov Center held in Kharkov the First International Symposium "The Homo Byzantinus Among Ideas and Things," which attracted scholars from Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, and Bulgaria.

Since the mid-1990s, such local publications as *Antiquities. The Kharkiv Historical and Archeological Yearbook*, *Drinov Collections*, and *The Khazar Almanac* have become important scholarly periodicals, and they regularly publish large blocks of articles on Byzantium. These periodicals have received their

deserved recognition from scholars from the various research centers cooperating with the Kharkov-based Byzantinologists.

In close cooperation with the Eparchy of Kharkiv and Bogodukhiv of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchy (Metropolitan of Kharkiv and Bogodukhiv Onufriy (O. V. Legkiy)), a periodical entitled «Nartex. Byzantina Ukrainiensia» is published annually since 2012. Important also is the the Helleno-Byzantine Lectorium «The Byzantine Mosaic», organized by Kharkiv Byzantinologists under the direction of S. B. Sorochan as a common project of the Department of Ancient and Medieval History of Kharkiv National University and the Kharkiv Theological Seminary (Archimandrite Vladimir (V. Shvets), Provost of the Church of St. Anthony) in the Church of St. Panteleimon (Provost Archpriest Nikolai (N. V. Ternovetskiy)). In the Lectorium, monthly popular lectures are organized since 2012 on various aspects of Byzantine history and culture and Christian history and theology. Published collections of public lectures are another result of the work of the Lectorium.

An important project of the Kharkiv Byzantinologists is the web-site «Basileus. Ukrainian Byzantine Studies» (<https://byzantina.wordpress.com>) (editor in chief A. M. Domanovsky).

Thus the 1990s and 2000s brought a revival of the traditions of Byzantine studies in Kharkov, and, naturally, this revival emanated first and foremost from the Department of Ancient and Medieval History of Kharkov University.

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