

INTRODUCTION

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For the second time around our Congress was hosted in Greece. After the 7th Congress in Thessaloníki in 1999, in October 2018 Athens offered its stage for the 12th edition. On that occasion (in Thessaloníki), our Association, which had just been created, was in fact celebrating its opening toward the East, later approved in 1995 with the Congress of Aix-en-Provence. Before then, the informal group that was leading these meetings had moved only in one half of the Mediterranean, taking into account France (where everything started), Spain (and Portugal, rightly along with the Iberian Peninsula), Italy and North Africa. A large part of areas that made the history of medieval ceramics (including the technological side of it), had remained outside this forum, perhaps for the concern, even if justified, of not being able to coordinate research and studies in such a large space which is the whole Mediterranean.

However, it was an exclusion that could not last forever. We received requests from colleagues who worked precisely in that other half (and whose research was growing, in terms of quantity and quality), but we were particularly aware of how little we could understand the processes and phenomena we were studying, if we had not expanded the horizon. Thessaloníki was therefore not the first test of this new perspective, but certainly a decisive one: we went directly to the East, on this occasion in the heart of the Byzantine world.

I remember how exciting it was: the place that we were in (the extraordinary city of Thessaloníki, rich in archaeological and architectural testimonies), the beauty of the materials we could finally see first hand, the quality and the amount of connections with the Byzantine world, the excellent organization of the Congress.

Almost twenty years later, and after other significant dates (Ciudad Real, Venice, Silves-Mertola, Antalya), Greece, and more specifically Athens, is rightly taking over the scene. Once again, a natural landing place, considering the age-old tradition that Greek civilization and Athens can boast of in ceramic art.

This superb volume includes all the features from that Congress, which have been impeccably curated by Platon Petridis, Anastasia Yangaki, Nikos Liaros, Elli-Evangelia Bia, 47 contributions and 59 posters, divided into five sections. Naturally, each section is represented by a different number of articles and posters. The authors did their utmost to offer a glimpse of what the main lines of research our scientific community faced. Keeping in mind the total number of proposals (between communications and posters), three sections are essentially equivalent by number of articles, namely: 1 (“Workshops and ceramic technology”), with 20 contributions and 6 posters, 3 (“Pottery as a factor of commercial exchanges and shipwrecks”), with 11 contributions and 9 posters and, finally, 5 (“New discoveries”), with 15 contributions and 19 posters. While a large number of proposals in the ‘New Discoveries’ section was sort of expected, we were surprised by the moderate appeal that the studies in ceramics still have, being analysed as a social indicator (on this occasion represented by section 4: “Pottery as a factor of social cohesion or differentiation”), with 8 contributions and 4 posters.

Even the most clearly archaeometric studies (section 2 “Ceramology and Archaeometry”), with 8 contributions and 4 posters, confirm that this type of approach is not yet so widespread. This is a situation that we could also expect, but it does not do justice to the importance of this research in our sector. In fact, many of these works are partly hidden in texts of other nature: many of the contributions that have been classified in the other sections contain, more or less explicitly, results acquired through this type of analysis. In this regard, I could also add (and to reiterate the importance of the archaeometric approach), how a qualitative leap in our studies can only take place when research projects on ceramics will not **always** be accompanied by analyses of this kind (minero-petrographic, chemical, even isotopic ones). These analyses



allow us to identify what we could define as the DNA of a ceramic product: through it we could recognize more precisely its origin (which is key to study the spread, trade and economies), but also build technological relationships and partnerships, necessary to understand through which channels the different technical skills spread. Our studies, from this point of view, need to limit the scope of approaches that derive only from formal analogies (decorations or morphologies) and try, instead, associations on the basis of similarities linked to craft practices (which can still be obtained from a finished product).

Overall, however, the volume seems balanced and the contributions it presents are all of considerable quality, demonstrating the good work done at the time by the International Committee in the selection of the numerous proposals that, at each Congress, were punctually made. The volume that contains the Athens' contributions also demonstrates how 'healthy' our studies still are, despite their various (mis) fortunes on the agenda of archaeological research. Giving continuity to these meetings is not out of line (such as promoting or encouraging even intermediate congresses), because they respond to an ever topical request. Needless to say, the agenda needs to be updated, some of the approaches not used so far need to be reconsidered, giving due importance to the archaeometric studies that have since the beginning represented a distinctive and original trait of these meetings (how could we fail to mention Maurice Picon and Tiziano Mannoni, precursors in this field!). However, the 'bet' made more than forty years ago (1978) with the first meeting of Valbonne, goes on and on also in memory of the creators of that meeting (such as Gabrielle Démians D'Archimbaud) and of those who, over time, gave their support with passion and intelligence.

Venice, July 2021

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Platon PETRIDIS

Head of the Organizing and Editorial Committee

When, twenty-two years ago, the Greek pioneers of our discipline, Charalambos and Demetra Bakirtzis, were initiating me in Thessaloniki to the world of the mythical to my young eyes, Association of Medieval Ceramics specialists and later proposed me as a member of the International Committee, I did not imagine that one day I would also be invited to organize one of the then AIECM2 and now AIECM3 Congresses. But a lot has happened since then, and if at that time, in 1999, the series of the Congresses had just reached adulthood, today it has reached maturity.

