



Title	How Should We Understand Hans-Georg Beck's Interpretation of Byzantium as Reflected in his <i>Das byzantinische Jahrtausend</i> ?
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# How Should We Understand Hans-Georg Beck's Interpretation of Byzantium as Reflected in his *Das byzantinische Jahrtausend*?

TODA Satoshi

**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to discuss how to understand Hans-Georg Beck's interpretation of Byzantium as reflected in his *Das byzantinische Jahrtausend*. It argues that, although Beck has accomplished remarkable contributions in the field of studies in Byzantine *Verfassungsgeschichte* and *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, his main research interest remained centered, throughout his academic career, on Byzantine theology (and Christianity) as well as on Byzantine literature.

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The purpose of this article is to try to understand Hans-Georg Beck's interpretation of Byzantium as reflected in his *Das byzantinische Jahrtausend*, one of his major works which was translated into Japanese by myself<sup>1</sup>.

## 1. Byzantine Studies in Japan and Beck

As the original version of this article was written in Japanese<sup>2</sup>, it would not be useless also for this English version to begin by explaining some Japanese contexts.

The works of Hans-Georg Beck (1910-1999), an internationally famous German Byzantinist, was intensively introduced to Japanese scholars of Byzantine studies by the late Prof. Watanabe Kin-ichi (1924-2011), who was *the* pioneer of Byzantine studies in Japan in the fullest sense of the term.

Perhaps some bio-bibliographical comments on Watanabe's career are in place here. Having commenced his research just after the end of the WWII, from around 1950 onward Watanabe published energetically his scientific contributions, first on Byzantium as well as on Hellenistic, Roman and

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1 H. -G. ベック (H.-G. BECK) / 戸田聡訳 (transl. by TODA Satoshi) 『ビザンツ世界論 — ビザンツの千年 — (Byzantine World. Thousand Years of Byzantium)』、知泉書館、2014年 (ISBN 9784862851826). This book is a translation of the second edition of *Das byzantinische Jahrtausend* (München: C.H. Beck, 1994); hereafter the original is referred to as *Jahrtausend*.

2 戸田聡 「『ビザンツ世界論』に見る H. -G. ベックのビザンツ理解をめぐって」、『エイコーン』46 (2016), pp. 3-18. Hereafter referred to as TODA, "Beck's Interpretation". The present English version reproduces basically the discussion presented in TODA, "Beck's Interpretation", but partially it is written totally afresh.

Byzantine Egypt, and later more specifically on Byzantium. His first major work, *Studies in Byzantine Socio-Economic History*, was published in 1968<sup>3</sup>, and one of the articles in it, which deals with the notion of feudalism in Byzantium and was published also in a Western language in 1960s<sup>4</sup>, earned him some international reputation. As for Watanabe's contacts with Beck, although precise information is inaccessible to me, apparently it began in 1960s, and culminated, in a sense, in Watanabe's stay in München during his sabbatical leave from 1973 to 1975, which were also Beck's last years as "der ordentliche Professor" at München. Later in 1978, in response to the invitation presented by Watanabe, Beck visited Japan and gave some lectures in various places. Beck's visit was also welcomed by the publication of a book in April 1978, which was a collection of Beck's treatises (selected and translated into Japanese by Watanabe) on Byzantine literature<sup>5</sup>, and to this book Watanabe appended his own contribution, in which he stressed the importance of Beck's contributions to the *Verfassungsgeschichte* of Byzantium<sup>6</sup>.

The point I want to make here is that this way of making Beck's contributions known to Japanese scholars of Byzantine studies was not without some biases, although it is in no way my intention to blame anyone on any matter in this respect.

