

Introduction

“Travelling – it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller.” These eternal words of the famous Muslim-Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta show the full meaning of undertaking voyages and recording them. Throughout centuries, travelling has inspired people to comment on the places they have seen and the experiences they went through. The means of transport also played a prominent role in accomplishing travels. There were numerous types of voyages, such as pilgrimages, for instance, but also conquests, as well as different kinds of travels prompted by spiritual or intellectual thirst.

This two-volume edition is a collection of different aspects of voyages, travelogues and perceptions of travelling in history, literature and culture in the broadest sense. The papers in both volumes include historical travel information on Central and South-Eastern Europe, the Islamic world, Byzantium, Portugal, but also China, from ancient times until the twentieth century. This complex volume is the result of a scientific project developed by a group of professors and researchers at the Department of History and the Department of Serbian Literature from the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Novi Sad, together with the Faculty *Lazar Vrkatić* of the Union University of Novi Sad.

The idea was supported by the Provincial Secretariat for Higher Education and Scientific Research of the Government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The result was a short-term (one year) scientific project, no. 142-451-2347/2019-02, titled *The Development of the Travel Culture and Travel Accounts in Serbian Historiography and Culture*. On behalf of the project team, I would like to express our deepest gratitude to the secretary Prof. Dr. Zoran Milošević and his associates who recognized the scientific potential of this topic and this work and financially supported the project and our research, which resulted in this book.

The first volume is the result of a dedicated long-term research done by the members of the project team and many colleagues worldwide. Because Serbia and the Serbs, including Serbian lands throughout history, are in the focus of the project research, the results of several project team members and contributors from other institutions are dealing specifically with this main topic. Thus, these contributions deal with the territory of present-day Serbia and adjacent lands from the Roman times until the end of the Middle Ages. The civilizational reach of the volume is fascinating, with papers covering medieval Persian culture, but also Byzantine commonwealth, South-Eastern Europe, France and the Islamic world, while contextualizing all this information within the frame of the main topic of the project.

When preparing this edited collection, the project team decided to expand its topic beyond Serbia and Serbian historiographical and literary production. Having in mind that the project contributions have already expanded on the micro-historical Serbian topic in the European and even in wider contexts, the logical sequence of events was to invite different scholars from Serbia and abroad to contribute. The response was unexpectedly positive and we received papers on medieval Persia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Portugal, the Arabic world, but also papers discussing the the Byzantine Empire and medieval Western Europe (including an interdisciplinary musicological approach on travels to Byzantium). Mutual ties between parts of the medieval world are thoroughly examined in this volume, and by analyzing these papers one can see that ancient and medieval travelling was a cross-cultural phenomenon, which started already with the *father of history* Herodotus and ended during the sixteenth century. Reflexions of this conclusion can be seen also on the example of medieval Central and South-Eastern Europe.

The contributors of this volume originate from various Serbian scholarly institutions: the Faculty of Philosophy from the University of Novi Sad, as well as the Institute of History and Serbian Academy of Sciences of Belgrade. The international contributors to the volume belong to prominent scientific institutions such as Harvard University and its Art Museum, University Marseille-Aix, IEM – Institute of Medieval Studies (NOVA FCSH), the University of Crete and the South-West University “Neofit Rilski” of Blagoevgrad. Their papers cover travelogues and voyages in historical, literary, musicological and cultural contexts, from Antiquity to the medieval epoch, examining sources,

discovering new information, and generally largely contributing to and revising modern scholarship.

This first volume is dedicated to ancient and medieval voyages and travel accounts. It part covers the Balkans, Europe, the Islamic world and the Mediterranean and gives an interdisciplinary academic insight into the early historical phenomenon of travelling. Voyages in these papers are studied from the perspectives of historical sources, arts, musicology, manuscript tradition and medieval politics.

Having the honour of editing this volume, I am obliged to express my most sincere gratitude to my *Alma mater* Faculty of Philosophy, the institution in which the project on travels was conceived, but also a co-publisher of this volume. I would particularly like to thank the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy, Prof. Dr. Ivana Živančević-Sekeruš for her continuous institutional help in spreading knowledge and science. The distinguished publishing house in the field of history and medieval studies in particular, Trivent Publishing from Budapest gladly accepted to be the co-publisher of the volume. I sincerely thank them for undertaking this scholarly venture and for providing assistance and support and making this volume accessible worldwide.

Dr. Jagoda Topalov, assistant professor at the Department of English Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy, Novi Sad translated the papers of the project members and invested considerable effort in proof-reading and copyediting. Her hard work is very much appreciated. Since the policy is that reviewers remain anonymous, they will not be named, but I thank them all for their generous help and for the *sine ira et studio* reviews of the papers. I am also grateful to my dear colleague Nebojša Kartalija on technical assistance on the editing of this volume.

The title page of both volumes is taken from the manuscript of the Serbian medieval writer Theodosius and his *Life of Saint Sava*, where Sava's voyage to the Holy Land is described. It is kept in the National Library of Serbia and I thank Dr. Vladan Trijić, the head of the Archeographic Department of the National Library of Serbia and his associate Dr. Ljiljana Puzović for their kind help and for providing us permission to use this wonderful piece of Serbian medieval hagiography in the travel context.

Finally, I thank all of the authors for their valuable contributions. This volume shows that joint cooperation and the support of state organs, parent institutions, a distinguished publishing house, and international

academia can result in a scholarly volume which will be impossible to avoid in the future when treating any topic connected to voyages and travelogues.

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