

# XVIII



XVIII Congress of Christian Archaeology  
September 2-6, 2024 Belgrade

Book of Abstracts

## Early Christianity between Liturgical Practice and Everyday Life



Археолошки институт  
Institute of Archaeology  
Institut Archéologique



UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE  
FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY



НАРОДНИ  
МУЗЕЈ



Republic of Serbia

MINISTRY OF SCIENCE,  
TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT  
AND INNOVATION

Belgrade 2024

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**Early Christianity between  
Liturgical Practice and Everyday Life**

**Editors:**

**Ivan Gargano**

**Ivana Kosanović**

**Institute of Archaeology**

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ТЕХНОЛОШКОГ РАЗВОЈА И ИНОВАЦИЈА

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## PLENARY SESSION

### Keynote Lectures:

#### - Liturgical practice

**Sible de Blaauw** “Liturgical Experience and its Architectural Context between Sacred and Profane”

#### - Everyday life

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#### - Urbanism and topography

**Gabriele Castiglia** “Liturgy in the Streets: Jerusalem”

**Lucrezia Spera** “Liturgy in the Streets: Rome”

#### - Architecture

**Pascale Chevalier** “Challenging Puzzles with Missing Pieces – the Architectural Frameworks of Liturgy in the Late Antique Balkans”

#### - Minor Arts, Iconography, Sculpture

**Ádám Bollók** “Between Decoration and Protection: Recent Directions in the Research into Early Christian Objects of Everyday Life”

**Catherine Vanderheyde** «La sculpture architecturale protobyzantine dans les Balkans: acquis et perspectives” (online)

#### - Epigraphy and prosopography

**Giuseppe Falzone, Danilo Mazzoleni** “Riflessi della prassi liturgica nelle iscrizioni cristiane di Roma e dell’*Orbis christianus antiquus*”

- **Church history and literary sources**

**Mark Edwards** “Did Early Christians Sacrifice?”

- **Novelties**

**Dominic Moreau** “The Late Antique Episcopal Sees in the Balkans: Historical Sources and Archaeological Excavations”

**ABSTRACTS****SESSION: Liturgical practice**

**Chiara Sanna** “Accoglienza e assistenza, tra archeologia e prassi liturgica: il caso di San Lorenzo fuori le mura a Roma”

L'accentramento della gestione dell'accoglienza e dell'assistenza a poveri e bisognosi nelle mani della gerarchia ecclesiastica ha un riflesso nell'accelerata e macroscopica conquista sia dello spazio fisico dell'Urbe, sia del tempo, specificatamente di quello liturgico. Questa, infatti, scandiva non soltanto la liturgia annuale, ovviamente connessa al ciclo stagionale, ma anche quella ebdomadaria, costituendosi come elemento paratattico nel susseguirsi della quotidianità della Chiesa.

La ridondante presenza di direttive dettagliate, tanto negli epistolari papali quanto nelle fonti amministrative, evidenzia l'assoluta centralità della tematica nell'ambito dell'amministrazione ecclesiastica della città, evidente sia nella proliferazione di edifici specificamente connessi alla pratica dell'assistenza sia come funzione complementare e accessoria nei maggiori santuari cristiani.

Tali strutture, copiosamente attestate dalle fonti, ma difficilmente individuabili dal punto di vista archeologico, costituivano una rete assistenziale capillarmente diffusa. Tra queste, emergono, per la peculiarità del contesto, quelle sorte in relazione al santuario laurenziano. Questo contributo ha si propone di valutare il ruolo svolto dalla basilica di S. Lorenzo fuori le mura nella gestione delle elemosine e dell'accoglienza, attraverso un confronto tra le fonti liturgiche e i dati archeologici.



**Florian Oppitz** “Places of Charity and the Problem of Their Identification”

The interdisciplinary (archaeology, theology, and history) dissertation project “Orte der Wohltätigkeit im spätantiken östlichen Mittelmeerraum”, based at the University of Graz and the Max Weber Centre in Erfurt, investigates places of charity in the Late Antique eastern Mediterranean. Although places of charity played an important role in Late Antique society, as attested by several literary sources, little is known about them. While historical and theological research has shown a greater interest in the subject, archaeological research has almost completely neglected the field of charity. This desideratum is not only due to a lack of interest in the research tradition but is also closely linked to a methodological problem: the identification of a charity space in an archaeological context is still rarely possible with any certainty. The dissertation project aims to investigate the institutionalised places of charity in their entirety. Based on a catalogue of charity sites, questions will be addressed regarding their possible characteristic layout and infrastructure, but also their socio-religious and topographical-urban contexts as well as their significance for Late Antique individuals.

