Nomadic arts in emigration: Russian diaspora, Czechoslovakia, and the broken dream of a borderless Europe (1918–45)*

Ivan Foletti and Adrien Palladino

When Nikodim P. Kondakov (1844–1925) died in Prague in February 1925, he had already been an emigrant for five years. This period, which started with the 1917 Revolution, was one of the most difficult moments in the scholar's life. Though very prolific throughout his career, Kondakov published just one article during this time: 'Les costumes orientaux à la Cour Byzantine'.[1] Such title is not surprising for the great specialist in Byzantine art that Kondakov was. A closer look into the content of this text, however, reveals something more unexpected. While the scene of action is indeed the court of Constantinople, significant space is dedicated to textiles, clothing styles, and their motifs, transferred to Byzantine culture by nomadic peoples. Considering Kondakov's previous focuses, this may appear rather unusual: he had devoted only a few publications in the first part of his career to the art of nomadic tribes, then ignoring, so to speak, the topic for twenty-five years. The issue we would like to discuss in this paper is thus precisely why he would come back to these interests. A broader perspective furthermore shows that Kondakov was not the only scholar fascinated by the art of nomadic peoples, especially after the First World War. Such an interest was indeed embraced by scholars from very different cultural and national backgrounds, living in what was called, at that time, *Mitteleuropa*.

In the following pages, we would like to explore the reasons why Nikodim Kondakov decided to come back to the passions of his youth, especially during his period of emigration in Prague. This becomes especially important within the context of the newly born Czechoslovakia, constructed as a supposed nation-state, seeking a new identity. The second part of our essay will be devoted to the impact of Russian emigration more broadly, and the notion of Eurasia in art historical scholarly research in Central Europe between the two wars. Lastly, we would like to explore the interaction between scholarship and emigration within a wider international framework, going beyond the borders of Central Europe.

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[1] Nikodim P. Kondakov, (Henri Grégoire trans.), 'Les costumes orientaux à la Cour Byzantine', *Byzantion*, 1, 1924, 7–49.

Becoming a nomad: Nikodim Kondakov meets his destiny

Born in 1844 in Khalan, Nikodim Kondakov is generally considered the most important art historian of his generation in Russia.[2] First as a full professor of art history, he taught in Odessa and St. Petersburg, where he also assumed the duties of head curator for the medieval and early modern collection at the Imperial Hermitage Museum. Originating from a family of serfs, he then became a sort of court art historian, playing a significant role in the construction of a Russian national narrative during his lifetime.[3] The idea we find as a *fil rouge* throughout his career is certainly the cultural, intellectual, and religious continuity between the Byzantine Orthodox world and medieval and early modern Russia. In the years when Filofej's text defining Moscow as the Third Rome was published – the 1870s – this vision of the past was widespread.[4] Kondakov was fully immersed in his cultural context, while actively participating in its construction.

Trained as a philologist and archaeologist, Kondakov became an art historian by choice. At the apex of his career, in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth, he was asked to participate in a very impressive project presenting all Russian medieval art, including the art of the Caucasus and Crimea, as well as the art of steppe nomads.[5] It was in this period that he started to reflect on the role of migrating tribes in the constitution of Russian identity. Parallelly, Kondakov was considering a revision of the display of the medieval collection at the Hermitage Museum: in a new catalogue, he presented the arts stemming from the Russian geographical space as the true bridge between Europe and Asia.[6]

This episode is, however, quite isolated within Kondakov's intellectual biography. He was mainly focused on the visual art of the Byzantine and Russian

[2] On Kondakov, see mainly Ivan Foletti, *From Byzantium to Holy Russia. Nikodim Kondakov (1844–1925) and the Invention of the Icon*, Rome: Viella, 2017 and Irina L. Kyzlasova, *Akademik N. P. Kondakov: poiski i sversheniya*, Sankt-Peterburg: Aleteiya 2018, with further bibliography.
[3] Recently, see the account of Maria Lidova, 'The Rise of Byzantine art and archaeology in late imperial Russia', in Jaś Elsner, ed., *Empires of faith in late antiquity: histories of art and religion from India to Ireland*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, 128–60.
[4] On the concept and the history of Moscow as 'Third Rome', see the essays in Pavel Boček, ed., *Moskva. Třetí Řím. Od ideje k symbolu* [Moscow. Third Rome. From the idea to the symbol], Prague: Lidové noviny, 2019, with further bibliography; the 19th century is analysed by Ivan Foletti, Karolina Foletti, 'Moskva nebo Řím? Byzantské 'ikony', Rusko-byzantská architektura a Translatium imperii' [Moscow or Rome? Byzantine 'icons' Russo-byzantine architecture and the Translatium imperii], *Moskva. Třetí Řím,* 185–99, 213–17. From another perspective, see also Sergey A. Ivanov, 'The Second Rome as Seen by the Third: Russian Debates on "the Byzantine legacy"', in Przemyslaw Marciniak, Dion C. Smythe, eds, *The reception of Byzantium in European culture since 1500*, Farnham: Routledge, 2016, 55–79.
[5] See, for the the period and further bibliography, Foletti, *From Byzantium to Holy Russia*, 43ff.
[6] Nikodim P. Kondakov, *Imperatorskij Ermitaž. Ukazatel otdelenija Srednich Vekov i epochi Vozroždenija* [Imperial Hermitage. Catalogue of the medieval and Renaissance sections], Saint Petersburg, 1891. See also Foletti, *From Byzantium to Holy Russia*, 47ff.

