



Sir Steven Runciman at Istanbul University: How British Wartime Politics Led to the Establishment of the Byzantine Art History Chair*

Sir Steven Runciman İstanbul Üniversitesinde: İkinci Dünya Savaşı Sırasında İngiliz Politikalarının Bizans Sanatı Tarihi Kürsünün Oluşumuna Etkisi

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*This study has been derived from Verda Bingöl's ongoing doctoral thesis under the supervision of Zeynep Kuban at Istanbul Technical University, Graduate School, Art History PhD Program.

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Submitted/Başvuru: 29.01.2022

Revision Requested/Revizyon Talebi: 21.02.2022

Last Revision Received/Son Revizyon: 17.05.2022

Accepted/Kabul: 10.06.2022

Published Online/Online Yayın: 16.06.2022

Citation/Atrf: Bingöl, Verda ve Kuban, Zeynep.

"Sir Steven Runciman at Istanbul University: How British Wartime Politics Led to the Establishment of the Byzantine Art History Chair". *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı - Journal of Art History* 31 (2022), 109-128.

<https://doi.org/10.26650/sty.2022.1065160>

ABSTRACT

The historiography of Byzantine art history education in Türkiye is a widely overlooked subject, despite a number of studies that have already been carried out. The first, and for a long time the only, Byzantine art history chair in Türkiye was founded in March 1942 at Istanbul University, Faculty of Letters, and the first holder of the chair was the British Byzantinist, Sir Steven Runciman. In its background, this foundation had the turbulent politics of the Second World War and three major institutions connected to it: The British Council, The Ministry of Education Türkiye and Istanbul University. This article deals with the historical and political background surrounding the establishment of the chair and with the key figures involved therein. It also deals with the relationship between the three institutions mentioned above. Through a comprehensive survey of archive materials, memoirs, newspaper, magazine, and journal articles, the article depicts Steven Runciman as a Byzantinist, and reviews his courses, travels, and published articles during his post at Istanbul University. It also sheds light on his contribution to academia in Türkiye between 1942 and 1945. The study aims to define and offer an introduction to the earliest stage of the establishment and the objectives of the first Byzantine art history chair in Türkiye.

Keywords: Byzantine Art History, Steven Runciman, Art History Education, Historiography, Istanbul University

ÖZ

Türkiye'deki Bizans sanatı tarihi eğitimi, konu üzerinde daha önce bazı araştırmalar yapılmış olsa da, ayrıntılı olarak çalışılmamış bir alandır. Türkiye'deki ilk ve uzun süre boyunca tek Bizans sanatı kürsüsü 1942 yılının Mart ayında İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesinde kurulmuş ve kürsünün başkanı İngiliz bizantinist Sir Steven Runciman olmuştur. Bu kuruluşun arka planında İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nın çalkantılı politikaları ve ona bağlı olarak üç ana kurum bulunmaktadır: İngiliz Kültür Heyeti (The British Council), Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı ve İstanbul Üniversitesi. Bu makale, kürsünün kuruluşuna neden olan tarihsel ve siyasal arka plan ile kurumlar ve kıilit isimler arasındaki ilişkiyi inceler. Makalede, kapsamlı bir



arşiv malzemesi, anı kitapları, dergi ve gazete makalesi incelemesinden yola çıkılarak, Steven Runciman'ın bir bizantinist olarak portresi ortaya çıkarılır; İstanbul Üniversitesinde verdiği dersleri, gezileri ve Türkiye'deki çeşitli yayınlardaki yazıları ele alınır. Çalışma, Runciman'ın İstanbul Üniversitesinde çalıştığı 1942 ve 1945 yılları arasında Türkiye'de yapılan akademik çalışmalara olan katkısına ışık tutar. Makalenin amacı, Türkiye'deki ilk Bizans sanatı kürsüsünün en erken evrelerini ve kuruluşundaki amaçları ortaya koymak ve konuya bir giriş sunmaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Bizans Sanatı Tarihi, Steven Runciman, Sanat Tarihi Eğitimi, Tarihyazımı, İstanbul Üniversitesi

Introduction

The conventional historiographical narrative of the establishment of an art history chair in Turkish universities takes the year 1943 as its starting point. This is the year in which the Turkish and Islamic art history chair was established by a German-speaking art historian, Ernst Diez, at Istanbul University. However within this discourse, a fact which has typically been ignored is that the chair of Byzantine art history had been established by a British scholar one year prior to this, in 1942. Two reasons could be given for this oversight, the first of which being that, unlike the chair of Byzantine art, the chair of Turkish and Islamic art continued uninterrupted, and the second being that the art historians who developed this narrative had a personal relationship with the German-speaking professors. They knew them, they were their students, and their research areas focused on Turkish and Islamic art, rather than on Byzantine art.

The establishment of the chair of Byzantine art history is closely linked to the politics and intercultural relationships between Türkiye and Britain during the Second World War. In this context, this article discusses the historical and cultural influences behind the establishment of the chair before introducing the first chair holder, Steven Runciman, and his contribution to the field of Byzantine art and history in Türkiye. This article aims to provide an introduction to the subject and to offer a new perspective on the position of the chair of Byzantine art history within the field of art history education in Turkish universities. To this end, archive documents, autobiographies, and biographies of the key figures, as well as newspaper and journal articles have been closely examined.

The British Council

The foundation of the chair of Byzantine art history at Istanbul University has the Second World War's turbulent bureaucratic relations in its background, specifically the tripartite relationship between the Turkish government, Istanbul University, and the British Council. Before this relationship is clarified, however, the British Council's history and objectives shall be explained.

The British Council is a cultural and educational organization founded in 1934 by the British Foreign Office "to create in a country overseas a basis of friendly knowledge and understanding of the people of this country, of their philosophy and way of life, which will lead to a sympathetic appreciation of British foreign policy, whatever for the moment that policy may be and from whatever political conviction it may spring."¹ According to this description, the main objectives of the Council right before the Second World War can be summarized as follows: to promote British culture and lifestyle in politically crucial countries (in this way, the "western" lifestyle image that the people of these countries had in their minds would match that of the British lifestyle); to instill an appealing image among the people, politicians, and government officers of those countries; and by cultural influence, to prevent yet neutral countries

1 "Our History," British Council, retrieved 06 December 2021, <https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/history>

from entering the war on the Axis side for the duration of the war. After the war, the Council went on to serve mostly educational and cultural exchange purposes which continue to this day.

