

# **Serbian scientific institutions and medieval research**

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Obiettivo del testo è fornire una breve rassegna delle risorse per la studio della storia medievale in Serbia.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a short overview of the resources related to research in medieval history in Serbia.

Medioevo; secoli XIX-XXI; Serbia; storiografia; didattica.

Middle Ages; 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>th</sup> Century; Serbia; Historiography; Teaching.

### 1. *Introduction and purpose*

Medieval past of Serbia was one of the core interests of many scholars of Serbian origin already from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The awareness of the once strong medieval Serbian kingdom and empire has been mostly present among Serbs in the Habsburg Monarchy. First examples of 18<sup>th</sup> century historians, i. e. writers who much dealt with Serbian medieval history were count Đorđe Branković, Jovan Rajić and Pavle Julinac. It is important to say that in that time history has not been established yet as a separate science with its critical methodological approach to sources, but Serbs had a very prominent intellectuals and scholars, such are the aforementioned three, who left exceptionally important marks in studying medieval past of the Serbian people.

Since the beginning of the critical historiography (mid 19<sup>th</sup> century), Serbian researchers and first historians have dealt with medieval history of Serbia, Serbian lands and of its' neighboring countries, like for instance Byzantium, Ottoman empire, Hungary, Wallachia, Bulgaria, Venice and so on. It is also important to emphasize that Serbs from Habsburg Monarchy were among the pioneers of the critical historiography, like for instance Iliarion Ruvarac. He is considered a *father* of modern historical science and already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century he has written many important and fundamental historical articles concerning medieval times. Besides him it is important to stress Konstantin Jireček, historian of Czech origin whose *History of Serbs* is still useful for

many historians studying Middle Ages. End of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century critical historiography begun to be very much present in Serbia as well. During the same period some the most important institutions have been established, and these institutions have started to do researches on the medieval history. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both in the interwar period and after the World War II many more scholarly institutions have developed and the number of the members of the academia dealing with medieval past has significantly increased.

In the following paragraphs I shall present the institutions in the present-day Republic of Serbia that are in scientific way treating medieval past of Serbia, region and neighboring countries and medieval past as whole. At the beginning I shall present the Serbian academy of sciences and arts and its' institutes, and then there will be some words about the universities in Serbia and its' faculties at which medieval history is studied.

## 2. Resources

### 2.1 Serbian Academy of sciences and arts and institutes

Serbian academy of sciences and arts (SASA) has been founded under the name *Royal Serbian Academy (Kraljevska srpska akademija)* formally by the law passed on 1 November 1886. But the history of this institution goes couple of decades before into history. A group of professor of the Lyceum of Belgrade suggested creating a learned society with an aim to study the development of the language and to create a terminology for those sciences that have been taught at the Lyceum. The title of that society was *Društvo srbske slovesnosti (Society of Serbian Letters)*. Among its preoccupation the Society was also dedicated to study Serbian medieval history. Serbian antiquities and history was studied through publication of sources and describing antiquities from the different parts of the Principality of Serbia. The official herald of the Society was *Glasnik*, while there have been 16 volumes of special editions of the Society. There have been many articles published on the medieval topics in the *Glasnik* and as for these special volumes is concerned, the *Life of Saint Sava* by Theodosius has also been published by the Society. From 1851 the Society has been divided into departments among which one was historical. This department dedicated an important part of its work to collect sources for Serbian history in the archives throughout Europe. For instance Dimitrije Avramović has published the volume on the antiquities of Mount Athos, whilst Janko Šafarik has published the acts of the Venetian archives.

The society was involved in the political affairs since 1858, and it has been suspended by the authorities in 1864, but already in August the same year it has been restored, this time under the name *Serbian Learned Society* or in Serbian language *Srpsko učeno društvo*. Among the founders there have been many scholars who dealt with history of medieval Serbia and medieval his-

tory as whole. Some of these famous names were Ilarion Ruvarac, Čedomilj Mijatović, Janko Šafarik and many more. The herald of the Society, *Glasnik*, was continually published and there have been numerous articles on medieval sources and other different medieval topics. Because of the political relations with Serbian king Milan I Obrenović and the Serbian government the Society has not become Academy.

