

MITTELALTER

Center, Province and Periphery in the Age of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos. From “De cerimoniis” to “De Administrando Imperio”. Hgg. Niels GAUL / Volker MENZE / Csanád BÁLINT. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 2018 (Mainzer Veröffentlichungen zur Byzantinistik, 15). 300 S., 20 pl. fig., ISBN 978-3-447-10929-1

The volume which is subject of this review resulted from the Proceedings of an academic conference held in November 2009 in Budapest in the memory of the distinguished Byzantinist Gyula Moravcsik on the occasion of the 1050th anniversary of the death of Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (959) and the 60th anniversary of the *editio princeps* of his most famous work “De administrando imperio” edited by Moravcsik in 1949. The introductory chapter by NIELS GAUL, “Zooming in on Constantinople. Introductory Notes on the Interplay of Center, Province and Periphery in the Tenth-Century Byzantine Empire” (1-21) introduces the reader to the subject matter of the collection, by identifying in the entire historiographic and encyclopedic activity at the court of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus the three works he wrote himself, which are taken as the conceptual basis of the volume – “De cerimoniis” as a symbol of the Center, “De thematibus” of the Province, and “De administrando imperio” of the Periphery. Nevertheless, in these works, as in reality, these concepts were intertwined and tended to overlap, and the author considers each of them individually but in the opposite direction, going from the periphery, across the province, towards the center, the imperial court itself, giving a vivid picture of each of these spaces at the time the emperor’s works were created. Finally, he gives a brief overview of the contributions that follow in the volume, which are grouped around the three outlined concepts, and whose task is to guide the reader through the world of Porphyrogenitus from the center, through the provinces, to the periphery.

The insight into the Center of that world begins at its very core, the imperial court of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, with an assessment of the literary, above all encyclopedic and historiographic, activity at Constantine’s court by ATHANASIOS MARKOPOULOS, “Voices from the Center. Constantine VII and the Macedonian Dynasty in Contemporary Historiography / With an Appendix: Three Letters from Romilly J. H. Jenkins to Gyula Moravcsik” (22-38), with reference to the inevitable question of the extent to which the emperor himself directly participated in it, in addition to unambiguously devising and organizing it, highlighting the emergence of the “biographical mode of expression” as the most important contribution of the “imperial historiography” of his circle, which became dominant in Byzantine historiography in the following decades at least. Three hitherto unpublished letters from the correspondence of R. J. H. Jenkins and Gy. Moravcsik, dating from the second half of 1946, are appended at the end, providing a major contribution to the history of Byzantine studies, since those are the letters from the very beginning of their correspondence that ultimately led to their cooperation on the fundamental project of the publication of the original text and the translation in the *editio princeps* of Porphyrogenitus’ “De administrando imperio” in 1949. In the chapter titled “Constantinople in the Age of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos. Life at the Center” (39-54),

PAUL MAGDALINO underlines the importance that Constantinople had for Constantine VII and his contemporaries, not only as the capital of the Empire, but also as a kind of center of the *oikoumenē*, which is clearly discerned and conveyed in his works. In the second part of the paper he wants to evoke what the city looked like at the time, starting with its powerful and impressive walls, which by no means made the absolute boundary between the city and its surroundings, that is, the center and the periphery, through its immediate hinterland, always fully integrated into the living space of the city, to the interior of the city itself, which, through the constant replacement of old buildings with new ones, gave the impression of a constantly evolving living organism. The author also looks at the social structure of the city and how it shaped its urban landscape, with reference to the place and importance of monasteries and palaces of the leading figures of the mid-10th century.

Starting from the now classic ideas about the era of Constantine Porphyrogenitus and its classicist tendencies in art as a kind of “Macedonian Renaissance”, later somewhat redefined and extended, in the chapter “Comparing the Carolingian and Middle Byzantine Artistic Revivals. Manual Exchange or Parallel Universes?” (55-70), ÁDÁM BOLLÓK guides the reader through the most striking examples of contemporaneous Byzantine art in the field of manuscript illumination and compares them with the most representative examples of Western, Carolingian illuminations in manuscripts created under the influence of classicist tendencies at the courts of the Frankish rulers at the time of the so-called “Carolingian Renaissance” in the 9th century, concluding that both had the same roots and inspiration in the art of the Late Antiquity, but also pointing to the intense mutual influences of the two cultural centers of Europe of the time. Switching to the works produced at the Center within the scope of the Emperor’s literary efforts, CLAUDIA SODE, “Historical-Antiquarian Texts in the Ceremonial Book of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos. The Appointment of an Augustalis and a Proconsul (Chapter I, 85)” (71-79) analyses chapters 84-95 of the first book of “De cerimoniis” by Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, which were found not to belong to the Emperor’s original conception of the first book, but to represent a subsequent addition included in the final editing of the manuscript. The first two chapters (I, 84, 85) are said to represent accounts of the appointment of dignitaries by Peter the Patrician, the imperial *magister officiorum* from Justinian’s time, while the others, which provide information on diplomatic practices and imperial coronations of the 5th and 6th centuries, are supposed to be, which is the point the author proves through detailed analysis. In the end, she makes the admissible assumption that the report of Peter the Patrician on the appointment of the *augustalis* in chapter I, 85 is based on the specific event of the appointment of John Lexarion for the *augustalis* of Alexandria in 542.