During its early years, the Council was mostly active in the Balkans and the Middle East, having two separate branches for each area. The Middle East branch covered Aden, Cyprus, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Transjordan, and Turkiye and the Council had different functions in each of them, but education, especially that of the English language, was the primary concern.² In Turkiye the British Council was mostly, but not exclusively, responsible for finding English teachers for the *Halkevleri* (People's Houses)³ and high schools, and professors for the universities. They even "cooperated with the Americans by providing an assistant to Professor Thomas Whittemore, who was in charge of the restoration of Santa Sophia in Istanbul."⁴

The British Council's first overseas office was opened in Egypt in 1938, and its Ankara office followed soon after, opening in 1940. Its first representative was Michael Grant (1914-2004), who was only 26 years old at the time (Figure 1, Figure 2).



Figure 1: Michael Grant (second from the left) and Hasan Âli Yücel (left) at the opening of a children's painting exhibition in Ankara. "İngiliz Çocukları Resim Sergisi Dün Açıldı," *Ulus*, 6 October 1945, 1

2 Frances Donaldson, *The British Council: The First Fifty Years* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), 91, 92.

3 "People's Houses, the cultural plus social institutes organised by the People's Party, the governing single party in Turkiye." Michael Grant, *My First Eighty Years* (Henley-on-Thames: Aidan Ellis Publishing, 1994), 65.

4 Grant, *My First Eighty Years*, 66.



Figure 2: Michael Grant (second from the right) and the minister of education Hasan Âli Yücel (right) at the opening of the British Architecture exhibition in Ankara. “Maarif Vekilimiz Dün Halkevinde İngiliz Mimari Sergisini Açtı,” *Ulus*, 6 June 1944, 1.

Grant had studied Classics at the University of Cambridge and was a numismatics expert. From the start, he proved himself as a capable director and won the trust and friendship of the then Minister of Education, Hasan Âli Yücel. The British Council’s work in Türkiye was mostly carried out through the *Halkevleri*, where English as second language courses took place, libraries containing English books were opened, and conferences, art and photography exhibitions, and film screenings about British culture and lifestyle were held.⁵ One of Grant’s greatest responsibilities was that of recruiting English teachers to the *Halkevleri*, a responsibility he fulfilled with a welcoming attitude from the ruling party and the directorate of the *Halkevleri*, because “in that epoch, the British Council was not part of the British Embassy . . . , so that the Party could accept our [their] teachers without seeming to take a political line, which it wanted to avoid, especially during the war.”⁶ The British were the only foreign nationals that had the privilege of recruiting their teachers into the *Halkevleri*.⁷ Likewise, Türkiye opened a *Halkevi* in London on 19 February 1942. It functioned similarly to the British Council in Türkiye by giving Turkish courses, hosting conferences, tea parties, movie and dance nights, exhibitions, and *bayram* celebrations. It officially closed down in 1950.⁸

5 Eminaalp Malkoç, “1940’lı Yıllarda British Council/İngiliz Kültür Heyeti’nin Halkevleri Üzerinden Türkiye Etkinlikleri,” *Türk İnkılâp Tarihi Yıllığı* 1 (2019): 5.

6 Grant, *My First Eighty Years*, 65.

7 Grant, *My First Eighty Years*, 66.

8 For more information on the London Halkevi, see: Eminaalp Malkoç, “Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Belgelerinde Yurtdışındaki İlk ve Tek Halkevi Örneği: Londra Türk Halkevi,” *Türkoloji Kültürü* 2/4 (Summer 2009), 35-55 and

Connections Between The British Council and Istanbul University

Apart from the work of promoting culture undertaken by the British Council, Grant personally found the recruitment of British professors to university positions the most important part of his job because he was “entrusted by the Council with the task of getting British professors into Istanbul University”⁹ “to counterbalance the many German refugees who had acquired tenure there.”¹⁰ The many German refugees he mentioned are the scholars who, from 1933 onwards, sought refuge from the Nazi regime in the newly established Istanbul University. Their need for refuge was due to the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service (*Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums*) that banned certain groups of people from holding civil, state and university positions in Germany.¹¹ During the eight years following the opening of Istanbul University, there had been no British scholars with a tenured post. However, with Grant’s intervention in 1941, eight British scholars were hired: at the Faculty of Natural Sciences Patrick Du Val (Geometry, 1941-1949), Thomas Royds (Astronomy, 1942-1947), Vernon Howes Legg (Industrial Chemistry, 1941-1944), Frederick Hurn Constable (Physical Chemistry, 1943-1971), and J. S. Rankin (Physics and Mechanics, 1943-1945); and at the Faculty of Letters George Bean (Classical Archaeology, 1944-1970), Ronald Syme (Classical Philology, 1942-1945), and Steven Runciman (Byzantine Art History, 1942-1945).¹²

The British Council’s interest in appointing professors to Istanbul University raised suspicions about the Council’s “hidden” intentions, namely intelligence work. It should be noted here, that the Council did not work with, nor did they have good relations with, the British Embassy in Ankara. In addition, the Turkish Ministry of Education was very careful to keep the country’s impartiality during the war, taking great pains to this effect. Donaldson suggests that although there might have been a few attempts, there is no evidence of espionage from British scholars within the university:

Many people believe that in the war years British Council staff were used for Intelligence work. There is absolutely no evidence for this and I have not met anyone working for the Council then or now who believes it. Since, if true, it would run counter to everything the Council

Hakan Yaşar, “Yurtdışında bir Kültür Kurumu: Londra Halkevi,” *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi* 45 (Spring 2010), 177-215, retrieved 13 January 2022, doi:10.1501/Tite_0000000322.