Serbian Royal Academy has been founded by the King Milan and the members of the Academy have been appointed by the Serbian ruler himself. From 1892 the two scholarly institutions have been united and the Serbian Royal Academy has continued the scholarly work in many fields including history. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Academy continued its scholarly work connecting itself with the academies throughout the Europe and world. After the Second World War the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA) has been established and from 1947 and 1948 a vast reorganization of the SASA has been conducted. During those years 20 institutes have been founded among them those that study history, and particularly the medieval one. Besides political history, medieval archeology and art history are also started to develop. The history of Mount Athos and Hilandar monastery has in particularly drawn the attention of the many renowned scholars within SASA.

Now I shall briefly present the institutes that predominantly or partially deal with medieval history with all its' subdisciplines and different areas of study. The Institute of History is the first one that will be presented. This institution has been founded on May 21<sup>st</sup> 1947, as one of the first scientific institutes of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts with the aim to explore «economic, social, scholarly and cultural history of the Serbian people», as well as their relations with other South Slavs (i. e. Yugoslav nations in that time) and other Balkan people and states, and at the same time to improve and develop all branches of historical science. The antecedent of the Institute of History can be found in the *Institute for the Collection of Sources Materials (1908-1918)*, that was working in the interwar period, and was founded by Stanoje Stanojević in 1922. When the newly reorganized Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts started its work, Viktor Novak was named the first director of the Institute, with famous world Byzantinist Georgije Ostrogorski as his deputy. Until 1961, the Institute was a unit of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and afterwards it became a separate institution by the decision of the Serbian Government. It has been divided into six sections or departments. The Department of Byzantine Studies existed very short, only until 1948, when the Institute of Byzantine Studies as an independent institution has been founded. The Department of Ancient History was transferred to the Archaeological Institute in 1952, while the Department of the Auxiliary Historical Sciences was attached to the already existing Department of Medieval Studies. This department (section) has conducted many interdisciplinary researches which have included and still include publishing sources, researches in the field of historical geography, church history, social and economic his-

tory, toponomastics, etc. Directors of the Institute were the academician Viktor Novak (1947-1953), a polyhistor, who started his career as a medievalist, researching on early medieval period of Dalmatia, even if he is mostly known for his voluminous work *Magnum crimen* where he wrote on the crimes of the Nazi Independent State of Croatia against Serbs and other people; Ilija Sindik (1954-1958), who was especially important for medieval historical geography, but also for his studies on medieval Kotor; Budva academician Mita Kostić (1958-1961), who dedicated his works to early modern and modern history of Serbia. Follow them Jorjo Tadić (1961-1969), one of the greatest experts on medieval Dubrovnik (Ragusa), and Relja Novaković (1970-1973), a medievalist specialized in Serbian medieval historical geography, old maps, chronological questions and so forth named. Subsequent Directors were Danica Milić (1973-1987) and Slavenko Terzić (1987-2002), both authors of books on modern Serbia; then the medievalist Tibor Živković (2002-2010), who has been an expert in early Slavic history, in the alleged work of Dukljanina (Dioclean priest), as well as in other topics concerning the period between 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century, and his heir and present director Srđan Rudić (since 2010), who also have left a strong mark in medieval studies.

In the scholarly work of the Institute the academic tribune occupies a very special place. Throughout the decades many high-prominent world historians have taken part in this academic tribune where they have presented and still present their newest scientific results. It is enough to mention that Fernand Braudel and Georges Duby were guests of the Institute. Besides this, a regular periodical scholarly journal «Historical review» has been published as well the one specialized for publishing sources «Miscellanea». In both of these academic journals there are many important articles which consider medieval past of Serbia, region and Europe, from different aspects. Both journals are among the most prominent ones in their area. In the last couple of years a Society for advanced medieval studies has started also to publish «Initial», the scholarly journal dedicated only to medieval studies, and it is already become a prominent journal where many international scholars publish their works. There are many editions, collected papers, different studies offered to late and living eminent scholars published by this Institute. Some of them were and are dedicated exclusively to medieval history, whilst other cover the larger historical period.