Middle Ages – from manuscripts to 'icons' and monumental art.[7] It is thus rather surprising to discover that, after the Revolution, his only publication was devoted to former topic. In his last article, published in the first issue of the journal *Byzantion* and translated by the great Belgian byzantinist Henri Grégoire (1881–1964), we read statements such as:

> If the Byzantine court adopted oriental costumes, it is because the barbarian world had transmitted them; these clothes were at the same time military uniforms and court costumes. The Byzantine court was never an Asiatic court, but it combined the forms and fashions of those courts with the entire cultural heritage of the Roman Empire.[8]

This sentence, among many others, makes it clear that Kondakov considered the arts of the 'barbarians' – the nomadic peoples – as the meeting point between Asia and European civilization, encapsulated for Kondakov in Byzantium.[9] This role as a contact zone had in fact been desired for Russia itself. The translated article was, as a matter of fact, part of the only monograph written in exile by Kondakov and published posthumously, where he examined almost exclusively the arts of the nomadic tribes.[10] To understand such a shift in his scholarly research, it is important to remember several aspects. Firstly, like many scholars of his generation, Kondakov decided – not least because of his proximity to the Tsarist court – to leave Russia. In abandoning the country and losing its cultural context – constructed since Sergej S. Uvarov's time (1786–1855) around the three keywords of Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality – Kondakov effectively lost his audience as well.[11] Who would be interested, outside of Russia, in the Russian 'icon'? This question is more than rhetorical, since devotional images were the main topics of the two manuscripts that left Russia with Kondakov, which he was unable to publish during

[7] For a full bibliography of Kondakov's works, Foletti, *From Byzantium to Holy Russia*.
[8] 'Si la cour byzantine adopta les costumes orientaux, c'est parce que le monde barbare les lui avait transmis, et ces vêtements furent en même temps des uniformes militaires et des costumes de cour. La cour byzantine ne fut jamais une cour asiatique, mais elle unissait chez elle les formes et les modes de ces cours avec tout l'héritage culturel de l'Empire romain.', from Kondakov, 'Les costumes orientaux', 9.
[9] On this topic, see already the commentaries of Georgij V. Vernadskij, 'O naučnoj dejatel'nosti N. P. Kondakova' [On the scientific activity of N. P. Kondakov], in *Nikodim Pavlovič Kondakov. 1844-1924. K vosmidesjatiletju so dnja roždenija* [Nikodim Pavlovič Kondakov. 1844–1924. On the occasion of his eightieth birthday], Prague, 1924, 3–16; Foletti, *From Byzantium to Holy Russia*, 77ff. On the topic of Russian Orientalism, see also the two important volumes by David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010 and Vera Tolz, R*ussia's Own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
[10] Nikodim P. Kondakov, *Přispěvky k dějinám středověkého uměni a kultury / Očerky i zametki po istorii srednevekovago iskusstva i kultury* [Essays and thoughts on medieval culture and art], Prague, 1929.
[11] On the context, see the synthetic account of Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire: 1552–1917*, Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1998, 146.

his lifetime in exile. Thus, for Kondakov, emigration was synonymous with an unexpected intellectual isolation.

The second aspect we should reference is no less important: in leaving Russia, Kondakov lost his pension, his art collection and library, not to mention his apartment in St. Petersburg and villa in Yalta.[12] From being a very wealthy person, he became a 'poor' émigré. What he retained, however, was considerable social capital. Considering his privileged status, as well as his past engagement in individual and national causes, he was welcomed warmly at all stages in his flight to the West. In Istanbul, he avoided the 'disinfection' meant for others émigrés, thanks to his recognition in the French Legion of Honour, since refugee reception was run by the French army.[13] In Bulgaria, he received a truly royal welcome from Tsar Boris III (r. 1918–43), probably because of his past engagement in favour of the Bulgarian cause.[14] In Czechoslovakia, finally, he was personally welcomed by the president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937), whom he had helped through hard times in Russia[15]. While such support was truly remarkable, it was still not enough to permit the old professor to live comfortably. Kondakov was obliged to return to teaching, at the age of seventy-five.

And this is precisely the first clear reason leading the scholar back to the arts of the steppe people. Indeed, documents preserved in the Prague archives (*Památník národního písemnictví* [Museum of Czech Literature]) show that the contract establishing Kondakov's collaboration with Charles University and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs clearly mentions the topic of the lectures Kondakov was supposed to deliver.[16] They had to be devoted to the arts of nomadic tribes, with a special

[12] Foletti, *From Byzantium to Holy Russia*, 64ff.

[13] Recalled in the memoirs by Vera N. Muromceva-Bunina, 'N. P. Kondakov (K pjatiletiju so dnja smerti)' [N. P. Kondakov (Five years after his death)], in Irina L. Kyzlasova, ed., Nikodim P. Kondakov, *Vospominanija i dumy* [Recollections and thoughts], Moscow, 2002, 348–58.

