The Libraries in the Byzantine Empire (330-1453) *

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Abstract

This paper has as objective presenting main types of libraries who existed during the Byzantine Empire. The five types of existent libraries – imperial, patriarchal, monastic, private and universitary, had a complex evolution during the history of Byzance. The beginning of those libraries is represented by the inauguration of the new imperial capital, by emperor Constantine the Great (306-337) in 330. The new imperial capital, Constantinople city, had several buildings which were inaugurated by Emperor Constantine including two libraries: the imperial one and the patriarchal one. Subsequently, have appeared over the centuries, and other libraries such as monastic, private or academic. Although there is no historical evidences proving the existence of a university library in the Byzantine Empire, however this it is not excluded. Over time all of these types of libraries have suffered changes and have experienced periods of flowering and decay, until their abolition final, once with the fall of the Byzantine Empire to the Ottomans in 1453. Since the study is not intended to be exhaustive I will deal this issue only from the historical point of view to make an overview of the Byzantine libraries and their role in the cultural evolution of Byzantium.An interesting thing is that the scientists and the byzantine scholars frequented the libraries in the Byzantine Empire, moreover some of them, such as Patriarch Photios the Great, had possessed impressive libraries, enviable even by the Byzantine emperors.

Keywords: Byzantine Empire, Constantine the Great, Libraries
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Before proceeding to the actual treatment of the subject it should be noted that this research is not and is not intended to be exhaustive.

So I divided my paper into two sections: 1. Foundation of the Byzantine Empire; 2. The libraries in the Byzantine Empire (330-1453): a short history.

1. Foundation of the Byzantine Empire

The Saint Emperor Constantine the Great (*Gaius Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantinus*) is considered by historians if not the biggest, then one of the greatest kings that the Roman Empire ever had.

Constantine the Great was born in 280 A.D., in the town of Naissus (today is the town of Niš in Serbia, located 250 km southeast of the capital, Belgrade); he was the son of the Roman general Constantius Chlorus and his consort, Helen (Matei, 1991, p. 73). His father was elevated to the rank of Caesar on the 1st of March, 293. After the abdication of the emperors Diocletian and Maximian in 305 A.D., young Constantine joined his father in the leadership of the western part of the Roman Empire. Constantius Chlorus died a year later, and Constantine is proclaimed Emperor by the army, on July 25, 306. Galeriu will accept Constantine as the Caesar and will hand him over the jurisdiction of Gallia and Britain. The same year, Maxentius arrogates himself the title of Emperor over Italy, Spain and Africa, but he was subsequently denounced as a usurper. Constantin arranges with Licinius, the new August of the West, to take over Spain, which will happen in the year 310. From Spain, Constantine will take his army in Italy, where he will defeat Maxentius in the famous battle of the Milvian Bridge (Ponte Milvius) that took place in the year 312 A.D. Given the new political situation, Constantin established a political alliance with Licinius through his marriage with Constantia, the sister of Constantine. In return, Licinius will defeat Maximinus II Daia and will become king over East, Asia Minor and Syria. This political alliance will not last for long and conflicts will appear between the two emperors, leading to a first civil war in 316 A.D. that ended in a compromise (Matei, 1991, p. 74) peace agreement. In 324, a new civil war breaks out, and this time Licinius is defeated by Constantine in two battles, at Adrianople and Chrysopolis. Licinius is captured and then executed at Thessalonica, in 325.

After long battles between Augusts and Caesars, as well as many civil wars, the Roman Empire is reunited under the leadership of one man. In 324, Constantine the Great is proclaimed the sole Emperor of the Roman Empire, just as Diocletian (was proclaimed the unique Roman emperor in the year 285) was crowned 40 years before.

From now on, Constantine will plan to build a new capital for the Empire. Constantine was determined to build a new capital mostly because Rome was no longer the official capital city of the Roman Empire since the reign of Diocletian (284-305) (Popescu, Bodogae & Stănescu, 1956, p. 90), when Nicomedia became the current residence of the Empire. To fulfill his plan, Constantine formally elects the city of Byzantium (an ancient Greek colony, founded in the sixth century BC) on the Bosporus, in November 324, and increases four times the surface of the settlement.

Byzantium was not designated the imperial capital by pure chance, but because it offered a number of strategical advantages. First, its geographical location was at the intersection of the main trading routes that linked the West with the East. Secondly, the city benefited from a big seaport that could be used for military purposes, in order to defend the Eastern border of the Empire against the frequent attacks of the Persians (Drîmba, 1999, pp. 212-213).