9 Grant, *My First Eighty Years*, 74.

10 Mino Dinshaw, *Outlandish Knight: The Byzantine Life of Steven Runciman* (London: Penguin Books, 2017), 281.

11 On the whole, the refugees that are referred to were not a homogenous group of people. They consisted of scholars with Jewish backgrounds or those that had Jewish family members, homosexuals, people that held political views which were not approved by the Nazis, or those who did not want to live under the Nazi rule; as well as scholars such as Paul Bonatz or Ernst Diez who were not refugees at all, or those that were specifically sent to Türkiye by the Nazi government.

12 Emre Dölen, “İstanbul Darülfünunu’nda ve İstanbul Üniversitesi’nde Yabancı Öğretim Elemanları,” in *Türkiye’de Üniversite Anlayışının Gelişimi (1861-1961)*, eds. Namık Kemal Aras, Emre Dölen and Osman Bahadır (Ankara: TÜBA), 138.

stood for, it seems most unlikely, although it is clearly impossible to refute the suggestion that here and there some Council officer might have been persuaded or even inserted.¹³

The highly amicable personal friendship between Michael Grant and Hasan Âli Yücel, obvious in both of their memoirs, seems to be the pivotal point in the intercultural wartime relationship between Britain and Türkiye. As Yücel put it “I [he] gave them all the help I [he] could.”¹⁴ Likewise, Grant was placed in favorable positions among the Turkish officials, such as being invited to private parties. Some high-ranking Turkish officials approached him first on professional matters (job hunting), assuming that they could take advantage of his influence on Yücel.¹⁵ This close relationship resulted in Yücel counting on Grant to find a suitable professor to establish a Byzantine art history chair at Istanbul University, and Grant at once suggested his close friend, Steven Runciman. Runciman recounts the event that led to this nomination as follows:

In the early spring of 1942, when I was living in Jerusalem, working for the Government Information Service there, I suddenly received word from our Foreign Office telling me that I was to go to Istanbul. It seemed that Atatürk’s successor, President İsmet İnönü, had been driving round Istanbul and had noticed a building that he did not recognize. He made enquiries; and at last someone said that it was probably Byzantine, but no one could tell him anything more. He was angry to find that none of his officials knew a thing about Byzantium. It was, he said, all part of the history of the city and the country. It was disgraceful that Byzantine studies were not taught at the University. He sent for his Minister of Education and told him to find a professor at once who could teach the subject. The Minister appealed for help to the head of the British Council in Turkey, who happened to be my friend Michael Grant, with whom I had journeyed to Trebizond in 1937. Michael at once suggested that I would be suitable. The British government at the time was anxious to do what it could to please the Turks. So, when a formal request for my services arrived in London it was granted at once.¹⁶

- 13 Donaldson, *The British Council*, 97. As the official institutional history book of the British Council, it is expected that such activities of intelligence would be denied, or omitted in it. However, Ronald Syme’s and Steven Runciman’s activities in particular have been much speculated upon, but without any written records and archive materials, they will continue to remain unresolved issues. Perhaps such intelligence activities should not only be viewed as grand spy narratives, because being in the right place at the right time is also helpful in such situations. In this case, Abulafia gives us a fair point of view concerning Runciman: “Once again we should conclude that he was something more than a professor of Byzantine studies, even if it would be absurd to cast him in the role of James Bond.” David Abulafia, “Sir Steven Runciman (1903-2000) A Memoir,” *Mediterranean Studies* 9 (2000), 6.
- 14 “Onlara elimden gelen yardımı yaptım.” Hasan Âli Yücel, *İngiltere Mektupları* (Ankara: İş Bankası Kültür Cep Kitapları, 1958), 149.
- 15 Grant, *My First Eighty Years*, 73.
- 16 Dinshaw, *Outlandish Knight*, 281; Steven Runciman, *A Traveller’s Alphabet: Partial Memoirs* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 59. However, Donaldson recounts a different development of this occasion: “Driving with him (Yücel) through Istanbul one day, Grant noticed a fine Byzantine building in a state of disrepair and suggested there was need for an expert on Byzantine art. This resulted in the transfer of Professor Steven Runciman from Palestine, where he was serving in the Ministry of Information, to become Professor of Byzantine History and Art at Istanbul University.” Donaldson, *The British Council*, 98. This information

Who is Steven Runciman?

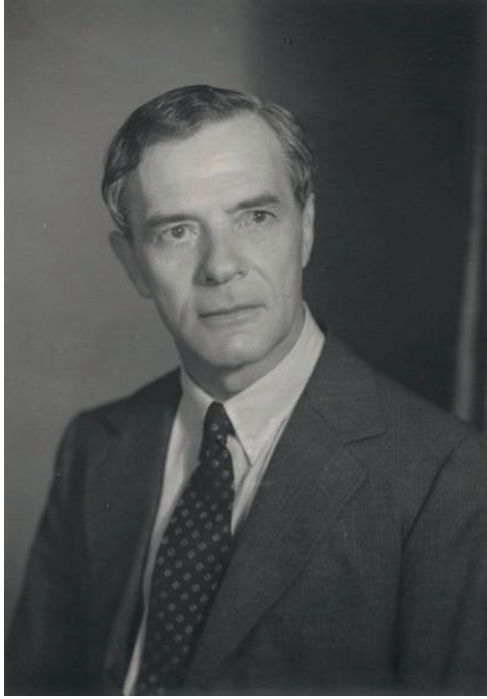


Figure 3: *Steven Runciman*. Photograph by Walter Stoneman, 1957. Bromide print. National Portrait Gallery, London. NPG x46555. Accessed 20.01.2022. <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw175222/Steven-Runciman>