[14] Irina L. Kyzlasova, *Istoria otečestvennoj nauki ob iskusstve Vizantii i drevnej Rusi 1920-1930 gody. Po materialam archivov* [The history of patriotic studies dedicated to the art of Byzantium and of ancient Russia, 1920-1930. Based on archival material], Moscow, 2000, esp. 47–51. For Kondakov's scholarly engagement, see Nikodim P. Kondakov, *Makedonia. Archeologičeskoe putešestvie* [Macedonia. Archaeological Voyage], Saint Petersburg, 1909. On Russian interests in Macedonia see Gerold I. Vzdornov, 'N. P. Kondakov v zerkale sovremennoj vizantinistiki' [Nikodim Pavlovitch Kondakov in the mirror of contemporary Byzantine studies], in *Restavracija i nauka. Očerki po istorii otkrytija i izučenija drevnerusskoj živopisi* [Restoration and Science. Considerations on the history of the discovery of early Russian painting studies], Moscow: Indrick, 2006, 296–306.

[15] Vítězslav Houška, *T. G. Masaryk: myslitel a státník* [T. G. Masaryk: thinker and statesman], Karviná/Paris: Masarykovo Demokratické Hnutí, 2007.

[16] Památník národního písemnictví, Prague, Fond Nikodim Pavlovič Kondakov, Korespondence vlastní [personal correspondence], přijatá [received], Zemská zpráva politická, č. 271.231. ai 1924 and Archiv Ústavu dějin umění Akademie věd čr, Prague, Fond Kondakovova Institutu, KI-38, sv. 9, p. 13. See Jitka Smrčková, *Přínos profesora N. P. Kondakova pro výzkum ikon* [The Contribution of Professor N. P. Kondakov in the Field of Research on the Icon], Prague, PhD dissertation, Charles University, 2009 [accessible online: https://dspace.cuni.cz/handle/20.500.11956/18905]; on the episode, see Foletti, *From Byzantium to Holy Russia*, 75ff.

focus on Slavic ones. We can thus conclude that Kondakov's decision to return to this issue was mainly the result of an external request. Such a request seems logical in the framework of a newly-founded state, which considered Slavic heritage an essential part of its identity. But going beyond this and looking at Kondakov's biography, this decision is even easier to understand: throughout his life, Kondakov tried to study topics relevant to the society in which he was evolving. In exile, he was perfectly aware that the very "Russian" topics of his past research would be of little interest, while investigating shared Slavic past would be a way of finding curious interlocutors. It is no coincidence that, apart from the presidential chancellery, Lubor Niederle (1865–1944) and Jiří Polívka (1858–1933), eminent specialists in Slavic culture, were responsible for Kondakov's invitation.[17]

But what exact idea did Kondakov present in his final lectures? Slavic tribes were, for him, crucial actors in the construction of a new space, which turned out to be both geographical and ideological: the one already called 'Eurasia' at that time.[18] Uniting the East and West, Kondakov maintained that nomads were the driving force for a new entity – one which, we might add, Russia and Czechoslovakia belonged to together. In exile, Kondakov thus expanded the ideas he had promoted in Russia: moving from an imperial to a transnational perspective. This is anything but surprising. Having lost his homeland, having become a nomad himself, Kondakov was searching for a new personal identity. And unsurprisingly, he projected this endeavour into his scholarship. Obviously, this projection was only partial, since Kondakov was aware of all the complexity of the past. Nevertheless, as in the case of prince Nikolaj S. Trubetskoj (1890–1938), one of the main promoters of the 'Eurasian movement', the experience of emigration provided the old art historian Kondakov with a new and unexpected perspective on his past and present, as well as on the historical past.[19]

[17] On Niederle, Lubomíra Havlíková, 'Lubor Niederle (1865–1944)', *Akademický bulletin*, 6, 2004, 24–5. On Polívka see Hana Hlôšková, Anna Zelenková, eds, *Slavista Jiří Polívka v kontexte literatúry a folklóru* [Slavist Jiří Polívka in the context of literature and folklore], 2 vols, Bratislava and Brno: Institute of Ethnology and cultural anthropology and Czech association of Slavists, 2008.

[18] On 'Eurasiatic' thought in a broad perspective, see Marlène Laruelle, *L'idéologie eurasiste russe ou comment penser l'empire*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999 and Michel Bruneau, *L'Eurasie. Continent, empire, idéologie ou projet*, Paris: CNRS éditions, 2018. See also the seminal studies of Otto Böss, *Die Lehre der Eurasier. Ein Beitrag zur russischen Ideengeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1961 and Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, 'The Emergence of Eurasianism', *California Slavic Studies*, 4, 1967, 39–72.

[19] The publication providing the first impetus for the movement was chiefly a short text published in Sofia in 1921, Nikolaj Sergeevič Trubeckoj, *Evropa i čelovečestvo* [Europe and Mankind], Sofia, 1921. On the text and its impact, see Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, 'Prince N. S. Trubetskoy's "Europe and Mankind"', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 12, 2, July 1964, 207–20.