The most impressive undertaking in the encyclopedic and historiographic activity of Constantine VII and his circle were certainly the “Historical Excerpts”, eponymously also known as the “Excerpta Constantiniana” and those are the topic of ANDRÁS NÉMETH, “Database for Re-conceiving Imperial Ideology? Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos and the Historical Excerpts” (80-102), who presents some of the results of his thorough research of this complex work, analysing its content and composition, the famous division into fifty-three topics, designed to make it easier for readers to search for specific information on past events, while also

discussing their visual presentation as well as their possible use in composing Porphyrogenitus' treatises. The minute analysis of the place of the image and the name of Constantine Porphyrogenitus on the coinage, seals and tesseræ from the time of Constantine's co-rulership with Romanus Lacapenus and his sons (the examples of which are found on Plates IV-V), presented by IVAN MARIĆ, "Lost on Reverse? Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos's Vying with Romanos I Lakapenos for Legitimacy as a Tale of Coins, Seals, and Tesseræ" (103-123), shows how the chief emperor skillfully used these means, especially coinage, to emphasise the primacy of his family on the imperial throne, and to sideline the rightful emperor to the utmost. Of particular importance is the conclusion that the author makes in the second part of the article, that the Emperor Constantine, after taking over self-government in 944/945 began to use the title *autokratōr* on his coins precisely to emphasise his position as the sole ruler after many years of co-rulership, and the epithet *porphyrogennētos* to emphasise his legal birthright to the throne in contrast to the Lacapeni, who lacked that prerogative, and how this imperial ideology soon became widely accepted by his younger contemporaries.

Leaving the Center, the imperial court and the capital, the reader is skillfully taken to the province, with the chapter of LEONORA NEVILLE, "The Auralty of Legal Performance in Provincial Society. Ceremonial Sounds of Sales" (124-136), which deals with the rhetorical shaping of the legal act in sales contracts throughout the Byzantine period and shows how it became richer and more lavish in style over the centuries, which had its practical importance in making a stronger impression on the provincial population who attended the announcement of such an act. Although there are no direct examples of it from the time of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, there is no doubt that the practice was the same then, especially given the importance of his legislation for the development of the provincial society. One of the most important aspects of the provincial society was the military, as it was responsible for maintaining order in the provinces and protecting the borders of the Empire. The chapter "Conveying Imperial Ideals to the Periphery of Empire. The Two Military Orations of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus" (137-152) by FLORIN LEONTE, is dedicated to the emperor's two military orations addressed to soldiers at the eastern border in the fight against the Hamdanid emir of northern Syria Sayf al-Dawla in the course of the 950s, as significant examples of the spread of ideas and ideology from the Center, that is, the imperial court, to the outskirts, in this case the eastern border, and their direct connection. The imperial army of the Eastern Romans had the historic task of fighting off the infidel Muslims, which has led scholars to ask whether that struggle was perceived as a "holy war" by them. VOLKER MENZE, "Blessed Be Who Crushes the Children of Persia'. Byzantine Sacralization of War from the Seventh Through Tenth Centuries" (153-167) emphasises the pragmatic attitude of the Byzantines towards Muslims, but concludes that this did not necessarily affect their understanding of the fight against them as a "holy war". Considering that they perceived themselves as the "chosen people" and the "New Israel", each war they waged had a religious connotation and was therefore a "holy war". Their soldiers were more than familiar with such an ideology, through military insignia full of religious symbolism, through regular and daily worship services in army camps, through singing religious hymns on the eve of battles, through regular fasting... The struggle against

the enemies of another faith was not discouraged even in the teachings of the most important theologians, and the soldiers, although neither the church nor the emperor had the freedom to promise them eternal life in heaven or absolution, were ready to fall as martyrs for their faith.

