

Greek Participants in the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest: From the Archive of Professor Sokrates Kougeas¹

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Abstract: Professor Sokrates Kougeas' archive, which documents his participation in the First International Conference of Byzantine Studies held in Bucharest in 1924, offers previously unpublished insights into the nature and scope of Greek involvement in this landmark scholarly event. The pro-Venizelos government of Greece took particular care to ensure national representation by sending two eminent scholars: Sokrates Kougeas, Professor at the University of Athens, and Georgios Soteriou, archaeologist and Director of the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens. Drawing on this archival material, the article presents Kougeas' notes and reflections, focusing not only on his unexpected participation in the Congress but also on his impressions of several papers, the excursion to Wallachia, and his encounters with prominent members of both the Romanian and Greek political elites, as well as representatives of the Greek community in Romania. Finally, the archive sheds light on Athenian social life in the 1920s, recording personal details about the professor's family – most notably the birth of his twin sons during his absence in Bucharest.

Keywords: Byzantine studies, University of Athens, Sokrates Kougeas, Georgios Soteriou, Romanian Academy, Bucharest

¹ This research would not have been possible without the kind permission of Dr. Sokrates Kougeas, grandson of Professor Sokrates Kougeas, to consult and study his grandfather's archive. Access to this material made it possible to examine both direct and indirect sources concerning the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies (Bucharest, 1924). It also provided valuable insight into Kougeas' contacts and preparations prior to the Congress, as well as into its aftermath – his reservations, impressions, and commentary. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Sokrates Kougeas for granting access to his grandfather's personal archive and for his warm hospitality at his home beneath the Acropolis in Athens.

Before presenting the archive, it is essential to outline the broader historical context of Greece at that time. In the years preceding the Congress, Greece had experienced both the First World War and the two Balkan Wars (1912-1913). Following the Balkan Wars, the Ottoman Empire lost most of its territories, retaining only the lands east of the Evros (Maritsa, Марица, Meriç) River. Greece, in turn, incorporated many territories and doubled its population. Two crucial issues, however, remained unresolved for the Greek state: first, the demarcation of the Greek-Albanian border, and second, the question of the status of the Aegean islands – Chios, Lesbos, Lemnos, Tenedos, and Imbros – which Greece had occupied during the First Balkan War. Although the European powers cooperated to bring the Balkan conflict to an end, this collaboration paradoxically accentuated their division into two opposing camps. At the same time, the political influence of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy declined, while Romania distanced itself from it. In alliance with Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro, Romania remained committed to the Treaty of Bucharest (1913), which secured new territorial gains for these states and brought them into closer alignment with the Entente Powers. In 1913, following the assassination of King George I in Thessaloniki, his son Constantine I (1868-1923) ascended the Greek throne. By that time, Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos had already laid the foundations for a strong Greek-Romanian alliance aimed at cooperation with the Entente. This policy, however, met with the opposition of King Constantine I, whose pro-German orientation deepened the rift between the Crown and the Prime Minister.²

With the Treaty of Sèvres (10 August 1920), Greece was granted extensive territorial acquisitions, including most of Eastern Thrace, the islands of Imbros, Tenedos, Limnos, Lesbos, Chios, Samothraki, Samos, and Ikaria, as well as Western Thrace and the wider region of Smyrna.³ A few years later, Greece experienced what Greek historiography refers to as the Asia Minor Catastrophe of 1922 – the outcome of the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) – which brought to Greece approximately 55,000 Armenian and 1,250,000 Greek refugees from Asia Minor. The political and social situation that followed was catastrophic.⁴ However, on the other hand, these territorial gains laid the foundations for profound social and political transformation within Greek society.⁵ Six politicians and military leaders were sentenced to death

² G. Leontarites, “Η διεθνής θέση της Ελλάδος στις παραμονές του Πρώτου Παγκοσμίου Πολέμου”, in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους. Νεώτερος Ελληνισμός από 1913 ως 1941*, Athens, 1978, p. 8-15.

³ E. Allamane and K. Panagiotopoulou, “Ο ελληνισμός της Μικράς Ασίας σε διωγμό”, in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους...*, p. 133-146.

⁴ A. Despotopoulos, “Η Μικρασιατική καταστροφή”, in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους...*, p. 200-247.

⁵ N. Andriotes, “Οι προσφυγικές μετακινήσεις προς και από την Ελλάδα (1914-1924) και η συμβολή τους στη διαμόρφωση νέων κοινωνικών αντιλήψεων και προνοιακών θεσμών”, in A. Markopoulos and E. Chatzibasileiou (eds.), *1914-1924. Τα χρόνια των ανατροπών Ευρώπης και Ελλάδας. Πρακτικά Συμποσίου Δελφοί 4-6 Ιουλίου 2014*, Athens, 2017, p. 201-226.

and executed after a summary trial.⁶ The Asia Minor Catastrophe marked the end of a decade of successive wars and of the irredentist policy and expansionism (“Great Idea”/Μεγάλη Ίδέα),⁷ which had dominated the politics of the modern Greek state since its establishment. In the aftermath, Greek society was deeply and bitterly divided: one faction supported King Constantine I, who was overthrown in a coup, while the other backed Eleftherios Venizelos, a brilliant politician from Crete. In January 1924, Venizelos won the elections and formed a government. However, political instability persisted, as successive governments followed one another and the polarization between the supporters of Venizelos and those of the king remained acute. Finally, in April 1924, a referendum abolished the monarchy in Greece.⁸

