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BELGRADE  
2016



## REVIEWS

23rd INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF BYZANTINE STUDIES  
BELGRADE, 22–27 AUGUST 2016

*Reviewed by Darko Todorović\**

The 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies (ICBS) organized by the Serbian National Committee of Byzantine Studies and the Association Internationale des Études Byzantines (AIEB) was held in Belgrade on 22–27 August 2016. The Serbian capital, as in the now distant year of 1927 when it played host to the 2nd ICBS, once again brought together the most prominent names in Byzantine and medieval studies from all around the world. With more than 1,200 participants from 49 countries, it was the largest scholarly gathering in the century-long history of the Association (the previous, 22nd ICBS, held in Sofia in 2011, hosted 1,000 scholars). By way of illustration, the number of 60 participants in the 1st Congress in Bucharest in 1924 rose, at the next meeting in Belgrade, to 200 specialists in this, at the time still new, academic discipline. The central theme of this year's meeting, *Byzantium – a World of Changes*, was inspired by the epigram of the Byzantine scholar Maximus Planudes (c. 1260 – c. 1305) "Everything changes, but nothing perishes" (Πάντα μὲν γὰρ μεταβάλλεται, ἀπόλλυται δὲ οὐδέν). According to Ljubomir

Maksimović, President of the Organizing Committee of the 23rd ICBS, this motto highlights the guiding idea of the Belgrade convention, which brought into focus "the question of institutional transitions and the phenomena which constitute Byzantium", viewing the millennium-long process from the perspective of its profound and palpable legacy which is indeed still influential.

The primarily Eurocentric character of Byzantine studies is easy to explain by the very nature of the field of study, as well as by the fact that the discipline originated in Europe (Russia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Austria, Germany, Italy, Greece, France, Great Britain). The presence of one Chinese scholar at the Congress obviously testifies to a rising interest in Byzantine studies in the Far East. American Byzantinology already has a well-established international reputation, while Canada and Australia have recently become major centres of Byzantine studies, mainly due to the significant Greek diaspora outside Europe,

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many of the scholars actually being of Greek origin. This was reflected in the ethnic composition of the participants in the 23rd Congress, where representatives of different national traditions in the field of Byzantine studies were in a position to compare and critically evaluate the scholarly achievements of their respective national schools. It was only natural that the Belgrade gathering was attended by a larger-than-usual number of Serbian Byzantinologists and experts in related medievalist disciplines.

The Congress was structured in six plenary sessions, numerous round-table discussions and thematic sessions. The main program was accompanied by eight thematic exhibitions, a book show (presenting the recent Serbian and foreign production in the field), a three-volume book *Byzantine Heritage and Serbian Art*, and numerous film and music events revolving around the theme of the Byzantine world. Apart from this, the attendees had an opportunity to visit several late antique and medieval archaeological sites in Belgrade and across Serbia.

The Congress was officially declared open at the Hall of Heroes of the Faculty of Philology of Belgrade University on 22 August. It was at this venue that the 2nd ICBS was opened 89 years ago in what then was the Great Hall of the recently founded New University. And this time, too, the most eminent figures of Serbian culture and public life were present at the opening ceremony: Mr Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, His Holiness Patriarch Irenaeus of Serbia, representatives of the diplomatic corps, and renowned figures of Belgrade University and the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The Congress was held under the auspices of the Serbian President, who greeted the participants with his welcome speech, in which he emphasized, among other things, the fact that the Serbian-Byzantine heritage in Kosovo is endangered today “by untruths and attempts of forging historical facts as well as by physical destruction”. The audience was

then addressed by Johannes Koder, President of the AIEB, by a representative of the Serbian National Commission for UNESCO, and finally by Ljubomir Maksimović, President of the Serbian National Committee of Byzantine Studies, who declared the Congress officially open. The opening session was concluded with the inaugural lecture delivered by John F. Haldon, Professor of History at Princeton University, “*Change in Byzantium. Thinking about Stability, Resilience and Movement in Medieval East Roman Society*, which re-examined the relationship between the historico-geographical environment and social and political change in the Byzantine world. In the evening of the first congress day, Mr Nikolić gave a reception at the Presidential Palace.

