Aspect of Christianization in the Mediterranean, IV-VI century

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The aim of this session is to give an overview of the Christianisation of the Mediterranean in the period from 4th and 6th centuries. The region that will be discussed encompasses those territories that have gravitated toward the Mediterranean Sea (Mare Nostrum) throughout the history until the present time because of theirs natural, geographic and social conditions. The Mediterranean sea has always played important role in connecting vast areas, thus forming civilization circumstances that had reached its peak during the Roman times.

The time span between the 4th and 6th centuries is chosen because that is the time in which Christianity developed from peripheral and unsuitable religion into official, soon to become the only religion in the Empire. That particular process is possible to follow study written sources and material remains. Thus, it is our intention to gather scientists that can, using existing knowledge combined with modern approach, help define similarities and differences contained within the process of the Christianization in the Mediterranean basin.

Introduction: NENAD CAMBI

1. Ž. TOMIČIĆ (Institute of Archaeology, Croatia)

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN – THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE OF JUSTINIAN'S EPOCH ON THE EASTERN ADRIATIC COAST

The archipelago alongside the eastern coast of the Ionian Bay (the Adriatic), Dalmatia, Liburnia, and Histria, along with the hinterland up to the mountain range of the Dinarides, as well as the area of Ancient Pannonia in the north, were all parts of a grand European historical scene in which, particularly in the mid-sixth century A.D., complex and vital historical events took place. It was one of the main battlegrounds surrounding the northernmost bay of the
Mediterranean, which played a part in the broader historical process known as Justinian’s reconquest.

In this brief overview, we attempt to give a summarized presentation of the main categories of sacral and profane archaeological monuments of Justinian’s epoch, a period that, arguably, represents one of the crucial and inescapable European bridges between Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. This bridge determined the historical processes and changes for many centuries to come, and has played a vital role in the shaping of the overall picture of contemporary Europe.

2. D. NUZZO – P. DE SANTIS (Università di Bari, Italia)

THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF THE NECROPOLIS AT PONTE DELLA LAMA
(CANOSA, APULIA, ITALY)

A systematic study of some funerary areas of Apulia to locate and to analyze the settlements, with special attention for the sepultures of Canosa, Puglia (BA), is in progress by the Dipartimento di Studi Classici e Cristiani (University of Bari) since 2004. By the excavations of these funerary settlements we have found a very extended cemetery and catacombs dated from II to VI century. The cemetery was used from the Christian community beginning from the second half of IV century. Here there is the most ancient Christian cemetery in Apulia, according with the historical sources, which attest in Canosa the mention of a bishop (Stercorius) in the year 343.

3. M. SGARLATA (Università degli Studi di Cassino, Italia)

HISTORY AND TOPOGRAPHY OF THE CATACOMBS IN SYRACUSE

Our aim is to trace the out-lines for an initial study of how the suburb of Akradina in Syracuse was transformed over time. Over a long period that goes from the classical period to the Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages the area underwent interesting and important changes. Over centuries the area underwent changes that modified it’s original destination. In fact there is unique evidence of latomia, city water systems (cisterns and aqueducts), handcraft work shops from the IV / III B C, hellenistic sacella and burial remains belonging to the beginning and the middle of the Roman Empire. The cemeteries of Syracuse
were therefore installed in an area that for at least two centuries had no longer been part of the town and where there were already consolidated cemetery services. With the creation of isolated hypogea and cemeteries the whole area underwent a transformation from being part of the city to becoming a suburban area. From the VI A C to the VII A C the entire area doesn’t seem to undergo an important state of abandonment.

Between the origin and the development of Vigna Cassia, S. Lucia and S. Giovanni catacombs there are evidence of the evolution of some important burial inspired by the roman examples of the pope Damaso.