As in international community of scholars, in Japan there is some separation, if not to say variance,

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- 3 渡辺金一 (Kin-ichi WATANABE) 『ビザンツ社会経済史研究 (*Studies in Byzantine Socio-Economic History*)』、岩波書店、1968年。Hereafter referred to as WATANABE, *Byzantine Socio-Economic History*.
- 4 Published in two parts: Kin-ichi WATANABE, "Problèmes de la "féodalité" byzantine. Une mise au point sur les diverses discussions", *Hitotsubashi Journal of Arts and Sciences* 5 (1965), pp. 32-40; and 6 (1965), pp. 8-24 (now available on internet respectively at <http://doi.org/10.15057/4514> and <http://doi.org/10.15057/4454>). For reference, later the same article was published again, this time in one: Kin-ichi WATANABE, "Problèmes de la "féodalité" byzantine. Une mise au point sur les diverses discussions", *Mediterranean World* 15 (1998), pp. 125-155 (now available on internet at <http://hdl.handle.net/10086/14850>).
- 5 H. -G. ベック (H. -G. BECK) / 渡辺金一編訳 (ed. and transl. by Kin-ichi WATANABE) 『ビザンツ世界の思考構造 — 文学創造の根底にあるもの — (*Spiritual Structure [Denkstruktur would be a more literal rendering, T. S.] of Byzantine World. [In Search of] What Lies at the Bottom of Literary Creation*)』、岩波書店、1978年; hereafter referred to as BECK-WATANABE, *Denkstruktur*. Beck's treatises translated in this book are the following:
1. (pp. 1-33) "An den Rändern der europäischen Geschichte. Das Modell Byzanz", in: *Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Jahrbuch 1975*, München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1975, pp. 106-123;
  2. (pp. 35-100) *Das literarische Schaffen der Byzantiner. Wege zu seinem Verständnis* (Sitzungsberichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Bd. 294, 4. Abhandlung), Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1974;
  3. (pp. 101-134) "Antike Beredsamkeit und griechische Kallilogia", *Antike und Abendland* 15 (1969), pp. 91-101;
  4. (pp. 135-156) "Besonderheiten der Literatur in der Paläologenzeit", in: *Art et société à Byzance sous les Paléologues. Acte du colloque organisé par l'Association Internationale des Études Byzantines à Venise en septembre 1968* (Bibliothèque de l'Institut hellénique d'études byzantines et post-byzantines de Venise, 4), Venezia: Stamperia di Venezia, 1971, pp. 41-52; and
  5. (pp. 157-195) "Die griechische Volksliteratur des 14. Jahrhunderts. Beiträge zu einer Standortbestimmung", in: M. BERZA & E. STĂNESCU (eds.), *Actes du XIV<sup>e</sup> Congrès International des Études Byzantines, Bucarest, 6-12 septembre, 1971*, vol. 1, Bucuresti: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste Romania, 1974, pp. 67-81.
- 6 渡辺金一 (Kin-ichi WATANABE) 「ビザンツにおけるイデオロギーと社会的現実 — H. G. ベックの若干の研究に寄せて — (*Ideology and Social Realities in Byzantium, with Special Reference to Some Studies by H.G. Beck*)」, in: BECK-WATANABE, *Denkstruktur*, pp. 197-219. Hereafter referred to as WATANABE, "Ideology etc. in Byzantium".

between scholars interested in Byzantium and those interested in Eastern Christianity (especially its spirituality); perhaps this “separation” or contrast, so to speak, is perceptible more clearly in Japan than in international community of scholars.

It seems that Beck started his research initially in the field of studies in Eastern Christian thought (which are, needless to say, virtually identical with studies in Byzantine theology); this is shown by the fact that his first scholarly monograph was published in the series *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*<sup>7</sup>. And of course Watanabe knew this quite well. However, he introduced Beck's erudition to Japanese audience by mentioning primarily Beck's works on the Byzantine *Verfassungsgeschichte*, so that, until now, Japanese scholars interested in Eastern Christian thought and/or spirituality have paid almost no attention to Beck's works on Byzantine theology and Christianity.