The paper presented at the International Congress of Christian Archaeology deals with the tradition of research on charitable spaces and the problems of identifying them, which will be underlined by some case studies. It also calls for interdisciplinary research to overcome the problematic interpretation of archaeological sources. A better understanding of charity places not only provides a better understanding of their architecture and environment, but also a deeper knowledge of Late Antique society itself, and is, therefore, an urgent desideratum of Late Antique archaeology.

**Giovanni Howard Muz** “Inventoried Furnishings from the τρίκλινιος of a 6<sup>th</sup> century προάστιον in *Oxyrhynchus*, Egypt”

The contribution I intend to submit is centered upon a unique *Oxyrhynchus* papyrus from the Apion archive, P. Oxy. XVI 1925, which consists of an extensive list of furniture (44 lines on the recto, plus the 1-line-long date on the verso) from the family’s suburban villa, the so-called προάστιον”Εξω τῆς πύλης, also referred to as μεγάλη οἰκία,

once located in the countryside of what is now the Egyptian town of el-Bahnasa. This document is of utmost importance for Late Antique archaeologists, as it provides an extraordinary and insightful textual reference to the furnishings of a Byzantine Egyptian προάστιον in the year 578, pertaining to the dining-room (τρίκλιος) and the estate's bathhouse (λουτρόν). First of all, I mean to address the papyrus's most considerable textual problems, which are mainly due to its damaged state of conservation—albeit relative to the lower half of the first column only—and may thus influence the archaeological examination of its contents. Secondly, and most importantly, I mean to focus on the list of dining-room furniture (lines 2-24), by analysing the inventoried objects—among which most notable are a bed (κράβακτιον), a sigma couch (ἀκκούβιτον), also known as a *stibadium*, and, above all, two small icons (ικονίδια) portraying the local, physician saint Kollouthos, and the Virgin *Theotokos*—and by pondering new readings and interpretations (as of the unclear χόδρον δίχα χόδρου sequence), through textual and archaeological comparisons from the *orbis Christianus antiquus*. In this regard, I aim to explore the otherwise unparalleled, and specifically Christian entity of the Apion τρίκλιος, which stands out, amidst the domestic contexts of its time, especially for the two Christian panels depicting a martyr saint from *Antinoopolis*, and Mary “Mother of God”, whose depictions are widespread in Late Antique Egypt.

**Andreu Muñoz Virgili** “In sacrario: arqueología y topoliturgia del antiguo rito del lucernario hispánico (siglos IV–VIII)”

Durante la Antigüedad Tardía, el rito del lucernario se fue afianzando como el ceremonial vespertino por antonomasia en las diferentes familias litúrgicas extendidas por todo el orbe cristiano. Su implementación inicial en contextos culturales domésticos, acabó dando paso a uno de los elementos constitutivos más característicos de la Vigilia Pascual. Los testimonios literarios que nos aproximan a esta celebración destacan por un marcado simbolismo y significación cristológica, eclesiológica y escatológica. Dicha concepción de carácter teológico se traducía en esquemas celebrativos específicos que quedaron reflejados en conjuntos de rúbricas relativamente ricos en lo concerniente a la topoliturgia del espacio sagrado. Los tempranos testimonios literarios de los que disponemos para la Hispania tardorromana y visigoda han

sido objeto de estudio por parte de la historiografía de la liturgia. Pero el contexto de la investigación en el que estas aportaciones se desarrollaron, no permitió integrar los datos que puede llegar a proporcionar el registro arqueológico, acrecentado significativamente en las últimas décadas.