The building and reshaping of Byzantium lasted almost six years. On 11th of May 330, Constantine will inaugurate the new capital of the Roman Empire. The city was commonly called "Constantinople" (Drîmba, 1999, p. 212), but officially it was named the "New Rome" (Drîmba, 1999, p. 212), since Constantine wanted a new capital that was identical to the ancient Rome. With the formal relocation of the imperial capital, the entire political administration from Rome will also move to Constantinople.

Concurrently with the official launch of the capital, some of the most important buildings were also opened, including the Senate, the Hippodrome, the imperial palace and the imperial library (there are no written documents or edicts issued by Emperor Constantine to prove this directly, but most historians consider it is the safest assumption; however, the imperial library was founded by the Emperor Constantine immediately after the inauguration of the new capital). The inauguration of the imperial library represented a true milestone in the history of the libraries in the Byzantine Empire. The imperial library is the incipit other types of libraries that will exist in the Empire, until its fall to the Turks, on May 29, 1453 A.D.

Since the beginning of Constantine's reign until the inauguration of the new capital (between the years 306-330 A.D.), there were approximately 30 public libraries (Brewster, 1832, p. 24) in the city of Rome. In addition, there

were also libraries in some of the major cities of the Roman Empire. Constantin will establish an imperial library following the model of Emperor Diocletian's (Ilie, 2007, p. 3) library, in Nicomedia city.

2. The libraries in the Byzantine Empire (330-1453): a short history

After Constantine the Great established the imperial library, other types of libraries started to appear as well. The libraries in the Byzantine Empire can be grouped into four categories: *imperial*, *patriarchal*, *monastic* and *private* (Papademetriou, 2000, p. 171). In addition to these four types of libraries recognized by historians, I added it in a fifth one: the *university library* that belonged to the University of Constantinople, which was founded in 425 A.D., by the Emperor Theodosius II (408-450) (Drîmba, 1999, p. 215).

We will further present and discuss each one of the five types of libraries indicated above, beginning with the imperial library.

2. 1. The imperial library

As mentioned before, the imperial library was established through an imperial decree by the Emperor Constantine the Great himself, along with other important buildings within the capital. Constantine was inspired by the imperial library of Diocletian, in Nicomedia (Ilie, 2007, p. 3). Constantine employed a head librarian named Lucianus (Ilie, 2007, p. 3), who managed the affairs of imperial library. Among his duties, the head librarian had to recommend a list of books for the emperor (Ilie, 2007, p. 3). The status of the imperial librarian was extremely important therefore, since it could influence and guide the emperor's daily reading.

Emperor Constantine's great attention towards the imperial library is proven by the fact that at his death, in 337 A.D., there were allegedly between 6900 (Ilie, 2007, p. 3) and 7000 (Runciman, 1978, p. 6) library books, which is considered "a large number" (Runciman, 1978, p. 6) by the historian Steven Runciman. The library was settled in the imperial palace, for the king's easy reach.

Among the library's collections there were historical and juridical books, besides the works of Greek writers and philosophers such as Homer, Aeschylus, Hesiod, Aristophanes, Plato or Aristotle (Ilie, 2007, p. 4). The library also included a manuscript of about 37 m (in J. B. Burry's book, from where we took this information, the measuring unit is 120 feet, which we converted to meters. 1 foot = 30, 48 cm, 120 feet = 3657 6 cm, or 36, 576 m) length of the *Iliad and Odyssey* by Homer, written in golden letters on the intestines of a serpent (Bury,

1923, p. 394), which was mentioned by the Byzantine chronicler John Zonaras (Brewster, 1832, p. 24).

After Emperor Constantine's death, his son Constantius II (337-361 A.D.) inherited further the responsibility for the imperial library, to which he added a scriptorium (Cameron, Garnsey, 2006, p. 37).

The man who succeeded Constantius II was the Emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363 A.D.). He was particularly interested in the imperial library, for which he built a portico in order to increase its surface (Ilie, 2007, p. 5). Being the first emperor, after Constantine the Great, who wanted to reorganize the pagan cult in a systematic way, following the model of the Christian church hierarchy, it is speculated that Julian the Apostate may have destroyed the Christian manuscripts included in the imperial library.

Theodosius I (379-395 A.D.) is another remarkable Byzantine emperor concerning of the libraries in the Empire. Emperor Theodosius employed seven copyists, four Greeks and three Latins, for the imperial library who worked in the scriptorium and copied the manuscripts containing both Christian and pagan literature (Witty, 1967, p. 720).

