

Commemorative conference in honor of a Hungarian Byzantinologist in Szeged



Terézia Olajos professor of the University of Szeged celebrated her sixtieth birthday not long ago. In her honor colleagues organized a commemorative conference. The lectures, supplemented with further studies, appeared in a complimentary volume.¹

Olajos graduated from the Attila József University (Szeged) in 1965 first as a Latin-Greek, later as a French teacher. Since graduation, she worked in higher education. Her scholarly work covers more periods. Besides dealing with works of antique and middle-Greek authors she has studied sources relating to Avars, Slavs as well as to early Hungarian history. The professor is highly praised for her scholarly activity both in Hungary and internationally. Besides her expanded research she gains distinction by her active participation in public life as well as her conscientious teaching. She can be reckoned as the most outstanding representative of Hungarian Byzantinology.

Her career is appreciated by Professor Ferenc Makk in the Salutatory of the complimentary volume. The volume consists of 12 studies dealing with various topics in Hungarian, German and French.

In the opening study of the volume (*Medieval documentary heritage of the Carpathian-basin*) Tibor Almási surveys the achievements of the last century of Hungarian historiography and source publication, referring to the various intellectual trends of the different historical eras as well as to the effects these trends produced on the exploration of medieval documentary material. The author remarks that the exploration of the medieval documentary legacy had been thrust into the background in twentieth-century Hungary, but that in the past two decades it seems to be moving from its nadir. Almási draws attention to three publication series: collection of documents of Sigismund, of the Angevin dynasty and that of Transylvania. From the three series the author considers the largest-scale enter-

¹ Kultúrák találkozása. [Meeting of Cultures. Festive studies in honor of Professor Terézia Olajos] ed. Ferenc Makk, Erzsébet Galántai, Szeged 2002, pp. 127.

prise – the Anjou collection – to be the most significant. He informs us that the series being made in Szeged aims at treating the archive source material known up to now, preparing a collection of summaries from each and every document that still exists or for the existence of which there is any evidence. The whole work will take up 70 volumes, 16 volumes of which have already been published. The author emphasizes the significance of the enterprise when expounding that at least three thirds of the documents in the volumes were unpublished. He calls attention to the fact that the work is useful for various social sciences since all summaries contain factual information valuable for historians, linguists, archaeologists and researchers engaged in social sciences.

László Blazovich in the chapter entitled "*Legal situation of free royal towns of the Great Hungarian Plain with special regard to Szeged*" raises the question of how free royal towns of the Great Plain adjusted themselves to other Hungarian, European and especially German towns according to the legislation. Following a brief overview of medieval urban legal development in Europe, the author traces the roots of legal development in the East back to Lombardy and to areas near the Rhine back to the tenth–twelfth centuries. From there traders and foreign merchants brought with themselves elements of urban law, e.g. right to personal freedom, right to property and right to customs freedom. Further development of urban law – according to Blazovich – was influenced by royal and noble decrees. The author takes the identities and differences in the unwritten law of Hungarian free royal towns one by one, emphasizing the role of Székesfehérvár and Buda. The chapter describes how Szeged gradually acquired its privileges, how it used the law of Buda under the authority of *magister tavernicorum*. Moreover, it analyzes the question of why the towns using the very same law did not welcome Szeged among themselves.

The following study takes us to another field. Jürgen Blusch in his work "*Lob als Herausforderung: Zur Laus Stultitiae des Erasmus*" examines the appearance and application of *laudatio*, a term often used by humanists, by the Flemish author. At the beginning of the study Blusch surveys the meanings of the word "praise" used in everyday, official as well as in literary language followed by an analysis of the characteristic features of "*laudatio*" by Erasmus. In Erasmus' work the personified *Stultitia* (Foolishness) praises herself, thus applying facetious *panegyricus* – popular humanist genre traceable to literary traditions of the antiquity – as *autopanegyricus*. Blusch undertakes to illuminate the connection between the various faces of Foolishness, which, in his opinion, demonstrate the different grades of mentality by Erasmus. *Laudatio* by Erasmus, according to Blusch's analysis combines the meanings of both *stimulus* and *provocatio*.