Mediante un diálogo bidireccional, el objetivo de esta comunicación es presentar un análisis arqueológico de dichas fuentes y, al mismo tiempo, formular una lectura litúrgica de los escenarios en ellas referenciados. Con este propósito interdisciplinar, pretendemos dar mayor inteligibilidad a la articulación ritual de ámbitos concretos como las cámaras laterales adyacentes, enriqueciendo así el debate sobre su definición e interpretación funcional. Igualmente, esta tarea permitirá examinar desde nuevas perspectivas el *modus celebrandi* que nos han transmitido las principales fuentes documentales del antiguo rito hispano.

**Laura Pinelli, Marcella Serchisu** “Bread Stamps with Christian Motifs in the Mediterranean Area (4<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> centuries): Liturgical and Civil Uses”

The use of bread stamps has been documented in the Mediterranean area since the prehistoric age. Their production and use can be found even in Christian and Byzantine times, both with a sacred/liturgical and civil function. They were used to indicate the producer/baker, especially in the eastern area, more infrequently in the western area, showing indirectly the production and consumption of bread in collective ovens. These manufactures (which often belong to private collections) were mainly made in terracotta, but also in wood and metal, and they used to be decorated with figurative scenes of religious themes or simple inscriptions. According to ancient literary sources, sometimes they are related to well defined productive contexts, such as monastery ovens specialised in the production of liturgical bread.

This paper’s aim is to define the diffusion of these manufactures in the Mediterranean area, marking the difference between bread stamps decorated with figurative scenes or inscriptions and between liturgical and civil stamps, in order to provide a chronological and distributive focus to improve the knowledge and study of these objects, evaluating influences, differences or similarities in the chronological period examined and, when that proves impossible, to define the archaeological context.

**Michel-Yves Perrin** “*Tactu sacro, tactu salubri*. Remarques sur les rituels d’interaction avec les saints défunts dans l’œuvre de Grégoire de Tours”

L’œuvre de Grégoire, évêque de Tours (573-594), est d’une richesse incomparable pour une anthropologie religieuse de l’Antiquité tardive. Non seulement elle offre tant dans les livres hagiographiques que dans les livres d’histoire, une grande diversité de données mais elle permet une étude quasiment sérielle de ces phénomènes, par exemple dans *De virtutibus sancti Martini* où la récurrence inlassable des mêmes rituels d’interaction avec la tombe ou les reliques de Martin de Tours le dispute à l’antique goût du rhéteur pour la *varietas*. Le propos de cette communication est de rassembler les informations qui permettent de cerner de véritables séquences rituelles et dans une perspective comparatiste de chercher à mettre en évidence leur éventuelle spécificité au regard de la documentation contemporaine aujourd’hui disponible, en particulier en comparaison avec les recueils de miracles issus du monde méditerranéen hellénophone.

### **SESSION: Everyday life**

**Shelley Wachsmann** “Boats and Seafaring on the Sea of Galilee in the Gospels”

Virtually the entire ministry of Jesus took place in and around the Sea of Galilee (Heb. Yam Kinneret), a fresh water lake that is only 12 by 21 kilometres in size, within a milieu of fishing communities who made a living with their boats. It is difficult to understand this period without understanding this physicality, and yet, until the discovery of the Kinneret Boat in 1986, virtually nothing was known about the watercraft in use on the lake during the 1<sup>st</sup> century. The boat has given us a new understanding of the physical reality of Jesus’ ministry. This paper will examine the contribution of the Kinneret Boat to our knowledge of life on the lake in the time of Jesus.

**Enrico Cirelli, Diego Peirano** “Artisanal Activities in Religious Institutions of Western Asia Minor”

During the Late Antiquity, in western Asia Minor grew the number of religious institutions within fairly large complexes; while monasteries were isolated in the countryside, urban foundations were frequently placed in cities central sectors. In a number of monasteries remains of oil and wine presses are evident, while mill wheels are attested also in vicinities of urban churches. Ovens too are diffused both in monastic than in parish complexes. The findings of Eucharistic stamps testify the preparation of holy bread within the communities. Sometimes these structures seem related to auto production, in other instance seem to have been real economic activities as the glass and pottery kilns seem to suggest. The agora basilica in Iasos dates back to mid-6<sup>th</sup> century and was placed in this city central sector, at the time an artisanal and commercial area. In the north-east corner of the church there was a kiln for the processing of pottery. Close and within this workshop a series of pots have been identified; these cover a thin chronological frame between end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century with tableware, cooking ware and small *amphorae*. Finds do not have any waste aspect and they could also come from consumption context, but the fabric characteristic and the homogeneous productive patterns seem to relate to the same atelier. Other later productive zones, for *amphorae*, have been identified in Iasos agora; to these a 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century container (Saraçhane types 54 and 62) is related. Is it also assumed that close to the ecclesiastical complex was established an atelier for liturgical stamped bread; this and other evidences show that the Byzantine city was still a dynamic and active port settlement, with a large inhabited area, built on the ruins of the ancient site and defended by a castle.