During this turbulent and exceptionally difficult period for Greece – politically, economically, and socially – the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies was attended by Georgios Soteriou (1880-1965),⁹ archaeologist, Director of the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, and subsequently Professor at the University of Athens, and by Sokrates Kougeas (1877-1966),¹⁰ Professor of Ancient History at the University of Athens and a fervent supporter of Eleftherios Venizelos. Sokrates Kougeas was born on 14 September 1877 in Doloι, Mani. He attended school in Kalamata and later studied at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Athens, where he received his doctorate for a dissertation entitled *De novo Xiphilineo codice Iberitico 812*. In 1929, he was elected a member of the Academy of Athens. Together with Konstantinos Amantos (1874-1960), he established from 1928 to 1939 the journal *Ελληνικά*.

The archive of Georgios Soteriou is preserved at the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, but I was unable to consult it. According to the Museum’s director, Aikaterini Rosa Maria Dellaporta, the archive is currently being digitized under the

⁶ I. Giannouloropoulos, “Η επανάσταση του 1922, η δίκη των εξ και η συνθήκη της Λωζάννης”, in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους...*, p. 255-258.

⁷ P. Papastrates, “Από τη Μεγάλη Ίδέα στη Βαλκανική Ένωση”, in G. Mavrogordatos and Ch. Chatziiosef (eds.), *Βενιζελισμός και Αστικός Εκσυγχρονισμός*, Rethymno, 1988, p. 418-437; P. Kitromilides, “On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism: Paparrigopoulos, Byzantium and the Great Idea”, in D. Ricks and P. Magdalino (eds.), *Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity*, New York, 1998, p. 25-34; E. Lemonidou, “Απόηχος και αντιδράσεις για τη ‘Μεγάλη Ίδέα’: Η αντιμετώπιση των εθνικών διεκδικήσεων του ελληνισμού μέσα από τα δημοσιεύματα του γαλλικού τύπου για την Ελλάδα (1914-1923)”, in A. Markopoulos and E. Chatzibasileiou (eds.), *1914-1924. Τα χρόνια των ανατροπών Ευρώπη...*, p. 181-200.

⁸ A. Beremes, “Η αντεπανάσταση του 1923 και η ανακήρυξη της αβασίλευτης δημοκρατίας”, in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους...*, p. 271-282.

⁹ For the archaeological work and activities of G. Soteriou, see <https://www.ebyzantinemuseum.gr/?i=bxm.el.warehouses.5>.

¹⁰ N. Oikonomides, “Σωκράτης Β. Κουγέας”, *Ό Έρανιστής* 4.19-24, 1966, p. 198-199; D. Zakythenos, “Σωκράτης Κουγέας”, *Νέα Εστία* 95.1120, 1974, p. 287-296; S. Lampakes, “Σωκράτης Κουγέας (1877-1966) τριάντα χρόνια από τον θάνατόν του”, *Βυζαντινός Δόμος* 8-9, 1995-1997, p. 135-136.