Gábor Hajnóczi (*Did a Vitruvius copy exist in the Buda library of King Matthias?*) studies the *Bibliotheca Corviniana*, the most important humanist library in Hungary. Researchers had already raised the question of whether Vitruvius' *De Architectura* existed in Matthias' library. Some authors believed that the ornamented copy made in 1463 and kept in Budapest belonged to the royal library. Hajnóczi argues that he can prove the falseness of this theory. At the same time he demonstrates that the book under consideration was given as a present for John Corvin,

son of the king, by the Prince of Milan and that it did not originally belong to the royal library, but by the token of the above, it finally was incorporated into the collection. The author believes his assumptions are verified by period architecture that shows the work's effect; he relies on analogies of court libraries of the age, saying that all but one period libraries possessed a copy. Moreover, he argues that on the basis of the existing volumes Matthias was extremely interested in studies on architecture. Thirdly, the author draws attention to the fact that Bonfini, while translating Filarete's *Trattato*, was undoubtedly using Vitruvius' work.

László Havas (Admonitions by Saint Stephen and their possible Byzantine background) surveys the Admonitions issued under the reign of the first Hungarian king and their possible Byzantine background. Admonitions (in Latin: *Libellus de institutione morum*) – according to the author – complies with the cultural standards of contemporary Europe: classic, medieval, European and at the same time characteristically Hungarian. Thought provoking though is the fact that the cultural change and turn towards the Western world seems abrupt. The author attaches oneself to the opinion of Gyula Moravcsik and Ferenc Makk, according to which, from an intellectual, cultural and religious point of view, eleventh-century Hungary was characterized by a Greek–Latin two-facedness. Analyzing Byzantine literature at great length with special emphasis on the genre of “royal mirror”. Furthermore, he demonstrates which Byzantine literary pieces affected the Admonitions. Nevertheless, the author agrees that Hungary even under Stephen's reign stood somewhat closer to Western European mentality.

Imre H. Tóth in his work entitled “Georgios Bulgarian Archbishop's lead-seal of Zalavár” analyzes a Byzantine question. The governing idea behind the study was an exhibition catalogue appeared in 2001, in which the image of Georgios' lead-seal was published, accompanied by commentaries. The publisher of the catalogue – Etele Kiss – traced back the finding to Bulgaria, its date of origin to 878. After describing the parameters of the seal as well as stating its provenance (Zalavár), Kiss mentions that two analogues of the seal are known, one guarded in Sophia, the other in Athens. Imre H. Tóth supplements Kiss' statements with data by T. Totev and I. Jordanov, on the basis of which seven seals of Georgios are known so far. The author recognizes the seal mentioned above as the eight member of the group established by Totev and Jordanov. On the other hand, he accepts Kiss' opinion which dates back the seal to the years around 878. Nevertheless, he refutes the statement that the previously mentioned findings of Athens and Sophia could have been Georgios' seal since there exists no likeness whatsoever to the other eight seals. Imre Tóth sharing Gerasimov's opinion maintains that the two findings mentioned by Etele Kiss may have come into being after 894 and they were Georgii Synkhellos' seals who cannot be identified with archbishop Georgios. The existence of the seal raises important questions: when and how the bill got to Hungary or what kind of relationship might have existed between the religious community of Zalavár pursuing vernacular liturgy and the Bulgarian church.

In "Greek language command in the West in the ninth–tenth centuries" Ilona Jónás aims to provide examples of Greek language command of the Carolingian and post-Carolingian era. She points to Charlemagne, Louis I (the Pious), the papal court, as well as certain parts of Southern Italy as promoters of Greek language and culture. She calls attention to the significance of preparing bilingual texts in the West in the spirit of *translatio studii* announced by Charles the Great. He also praises the role of scholars and monks who since the eighth century labored in the rediscovery of the Greek language, culture and philosophy.

