Society News

Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies

Issue 16 **November 2009**

XLIII Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies
University of Birmingham
27-29 March 2010

Byzantium behind the Scenes: Power and Subversion

www.iaa.bham.ac.uk/conferences/byzantine

The 43rd Byzantine Spring Symposium addresses a theme of special significance for the field of Byzantine studies. Byzantium has traditionally been deemed a civilisation which deferred to authority and set special store by orthodoxy, canon and proper order. Since 1982 when the distinguished Russian Byzantinist Alexander Kazhdan wrote that 'the history of Byzantine intellectual opposition has yet to be written', scholars have increasingly highlighted cases of opposition to and subversion of 'correct practice' and 'correct belief' in Byzantium. The innovative scholarly effort has produced important results, although it has been hampered by the lack of dialogue across the disciplines of Byzantine studies. The Byzantine Spring Symposium in 2010 addresses this situation by drawing together historians, art historians, scholars of literature and religion, and philosophers who will discuss shared and discipline-specific approaches to the theme of subversion.

The symposium is organized in the form of five sessions devoted to

(i) history
(ii) art history
(iii) religious and popular belief
(iv) philosophy and intellectual life
(v) literature

The dialectical relationship between authority and subversion, and the distinction between dissidence and subversion, are among the theoretical questions to be addressed. Most papers will deal with the period after the eleventh century, although early Byzantium will not be ignored. The conference comes at a timely junction of the development of Byzantine studies, as interest in subversion and generally in nonconformity has been rising steadily in various disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences.

Symposium Communications

We invite communications (maximum 13 minutes) to be delivered during the symposium. Communications can deal with any subject related to Byzantine studies, but especially welcome are communications on the theme of the symposium. As usual, we will read the proposals. Please send proposals for communications (title and 150-word abstract) **from now until 7 February 2010 at the latest** to Dr Dimiter Angelov, Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, Arts Building, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, UK, d.angelov@bham.ac.uk.

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Notice

(1) There will be an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Society in the course of the annual Symposium at 1.30pm on Sunday 28 March, 2010, in the Large Lecture Theatre, Arts Building, University of Birmingham at which the following resolution will be proposed.

That the Constitution of the Society be amended by inserting the following new clause VI after clause V and by re-numbering the existing clauses VI-VIII accordingly:-

"VI Patrons

1. The Society at any Annual General Meeting may on the proposal of the Executive Committee elect as Patron or Patrons of the Society one or more persons who have significantly supported or advanced the aims and objects of the Society.

2. A Patron shall be elected for life but he or she may resign the office.

3. A Patron shall be an Honorary Member of the Society."

(2) The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on the same day and place as soon as the Extraordinary General meeting has been concluded.

(3) Members who are not participants in the Symposium are entitled to attend these meetings.

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A Message from the Chair of SPBS

Society News

As this is my first opportunity to address the whole membership of SPBS, I must start by reporting changes on the Executive of the Society. As many of you will know, after many years service on the Committee of SPBS, our last Chair, Margaret Mullett, has now taken up the post of Director of Byzantine Studies at the Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, Washington DC. We wish her well. Tony Eastmond, who has served on the committee, latterly as Secretary, for 14 years man and boy, has indicated his intention to retire at the next AGM in 2010. We shall miss him greatly, but the Executive unanimously recommends for your approval Tim Greenwood, who, if elected, would keep power of the secretaryship firmly in the hands of Caucasian experts! The Committee, like Dracula, is always on the lookout for 'new blood' and would warmly welcome an application from anyone who would like to serve, particularly from those who are **not**

academic Byzantinists. You will find an advertisement for Membership Secretary elsewhere in this mailing. We also want to hear from as wide a range of members as possible about what they would like to see SPBS doing. After a somewhat hectic year last year basking in the reflected glory of the Royal Academy *Byzantium* Exhibition, we need to keep up the momentum. So suggestions, please! And do remember that we have some funds to help promote events: application forms on the SPBS website: www.byzantium.ac.uk
or contact the Chair of the Development Committee, Liz James: e.james@sussex.ac.uk.

