

**CITY OF NIŠ**  
**DAYS OF ST. EMPEROR CONSTANTINE AND EMPRESS HELEN**

**PROJECT**  
**INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIUM**

**NIŠ AND BYZANTIUM XXIV**

*„1700 years after the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea: 325–2025“*



Niš, February 2025

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## **I – GENERAL DATA**

### **1. Organizers**

- City of Niš, University of Niš, Niš Orthodox Eparchy and Niš Cultural Center, as co-organizers

- Scientific Board within the Committee for the Celebration of the Festivities of Saints Emperor Constantine and Empress Helen

### **2. Project leaders**

- City of Niš, University of Niš and Niš Orthodox Eparchy

### **3. Project Management**

- Organizing Committee and Redaction of the Symposium „Nis and Byzantium“

- Metropolitan of Niš Mr. Arsenije
- Dragoslav Pavlović, Mayor of Niš, President
- Prof dr Jovan Stepanović, University of Niš, Rector
- Luka Gašević, Deputy Mayor, President
- Сузана Јовановић, City Administration for Culture, ..., Member
- dr Miša Rakocija, art historian, editor-in-chief of the Proceedings, member (Niš)
- Srdjan Savić, director of Niš Cultural Center, advisor
- dr Hranislav Andjelković (Niš)
- dr Franz Curk (Niš)
- Milica Todorović (Niš)
- Jovan Mandić (Niš)
- Reverend Aleksandar Djordjević, coordinator, Niš Orthodox Eparchy

- Olgica Davidović, coordinator, Rector's Office, University of Niš
- dr Irena Ljubomirović, secretary (Niš)
- academician dr Ljubomir Maksimović (Belgrade)
- academician dr Renate Pilinger (Vienna)
- academician dr Vera Bitrakova Grozdanova (Skopje)
- dr Aleksandar Kadijević (Belgrade)
- dr Graham Jones (Oxford)
- dr Lars Ramskold (Stockholm)
- academician dr Vujadin Ivanišević (Belgrade)
- academician dr Miodrag Marković (Belgrade)
- academician dr Dragan Vojvodić (Belgrade)
- dr Radivoje Radić (Belgrade)
- dr Giordana Trovabene (Venice)
- dr Ioannis Sisiou (Kastoria)
- dr Georgi Gerov (Sofia)
- dr Bojana Krsmanović (Belgrade)
- dr Athansios Semoglou (Thessaloniki)
- dr Ioannis D. Varalis (Volos)
- dr Marta Nagy (Debrecen)
- academician dr Ivanka Gergova (Sofia)
- dr Elizabeta Dimitrova (Skopje)
- dr Carolyn C. Snively (Gettysburg)
- dr Ivana Popović (Belgrade)
- dr Irina Oretskaya (Moscow)
- dr Marco Fasolio (Vercelli)
- dr Miomir Vasov (Niš)
- dr Srđan Pirivatrić (Belgrade),
- dr Ana Zaharova (Moskva)
- dr Jasmina Ćirić (Belgrade)
- dr Jasmina Šarenac Stamenković (Board Secretary, Niš)
- dr Nebojša Stanković (Niš)
- deacon dr Ivica Čairović (Belgrade)
- dr Nadežda Gavrilović Vitas, Institute of Archaeology SANU
- Nadežda Rakocija, Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments Niš
- Hieromonk Ignatija Uroš Đorđević
- др Ненад Милосављевић, Director of TON, member
- Ненад Радуловић, Assistant Professor at the Department of History, Faculty of Philosophy, Niš
- Aleksandra Golubović, Rectorate of the University of Niš, member
- dr Anđela Gavrilović (Belgrade)
- Aleksandar Đorđev, priest, Eparchy of Niš
- Maja Miljković, coordinator, City Administration for Social Affairs

## II – PROJECT OBJECTIVE

Eminent national and European scientists dealing with the history of arts and cultural attainments of the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine world are invited to the International Symposium "Niš and Byzantium". This implies the participation of art historians, historians, archaeologists, classical philologists, theologians, architects and

philosophers whose sphere of interest is Niš, the Balkan region and Europe. The intention of the organizers of the Symposium, which would be concentrated around the Early-Christian, Byzantine and Post-Byzantine cultural heritage of the city and region of Niš, is to comprehend its position in the cultural mosaic of Europe. The wish of the organizers is to contribute to a better understanding of the Byzantine past of Niš, as well as its reverberation to the later spiritual, cultural and artistic creative endeavors in Niš, the Balkans and Europe. Gathering of reputable European, and particularly Balkan scientists and targeting their knowledge to the area of our city would contribute to the illumination of many question marks related to the Early-Christian and Byzantine past of Niš and its region. The real picture of the city of Niš can only be created on the grounds of knowledge about our rich Christian past, which has been relegated to a marginal status in scientific research during the last 50 years. *The task* of the Symposium is to divert the attention of the European scholarly public to the significance of Niš for the entire Christian world and to point out the effects of the Byzantine culture on the modern Europe. The misunderstandings, lack of comprehension and old delusions related to Byzantium shall fall into oblivion due to scientific argumentation. Cultural rapprochement leads to a national consolidation, to the long-forgotten Byzantine dream about the unity of the Empire.