Zoltán Kádár's "Philés, Bergikios and seventeenth-century French natural science" analyses how the thirteenth–fourteenth-century Byzantine author exercised influence on western scientific literature of the sixteenth century as well as on fourteenth–fifteenth-century art. Philés's work "Petri Zoón Idioéetos" (On Animal Features) is one of a monumental ethological summary. Philés not only collects but also systematizes animal features. The original manuscript did not survive, though 16 copies were made in the sixteenth century, eight of which illustrated. The writer of the copies was Bishop Bergikios (Vergecius) Angelos who worked in Francis I's library copying Greek manuscripts. The pictures in the manuscript in accordance with the texts present various fantastic creatures, who – according to Zoltán Kádár's research – correspond to the scientific standard of the age. Moreover, it is evident that the illustrations were influenced by observations carried out by natural historians on behalf of Francis I. Further analysis reveals that the Philés manuscript impressed the art, medicine and scientific life to a great extent.

Gyula Kristó in his study "Rivers and Towns in DAI (*De administrando imperio*)" surveys the geographical objects that in Constantinus VII Porphyrogenitus' work helped to define the habitat of certain people. The author points out that in some areas the DAI uses exclusively names of rivers, while in other cases names of towns, thereby the emperor provides indirect data about the level of settlement as well as the nomadic nature of the people. Kristó supports his point of view with a series of arguments. He considers it natural that in nomadic life watering places were of utmost importance. Conversely, towns and fortresses in pasturing way of life had no real value. Further argument is that Constantinus when defining a habitat with the help of towns, always mentioned the activity of the people which required a settled way of life. Finally the denomination "nomadic" indicates that the emperor was aware of the differences in lifestyle of the two people. In his study Kristó provides further evidence for the nomadic way of life of the Magyars before their settlement in the Carpathian basin.

Ferenc Makk's study "Hungarian people and Europe 895–1038" discusses post-conquest Hungarian history and conversion into Christianity until Stephen I's (first Hungarian king) death, touching upon foreign policy stressing Byzantium's effect on the Hungarian people. He raises the question of why at the turn of the first millennium Hungarian people already settled and not sided with the West in the dilemma denominated "East or West" formulated in cultural religious and political circles. The author enforces his already articulated opinion that this decision was related to two persons: Prince Géza (971–977) and King Stephen (prince

997–1000, king 1000–1038). According to Makk, opening towards the West (970) was rather a political question for Géza since it was under Byzantine threat that Hungary tried to win the Holy Roman Empire's support. His son Stephen, however, when maintaining good relationship with Byzantium and when trying to strengthen external relations towards the papacy aimed at weakening German influence that had strengthened during the decades.

Samu Szádeczky-Kardoss in his work entitled "*Picti Agathyrsi (Vergil, Aeneis 4, 146)*" analyses the question of why the people of *agathyros* and God Phoebus were attached to each other by Vergil. Why did Vergil from among the many Scythian people chose exactly the *agathyros* as a companion for Apollo in the descriptive part dealing with the love relationship of Aeneas and Dido. Following an overview of antique explanations the author determines that neither of them gives a real solution to the problem. According to Szádeczky-Kardoss, examining the text from the angle of poetic context may be looked upon as the clue. Drawing a parallel between the characters we can see that Vergil formed Aeneas on the basis of Apollo's character. As a consequence, we have to compare the companions of Aeneas to those of Apollo. Thus, characterization of the *agathyros* cannot be explained as an illustration of the real ethnic group. By mentioning these people Vergil's objective might have been to create the impression of richness. Thereby, for the educated reader, he could easily recall the picture Homer painted before, depicting the richness of those who wore more gold than anybody else did.

György Székely's study entitled "*Cardinal Humbert struggle for Church reform and unity*" describes the struggle of the Catholic Church through the life and achievements of the eleventh-century cleric Humbert de Moyenmountier. The author describes Humbert's adventurous path of life, followed by an overview of the respectable cardinal's activity. He introduces Humbert's efforts to keep together the two churches (Greek and Roman) as well as his role in inducing the schism. Székely declares that besides trying to enforce the pope's primacy, the schism was brought about by not recognizing eastern church and state properly, not comprehending it, and thus by falsely interpreting its signs. Humbert became one of the most qualified ideologists of papal supremacy. Humbert became an inspiration for the canonic movement developing at the end of the eleventh century. Through his activity he played a role in proving the church's superiority against worldly powers. The complimentary volume ends with surveying Terézia Olajos' specialized literary activity compiled by Terézia Dér.

ÉVA TEISZLER