

MICHAEL ROSTOVTZEFF  
and  
THE TRIUNITY OF CLASSICAL STUDIES:  
HISTORY, ARCHAEOLOGY, PHILOLOGY

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The portrait of M. I. Rostovtzeff by an unknown artist,  
provided by the St Petersburg Branch of the Archive of  
the Russian Academy of Sciences (SPbB ARAS).  
Fond 1054, opis' 1, delo 51 (drawing)

## PREFACE

Michael (Mikhail Ivanovich) Rostovtzeff, a Russian historian of the ancient world, is the world's most famous Russian classical scholar. He was known both in Russia and in the West already in his younger years; he became famous here as well as there before the October Revolution of 1917. His name did not disappear after his emigration from Russia, but it was prohibited for more than 60 years.

So his name returned to his native land and one could not only mention it, but also refer to him, study him, and conduct research about him freely both in the West and in the interim of freedom in Russia. Much has been achieved in the study of his work, as well as of his biography, which became a touchstone of scholarly achievement and a measure of cultural significance.

At the same time, such renown inevitably drew occasional criticism of Rostovtzeff's conceptions. The main line of criticism was indictment of modernization; historians wondered if his passionate political views did not dangerously influence the ideal impartiality of a historian et sim. Knowing this and despite our natural admiration of his fame, we tried to ask some sometimes inconvenient questions to probe the soundness and integrity of Rostovtzeff's work and thus learn more from it. We are pretty certain that everyone can only win through such an approach.

To celebrate Michael Rostovtzeff's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday, the forum "The Saint Petersburg Days of Classical Studies" was held on October 26–31, 2020 in St Petersburg by a number of academic institutions and museums under the general aegis of the State Hermitage. It was held partly online, since pandemic restrictions limited the number of speakers and attendees (for the most part from St Petersburg) who were allowed to be present personally.

Complete information about all the events of the forum, including the complete list of organizers, the programs of all sessions held at the various institutions, video links of the sessions and publications to follow, is available on the website: <https://classical-studies-spb.tk/en>. For a detailed account of the forum's events in Russian, see: А. А. Трофимова, Н. К. Жижина, О. Ю. Климов, А. Д. Пантелеев, "К 50-летию М. И. Ростовцева.

Дни антиковедения в Санкт-Петербурге (26–31 октября 2020 г.)”, *Мнемон* 20: 1–2 (2000) 7–31, and a succinct version: eidem, “Дни антиковедения в Санкт-Петербурге (Санкт-Петербург, 26–31 октября 2020 г.)”, *VDI* 80: 4 (2004) 1100–1102.

Apart from the round table at the St Petersburg Institute for History and the plenary session at the Hermitage (respectively fully and partly) represented in this volume, three conferences devoted in substantial part to Rostovtzeff took place in the forum:

- “Zhebelev Readings – XXII” at the Institute for History (former Faculty of History) of the St Petersburg State University (October 28–30, 2020);
- “The Bosporean Phenomenon – XVI” (October 27, 2020) with the subsequent publication: *Боспорский феномен, Боспорское царство М. И. Ростовцева (взгляд из XXI века)* I–II (St Petersburg 2020; materials devoted to Rostovtzeff are confined to Vol. I);
- “Actual Problems of Theory and History of Art – IX” (October 29–30, 2020, section “The Art of the Ancient World”).

Two events of the forum are illustrated in the present issue of *Hyperboreus*. The first is the plenary session held at the Hermitage on October 26. Its topic was “Mikhail I. Rostovtzeff as an Historian, Archaeologist, and a Specialist in Classical Antiquity. Classical Studies in St Petersburg and Outside Russia in the Light of the Scholar’s Creativity”.<sup>1</sup> The publication of all of its papers in Russian is to be prepared in 2022 by the Hermitage. The second event is a round table titled “Michael Rostovtzeff and the Trinity of Classical Studies: History, Archaeology, Philology” held on October 28 at the St Petersburg Institute for History (Russian Academy of Sciences). Its scope was Rostovtzeff’s legacy and creative methodology regarding the three main disciplines of *Altertumswissenschaft*.

The papers by A. Gavrilov, A. Marcone, and A. Schnapp were read at the plenary session; those by M. Pozdnev, L. Zhmud, W. Chrystaljow, V. Kashcheev, and D. Keyer at the session organized by the St Petersburg Institute for History; finally, the papers by St. Rebenich and D. Panchenko were added to the materials of the plenary section and the round table, respectively.

Alexander Gavrilov, Denis Keyer  
*Saint Petersburg Institute for History (RAS)*

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<sup>1</sup> On the same day, the temporary exhibition-preview “In Search of Antique Bosphorus. Introduction. On Mikhail Rostovtzeff’s 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary” was shown at the Hermitage. The opening of the exhibition, itself organized by the State Hermitage in cooperation with the Institute for the History of Material Culture (RAS) and the St Petersburg Branch of the Academic Archive of Russia, was postponed to February 15, 2022.