

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BYZANTINE STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NIŠ

UDC 930.85(495.02)

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Abstract. *The development of the Byzantine Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University in Niš is presented chronologically, starting from the establishment of the Department of History in 1998. The professors from the Department of History (Seminar for Byzantine Studies) at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade and from the Institute for Byzantine Studies of the SASA (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts) had the key role in the development. Scientific cooperation was also established with these two most prominent institutions in the state. The product of such cooperation was the increased interest in the Byzantine studies at the University of Niš.*

Key words: *Byzantine studies, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of History, University of Niš, Symposium of Byzantologists „Niš and Byzantium“, Centre for Byzantine-Slavic Studies*

Interest in the history of the Eastern Roman Empire throughout the world started as early as in 16th century. At the time, German humanist Hieronymus Wolf (1516–1580) was the first to use the term *Byzantium* in its present meaning. During the following century there was a certain level of progress in the study of the history of Byzantium, first of all, in France: a corpus of Byzantine narrative sources (Paris Corpus) was published, the first scientific studies and monographies came out, and finally, a dictionary of the Medieval Greek language was published. However, in the 18th century, interest in the Byzantine history declines. The Byzantine Empire was viewed exclusively as a feudal monarchy with the expressed negative characteristics of the Middle Ages (Ostrogorski 1996, 22; Maksimović 2000, 117–118).

In the 19th century there was again a growing interest in Byzantium and its civilisation. At the end of the century, first scientific centres were established. The first Department of Byzantine Studies in Europe was established in Munich (1892), with Karl Krumbacher (1856–1909) as its chairman. In 1898, the Department turned into a Seminar with a specialised library. After that, the second Department was established in Paris

Received October 21, 2018/Accepted December 11, 2018

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(1899), it was owing to Charles Diehl (1859–1944). At the time, first scientific journals were started: *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* (1892), a referential journal of contemporary Byzantine studies, and *Византийский Временник* (Ostrogorski 1996, 28–29; Maksimović 1988, 655; Maksimović 2000, 118).

At the same time, at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the increased cultural enthusiasm in the Kingdom of Serbia resulted in the promotion of the Great School in Belgrade into the status of a University (1905). And the next year (1906) the Department of Byzantine History was founded, as the third one of that kind in Europe. During the same year, there was an appointment advertisement for the post of Professor who will run the Department of Byzantine Studies. The first professor to be chosen at the Department and as the Head of the Department was Dragutin Anastasijević (1877–1950) (Maksimović 1988, 656–658; Radić 2012, 289–291).

In the period between two world wars, in University and Faculty files Byzantine Studies was (1924/5, 1927, 1931) determined three times as a separate branch of science, and the Department of Byzantine Studies as a separate institution at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade (Maksimović 1988, 660; Radić 2012, 292).

The arrival of George Ostrogorsky (1902–1976) in Belgrade (1933) was a great credit for Serbian science and University. After the Second World War, owing to Ostrogorsky, the Institute for Byzantine Studies of the SASA was founded (1948). In 1952 the scientific journal *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* (*Зборник радова Византолошког института*) was started. With synchronous and symbiotic action of the University and institutional associates, scientific results of Serbian Byzantologists were recognized abroad (Maksimović 1988, 661–670; Radić 2012, 293–296).

At the end of the 1960's and at the beginning of the 1970's, favourable political, social, economic and cultural conditions in the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia helped the foundation of new higher-education institutions in the state. From the moment of the foundation of the University of Niš (1965), the need and possibility to establish the Faculty of Philosophy was considered. This idea was finally realised in 1971 (Zaječaranović 1996, 6; Jovanović 2006, 5).

After two and a half decades of the existence of the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš, the Department of History was established at the Faculty (1998/99) (Jovanović 2006, 15). From the very start, it was defined in the curriculum of BA studies at the Study Group of History that the course *Byzantine History* lasted for two semesters (3 and 4). There were also three hours of lecturing and one hour of tutorials per semester. The exam was taken orally (Curriculum of the BA studies of the Study Group of History, the Department of History's Archives).

By understanding the importance of the antique and medieval cultural-historical inheritance of Niš, the birthplace of Constantine the Great (306–337 AD), as well as the Byzantine civilisation generally, the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš, after the foundation of the Department of History, established cooperation with the key (and at the same time the only) scientific centres for Byzantine Studies in Serbia: the Institute for Byzantine Studies of the SASA and the Department of Byzantine Studies of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade. That was how Radivoj Radić, PhD, a fellow of the Institute for Byzantine Studies of the SASA and Assistant Professor at Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade, was hired for the academic year 1999/2000. In the same status he delivered lectures on the history of Byzantium until the academic year 2005/06. Even today students who were taught by professor Radić remember lectures on the codification of Byzantine Law, iconoclasm and civil wars in Byzantium in the 14th century as the most complete and beautiful pictures of the thousand-year history

of the Byzantine Empire. During the academic year 2001/02, Radić was assisted by Bojana Krsmanović, MA, an associate researcher of the Institute for Byzantine Studies of the SASA, who gave tutorials in *Byzantine History* from that point all until the academic year 2006/07.