At the beginning of the VI it seems that the burial sites was out of use: the last burial of Goti at S. Giovanni belongs to this period. This catacomb is of particular interest because it is the only one that has not undergone modifications that would have changed its original form. In the nearby crypt of S. Marciano and the two cemeteries of Vigna Cassia and S. Lucia the areas that were reserved for important burial were transformed into places for religious ceremonies and devotion, for a very long period.

4. I. BORZIĆ (University of Zadar)

CHRISTIANIZATION OF THE KORČULA ISLAND

Position of the Korčula island on the Adriatic maritime route, played an important role in development of many historical and social processes within island population, so as in the Christianization. Since Romans occupied island in 35-33 BC, population density corresponds to the principles of inhabitation of Roman rural ambient based on settlements of the villa rustica types. Registered pagan cults of Liber Torclensis and Venvs Pelagia show great correspondents between rural ambient, economy and religion.

It is a case that on the both sites (Potirna-Mirje and Žrnovo) where the mentioned pagan cults are registered, were found Early Christian archeological finds, which, together with seven more sites testify process of the Christianization of the Korčula island in period IVth - VIth century. According to principles of inhabitation, early Christian finds are registered on rural estates with long-lasting continuity of life. Most important site is rural estate on little island of Majsan, where a monastery were founded during the IVth century AD, and which had a strong impact on Christianization of the neighboring area (Early Christian churches on Gubavac, Lučnjak and Sutvara islands).
Despite very weakly archeological excavations, on the basis of topographical data it is possible to conclude that Christianization of the Korčula island went together with other parts of the Dalmatian coast and that her principles correspondent to one rural ambient with monastery in the focus of Christianity.

5. T. M. KRISTENSEN (University of Aarhus, Denmark)

AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF RESPONSE: EARLY CHRISTIAN DESTRUCTION AND MUTILATION OF ’PAGAN’ IMAGES

This paper examines destruction and mutilation as a particular kind of Christian response to ‘pagan’ images in the eastern Mediterranean between the 4th and 6th centuries AD. It will be shown that systematic destruction of ‘pagan’ statuary, never advocated by imperial legislation, was rarely practised. Rather, a picture emerges of selective destruction, both of the monuments targeted and the different ways they were treated. Through archaeological case studies, the meanings and motives behind such attacks on statues and reliefs will be explored. Lastly, I will put the violent responses of some Christian groups to statuary into the wider context of the social and religious changes that took place over the course of the Christianization of the Roman world.

6. CH. FAYAD (Beirut, Lebanon)

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN BASILICA IN THE TEMPLE OF JUPITER – BAAL

The ancient city of Heliopolis (Baalbek), situated in the valley between Lebanon and Antilebanon mountains, gained in importance during Hellenistic and Roman period. The peak of its development occurred at the end of II and beginning of III century AD. The real beauty of this typical ancient city were complexes of temples, especially the Temple dedicated to Jupiter-Baal built on the tell in the I century AD which indicates the antiquity of this settlement. This city was the monument of Roman glory and power in orient provinces.

The Christianity in Baalbek had to face the resistance of paganism which continued till VI century AD. The final victory of Christianity is manifested in the construction of Christian basilica inside the mentioned Jupiter-Baal temple. The temple’s architectonic material was completely reused for this new construction. The basilica, in the first phase, had three apses
and three naves divided by pillars. Later, in the second phase, the basilica completely changed the orientation and the new polygonal apse was built on the eastern side. The dating of this two successive constructive phases still remains the argument open for discussion. This Early Christian basilica represents the typical and fundamental example for understanding the transition from paganism to Christianity in Lebanon.

7. L. ACAMPORA (Museo Nazionale Romano, Roma, Italy)

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS PLACES IN ROME DURING LATE ANTIQUITY

This paper would try to restore the religious settlement of the city of Rome from 3rd to 5th century, by verifying the history of each temple and place generically defined as “non-christian”, because in studies about city during Late Antiquity, christianization and persistence of pagan places have often been studied separately, and not in a common point of view.

