

<https://doi.org/10.18778/2084-140X.13.35>

ПРЕДРАГ КОМАТИНА, *Константин Порфирогенит и рана историја јужних Словена*, уредник Љ. МАКСИМОВИЋ [PREDRAG KOMATINA, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus and the Early History of South Slavs*, ed. L. МАКСИМОВИЋ], Византолошки институт САНУ, Београд 2021 [= Византолошки Институт Српске Академије Наука и Уметности Посебна Издања / Institute for Byzantine Studies Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts Monographs, 50], pp. 404.

The work by Constantine Porphyrogenitus entitled *De Administrando Imperio* is a mine of information about the peoples who, for a variety of reasons, found themselves in Constantinople's orbit of interest in the mid-tenth century, that is, at the time when the work mentioned above was created (948–952). Southern Slavs were among them. It should be stressed that our knowledge of the latter's history until the mid-tenth century is, to a significant extent, based on the learned emperor's testimonies. It can hardly come as a surprise that they have, for quite a long time, drawn scholarly attention in many countries. The work under review has been written by the distinguished Serbian scholar, Predrag Komatina. Part of the information provided by Constantine is devoted to the Serbs. As such, it concerns the history of Komatina's own country.

The book is divided into seven parts, as well as a preface (p. 7–12), conclusions (p. 339–341), a summary in English (p. 343–363), a bibliography (p. 365–394), and indexes (p. 395–404).

The first part, *Константин Порфирогенит. Између престола и пера* (*Constantine Porphyrogenitus. Between the Throne and a Pen*, p. 13–62) starts with a brief account of Constantine Porphyrogenitus's life until his rise to full power in 945 (p. 13–17). It then goes on to characterize the intellectual climate in which the emperor-erudite's interests took shape. We are told that Constantine was especially fond

of history and displayed a proclivity for encyclopedic knowledge. Komatina explains the motives that led the emperor to embark upon such works as *Excerpta Historica*, *De Administrando Imperio*, *De Cerimoniis*, *De Thematibus*, *Vita Basilii*. He argues that Constantine's efforts were, to some extent, designed to remedy the crisis of Byzantine historiography whose last distinguished representatives, that is, Theophanes the Confessor and Nicephorus, the Patriarch of Constantinople, were active as long ago as the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century (p. 17–52). This part of the book ends with a discussion of the works that grew out of the climate of Constantine VII's reign but were created already after his death. I mean here the sixth book of *the Continuation of Theophanes* and *the Chronicle* by Symeon Logothete.

In the second part, *Јужни Словени у византијској историографији од почетка IX до средине X века* (*The Southern Slavs in Byzantine historiography from the beginning of the ninth to the mid-tenth century*, p. 63–86) P. Komatina analyses Byzantine historiography's interest in the southern Slavs, focusing his attention on the period from the beginning of the ninth to the mid-tenth century. The first fragment of this part of the book deals with references devoted to the Slavs to be found in works by Byzantine authors from the sixth to the beginning of the ninth century (beginning with Procopius of Caesarea, Theophylact Simocatta,

Pseudo-Mauricius, St. Demetrius and through to Nicephorus, the Patriarch of Constantinople, and to Theophanes the Confessor, p. 63–70). The second part of the Chapter, in turn, analyses testimonies devoted to the Slavs in Greece found in *Tactica* by Leo VI, in works by John Kaminiates and Aretas, and in *the Chronicle of Monemvasia* (p. 70–86).

In the following part, *Јужни Словени у дворском церемонијалу и царској дипломатији Константина Порфирогенита* (*The Southern Slavs in the Court Ceremonial and the Imperial Diplomacy of Constantine Porphyrogenitus*, p. 87–105) P. Komatina first deals with the issue of the origin of *De Cerimoniis* (p. 87–93) and then goes on to analyse it in terms of the information it provides about the southern Slavs, both those who were the emperor's subjects (p. 93–95) and those who enjoyed the independence of Constantinople (p. 95–105).