In this context it is worth quoting what Watanabe wrote about Beck's scientific “odyssey”<sup>8</sup>:

In 1937, under the supervision of a theologian Martin Grabmann, Beck finished his doctoral dissertation *Vorsehung und Vorherbestimmung in der theologischen Literatur der Byzantiner*, and started his studies in theology, and in 1949, under the guidance of Franz Dölger, who was then the professor of Byzantine studies at München, he finished his Habilitationsschrift *Theodorus Metochites. Die Krise des byzantinischen Weltbildes im 14. Jahrhundert*, and became a lecturer in Byzantine studies at the University of München. As the professor of Byzantine studies of the same university from 1960 to 1975, the latter year being the beginning of his *Emeritierung* (sic)<sup>9</sup>, Beck served as the fourth director of Byzantine institute. ... It is most probably this scientific odyssey of his, which started from theology through literature into *Verfassungsgeschichte* and *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*<sup>10</sup>, thus digging deeper into the *Unterbau* of Byzantine society, that makes him so peculiar that one cannot expect such discussions from almost no other Byzantinists.

I am not arguing as if Watanabe had deformed the facts; such deformation is utterly unthinkable. On the contrary, Prof. Peter Schreiner, one of the Byzantinists for whom Beck was the so-called *Doktorvater*, also mentions Beck's contribution to Byzantine *Gesellschaftsgeschichte* as one of the attractive features of Beck's erudition<sup>11</sup>.

7 Hildebrand BECK, *Vorsehung und Vorherbestimmung in der theologischen Literatur der Byzantiner* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 114), Roma: Pont. institutum orientalium studiorum, 1937.

8 渡辺金一 (Kin-ichi WATANABE) 「編訳者あとがき (Epilogue by Editor-Translator)」, in: BECK-WATANABE, *Denkstruktur*, pp. 221-229, at pp. 227-228.

9 According to a document, which I found on internet and whose beginning reads “Zusammenstellung und Redaktion Günter Prinzing unter Mitarbeit von Lars Hoffmann” (according to the webpage [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans-Georg\\_Beck](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans-Georg_Beck), this seems to be “Günter PRINZING, *Bibliographie Hans-Georg Beck*, Mainz: Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Byzantinisten, 2000”), Beck's *Emeritierung* began in 1977.

10 The Japanese term used here by Watanabe is 社会史, which can correspond to both *Sozialgeschichte* and *Gesellschaftsgeschichte* in German. Some Japanese scholars who try to render more precisely the nuance of the German term *Gesellschaftsgeschichte* tend to use the expression 社会構造史 (which literally means “history of social structure”) as a more suitable translation. However, this translation practice is rather recent, and was simply unknown to Watanabe in 1978.

11 P. SCHREINER, “Nachruf. Hans-Georg Beck (18.2.1910-25.5.1999)”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* (ByzZ) 92 (1999), pp. 812-816, at p. 814.

However, if we wonder on what Beck's research interest was centered, I think Watanabe's presentation quoted above may indeed have been somewhat misleading. My question is the following: seeing that Beck's contributions to Byzantine *Verfassungsgeschichte* and *Gesellschaftsgeschichte* are essentially limited to the years 1960 to 1975, i.e. the period when he was the professor of Byzantine studies at München<sup>12</sup>, can we interpret his intellectual products in these fields as deriving from the change of his research interest? Or is it rather that Beck, as the professor at München who, by the status itself, was forced at that time to represent not only German Byzantine studies, but *the* Byzantine studies at large, was obliged to publish his own contributions also in these fields? I myself strongly incline toward the latter interpretation. It is well known that Franz Dölger, Beck's predecessor, published the *Kaiserurkunden* on a large scale, and was also a famous scholar studying in Byzantine *Kaiseridee*. Thus it is no wonder if Beck felt obliged to publish also in the fields which were originally not at the center of his research interest.

And needless to say, Beck, as a first-rate scholar, made his investigations on Byzantine *Verfassungsgeschichte* and *Gesellschaftsgeschichte* from so unique a perspective<sup>13</sup>, with no one ever imagining any kind of pressure upon our professor at München, that both Watanabe and Schreiner regarded Beck's contributions to those fields as attractive.