The generation of students who enrolled in BA studies at the Department of History of the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš in the academic year 2006/07, encountered a curriculum prepared in line with the Bologna Process. This meant that the 2-semester course *Byzantine History* was split into two one-semester courses: *Byzantine History from 4th to 11th century* and *Byzantine History from 11th to 15th century*. The former course belonged to the third semester, and the latter to the fourth. Each course consisted of two lecture classes and two tutorials a week (<https://www.filfak.ni.ac.rs/preuzimanje/category/56-predmeti-oas-istorija-2008>, accessed on 26th July 2018 at 13:19).

The autumn of 2007 witnessed the first appointment advertisement for the post of Assistant Professor in *Medieval History (Byzantine History from 4th to 11th century and Byzantine History from 11th to 15th century)*, with a 30% part-time contract, at the Department of History, Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Niš. One candidate applied for this position, Bojana Krsmanović, PhD, at that time an research fellow of the Institute for Byzantine Studies of the SASA. The Scientific-Expert Council for Social Sciences and Humanities of the University of Niš, during the session held on 8th May 2008, arrived at a decision to appoint Bojana Krsmanović, PhD to the rank of Assistant Professor (Decision on appointment to the rank, SEC number 8/18-01-005/08-013 dated 8th May 2008).

In this period, the Department of History of the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš submitted the documents necessary to start a PhD programme to the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance. Within the programme, the Byzantine civilisation was represented in four elective courses: *Byzantine History* (semesters 1 and 3), *Byzantine Theme System in the Balkans from 7th to 13th century* (semesters 1 and 3), *Byzantine State Apparatus from 9th to 11th century* (semesters 1 and 3), and *The Rise of Byzantine Aristocracy from 7th to 12th century* (semesters 2 and 4). Because of this, in June 2008, the Faculty of Philosophy appointed assistant professor Bojana Krsmanović, PhD, for the task of teaching on all three academic levels (BA, MA and PhD studies) in the Department of History (Decision on teaching appointment number 304/61-01 dated 23rd June 2008). Unfortunately, the PhD programme at this point was not accredited.

As assistant professor Bojana Krsmanović, PhD, had a research stay in Mainz from 2007 to 2009, owing to the prestigious scholarship she received from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Faculty of Philosophy appointed Radivoj Radić, a full professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, to the rank of honorary lecturer within the BA programme at the Department of History (*Byzantine History from 4th to 11th century* and *Byzantine History from 11th to 15th century*) for the academic years 2007/08 and 2008/09. Starting from the academic year 2009/10 until 2011/12, assistant professor Bojana Krsmanović, PhD has continually given lectures in Byzantine history at the Department of History of the Faculty of Philosophy (Annex I to the teaching appointment contract number 304/61-01 dated 23rd June 2008, number 304/90-01 dated 16th November 2009; Annex I to the teaching appointment contract number 304/61-01 dated 23rd June 2008, number 304/120-01 dated 12th November 2010; Annex I to the teaching appointment contract number 304/61-01 dated 23rd June 2008, number 302/13-01 dated 31st October 2011). There is no doubt that Bojana Krsmanović's immensely interesting lectures on the Empire's state organization, provincial administration and military command nomenclature remained as great memories of the generations of students she

taught. The tutorials in the courses *Byzantine History from 4th to 11th century* and *Byzantine History from 11th to 15th century* were given by Miloš Cvetković, a PhD student who held a fellowship of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia. During the following four years (from 2010/11 until 2013/14), these tutorials were given by Jasmina Šaranac Stamenković, a PhD student, first a fellowship holder (the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia), and then a research fellow of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade.

During the two academic years (2012/13 and 2013/14) students at the Department of History of the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš attended lectures from the courses *Byzantine History from 4th to 11th century* and *Byzantine History from 11th to 15th century* delivered by Vlada Stanković, PhD, Associate Professor of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade (Contract for teaching appointment, number 144/14-01 from 28th November 2012; Contract for teaching appointment, number 292/3-01 from 14th October 2013). With his erudition and direct approach, Stanković familiarised students with the Byzantine civilisation, especially in the domain of literature, architecture, painting, as well as everyday life. In this period, the Department of History prepared the documentation to reaccredit study programmes at the BA and MA academic studies, and it was planned that professor Stanković should be hired at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš in the following period. Due to nice reasons, this never happened. Namely, professor Vlada Stanković became a member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton on the basis of a one-year scholarship for the academic year 2014/15 (<https://www.hs.ias.edu/memberlists/2014-2015>, accessed on 26th July 2018 at 13:14). This is why the lectures from the field of Byzantine history were delivered by the permanently employed teaching staff at the Department of History during the academic years 2014/15 and 2015/16.