The Institute for Byzantine Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts is the only institute that deals almost exclusively with medieval past, since Byzantine empire has existed during the medieval times only. This institution was founded in March 1948 by world famous Byzantinist of Russian origin Georgije Ostrogorsky (director from 1948 to 1976), as a research institution of the SASA. At the beginning the Institute was a part of Academy, then in the period 1961-1972 it was an independent scientific unit. From 1972 onwards Institute for Byzantine Studies has once again become the part of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Since its foundation, the scholarly activities at the Institute were based on the work of the associates, engaged

in various scientific projects. Besides researchers with full time employment, the associates of the Institute were and still are colleagues from other closely related institutions. The Institute for Byzantine Studies has made a significant contribution to the development of Byzantine studies in the world, especially in the field of research of Byzantine state institutions and ideology, Byzantine society of the late centuries (12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century), and, mainly, of Byzantine-Serbian relations. Institute has been closely related to the Department of Historical Sciences of the SASA and its members, having always been the organizational core of all scientific events concerning Byzantine studies in ex Yugoslavia and modern day Serbia. The institute has remained a unique research and scholarly organization of this profile in our country (former Yugoslavia as well as the modern day Republic of Serbia). The Institute has been managed by three directors so far: Georgije Ostrogorsky (1948-1976), Božidar Ferjančić (1976-1998) and Ljubomir Maksimović (since 1998 until present day).

Scientific activities of the Institute were of interdisciplinary character since the very beginning. Practically since its foundation the Institute has pursued four main research directions: the history of Byzantium and Byzantine-Southern Slavic relations mainly Serbian but other too, Byzantine sources for the history of the peoples of Yugoslavia, especially Serbia in modern times, Byzantine literature and the medieval Greek language, Byzantine and Post-Byzantine art. Two projects have also been launched within the same framework, in cooperation with similar institutions abroad, the initial results of which have already been published: *The Greek Documents of the Hilandar Monastery* (with The Institute for Byzantine Studies in Paris), *Byzantine Inscriptions on Portraits from Macedonia* (with The Institute for Byzantine Studies in Athens). From 2002 to 2005, so-called target projects were introduced and developed (including the already mentioned cooperation with foreign partners that exist ever since the institute has been founded): *Actes de Chilandar II; Donors' Inscriptions on Frescoes from the XII<sup>th</sup> to the XIII<sup>th</sup> Century; The Internal Transformation of Byzantium from the X<sup>th</sup> to the XII<sup>th</sup> Century; Byzantine Sources for the History of the Peoples of Yugoslavia*, vol. V. In the year 2006 a five-year cycle of combined projects was initiated: *The Last Century of Byzantium and Serbia, The Byzantine World Changes (X<sup>th</sup>-XII<sup>th</sup> Centuries), Wall Painting and Inscriptions of the XIV<sup>th</sup> and XV<sup>th</sup> Centuries*. Scientific activities of the Institute are currently joined in the four-year project of an interdisciplinary character, *Tradition, innovation and identity in the Byzantine world* (project leader is the Head of the Institute Lj. Maksimović), which has brought together researchers of various disciplines from academic circles in Belgrade and those from many eminent foreign institutions.

