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**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “THE ROLE OF  
HISTORICAL FIGURES IN HISTORY AND COLLECTIVE  
MEMORY” (6–8 NOVEMBER 2023, SKOPJE)**

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Academic discussion and exchange of knowledge on the role of historical figures in history and collective memory can be addressed to various personalities and processes. Comparative scientific analysis of a wide range of aspects were covered within the International Conference “The Role of Historical Figures in History and Collective Memory” \*, held in Skopje (6–8 November 2023, in the premises of Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts), and organized by the Institute of National History. The conference was convened to mark the 145<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Dimitrija Čupovski (1878–1940) — president of the Macedonian Scientific and Literary Fellowship (1902–1917), which laid the foundation for the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts — as well as the fifth anniversary of the passing of Acad. Blaže Ristovski (1931–2018), his researcher and advocate. At the opening ceremony, Acad. Dragi Ćorgiev (Director of the Institute of National History) and Acad. Ljupčo Kocarev (President of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts) delivered their welcoming speeches. The conference was officially opened by the event organizer, Prof. Biljana Ristovska-Josifovska.

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The working sessions began with a plenary lecture by Acad. Katica Ćulavkova, in the context of the anniversaries commemorated at the conference: "Sermon about Dimitrija Ćupovski, Krste Misirkov and BlaŹe Ristovski". The plenary session also included papers by: Dimitar Pandev ("The Role of Linguistic-Creative Figures in the Historical Processes /with a Special Preview to the Language and Style of BlaŹe Ristovski/"), Zoranĉo Malinov ("The Activity of d-r BlaŹe Ristovski in the Institute of Folklore With a Special Focus to the Development of the Institute' Archive"), Oksana Mykytenko ("Ukrainian Studies in the Academic Heritage of BlaŹe Ristovski"), Katerina Petrovska-Kuzmanova ("The Role of d-r BlaŹe Ristovski in the Development of Macedonian Folkloristics"), Mišo Kitanoski ("Homage to BlaŹe Ristovski's Initial Work on Language and Macedonian Literary History") and Biljana Ristovska-Josifovska ("The Transfer of Dimitrija Ćupovski's Relics to Macedonia").

The work of the conference continued in parallel sessions with presentations of papers from different fields, which contributed to opening a broad discussion. The analyses were conducted through a comparative discourse and from different cultural and scientific backgrounds. For example, the papers on some clergymen and social figures in the history and memory of Georgia, Ukraine, Macedonia and Azerbaijan were presented: the paper of Lempi Liski and Tamaz Putkaradze on "The Life Path of the Scientist and the Man of God Ekvtime Takaishvili", Vyacheslav Olickiy's paper "Opposition Attitudes Among the Orthodox Clergy of Ukraine in the Second Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: At The Example of Patriarch Volodymyr (Romanyuk)" and Liljana Guševska's paper "Metropolitan Meletius Between Historical Facts and Popular Memory". On the other hand, Nikola Ćirić spoke on "The Role of Ohrid Archbishop Joasaf II in Stabilizing The Economic and Political Situation of the Ohrid Archdiocese in the Period 1719–1745", while Irada Baghirova's paper was on "Life And Work of an Undeservedly Forgotten Public Figure – Akhmed Akhmedov".

The impact of personalities on memory and national identity were comparatively analyzed in a separate session. Thus, Vytas Jankauskas referred to "Grand Duke Gediminas of Lithuania Between Epic and Historical Memory", Mariam Chkhartishvili spoke about "Historical

Figures and Making of National Identities: Case of Georgia”, and Sopio Kadagishvili on “The Role of Giorgi the Athonite and Giorgi the Minor in Forging of Georgian Collective Memory”. Aliaksandra Valodzina, in turn, elaborated on “The Role of Valdes of Lyon in the Formation of the Self-Identification Memory of the Medieval Waldenses: Evolution from the Real Coeval to Coequal with the Apostles”, versus the contemporary theme of Sopio Kadagishvili: “The Role of Giorgi the Athonite and Giorgi the Minor in Forging of Georgian Collective Memory”.

Sašo Cvetkovski presented “Zograf Serafim from Ohrid” as a lesser-known representative of Macedonian fine art, while Hristijan Cvetkovski focused on “The Significance of Dimitar Prince Kratovski in The History of Macedonia from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century”. On the reflection of personalities in memory and testimonies, the following spoke: Aleksandra Kuzman (“The Image of Klime Sadilo (1881–1965) in the Collective Memory of Citizens of Ohrid”), Sonja Novotni and Mihajlo Marković (“The Cult of St. Cyril and St. Methodius in the Collective Memory of Macedonians”), Aleksandar Manojlovski (“The Testimonies of Moritz Romano as a Source for the History of the Jewish Religious Municipality in Bitola”) and Dragan Zajkovski (“Saint Kliment of Ohrid in the Balkan Collective Memory”).