The Honourable Sir James Cochran Stevenson Runciman (1903-2000) (Figure 3) studied history at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he also worked as a lecturer until 1938. After inheriting a large sum of money from his shipping magnate grandfather and wishing to conduct research and to write on the Byzantine Empire, he resigned from his position and began to travel extensively. Even before his commitment to Istanbul University in 1942, Runciman was no stranger to Istanbul, having visited the city three times before: at the end of the Ottoman Empire, and twice during the early republic era. During these visits, together with other privileges such as traveling to Trabzon and Eastern Anatolia, going to yacht parties hosted by ambassadors, and meeting Atatürk, he had got to closely observe the uncovering of the mosaics

without reference is confusing, since it would then mean that İnönü did not have any say in the matter. In either case, two points are certain: the chair of Byzantine Art History was founded after a tangible necessity to study Byzantine artifacts and monuments, and Runciman was appointed through the British Council, specifically through his friendship with Michael Grant, and Grant's good relationships with Hasan Âli Yücel.

in Santa Sophia and the Great Palace of Constantinople.¹⁷ Runciman was a highly productive and popular Byzantinist and author, whose narrative style made complicated historical events easy to comprehend. Largely known as the author of *A History of the Crusades*, he had already published three books on Byzantium¹⁸ before his employment at Istanbul University, and he would go on to publish 15 more books, as well as countless articles and reviews throughout his lifetime.¹⁹

Steven Runciman at Istanbul University

As previously stated, Runciman's invitation and the start of Byzantine studies in Turkish academia began with a chance encounter. Upon the direction of President İsmet İnönü, the Minister of Education Yücel approached the British Council representative Michael Grant in late 1941 to find a suitable Byzantinist to teach the subject at Istanbul University. Finding professors for the University was perhaps the most important subject on Grant's agenda. Therefore Grant gladly and very quickly convinced the best person he thought could do the job, Steven Runciman, to found the Chair. He also convinced the faculty assembly (*Fakülte meclisi*) of Istanbul University with his letter of recommendation. Even though Runciman was at first reluctant to leave his pleasant life in Jerusalem, where he was working for the Government Information Service,²⁰ he arrived in Istanbul on 1 March 1942, and immediately dove into Turkish academia.

The official correspondence between the Dean of Faculty of Letters, the University Rectorate, the Higher Education General Directorate, the Minister of Education and the General Directorate of Governmental Decree shows that Runciman was appointed as a professor to the newly founded Chair of Byzantine Art History.²¹ In the official documents of the later years, he is mostly referred to as the Professor of Byzantine Art History.²² Runciman himself refers to this

17 Runciman, *A Traveller's Alphabet*, 56-58.

18 Steven Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and His Reign: A Study of Tenth-Century Byzantium* (Cambridge University Press, 1929), Steven Runciman, *A History of the First Bulgarian Empire* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1930), Steven Runciman, *Byzantine Civilisation* (London: Edward Arnold, 1933).

19 Selected works: Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades: Volume 1. The First Crusade and the Foundation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Cambridge University Press, 1951); Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades: Volume 2. The Kingdom of Jerusalem and the Frankish East* (Cambridge University Press, 1952); Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades: Volume 3. The Kingdom of Acre and the Later Crusades* (Cambridge University Press, 1954); Steven Runciman, *The Fall of Constantinople 1453* (Cambridge University Press, 1965); Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity: A Study of the Patriarchate of Constantinople from the Eve of the Turkish Conquest to the Greek War of Independence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1968); Steven Runciman, *Byzantine Style and Civilization* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1975). For a complete bibliography, see: "Sir Steven Runciman: A Bibliography," in *Byzantine Style, Religion and Civilization: In Honour of Sir Steven Runciman*, ed.: Elizabeth Jeffreys (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), xx-xxxviii.

20 see: Footnote 16.

21 Directorate of State Archives Republican Archives (BCA), Kararlar Daire Başkanlığı (30-18-1-2) 98/33/16, 24.04.1942.

22 The Chair has been called differently in the Turkish correspondences: Bizans Sanatı Kürsüsü, Bizans Sanat Tarihi Kürsüsü and Bizans Sanatı Tarihi Kürsüsü. Michael Grant's letter of recommendation mentions Runciman's

case as follows: “(...) it was decided to found a Chair of Byzantine History and Art at Istanbul University.”²³ However, this chair was not like that of an independent undergraduate department of today, because the students did not graduate as Byzantinists. The chair’s function will be explained in the following pages.

Runciman’s employment contract at Istanbul University was initially signed for three months, between 1st March 1942 and 31st May 1942. It was later extended twice, up to 31st May 1946.²⁴ According to this contract, he was appointed as professor to the History and Archaeology Institutes separately,²⁵ and his duties were:

1) To teach Byzantine Art at the Faculty of Letters, Institute of Archaeology, and Byzantine History at the Institute of History. To arrange the courses’ seminars and organize research trips on the subject.

2) To prepare a complete bibliography on the Byzantine Empire.

3) When requested by the ministry, to give consultancy on Byzantine monuments.

4) To work as an advisor on Byzantine archaeological finds.

The contract’s first article shows that even though a Byzantine art history chair was established and Prof. Runciman was its holder and sole lecturer, it served the purpose of supporting the Archaeology and History Departments through its courses. Due to the “certificate system” at the University at the time, students who were to graduate with an archaeology degree could take the Byzantine Art History Certificate, and students with a history degree could take the Byzantine History Certificate as their secondary certificate.

Even though the last three articles of the contract point to Runciman’s miscellaneous state-related responsibilities outside the University, no occasions of working as an advisor or consultant as stated ever arose, nor did he prepare a textbook or a bibliography on the Byzantine Empire. He did not organize any research trips with his students either. Runciman only went on personal trips, such as a field trip to work on an article, or to conduct research on behalf of a British commission (Table 1).

candidacy as “Candidat pour le Professorat D’Art Byzantin a L’Université d’Istanbul” (Candidate for Professor of Byzantine Art at Istanbul University).

23 Steven Runciman, “Byzantine Studies in Turkey 1939-1945,” *Byzantinoslavica: International Journal of Byzantine Studies* IX (1947-1948), 143.

24 Istanbul University Personnel Archive. Steven Runciman Folder, Tedris İşleri Müdürlüğü 7773, 25.05.1942; 4102-104/8444, 19.07.1942; 4102-104/7861, 22.06.1943.

25 “Profesör Runciman Arkeoloji ve Tarih enstitüleri profesörlüğüne tayin edilmiştir.”