All plenary sessions (except for the opening one, which proceeded with the work program after the opening ceremony) were held in the Main Hall of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, while round-table discussions and thematic sessions took place on the premises of the Faculty of Philology. This year, the role of the moderator was somewhat different in comparison to previous practice. It involved more than providing usual technical support, but rather an active participation in the work of the session through presenting both broader introductions to the theme under discussion and recapitulations of the results of the day’s work.

The first plenary session (*The Golden Age of Byzantine Hagiography*) was devoted to the innovative trends in the Byzantine hagiography of the eighth to the eleventh century, a flourishing period of this original and unprecedented genre of Byzantine literature. The Byzantine city, viewed in a diachronic perspective and in a broad spatial framework encompassing the Balkans, the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, was the topic of the second plenary session (*The Byzantine City and the Archaeology of the Third Millennium*). The third day’s gathering was devoted to the interesting and hitherto barely explored area of the sensory

aspect of the Byzantine liturgical ritual (*Byzantine Religious Practices and the Senses*). The fourth plenary session was concerned with the historical connection between the Slavic world and Romanitas, embodied in Old Rome, as well as its two historical "reincarnations", the Byzantine and the Slavic one (*Romanitas and Slavia: Political and Ideological Relationships between the Slavs and Old and New Romes*). The complex issue of the reasons for Byzantine history writing and of the system of inherent rules guiding the process was the subject of the fifth plenary session (*How the Byzantines Wrote History*), while the last, sixth one (*Byzantine Studies in the New Millennium*) was focused on the future of Byzantine studies, especially in cultural environments that lack their own scholarly traditions in the field, such as China for example.

The topics that attracted the greatest interest at round tables and thematic sessions were those which traditionally constitute the core of Byzantine studies: political and military history, historiography, a broad spectrum of issues concerning literature, linguistics and philology, philosophy and theology, the arts, architecture, archaeology, the music and the theatre.

Various particular topics concerned with different periods of Byzantine history were grouped according to the chronological principle and discussed within separate thematic sessions arranged in three-day cycles (*The Early [Middle; Late] Byzantine Empire*), or according to both chronological and territorial criteria (*Epirus Revisited – New Perceptions of its History and Material Culture*; *Islands of Byzantium between the 7th and 13th Centuries*; *The Black Sea Region between East and West in the 13th–15th Centuries*; *Latin Cyprus (1192–1571): A Case of Forced Coexistence*; *Exile: Continuity and Change in the Empire of Nicaea*). Some of the cycles were, however, thematically focused on famous dynasties, considering their significance in a broader cultural and historical context (*The Age of the Komnenoi*; *Thessaloniki in the Age*

*of the Komnenoi and Angeloi*; *Literature in the Age of the Komnenoi*).

Byzantine historiography was the topic of thematic sessions which, divided into three-day cycles, looked at the origin and development of the genre within particular historical and literary periods (*Historiography of the 4th–9th [10th–11th; 11th–14th] Centuries*), and a separate round table examined the Byzantine world chronicle as an autochthonous genre of Byzantine historiographic prose (*Byzantine World Chronicle as Open Text*).

A series of thematic sessions covered various literary issues (*Liturgical Poetry as Literature: Rhetoric, Exegesis, and Artistry*; *Poetic Circles and Anthologies in Byzantium*; *Byzantine Literature in the 11th Century*), as well as particular genres (*Hagiography*; *Liturgical Poetry*; *Hymnography*), and some of the prominent authors whose work marked distinctive epochs in the history of Byzantine literature (*Michael Psellos. One Thousand Years of a Polymath's Birth*; *Life and Works of Photius of Constantinople*).