Unfortunately, the imperial library burned during Emperor Zeno's reign (474-491), in a great fire that occurred in the year 477 A.D (Runciman, 1978, p. 6). That same year, short before the destruction of the library, an inventory was made and it was established that there were approximately 100 000 (Ilie, 2007, p. 6) or 120 000 (Runciman, 1978, p. 6) manuscripts in the library. The recorded number of manuscripts may look exaggerated, but it is reasonable to consider that the Byzantine emperors who succeeded Constantine the Great also exhibited a genuine interest towards the library.

Very few manuscripts were saved by the fire. For the following years, it is hard to determine whether the imperial library collections were completely redrafted, although the library was mostly rebuilt soon after its destruction (Runciman, 1978, pp. 6-7).

We know with certitude that the library functioned until the Fourth Crusade (1204 A.D.), when it was vandalized and burned by the Christian crusaders. In 1204, the Christian crusaders have deviated from their original route, the liberation of Jerusalem, and they turned to conquering the city of Constantinople and establish the Latin Empire, which will last between 1204-1261. This course of events determined the historian Steven Runciman to remark that because "none of the French could read in Greek and very few knew how to read at all [...] they kept only the books that had expensive metals or precious stones, and burned the rest, along with their buildings, while the Venetians, who were widely read, chose to save them" (Runciman, 1978, p. 7).

In the year 1261, the Constantinople is retaken from the Latins by the Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus (1259-1282). The following Byzantine emperors tried to rebuild and recompose the imperial library, to the extent that "the Byzantine scribes in the XIV century were busier than ever copying rare manuscripts" (Runciman, 1978, p. 7).

From this moment on, until the fall under the Turkish Empire, the imperial library will not regain its past greatness and will eventually be completely abolished in 1453 A.D. The collection of manuscripts came into the library of Muhammad II the Conqueror (1451-1481).

The imperial library was created for the disposure of the Byzantine Emperors and their families. The best example is illustrated by the Byzantine princess Anna Comnena, daughter of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118). Anna Comnena's memory remained entrenched in the history of the Byzantium through her work entitled *Alexiada*. In the preface to her work, she cites passages from Plato and Aristotle, authors who she most likely read from the imperial library collections (Ilie, 2007, p. 6).

Similarly to how the imperial library of Diocletian had a chief librarian, the imperial library of Constantinople was also directed by a librarian. His duties included to organize the manuscripts according to the library catalog, to supervise the copyists in the scriptorium and to select the books that were to be read by the emperor.

2. 2. The patriarchal library

The patriarchal library (it should be noted that the title of *ecumenical patriarch*, referring to the bishop of Constantinople, appears around the year 582, when St. John the Faster (582-595) starts signing the official documents with the title of *ecumenical patriarch*. Starting with this year, all the patriarchs of Constantinople will take on this title. Therefore, we cannot properly speak of a *patriarchal library* between the years 330-582. We can speak at best of a library belonging to the *Diocese* and *Archdioceses* of Constantinople. However, as most historians use the term of patriarchal library, we will also use this option) was founded in the same year as the imperial library, having again Emperor Constantine the Great as protector (Ilie, 2007, p. 6). Together with the imperial library, the patriarchal library was one of the largest existing libraries in Byzantium, and was intended for the use of the patriarch and the clergy who were part of Constantine's entourage.

The location of the patriarchal library has not been precisely determined. This prompted some historians specialised in the history of Byzantium to assert that the library was in the episcopal palace (Papademetriou, 2000, p. 173).

However, the majority of historians consider that the library was located in one of the outbuildings of St. Sofia Church (Ilie, 2007, p. 8).

The patriarchal library collections were made up of a variety of Christian works, as well as pagan and heretical writings. On 30 April 311, the emperor Galerius issued an edict granting Christians freedom of worship, as he realized the futility of the persecutions against Christians, provided that they "pray to God for him and for the state, and do not disturb the public order" (Popescu, Bodogae & Stănescu, 1956, p. 79). With the religious freedom of Christianity, reconfirmed by the Holy Emperor Constantine the Great in 313, through the Edict of Mediolanum (now Milan in Italy), the Christian literature also spread throughout the entire Empire. Among the Christian authors, whose works were inside the patriarchal library, we can mention: St. Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386 A.D.), St. Epiphanius of Cyprus (315-420 A.D.), Evagrius of Pontus (345-399 A.D.), Diodorus of Tarsus (300-390 A.D.), Saint John Chrysostom (347-407 A.D.), St. John of Damascus (676-749 A.D.), Saint Theodore the Studite (759-826 A.D.), St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359 A.D.) etc. Because the space designed for this study is not large enough to include all parents and ecclesiastical writers, whose works were in the patriarchal library collection, I only summarized a few of the most important.