Seminarium Kondakovianum, *Byzantinoslavica*, and Czechoslovakia in search of self-definition

Nikodim Kondakov's trajectory may have corresponded to a deep personal experience, which it certainly was. It is, however, also important to understand his story within the larger framework of the cultural history of his time. We would therefore like to mention, firstly, the fact that Kondakov did not arrive in Czechoslovakia merely because of his privileged relationships, but also as part of a much broader policy promoted by the country's first prime minister, Karel Kramář (1860–1937) and the already mentioned President Tomáš G. Masaryk. Called the *Ruská pomocná akce*, and thereafter the 'Russian Action', this policy had the explicit ambition of creating an epicentre of Russian émigré intelligentsia in Czechoslovakia.[20] The idea, promoted by local authorities, was to gather university teachers and students in the new country, permitting to the latter to complete their education. The original intention was not to assimilate these intellectuals, but quite the opposite, to create an elite diaspora ready to return to Russia after the situation was 'normalized'. As we know, this never happened. Nevertheless, in Czechoslovakia, one of the most impressive strategies in dealing with the phenomenon of mass emigration was promoted from 1921 on. High schools, universities, and other educational institutions were created to promote Russian education in the country.[21] Furthermore, personal fellowships were given to talented PhD students to train them. Lastly, and this is very important for our purposes here, Russian cultural activities were supported by financial and institutional means.

In is in this context that an institution was created to celebrate the memory of Nikodim Kondakov: the *Seminarium Kondakovianum* (later renamed the *Institutum Kondakovianum*).[22] The idea Kondakov's pupils and friends had in forming the group

[20] For the framework of the 'Russian Action', see Světlana Tejchmanová, 'Politická činnost ruské emigrace v Československu v letech 1920–1939' [The political activity of Russian emigration in Czechoslovakia in the years 1920–1939], *Sovetskoe slavianovedenie*, 6, 1991, 24–36; Elena Chinyaeva, 'Ruská emigrace v Československu: vývoj ruské pomocné akce' [Russian Emigration in Czechoslovakia: the development of the Russian Help Action], *Slovanský přehled*, 79, 1993, 14–24; Olga Bobrinskoy, 'La Première République tchécoslovaque et l'émigration russe (1920–1938): la spécificité d'une politique d'asile', *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest*, 26, 1995, 153–75; see also Elena Chinyaeva, *Russians outside Russia. The Émigré Community in Czechoslovakia 1918–1938*, Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2001, 41–68. Recently, see also the book of Catherine Andreyev, Ivan Savický, *Russia Abroad. Prague and the Russian Diaspora, 1918–1938*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004, 33–79.

[21] With focus on pedagogical endeavours, see Zdeněk Sládek, 'Prag: Das "russische Oxford"', in Karl Schlögel, ed., *Der grosse Exodus. Die russische Emigration und ihre Zentren 1917–1941*, Munich: Beck, 1994, 218–33 and Irina Mchitarjan, *Das "russische Schulwesen" im europäischen Exil. Zum bildungspolitischen Umgang mit den pädagogischen Initiativen der russischen Emigranten in Deutschland, der Tschechoslowakei und Polen (1918–1939)*, Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2006.

[22] About the Kondakov Institute, see Lawrence Hamilton Rhinelander, 'Exiled Russian Scholars in Prague: The Kondakov Seminar and Institute', *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 16/3, 1974, 331–52; Jelena P. Aksenova, 'Institut im. N.P. Kondakova: popytki reanimacii (po

was first of all to pursue fertile paths of research opened by Kondakov himself. Gradually, however, one of the most prolific centres for Byzantine and Western Asia studies on a global scale was formed.

From our perspective, the most challenging aspect of this institution is undoubtedly the way Kondakovian memory was implemented within both scholarly and dissemination activities. The research aspect was carried out especially within the framework of a scientific journal, *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, later the *Annales de l'Institut Kondakov*, and two book series, *Skythika* and *Zographika*.[23] The main lines of research promoted by the journals obviously followed their titles, namely, one dedicated to the painting of devotional images, and the other to the various manifestations of nomadic arts and culture. These two streams of intellectual interest were also at the heart of the journal *Seminarium Kondakovianum*.[24] What is also important to remember is the fact that, within the scope of the institute, the discussions were, from the very beginning, clearly transdisciplinary, with art historians, historians, archaeologists, philologists, and folklorists interacting regularly. To a certain extent, however, we can state that the big picture did not change from the paths explored by the late Kondakov.

Two prominent figures within *Seminarium* focusing on both nomadic art, especially fibulae, and "Byzantine" painting were certainly the scholars Nikolaj Beljaev (1899–1930) and Dimitrij Rasovskij (1902–41).[25] Other key figures included

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materialam archiva A.V. Florovskogo)' [The Institute named after N. P. Kondakov: attempts at resuscitation (based on materials from the archive of A. V. Florovskij], *Slavjanovedenie*, 4, 1993, 63–74; Zuzana Skálová, 'Das Prager *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, spaïter das Archaïologische Kondakov-Institut und sein Archiv (1925–1952)', *Slavica Gandensia*, 18, 1991, 21–49; Martin Beißwenger, *Das Seminarium Kondakovianum in Prag (1925–1952),* M.A. Thesis, Humboldt-Universität, Berlin, 2005 [2001]; Marina Dmitrieva, 'Towards a Transnational History of Russian Culture: The N. P. Kondakov Institute in Prague', in Christoph Flamm *et al*., ed., *Transcending the Borders of Countries, Languages, and Disciplines in Russian Émigré Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018, 173–98; Ivan Foletti, Adrien Palladino, *Byzantium or Democracy? Kondakov's Legacy in Emigration: the* Institutum Kondakovianum *and André Grabar, 1925–1952*, Brno/Rome: Viella, 2020, with further bibliography.