Across the Byzantine-Muslim border lay the region of Cilicia through which the shortest route between the two capitals, Constantinople and Baghdad, ran. Though organised as an Arab military march (*thughūr*), it was not affected by the expeditions of the Byzantine army and the ravages of war well until the time of Nicephorus Focas (963-969), permitting Byzantine-Arab trade in the mid-10th century to flourish despite frequent border conflicts on the Syrian frontier, as shown by KORAY DURAK, “The Cilician Frontier. A Case Study of Byzantine-Islamic Trade in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries” (168-183), which introduces the reader to the Periphery of the Byzantine world of Constantine Porphyrogenitus. The archeological findings of Byzantine origin in the Carpathian Basin, on the northern Periphery, dating from the 10th century, which cannot be explained solely as a result of the Hungarian invasions of the territory of the Empire, which are the topic of the chapter of PÉTER LANGÓ and ANDRÁS PATAY-HORVÁTH, “Byzantinizing Minor Objects in the Carpathian Basin. Tracing Multi-Level Connections during the Tenth Century” (184-191, plates VI-XV) point to that area as significant for the Byzantine material culture of that time, though the authors argue that such influences are yet to be fully examined. The Byzantine diplomacy towards the remnants of the once significant Frankish presence in Italy is the point of interest of GÜNTER PRINZING’s chapter “Emperor Constantine VII and Margrave Berengar II of Ivrea under Suspicion of Murder. Circumstantial Evidence of a Plot against Berta-Eudokia and Lothair (Lothar) the Children of King Hugh of Italy” (192-210), which elaborates an intriguing hypothesis about a possible plot of the Byzantine emperor and the Margrave of Ivrea to get rid of the two siblings – the former’s daughter-in-law and the latter’s suzerain, with the intention to set a new political stage for the Western Periphery of the Empire. The Eastern Adriatic coast, inhabited by the Slavic Croats, was by no means neglected in the Byzantine diplomacy of the 10th century, especially during the conflicts with the Bulgarians in the Balkan interior, although the direct imperial authority over the Dalmatian cities seems to have been replaced at times by the Croatian rulers acting on behalf of the emperor, as argued by NEVEN BUDAČ, “Croatia and Byzantium in the Tenth Century. A Latin Member of the Byzantine Commonwealth” (211-222).

The article by PETER SCHREINER, “Clothes Make the Man. Writings the Emperor. Tracing Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos and His Œuvre Through the Centuries” (223-241, plates XVI-XX) concludes this volume with an assessment of the image of Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in the works of Byzantine historiographers, ranging from those who witnessed his life and death to those who worked two centuries later. The author then turns to the four pieces that the Emperor is believed to have written himself – “Vita Basilii”, “De thematibus”, “De administrando imperio” and “De cerimoniis”, relating their textual tradition and how interest in them waned among later generations in Byzantium, only to be revived once again in the Renaissance West after the fall of Constantinople, which brought them to the printing press in the late 16th and the early 17th century and to the perspective of early modern and modern scholars. At the very end of the volume there is the “Bibliogra-

phy" (243-291), listing all editions and translations of the works composed and commissioned by Emperor Constantine, other primary sources, as well as all scholarly works cited in the volume. Due to its comprehensiveness, this bibliography arguably represents the most exhaustive list of the works on the subject. The bibliography is followed by the "Index" (293-300), the two being separated by twenty Plates pertaining to the individual chapters. Concerning all said so far, the general impression is that this volume represents quite a significant and above all useful contribution to the scholarly efforts concerning the person and times of Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, unavoidable in any further research of that issue.

Belgrade

Predrag Komatina

Miklós TAKÁCS, Byzantinische oder byzantinisierende Raumgestaltungen kirchlicher Architektur im frühárpádenzeitlichen Ungarn. Eine vergleichende Analyse auf der Grundlage von Parallelen aus dem Balkan. Mainz: Verlag des RGZM 2018 (Monographien des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, 139). XII, 293 S., 42 Tafeln, 3 Kt., zahlr. z. T. farbige Abb., ISBN 978-3-88467-285-3, € 55,-

Diese sehr umfangreiche, aktuelle Studie hat den mittelalterlichen Kirchenbau auf dem Gebiet des mittelalterlichen Königreichs Ungarn, das erst unter der Dynastie der Árpáden (ab 1001–1301) zum Königreich wurde, zum Thema. Aus verschiedenen Gründen wurde, was die Forschungsgeschichte des Materials wie ein roter Faden durchzieht, hier immer wieder ein starker byzantinischer Einfluss attestiert, den der Autor kritisch hinterfragen möchte. Durch seine neue Analyse kommt Takács zu dem Schluss, dass, nach aktueller Überprüfung des Befundes des bestehenden Denkmalkatalogs (in angestrebter Gesamtschau), eigentlich nur acht Kirchen zu finden sind (61), die „mit größerer oder geringerer Wahrscheinlichkeit“ (253) als byzantinisch bezeichnete Vorbilder gehabt haben könnten. Der Rest der Bauten könne eigentlich von der Byzanz-Liste genommen werden, entweder weil deren, auch teilweise nur noch archäologisch nachweisbarer, Befund zu gering ist, oder die Rauminterpretationen unkorrekt waren oder in andere Richtungen weisen würden. Auch habe nur ein geringer Teil (aus teilweise nationalistischen Gründen) der als „byzantinisch“ bezeichneten Kirchen tatsächlich Vorbilder aus Byzanz gehabt.

Vorwegzunehmen ist bereits, dass der Autor eine sehr schwierige, gar komplexe, da materialreiche und geographisch ausgedehnte kunsthistorische Aufgabe, zunächst sehr gut nachvollziehbar und transparent in Angriff genommen hat. Dieser Eindruck wird u. a. durch eine recht angenehme methodische Gliederung der Arbeit vermittelt. Zu Beginn steht eine historische Einführung – Stichwort „Königreich Ungarn im 10. und 11. Jh.“ / „Balkanhalbinsel im 10. und 11. Jh.“ (1-20) mit zahlreichen, zwar teilweise redundanten, aber struktural logischen Unterpunkten, etwa zur Bestandsaufnahme oder zur Darlegung der Forschungsgeschichte.