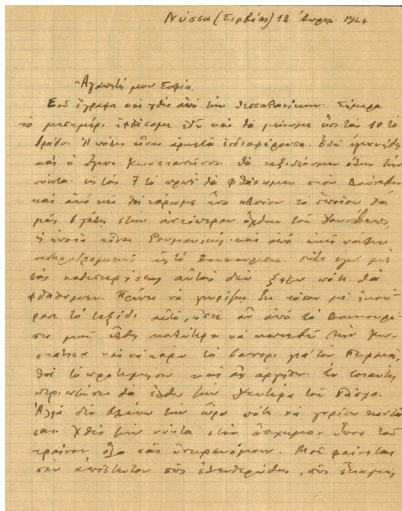


Fig. 1

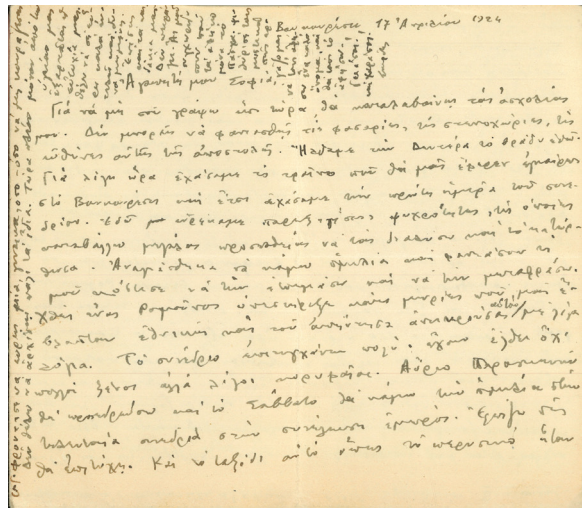


Fig. 2

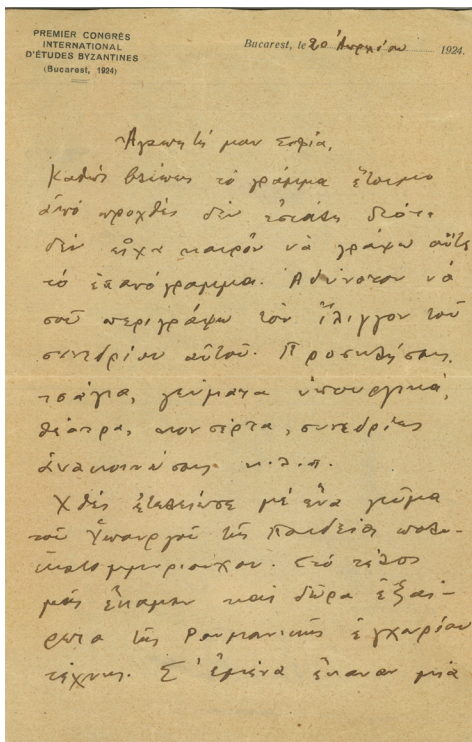
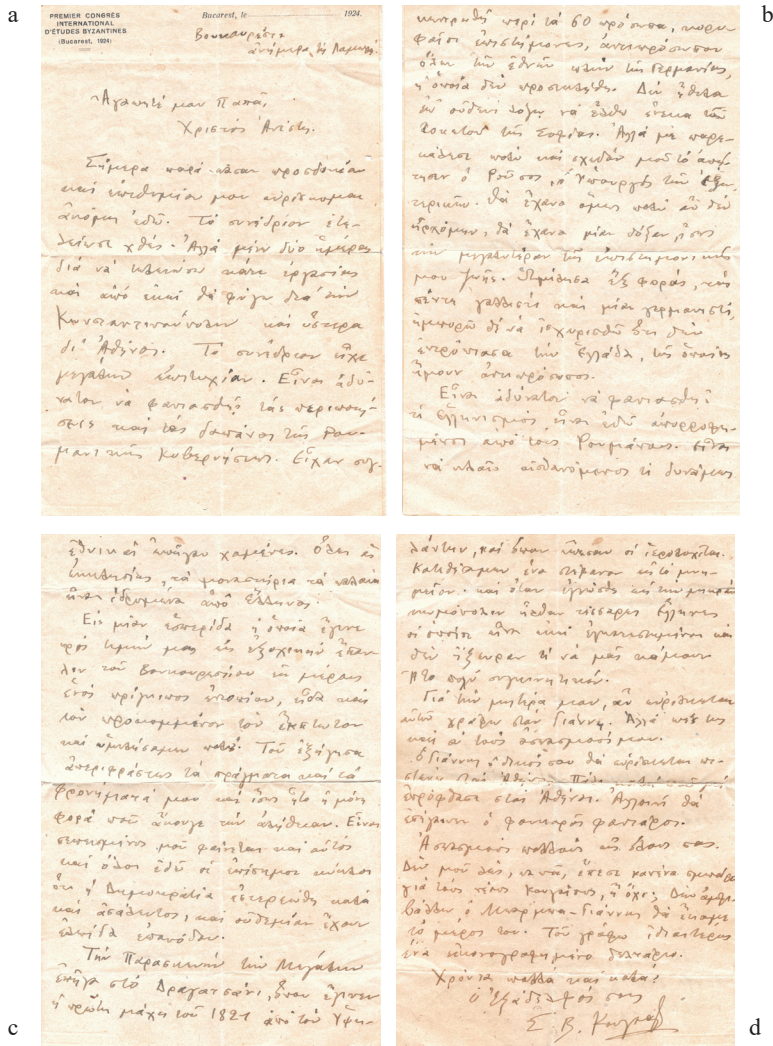


Fig. 3

supervision of the Greek Ministry of Culture. By contrast, in the archive of Sokrates Kougeas, I located a substantial body of material pertaining to the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies held in Bucharest.¹¹ The relevant documents from this archive can be categorized in the following groups:

I. *Letters*. The archive contains correspondence received by Sokrates Kougeas from various correspondents in Greece and abroad. Of particular significance, however, are the letters that Kougeas himself sent to Greece during his participation in the Congress. These include personal notes and informations addressed to his wife, Sophia, in Athens, and to other relatives. Three of these letters – dated 12 April (fig. 1), 17 April (fig. 2), and 20 April 1924 (fig. 3) – were sent to his wife. The first was sent from Niš, Serbia, while en route to Bucharest, and the other two from Bucharest itself. All

¹¹ L. Brehier, “Congrès de Bucarest”, *Byzantion* 1, 1925, p. 734-744; C. Marinescu, *Compte-rendu du premier Congrès international des études byzantines, Bucarest, 1924*, Bucharest, 1925.



three are deeply personal texts, written with great affection and concern for his heavily pregnant wife. In these letters, Kougeas shares his experiences and impressions from the journey and his stay in Bucharest. His descriptions focus primarily on events outside the academic proceedings – receptions, the hospitality of the organizers, meetings, and excursions – and contain little scientific information. Nevertheless, they also include brief remarks on the general political situation and his own political views. In a later letter, written after the birth of his twin sons, Kougeas gives detailed instructions for managing the new-borns’ needs during his absence – shopping, obtaining milk, and finding a wet nurse. This correspondence provides valuable insight into everyday domestic life in Athens during the 1920s. A different tone characterizes the letter of 27 April (Greek Orthodox Easter) (fig. 4), sent from Bucharest to his cousin Vasileios



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Kougeas, a priest in his native village of Doloi, near Kalamata. Here, Kougeas offers more extensive commentary on the Congress itself, its participants, and the political context of Greece and the Balkans, reflecting on how these dynamics influenced the event's atmosphere and discussions.