In addition to the works of the Christian and pagan authors, the patriarchal library comprised a considerable number of heretical writings (Papademetriou, 2000, p. 173). These works formed the basis of the study of heresies undertaken by the orthodox theologians (Papademetriou, 2000, p. 173).

Over the centuries, the Byzantine emperors watched over the patriarchal library, beginning with Constantine the Great, who asked Bishop Eusebius to provide him with 50 copies of the Holy Bible. Some historians believe that out of the 50 copies of the Holy Scripture, only two are preserved today - known as the *Codex Vaticanus* and *Codex Sinaiticus* (Ilie, 2007, p. 7). The quality of these copies must have been highly important for Constantine, since he ordered them on *vellum* (a material made from calfskin that was used for writing the parchments). The copies of the Bible were intended for some of the greatest churches in Constantinople, as well as for other libraries within the capital: imperial, patriarchal, etc.

During the following centuries, the patriarchal library has experienced an upward trend through the contributions of the Byzantine patriarchs and emperors.

In the time of the reign of Patriarch Thomas I (607-610 A.D.), the patriarchal library was moved due to the fact that the collections widened. The library was relocated in the palace called *Thomaites Triklinos* (The Triangle of

Thomas), where it remained until 791, when the building burned in a fire (Papademetriou, 2000, p. 174).

Sergius I (610-638 A.D.), the successor of Patriarch Thomas, aspired to increase the number of books in the library's collection – fact that was recorded by the deacon George Pisides, who has the high *skevofilax* (*skevofilax* – *sacristan* was the Byzantine dignitary whose main function was guarding and keeping the sacred vessels used in the service of the church *Hagia Sophia*).

The first recorded patriarchal librarian is mentioned in the sources of the Sixth Ecumenical Synod in 680-681 A.D., held in Constantinople. His name was Archdeacon George and he was holding the position of *chartophylax*. The *chartophylax* (patriarchal archivist), together with the *econom*, *sachelar*, *schevofilax* and *sacheliu*, was the Byzantine ecclesiastical dignitary who was part of the first pentad of the choir in the right, also known as the councillor of the patriarch. He was mainly responsible for the patriarchal archive and library. In time, the attributions given to the *chartophylax* increased progressively, until the patriarchal archivist became become the second man after the Patriarch. We have developed extensively this topic in the following study (Nedelcu, 2012, pp. 143-151). His main attribution during the Synod was to make available the heretical books and the documents from the other ecumenical councils included in the patriarchal library, which were then consulted by all the participants in the synod. Later, the chartophylax George became the patriarch of Constantinople (Papademetriou, 2000, p. 175).

After the Fourth Crusade (1204), the fate of the patriarchal library was identical to that of the imperial library. The library was devastated by the Crusaders and most of the books were burned or stolen.

The patriarchate moved to Nice (today it is the city of Iznik in Turkey, Asia Minor, cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iznik), the capital of the Byzantine Empire in exile, known as the Empire of Nicaea. The patriarchal library was also moved, together with everything that was saved.

In 1261 A.D., Constantinople was liberated from the Latin occupation. The Patriarchate was moved back to Constantinople, together with the patriarchal library, in the *Thomaites Triklinos* palace.

The patriarch Gregory II of Cyprus (1283-1289 A.D.) tried to reunite the library collections. With this intention, he paid scribes to enrich the library collections with manuscripts, many of which were difficult to purchase (Papademetriou, 2000, p. 177) after the final return in the Byzantine capital.

The patriarchal library suffered the same fate as the imperial library on 29th of May 145, when the imperial capital fell under the Turkish occupation. The collections of the patriarchal library, just like the collections from the

imperial library, were moved to the library under the patronage of Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror.

2. 3. The monastic library

The monastic libraries, or the libraries of the monasteries, began their history with the advent of the organized monasticism (this will happen after 313, when the emperor Constantine together with Licinius issued an edict of religious tolerance for the Christians in the Empire, at Mediolanum).