Furthermore, it seems that, for Watanabe in 1960s (i.e., at the time of publishing his first major work mentioned above) who devoured, as it were, Western scholarly literature on Byzantium, Beck's contributions to Byzantine studies were still quite new and hard to digest. This can be illustrated by one of Watanabe's articles which deals with the Byzantine *Geisteswelt*<sup>14</sup>: in this article, while Dölger's works are mentioned and quoted throughout the discussion, Beck's work is mentioned only once in a note.

Taking all this into consideration, I think the following would be a more correct presentation of the matter: although Beck, while he was professor at München, extended his research also into the fields of Byzantine *Verfassungsgeschichte* and *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, this extension apparently did not involve

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12 The following list (although not exhaustive) illustrates, as I believe, Beck's major contributions to Byzantine *Verfassungsgeschichte* and *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*: H.-G. BECK, "Reichsidee und nationale Politik im späbyzantinischen Staat", *ByzZ* 53 (1960), pp. 86-94; ID., "Konstantinopel. Zur Sozialgeschichte einer früh-mittelalterlichen Hauptstadt", *ByzZ* 58 (1965), pp. 11-45; ID., *Byzantinisches Gefolgschaftswesen* (Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse (SBAW. PH), Jahrgang 1965, Heft 5), München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1965; ID., *Senat und Volk von Konstantinopel* (SBAW.PH, Jahrgang 1966, Heft 6), 1966; ID., *Res Publica Romana. Vom Staatsdenken der Byzantiner* (SBAW.PH, Jahrgang 1970, Heft 2), 1970; ID., *Theorie und Praxis im Aufbau der byzantinischen Zentralverwaltung* (SBAW.PH, Jahrgang 1974, Heft 8), 1974.

13 One of the good illustrations of this would be what Beck argued on Byzantine *Kaiseridee*: according to Beck, "Aus den Verfassungsvorgängen selbst kann sie [i.e. die byzantinische Kaiseridee] als irrelevant und als ein a-posteriori-Element mit interpretatorischer Funktion gestrichen werden" (*Res Publica Romana* (see note 12 above), p. 10; see also WATANABE, "Ideology etc. in Byzantium", p. 201). Concerning this topic, Beck notes in a pamphlet titled "Abschied von Byzanz" which was apparently designed for limited private circulation (hereafter referred to as *Abschied*; quite luckily, this pamphlet could be consulted on internet at the time of writing the Japanese version of this article, i.e. September 2015, although now (January 2019) it is regrettably no longer accessible): "Es wäre undankbar, wollte ich hier nicht die entsprechenden Vorlesungen und Arbeiten Franz Dölgers erwähnen, an dessen Seminarübungen ich an die zwölf Semester teilgenommen habe. Er war es auch, der mir seine volle Zustimmung gab, als ich ein paar Jahre vor seinem Tod den Plan entwickelte, die Daten dieser Idee systematisch an den politischen Realitäten nachzuprüfen". Thus with agreement of Dölger, a specialist of Byzantine *Kaiseridee*, Beck succeeded in largely relativizing the importance of the *Kaiseridee*.

14 Originally published in 1964 (in Japanese; now available on internet at <http://doi.org/10.15057/9210>) and incorporated into WATANABE, *Byzantine Socio-Economic History* (pp. 79-98).

the change of his major research interest. And in fact, Schreiner, who wrote a *Nachruf* (mentioned above) just after the death of Beck, published in 2011 again an article about Beck's scholarly works, and argues that Beck's research interest remained centered on "Kirche und theologisches Denken in Staat und Gesellschaft"<sup>15</sup>.

Thus if we try to understand in depth Beck's interpretation of Byzantium, his contributions on Byzantine theology and Christianity cannot be missed.