II. *Postcards*. In addition to the letters, Sokrates Kougeas sent two postcards to his wife (fig. 5) and daughter, Irene (fig. 6). Both are of a personal nature and refer exclusively to domestic events in Athens during his absence. Modern historiography recognizes postcards as surprisingly rich historical sources, whose value extends far beyond mere visual nostalgia.¹² Their brief handwritten messages can reveal elements of colloquial language, personal networks, and everyday preoccupations, while postcards sent abroad often reflect connections between homeland and emigrant communities. The two postcards sent by Kougeas retain this intimate character and were likely enclosed with one of his letters from Bucharest. The postcard addressed to his daughter Irene depicts a child holding an Easter basket filled with eggs and bears

¹² In recent years, research on postcards as a historical source has been steadily developing, highlighting their significance for the study of modern Greek history: see indicatively A. Anagnostopoulos, "Picturing Public Space: Ethnicity and Gender in Picture Postcards of Iraklio, Crete, at the Beginning of the 20th Century", in E. Pistrick, N. Scalfaferrri, and G. Schwörer (eds.), *Audiovisual Media and Identity Issues in Southeastern Europe*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2011, p. 171-191; K. Kopsidas, *Οι Εβραίοι της Θεσσαλονίκης από τις καρτ-ποστάλ, 1886-1917*, Thessaloniki, 1992; T. Alexander, G. Hadar, and Sh. Sabar, "'El oio ve, la alma desea (The eye sees, the soul desires)': Jewish Postcards from Salonika", *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* 27, 2011, p. 183-229 (in Hebrew).

the Romanian Easter greeting “Hristos a înviat” – “Christ is risen” (Χριστός ἀνέστη). The postcard to his wife portrays two young women, one of whom is bare-breasted, tenderly cradling an infant in her arms. The child rests peacefully against her chest as she gazes down lovingly – a serene, maternal scene rendered in soft natural light, symbolizing joyful motherhood. Beneath the image, Kougeas wrote in Greek: “Here the two are proud of a child. How much happier is the mother who boasts two. I could not find such a picture. I can only imagine her”.¹³

III. *Newspaper articles.* The archive also contains several newspaper clippings in Greek and Romanian. Because most of these items lack annotations, it has not been possible to determine with certainty the newspapers from which they originated or their exact dates of publication. The articles consist of reports written by journalists or scholars who, although not official delegates, attended sessions of both the First and Second International Congress of Byzantine Studies. The testimonies preserved in these newspapers are either direct or indirect. The indirect ones are excerpts from reports on the Second Congress (Belgrade, 1927) that include



Fig. 7

important retrospective references to the First Congress in Bucharest. Kougeas also collected numerous Romanian newspapers that discussed the Congress and mentioned him personally.¹⁴ Although he did not speak or understand Romanian, his letters reveal that he met several members of the Greek community in Romania during the Congress. It is likely that these individuals either supplied him with the newspapers or translated the relevant articles for him. He even notes that one of them – whom he does not name – corrected the French in his own presentation. The most significant of all these press accounts is, in my view, the extensive article published in the Greek newspaper *Ethnos* of Bucharest on 1 May 1924 (fig. 7), which contains vivid

¹³ He meant that he was unable to find an image of a woman holding two babies in her arms that resembled his wife at that time.

¹⁴ Ș. Petrescu, “From Bucharest to Athens: Reflecting on the Balkan Cooperation in the Greek-Language Newspapers”, *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 61, 2023, p. 119-130.

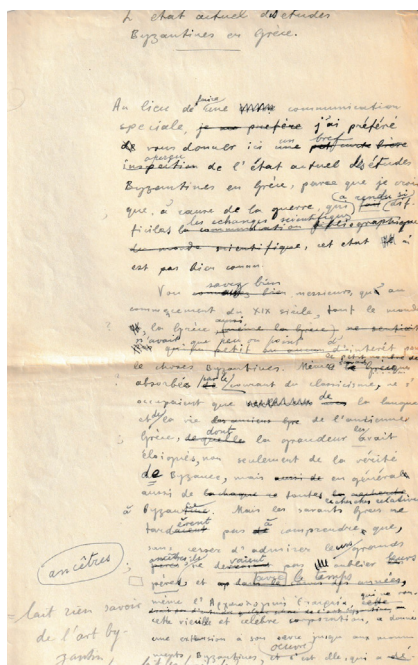


Fig. 8



Fig. 9

descriptions of the Congress events and of the participants' visits to Romanian monuments.¹⁵