With St. Pachomius the Great (291-348 A.D.), who is recognized as the founder of the community life, the first organized monastic communities appear, somewhere in the desert of Egypt. The place known today as the *Natron Valley* or the *Nitrian Desert*, is a monastic settlement located SE of the city of Alexandria, with a length of 48.2 km and a width of 4.8 km, and closed between two rows of mountains. Besides the usual obedience, such as weaving baskets, gardening, or caring for the sick, the Egyptian monks gathered daily in churches to perform prayers and singing hymns to God, but also to do the daily readings. In the beginning, the readings were done from the Scriptures and later the writings of the Church Fathers were added as well. In his rules (it is similar to a rule book or a monastic handbook containing certain ordinances, practices and rules about how the monks should live together in parishes), St. Pachomius notes that the steward of the monastery was responsible for organizing the monastery's library. The books and manuscripts were placed in special boxes and deposited in the walls of the monastery (Witty, 1967, p. 720).

Here, in the valley of Nitria, there was a mountain where approximately 600 monks retreated. In this place, there was a large church and next to it was placed a *xenodochium* (a guest house for the reception and accommodation of pilgrims). The pilgrims who were received here could stay without doing anything until their departure. However, if they remained for more than one week, they had to undertake some activities in the garden, in the kitchen or at the bread oven. An interesting thing to mention is that if a pilgrim was "worthy of attention" (Paladie, 1993, p. 24) we was given a book. This detail is particularly important, because we can infer that not only the monks had access to the library, but also some of the pilgrims who arrived here and who proved indeed to be "worthy of attention" (here the sense of being great by the way and their behavior).

Soon enough, besides the first traditional monasteries that were founded in the wilderness, other monasteries appeared within cities, as well as in the imperial capital.

Typically, each monastery had a library (Brewster, 1832, p. 21) comprising various manuscripts, among which we can mention copies of the Holy Bible, the works of the Church Fathers and those written by the profane authors of the Greek literature.

In the Byzantine Empire, there were many monasteries that can be divided into two categories: the monasteries of Byzantium and the monasteries from Constantinople.

I will further discuss the following three monasteries of the Byzantine Empire: the Monastery of St. John the Theologian (Patmos Island), St. Catherine's Monastery (Mount Sinai) and the monasteries of the Holy Mount Athos (Greece). There are over 100 existing monasteries throughout the Byzantine, but given the space allocated to this study, we will only summarize these 3, which are the most popular. The three monasteries of Constantinople that I will present are: the Monastery of Stoudios, the Chora Monastery and the Monastery of Christ Panoiktirmon.

2. 3. 1. The monasteries of the Byzantine Empire
2. 3. 1. 1. The Monastery of Saint John the Theologian (Patmos)

St. Christodoulos of Patmos (1020-1093 A.D.) is considered the founder of the Monastery of Saint John the Theologian, which was built with the support of the Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118), who donated for this purpose the island of Patmos. The monastery had a library at the very beginning of its creation, due to both St. Christodoulos, who donated his collection of manuscripts (Ilie, 2007, p. 10), and to the Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (Ilie, 2007, p. 10). The monastery was built in 1201 and the catalog of the monastery's library, which is still preserved today, contained 330 manuscripts (Bréhier, 1994, p. 283). The 330 manuscripts can be divided into: liturgical works, texts and commentaries of the Holy Bible, the works of the Holy Fathers, the lives of the Saints and textbooks for elementary education (Bréhier, 1994, p. 283). The number could seem rather small, but it is understandable given the cost of manuscripts, which was very high in that period, and that there were none of today's modern printers.

2. 3. 1. 2. St. Catherine's Monastery (Mount Sinai)

The emperor Justinian the Great built a monastery on Mount Sinai, between the years 548-565 A.D., in the place where God spoke to Moses in the

form of the burning bush that was not consumed, accordingly to the Holy Scripture (Exodus 3: 2). Some historians believe that the monastery was established in this period, as on the cedar roof of the monastery church is kept an inscription, which can be viewed on the website of the monastery http://www.sinaimonastery.com/en/index.php?lid=66#, who remembers "our pious emperor" Justinian and the "dear departed empress" Theodora. Empress Theodora died in 548, from which the historians concluded that the monastery was built between 548 and 565, beginning with the death of the empress until the end of Emperor Justinian's reign. Here was also founded a library where the famous manuscript *Codex Sinaiticus*, dating from the 4th century, is kept until today. This manuscript, together with *Codex Vaticanus*, is considered to be the oldest copy of the Holy Bible (it is believed that these two codices are part of the 50 copies of the Holy Bible ordered by St. Constantine the Great for the imperial library (Ilie, 2007, p. 7).). The monastery's library holds one of the oldest collections of manuscripts in the world and contains over 3,300 manuscripts. Two thirds of the manuscripts are written in Greek, while the rest are in Arabic, Syriac, Georgian, Slavic, Polish, Hebrew, Ethiopic, Armenian, Latin and Persian (http://www.sinaimonastery.com/en/index.php?lid=103). Today, the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai is included in the UNESCO heritage list (http://www.sinaimonastery.com/en/index.php?lid=10).