## 2. Beck's Understanding on Byzantine Theology and Christianity

According to Schreiner's article of 2011 mentioned just above, Beck, who was a monk at the monastery Scheyern since 1929, was for some time in conflict with his superior, and finally quitted the monastery in 1944 (on his birthday "according to an oral tradition", says Schreiner; doubtless Schreiner heard this story told by Beck himself), and at that time Beck was in serious doubt not about theology, but about belief and church. And for Beck, says Schreiner, "Nicht die Theologie stand im Mittelpunkt, und schon gar nicht Theosophie, sondern Autoren und Werke, sowie die theologischen Genera und ihre Stellung im Leben der Byzantiner"<sup>16</sup>. On all these things, which Schreiner wrote based partly on first-hand information, no comment can be made by an outsider like me. As a translator of *Jahrtausend*, I can only say that, on the one hand, Beck's grasp and command of the entire history of Byzantine mysticism (as presented in pp. 192-203 of *Jahrtausend*) is quite impressive, and on the other hand, it is really remarkable that, in describing the dogmatic history of Byzantine Christianity, Beck could appreciate highly the role of Tarasios, patriarch of Constantinople at the time of the second Nicene oecumenical council and who himself was a sheer layman before assuming the post; in my view, such a balanced judgement on the both sides of the history of Byzantine Christianity can be rarely obtained<sup>17</sup>. And needless to say, Beck's sharp grasp of Byzantine Christianity is shown especially in the notion *politische Orthodoxie*, proposed by himself as replacement of the outdated notion *Cäsaropapismus* (used by Max Weber among others)<sup>18</sup>. One can even say that this notion *politische Orthodoxie* constitutes one of Beck's most characteristic grasps of

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15 P. SCHREINER, "Hans-Georg Beck und die Byzantinische Theologie. Zum hundertsten Geburtstag eines grossen Gelehrten", in: A. RIGO (ed.), *Byzantine Theology and its Philosophical Background*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2011, pp. 197-212, at p. 211.

16 Ibid., pp. 198-199.

17 One can of course mention in this context a remarkable description of (a part of) the history of Byzantine Christianity presented by John Meyendorff, a well-known specialist of hesychasm, in his *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions. The Church 450-680 A.D.*, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989. However, Meyendorff's is, after all, a partial description of Byzantine Christianity (to my knowledge, he did not finish writing up the entire history of Byzantine Christianity), whereas Beck of *Jahrtausend*, albeit briefly, dealt with its entire period. Furthermore, one can say that elsewhere (more concretely, in a series of articles in the collection *Handbuch der Kirchengeschichte* edited by Hubert Jedin, and in a volume of the collection *Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte*) Beck presents a continued description of the entire history of Byzantine Christianity in the proper sense of the term.

18 One can say that this notion of *politische Orthodoxie* skillfully treats, for instance, the problem of the so-called "Hellenization of Christianity" which, in my view, remains one of the most important problems to be dealt with in the history of ancient Christianity. A discussion of this, presented in some depth in TODA, "Beck's Interpretation", pp. 9-10, is not repeated here, since subsequently I discussed the same topic in greater detail in TODA Satoshi, "Some Reflections on the So-Called "Hellenization of Christianity", *Christian Studies (Kirisutokyo Gaku)* (Rikkyo University) 59 (2017), pp. 65-84 (in Japanese).

Byzantium. Thus it is evident that one of the *fortes* of Beck's interpretation of Byzantium lies indeed in the field of Byzantine theology and Christianity (although *politische Orthodoxie* is evidently something much more than a pure theological concept).

However, if Schreiner's discussion tends to suggest that Beck's personal experience, mentioned above, was important for him to focus his research interest more on "church and theological thinking in the state and society", I should wonder if this way of understanding Beck's perspective is quite correct or not. In fact, as Beck was very proud (and doubtless this was so throughout his life) of having been taught by Martin Grabmann, a great specialist of Medieval catholic (especially scholastic) thought<sup>19</sup>, it is quite possible, and even plausible, that from the very beginning, and before his quitting the monastery, theology was at the center of Beck's research interest<sup>20</sup>. In my view, what made Beck's perspective so peculiar should rather be explained by the fact that, for some reason, he became deeply engaged in the study of Byzantine literature (doubtless initially for the purpose of his *Habilitationsschrift*, but this was probably not the sole reason for him to become immersed with this literature). If this is correct, then we need, in order to understand more in depth Beck's interpretation of Byzantium, to take into full consideration his contributions to studies in Byzantine literature.