Since 1952 to the present day, 51 volumes of *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta - ZRVI (Recueil des travaux de l'institute d'études byzantines)* have been published. This periodical is a world-renowned publication, often quoted in the most significant works in the field of Byzantine studies in the

world. Besides the aforementioned «Initial» this is also a journal that deals almost only with medieval topics. The Institute has also published 44 separate monographs, among which are 5 volumes (out of 7) of *Byzantine Sources for the History of the Peoples of Yugoslavia*. They represent one of the key collections of sources for studying Byzantine-Serbian and Byzantine-South Slavic relations from the 6<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Other monographic publication in Byzantine studies and close disciplines have been edited and published by the Institute of Byzantine Studies covering political, ecclesiastical, military, social, economical and other aspects of Byzantine history, Byzantine-Serbian/Southern Slavic relations, as well as Byzantine art, language and so forth.

It is maybe worth mentioning that already in the interwar period, long before the existing of this Institute, Belgrade was host of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Congress of Byzantine Studies in 1927. The Institute was, later, the head organizer of several scholarly national and international events. In the year 1961, the 12<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Byzantine Studies was organized in Ohrid, in that time Yugoslavia. In August 2016 the 23<sup>rd</sup> International Congress of Byzantine Studies has been summoned to Belgrade where more than 1500 scholars have gathered from all continents to present results of their scientific researches. This conference was interdisciplinary and topics from various fields of Byzantine studies were covered, from the late antiquity until the modern history, all connected with Byzantium and its heritage throughout the world. National conferences of Byzantine Studies have been taking place every five years, for the past two decades. The first was organized in Zadar in 1990 (Yugoslav conference of Byzantine Studies), the second was held in the monastery of Studenica near Kraljevo (1995), the third gathered scholars to the city of Kruševac (2000) and the last two conferences were held in Belgrade in the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and in other academic institutions (2005, 2010). These interdisciplinary national conferences always bring together researchers of all generations dealing with Byzantine studies as well as other closely related scientific disciplines. The Institute has participated, since the very beginning, in the organization of various scientific events, which were the result of bilateral cooperation. During the past years, such events were related to the Bulgarian-Serbian (2008) and French-Serbian (2010) cooperation. The papers from these conferences have been published.

These two institutes are the most important ones that are dealing with medieval studies in the broadest sense. But some other institutes of the Serbian academy of Sciences and Arts also partially deal with medieval period. One of these institutions is the Institute of Balkan Studies. The origin of this Institute goes back to the foundation of the Institut des Études balkaniques, estimated in Belgrade in 1934 as the only of the kind in the Balkans. The initiative came from King Aleksandar I Karađorđević, while the Institute's scholarly profile was created by Ratko Parežanin and Svetozar Spanačević. This Institute published «Revue internationale des Études balkaniques», which assembled most prominent European experts on the Balkans. During the Second World War the Institute has been banned. The institute was re-

started only in 1969 under its present-day name and under the auspices of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. It assembled a team of scholars to cover the Balkans from prehistory to the modern age and in a range of different fields of study such as archaeology, ethnography, anthropology, history, culture, art, literature, law. This multidisciplinary approach has remained its long-term orientation. The Institute has established international cooperation with a number of institutions in Europe. It has organized several dozen international conferences, publishes its annual «Balcanica» and its special editions covering all fields of Balkan studies. Many of the articles published in «Balcanica», as well as monographs edited by the Institute of Balkan Studies, are tightly connected to the medieval history of Serbia and the Balkans, and represent valuable scholarly achievements in the different fields of medieval aspects.

The reorganization of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts brought to opening of some new institutes in whose area of study and research medieval studies are also very much present. Such is for instance the Institute for Archeology. It was founded in 1947 with the aim to gather all people from different institutions, and museums in order to create a unique institution dedicated to archeological researches. Medieval archeological excavations have always been a very important part of the work of this institute and archeological results are, as it is well-known, sometimes of high importance for historians.

It is needless to say that the libraries of all the aforementioned institutions, as well as the ones that will follow are also very important parts of the institutions in Serbia where a medieval scholar can conduct many researches. Besides them, National Library of Serbia and University Library in Belgrade are the key institutions where sources and literature can be found for scholars. Especially National Library of Serbia with its various departments is also a place where many scholars conduct their research, since this institution has a very rich collection of manuscripts. Of course, one would always tend to notice that the libraries are not the institutions which conduct the research; but rather places where the research itself is done, at least partially.