The part entitled *De administrando imperio* постанок и структура дела (*De administrando. The Creation and Structure of the Work*, p. 107–138), addresses the issue of the creation and structure of *De Administrando*. The author points out that the work was organized around five issues that Constantine Porphyrogenitus signalled in Proimion¹ and then developed further in the text. Komatina indicates that the first issue is discussed in Chapters 1 to the beginning of Chapter 13 (13.11). Part of Chapter 13 (12–194) focuses on the second issue, while Chapters 13.195 to 46.165 are concerned with the third (this part of the book can be divided into 3 sub-sections). The fourth issue is dealt with in Chapters 47 to 48.21, while the fifth is covered in the last section of *De Administrando*, which starts at the end of Chapter 48. The scholar supports the thesis that Chapter 30 forms the inherent part of the text and is not a later interpolation, while Chapter 29 belongs to the Italian and not the South-Slavic part of the work.

Next comes the most extensive part of the work, which is also the most important in terms

of the topic it takes up. Entitled *Јужни Словени у De administrando imperio* (*The Southern Slavs in Administrando Imperio*, p. 139–315), it provides an insightful analysis of those fragments of *De Administrando* that pertain to the southern Slavs. The author's discussion of the issue is divided into several parts. The first two deal with the Byzantine Dalmatia (p. 139–164) and the Slavs who inhabited it (p. 164–194). The third part is devoted to the Croats (p. 194–210), and the fourth to the Serbs (p. 210–300). The title of the fifth part is *the Danubian and Pannonian Context of the History of the Southern Slavs* (p. 301–307), while that of the sixth, the ultimate one, is *the Slavs in the Peloponnese* (p. 307–315).

The part entitled *Дипломатија и историографија под окриљем De administrando imperio* (*Diplomacy ad Historiography under the Auspices of De Administrando*, p. 317–330) raises the question of whether the ideas advanced in *De Administrando* actually affected the way in which Constantine conducted his foreign policy. The author answers it in the affirmative. His focus in this section of the book is also on the representation of the southern Slavs in works created in the circle of Constantine after he wrote *De Administrando*. We are told that the Slavs are almost entirely absent from those works.

In the ultimate part, *Порфирогенитова заоставштина у византијској историографији* (*The legacy of Porphyrogenitus in Byzantine historiography*, p. 331–337), the author deals with the issue of why the information about Southern Slavs found in *De Administrando* is absent from the Byzantine historiography, both that which was contemporaneous with the emperor (p. 331–334) and that which was created later (p. 334–337).

The book under review demonstrates – competently and with a deep knowledge of sources and secondary literature – what the Byzantines from the mid-tenth century knew about southern Slavs and where they knew it from. It also adds to our knowledge of Constantine Porphyrogenitus and his times and gives us an idea of the place the emperor's works, and especially *De Administrando*, held in the history of

¹ CONSTANTINE PORPHYROGENITUS, *De administrando imperio*. Proimion, 14–24, ed., trans. Gy. MORAVCSIK, R.J.H. JENKINS, Washington 1985 [= *CFHB*, 1].


Byzantine literature. On the one hand, it sums up the scholarly discussion of the representation of Southern Slavs in *De Administrando* and, on the other, it also inspires scholars to further discuss the issue. For this reason, it is a good thing that the book is equipped with an extensive summary in English.

Translated by Artur MękarSKI

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CONSTANTINE PORPHYROGENITUS, *De administrando imperio*, ed., trans. Gy. MORAVCSIK, R.J.H. JENKINS, Washington 1985 [= *Corpus fontium historiae byzantinae*, 1].

Mirosław J. Leszka (Łódź)*

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2643-4520>

* University of Lodz, Faculty of Philosophy and History, Department of Byzantine Studies



© by the author, licensee University of Lodz – Lodz University Press, Lodz, Poland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)