

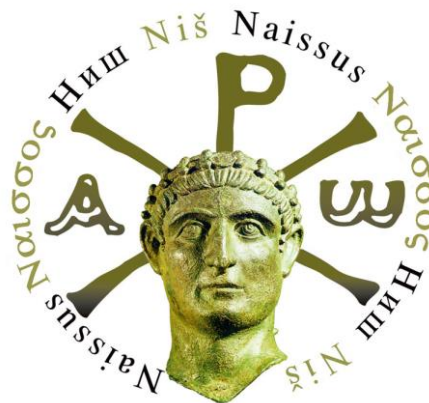
CITY OF NIŠ
DAYS OF ST. EMPEROR CONSTANTINE AND EMPRESS HELEN

PROJECT
INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIUM

NIŠ AND BYZANTIUM XXV

„The Orthodox Empire of the Romans in the paintings of the first Christians“

“
”



Niš, December 2025

PROJECT CONTENTS

I – General Data

1. Organizers
2. Project leader
3. Project management

II - Project objective

III – Rationale

IV – Program

V - Work Plan

VI – Project financing

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 Kadrijević (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 Горан 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 - „*The Orthodox Empire of the Romans in the paintings of the first Christians*“.

When considering the first Christians and the process of the emergence of Early Christian and Early Byzantine art, a prominent place belongs to Niš, the birthplace of Emperor Constantine the Great, who advocated the Orthodox confession of faith. The benefits brought by research and new insights into the life, faith, and art of the first Christians are immeasurable. The wall painting of tombs makes a special contribution to this field, one that has not yet been sufficiently examined.

Our knowledge of the painting of the first Christians comes from the preserved fresco decoration on the walls of their tombs. Carefully studied wall paintings reveal details of everyday life, spiritual condition, aesthetic preferences, as well as the persistent struggle of the first Christians to preserve Orthodoxy—visible from the Roman catacombs to the tomb paintings of Niš and the wider Balkan region. Preserved funerary painting is undeniable evidence of the artistic, intellectual, and spiritual life from the period when Christianity was developing and entering the historical stage.

The Early Christian painting of the tombs of Niš occupies a significant place in the history of Early Christian art. Understanding the Early Christian heritage of Niš also means recognizing the spiritual, artistic, and civilizational achievements of the first Christians in both the West and the East, to whom we owe what we are today—Christians.

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
- Printing of the Proceedings of the 24th Symposium
- The preparations of the scientific meeting have to start in November 2025 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 I, 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. Dragan Vojvodić
- Presentation of the Proceedings vol. 24
- Opening of the photo exhibition ‘*The World of Early Christian Niš*’ – Opened by Academician Prof. Dr. Renate Pillinger (Vienna).
- Cocktail reception
- Gala 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 funded by the City of Niš.

- Material costs for those whose abstracts are accepted include the joint dinner after the opening of the symposium.
- Funds required for the work of the project organizers (Working Group of the Scientific Committee at the Board for the Celebration of the Day of St. Emperor Constantine and Empress Helena):
- Funds for printing the Proceedings “Niš and Byzantium,” No. 24
- Compensation for engagement, maintenance, and website design

* * *

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
