Byzantine Studies Alive (Nijmegen, 16-17 Jun 16)

Radboud University Nijmegen, Jun 16–17, 2016
Deadline: Dec 1, 2015

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In recent decades many new studies on the Byzantine world have appeared that have offered us new perspectives on existing views of the Byzantine Empire. For instance, Judith Herrin in Byzantium. The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire (2009) and Margins and Metropolis (2013) made an appeal for Byzantium to be saved from its negative stereotype of an autocratic, completely ritualized and almost fossilized empire. Averil Cameron has demonstrated in her recent Byzantine Matters (2014) that – although we have made progress in the past few decades – Byzantine Studies is still left with many questions on issues such as Byzantine identity, the Hellenistic influence or our understanding of religious practices and orthodoxy in the Byzantine world.

However, whereas both Herrin and Cameron encourage Byzantine scholars to continue to deal with these issues, to take up new avenues and to unite the various disciplines that work on the Byzantine field, Norman Davies in his Vanished Kingdoms (2011) has been more pessimistic. In his discussion of the rise and fall of various kingdoms in Europe he offered his readers a gloomy view on our possibilities of understanding Byzantium. In fact, in the chapter on Byzantium he concluded that “describing or summarizing Europe’s greatest ‘vanished kingdom’ is almost too much to contemplate. The story is too long, too rich and too complex” (p. 322).

This rather negative point of view of being overwhelmed by Byzantium’s complexities almost seems to suggest that we should refrain ourselves from attempting to analyze Byzantium and its history. Our conference likes to object to this suggestion as it will take up the challenge of demonstrating that Byzantine Studies is far from dead. We want to show how the diversities and complexities have made Byzantium into a fascinating world worth of our attention, encouraged by the studies of Herrin and Cameron. We are very pleased to announce that Averil Cameron will give the key note lecture of the conference.

We would like to bring together both junior and senior scholars from various disciplines such as Byzantine history, art history, literature and archaeology in our attempt to unlock the importance of the Byzantine world for our current generations.

We welcome proposals for papers on the following two themes:

1) Byzantium as a key player in the relationship between East and West, A.D. 330 -1453

Byzantium can be seen as a leading catalyst in the political, cultural, economic and religious exchange between East and West, to be detected in the relationship both between Byzantium and Latin Western Europe and Byzantium and the Islamic world.

Keywords: contacts, interchange, imitation, competition, confrontations

We especially welcome the papers on this theme to include analyses on
(a) Agents of exchange such as rulers, bishops, popes, diplomats, pilgrims, writers or artists
(b) Objects of transcultural encounter and transfer such as, (religious) monuments, texts (hagiography, historiography, liturgical texts, travel accounts) decorations, liturgical objects, relics or diplomatic gifts.
These agents and objects can be regarded as part of the larger historical context within which Europe took shape in the Middle Ages and beyond.

2) The position of Byzantine heritage, 7th Century - present day
The definite end of the Byzantine Empire is marked by the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453. Through its history, however, the dimension and identity of the Empire was not one identical continuum. In different phases of development (Arab conquests, iconoclasm, Crusaders period) Byzantine monuments and artefacts were appropriated or under threat, a phenomenon that continued after the Ottoman conquest.

Keywords: appropriation, transformation, identity, continuity, rupture.

We especially welcome the papers on this theme to include analyses on:
(a) Appropriation and transformation of Byzantine heritage (objects, monuments, cities)
(b) Display of Byzantine heritage in museum collections
(c) Preservation and restoration of Byzantine heritage
(d) Byzantine heritage under threat

Abstracts, no more than 400 words, can be submitted to d.slootjes@let.ru.nl and m.verhoeven@let.ru.nl before the 1st of December, 2015.

Reference:
CFP: Byzantine Studies Alive (Nijmegen, 16-17 Jun 16). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 20, 2015 (accessed Nov 2, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/11301>.