

to the study of Plutarch. Its sharp, clear and plain narrative should no doubt help towards understanding Plutarch's life and work. Russell's *Plutarch*, a remarkable book, is clearly a must for both new and old readers of Plutarch.

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Dionysios Zakythinos, *Byzance: État-Société-Économie*, London, Variorum Reprints, 1973, pp. 424.

There is a story to the effect that someone once asked Zakythinos to tell him who among the contemporary historians of the Byzantine empire was, in his opinion, the greatest. «There are two», he is said to have replied, «The other is Ostrogorsky». The story is no doubt apocryphal, but its implication has a very strong basis in fact. That basis was laid down by the publication of the first volume of his *Despotat grec de Morée* and was solidified by the appearance of the second volume some years later. A series of other studies, most of them relatively short, but remarkable for their synthetic and thought-provoking qualities, added additional strength to it. They show Zakythinos to be not only a scholar, but also a thinker, two qualities which distinguish a true historian from a simple compiler of data.

Fourteen of these studies have now been brought together in the present collection. They extend in time from 1947 to 1971; two of them are in German, two in Greek and the rest in French. They range from 9 to 149 pages and cover a variety of subjects, including the position of Byzantium in the historiographical thought of Europe since the seventeenth century, the nature of Byzantine society, whether it was oriental or western, and a brief history of Greece during the Middle Ages.

However, two essays on Cyril and Methodius, one in which the attempt is made to explain the darkness and the apparent lack of any development in the seventh and eighth centuries, and several studies devoted to an analysis of the social, cultural and economic conditions of the empire, including some features of its administrative system, constitute the core of the book. It is here that Zakythinos shows his powers as a thinker. The essay on the darkness of the seventh and eighth centuries is particularly impressive. The apparent lack of any new constructions and the rarity of coins belonging to these two centuries which the coin finds in certain regions of Greece reveal, have been generally attributed to the occupation of these regions by the Slavs, and the consequent loss of jurisdiction over them by Byzantium. But the lack of new construction and the rarity of coins belonging to this period obtains also for Asia Minor where no Slavs ever entered by force, and as a consequence the explanation must lie in some cause applicable to both Greece proper and Asia Minor. Zakythinos finds this cause in the general poverty caused by the irruption of the Arabs, their repeated invasions of Asia Minor and their domination of the sea. He is no doubt right. Some years ago in a study which I devoted to the coin finds in Athens and Corinth, I suggested the same explanation. This is not to say, of course, that the Slavic penetration of Greece proper was without violence and serious dislocations. That the Slavs came into Greece as early as the end of the sixth century and that their coming caused serious dislocations, Zakythinos himself now seems to accept. This may be inferred from the reference which he gives in his brief history of Greece included in the collection to the effect that Monemvasia was founded in 582-83.

The Slavs in Greece were absorbed partly at least because when they came they had no national identity. Developments among the Slavs in the rest of the Balkan peninsula were

quite different. There, in time, the literary activities of Cyril and Methodius gave to these Slavs a cultural identity of their own, and this enabled them to resist the process of hellenization. The work of Cyril and Methodius no doubt extended the influence of Byzantine civilization among the Slavs of the Balkan peninsula, but, at the same time, by enabling them to develop a cultural and national identity of their own, made their absorption by Byzantium impossible. This is the thesis developed by Zakythinos in the two essays in the collection which are devoted to the two brothers from Thessalonica. The thesis is no doubt sound, but one must add to it this; that the cultural identity of the Slavs and the consequent resistance by them to the process of hellenization which may be attributed to it was enhanced and given solidity by the political successes of the Bulgars.

The essays on society and on some features of the administrative system of the empire deal with three themes: the defense of the Ionian sea, treated in the essay on the origins of the *theme* of Cephallonia; the origins of the regulatory economic system which obtained in Byzantium and which according to Zakythinos, must be sought in the hellenistic Near East; and the state of Byzantine society after 1204. Among the several essays devoted to the latter, the longest and no doubt the most important is the one devoted to an analysis of the monetary, economic and social conditions of the empire during the period of the Palaeologi. The essay had been published in parts in *L'Hellénisme Contemporain* and issued in book form in 1948. The essay begins with an examination of the status of the Byzantine coin. The striking feature of that coin was that, both in content and in its relations to other coins, it steadily declined, until finally, in the course of the reign of Manuel II, it ceased to exist. The rest of the essay is devoted to an analysis of the political, social and economic conditions of the Byzantine society of the period. Except for the growth of the power and the properties of the magnates, the general picture which emerges from the analysis is one of misery both for the state and the people. The picture in its essentials had been drawn before, but the power of synthesis that Zakythinos has brought to bear upon it makes it more vivid. It will no doubt be observed that since the original appearance of this essay a number of important studies covering various aspects of the same subject have come out and as a consequence it may be said that the essay is no longer up to date. It would have been desirable indeed if the new edition of the essay had been prefaced by some introductory remarks making the necessary revisions. Nevertheless, the general picture as drawn by Zakythinos retains its validity.

Two other items—an outline of the development of Greek historiography from the Fall of Byzantium to Constantine Paparrigopoulou, and a series of definitions of certain technical terms developed in connection with the study of the history of Byzantium—complete the collection. The collection with minor exceptions is not what one may call a work of erudition. It is rather one of interpretation. The scholar will find in it very little factual information which he may not already know. He will find, however, ideas and suggestions which should lead him to rethink, perhaps even alter, his own views of how certain phenomena in the history of Byzantium may be explained.

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David Jacoby, *La féodalité en Grèce médiévale. Les «Assises de Romanie». Sources, application et diffusion*, Paris, Mouton et Co., La Haye, 1971, pp. 352.

A partir du XIII^e siècle, le monde occidental et le monde byzantin, avec leurs propres structures et institutions, se sont confrontés sur le territoire de la Grèce du moyen âge sous