The research of medieval pottery was meanwhile established as an ambitious branch of the archaeological science, and then came the realization of the extremely close links that bring together medieval productions with the modern ones. Thus, as a pioneer again, the Association officially enlarged its field by embracing from 2012 onwards the modern period Mediterranean ceramics. We should also not forget that if the first collections of Byzantine pottery and the first catalogs date from the last decades of the 19th and the early 20th centuries, the attribution of a museological value and their presence in a permanent or temporary manner in the European museums took a long time to be realized. The interest aroused for the byzantine and modern pottery is due, also, to the organization of such specialized congresses and temporary exhibitions and it has resulted in a constant enhancement which goes hand in hand with the advancement of research and the support provided by the hard sciences.

Organizing a one-week Congress in the post-crisis Greece was a great challenge from all points of view. The warm messages I received after its completion have honored me and the rest of the Organizing Committee and assured us that this challenge was accomplished with success. The Congress was realized as a co-organization between two major scientific institutions in Greece, the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA) and the National Hellenic Research Foundation (NHRF). In collaboration with Anastasia G. Yangaki, my colleague from NHRF, we undertook its realization and the preparation of its Acta.

Nikos Liaros and the Center for the Study of Modern Pottery-G. Psaropoulos Foundation (CSMP) were also actively involved to the success of the project.

The 12th Congress of the AIECM3 started on Sunday, October 21 2018, with a Welcome reception at the CSMP. In the warm atmosphere of a 19th c. old Athenian house the participants registered themselves and followed a demonstration curated by Nikos Liaros, a fabrication of a jar by the Cretan Master Potter N. Mavrantonakis (Fig. 1). The French School at Athens generously offered a reception with various Greek dishes.



Fig. 1



The official opening ceremony was held at the Great Hall of the Neoclassical central building of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens on Monday, October 22 (Figs 2-4). The inaugural speeches were delivered by the President of our Association, Sauro Gelichi and the authorities of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, the National Hellenic Research Foundation and the University of Athens; they were followed by the Keynote lecture by Demetra Papanikola-Bakirtzis intitled «Byzantine Glazed Ceramics - Twenty Years After (1999-2019)». In the central building of the NKUA that same day and in the NHRF's



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

hospitable amphitheatre and exhibition area on those which followed (Figs 5-8), oral presentations and posters were presented around five themes: *Workshops and ceramic technology*, *Ceramology and archaeometry*, *Pottery as a factor of commercial exchanges and shipwrecks*, *Pottery as a factor of social cohesion and differentiation*, *New discoveries*. In the course of the Congress, at the NHRF's exhibition hall, a short photographic exhibition was presented by A.G. Yangaki on «The bacini in churches of Crete» and a presentation of «The WebAtlas of Ceramic Kilns in Ancient Greece» was undertaken by E. Hasaki and C. Raptis.



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

Besides these on-site events, on Wednesday October 24, the one-day excursion offered the participants the occasion to visit the newly built Archaeological Museum of Thebes and its Medieval Tower and the new Archaeological Museum of Chalkis «Arethousa». The rest of the day was consecrated to oral presentations and to a hands-on pottery display of the material coming from the Chalkis' byzantine pottery workshops, a brand-new discovery in the field of middle byzantine pottery productions (Fig. 9). That long day ended up at the Athens University History Museum, where the inauguration of the exhibition «7 Clay stories from Arta, 16th-18th c.» curated by N. Liaros and V. Papadopoulou took place (Fig. 10). It was our wish to have also a pottery exhibition to accompany this Congress in order for our foreign colleagues to familiarize themselves with aspects of our country's post-medieval ceramics and the museological



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

approach of today's Greece; this wish was realized by a joint effort of three institutions, the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports and the Center for the Study of Modern Pottery.

The week from October 21 to October 27, 2018 was an opportunity to discuss, to think, to get informed, to observe, to decide who will represent us in the next years in the International Committee, to exchange views and solve questions, perhaps to fill up with more questions, but isn't this the charm of our work? We have been especially careful to show to the participants what is new in our discipline



Fig. 10

approaches. The Keynote lecture presented a synthesis of the progress in the field of glazed ceramics not only in a scientific but also a practical and social level. The communications and posters, one hundred and one and fifty-nine respectively, traveled us from Portugal to the Azov sea, from distant Martinique to Morocco and from there to Palestine, for a period covering not less than fifteen centuries, from the 6th century AD to 1988. We dealt with issues of typological evolution, distribution and trade, fabrics and firing technologies; we learned about new methods of analysis and dating such as archeomagnetism, we learned about older or new, unpublished excavations and impressive shipwrecks, ideological and political changes reflected on pottery and new online tools which make our job less time-consuming and efficient. Particular emphasis was given to the middle medieval and early Renaissance period, especially the 12th to 16th centuries. Over these seven days, I realized the important progress that our community of pottery specialists has made in recent years, towards a more substantial, more dynamic presence in all places and all times from the early Middle Ages to the modern period. The younger generation of ceramologists are now based safely on conclusions coming from the hard sciences, and have learned how to integrate data in a historical context; the accumulated knowledge of decades of careful study, analytical typology and traditional approach, the contribution of which we should not underestimate, give them all the opportunities to advance our science.