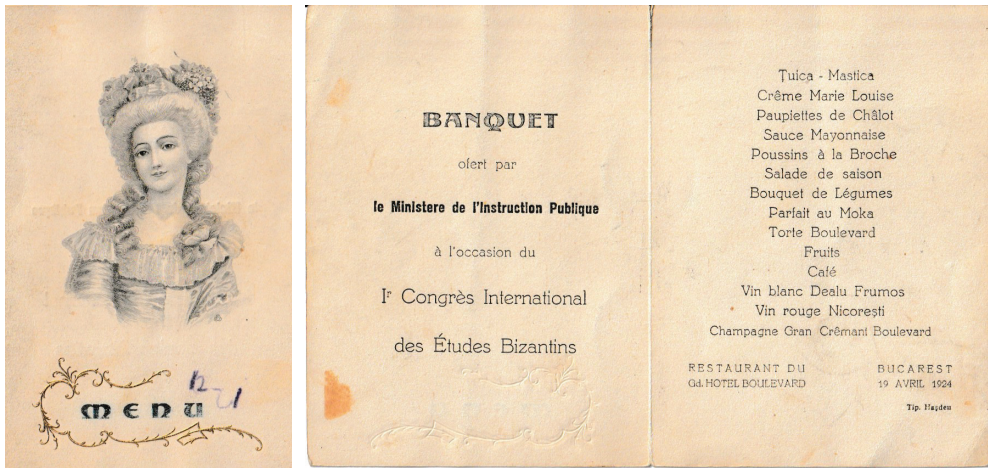
IV. *Personal notes.* These comprise handwritten notes by Sokrates Kougeas related to the presentation he delivered on the final day of the Congress, devoted to the subject of Byzantine studies in Greece (fig. 8). In his first letter, written from Niš, Serbia, he mentions that he was not enthusiastic about the

trip, which, as he implies, had not been undertaken solely for academic purposes. However, once the Congress began, his attitude changed. He describes the speakers and lectures in general terms and expresses enthusiasm upon being invited to deliver a presentation on Byzantine studies in Greece and to preside over one of the sessions. In his second letter, he notes *mot à mot* that during the Congress he was asked to prepare and present this paper, which he delivered on the closing day.

V. *Photographs and other materials.* This section of the archive includes two photographs of the Congress participants (fig. 9). One of them was used on the poster of the International Conference commemorating the centenary of the Congresses of Byzantine Studies (Bucharest, 4-5 September 2024), while the other bears only a brief note identifying it as originating from the First International Congress of Byzantine Studies. This group also contains summaries of participants' presentations, as well as writings by Sokrates Kougeas himself. Among these are the handwritten version of his paper on the progress of Byzantine studies in Greece¹⁶ and his article “Εντυπώσεις ἐκ Ρουμανίας”, in which he describes in detail the events within the Congress and

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 129-130; id., *Corespondenții români de presă și publicațiile emigrației balcanice: (1877-1916)*, Brăila, 2021.

¹⁶ S. Kougeas, “L'état actuel des études byzantines en Grèce”, *Bulletin de la Section Historique – Académie Roumaine* 11, 1924, p. 164-169.



a

Fig. 10

b

related occasions.¹⁷ Finally, Kougeas carefully preserved several photographs and the elegant invitation issued by the Romanian Ministry of Public Education to a formal banquet, accompanied by its printed menu, held at the Grand Hotel Boulevard in central Bucharest on 19 April 1924 (fig. 10). In his second letter (20 April 1924), he mentions that he received as a gift from the Minister of Education – whom he describes as a “multi-millionaire” (πολυεκατομμυριούχος) – a wonderful blouse. Despite the efforts of Dr. Sokrates Kougeas, the professor’s grandson, this item has not been found in the family archive. According to the professor’s own account, the other delegates received similarly luxurious and costly gifts, including carpets, scarves, handkerchiefs, and other fine objects.

In the archive of Professor Sokrates Kougeas, concerning the First International Conference of Byzantine Studies, there are several comments directly or indirectly related to the event. These remarks fall into four categories: personal, scientific, historical/social, and political.

I. *Personal comments.* It should be noted that during that period the Orthodox Easter was being celebrated, while Kougeas’ wife was heavily pregnant. During his journey to Niš (letter of 12 April 1924), he learned of the birth of his twin sons.¹⁸ He emphasizes the physical fatigue associated with the journey, mainly due to the numerous stops and changes of transportation. He informs his wife that he would prefer to return by ship from Constanța to Piraeus, even though this route would take longer. Indeed, in a subsequent letter dated 17 April 1924, he tells her that, together with Henri Grégoire and other French colleagues, he plans to return by ship via Constanța to

¹⁷ Id., “Εντυπώσεις ἐκ Ρουμανίας”, *Απόσπασμα ἐκ τοῦ Ἡμερολογίου τῆς Μεγάλης Ἑλλάδος* 4, 1925, p. 513-526.

¹⁸ In his letter from Niš, he refers to an earlier letter written from Thessaloniki, which, however, is not preserved in his archive.

Istanbul, and from there to Piraeus. He adds that, should he encounter any difficulties with the Turks, he will instead travel to Belgrade and continue from there to Athens. In the same letter (17 April 1924), he also writes that he will not return until Easter Sunday, since the Romanian organizers of the Congress were arranging free excursions to various parts of Romania. In the earlier letter of 12 April 1924, he expresses his joy at the birth of his children and advises his wife to find a wet nurse from the island of Salamis. He stresses that she should not worry about expenses, as he has left her a substantial sum of money; however, in the letter of 17 April 1924, he suggests that, if she needs additional funds, she should borrow from mama (μαμά).¹⁹ Also noteworthy in the letter of 12 April are his detailed instructions regarding the care of the new-born twins, including the purchase of pure milk, which must be diluted before being given to them. His affection and tenderness toward his wife are evident even in his reference to his daughter, Irene, as the professor expresses his hope that she would be quiet and not cause any trouble for her mother. Such personal reflections become much less frequent in his later correspondence, which is increasingly dominated by his impressions and observations from the Congress itself.

