

MISCELLANEA

The International Congress on Religious Centres in Turkish World 23–28 September, 2002, Mersin

The participants – outnumbering that of the previous Congress held in Ankara –, more than two hundred and thirty, arrived from sixteen countries.

Organised by the Foundation of Turkish Culture, Art and Education in co-operation with the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Tourism and that of TIKA, topics were considered including the function of religious centres; contribution of religious centres to our cultural heritage, the place of religious centres existing in the geographies where Turkish culture has ever spread.

Turkic peoples that have lived in the vicinity of so many different folks throughout history, got acquainted with a huge variety of religions. Even Islam, the final station had been acquired in a Turkic way. Turks getting into contact with the neighbours, became influenced by each other and through the long process of cultural exchange they achieved a synthesis, and as a result, several religious centres were built.

The importance of the meeting was underlined by the fact that almost all kinds of Turks

were present: those at home, as well as the Cyprians, the Azeris (from Azerbaijan and also from Iran), Kazakhs (from Kazakhstan), Kirghizes and Turks that arrived from the Russian Federation: a Tuvinian and a Hakass colleague.

Two parallel sections gathered every morning on the 46th floor of the beautiful Taksim International Hotel situated near the beach of the Mediterranean Sea. The exhaustive lectures formed very long work-days lasting from 9.30 till 7 in the evening cut only by short teabreaks and a heavy lunch. Since it was very hot outside, everybody stayed in the hotel and had ample possibility to have long and friendly discussions with the colleagues till late in the night.

Those organising the congress deserve all our heartfelt congratulations. All the participants of the previous Congress were presented by the Proceedings, a heavy hard-bound book consisting of almost a thousand pages.

After the congress our generous hosts took the participants to a wonderful excursion that led us to Tarsus, one of the oldest centres of different religions in the world, from there to Adana, Osmaniye and Hatay. It will remain unforgettable for all the participants.

É. Csáki