As the Head of the Organizing and the Editorial Committee, I would like to thank on behalf of the Organizing and Editorial Committee all the participants of the Athens 2018 Congress and particularly those who sent us a written version of their papers to be published into this volume.

in Greece, devoting an entire session to the sensational discoveries of the Thessaloniki Metro excavations and giving them the opportunity to take a closer look at the then recent discovery of the so-called Middle Byzantine Ware workshops in Chalkis, Euboea. One hundred and seventy-nine initially registered, but finally more than two hundred nominally or physically present participants from nineteen countries (Morocco, Portugal, Spain, France, United Kingdom, Germany, The Netherlands, Italy, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, Greece, Ukraine, Russian Federation, Turkey, Cyprus, Israel, USA) did their best to provide us with an insight into their recent scientific discoveries. One hundred and seven articles including the Keynote lecture coming from the Congress' oral presentations or posters were finally sent to be published and, after a meticulous editorial process, have been included in the volume you hold in your hands.

It was a great pleasure to realize that the communications and posters as well as the articles that followed, were not limited to the presentation of typology and new excavation material, but they proceeded with a more holistic view and tried out synthetic

I also express my profound gratitude to:

- The Members of the International Committee of AIECM3 and its President S. Gelichi as well as the members of the National and Thematic Committees who trusted me in a difficult economic period for my country and gave to all of us the opportunity to prove that we can organize a major scientific event.
- The Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports which facilitated by all means the organization of the Congress and financially supported the publication of the Acta, and more precisely: the Ministers, former M. Zorba and current L. Mendoni; for their various and invaluable contribution to many aspects of the organization of the Congress, the former Secretary General M. Andreadaki-Vlazaki, the Director of the General Directorate of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage P. Adam-Veleni, the Directors of the Ephorates of Arta V. Papadopoulou, of Boeotia A. Charami, of Euboea former P. Kalamara and current A. Simosi as well as A. Kostarelli and E. Kalantzi from the same Ephorate, the Director of the Museum's Directorate A. Lazaridou as well as N. Saraga and Tz. Albani; for her prompt and determinant support for the publication of the Acta the Director of the Directorate of Modern Culture and Intangible Cultural Heritage S. Fotopoulou, as well as the Head of the Administrative Department of the same Directorate E. Spyraiki.
- The sponsors who permitted us to organize the Congress and to publish the Acta: Thanasis and Marina Martinou whose generosity in any aspect of culture is inexhaustible and discreet; the French School at Athens for its hospitality and its former director A. Farnoux; the Stavros Niarchos Foundation/Koç University Centre for the Study of Late Antique and Byzantine monuments (GABAM) for its financial support and its director E. Akyürek; the Unité Mixte de Recherche 8167 Orient et Méditerranée of the French CNRS for its financial and scientific support and its director V. Déroche.
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- Our colleagues S. Skartsis, Y. Vaxevanis, N. Kontogiannis and Y. Waksman, responsible for the study of the Chalkis pottery material, who kindly accepted our invitation and organized the Chalkis

hands-on pottery display and E. Katsara who eagerly participated at the Organizing Committee. The artist V. Papazikou, who created for us a marine universe with a vessel (in its double meaning) traveling through the Mediterranean waters. The new generation to whom we will pass the torch in order to continue this path, all my undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students who accompanied us and supported us backstage before and during the Athens 2018 Congress.

- Finally, for the time and the energy they had to spend and the stress that the preparation of the Congress and of the Acta or my incurable perfectionism caused them, I would like to express my gratitude to my fellow travelers in this adventure Anastasia G. Yangaki, Nikos Liaros and Elli-Evangelia Bia.

The journey which began forty-three years ago in Valbonne, France, by a team of pioneers around Gabrielle Démians d'Archimbaud to the memory of whom the Athens 2018 Congress was dedicated, is now continuing. In these particular light blue and deep blue waves and in the blinding white light of the Mediterranean, every three years, the Iberian Peninsula meets Asia Minor, the African coasts the Adriatic and the Aegean hinterland, the Crimea and the Danube the French Riviera and Sicily. In this basin where «children with black eyes are playing, where there are three continents and centuries of history, prophets and Gods» (to recall Georges Moustaki), the Byzantine Medieval potters are meeting their descendants of the Aegean and the humble Byzantine *tsoukalolagina* are meeting with the luxurious productions of Iznik and the Rinascimento italiano. May we have a good and productive trip in the next many Congresses which will follow!

Athens, July 2021