As often happens at major conferences (even today), Kougeas' relationships with other participants were initially rather formal and distant, but the atmosphere soon changed. A decisive factor in this transformation was the warm and generous hospitality of the Romanian hosts, his relationships with the Greek community in Romania, which developed quickly, and certainly his acquaintance with other colleagues. A particularly touching personal moment occurred during the excursion of the Congress participants through Wallachia, when Sokrates Kougeas and Georgios Soteriou visited Drăgășani. This was the site of the battle led by Alexander Ypsilantis on 7 June 1821, where all 2,000 young volunteers of the Sacred Band (Ἱερός Λόχος) lost their lives. The Sacred Band had been a military unit founded by Ypsilantis at the beginning of the Greek War of Independence (March 1821, in Wallachia), composed of volunteer students from the Greek communities of Moldavia, Wallachia, and Odessa.²⁰ During their visit, Kougeas and Soteriou met the only three remaining Greek inhabitants of Drăgășani.²¹

¹⁹ According to Dr. Sokrates Kougeas, the professor's grandson, the "mother" (μαμά) was Angelike Aneze, the professor's mother-in-law.

²⁰ G. Gkekos, *Η επιστροφή. Αγωνιστές του Α. Υψηλάντη στον δρόμο για την Ελλάδα*, Athens, 2019, p. 111-140; N. Zygoire, "Ἰχνηλατώντας την ιστορία του Ἱεροῦ Λόχου μέσα από τα κειμήλια του Εθνικοῦ Ἱστορικοῦ Μουσείου", in T. Dinu and K. Kaimakame (eds.), *Πρακτικά του Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου "Ἡ Ἑλληνική Ἐπανάσταση και οἱ Ρουμανικές Χώρες" / Lucrările Congresului Internațional "Revoluția Greacă și Țările Române"*, Bucharest, 2023, p. 246-266; R. Katsimardou, "Ἑλληνες πρόσφυγες εκ του Ἱεροῦ Λόχου του Υψηλάντη", in N. Kastrite and R. Katsimardou (eds.), *Ἐπαναστάση '21*, Athens, 2021, p. 339.

²¹ S. Kougeas, "Ἐντυπώσεις...", p. 524-525.

Together they sang the Epitaph Hymn “Ἡ ζωὴ ἐν τάφῳ”,²² as it was Good Friday (Μεγάλη Παρασκευή) and the hymn suited the character of the visit.

II. *Scientific comments.* Neither the professor’s letters nor the newspaper reports contain detailed descriptions of the presentations delivered at the Congress. Nevertheless, his remarks reveal two key points: (1) he believed that many of the leading Byzantinists of the time had gathered in Bucharest; and (2) although he had been initially reluctant to attend, his participation – particularly the six short speeches and interventions he delivered – represented the most important event in his scholarly career up to that point. However, the central role of Professor Nicolae Iorga is repeatedly emphasized. Kougeas expresses unreserved admiration for Iorga’s intellectual and political stature, noting that the absolute success of the Congress was due to him. He also reminds his readers that Iorga was not only a distinguished scholar but also a prominent politician and leader of a powerful parliamentary party in Romania. At the same time, Kougeas acknowledges the crucial assistance provided by Constantin Marinescu and by several women working in Iorga’s office.²³ In his article about his impressions from Romania, however, Kougeas observes that, although the Congress was called “international”, in practice it was far from truly so.²⁴ In a private conversation, he notes, the Romanian Prime Minister Ion I. C. Brătianu himself expressed dissatisfaction with the absence of leading Byzantinists. Scholars from certain countries had not been invited, while others declined to participate in protest.²⁵ Invitations were extended only to representatives from the Allied countries and those that had become members of the League of Nations (Paris, 1920). Moreover, Kougeas had expected the Congress to address major issues in Byzantine studies, rather than narrowly specialized topics such as those presented by Gabriel Millet²⁶ and Nikodim Kondakov. He thus concluded that, apart from the decision to establish the journal *Byzantion*, the overall benefit to the field had been limited and the scientific outcomes rather modest.²⁷ Further scholarly observations appear in his article about

²² Τριώδιον Κατανυκτικόν, Rome, 1879, p. 710; Th. Xydes, “Ἐγκώμια”, in *Πεπραγμένα του Θ’ Διεθνούς Βυζαντινολογικού Συνεδρίου, Θεσσαλονίκη (12-19 Απριλίου 1953)*, Thessaloniki, 1956, p. 277-278; E. Pantelakes, “Νέα Ἐγκώμια τοῦ Ἐπιταφίου ἐκ Συναίτικου χειρογράφου”, *Θεολογία* 14, 1936, p. 224-250, 310-329; A. Biliou, *Τα Ἐγκώμια στη λειτουργική μας Παράδοση: τα δεδομένα της αγωγείτικης Παράδοσης*, PhD thesis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2011; K. Costa, *A Critical Edition and Study of the Transmission of the Megalynaria on the Burial of the Divine Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, MA dissertation, The Hellenic Institute at Royal Holloway, University of London, 2023.

²³ S. Kougeas, “Ἐντυπώσεις...”, p. 515.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 513.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 514.