Table 1: Runciman's Travels During His Post in Türkiye²⁶

Date	Destination	Reason
September 1943	Konya	Together with the assistant of the history chair, Oktay Kazanlı, to visit Konya Museum and investigate the remains of antiquity around the city. ²⁷
End of August until 20.09.1943	Cyprus	To conduct archaeological research as a member of a British commission that dealt with Cypriot antiquities. ²⁸
Right after the academic year of 1944 (Possibly in May)	Syria, Tripoli and Beirut	“To trace the Crusader routes across Anatolia and to visit all the Crusader sites further to the south.” ²⁹ To accompany his translator/assistant Münire Karacalarlı Çelebi and her stepson on their voyage to Syria for a Mevlevi Order matter. ³⁰
July 1944	Egypt	To do academic research and writing, as well as negotiate his future with the British Council. ³¹
Early August 1944	Jerusalem	For a holiday. ³²
15-30 September 1944	Iran	To meet his brother to mourn the death of their sister, and at the same time to give two lectures in Tehran and Isfahan, arranged by the British Council. ³³
Late September/ Early October 1944, for a week	Iraq	On the way to return to his work in Istanbul. ³⁴
May 1945	Cyprus	To recover from sciatica. ³⁵

His appointment at Istanbul University and his travels might indicate the interests of wartime Britain, but that is not to say that he did not take his job seriously. He lectured on Byzantine history to first-year history students, all of whom were Muslim Turks. These courses were rather an outline of Byzantine history. Even though Runciman was able to converse in Turkish, he wrote down his lectures in English beforehand, and his assistant and translator

26 This table was prepared with the help of documents in the Steven Runciman folder at Istanbul University Personnel Archive, and his correspondence.

27 Istanbul University Personnel Archive, Steven Runciman folder 4102-104-65/8356, 16.08.1943. As a result of this visit, he wrote an article in *Biz ve Dünya* magazine called *Konya'yı Ziyaret*, in which he praises the city for its history and monuments. Steven Runciman, “Konya'yı Ziyaret,” transl. Ahmet Armağan, *Biz ve Dünya* 7 (26.09.1944), 9, 14.

28 Istanbul University Personnel Archive, Steven Runciman Folder, Edebiyat Fakültesi Dekanlığı 2350, 26.08.1943.

29 Runciman, *A Traveller's Alphabet*, 62. Runciman had proposed to the University that he would go to England during the summer holidays to deal with personal matters and to work on an article to be published by Cambridge University Press. He instead went to the aforementioned countries (Istanbul University Personnel Archive, Steven Runciman Folder, Edebiyat Fakültesi Dekanlığı 1734, 02.05.1944).

30 Dinshaw, *Outlandish Knight*, 292.

31 Dinshaw, *Outlandish Knight*, 294.

32 Dinshaw, *Outlandish Knight*, 296.

33 Dinshaw, *Outlandish Knight*, 300-302. His lecture given at the Anglo-Persian Institute, Tehran on 26 September 1944 was titled *The Iranian Influence on Medieval European Culture* (“Sir Steven Runciman: A Bibliography,” xxii).

34 Dinshaw, *Outlandish Knight*, 303.

35 Dinshaw, *Outlandish Knight*, 306; Runciman, *A Traveller's Alphabet*, 69.

Münire Karacalarlı Çelebi³⁶ consecutively translated them into Turkish in the class. This way the students had plenty of time to write down everything he had said, leading them to repeat the same information during the oral examinations. According to his observations, marking the students' notes in the examinations of the history classes depended on the political views of his fellow examiners, rather than how well prepared the students were: "For the History Department I had two co-examiners, both Turkish, one an ardent pan-Turanian, only interested in Turkic races, the other a pious Moslem, only interested in Islam. Each marked the students according to their views rather than to their historical knowledge."³⁷

Runciman enjoyed his Byzantine art class more, which was smaller in size (between 5 and 10) and also included Christian and Jewish students. They were run as seminars and he held the classes mostly at home in English or French, so there was no need for translation, and he found the girls abler than the boys.³⁸ As A. Bryer remarks, "SR's [Steven Runciman's] lectures in Istanbul (originally intended for publication in Turkish) were, to judge by their typescripts, the most rigorous introduction to Byzantine Studies that any student could then find beyond Munich. He had to quote Kekaumenos from memory and taught Armenian numismatic epigraphy on the blackboard."³⁹ Eyice views Runciman's courses similarly, adding that since Runciman was not an art historian, he prepared the courses by compiling the information from books on Byzantine art, but he did it so well that no area of the subject was excluded.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, no trace of either the English or the Turkish versions of the course typescripts has yet been found. That is why our knowledge about the course contents is very limited.

Runciman recalls his time in Istanbul fondly; in fact, he has pleasant memories of both his Turkish and German friends and colleagues and he was happy to be spending the wartime in a neutral country. However, academically, it is evident through his words that he was not wholly satisfied: "From a purely academic aspect it was not very rewarding,"⁴¹ "From the point of

36 Münire Karacalarlı (1912/1913-?) studied Hittitology and archaeology at Istanbul University and graduated in 1939. While still a student, she was appointed as the translator to the Faculty of Letters, Institute of Archaeology. She could speak English, French and some German. In 1941, her position changed as "assistant" of the Institute of Archaeology, but she continued her main job of translating, especially that of Runciman's courses. In 1948, she was dismissed on grounds that she was scientifically unproductive, and that since Runciman was gone, she was not needed at the faculty. As a result, her position was filled by Semavi Eyice. She was briefly married to "Çelebi Efendi" Bakir Çelebi in 1943, which is why her names in the published works are Münire Karacalarlı, Münire Çelebi, or Münire Bakir Çelebi.

37 Runciman, *A Traveller's Alphabet*, 69. According to the student guide of 1937/1938, the examination commission had to consist of three professors of the same department, regardless of the nationality of the professors. *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi 1937-1938 Ders Yılı Talebe Kılavuzu* (İstanbul: Burhaneddin Matbaası, 1937), 22. In Runciman's case, the pan-Turanian professor would have been Zeki Velidi Togan.