Every temple, mithraeum, serapeum... has been studied in its forms of persistence, through archaeological evidences, literary and juridic sources and other kind of documents; the diachronical and topographical analyses seem to show how, above all in 3rd and 4th century, the city still looks unchanged, as several pagan temples, for different reasons, continue their life, in spite of the progressive construction of christian churches, first in the suburbium and then within the walls.

During the 5th century, the situation is going to change: there’s an “explosion” of christian buildings in almost every part of the city, though there are particular and significant situations in which pagan religious buildings still stay active, sometimes with different functions, showing a very composite and variegated urban tissue.

8. S. VASILEVA (Narodni muzej Veles, FYR Macedonia)

MEMENTO MORI:
INSCRIPTIONS ON THE MOSAIC PAVEMENTS AND THEIR MESSAGES IN LATE ANTIQUITY

The aim of the title is to represent mosaics OF FYR Macedonia in their social context as “contributors” of the religious and social life. Certainly, they are “mirrors” of Early
Christian art and therefore, the scholarly approach to the problem of the message written into the mosaic pavement, shows a variety of paths and questions. The mosaic inscriptions form the region of FYR Macedonia can be divided in two groups: votive inscriptions and sacred messages. Most of them are found in sacred buildings and they usually recorded the name(s) of the commissioner(s) or some quotations from biblical texts. The main interest will be focused on the social context of the inscription and the desire of the commissioner to record his/her donation and two main questions will be examined:

1. Where is the humbleness and modesty and where is the desire to receive mercy and forgiveness on the Judging day?
2. What is the main aim of the inscriptions: please do not forget me or please remember me?

Both questions open the problem of memory in late antiquity and both questions show strong connection between art and social meaning of memory in the world when primal birth of the early Christian art happened.

Creation of a mosaic was an expensive and a luxurious action. Therefore, they served to show not only the wealth of the donor but also the artistic ability of the *pictor*. Unfortunately, attempts to attribute mosaics to specific historical figure have been controversial and usually unproductive. A certain number of inscription attest to the activity of the patrons responsible for the creation of mosaics. Most of them come from public or semi-public circles and their principal function is to record the generosity and spirit of the donors and to satisfy their desire for long-term memory.

9. E. MAIANI (Roma, Italy)

CHRISTIAN GRAFFITI: OBSERVATIONS ABOUT MARTYRS’S VENERATION AND THE PHENOMENON OF PILGRIMAGE DURING THE LATE ANTIQUITY THROUGH WRITTEN TESTIMONIES NEAR REVERED SANCTUARIES.

The paper treats about the graffiti left by christian *viatores* in the proximity to revered places, which constitute an interesting testimony of the phenomenon of pilgrimages during the late antiquity.

Starting from the personal experience of relief and study of the graffiti in the *iter ad sanctos* to the sanctuary of the ss. Marcellino and Pietro, in the homonym roman catacomb, the Speaker will put in evidence, through a series of examples from various sites of the *orbis christianus antiquus*, the role that such epigraphic category has within archaeological
investigation, as it, besides furnishing interesting data about the origin and the religious feelings of pilgrims, can constitute a fundamental test for the identification of a martyr’s sepulchre.

The paper will deal with the problem related to the chronology of such texts, a very complex matter, as the graffiti, both from the point of view of the graphic types and of the executive technique, practically result unchanged during centuries.

Another difficulty is represented by the variety of the graphic types contemporarily used inside a same text or even in a single word (atypical capital, uncial or cursive letters) and by the different forms that letters of a same graphic type can assume, making reading and interpretation rather complicated, above all when – fact that often happens- inscriptions overlap the one to the others.

The end of the paper is reserved to show some examples about the technique of relief of graffiti engraved on the walls and to talk about the most proper materials for the purpose.

