1st HEMSEE WORKSHOP

HISTORY ON THE MARGINS

MARGINALIA IN EARLY MODERN SOUTHEAST EUROPE, 15TH–18TH CENTURIES

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Byzantine_Alexander_Romance,_Venice#/media/File:Dedication_page_Hellenic_Institute_codex_5.JP
HISTORIOGRAPHIES OF EARLY MODERN SOUTHEAST EUROPE (HEMSEE)

The Vienna-based project HEMSEE (financed by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation) intends to produce a source-based handbook showing the challenges and opportunities of working with the historiographic texts of Early Modern Southeast Europe. Operating with thematic clusters, we will explore both familiar and uncharted territories and thereby analyze excerpts from both mainstream and “minor” sources.

WRITING ON THE MARGINS

Relentlessly chasing solid data for their research, historians have long (and justifiably) used marginalia as source of information. Nevertheless, as the focus was rather on details than on form, structure, or motive, writing on the margins was hardly addressed in its own right. This allegation holds particularly true for Early Modern Southeast Europe where the “notes of yore”, which allegedly offered unmediated access to otherwise inaccessible bygone worldviews and realities, fuelled many collections, but inspired few epistemological reflections.

Recent developments in the field of medieval diplomatic, literary studies, art history, or history of ideas, provide, however, plenty of food for thought for all those interested in the topic. The number of high-quality editions is also increasing at a steady pace. As a direct consequence, the first workshop organized in the framework of the project Historiographies of Early Modern Southeast Europe intends to build upon these stimuli and reflect, from a cultural-historical perspective, on the potential and limits of Southeast European marginalia as form of writing about history.

We operate with a concept of marginalia, which tries to take into account the remarkable linguistic and typological diversity of the marginal notes. Our aim is to reflect on the issue of “marginal” subjects, discuss the interplay between text and image, and provide a plausible interdisciplinary interpretative framework for an elusive and, by definition, peripheral phenomenon.


CONVENOR

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