38 Runciman, *A Traveller's Alphabet*, 59.

39 Anthony Bryer, "James Cochran Stevenson Runciman 1903–2000," in *Proceedings of the British Academy: Biographical Memoirs of Fellows II*, ed. P. J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 120:366.

40 Semavi Eyice, "İstanbul Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesinde Bizans Sanatı Öğretimi ve Araştırmaları," in *Cumhuriyetin 50. Yılına Armağan* (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1973), 408.

41 Runciman, *A Traveller's Alphabet*, 59.

view of academic research my years in Istanbul were wasted.”⁴² In a letter to his mother, he complains: “I can’t do any real research myself and I can’t achieve any real education of my pupils because the raw material is so raw- their preliminary education is so feeble.”⁴³ In the same letter, he adds that he had been asked to give a regular course at the Academy of Fine Arts. Also in another letter dated March 1944, he mentions throwing a party “for all my [his] friends on the staff of the University and the Academy of Fine Arts.”⁴⁴ Even though there are no official records of him having held a post at the Academy, he regularly held conferences on Byzantine art there. Their texts have been translated into Turkish and published in the journal, *Arkitekt*. These articles will be studied in detail below. Financially, he was better off than many of his colleagues at the University because, his 300 lira/month salary aside, like the other British professors, Runciman was given “a useful subsidy by the British Council, so we [they] were never in difficulties,”⁴⁵ because “the Ministry had no objection to the British Council topping up the British teachers’ salaries.”⁴⁶

Runciman’s Extracurricular Responsibilities and Publications

As mentioned above, Runciman’s contract gave him the extracurricular responsibilities of arranging field trips and acting as an advisor for Byzantine monuments if needed, but such needs or occasions never arose. Still, his regular courses at the University aside, Runciman gave several seminars and wrote articles throughout his post in Istanbul and also afterward, during one of his many visits to the city.

The first of these seminars took place in the University, under “Üniversite Konferansları” (University Conferences). University Conferences were a series of conferences that marked the start of the academic year, and they took place for ten years, between 1935 and 1945. At the conferences, around 10 professors gave seminars on their research topics, which ranged from ethics to tobacco. The texts of these seminars were published one year later. Runciman gave his seminar at the beginning of the academic year 1942-43, and its title was *Bizans Zamanında İstanbul Üniversitesi* (Istanbul University During the Byzantine Empire). Its subject was exactly what its title suggested: the first organized university in the world, founded in Constantinople and opened (after closing several times) in the 6th, 9th, 11th and 13th centuries. It was translated by his translator/assistant Münire Karacalarlı Çelebi, and published in the booklet *Üniversite Konferansları* of 1944.⁴⁷

In January and July 1943, Runciman published two articles in *Belleten*, the journal of Türk Tarih Kurumu (Turkish Historical Society), in which he designated himself as “Istanbul

42 Runciman, *A Traveller’s Alphabet*, 62.

43 Dinshaw, *Outlandish Knight*, 286.

44 Dinshaw, *Outlandish Knight*, 290.

45 Runciman, *A Traveller’s Alphabet*, 60.

46 Grant, *My First Eighty Years*, 74.

47 Steven Runciman, “Bizans Zamanında İstanbul Üniversitesi,” transl. Münire Bakir Çelebi in *Üniversite Konferansları 1942-1943* (İstanbul: Kenan Matbaası, 1944), 126-136.

University Faculty of Letters Professor of Byzantine History". This title was fitting for his two articles in the journal, as both of their subjects were far from Byzantine art: *Orta Çağların Başlarında Avrupa ve Türkler* (Europe and Turks at the Beginning of the Middle Ages) and *Anadolu'nun Orta Çağlardaki Rolü* (The Role of Anatolia in the Middle Ages). The latter was presented at a meeting of the Turkish Historical Society that took place on 23 May 1942, only two months after he had arrived in Türkiye.⁴⁸

Runciman wrote an article for the short-lived journal *Tarihten Sesler: Aylık Tarih Mecmuası* (Voices from History: Monthly History Magazine), for the March and April 1943 issues, titled *Tarih Devirleri Boyunca İstanbul* (Istanbul Through the Ages). This is a popular history-style article that deals with the (Byzantine) history of the city mostly through its architecture, spanning the years from 660 BCE to the capture of Istanbul by the Ottomans. The article was translated by Rasim Cenani, a lawyer.⁴⁹

As mentioned above, Runciman was asked by the Academy of Fine Arts to give a regular course.⁵⁰ Although he was never officially employed there, his conferences were translated into Turkish and published in the journal, *Arkitekt*. His first seminar took place in April 1943. Taking into consideration that he wrote to his mother about the offer he received from the Academy in September, it may be assumed that he was asked to hold regular courses after this seminar, which was titled *Bizans San'atının Prensipleri ve Tarifî* (The Principles and Description of Byzantine Art).⁵¹ In this short article, Runciman first defines what he means by Byzantine art, its timespan, its geography, the Byzantines' outlook on art and its influences. He then explains why Byzantine art cannot be studied like any other school of art, starting with its emergence, continuing with its rise and finally, its fall. As the article was originally a text for presentation, he comments on these points only briefly, but in such a way that the listener/reader is well introduced to Byzantine art.

The next year in 1944, Runciman gave four lectures at the Academy, which were all published in *Arkitekt*.⁵² In the first lecture, he began the subject of Byzantine art with the conversion to Christianity, i.e. the time of Constantine the Great, explaining and giving examples of architecture primarily, but also introducing the reader to ornament in architecture, sculpture, painting and decorative arts through to the 11th century. While covering such a wide timespan, he kept the information brief, and his examples were mostly chosen from Istanbul, the city his audience was familiar with. He started his second lecture from where he left off chronologically,

48 Steven Runciman, "Orta Çağların Başlarında Avrupa ve Türkler," *Belleten* 7/25 (January 1943), 45-57; Steven Runciman, "Anadolu'nun Orta Çağlardaki Rolü," *Belleten* 7/27 (July 1943), 549-556.