**Srboljub Ubiparipović** “The Liturgical Offerings of Bread and Wine Mixed with Water in the Early Church: From Everyday Life toward the Act of Sacrifice”

The preparation and bringing of bread, wine and water to the place of Christian liturgical gatherings was practised in the Early Church by all partakers of the Body of Christ. At the same time, such a sacred practice had a direct impact on the better understanding of the role of sacrificing bread and wine with regard to the Eucharistic sacrifice. Above all, it should be noted that the already-mentioned aspects

encouraged the continued liturgical use of bread and wine among Christians as well as strengthened the relationship between their everyday life and sacred religious identity.

**Grace Stafford** “Fertility Management and Lived Religion in the Late Antique East”

How to control fertility was a common issue in Late Antiquity. The road from conception to the birth of a healthy child was long and often dangerous, requiring careful management by the woman, her family, and any number of religious and medical practitioners. Fertility management sat squarely at the intersection between sacred and secular concerns: it was recognised that holy figures could grant fertility miracles and protection during childbirth, but medical texts also theorised conception and provided guidance for contraception, abortion, and midwifery skills. For most Early Christians, the line between medicine and religion was hazy, if it existed at all. Treatment for problems was sought from doctors as well as through pilgrimage and prayer, including to ‘doctor saints’ like Cosmas and Damian. The management of fertility was no different. In addition to dietary changes and herbal remedies, methods for controlling fertility included pilgrimage, the use or consumption of holy substances, and the purchase of special figurines, charms, and amulets that mingled Christian imagery with pagan forces. This paper explores the material ways in which people sought to manage their fertility, primarily by examining related objects that survive in the archaeological record. Material evidence of these practices illuminates how the everyday concerns of family life were entangled with both religion and magic. Since fertility was generally considered to be a women’s issue, its management also opens a window into gendered medico-religious practices and their attempts to bring order to an often painful and difficult part of life.

**Vesna Lalošević, Kristina Džin** “Due esempi di vita quotidiana nelle leggende sui martiri da *Regio X. Venetia et Histria*”

Nelle leggende dei primi martiri cristiani della persecuzione della Tetrarchia (303-313) legate all’area della *Regio X. Venetia et Histria*, le cui origini risalgono alla Tarda Antichità, è delineata la vita degli

strati alti della società romana, patrizi romani e amministratori della città.

Le scene descritte in queste fonti letterarie venivano inserite nella trama di base dallo scrittore o redattore delle leggende, con lo scopo di insegnare alla popolazione cristiana. Due scene verranno prese in considerazione come punto di partenza per la ricostruzione della quotidianità romana degli strati più alti della popolazione nell'ambiente urbano del Mediterraneo orientale. Sebbene queste due immagini siano idealizzate, delineano chiaramente le norme secondo le quali funzionava la prima comunità cristiana del periodo tardoantico. Per questo motivo i dati delle leggende verranno confrontati con reperti materiali e resti archeologici della stessa zona e periodo.

Questo approccio potrebbe far luce sull'antica vita quotidiana dei cristiani e dei politeisti nell'area osservata. Quest'indagine mostrerà l'antagonismo di questi due gruppi durante i decenni di persecuzione e darà un nuovo contributo all'illuminazione della vita quotidiana romana di quest'area.