National Matters

SPBS Members in the universities will be well aware of the Consultation Document that has been issued by HEFCE in advance of the new-style Research Evaluation Framework and to which responses have been invited by 16th December, 2009. One of the issues which most concerns academics in the Arts and Humanities is that of the 'impact' of research (which could have a considerable effect on the scoring of research: 25% for 'impact' is at present proposed). The SPBS as a 'Learned Society' has been asked to respond to the proposals in the Consultation Document, and will be sending a representative (Leslie Brubaker) to a meeting hosted by the Research Councils in London on 10th December, 2009 to discuss the issue of 'impact'. She is also drawing up a response to the Consultation Document. This will be sent in under the aegis of the newly-formed Council of University Byzantinists (UK) (CUBUK), so as to avoid compromising in any way the charitable status of the SPBS. Academic Byzantinists will shortly receive an e-mail invitation from me to join this group and to submit comments on Leslie Brubaker's draft to her; if by any chance I have missed you, my apologies, and do please contact me at once for details of CUBUK.

International Matters

2011 International Byzantine Congress

Many members responded to our invitation to suggest speakers and topics for the 2011 Congress in Sofia. The SPBS Executive has been concerned at the lack of opportunity for younger scholars to present main papers and to organise Round Tables at international symposia and had hoped that our long and impressive list of suggestions would have found some favour with the organisers. In the event, I have to say that we were not successful. There are some British names to be found on the programme
http://22byzantinecongress.org/
but many of them (including that of your Chair!) are certainly not in the first flush of youth. I will be writing to the Bulgarian organising committee and to the President of the International Byzantine Studies Association, Peter Schreiner, to express our disappointment about this, and also to ask whether information about travel arrangements to Sofia and accommodation at the Congress can be made a little more 'user-friendly'. At present, one of the three linked 'travel' websites from the Congress web-page is only available in Bulgarian and only one seems to offer some promise of 'deals' linked to the Congress! I will also be investigating what travel grants might be available from UK Funding organisations and will hope to circulate information about this

soon. But, a **reminder**!! The SPBS '2006 Fund' exists to assist individuals to travel to Conferences and Symposia; we certainly intend to make funds available to help members travel to the Sofia Congress. Application forms, as ever, available on our website.

Finally, a plea to members not only to pay the subscriptions which are the life-blood of our Society, but also to contact members of the Executive with their suggestions and concerns. We want to hear from you!

Rosemary Morris (Chair)
rm22@york.ac.uk or
nikephoros_phokas@hotmail.com

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SPBS Grants

The SPBS invites applications for Conference Travel Grants, for Symposium Grants, and for Conference Grants. We particularly welcome applications from students, so if you are planning to attend the 2010 Symposium, or any other Byzantine conference, or are planning one of you own, then have a look on the website for details and applications forms:
http://www.byzantium.ac.uk/frameset_spbsgrants.htm

The next deadline for applications is March 1st 2010.

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Annual Subscriptions

Please could members remember that annual subscription to the Society is due by 31st January 2010 (£20/$40/40 euros or £10/$20/20 euros for students).

Please note that those members who are in arrears will not receive a copy of the *Bulletin of British Byzantine Studies* 36 (2010) or be eligible for a discount at the 2010 Symposium.

Please make cheques payable to the "S.P.B.S" and send them to:
Dr Fiona Haarer
Department of Classics
King's College
Strand
London WC2R 2LS

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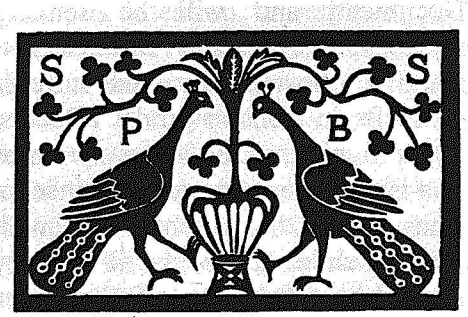
Keeping in Touch

The Society would like to update its email distribution lists, and to use email to contact members throughout the year (in addition to the mailings of the *Autumn Newsletter* and *Bulletin of British Byzantine Studies*). If you think that the Society does not have your email address, or it has changed lately, please email me:
(fiona.haarer@kcl.ac.uk)
with SPBS EMAIL CONFIRMATION as the subject (the message may be blank).



Fiona Haarer
Editor