The founders and researchers were a topic of a separate session: “Creative Profile of Mihail D. Petruševski” by Katerina Mladenovska-Ristovska, “Krste P. Misirkov: the Founding Father of the Macedonian Sociological Discourse” by Ganka Cvetanovska, and “Margarit Dimica (1830–1903): The Oldest Classicist and Archaeologist from Macedonia” by Damjan Donev. Kristina Dimovska, on the other hand, did “Theoretical-Methodological Parallels: Bone Veličkovski and Tvrtko Čubelić and Their Contribution to the Paremiology”, while Manuchar Loria and Tamila Lomtadze referred to “Peculiarities of the Development of Georgian Ethnographic Thinking: Field Ethnographic Photochronicle (Visual Anthropological Research)”.

The memory was also discussed in the session dedicated to few historical figures: Rubinčo Belčeski spoke about “Ali Feti Okjar from Prilep (1880–1943)”, Nataša Didenko about “Sergej Mihajlov – the

Russian Emigrant in the Macedonian Musical Culture”, and Sašo Dodevski about “Lawrence Eagleberger (Lawrence of Macedonia) – Diplomat, Politician and Humanist (60 Years Since the Skopje Earthquake)”. While the interaction of the intelligentsia and socio-political events in the context of their activity was a topic of the following participants: Neven Radičeski (“Venko Markovski in the Memories of Krste Crvenkovski”), Danijel Radović (“The Battle for Remembrance – Jovan Ristić as His Own Historian”), Aleksandar Trajanovski (“Victor Berar for Macedonia and Macedonian Question in the Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (In Occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Francophonie)”), Makedonka Mitrova (“Petar Mandžukov (1878–1966): One Lifetime – Two Strings”). In that context, the papers related to the creators of literary and artistic production were also present in the Alirami Ibraimi's paper “Life and Work of the Poet and Writer Jahja Kemal Bejatli from Skopje” and Zejni Mazlami's “The Role of the Albanian Revivalists from Macedonia for the Education in Mother Tongue (1895–1912)”.

The role of translators in the development of science was analyzed by Georgian and Macedonian researchers. On the one hand, we followed Marina Aroshidze and Nino Aroshidze with their joint paper “Translators as Mediators Scientific Progress”, as well as Hatuna Halvashi “Particularities in the Translation of Business Unified Documents”. On the other hand, there were presentations by Macedonian researchers: Dragi Ćorgiev (“The Role of the Macedonian Translators of Ottoman Documents in the Development of Macedonian Ottoman Studies”), Sunčica Trifunovska-Janik (“The Role of Medieval Translators in the Macedonian Translating Literature-Historical Tradition”) and Slavica Petrovska-Ćorgjevska (“The Role of the Medieval Literature Authors in the Shaping of the Memory of the Macedonian Saints Through Their Hagiographic Texts”).

Female historical figures were the topic of a special section on their role in various eras of history: “The Role of the Women's Anti-Fascist Front for the Development of the Women's Movement and the Emancipation of Women” by Stefan Vasev, as well as “The Role of Žamila Kolomonos in the Process of Renewing of the Jewish Community in Macedonia in the Period After the Second World War”

by Vladimir Janev. In that context, the reflection of female characters in memory, in society and in places of remembrance today was the subject of presentations by Katerina Mirčevska (“Woman Discourse of Power: Evdokija Foteva-Vera and the Civil War in Greece”) and by Ljubica Jančeva (“The Gender Aspect in the Urban History of the City of Skopje: Rosa Plaveva and Nakie Bajram”). Larisa Vakhnina's topic was also interesting in the context of the current historical events, and dedicated to “The Issue of Cultural Adaptation and Memory of Ukrainian Refugees Women in Poland the Time of the Russian-Ukrainian War”.

Special interest was also devoted to the role of various intellectuals and revolutionaries, as spoken about by: Vera Goševa (“Revolutionary Activity of Mišo Škartov (1884–1936)”), Aleksandar Litovski (“About the Combat Biography of the Partisan Dojčin Apčevski”), Dimitar Ljorovski (“Who Killed Pavlos Melas?: Creation of a National Hero”), Evgenij Litovski (“The Role of Andrej Čipov in the Macedonian Revolutionary Struggle (Activity and Personal Testimonies)”) and Miroslav Radivojević (“Intellectuals and the Beginning of the Nato Bombing of FR Yugoslavia”).