²⁶ Published as G. Millet, “Sur les sceaux des commerciaires byzantins”, in *Mélanges offerts à M. Gustave Schlumberger, membre de l’Institut, à l’occasion du quatre-vingtième anniversaire de sa naissance (17 octobre 1924)*, Paris, 1924, p. 303-327.

²⁷ S. Kougeas, “Ἐντυπώσεις...”, p. 516-520.

his impressions from Romania, where he offers descriptions of monuments and, in particular, transcriptions of Byzantine and post-Byzantine inscriptions encountered during the Congress excursion. He was particularly impressed by a gold-embroidered fourteenth-century epitaph and a monogram of the Palaiologoi that he saw in the museum of Putna, as well as by the churches of the Three Hierarchs and of Saint Sabbas in Iași.²⁸ He also records his visits to the church of Curtea de Argeș and the Hurezi Monastery in Oltenia, from which he transcribed several Greek inscriptions.²⁹

III. *Historical/social comments.* Kougeas was impressed by the buildings and works of art he saw in Bucharest, and he was also struck by the fact that several were associated with aristocratic Greek families of Romania. In a letter to his cousin, while describing the Greek presence in Romania, he characteristically remarks: “It is worth weeping to realize what national forces have been lost. All the old churches and monasteries were founded by Greeks”. In another passage of the same letter, he adds: “Yesterday a Romanian put forward certain claims that were harmful to us as a nation, and I replied to him appropriately in a few words”. These statements, in my view, are not linked to the phenomenon of Balkan nationalism, which in any case had weakened in Greece following the end of the Great Idea. Rather, they reflect Kougeas’ emotional attachment to places and regions where the Greek presence had historically been significant.³⁰ In a note at the end of his letter to his wife (17 April 1924), he also remarks on the lower cost of goods in Romania compared to Greece, explaining that for this reason he intends to buy her and the family additional gifts. In the newspaper *Ethnos* (*Ἔθνος*, Thursday, 1 May 1924, no. 2209), there was a lengthy article devoted to the Congress and entitled “Τὸ Συνέδριον τῆς Βυζαντινολογίας. Ἡ ὠραία δρᾶσις τῆς ἑλληνικῆς ἀντιπροσωπείας. Αἱ ληφθεῖσαι ἀποφάσεις”. The final section of this article, titled “Ἡ προσφώνησις τοῦ κ. Κουγέα”, reproduces the speech Kougeas delivered before the authorities of Pitești. Several aspects of this address are noteworthy: (1) his admiration for Romania’s art monuments and for the progress achieved by the Romanian people in the sciences, arts, and industry; (2) his references to the past and the expression of gratitude focused on the long-standing presence of the Greek element in Wallachia and its assistance in the War of Independence against the Turks;³¹ and (3) his warm thanks on behalf of all participants for the generous hospitality.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 521-522.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 522-523.

³⁰ E. Gellner, “Ἐθνικισμός και πολιτική στην Ανατολική Ευρώπη”, in id., *Ἔθνη και Ἐθνικισμός*, tr. D. Laphazane, Athens, 1992, p. 257-270; D. Tziouvas (ed.), *Greece and the Balkans Identities: Perceptions and Cultural Encounters since the Enlightenment*, New York, 2003.

³¹ See F. Marinescu and M. Rafailă, “Το ελληνικό έντυπο στη Ρουμανία (1642-1918)”, in T. Sklavenites and K. Staikos (eds.), *Το έντυπο ελληνικό βιβλίο 15^ο-19^ο αιώνας. Πρακτικά Διεθνούς Συμποσίου Δελφοί, 16-20 Μαΐου 2001*, Athens, 2004, p. 265-278. At the end of the article, it is noted that the Greek participants in the Congress visited the offices of the newspaper *Ethnos* in Bucharest and left “enthusiastic”.

IV. *Political comments.* This section of the archive is, in my view, the most important, as it reveals how deeply political considerations permeated the Congress and the events surrounding it. Three aspects stand out.

(1) The prominent presence of politicians and royal figures. At the various receptions and dinners held during the Congress, members of the Romanian political elite and of the Romanian and Greek royal families were present.

(2) Greek politics were not confined to Athens. In a letter to his cousin dated 27 April 1924, Kougeas explicitly states that his trip to Bucharest and his participation in the International Congress were the result of the pressure and insistence of the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, George Roussos, a member of the pro-Venizelos government.³² Although he does not elaborate on the reasons, it seems clear that the Greek government sought to ensure representation at a scientific congress restricted to the Allied states, from which the “enemy” nations were excluded. It should be recalled that the deposed King Constantine I had been an ardent supporter of Germany and its allies, a stance that had caused the so-called National Schism (Εθνικός διχασμός).³³ By this time, King George II had been living in exile in Romania since December 1923.³⁴ I mention two characteristic examples. In his letter of 17 April 1924, addressed to his wife, Kougeas describes a reception at the royal palace, during which he met Princess Helena, daughter of King Constantine I and Queen Sophia, wife of King Carol of Romania and mother of Michael, the last king of Romania. He conversed with her in Greek. Yet, he later notes that he was not invited to the subsequent palace dinner, attended by all the other Congress participants – a slight he attributes to the disclosure of his anti-royalist convictions and open support for Eleftherios Venizelos. At another reception held in an “old château” outside Bucharest, he encountered the deposed King George II and Queen Elizabeth of Romania. Although he describes his situation as tragic, he nonetheless approached and spoke with the royal couple before discreetly withdrawing, while his colleague Georgios Soteriou remained behind. In his letter, Kougeas remarks that when he later took leave of Soteriou, their farewell was cold; he suspects that the King had been informed of his democratic sentiments and support for Venizelos. At this point in the letter, Kougeas refers to George only as “Glyxburg” (Γλύξμποργκ) (as a surname), a term still employed by some Greeks today, but, as far as I know, rejected by the former royal family. A different version of this meeting appears in his letter to his cousin in Doloι, in which he does not mention the former king by name, referring to him only as “disgraced” and “deposed”. He recounts speaking to him openly and honestly about his political views, adding that the ex-king may have been hearing such frank opinions for the first time. Kougeas concludes: “He