### **III - PROJECT RATIONALE**

The medieval past of Niš is still insufficiently known. It seems that the incomplete investigation, even of known objects, can be explained by the indifference and not only by the lack of funds. The result is, thus, a withering level of knowledge about the Christian past of Niš, although it occupied a prominent political, economical, religious, cultural and artistic position in the vast Byzantine Empire, whose achievements are firmly integrated in the foundations of European culture and arts. Even the fact that Niš is the birthplace of Saint Emperor Constantine, to whom the Christian part of the world owes its own existence, did not represent a sufficient reason to pay due attention to it. On the other side, the known monuments have not been properly protected and preserved. For this reason, and with the awareness of the inseparability of the historical and artistic heritage of Niš from the European culture and arts, the organization of the Scientific Symposium "Nis and Byzantium-Byzantium - *“Byzantium and the Byzantine: World 324–2024 - from Byzantion towards Constantinople and New Rome”*”.

This year, we mark 1,700 years since the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea. Using scientific methodology, we will examine the impact of the conclusions made at the Nicene Council on all aspects of Christian life, from theology and art to politics. How much and in what ways has the Christian world changed from the year 325 until today?

The Council was opened in 325 by Emperor Constantine the Great. One of Constantine's main ideas was harmony between the state and the Church. The Council particularly emphasized unity and conciliarity. There was a fierce struggle against Arius and his teachings, which were opposed by the Orthodox bishops. After the Nicene Council, Niš would become a stronghold of the Arians.

One of the greatest Christian thinkers, Athanasius the Great, a defender of Orthodoxy and the Nicene Creed, participated in the Council. Later known as Saint Athanasius the Great, he spent Easter of 344 in Niš together with the city's bishop, Gaudentius, following the Council of Serdica in 343.

The Council of Nicaea clearly shaped Constantine's work and ideas, contributing to the formation of Christian culture and art.

#### **IV - PROJECT PROGRAMME**

- The expected number of participants is 35
- Presentation of papers shall last for 2 days
- The third day of the Symposium shall include a reception at the City Hall and a tour of cultural monuments of Niš and its surroundings
- The Proceedings of the 22<sup>th</sup> Symposium shall be published by the end of the current year
- The preparations of the scientific meeting have to start in November 2023 in order to enable invited participants to have enough time to write their respective papers
- Details shall be defined by the programme of the scientific symposium

#### **V – WORK PLAN**

- Day 1, June 3

*Venue: Niš University Hall*

- *17:30 Ceremonial opening and the beginning of working sessions*
- Introduction - Dr. Miša Rakocija - art historian
- Blessing – Metropolitan of Niš Mr. Arsenije
- Welcome speech– Niš City Mayor Mrs. Dragoslav Pavlović
- Welcome speech – University of Niš Rector Prof. dr Jovan Stepanović

- Opening ceremony – Academician Prof. Dr. Renate Pillinger
- Presentation of the Proceedings vol. 23
- Dinner

#### I Working Session

- Presentation of papers until 20:30
- Meeting with the representatives of local authorities, cultural workers and journalists
- Dinner

- Day II, June 4

09:00 - 19:30 Presentation of papers with a break from 14:00 to 16:00

- 09,00 - 14,00 - Presentation of papers
- 14,00 - 15,30 – Lunch Break
- 15,30 - 19,00 - Presentation of papers
- 19,00 – 19,30 - Discussion

- Day III, June 5

- 9,30 – Reception at the Niš City Hall
- Tour of cultural monuments and historical sites
- Departure

#### **VI – PROJECT FINANCING**

The Project is financed by the City of Niš.

- Expenses related to the invited paper presenters including a dinner on June 3 after the ceremonial opening of the symposium.
- Necessary funds for the activities of the project organizer (Task Force of the Scientific Board within the Committee for the Celebration of the Festivities of Saints Czar Constantine and Czarina Helena).
- Proceedings vol. 22
- Remuneration for hiring, maintaining and designing the website of the Symposium.

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Considering the exceptional importance of the early Christian and Byzantine Niš, as well as insufficiently exploration of this area, the invited researchers' response and the great interest of the European scientific community should be expected. The knowledge gained on this occasion is very important for our city, but also for the cultural heritage of Serbia, the Balkans and Europe. Gathering of prominent researchers, who properly process the cultural

and historical treasures of Nis and Byzantium, has resulted in greater interest of the world scientific public and has increased the City of Nis reputation.

**On behalf of the Scientific Board**

**Editor in Chief**

Dr Miša Rakocija

**CHAIRMAN OF THE  
SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE  
Deputy Mayor  
Luka Gašević**

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