2. 3. 1. 3. The monasteries of the Holy Mount Athos (Greece)

The holy Mount Athos in Greece was founded by St. Athanasius the Athonite (930-1000 A.D.). The Holy Mount Athos, considered a stronghold or a bastion of Orthodoxy, is a genuine monastic republic. The Holy Mountain is geographically located in northeastern Greece, on the larger Chalkidiki peninsula. It has a length of 60 kilometers and a width between 8 and 12 kilometers, totaling about 360 square kilometers. With the financial support of his friend General Nicephorus Phocas (Cavarnos, 2005, p. 78), who will ascend the throne of Byzantium between the years 963-969 A.D., St. Athanasius will build the Great Lavra in 963 A.D. The Monastery of Great Lavra was equipped with a library, where there are about 960 manuscripts (Kahzdan, Browing, 1991, p. 1224). There are 19 other monasteries on Mount Athos and all of them took as model the *Great Lavra* founded by St. Athanasius the Athonite. Over the centuries, the number of monasteries in the Holy Mountain Athos has increased, but eventually it was settled at around 20 monasteries, which exist until today. These monasteries are: the *Great Lavra*, *Vatopedi*, *Iviron*, *Hilandar*, *Dionysiou*, *Koutloumousiou*, *Pantocrator*, *Xiropotamu*, *Zografu*, *Docheiariou*, *Caracalu*, *Filotheu*, *Simonospetras*, *St. Paul*, *Stavronikita*, *Xenophon*,

Gregoriou, *Esphigmenou*, *St. Pantelimon* and *Kostamonitu* cf. http://www.munteleathos.com. All 20 athonite monasteries benefit of libraries, which comprise in their collections the works of the Church Fathers, as well as profane works from the Greek and Roman literature. The Byzantine emperor in exile of Nicaea, John III-Vatatzes Dukas (1222-1254 A.D.), sent Nichifor Blemmydes (1197-1272 A.D.) across the cities of the empire and the monasteries of Mount Athos "to buy, or, if necessary, to copy or summarize precious manuscripts" (Tatakis, 2010, p. 286). In 1204, during the Fourth Crusade, Constantinople was conquered by the Latins and the Emperor Alexius V Dukas (1204) was deposed. The Latin Empire of Constantinopole was then established, having as first king the count of Flanders, Balduin I (1172-1205). The new empire lasted only until 1261, when the Byzantines reconquered the capital from the authority of the Latins. Only 3 parts of the Byzantine Empire retained their independence: Trepizonda or the Greek Empire of Trebizond, Greek Empire of Nicaea and the Despotate of Epirus. Empire of Nicaea was founded by Theodore I Laskaris (1204-1222) and his successor Michael VIII Palaeologus (1259-1282) will recapture Constantinople from the Latins hand on July 25, 1261 (Băbuş, 2003, p. 264). The Athonite libraries became worldwide famous, which prompted David Brewster to say that "there is no doubt that Constantinople and Athos (their libraries A.N.) contributed with a large number of manuscripts, which can be found in different parts of Europe" (Brewster, 1832, p. 23).

2. 3. 2. The monasteries of Constantinople
2. 3. 2. 1. The Monastery of Stoudios

The monastery was founded by the consul Stoudios, a Roman dignitary established in Constantinople in the years 462 or 463, who brought a group of monks from the Monastery of the "unsleeping ones" (http://www.crestinortodox.ro/biserica-lume/manastirea-studion-67774.html).
The fame of the monastery increased during the time of the abbot John of Studios, a "scholar" whose rules have influenced other monasteries throughout the Byzantine Empire (Ilie, 2007, p. 10), including the monasteries of the Holy Mount Athos. The monastery was equipped with a rich library and a scriptorium. The place was distinctive because the monks were studying the Scripture and the works of the Church Fathers. The daily obedience and occupations that the Stoudite monks were performing included the "reading day". In the "reading day", each monk from the monastery had to choose a book from the library and read it from sunrise to sunset (Ilie, 2007, pp. 9-10). At the end of the day, the monks had to return the books to the librarian. Another

abbot of the monastery, St. Theodore the Studite (758-826 A.D.), who revived the Byzantine monasticism in the 9th century, wrote that "a well-stocked library was essential, together with good scribes who had to be kept up to the mark" (Runciman, 1978, p. 10).