### 3. Beck's Understanding on Byzantine Literature

As is evident from e.g. the beginning of ch. 4 of *Jahrtausend* where the incipits of Dante's Divine Comedy and the Dark Night of Soul of San Juan de la Cruz are compared in original, Beck could read and appreciate representative works of European literature in original languages<sup>21</sup>. This, i.e. Beck's extensive reading, and consequently abundant experience, of European literature, is doubtless one of the reasons why Beck's treatises, interspersed with pregnancies and ironies, are quite often abstruse (if not to say "baroque") and not prone to easy understanding; I should immediately add, however, that this very character is, at the same time, one of the most attractive features of Beck's erudition, at least as far as I am concerned.

Beck notes that Theodore Metochites, one of his most favorite Byzantine figures ("Byzantiner" in German), formulated the sentiment which Byzantine literates had under the overwhelming impression of the ancient Greek classical literature as a unique model of all the literatures in a "really shocking manner"<sup>22</sup>; this belongs to a common sense of studies in Byzantine literature. And it seems that, before

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19 Hans-Georg BECK, *Byzantinistik heute*, Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1977, p. 26.

20 For instance, one of the earliest publications of Beck was apparently concerned with possible theological influence of the West on Byzantium: "Der Kampf um den thomistischen Theologiebegriff in Byzanz", *Divus Thomas* 13 (1935), pp. 1-22 (non vidi).

21 Beck writes in *Abschied*, p. 17: "Masai weckte in mir auch die Liebe zur französischen Literatur. Kaum aus Rom zurück und nur noch in brieflicher Verbindung mit ihm, habe ich auf seine Anregung die Oeuvres complètes von Racine sowohl wie von Molière gelesen und teilweise auch Bossuet und Fénelon; mit Comeille kam ich allerdings nicht zurande. Schließlich trat die Nouvelle Revue Française von Jacques Rivière dazu. Ich sage dies, weil damit ein Riegel vorgeschoben war gegen byzantinistischen Exklusivitätsanspruch, i.e. Fachidiotie. Das Buch unserer Jugendfreundschaft schlechthin aber war "Le grand Meaulnes" von Alain Fournier. Ein widerwärtiges Geschick trennte uns für Jahrzehnte und ich traf ihn erst wieder kurz vor seinem Tod (1979) in einem Krankenhaus in Brüssel. Und noch hier summten wir zusammen ein wallonisches Volkslied, das an die fernen Tage von Rom erinnerte".

22 BECK, *Das literarische Schaffen* (note 5 above), p. 4 = BECK-WATANABE, *Denkstruktur*, p. 39.

Beck, e.g. a study of a specific work of Byzantine literature was normally occupied with identifying sources and models which were sought mainly in ancient Greek classical literature, and nothing more; thus literary works of Byzantium were normally treated as if born-secondhand pieces<sup>23</sup>. However, Beck himself did not adopt such approaches, but studied Byzantine literary works consistently as relevant and actual at the period when each of them was composed. And it goes without saying that this stance of his makes him cover, in ch. 9 of *Jahrtausend* ("Die Dimension Geschichte"), the relationships of society and literature in each period of the thousand years of Byzantium; this chapter, in its entirety, seems to constitute a good illustration of Beck's utterly peculiar perspective.

And it should be added that it is far from certain whether this approach of Beck toward Byzantine literature is adopted nowadays in mainstream studies of that literature or not. Here let me explain my personal experience a bit: when I was a student of the Oriental Institute at the Catholic University of Louvain (in Louvain-la-Neuve), one of the courses I followed was called "Encyclopédie (Byzance et Orient chrétien)", which consisted in presenting various scientific tools as well as general introductions of the relevant fields, and which was taught by Fr. Ugo Zanetti, formerly a Bollandist and subsequently a monk at the monastery of Chevetogne in Belgium; at that time Zanetti was also my *promotor*. And in one of the classes of this course, when explaining various things related to Byzantine literature, Zanetti said that not Beck, but Hunger knows Byzantine literature very well. What was meant by Zanetti on that occasion is apparently that Herbert Hunger (1914-2000), and not Beck, knows Byzantine literature from the level of manuscripts<sup>24</sup>. It is certain that Hunger, who has also some publications related to Greek paleography<sup>25</sup> and whose authoritative book on Byzantine "hochsprachliche profane Literatur"<sup>26</sup> includes many references to manuscripts, knew Byzantine literature very well from the level of manuscripts. On the other hand, if we can assume that such a judgement is not limited to this ex-Bollandist (sit venia verbo!), should we rather expect that, still today, studies in Byzantine literature are mainly of philological nature and do not easily admit of (as it were) "literary-sociological" approaches like Beck's?