[23] Three volumes of *Zographika* (by Alexander J. Anisimov, Nikolaj Beljaev, and André Grabar) and four volumes of *Skythika* (by Mikhail Rostovzeff, Nándor Fettich, George N. Roerich, and Gyula Rhé) have appeared.

[24] For the journal's interests, see, e.g., Francesco Lovino, 'Southern Caucasus in perspective: the scholarly debate through the pages of "Seminarium Kondakovianum" and "Skythika" (1927–1938)', in Ivan Foletti, Erik Thunø, eds, *The Medieval South Caucasus: Artistic Cultures of Albania, Armenia and Georgia*, (= Convivium Supplementum 2016), Brno/Turnhout 2016, 36–51; Francesco Lovino, 'Constructing the Past through the Present: The Eurasian View of Byzantium in the Pages of *Seminarium Kondakovianum*', in Matthew Kinloch, Alex MacFarlane, eds, *Trends and Turning Points. Constructing the Late Antique and Byzantine World*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019, 14–28.

[25] About Beljaev, who died young in Prague, see André Grabar, 'Nikolaj Michajlovič Bĕljaev', *Byzantion*, 6/1, 1931, 517–8; on Rasovskij, Roman Jakobson, Henri Grégoire, 'D. A. Rasovskij', *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves*, 7, 1939–1944, 535–537; on the scholarly publications of the two scholars in *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, see, e.g., Nikolaj M. Beljaev, 'Očerki po vizantiiskoj archeologii, I. Fibula v Vizantii; II. Chersonesskaja

older scholars such as the great historian Georgij Vernadskij (1887–1973), one of the theoreticians – alongside Trubetskoj himself and the geographer Petr N. Savickij (1895–1968) – of the Eurasian movement.[26] In the same vein, another fundamental member of the institute was the historian and archaeologist Mikhail Rostovtzeff, who had studied with Kondakov in St. Petersburg.[27] On the one hand, Rostovtzeff followed scholarly research clearly uniting Europe and Asia through archaeological and historical findings: he had, in this context, written the very first volume of the series *Skythika*, published in 1929 and entitled *Le centre de l'Asie, la Russie, la Chine et le style animal*.[28] On the other hand, Rostovtzeff, like Vernadskij, Trubetskoj, and Savickij, was a promoter of the Eurasian movement, with a focus on archaeological and historical evidence connecting the Asiatic steppes with ancient Russian and European cultures.[29] It is important to remember that, in its conception, the Eurasia constructed by these scholars consisted of an intellectual movement uniting all different fields of research and culture – from linguistics to geography and art history – towards an overarching idea, i.e., understanding the essentially transcultural identity of Russia, between Asia and the West.[30]

The other aspect that is important to underline is that *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, in large parts of its scholarly identity, belonged to a transnational network of Russian émigrés spread around the world who sometimes had, however, limited contact with the Czechoslovak reality. This situation, which would become a problem especially in the thirties, when the support of the Russian Action was reduced, was embedded in the initiative as such: the goal of the Russian Action was not integration or assimilation, since it was not planned for the long term. Thus,

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moščechranitel'nica' [Essays on Byzantine archaeology, I. Fibulae in Byzantium; II. The Cherson reliquary], *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, 3, 1929, 49–114; Dimitrij A. Rasovskij, 'Pečenegi, Torki i Berendei na Rusi i v Ugrii' [Pechenegs, Turks and Berendei in Russia and Hungary], *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, VI, 1933, 1–66.

[26] André Ratchinski, 'G. V. Vernadski (1887–1973) et le mouvement eurasien', in Danièle Beaune-Gray, ed., *Les historiens de l'émigration russe*, Paris: Institut d'études slaves, 2003, 43–48. On Savickij, see especially G. Nicolas *et al*., 'La Russie-Eurasie d'après Savitsky', *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, vol. 42, no. 115, 1998, 67–91.

[27] About Rostovtzeff's life, and his later emigration, see Marinus Antony Wes, *Michael Rostovtzeff, Historian in Exile. Russian Roots in an American Context*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990.

[28] Michail I. Rostovtzeff, *Le centre de l'Asie, la Russie, la Chine et le style animal*, (bilingual French-Russian), Prague: Seminarium Kondakovianum, 1929.