2. 3. 2. 2. Chora Monastery

This monastery dates back to the 5th-6th centuries (http://www.crestinortodox.ro/biserica-lume/biserica-chora-constantinopol-67766.html), but it was rebuilt several times over the centuries. The famous Byzantine scholar Theodor Metochites (1260-1332), restored the monastery in the years 1315-1320, but besides its restoration, he enlarged the library collection to the point where it became the largest library in Constantinople until the fall of Byzantium in 1453, according to Ihor Ševčenko (Ševčenko, 2002, p. 287). Some historians consider that, due to the donations made by Theodor Metochites, the library of monastery Chora ended up having more books than the patriarchal and the imperial library together.

2. 3. 2. 3. Monastery of Christ Panoiktirmon

This monastery was founded by the Byzantine historian Michael Attaliates (1020-1085) before the year 1074 (Ilie, 2007, p. 11) on one of its properties in Rhaidestos (today is the province of Tekirdağ in Turkey, 135 km away from Istanbul cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tekirda%C4%9F), located on the northern shore of the Marmara Sea and of the city of Constantinople. Initially, he built a church with the patron *Jesus Christ – All Merciful*, where he was planning to have only priests and deacons who would serve. Fearing that the church will be taken over by the authorities that could send there anyone to serve, Attaliates changed his mind and organized the church as a monastery with monks ("Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents", 2000, p. 326). In order to carry out his vision, Michael Attaliates also wrote a set of rules for the monastery. Although Attaliates was not part of the imperial court, the monastery became slowly an aristocratic one. Furthermore, though the number of monks was initially set at seven, it was later reduced to five, because the monastery could only support that many ("Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents", 2000, p. 327). At the end of typika written by Attaliates, there has been preserved also a catalog of the library of the monastery. Some of the manuscripts in the catalog included: a Gospel, an Apostle, a Psalter, the Catechesis of St. Theodore of Studios, a manuscript of history written by

Michael Attaliates and a Nomocanon, to name only a very few ("Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents", 2000, pp. 358-359).

2. 4. Private libraries

This is the most common type of library in the Byzantine Empire, because there was a good number of erudites who gathered impressive collections of manuscripts. Among the famous private Byzantine libraries, we can mention those belonging to: Libanius (314-392/393); the emperor Justinian the Great (527-565); Cosmas the Scribe (sec. VI-VII); Tychius; the Holy Patriarch Photius the Great (858-867, 877-886); the archbishop Arethas of Caesarea in Cappadocia (860-939); the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (912-959) and the emperor John II Comnenus (1118-1143).

2. 4. 1. Libanius (314-392/393)

Libanius is of Greek origin and he was born in Antioch in 314. He was one of the most famous pagan orators of antiquity, being a follower of Hellenism. Libanius studied in Athens and later opened a school in Constantinople, sometime between the years 340-346, which he was forced to close later on, because his rivals accused him of witchcraft. He settled in Antioch in 354, where he remained until his death. Libanius had an impressive library and a scriptorium which functioned as a "publishing house". Among his disciples, who read books from his library, we can mention here St. John Chrysostom (347-407) and Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libanius#Life).

2. 4. 2. The emperor Justinian the Great (527-565)

The emperor Justinian the Great was one of the Byzantine emperors who had a rich "intellectual" activity, writing many works, especially in the field of law. His large library collection comprised numerous manuscripts of canons and laws, and it is believed that it was competing with the imperial library (Ilie, 2007, p. 20) in terms of content. Unfortunately, there is no preserved catalogue that could show all the books that the emperor Justinian the Great had in his personal library.

2. 4. 3. Cosmas the Scribe (sec. VI-VII)

John Moschos (540/550-617) describes in his famous work, entitled *Spiritual Meadow* or *Limonariu* (this book is a collection of lives of saints and monks parents in Palestine, Egypt, Mount Sinai etc.), the life of Cosmas the Scribe, in Chapter 172. This is how it appears the Romanian edition used by we

cf. (Moshu, 1991, pp. 163-164). Here is the life of Cosmas the Scribe: "Concerning this man Cosmas the lawyer, many people told us many things [...] This wondrous man greatly benefited us, not only by letting us see him and by teaching us, but also because he had more books than anyone else in Alexandria. Yet he was a man of no possessions. Throughout his house there was nothing to be seen but books, a bed and a table. Any man could go in and ask for what would benefit him – and read it. Each day I would go in to him and I never entered without finding him either reading or writing against the Jews, because it was his fervent desire to convert the Hebrews to the truth" (Moshu, 1991, p. 163). In this short passage we learn about Cosmas' life, a monk whom John Moschos knew personally. When he would visit Cosmas, at his home in Alexandria, all he could see was books, but the most interesting thing is that the monk's private library "had more books than anyone else in Alexandria" (Moshu, 1991, p. 163). Unfortunately, John Moschos does not provide other details regarding Cosmas' library, making it difficult to determine what other books, besides the Holy Scriptures, were included in the library.