10. J. BARAKA (University of Zadar, Croatia)

EARLY CHRISTIAN SARCOPHAGI FROM VRANJIC

Little city of Vranjic, situated on a small peninsula on the western side of Kaštela bay, between Solin and Split, archeologically is barely known. That is very surprising, because many houses in Vranjic have at least one Antique spolium incorporated in their stone walls. Archeological knowledge about Vranjic is based on casual findings or is a result of protective excavations that were recently undertaken by Croatian Conservation Institute, Department for Underwater Archaeology. During several excavation campaigns, organized between September 2005 and October 2006, underwater archaeologists found archaeological material (prehistoric, Roman, early Christian) that was mainly reused for the construction of the western and southern shore of the city.

On this occasion, early Christian sarcophagi that were found during underwater researches will be analyzed. Fragments of sarcophagi found implanted in the shore will be observed, as well as those used as spolia in the stone houses of Vranjic. The material will be defined typologically in order to establish what qualifies it as early Christian “entity”. In the same time, the main topic of the discussion is topography and it includes the question where did this early Christian material come from to Vranjic peninsula?
11. D. NICOLAU (Nicosia, Cyprus)

EARLY CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE OF CYPRUS FROM 4TH – 7TH CENTURY:
STRUCTURE AND LITURGICAL FURNISHINGS OF THE CYPRIOT BASILICAS

My presentation attempts to explore the ecclesiastical architecture of Cyprus from the 4th to the 7th century. The discussion concentrates on the architectural analysis in order to clear up their different structural phases and to demonstrate the evolution of their liturgical structures in the first Christian era. A wide range of issues is being taken into consideration, including architecture, architectural and liturgical sculpture and ornamentation. The more complex subject of liturgy is also being dealt with. My investigation analytically focuses on the period from the 4th century, when the first traces of Christianization can be archaeologically proved on the island, until the second half of the 7th century.

The main part is being based on the architectural examination of the churches built during this era. Every single building has its own record with all the information necessary for a detailed study. The liturgical furnishings are included in every record (altars, canopies, ciborium, ambons, presbyterial chancel). This evidence is being critically analyzed providing a thorough synthesis.

This research aims to contribute to our understanding of the Early Christian architecture of Cyprus by examining the evolution of the structure and liturgical furnishings of the cult buildings in close association with the development of the liturgy itself during the four centuries after Constantine’s legalization of Christianity.

12. D. DAMIJANOVIĆ (Catholic Faculty of Theology, University of Osijek J. J. Strossmayer, Croatia)

REPRESENTATION OF THE CROSS ON CLAY LAMPS FROM 4TH UNTIL 6TH CENTURY

This work will try to present different typology of crosses on Christian clay lamps in the period from 4th until 6th century, and development of iconography of the cross in the same period, through many known representative works. The goal is to review a development of his representation on clay lamps in Dalmatia and to do a parallel comparison with its
development in other Mediterranean areas. Special focus is put on origins and development of typology of cross, and his meaning and symbolism in early Christian world. Finally, as a conclusion, we will see if there really is a development of typology of the cross, and if so, can it be determinate with certainty.

13. Y. FUJII (Tokyo, Japan)

FIGURES OF FEMALE SAINTS INCISED ON GOLD SANDWICHED GLASS OF FOURTH CENTURY A.D.

This presentation focuses on figures of female saints on gold sandwiched glass ("vetri dorati") of fourth century A.D. All of the figures are stereotyped; they are assumed young dressed-up women of “Orans” (with their arms stretching out for pray and their palms opening to the heaven) standing between trees or the columns with pigeons. We can find similar types of female figures on the frescos and sarcophagi of Catacombs, deceased in the haven. Therefore distinguishing the figures of female saints from those simply deceased seems difficult unless names and signs are added beside them. However it is fortunate that most figures on gold sandwiched glass bear their names in Latin inscriptions and so we can identify each of their figures as St.Agnes, Virgin Mary and Peregrina, although it is difficult to find the name of Peregrina in any literary sources referring her as a saint. In addition, some of them carry nimbus behind their heads. Studying those figures by comparing with other sources would bring clear images as to how Romans in those days adore female saints.