[29] For a broad perspective on Rostovtzeff's impact, see the works of Caspar Meyer, 'Rostovtzeff and the classical origins of Eurasianism', *Anabases. Traditions et réceptions de l'Antiquité*, 9, 2009, 157–97; *idem*, *Greco-Scythian Art and the Birth of Eurasia. From Classical Antiquity to Russian Modernity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. See also Terence Emmons, 'The problem of Russia and the west in Russian historiography (with special reference to M. I. Rostovtsev and P. N. Miliukov', in Catherine Evtuhov, Stephen Kotkin, eds, *The cultural gradient: the transmission of ideas in Europe, 1789–1991*, Oxford i.a.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003, 95–108.

[30] See the bibliography above in notes 18, 19, 25, and 28. On the strong roots of Eurasian thought in linguistic theory, see also Jindřich Toman, *The Magic of a Common Language. Jakobson, Mathesius, Trubetzkoy, and the Prague Linguistic Circle*, Cambridge, MA, London: MIT Press, 1995.

in the 1930s, the situation of the Institute was often precarious due to its low level of engagement with local communities.

It is possibly for this reason that, especially starting at the end of the 1920s, the group of the institute increasingly promoted activities for a 'larger audience'. These included the organization of one of the first exhibits of Russian icons in Europe, made possible thanks to private and institute collections, in 1932, as well as workshops of icon-painting, enamel-production, and more.[31] In sum, the Institute's activities in the name of Nikodim Kondakov aimed to propose a new narrative concerning pre-modern Russian culture. Following in the footsteps of the master, this framework tried to interpret Russia's past and cultural heritage in a much broader framework. This heritage united Europe and Asia and found a perfect historical mirror in nomadic art. Also very important is the question of arts and crafts. Both aspects were, however, relevant not only for nostalgic Russian émigrés, but also for the newly-born Czechoslovakia, a country facing a series of nationalistic tensions: presented as a Slavic country, Czechoslovakia was an heir of the Austro-Hungarian empire, with significant minorities of Germans, Ruthenians, Hungarians, Poles, and Jews, not to mention the fact that a 'Czechoslovakian' nation was invented in order to create a predominantly Slavic ethnicity.

The importance of the 'Byzantine' past and the Eurasian issue for the construction of Czechoslovakia is evident not only from the support that the Kondakov Institute received over the years, but also from the creation of a new journal around that time. Belonging to the Slavic Institute of the Academy of Sciences, called *Byzantinoslavica*, and directly promoted by President Masaryk, the journal had a clear program:

> In 1928, the president of the Czechoslovak Republic, T. G. Masaryk, who had thoroughly investigated, in his own scholarly works, the Byzantine elements in the mentality of the Slavic world, gave impetus to the creation, in Prague, of a special organization for Byzantino-Slavic studies. The latter was set up not only to gather and support Czech scholarship in this field, but also to facilitate cooperation between Slavs and non-Slavs.[32]

Leafing through the pages of this journal, one might consider, at first glance, a partial overlap with the publishing line of *Seminarium Kondakovianum*. This time, however, the focus on the Pan-Slavic panorama is more explicit. Besides the articles devoted to Serbian, Bulgarian, and Slovak art, even the languages used in the journal are more varied. More importantly, the editorial line of *Byzantinoslavica* clearly shows the new state's ambitions to be both Slavic and cosmopolitan. In this

[31] See Foletti, Palladino, *Byzantium or Democracy*, 59ff., 71–5, with further bibliography.
[32] 'R. 1928 president Republiky československé T. G. Masaryk, jenž se ve svých vědeckých pracích hluboce zabýval studiem byzantských prvků v myšlenkovém světě slovanském, dal podnět k tomu, aby byl v Praze vytvořen orgán pro studia byzantsko-slovanská, který by nejen sdružoval a podporoval českou vědeckou práci v tomto směru, nýbrž získával také součinnost odborníků slovanských i neslovanských.', Jaroslav Bidlo *et al*., 'Úvodní slovo' [Foreword], *Byzantinoslavica*, 1, 1929, I–II. The founding members of the journal include both Czechs and Russian émigrés from the Kondakov Institute: Jaroslav Bidlo, František Dvorník, Karel Kadlec, Aleksandr Kalitinskij, Mathias Murko, Nikolaj Okuněv, Miloš Weingart.

regard, the fact that President Masaryk was also at the origins of a third periodical is not surprising: *Germanoslavica*, dedicated to interactions between Slavic and Germanic cultures in Central Europe and beyond.

The Russian imprint on both *Seminarium* and *Byzantinoslavica* is dominant. The broader picture is, however, much more Czechoslovak than one might imagine: what is constructed here is a scholarly perspective presenting the new state as a true bridge between East and West. Even more than that, Czechoslovakia concedes its identity a multi-cultural and -ethnical construction. The Slavic component was undoubtedly seen as the dominant one – an aspect which later led to several problems – but the idea that President Masaryk, a scholar himself, wanted to promote was without a doubt a state constructed through diversity. Paradoxically, the transcultural Eurasian perspective thus theoretically rounded out these ambitions.

