

REPORTS

Karolina Filipowska (*Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland*)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3740-9961>

karolina.filipowska@amu.edu.pl

REPORT FROM THE 23RD INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF HISTORICAL SCIENCES POZNAŃ 2020/2022 ON 21–27 AUGUST 2022

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On August 21–27, 2022, the 23rd International Congress of Historical Sciences was held in Poznań. This event was of great importance to all scientists dealing with the past. Since 1900, historians from around the world have organized their congresses to discuss the most pressing topics, present the results of their research and build a network of international cooperation. In 1926, they established the International Committee of Historical Sciences (ICHS) as a non-governmental organization made up of national committees representing member countries and specialist committees dealing with specific fields of research. The main objective of the Committee is to promote historical science through international cooperation. The committee was entrusted with organizing successive congresses every five years, in cooperation with historians from the host country. In the past, the congress was held in Poland only once, in 1933 in Warsaw. On August 29, 2015, the General Assembly of ICHS during the 22nd Congress in Jinan (China) decided that the next meeting would be held in Poznań on August 23–29, 2020. Unfortunately, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and unsatisfactory progress in combating it in most countries, the organizers were forced to postpone this event twice.

The Polish Local Organizing Committee, established by the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (AMU) and the Historical Sciences Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences (HSC PAS) on November 5,

2015, was responsible for the organization of the Congress. It was headed by subsequent rectors of the Adam Mickiewicz University and the chairman of the HSC – finally prof. Bogumiła Kaniewska (Rector of the Adam Mickiewicz University) and prof. Tomasz Schramm (President of the HSC PAS). In addition to the above-mentioned, the Committee included representatives of the History Department of the Adam Mickiewicz University, HSC PAS, the Polish Historical Society and the Polish History Museum in Warsaw, as well as representatives of local authorities – Marek Woźniak, Marshal of the Wielkopolska Province, and Mariusz Wiśniewski, Vice President of the City of Poznań. The Committee entrusted the direct organization of the Congress to its Executive Department, headed by prof. Krzysztof A. Makowski, and the Secretary General, prof. Maciej Michalski. The other members represented the Faculty of History of the Adam Mickiewicz University, the university administration, local authorities, and the Poznań Supercomputing and Networking Center. The technical and infrastructural preparation of the Congress was entrusted to the Poznań International Fair.

The Congress gathered over 900 participants from all continents, registered in various capacities – including panel organizers, speakers, honorary guests. Apart from Poland, the largest representation of the historical community came from France, Germany and Italy. The representation of non-European countries was relatively numerous (over 20%). Most of the registered participants took part in the Congress in person, the others took advantage of the on-line participation. Among online participants, Poles also dominated, followed by Chinese, Italians, Americans and Spaniards. It was the first Congress of Historians in history in a hybrid form.

As always, ICHS was responsible for the content of the event. During the Congress in Poznań, nearly 100 different panels were held, the topics of which were approved in 2017 by the General Assembly of ICHS in Moscow. Later, mainly due to the postponement of the Congress, the program was still subject to changes. The most important of the sessions were Major Themes: Intertwined Pathways: Animals and Human Histories (prepared by Regina Horta Duarte), Memory – Archeology – Identity: The Construction of Identity on the Antiquities (organizer Tanja Itgenshorst) and, above all, Towards a Balanced Historical Knowledge: State and Nation in a Comparative Perspective – Paradigms of Investigation, Narratives, Explications (work by three Central European historians: Tomasz Schramm; Jaroslav Pánek; Attila Długi). In addition, there were 23 Specialized Themes panels, 20 Round Tables,

10 Joint Sessions and 2 Evening Sessions. An integral part of the Congress were the sessions of the field commissions affiliated with ICHS, which took place on August 25–26, 2022, in the number of 35, including the Commission Internationale des Études Historiques Slaves chaired by Frank Hadler. In total, about 150 people participated in them. In total, nearly 550 papers were presented at the Congress, which concerned all eras and all fields of historiography.

As part of the Congress, a poster session was also held, attended by 27 second and third degree students. The best works were honored with the ICHS-Shandong University Young Historian Award established at the 22nd International Congress in Jinan in 2015. This award was to encourage young scientists to participate in the Congress, during which they could present their current scientific achievements. First place went to Chenxi LIU (Humboldt-Universität Berlin) for her work “Racist Discourse in Former Socialist Countries: a Case Study on Mao Zedong’s Declaration of Supporting African Americans’ Fight Against Racial Discrimination.” A special mention for the author of the best poster devoted to Chinese history went to Xiaona GUO for the poster “Gentes, Shi zu and Patrilineal Families in the Research Field of Ancient Chinese History in the 1930s and 1940s.”

In Poznań, the so-called Research Forum was held for the first time as part of the Congress. This is a new initiative of the ICHS Management Board, the main goal of which was to enable research institutions to present recognized scientists and emerging researchers with ongoing or planned projects. It was also supposed to be an opportunity to establish cooperation between institutions, as well as to attract highly qualified scientists as collaborators. This initiative fully corresponds to the mission of ICHS, because one of its goals is to stimulate dialogue between young scientists and various research institutions. The Poznań Research Forum was attended by several institutions, including: Leibniz Science Campus “Eastern Europe – Global Area” (EEGA), Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe, Network of Global and World History Organizations (NOGWHISTO), European Network Solidarity and Remembrance and the Foundation for Polish Science.

One of the most important events of the Poznań Congress was the awarding of the International ICHS History Prize. It was the third edition of the award granted to historians who have distinguished themselves with their research, publications or teaching achievements and have made a significant contribution to the development of historical knowledge.

In Poznań, Sanjay Subrahmanyam was honored, author of many books, essays, editor of collective works on the history of India and the Indian Ocean, early modern European empires, as well as reflections on global history and the so-called Connected History.

Both during official speeches and during individual sessions, it was impossible not to refer to the current global situation and point to analogies with previous congresses. So far, disruptions to the five-year congressional rhythm have been caused only by world wars, and more recently by a pandemic. Anxiety about the fate of the world, about the fate of democracy as a socio-political system was present in many congress speeches. Anxieties arising from the unstable international situation were expressed, among others, in the introductory paper delivered by prof. Ewa Domańska and in the summarizing speech of the Secretary General of ICHS, prof. Edoardo Tortarolo – during the Closing Ceremony.

The next, 24th International Congress of Historical Sciences will be held in Jerusalem in 2026.

Karolina Filipowska, PhD Student in the Faculty of History of Adam Mickiewicz University, member of the Polish Historical Society and the Polish Association for Jewish Studies, in the years 2015–2022 the head of the Bureau of the XXIII International Congress of Historical Sciences Poznań 2020/2022. Research interests: history of Poznań in the 19th and 20th century; national relations in the Polish lands in the 19th and 20th century, especially the Polish-German-Jewish relations in Wielkopolska during the period of partitions of Poland, history of the Jews in the Polish lands (demographics, socio-economic and identity issues, social mobility and migration processes).