23 According to Beck's own expression, "[eine] Literatur, die als Fabrikat „aus zweiter Hand“ abgewertet werden kann" (*Jahrtausend*, pp. 109-110).

24 I would imagine that this judgement of Zanetti is possibly influenced by that of one of his teachers, Gérard Garitte (1914-1990), a much talented polyglot Belgian scholar. In fact, Garitte wrote a review of Beck's one of main works, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (Byzantinisches Handbuch im Rahmen des Handbuchs der Altertumswissenschaft, 2. Teil, 1. Band), München: C.H. Beck, 1959 (*Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 54 (1959), pp. 920-928), and in this review, after applauding Beck's intellectual *tour de force* by mentioning "la maîtrise avec laquelle il [i.e. Beck] domine et synthétise une matière immense", Garitte enumerates, using very small scripts and page after page, diverse errors etc. in Beck's book. This sarcastic review was doubtless a severe blow to our professor at München. Another review I could consult by chance (H. F. SCHMID, *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Kanonistische Abteilung* 46 (1960), pp. 471-478) is also far from friendly and points out various insufficiencies of Beck's work. Possibly these and other critical reviews discouraged Beck from revising the book in question, and that with good reason, because such a revision might require more work than simply writing a new book of the same size.

25 H. HUNGER, *Repertorium der griechischen Kopisten 800-1600*, vol. 1: *Handschriften aus Bibliotheken Grossbritanniens*, Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981.

26 ID., *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* (Byzantinisches Handbuch im Rahmen des Handbuchs der Altertumswissenschaft, 5. Teil), 2 vols., München: C.H. Beck, 1978.

#### 4. How Should We Understand Hans-Georg Beck's Interpretation of Byzantium?

And if so, should we rather think that, still today, the entire book of *Jahrtausend* would be better characterized as a provocative interpretation, rather than a general and authoritative description, of Byzantium in its multiple aspects, which was written by a Byzantinist internationally well known to be sure, yet simultaneously a man of quite peculiar perspective?

It is very difficult for me to drive away from my mind this idea which haunts tenaciously; for one thing, it can be significant that Beck published his *Jahrtausend* in 1978, i.e. only after retirement from his professorship. This situation can be compared with Hunger's popularizing book on Byzantium, i.e. *Reich der neuen Mitte: der christliche Geist der byzantinischen Kultur*, which was published in 1965, i.e. well before the time of retirement. Is it not possible to imagine that Beck was quite conscious of the peculiarity of his perspective to be presented in full in his *Jahrtausend*? Furthermore, Beck's discussions on Byzantine *Verfassungsgeschichte* in ch. 2 of *Jahrtausend* can be interpreted as showing that, before Beck's discussions, Byzantine *Verfassungsgeschichte* received attention of virtually no serious study worthy to be so called; this is, of course, sufficiently provocative. And needless to say, Beck's ironical and pregnant (again, if not to say baroque) writing style adds greatly to the difficulty of the reader.

This much said, it should be noted that, evidently, my intention is by no means to depreciate the value of Beck's *Jahrtausend*. Quite the contrary. In original as well as (according to my humble hope) in the Japanese translation, Beck's *Jahrtausend* should decisively be highly appreciated as a thoughtful and provocative presentation of Byzantium, interspersed with ironies deriving from his perennial contact with *Byzantiner* who were so dear to him.