From Prague to Vienna, and to Paris

One of the most challenging questions when dealing with Russian emigration after 1917 is certainly regarding its fluidity. There are well known examples of émigrés living, for instance, between Paris and Prague, or, more frequently, moving from Prague to Berlin and then to Paris or the US. It has been recently shown how Russian émigré philosophers brought German philosophy to France.[33] Thus, Russian emigration is a phenomenon that cannot be seen as enclosed within the borders of one nation like Czechoslovakia. We can mention, for example, Georg Ostrogorskij (1902–76), an active member of *Seminarium Kondakovianum* while teaching in Belgrade, Vernadskij, acting for some time as a director of the Kondakov Institute from Yale, not to mention the shared projects bringing together the United States, France, and Czechoslovakia for the excavations at Dura-Europos.[34]

In yet another configuration, we can also cite the figure of André Grabar (1896–1990). Trained by Kondakov in Russia, he followed his master to Sofia, from where, however, he took a different path. He did decide to pursue travels to the West, reaching first Strasbourg and then Paris.[35] Different to the Czechoslovak situation, where, as mentioned, the Russian diaspora was supposed to remain

[33] Ekaterina Shashlova, 'Russian Philosophers in France in the Interwar Period. A Review of the Studies of Emigrant Philosophers', in Ivan Foletti, Karolina Foletti, Adrien Palladino, eds, *Convivium Supplementum* 2020 = *Transformed by Emigration. Welcoming Russian Intellectuals, Scientists, and Artists 1917–1945*, 32–49.

[34] Besides Rostovtzeff, other members of *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, chiefly Nikolaj Toll', were involved in the excavations at Europos, see Vlastimil Drbal, 'Der Archäologe N. P. Toll und seine Teilnahme an den Ausgrabungen in Dura-Europos (Syrien)', *Byzantinoslavica*, 1–2, 2008, 53–70.

[35] On Grabar's path in emigration, see Adrien Palladino, 'Transforming Medieval Art from Saint Petersburg to Paris: André Nikolajevič Grabar's Fate and Scholarship between 1917 and 1945', in Foletti, Foletti, Palladino, eds, *Convivium Supplementum* 2020, 122–43. For a synthetic biography and bibliography, Ivan Foletti, 'André/Andrej Nikolajevič Grabar', in Stefan Heid, Martin Dennert, eds, *Personenlexikon zur Christlichen Archäologie. Forscher und Persönlichkeiten vom 16. bis zum 21. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols, Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2012 vol. 1, 601–2.

'isolated', Grabar was rapidly forced to acculturate himself to France. It was even mandatory to be a French citizen to teach at French universities. Grabar became a French citizen already in 1928 and would later serve, during the 1939–45 war, as a soldier in the French army.[36] His publications would almost immediately abandon the Russian language, to be written almost exclusively in French. Grabar would become a true emperor in medieval studies, especially after the 1939–45 war.[37] When looking at his publications from the 1920s and early 1930s, however, we can understand the extent to which the Russian cosmopolitan experience transformed his understanding of the medieval past. In his writings, art is free from any modern borders. Visual cues, patterns, objects, and artists freely travel from East to West.[38] Most interestingly, some of them, such as Sainte Face of Laon – a Byzantine-Slavonic devotional image worshipped in the French kingdom since the thirteenth century – are 'acculturated' to the places where they arrived.[39] Surely, in the first phase of Grabar's French career, the undisputed epicentre remained Constantinople. But the more time passed, the more the scholar was attentive to other centres and regional phenomena. One may be tempted to say that the more his own experience of Russia as the centre of Byzantine studies disappeared, the more his idea of medieval hierarchies was gradually transformed.

If compared to the members of *Seminarium*, Grabar was less engaged in explicit 'Eurasianism'. However, when looking at his extremely large scope of investigation, one is struck by how naturally his scholarly work embraced both 'East' and 'West'. From his French perspective, obviously, the 'West' took up more and more space, especially from the Second World War on. Still, we might consider Grabar a figure who extended the medieval Euro-Asiatic space in art historical studies. It is maybe not entirely coincidence that his son, Oleg Grabar, would become one of the founding figures of modern studies in Islamic art history, thus indirectly expanding the Eurasian and Mediterranean frameworks.[40]

We are indeed dealing with a truly cosmopolitan phenomenon, where ideas travelled even faster than human beings. Thus, it is not surprising that ideas of Eurasia and related concepts, which developed in a very specific context in Prague, were then naturally spread to Yale, Paris, and Belgrade. To make this picture even

[36] About this period, see especially Grabar's unpublished 'Esquisse biographique' at the Archives du Collège de France, Paris, Fonds André Grabar, boîte complémentaire, 27–8.
[37] His most famous monographs include books esteemed still today as groundwork for imperial iconography, for the cult of saints, and for Byzantine iconoclasm, see André Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin: recherches sur l'art officiel de l'Empire d'Orient*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres,1936; *idem*, *Martyrium: recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique*, 2 vols, Paris: Collège de France, 1946; *idem*, *L'iconoclasme byzantin. Dossier archéologique*, Paris: Collège de France, 1957.
[38] These ideas appear especially, but not exclusively, in Grabar's two publications from his Bulgarian period, André Grabar, *La peinture religieuse en Bulgarie*, foreword of Gabriel Millet, 2 vols, Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1928, IV; *idem*, *Recherches sur les influences orientales dans l'art balkanique*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1928.
[39] André Grabar, *La Sainte Face de Laon: le Mandylion dans l'art orthodoxe*, Prague: Seminarium Kondakovianum, 1931.
[40] Robert Hillenbrand, 'Oleg Grabar: the scholarly legacy', *Journal of art historiography*, 6, June 2012, with further bibliography.

