



*Commission for the History of Byzantine Art /
International Association of Byzantine Studies
(CHAB/AIEB)*

**Activities Report of the
Commission for the History of Byzantine Art /
Commission pour l'Histoire de l'art byzantin (CHAB)**

September 2016-August 2022

The **Commission for the History of Byzantine Art / Commission pour l'Histoire de l'art byzantin (CHAB/AIEB)** was revived during the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies held in Belgrade in 2016 on the initiative of Jean-Michel Spieser. Its primary aim is the co-ordination of efforts for the promotion and advance of the study of Byzantine Art and the dissemination of knowledge not only among Byzantinists but also the wider community of mediaeval art historians. More specifically, the Commission is working towards: (1) The development of research and educational tools; (2) The collection and the dissemination of information drawn from various research projects whose outcome, though significant, remains scattered and therefore partly unexploited; (3) The fostering of international and interdisciplinary collaboration between scholars, institutions, and initiatives active in the field.

Members of the CHAB/AIEB (2016-2022):

- Jean-Michel Spieser, Fribourg-Switzerland (co-ordinator)
- Sophia Kalopissi-Verti, Athens-Greece (co-ordinator)
- Maria Panayotidi-Kesisoglou, Athens-Greece (co-ordinator)
- Nancy Ševčenko, USA
- Annemarie Weyl Carr, USA
- Catherine Jolivet-Lévy, Paris-France
- Miodrag Marković, Belgrade-Serbia
- Dragan Vojvodić, Belgrade-Serbia
- Maria Parani, Nicosia-Cyprus
- Giorgos Philotheou, Nicosia-Cyprus
- Ioanna Bitha, Athens-Greece
- Anastasia Drandaki, Athens-Greece
- Vicky Foskolou, Athens-Greece

Collaborator: Manuel Castiñeiras, Barcelona-Spain

As a first step towards achieving the Commission's goals, its members decided to create an open-access web portal where electronic material on Byzantine art and material culture would be gathered, organized, and made easily accessible. The Portal's concept, organization and name have been proposed by the member of the Commission Vicky Foskolou. This open-access web

portal was named *ΧΑΛΚΗ ΠΥΛΗ / CHALKE GATE: A Portal to Byzantine Art and Material Culture* (www.chalkegate.eu)

The “Athens Team”, i.e. those members of the Commission who reside in Athens (Ioanna Bitha, Anastasia Drandaki, Vicky Foskolou, Sophia Kalopissi-Verti and Maria Panayotidi-Kesisoglou), following a collective decision of all Commission members, was in charge of holding meetings and discussing proposals for the creation and function of the Web Portal. Our first goal was to find the technological institution which, ideally, would be able to design the Portal, undertake its maintenance and secure its funding. We addressed our request to the National Documentation Centre in Athens (NDC) and to the Science and Technology in Archaeology Center (STARC) of the Cyprus Institute (CyI) yet both attempts, though initially very promising, were proved fruitless.

At the end it was the Christian Archaeological Society (ChAE) / Χριστιανική Αρχαιολογική Εταιρεία (XAE), the oldest and most established Hellenic Scholarly Society for the Study of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Archaeology and Art, founded in 1884 in Athens, (www.chae.gr), which undertook the responsibility for hosting and funding the design and launching of the Portal. The funding came from the gifts donated to ChAE in memory of the late member and sponsor of the Society, Dr Stamatia T. Kalantzopoulou (1959-2019).

The design of the portal was made by LP-Development (Panos Kalambakas) and the first demo, still in progress, is being carried out by the Archaeologist-Byzantinist Dr Anna Takoumi, under the guidance of the “Athens Team”.

The Portal is organized in five sections: Museums and Libraries, Cultural Heritage, Institutes (Research Centres), Universities, Online Web Resources. Its design allows for the responsible persons of each country to feed it with their own data, which once checked will be uploaded online. The category **Museums and Libraries** includes e-museum and exhibition catalogues, educational programmes, digitized manuscripts etc. Archaeological sites and historical monuments are recorded in the section **Cultural Heritage**. The section **Institutes and Universities** includes graduate programmes, excavation and field work projects, research initiatives on Byzantine archaeology and art, e-publications etc. E-sources and digital research tools, such as e-journals, e-publications, open access repositories are registered in the **Online Web Resources**. The Portal is flexible, user-friendly and easy to feed. Though still in its infancy and in need to include more data, we hope it will succeed in serving as a useful research and teaching resource, and as a means for updates, communication, and scholarly collaboration on international and interdisciplinary level. It is our intention to contact the Commission for Byzantine Archaeology for their input and possible collaboration.

The members of the CHAB as well as members of each National Committee are expected to contribute to the feedback of the Portal with the relevant information from each country. Our intention is to put together an International Working Group (IWG) appointed by the members of the Commission and the National Committees whose operation will voluntarily undertake the collection of material and constant updating of the Portal along the lines of the network of scholars that collects bibliographic notices on behalf of the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*. However, the maintenance and sustainability of the Portal in the future (its financial and technical support and regular updating) are major issues which will be discussed in the forthcoming meetings of the CHAB. The web portal *Chalke Gate* was briefly presented in the General Assembly of the AIEB (Venice, Friday 26 August 2022).