The spring of 2014 witnessed the first appointment advertisement for the post of Teaching Assistant for the courses *Byzantine History and Byzantine Civilisation* at the Faculty of Philosophy, Department of History. One candidate applied for this position: Jasmina Šaranac Stamenković, a PhD student and an research associate of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade. The Election Council of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Niš, during the session held on 16th July 2014, arrived at a decision to appoint the candidate to the rank of Teaching Assistant (Decision on appointment of the associate to the rank of Teaching Assistant, the Election Council of the Faculty of Philosophy, number 182/3-2-01 from 16th July 2014).

During the second semester of the academic year 2014/2015, Mina Ilić, a student of master academic studies of history at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, gave tutorials in the course *Byzantine History from 11th to 15th century*. During that semester, the Department of History of the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš organised a two-day course on the last five centuries of the Byzantine Empire. The lectures were held by the youngest Byzantologists in Serbia, research fellows of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Belgrade, Larisa Velimonović, PhD and Dragoljub Marjanović, PhD (Copyright contract 13/13-01, 26th March 2015).

Since the academic year 2014/2015 up to now, students who enrolled in the undergraduate academic studies of history at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš have attended the course in *History of the Byzantine Empire* according to the reaccredited programme. During the process of reaccreditation of the study programme of the undergraduate academic studies of history, *Byzantine Civilisation* was defined to be studied as two core one-semester courses (*History of the Byzantine Empire* and *Byzantine Civilisation*) and an elective, one-semester course from group 8 (*Cultural History of the*

Byzantine Empire). The first core course is attended during the third semester, the second one during the fourth semester. The planned teaching load for core courses per semester is 2 lecture classes and 2 tutorials. The elective course is attended in the fourth semester, and the teaching load is one lecture class and one tutorial class. (<https://www.filfak.ni.ac.rs/preuzimanje/category/69-predmeti-oas-istorija-2014>, accessed on 26th July 2018 at 14:23).

Eventually in June 2016 there was the appointment advertisement for the post of Assistant Professor in the scientific field of History (*History of the Byzantine Empire and Byzantine Civilisation*) at the Department of History of the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš. One candidate, Jasmina Šaranac Stamenković, PhD, a teaching assistant at the Department of History of the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš, applied for the post. At the meeting held on 13th October 2016, the Scientific-Expert Council for Social Sciences and Humanities of the University of Niš arrived at a decision to appoint Jasmina Šaranac Stamenković to the rank of Assistant Professor (Decision on appointment to the rank, SEC number 8/18-01-007/16-009 dated 13th October 2016). During the academic year 2016/2017, the tutorials were given by Dušan Obradović, a student of master academic studies of history at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš.

Following the proposal of the Department of History, the associates of the Institute for Byzantine Studies of the Serbian Academy for Sciences and Arts (SASA) delivered several lectures at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš. Thus in the spring of 2012, Professor Emeritus and member of SASA, Ljubomir Maksimović, the director of the Institute for Byzantine Studies of SASA, spoke about the imperial title of the Serbian Emperor Stefan Dušan. In May 2016, Predrag Komatina, PhD, a research fellow of the Institute for Byzantine Studies of SASA, held a lecture on *The End of Roman and the Beginning of Byzantine Civilisation*. Also, the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš organised two promotions of the books by Professor Radivoje Radić, PhD, the head of the Seminar for Byzantine Studies of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. The books promoted were *Another Face of Byzantium* (May 2016) and *Klio is ashamed* (May 2017).

In addition to the courses in Byzantine Studies at the Department of History of the Faculty of Philosophy, the University of Niš has become recognisable abroad by the scientific symposium *Niš and Byzantium*, which has been organised at the University of Niš by the city of Niš, the Orthodox Eparchy of Niš and the University of Niš every year since 2001. The greatest credit for the idea of the symposium, its realisation, as well as the continuity in publishing of the collection of papers belong to Miša Rakocija, PhD, the editor of the collection of papers *Niš and Byzantium* (<http://www.nisandbyzantium.org.rs/>, accessed on 1st August 2018, at 17:15).