broader, it is worth mentioning the figure of Wolfgang Born (1883–1949), a painter and scholar from Vienna. A pupil of Josef Strzygowski, Born entered the orbit of the Kondakov Institute because he shared a methodological and intellectual background with the Russian émigrés in Prague.[41] He was German-Jewish, and belonged to the deeply cosmopolitan Viennese culture, still deeply enrooted around 1900.[42] Reading his letters, an evident discomfort can be felt. It would be possible to interpret this in continuity with his teacher, who, as is well known, found himself in deep opposition with the remaining members of the Viennese school of art history because of divergent methods, interests, and eventually political views.[43] This does not seem to be the case for Born. Instead, the Austrian painter fully experienced the radical change of mood in Vienna, a city that went from being international and cosmopolitan to increasingly nationalistic. Born was eventually forced to emigrate to the United States and lived the rest of his life there. His story serves to remind that in the 1930s, democratic countries like Czechoslovakia and France represented increasingly menaced islands of cosmopolitan memory, surrounded by increasingly aggressive national-socialist and fascist neighbours.[44] As an ambiguous figure such as Strzygowski shows, art history had also played its role in the shaping of such identities.

Within this atmosphere, it seems that the broad Eurasian art history promoted by Russian émigrés no longer had any place in Europe. Gradually, institutions and individuals were brought to silence, seeing their only option for survival in emigration. Kondakov's Institute would unsuccessfully attempt to move to Belgrade but was caught by the 1939–45 war.[45] After the tragic death of Dmitrij Rasovskij and his wife Rasovskaja-Okuneva, the Institute returned to Prague, to

[41] Adrien Palladino, 'The Wolfgang Born – Kondakov Institute Correspondence. Art History, Freedom, and the Rising Fear in the 1930s', *Convivium*, VI/2, 2019, 128–35.
[42] It is almost trivial to mention Carl E. Schorske's, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, New York: Knopf, 1979; in an art historical context, see the studies of Margaret Olin, 'Art History and Ideology: Alois Riegl and Josef Strzygowski', in Penny Schine Gold, Benjamin C. Sax, eds, *Cultural Visions: Essays in the History of Culture*, Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodolpi, 2000, 151–70; see also recently, with focus on Late Antique art, Jaś Elsner, 'The Viennese invention of late antiquity: between politics and religion in the forms of late Roman art', in Jaś Elsner, *Empires of Faith in Late Antiquity: histories of art and religion from India to Ireland*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, 110–27.
[43] In a broad perspective, see Suzanne Marchand, "Appreciating the art of others: Josef Strzygowski and the Austrian origins of non-Western art history", in Piotr O. Scholz, Magdalena Anna Długosz, eds, *Von Biala nach Wien. Josef Strzygowski und die Kunstwissenschaften*, (Conference proceedings, Lublin, Vienna), Vienna: European University Press, 2015, 257–85.
[44] For a historical perspective on Czechoslovakia, see Igor Lukes, *Czechoslovakia Between Stalin and Hitler: The Diplomacy of Edvard Beneš in the 1930s*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
[45] On the period, see Světlana Tejchmanová, 'Politická činnost ruské emigrace v Československu v letech 1920–1939' [The Political Activity of Russian Emigration in Czechoslovakia in the Years 1920–1939], *Sovetskoe slavianovedenie*, 6, 1991, 24–36; see Foletti, Palladino, *Byzantium or Democracy*, 141–58.

survive there for several more silent years – refusing to publish.[46] The story of the Institute came to an end once Communists took control of Czechoslovakia.[47] For most individuals, emigration to the US became the only way to pursue their research in freedom. As for Grabar, after the terrible years of Nazi Occupation, he would go on to be one of the main architects of the revival of French medieval art history, but with a gaze mostly focused on the West and the Mediterranean.

Ivan Foletti is full professor of art history at Masaryk University, Brno, where he specializes in the study of the historiography of Byzantine studies and in the art of Milan, Rome, and the Caucasus in the Late Antique and Early Medieval period. He is the head of the Centre for Early Medieval Studies in Brno, editor-in-chief of Convivium, and director of the Hans Belting Library.

ivan.foletti@gmail.com

Adrien Palladino is a post-doctoral researcher at the Centre for Early Medieval Studies, Department of Art History, Masaryk University, Brno. His interests include the history of art history and art theory, as well as the study of Late Antique and Early Medieval material cultures – mainly centred around objects.

palladino.adrien@gmail.com

[46] Ivan Foletti, 'Russian Inputs in Czechoslovakia: When Art History Meets History. The Institutum Kondakovianum During the Nazi Occupation', in Ivan Foletti, Adrien Palladino, eds, *Inventing Medieval Czechoslovakia 1918–1968. Between Slavs, Germans, and Totalitarian Regimes*, Brno, Rome: Viella, 2019, 63–92.
[47] Foletti, Palladino, *From Byzantium to Democracy*, 158ff.