There are also archival institutions and museums in Serbia in which the researches in the field of medieval studies is done, even though in museums archeological researches are much more done than the historical ones, but the latter ones are not to be diminished. The most important and most prominent museums in Serbia are National museum in Belgrade, but also Museum of Vojvodina, National Museum in Kruševac, National museum in Niš, and so forth. Many of museums have their journals in which results of the researches have been published, for instance «Rad Muzeja Vojvodine». As far as the archives are concerned, it is important to stress that there is no archive in present day Serbia that preserves authentic medieval sources. The largest and most important archives for Serbian medieval history are in Dubrovnik, Hilandar monastery, as well as in Budapest, Constantinople, Wien, etc. Copies of the original documents can be found in different Serbian archi-



tutions, but there is almost not any medieval documents preserved in Serbia. One should finally not forget the Archives, Library and the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, all seated in the Patriarchate in Belgrade. In all of these institutions, founded under the auspices of the Serbian Orthodox Church, there are hundreds of thousands of valuable manuscripts and rare books, some of them from especially the late medieval period. There is also some research conducted in these ecclesiastical institutions.

Besides different institutes, libraries, museums, and of course the most important Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, high education institutions are also places of large research in the field of medieval studies. It is very important to stress that at the institutions of high education, i. e. faculties of philosophy (since history is taught in these faculties), a methodology of the historical research is taught, therefore, not only that professors and lecturers at faculties do the research but also they teach students how to do researches. Undoubtedly, those young scholars who wish to dedicate their academic researches towards medieval studies need to have a very strong knowledge of methods of research as well as the languages necessary to conduct the aforementioned studies. Throughout the decades, many important institutions have emerged in the field of higher education in Serbia where medieval studies are a part of curriculum.

The Faculty of Philosophy is the oldest Faculty at the University of Belgrade in Belgrade. It is also a largest center in which history is taught, and medieval studies as well in a special curriculum. The beginnings of the Faculty of Philosophy are considered to date back to year 1838 when, by the Prince Miloš Obrenović Decree, the Lyceum School was established in the city of Kragujevac. Lectures in General History were first introduced at the Lyceum in 1838, while Serbian history has been studied from 1844. Studies of History continued in 1863 at the Great School and the Faculty of Philosophy, and later on at the University, that has been established in 1905. In the mean time a Seminar of History has been established in 1896. Ten years after, as a third of its kind in the whole world a seminar for Byzantine studies has been founded with Dragutin Anastasijević as the first professor. In the same time, along with forming the University Dragoljub Pavlović, Ljubomir Jovanović, Nikola Vulić, Stanoje Stanojević and Jovan Radonić were appointed as professors of medieval studies at the Department of history. Stanoje Stanojević was the most important professor, dedicated fully both to the teaching and to the scientific work. General history of the Middle Ages and modern general history were at the beginning a part of one seminar, and finally in 1930-1931 the special Seminar for medieval history and auxiliary sciences has been formed. The Department of History at the Faculty of Philosophy at the Belgrade University was officially established in 1963. Through the decades seminars for historical geography, general medieval history and auxiliary sciences, national medieval history (first of people of Yugoslavia, later and now Serbian medieval history) and history of Byzantium have been established. These seminars are now centers for studying vast range of medieval studies. Scholars in the

Department of history that deal with medieval topics are mostly working on historical geography, Byzantine history, different aspects of Serbian medieval history, diplomatics and other auxiliary sciences, publish sources, mainly medieval charters, and so on. This knowledge has been transferred to the students of history, and through great range of subjects in medieval history the students in Belgrade get acquainted with many important data and methods on studying medieval history.