Particularly important are the questions related to the teaching methods of studying historical figures. Several examples were addressed by: Marija Pandevska (“Visualization of History With Educative Purposes (on the Example of an Imaginary Interview with Goce Delčev)”), Miljenko Hajdarović (“Reclaiming Women’s Narratives: Gender Equality in Croatian History Textbooks”), Igor Janev (The Concept of the Role of Historical Figures in History Used in High School Education”), as well as Aleksandra Fostikov and Boban Petrovski (“Challenges of Using Generative Artificial Intelligence (Ai) in the ‘Research’ of Personas from the National History”).

A special topic was the role of some Ottoman rulers in historical events related to Macedonian cities: “Role of the Historical Figures in the Occupation of Skopje and the Migration from the City After the Siege of Vienna in 1683” by Eyüp Kul, “The Economic-Infrastructural Projects of Abdulhamid II in Macedonia at the End of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century” by Armen Žarnoski,

and “Economic, Cultural and Educational Contribution of Isa Bey in Skopje During the Ottoman Ruling” by Emel Sherif Miftar, while Jeton Doko referred to the memories associated with “Skopje and Ohrid in the Memoirs of Munevera Hadžišehović”.

The role of historical figures in the process of building institutions in correlation with state policies and propaganda machinery in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was discussed in a separate session. The policies of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union were compared and viewed through a national prism by: Aleksandar Simonovski (“Methods of the State Security for the Monitoring of Acad. Božidar Vidoeski in the Period 1945–1985”), Zurab Targamadze (“Shaping and “Deconstruction” of Stalin’s Icon: in Soviet and Post-Soviet Georgia”), Eda Starova Tahir (“Misconceptions and Superstitions”: the Role of Ethnologists in the Process of Health Education in Socialist Yugoslavia”), Petr Gulenko (““No Specific Measures of Disease Fighting Exist”: Nikolai Semashko and the ‘Inconspicuous’ Epidemic of the Spanish Flu in Soviet Russia (1918–1919)”), and Valentino Dimitrovski (“Murderous Identities”).

On the third day of the conference (8 November), two book presentations related to the conference theme took place. The first was the presentation of *Duhovnata i materijalnata kultura niz procesi i ličnosti od Makedonija (XVIII – XX vek)* [Spiritual and Material Culture through Processes and Personalities from Macedonia (18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries)], edited by Acad. D. Ćorgiev (Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Skopje, 2023). In his promotional speech, Prof. Sašo Cvetkovski (adjunct member of Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts) highlighted the significance of this publication, which is directly related to the fifth anniversary of Acad. B. Ristovski’s passing. This book is the result of a Workshop held at Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts (13 December 2019), as part of the activities of the Macedonian team of the international bilateral project “Education, Spiritual and Material Culture in the 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> Century – Processes, Personalities, Models” (led by Acad. D. Ćorgiev, but the project was originally initiated by Acad. B. Ristovski). The second book presented was *Raskažuvači, sobirači i istraživači* [Storytellers, Collectors and Researchers] by Prof. Tanas Vražinovski (Panili, Skopje, 2023), dedicated to Acad. B. Ristovski,

the author's long-time friend and collaborator. The promotional speech was delivered by Prof. Ermis Lafazanovski. The conference concluded with closing remarks by Prof. B. Ristovska-Josifovska. Following the closing, a delegation ceremonially laid flowers at the City Cemetery "Butel" in Skopje, at the graves of D. Čupovski and B. Ristovski.

The conference provided an opportunity for academic exchange of knowledge and comparative analysis of historical figures across different national discourses, featuring approximately 70 researchers from Macedonia, the Czech Republic, Turkey, Romania, Lithuania, Ukraine, Georgia, Serbia, Croatia, and Azerbaijan. A scholarly discussion was initiated on various aspects of the main topic across different historical eras. As a result, a selection of the conference papers was published in the book *Historical Figures in History and Collective Memory*, (ed.) Biljana Ristovska-Josifovska, Institute of National History, Skopje, 2024.



Laying flowers  
at the grave of  
Dimitrija  
Čupovski  
(representatives  
of the Institute  
of National  
History and  
admirers)



Laying flowers  
on the grave of  
Acad. Blaže  
Ristovski  
(representatives  
of the Institute  
of National  
History,  
members of  
family and  
friends)



The grave of Dimitrija Čupovski  
at the City Cemetery “Butel “,  
Skopje



The grave of acad. Blaže Ristovski  
at the City Cemetery “Butel “,  
Skopje

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