Several sessions discussed topics in linguistics and philology (*Linguistics and Philology of the Byzantine Balkans*; *Byzantine Philology*), medieval translations of Byzantine texts into Slavonic and other languages (*Metaphrasis in Byzantine Literature*; *Byzantine Literature in Translation*; *The Role of the Slavonic Translation in the History of Byzantine Literature and Church Writing*; *Byzantine Literary Models and Patterns of Reception: Translation and Transformation in the Slavonic and Middle Eastern Traditions*; *The Translations of Latin Texts into Greek and of Greek Texts into Latin as an Expression of the Cultural Exchange between East and West (13th–15th Centuries)*). A separate session brought together the papers concerned with different aspects of ancient literary and educational tradition with regard to their influence on the medieval culture of Byzantium (*Byzantium Meets Ancient Literature*; *Imperial Responses to Pagan Hellenic Education in the 5th–6th Centuries*).

Philosophical and theological questions have always been in the focus of Byzantine

spiritual thought, and consequently held a prominent place in a series of thematic sessions and round tables (*Byzantine Philosophy and Maximus the Confessor; The Early and Middle Byzantine Tradition of Aristotelian Logic: The Road from Alexandria to Constantinople; Philosophers and Philosophical Books in Byzantium; Saint Gregory Palamas and Barlaam the Calabrian in the Context of 14th-Century Byzantine Philosophy and Theology*).

Considerable attention was paid to the area of civil and canon law in Byzantium, the development of legal theory and the implementation of elements of Roman law in societies of the Byzantine Commonwealth (*Law as a Means of Change in Byzantium; Civil and Canon Law in Byzantium and Medieval Serbia; Crimes against State and Church; Du manuscrit de lois à l'acte écrit: la pratique juridique à Byzance*).

A considerable number of round tables and thematic sessions were expectedly concerned with the vast field of Byzantine art, its styles, the enduring principles of its iconography, as well as the living tradition of icon painting in the modern era (*Byzantium in Change. Art, Archaeology and Society of the 13th Century; Late Antique and Early Byzantine Art; Studies in Byzantine Iconography; The Artists of the Byzantine World and Stylistic Trends in Monumental and Icon Painting; Byzantine Art in the Modern Era: Issues of Emulation, Presentation, and Interpretation; Applied Arts of the Byzantine World; Serbian Medieval Art*). A number of sessions covered the wide area of Byzantine archaeology as well (*Art and Archaeology; Byzantine Archaeology*). The thematic session that aroused most attention among those discussing Byzantine architecture was the one devoted to the recent discoveries at the site of Caričin Grad, one of the most important archaeological sites dating from the Early Byzantine period (*Byzantine Architecture; New Insights on an Early Byzantine City: Caričin Grad (Justiniana Prima); Late Antique and Early Byzantine Architecture; Architecture of the Byzantine World*).

Byzantine music was the topic of another separate session (*Music and Hymnography, Melodies, Their Composers and Musical Instruments*), while the performing arts, which have been a subject of extensive research over the last few decades, were looked at in the light of the evolution of liturgy (*Theatre and Liturgy: Performance and Ritual in Christian Worship; Gesture and Performance in Byzantium*).

The Belgrade congress was marked by the presence of a large number of prominent scholars in the field of Byzantine studies. Even their simple enumeration would take too much space and inevitably expose the reviewer to the risk of unjustly omitting many a meritorious author. Yet, at least some of the resounding names whose work epitomizes contemporary Byzantology should not be left unmentioned. Vincent Déroche, Bernard Flusin, John F. Haldon, Sergey A. Ivanov, Elizabeth Jeffreys, Anthony Kaldellis, Johannes Koder, Ruth Macrides, Paul Magdalino, Athanasios Markopoulos, Charis Messis, Margaret Mullett, Leonora Neville, Ingela Nilsson, Paolo Odorico, Günter Prinzing, Claudia Rapp, Diether R. Reinsch, Warren Treadgold, Mirjana Živojinović and others made it possible for this year's congress to become a scholarly event of the utmost importance.