³² G. Daphnes, *Η Ελλάδα μεταξύ δύο πολέμων 1923-1940*, vol. 1, Athens, 1997, p. 214-215; A. Makrydemetres, *Οι υπουργοί των Εξωτερικών της Ελλάδας, 1829-2000*, Athens, 2000, p. 82.

³³ See G. Mavrogordatos, *1915: Ο εθνικός διχασμός*, Athens, 2015.

³⁴ A. Beremes, “Η αντεπανάσταση...”, p. 275-281.

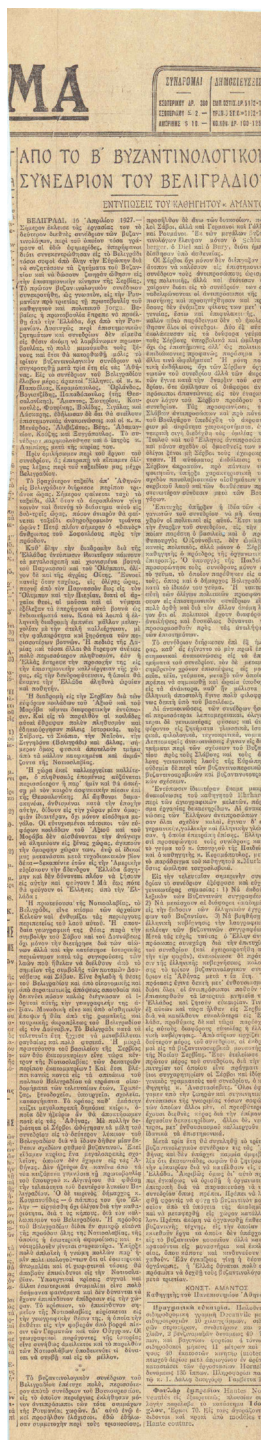


Fig. 11

[the former king] seems convinced, and so do all the official circles here, that the Republic has been firmly established and they have no hope of returning”. This exchange likely explains the reason Georgios was cold towards him during the farewell.

(3) The political selectivity of the Congress. Finally, the exclusion of scholars from certain countries – Germany, Austria, Hungary, Poland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Portugal, and Scandinavian countries – constituted an overtly political gesture. This is noted both in an article by Kougeas himself and in Greek press reports concerning the Second International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Belgrade.

The First International Congress of Byzantine Studies and its associated events were deeply shaped by the political climate of the time, not only in Europe at large but also within Greece. The absence of leading scholars from uninvited nations became a topic of discussion and provoked mixed reactions. Articles from Greek newspapers preserved in Kougeas’ archive, particularly those describing the Second International Congress of Byzantine Studies (Belgrade, 1927), consistently characterize the Belgrade meeting as a complete success precisely because no participants were excluded. Professor Konstantinos Amantos³⁵ expressed this view clearly, noting: “The Serbs not only refrained from inviting political representatives to the scientific conference, but also underscored that, at their conference, scholars are bound together as colleagues and brothers”³⁶ (fig. 11). It should also be emphasized that political figures in Romania – not only in Bucharest, but also in the provinces – showed great interest and played an active role in hosting the Congress participants. However, beyond any doubt, both the archival documents and Kougeas’ reports attest that the personality of Nicolae Iorga was decisive in the conception, organization, and continuation of the event.

³⁵ For information on the first professorship of Byzantine studies at the University of Athens, to which K. Amantos was appointed, see T. Kioussopoulou, “Η πρώτη έδρα Βυζαντινής Ιστορίας στο Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών”, *Μνήμων* 15, 1993, p. 257-276.

³⁶ This is a clipping from the newspaper *Βήμα* found in Kougeas’ archive, although it is undated.

Kougeas' repeated observations also make clear that the Greek community in Romania displayed particular interest in the Congress and sought to establish contact with the Greek delegates. Kougeas met frequently with members of this community. Even in Drăgășani, the small town visited during the Wallachian excursion, the few remaining Greek there came forward to greet Kougeas and Soteriou.

Finally, the Greek government itself strongly desired a national presence at the Congress, although it appears that there had been little advance preparation. From Kougeas' letters, it emerges that he travelled to Bucharest at the request of the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, and that he was unaware prior to his departure that he would be asked to deliver a lecture. The invitation came only after his arrival in Bucharest, prompting him to prepare and present his paper on Byzantine studies in Greece. Undoubtedly, however, this Congress marked a turning point in his academic career, securing his international recognition as a scholar. This is evident not only from his own letters but also from the articles he later published in international journals, which reflect both the prestige and scholarly visibility he gained through his participation in the Bucharest Congress.