



# Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies

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Thematic Sessions of  
Free Communications

PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
23<sup>RD</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF BYZANTINE STUDIES  
BELGRADE, 22 – 27 AUGUST 2016  
THEMATIC SESSIONS OF FREE COMMUNICATIONS

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Cover illustration: *Personification of Truth*, Church of the Holy Virgin of Ljeviša in Prizren, beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, fresco.

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## THEMATIC SESSIONS OF FREE COMMUNICATIONS

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## **Trials of the Christians in the Eastern Roman Empire at the Beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century**

The aim of this contribution is to examine persecutions of the Christians primarily under Diocletian and Maximian in the eastern part of the Roman empire from specific, legal point of view. Although the Great Persecution of 303–312 has been often discussed, certain problems could be reconsidered. So, in the paper, it will be presented what were official charges against the Christians and what was their legal background. It will be analyzed why certain differences existed in the legal procedure. Considering that the charges against the Christians have changed over time, the uniqueness of the Great Persecution will be especially examined. Besides that, personal preferences of the judges in the trials of the Christians will be discussed. One of the points of the interest will be if the officials exactly followed the orders prescribed by imperial edicts or if they established some precedents.

The significance of local conditions will be studied and the attitude of local (pagan and Jewish) inhabitants towards Christians. The initiative for persecution came from the non-Christian majority and provincial governors in the first centuries of modern era, but from the time of emperor Decius (beginning of the so-called third phase of the persecutions, as defined by G. E. M. de Ste Croix) the official (state) courts launched the actions against the Christians. A new persecution under emperor Valerian ensued. After first official recognition of Christian communities under emperor Gallienus, the Great Persecution terminated that period of tolerance towards Christians, which lasted only few decades. Bearing in mind that fourth century persecutions is main topic of the paper, some parallels and divergences between political approaches of the previous emperors will be taken into consideration.

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## **Emperor Julian the Apostate and His Attitude towards the Church**

In the study the author deals with one of the most interesting and most controversial characters which were on the Roman throne in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Julian the Apostate. In the first part of the study the historical facts of his life and surroundings which influenced Julian's religious views will be presented. In the central part of the study we will focus on motives that influenced the emperor Julian to completely embrace the pagan religion and how that change reflected on his relation towards the Church. In the end we will try to give an answer to the question in what measure was his reform successful.