The Chair for History of Art was founded in 1905. In 1927, it was promoted into a History of Art Study Group, while following The Decree from 1963 the former Study Group became the Department of History of Art, which includes a Medieval Arts Seminar. The Great School and Lyceum were the first to introduce learning and teaching of classical languages at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1875, the Chair for Classical Languages and Literature was established, while in 1900 the Classical Philology was formed as a separate study group. The Department of Archeology also as well as the two earlier described departments have medieval studies in their curricula and from their own aspect they perform their researches, which make the medieval studies even more interdisciplinary.

The Department of History of the Faculty of Philosophy of Novi Sad was founded in the autumn of 1954, the same year as the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad itself. In addition to history courses, the Department also organized introductory courses in Social Science and Pedagogical Science, which were later established as separate teaching units and departments at the Faculty. The primary task of the Department, which began its work on 1 December 1954 (today celebrated as a Day of the Faculty), was to organize and conduct regular classes in history and to perform the academic research. The Department of History at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad was consolidated with the Institute for Historical Research of Vojvodina in 1975. The reason for this consolidation was the need to improve the overall teaching and academic research within the Province of Vojvodina. Unlike in Belgrade, there are no special seminars, so medieval studies are taught as courses. At first national and general medieval history have been taught, and now after the changes lead by the Bologna system, special courses in Byzantine history, Western Europe, medieval Hungary, Slavic countries and the medieval Mediterranean (including Arabic and Islamic history, Spain and Italy) have been introduced. The academic work at the Institute was accomplished with the cooperation of various scientific institutions both within the country and abroad. The products of this academic work were presented in publications written by the authors from Novi Sad but in cooperation and in edition of the Institute itself (45 monographs), as well as Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Matica srpska, and in historical journals both locally in Serbia (once Yugoslavia) and abroad. In recent times monographs have been published by the Faculty of Philosophy and other editors. There are many monographs published that deal with medieval period, and the Department has taken part in organizing many international and interdisciplinary conferences in Novi Sad and Bačka

Palanka, one of them strictly dedicated to medieval studies in 1996, on the occasion of 1100 years of the arrival of Hungarians to the Carpathian basin. The Institute's journal «Istraživanja» was established in 1971, published until 1992 (fourteen issues), and was later restored in 2004, with two more issues having been published since then. In the most recent period, this scholarly journal has started to publish only in English with aim to make regional history available to scholars worldwide.

While the Department of history from Novi Sad mostly covers northern Serbian province of Vojvodina in the state's southern province of Kosovo and Metohija in 1963 groups for general and national history have been formed on a Faculty of Philosophy of Priština established three years later. After the NATO bombing of Serbia, the see of the Faculty has been transferred to Kosovska Mitrovica, where the Faculty and University resides now. For 40 years «Zbornik radova» of the Faculty has been published, with many historical, and in its frames medieval papers published for the last four decades. The accent in the research work has mostly been on the medieval past of the region of Kosovo and Metohija.

Finally, in 1998 at the already existing (from 1971) Faculty of Philosophy in Niš a group for history had started its work. With later reorganization of the Faculty, Department of History has been established. Teaching focus is on Serbia in medieval period, and Byzantine history that has been taught from the beginnings. Research of the scholars at this institutions are mostly alerted to the medieval Serbian state, its relations with Bulgaria, as well as Byzantine history and culture.

At all four universities the classes are given on all three cycles of studies-bachelor, master and doctoral. For research at these departments the scientific projects are of great importance. Most of the scientific and scholarly projects are financed by the Ministry of education, science and technological development of the Republic of Serbia, some of them dedicated to medieval studies completely, others partially. Besides this, the part of the scientific projects realized with the help of the Provincial secretariat for high education and scientific and research activity of the Government of Vojvodina, one of them mostly dedicated to medieval studies.

To conclude, in Serbia medieval studies were through decades on a very high level with many scholars in various number of institutions. Even though there is a considerable lack of support by the state, and history, and in its frames medieval studies, do not occupy the position it needs in the academia, there are strong efforts by scholars to provide the best possible research and bring new data.

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