2. 4. 4. The Holy Patriarch Photius the Great (858-867, 877-886)

St. Photius the Great was chosen as Patriarch of Constantinople twice (858-867 and 877-886) and is renowned not only for his writing, but also for his library, which was at the disposal of his friends (Vasiliev, 2010, p. 305). In his library there were books of all kinds, both Christian and secular. Saint Photius remained in the history especially for his encyclopedic work called *Myriobiblion* or *Bibliotheca* (Brezeanu, 2007, p. 180). This book resembles a bibliography and summarizes around 380 books (Vasiliev, 2010, p. 306), which are mostly missing today.

2. 4. 5. Other personalities who have held private libraries

Ananius from Shirik mentiones the private library of Tychius, who came to Constantinople in 620. Ananius testifies that his teacher's library was very large and comprised "known and secret books, ecclesiastical and secular ones, scientific and historical, medical and chronological writings" (Ilie, 2007, p. 19).

Another important private library was that of Areta, the Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia (Chellinck, 1937, p. 1600). Areta was a disciple of Patriarch Photius the Great and in his library there was a copy of the manuscript of Euclid (Mango, 2002, p. 221), as well as other manuscripts thought as belonging to his teacher.

The Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (912-959) (Kahzdan, Browing, 1991, p. 1225) was another lover of books, who possessed a rich personal library.

John II Comnenus (1118-1143) was another Byzantine emperor who had a passion for reading, holding a large private library and a collection of religious books (Kahzdan, Browing, 1991, p. 1225).

There were numerous other Byzantine scholars and humanists who possessed important private libraries and who either kept them until their deaths, or donated them to other libraries. For example, Theodor Metochites donated his private collections to the library of Chora monastery in Constantinople. There were certainly other scholars that did the same thing as Theodor Metochites.

2. 5. The university library

I have not found any concrete evidence that the university library actually ever existed, which is the reason why I left it for the final part of the essay.

The emperor Theodosius II (408-450) will establish the University of Constantinople in 425. The teaching was focused on the two cycles: *trivium* and *quadrivium*. One of the disciplines taught to basic "students" who attended the University of Constantinople was the Roman law. The Byzantines developed considerably the juridical area, to the extent that during the reign of the Emperor Justinian the Great the subject reached its climax, especially since Justinian himself wrote a great deal in legal and canon law.

Unfortunately, there is no evidence that the University library actually existed (Kahzdan, Browing, 1991, p. 1224), although this is highly possible. The hypothesis still remains at this level. The library was also called the legal library or the law school.

Given the specific of this legal library, the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus asserted that the university library should contain "all the necessary books of legal education" (Ilie, 2007, p. 8).

If indeed the library of the University of Constantinople ever existed, its collection of book was largely composed by fundamental works of Roman law, from the collection of canons written in Latin and Greek.

3. Conclusions

The history of the Libraries in the Byzantine Empire begins with the arrival to the throne of the Emperor Constantine the Great (306-337). He inaugurated in 330 the new imperial capital, together with the imperial library

and other important buildings. Over the life of the Empire, we could determine the following libraries: *imperial*, *patriarchal*, *monastic*, *private* and *university*. The evolution of these libraries has experienced an upward flow until their abolition, when Constantinople was conquered by the Turks, in May 29, 1453. Some of the libraries' collections entered into the library of Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror (1451-1481).

The fall of the Constantinople marked the end of the Byzantine Empire, event that took place on May 29, 1453. The main libraries that existed in the Byzantine capital, were saved from destruction by Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror (1441-1481). Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror added to his personal library the collections of the libraries who existed in Constantinople, such as imperial library, patriarchal libray and some monastic libraries.

The reforms that followed the conquest of the Byzantine Empire by the Turks, have led to its administrative reorganization. Thus, all Christian churches and monasteries were turned into mosques and colleges. The main turkish libraries who overtake byzantine manuscripts, in greek and other languages, are: the library of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror.

Currently the Byzantine manuscripts are in the following turkish libraries: Süleymaniye Kütüphansi, the National State Archives of Turkey and Topkapi Palace Museum Library.

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