In December 2014, the Centre for Byzantine-Slavic Studies was founded at the University of Niš. In a short period of time, the Centre for Byzantine-Slavic Studies organised the International scientific conference *Byzantium and Orthodoxy* (22nd – 24th April 2015), as well as the seminar *Byzantium and the World of the Slavs*, from 5th November to 17th December, 2015. The Centre is the co-publisher of the respected journal *Crkvene studije* (*Црквене студије*). What is particularly significant is the contribution of the Centre for Byzantine-Slavic Studies to the initiation and establishment of the International scientific network *Pax Byzantino-Slava*, which brings together related institutions from the region and the world. Professor Dragiša Bojović, PhD, the head of the Centre for Byzantine-Slavic Studies at the University of Niš and a full professor at the Department of Serbian and Comparative Literature of the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš, was elected the first chair of this Network (<https://www.ni.ac.rs/univerzitet/centri-univerziteta/centar-za-vizantijsko-slovenske-studije>, accessed on 1st January 2016 at 17:17).

It is understandable that, at the University of Niš, especially at the Faculty of Philosophy and the Faculty of Law, as well as at the Faculty of Arts, there are courses all the time in certain academic disciplines which cover: Byzantine philosophy, Byzantine aesthetics, Byzantine literature, Byzantine law, Byzantine architecture, art and music - Byzantine Orthodox civilisation in general.

In September 2016, the SASA branch in Niš was established, so the SASA Science and Research and the University of Niš, founded in 1990, stopped working. The branch is in charge of numerous scientific research projects in various fields, as well as in social and humanistic sciences. The branch is the organiser of numerous scientific conferences, round tables, public lectures, etc. With the daily advocacy and unselfish support of member of SASA, Ninoslav Stojadinović, the president of the SASA branch in Niš, as well as his far-reaching vision of Niš as the main university, scientific, cultural and art centre in southeast Serbia, two projects on archaeological and cultural-historical research of ancient and medieval Niš were realised in this institution. In addition, within the cycle of public lectures of academicians organised by the SASA branch in Niš on 21st November 2017, academician Ljubomir Maksimović, the vice President of SASA and director of the Institute for Byzantine Studies of the SASA, held a lecture *Understanding the Byzantine Empire*. (<http://www.vi.sanu.ac.rs/Clanstvo/Nis.aspx>, accessed on 1st August 2018 at 17:19).

For the past two decades, the University of Niš, the Faculty of Philosophy and the Department of History have been encouraging academic and scientific cooperation with the Seminar for Byzantine Studies of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade and the Institute for Byzantine Studies of the SASA. The management of the University, Faculty and Department, as well as their teaching staff and associates, strive for the cooperation to continue and be as effective as it has been so far.

Acknowledgement: *The paper is the result of the research done within the project Christian Culture in the Balkans in the Middle Ages: Byzantine Empire, the Serbs and Bulgarians from the 9th to the 15th century (no. 177015) of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia. Only the results of the research dealing with the institutional foundation and development of Byzantine studies at the University of Niš are presented in this paper. In the second part of the research, whose results will be published in another paper, attention is paid to the problem of the predominant contents of curricula and their change, i.e. the change of Byzantine conceptions, schools, approaches, theoretical-methodological paradigms, corpora of the recommended literature, etc. – in the teaching process of Byzantine Studies at the University of Niš.*

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RAZVOJ VIZANTOLOGIJE NA UNIVERZITETU U NIŠU

Razvoj vizantologije na Filozofskom fakultetu Univerziteta u Nišu prikazan je prema hronološkom principu, od samog osnivanja Studijske grupe za istoriju 1998. godine. Ključnu ulogu u razvoju odigrali su nastavnici koji su dolazili sa Odeljenja za istoriju Filozofskog fakulteta u Beogradu (prof. dr Radivoj Radić i prof. dr Vlada Stanković) i iz Vizantološkog instituta SANU (dr Bojana Krsmanović). Sa ove dve najuglednije institucije u zemlji uspostavljena je i naučna saradnja. Plod takve saradnje doveo je do povećanog interesovanja za vizantologiju na Univerzitetu u Nišu. Pored nastave vizantologije koja se odvija na Departmanu za istoriju na Filozofskom fakultetu, Univerzitet u Nišu postao je prepoznatljiv u inostranstvu po naučnom simpozijumu Niš i Vizantija koji se od 2001. godine, svake godine, održava na Univerzitetu u organizaciji Grada Niša, Pravoslavne Eparhije niške i Univerziteta u Nišu. Na Univerzitetu u Nišu osnovan je i Centar za vizantijsko-slovenske studije, decembra 2014. godine. Posebno je značajan doprinos Centra u iniciranju i osnivanju Međunarodne naučne mreže Pax Byzantino-Slava, koja okuplja srodne institucije iz regiona i sveta. Septembra 2016. godine osnovan je i Ogranak SANU u Nišu, koji je nosilac brojnih naučnoistraživačkih projekata iz raznih oblasti, pa tako i iz društveno-humanističkih nauka, uključujući i vizantološke teme.

Ključne reči: *Vizantijske studije, Filozofski fakultet, Departman za istoriju, Univerzitet u Nišu, naučni simpozijum „Niš i Vizantija“, Centar za vizantijsko-slovenske studije*