49 Steven Runciman, "Tarih Devirleri Boyunca İstanbul," transl. Rasim Cenani, *Tarihten Sesler* (15 March 1943), 19-22; Steven Runciman, "Tarih Devirleri Boyunca İstanbul," transl. Rasim Cenani, *Tarihten Sesler* (15 April 1943), 18-22.

50 Dinshaw, *Outlandish Knight*, 287.

51 Steven Runciman, "Bizans San'atının Prensipleri ve Tarifî," *Arkitekt* 137-138 (1943), 127-130.

52 Steven Runciman, "Bizans Sanatı," *Arkitekt* 145-146 (1944), 20-24; Steven Runciman, "Bizans Sanatı," *Arkitekt* 147-148 (1944), 77-79/82; Steven Runciman, "Romantik Sanat ve Bizantium," *Arkitekt* 149-150 (1944), 118-120; Steven Runciman, "Bizantium ve Gotik Sanatın Doğuşu," *Arkitekt* 151-152 (1944), 179-181.

from the end of the 11th century. After a brief historical background, Runciman introduced architecture, mosaics, frescoes, manuscripts and handcrafts by always referring to the causes and effects. He ended his talk/article once again chronologically with the end of the Byzantine Empire, and apologized for having taught this subject only in summary form. The third and fourth (final) talks focused on the influence of Byzantine art on Romanesque and Gothic architecture and arts. Unlike the first two talks, he did not summarize their characteristics. He rather concentrated on the effects that Byzantine and Eastern arts had on them, basing his arguments on historical background. The most significant remarks in these articles are his criticism of the earlier historians' views of separating Europe into two poles - Western and Eastern Europe - and trying to study each as if they had no relationship with one another. All of these five seminars were translated into Turkish by Münire Karacalarlı Çelebi, as were his university lectures. As previously mentioned, those lectures were not official courses, but were most probably a series of conferences organized by the Academy to teach the basics of Byzantine art to those interested.

Runciman was once a speaker at one of the British Council conferences in *Halkevleri*, under the supervision of his friend Michael Grant. His lecture, titled *Istanbul* took place in the Eminönü Halkevi on 9th February 1943.⁵³

Runciman was one of the speakers at III. Türk Tarih Kongresi (The Third Turkish History Congress) in Ankara, between 15 and 20 November 1943. He was the only non-Turkish keynote speaker on the second day, and his name came before the Germans in the conference program, a fact that he enjoyed.⁵⁴ He gave his talk, *Deniz Kuvvetinin Ortaçağ Tarihindeki Rolü* (The Role of the Navy in the Middle Ages) in Turkish.⁵⁵ Runciman observed the event to be a place to “tell exactly who is and who is not in high fashion at the moment”. He was pleased with the welcome he received, and he found the proceedings entertaining.⁵⁶

Dinshaw writes that Runciman was promoted to various committees in Türkiye, but he was not particularly delighted by them. He was even on the board for the purification of the Turkish language- a task for which he could not be said to be qualified.⁵⁷ This committee would have been the Türk Dil Kurumu (The Turkish Language Association). Runciman also had a long-standing affiliation with the British Institute of Archaeology in Ankara.⁵⁸

Although Runciman resigned from his post when the Second World War ended in 1945, he came back to Istanbul many times as a visitor. During one of these visits, he gave a lecture

53 “Lectures in English at the Eminönü Halkevi,” *Réalité* 82 (25 December 1942), V.

54 Dinshaw, *Outlandish Knight*, 290.

55 Steven Runciman, “Deniz Kuvvetinin Ortaçağ Tarihindeki Rolü,” in *III. Türk Tarih Kongresi: Kongreye Sunulan Tebliğler* (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 1948), 156-164.

56 Dinshaw, *Outlandish Knight*, 290.

57 Dinshaw, *Outlandish Knight*, 290.

58 Bryer mentions that Runciman was its president between 1962 and 1975 and vice-president between 1975 and 2000, but this information cannot be correct; he must have been one of its board members or trustees. Anthony Bryer, “James Cochran Stevenson Runciman (1903-2000),” in *Byzantine Style, Religion and Civilization: In Honour of Sir Steven Runciman*, ed.: Elizabeth Jeffreys (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), lii.

at the Faculty of Letters in 1958, titled *Avrupa Medeniyetinin Gelişmesi Üzerindeki İslâmî Tesirler* (Islamic Influences on the Advance of European Civilization). The text of the lecture was translated by Dr. Nuşin Asgari and printed a year later in the *Journal of Oriental Studies*.⁵⁹

Runciman's Last Days at Istanbul University

As Michael Grant mentions, except for one lecturer, Howes Legg, all the British scholars at Istanbul University stayed and taught until the end of the war, some even for much longer.⁶⁰ Runciman was among those that left right after the war. Even though his contract was due to end on 31 May 1946, "I [he] could not face another winter in that climate, and both the University and the British Council, which was sponsoring me [him], agreed that it was better that I [he] should resign."⁶¹ He cited his sciatica attacks as the reason, and Istanbul's damp weather as the reason for the attacks. In our opinion, however, that was not the only reason because, in his memoir, Runciman emphasizes in various instances that the length of time he had spent in "oriental academic life" had been enough for him.⁶² Thus Runciman resigned from his post in June 1945 and shortly afterward was stationed in Athens as the Representative of the British Council.⁶³ As a matter of fact, his academic position at Istanbul University was his first and last official "professorship". For most of his life, he remained an independent scholar. With both academic and popular works on the Byzantine Empire, Runciman contributed immensely to Byzantine scholarship. This curious Scotsman died at the ripe age of 97, leaving numerous articles, books, memoirs and conference papers behind.

