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A NEW & FASCINATING WORK ON TRABZON MONUMENTS[1]

Throughout history, Trabzon has been hosting and sheltering numerous civilizations. Due its rich past and preserved culture, the city could have brought much of its heritage to the present day. Trabzon's heritage and natural beauty may well exceed one's expectations. It is placed on the route of Historical Silk Road, as a port initially reached by ships and then by camel caravans throughout Macka district, Zigana Mountain Chains, Bayburt and Erzurum cities, as a passage for travelers and commodities. The city also was a stage for everyone who intended to go Central Asia or China. Because of this reason, the city of Trabzon has been settled since Antiquity, being mentioned by Xenophon and Arrianus. Trabzon housed numerous monuments of different civilizations due its long past.

In the first years of Turkish Republic (1923), due to the construction of Ankara-Erzurum Railway, Trabzon lost its commercial gravity but has always protected its historical and cultural importance. Edged by the angry waves of the Black Sea, blue and greenness are close friends and woven like embroidery frame, championing a unique city in Anatolia. Despite cursory preservation of its monuments, Trabzon is currently an open air museum for fine art researchers, archeologists, historians and anthropologists. All those scientific branches could find something appropriate for their works or unearth a new invention bringing a different aspect to the known realities.

Professor Vasile M. Demciuc from the Suceava University/Romania paid several visits to Trabzon over the last decade. During these visits, he worked on Byzantine Monuments in the city and its vicinity. His work entitled *Trapezunt – Byzantine fascination and spiritual landmark* is an accumulation of information focusing on detailed features of Byzantine period monuments in Trabzon. The book consists of almost all distinctive monuments in the city; it starts with a comprehensive historical

[1] Vasile M. Demciuc, *Trapezunt: fascinație și reper spiritual bizantin*, București, Editura Basilica, 2014, p.310.

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explanation of the city. During his studies on Trapezunt, the author tried to see all related sources including Greek and Turkish works regarding the city. That is why his work has a comprehensive bibliography and a lot to contribute new findings into the history of the city.

The first monument the book tackled with is the Monastery of Vazelon located in Macka sub-district of Trabzon. I remember, four years ago we had climbed up the said monastery together with Professor Vasile M. Demciuc and worked in the ruins all the day. There was a small chapel in front of the monastery in which some pieces of frescoes were still visible. In his book, Professor Demciuc adds a drawing of the chapel and gives distinctive information about remaining fresco pieces of small chapel. He also gives the measures of the chapel and monastery defining main areas which accessible through ruins. One of the most important information regarding the Monastery of Vazelon and its chapel is the drawing showing internal perspective of building. The aim of the drawing is to mark the fresco narrative of the Chapel by numbers. Despite his hard work arranging an internal plan for such a ruined construction, the author had done a fascinating job.

The famous Monastery of Sumela is the second monument analyzed in the book. It was built clinging to a cliff face, on a sharp sloping rock in the Altındere Valley National Park, at the borders of Macka district. It is located on the Historical Silk Road, at the north eastern side of Turkey, and at 43 kms away from Trabzon. As it was dedicated to Mother of Jesus, Virgin Mary, the local people call it Mother Mary Monastery *(*"Meryemana Manastırı"*)*. Its original name is "Panaghia tou Melas" meaning "The Virgin of Black Rock". There has been ongoing restoration works in Sumela since 1990's. At the beginning of 2016, because of growing danger of falling rock pieces from the top, no visitors are allowed to enter into the monastery. This case makes Professor Demciuc's book more important than ever because it is delivering vital information about the internal features of building. However, he spared special time on the monastery and tried to unearth some new findings regarding the building. Sumela is the most famous monastery bearing almost 200 fresco scenes which mostly visible and distinguishable at present. Focusing on the history of the Monastery, Professor Demciuc gives impressive knowledge regarding the building.

In addition, the author focuses on the monuments located mostly in the center of Trabzon. Many of these monuments were converted into mosques during Ottoman period and they are still in use. Professor

Demciuc enriched his book with drawings including outer and inner perspectives of these buildings. The drawings are splendid works and give an idea about the monument. The "Haghia Sophia" is also included in the book; during the last years, it has been reconverted into mosque while being a museum. The inner and outer drawings and knowledge regarding "Haghia Sophia" worth to talk about. At the last pages of the book there are color pictures showing some of the monuments explained in the book.

Professor Demciuc's book is 310 pages, including a Trabzon map and important Byzantine monuments marked on; it also has a rich bibliography. Finally, it is clear that *Trapezunt – Byzantine fascination and spiritual landmark* is an exciting book written after a rigorous survey process and brings out some new findings regarding the city of Trabzon and its monuments.

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THE RZECZPOSPOLITA POLITICAL CRISIS IN THE MID-SIXTEENTH CENTURY: THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL DEBATE CONTINUES[2]

The subject of the review is a book written by PhD. Ewa Dubas-Urwanowicz under the title: *O nowy kształt Rzeczypospolitej: kryzys polityczny w państwie w latach 1576-1586*. The author is a lecturer at the University of Bialystok at the History and Social Faculty. In her historical studies she is interested in the modern and common history of Poland from

[2] Ewa Dubas-Urwanowicz, *O nowy kształt Rzeczypospolitej: kryzys polityczny w państwie w latach 1576-1586* [The new shape of the Republic: the political crisis in the country between 1576-1586], Warszawa, Wydawnictwo DiG, 2013, 250 s.