Finally, one should not fail to mention a lasting result of the admirable effort, occasioned by the Congress, to bring the relationship between Byzantine heritage and Serbian art through centuries, and the achievement of Serbian scholarship, closer to foreign audiences: the publication of *Byzantine Heritage and Serbian Art* in three volumes (*Sacral Art of the Serbian Lands in the Middle Ages; Processes of Byzantinization and Serbian Archaeology; Imagining the Past: the Reception of the Middle Ages in Serbian Art from the 18th to the 21st Century*). Also, some of the thematic exhibitions which, along with other activities, accompanied the main program, deserve to be mentioned in more detail, considering the fact that a number

of renowned domestic and foreign experts in related disciplines took part in their preparation: *The World of Serbian Manuscripts (12th–17th Century)*, curated by Irena Špadijer and Zoran Rakić (SASA Gallery); *Byzantine Architecture as Inspiration for Serbian Builders in the Modern Period*, by Aleksandar Kadijević (SASA Gallery of Science and Technology); *Serbian Icon Painting in the Territory of the Renewed Patriarchate of Peć (1557–1690)* (Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church); *Sounds, Reflexes and Rhythms of the Middle Ages in the Works of Serbian Artists in the Second Half of the 20th Century and the New Millennium*, by Ivana Simeonović Čelić (Zepeter Gallery); *Visual Journeys through Mount Athos. Holy Mountain in the Drawings of Doug Patterson and Tim Vyner*, by Anastasios Douros (Atrium Gallery of the Belgrade City Library); *Athos. The Holy Mountain*, by Kostas Mygdalis (Residence of Princess Ljubica); *Life of the People and the Thriving of Temples.*

*Photographic testimonies*, by Bojan Popović and Jelena Savić (Ethnographic Museum), and *Dossiers of the 2nd (Belgrade, 1927) and the 12th (Ohrid, 1961) International Congresses of Byzantine Studies*, by Predrag Komatina, Tamara Matović, Srdjan Pirivatrić, Bojan Popović and Miloš Živković (Courtyard of the Belgrade University Rectorate Building).

As the host of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies, the Serbian capital, long recognized as one of the oldest centres of Byzantine studies in Europe, proved for the second time in the past hundred years to be fully prepared to meet the demanding task of organizing the world's largest professional gathering of the kind. Thus, it once again confirmed not only the cosmopolitan openness of Serbian scholarship at its best, but also the traditional reputation of national Byzantinology on a world scale.

THE CHRISTIAN HERITAGE OF KOSOVO AND METOHİJA. THE HISTORICAL AND SPIRITUAL HEARTLAND OF THE SERBIAN PEOPLE. EDITOR-IN-CHIEF BISHOP MAXİM (VASILJEVIĆ), CHIEF CONTRIBUTING EDITOR DUŠAN T. BATAKOVIĆ.<sup>1</sup>

LOS ANGELES<sup>2</sup> 2015, 1007 p.

Reviewed by Dušan Fundić\*

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*The Christian Heritage of Kosovo and Metohija. The Historical and Spiritual Heartland of*

\* Institute for Balkan Studies SASA

<sup>1</sup> Members of the Editorial Board are Bishop Atanasije (Jevtić), Bogoljub Šijaković, Predrag Puzović, Gordana Kelić.

<sup>2</sup> Jointly published by Sebastian Press, the Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade, the Episcopal Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America, the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade, BLAGO Fund, Serbica Americana and Interklima-grafika, Vrnjci.

*the Serbian people* brings between its covers translations of documentary material and literary texts but also, and perhaps more importantly, new historical analyses organised into eight chapters and accompanied by more than eight hundred illustrations.<sup>3</sup> The contributions by forty-six historians, theologians, artists, journalists, writers and experts in various fields, historical documents,

<sup>3</sup> The illustrative material which includes photographs, maps, reproductions of paintings, icons and frescoes provides a visual insight into the Christian cultural heritage of Kosovo and Metohija.