Conclusion

After the Second World War ended in 1945, neither Runciman nor Grant stayed in Türkiye, which meant that the wartime interests of Britain to impose a direct cultural influence over Türkiye diminished, and the close relationship between Grant and Yücel came to an end, at least on a professional level. It also meant that after Runciman, a British person to take over his job could hardly be found. Before he left, Runciman had promised the Faculty that he would find a suitable person to take his place, but this promise was not fulfilled. Immediately after Runciman's departure, his Byzantine history courses were led by a history lecturer of the University, Oktay Kazanlı, between 1945 and 1946,⁶⁴ but his Byzantine art history courses did not have an official lecturer. According to Eyice's account, the professor of Turkish and

59 Steven Runciman, "Avrupa Medeniyetinin Gelişmesi Üzerindeki İslami Tesirler," transl. Nuşin Asgari, *Şarkiyat Mecmuası* 3 (1959), 1-12.

60 Grant, *My First Eighty Years*, 74.

61 Runciman, *A Traveller's Alphabet*, 69.

62 Runciman, *A Traveller's Alphabet*, 69-70.

63 Istanbul University Personnel Archive, Steven Runciman folder 2945, 25.06.1945; Runciman, *A Traveller's Alphabet*, 70.

64 Runciman, "Byzantine Studies in Turkey", 143.

Islamic arts at the time, Ernst Diez, continued the Byzantine art history courses.⁶⁵ About one year after Runciman left, the Faculty of Letters corresponded again with the British Council for a new lecturer of Byzantine Art and History. A photographer called Charles John Hope Johnstone (1883-1970), who was working at the British Council at that time, was employed to continue the Byzantine history and art history courses, which he did by reading the notes that Runciman had left him.⁶⁶ His employment lasted for one year, until the Fall Semester of 1947/1948. From 1948 onwards, there is no trace of British scholarship in Byzantine history and art at Istanbul University. With the translator/assistant Münire Karacalarlı Çelebi's dismissal because her assistance was no longer required, and upon no successor to Runciman being found, the University fell back on its old practice of inviting a German-speaking scholar for the Byzantine Art History Chair. Consequently, an archaeologist who was no stranger to Türkiye and especially to Istanbul, Prof. Alfons Maria Schneider, was invited to continue this post in 1947. Even though he accepted this offer in the beginning, he declined it at the last moment. This resulted in a new search among Byzantinists from three countries (the candidates included Ugo Monneret de Villard and Sergio Bettini from Italy; Friedrich Gerke, Hubert Schrade and Philipp Schweinfurth from Germany; and Wladimir Sas-Zaloziecky from Austria), and in the end, Philipp Schweinfurth (1887-1954) became the new professor of Byzantine art history. In the meantime, Semavi Eyice was appointed as the assistant for the chair, since that position was available after Karacalarlı Çelebi's dismissal. However, Schweinfurth's appointment that began in 1950 did not continue for long due to his death four years later, and consequently, the courses, as well as the chair, began to be led by Eyice until his retirement in 1990.⁶⁷

Even though the Byzantine Art History Chair was founded as a result of the politics of the Second World War and Great Britain's goal of creating a cultural dominance over the Turkish Republic, it was nevertheless an important step in starting Byzantine studies in Turkish academia. Steven Runciman's motivation in accepting the offer of work at Istanbul University was not because he specifically wanted to establish a Byzantine art history chair, but because he had a sense of duty. For someone whose previous employment was with the Government Information Service in Cairo and Jerusalem, this duty had implications of espionage: "More realistically, we have to see Runciman's arrival in Istanbul as an attempt by the British authorities to use him as a conduit for information gathered from the Germans in a country where Allied and Axis diplomats vied for influence, and for access to secrets."⁶⁸ Indeed he was reported by the

65 Semavi Eyice, "İ.Ü. Edebiyat Fakültesi Sanat Tarihi Kürsüsü'nün Kurucusu Prof. Dr. Ernst Diez (1878-1961)," *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı* 14 (1997), 12.

66 Eyice, "İstanbul Üniversitesi," 409; Istanbul University Personnel Archive, Hope Johnstone Folder, İstanbul Üniversitesi Rektörlüğü Giden Evrak 41028-4/11522, 25.04.1946.

67 Engin Akyürek, "Modern Türkiye'de Bizans Sanatı Tarihi," in *Cumhuriyet Döneminde Geçmiş Bakış Açıkları: Klasik ve Bizans Dönemleri*, eds. Scott Redford and Nina Ergin (İstanbul: Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2010), 250.

68 Abulafia, "Sir Steven Runciman," 6.

Italian embassy as a suspected spy, and the Turkish police had an “uninteresting” file on him,⁶⁹ but in the end, he never got into trouble with the Turkish authorities. Runciman’s translator/assistant, Münire Karacalarlı Çelebi was also accused by Eyice of being an English spy and of working for a British propaganda magazine.⁷⁰ Although such espionage activities provide a distinctive background for the establishment of the Chair, Runciman took his teaching job quite seriously. He was always well prepared for the courses, he made sure to provide the students with a complete overview of Byzantine art and history, and he cared about their academic achievements. At the same time, during his three-year post in Istanbul, Runciman wrote numerous articles for both academic and popular journals in Türkiye and gave many conferences on the different subject areas of the Byzantine Empire, which contributed to the visibility of Byzantine art history discipline in Türkiye. His employment was also the reason why the Turkish and Islamic arts chair was established at Istanbul University, which is the topic of another research article. Nonetheless, it can be claimed that Runciman did not truly establish a “school” of Byzantine art history at Istanbul University. Firstly, he was more a Byzantine historian than an art historian; secondly, in principle, he did not have that particular motivation; thirdly, he remained in Türkiye for only three years, and finally, he did not train the next generation of Byzantine scholars. For example, he held his translator Münire Karacalarlı Çelebi in high esteem, but he did not contribute to her academic development. Academia-wise, his employment at the university had the advantage of the foundation of a Byzantine art history chair, and through that, access to scholarship on the Byzantine Empire for students of both history and archaeology.

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Conflict of Interest: The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

Grant Support: The authors declared that this study has received no financial support.

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69 Runciman, *A Traveller’s Alphabet*, 65.

70 Selim Efe Erdem, *Semavi Eyice Kitabı: İstanbul’un Yaşayan Efsanesi* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2014), 188-189. Eyice recalls the propaganda magazine to be *Réalité*, but in reality she had worked for the *Geçit/Review* magazine, which was a culture and arts magazine of the British Council.

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