### **SESSION: Architecture**

**Ute Verstegen** “Architecture, Liturgy and Spatial Functions in the Early Christian Monasteries of the Church of the East”

Between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, the autocephalous Church of the East was established in Mesopotamia, the Persian Gulf and along the Silk Roads. Monastic life was popular in the Early Christian Church of the East, and various types and periods of monasticism are known from written sources. This presentation analyses the monasteries from the Early Christian period that have been discovered by excavations in these regions so far, and provides an overview of the characteristics of monastery construction in the Church of the East between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. The identification of possible spatial functions as well as the reciprocal influences of architecture and liturgy will be discussed. A comparison of architectural features and written sources shows, for example, that these monastic communities were organised in such a way that a coenobitic group living within an enclosed monastic complex was complemented by anchoritic or semi-anchoritic members of the community. Similar mixed monastic communities were also com-

mon in Late Antique monasticism in Palestine and Egypt, and reform personalities of the East Syrian church such as Abraham of Kashkar (c. 492 (?)-588) and his disciple Dadisho (c. 529-604) adopted this combination of *koinobion* and hermit dwellings in the organisations of the monastic communities of East Syrian monasticism. The structure of the monastic complexes suggests that they were separated from the outside world, but that access for lay people, for example as part of pilgrimage visits, was possible in a regulated manner.

**Lourdes Diego Barrado** “*PALATIVM*: imagen del poder y de la justicia en la Ravenna de Teodorico”

En la extremidad oeste del muro faldón sur de su basílica palatina, el rey ostrogodo Teodorico quiso legar a la posteridad la imagen de la morada que él mismo había promovido en su palacio ravennate, único documento de este tipo que nos ha legado de primera mano la Antigüedad Tardía. Sant’Apollinare Nuovo fue, tal vez, la más señera iglesia ravennate dedicada al culto arriano, lo que comportó que, tras la ocupación de la ciudad por los bizantinos en 540, fuera sometida a la necesaria reconciliatio para transformar -a iniciativa del arzobispo Agnello (557-570)- hacia 561 la antigua basílica palatina arriana de triple nave en iglesia de culto católico. Y ello motivó importantes cambios o censuras en el primigenio y

fastuoso programa iconográfico del monumento. Pero las censuras se llevaron a cabo con un cierto desmaño, de forma que conocemos con relativa certeza las transformaciones operadas en los muros faldones de la nave central y en el reverso de la fachada. En consecuencia, es posible reconstituir -en sus grandes líneas- la casi totalidad del programa iconográfico primitivo, sin duda, el principal testimonio plástico supérstite del arrianismo. Como quiera que la censura se llevó a cabo tan solo contra las personas representadas, el objeto de nuestro interés -la imagen del palacio- no sufrió apenas, aunque fue privada de los protagonistas que le daban vida. Esta imagen del palacio de Teodorico es de tal relevancia que su análisis y contextualización arqueológica suscitaron varias campañas de excavación y la publicación de numerosos estudios, desde los conocidísimos de Swoboda, Ghirardini, De Azevedo, Dyggve o De Francovich a los más recientes de Diego/Galtier, Augenti, Rizzardi o Cirelli. Nuestra aportación pretende demostrar que el palacio representado corresponde culturalmente a un



monumento germánico por la función -aunque realizado en la cuenca mediterránea e interpretado en clave artística ravnate-, que fue creado para satisfacer las necesidades de un príncipe bárbaro que vivió fascinado por la romanidad y, especialmente, por Constantinopla. Y que representaba una laubia, es decir, el tribunal donde el soberano germánico administraba justicia, respondiendo a la tipología de laubia cum solarium y que estaba impregnada tanto de la laubia germánica como del aula romana absidata o sede del tribunal en el mundo mediterráneo greco-romano. Y para ello nos apoyaremos en los textos y la iconografía antiguos, en otras villae contemporáneas de los invasores germánicos así como en la evolución que la referida tipología arquitectónica experimentó durante la alta Edad Media y hasta el pleno Renacimiento en distintas localidades de Occidente (interesándonos por los frontis de glorificación del prerrománico asturiano o por el retorno a la antigüedad -es decir, a los orígenes de la iconografía arquitectónica- con la muy reputada “serliana”).

**Tihon Rakićević, Nevena Debljović Ristić** “Liturgical Practice and the Hierarchy of Sacred Spaces in the Early Church”

Centuries of struggle for the survival and institutionalisation of the Church were marked by Christianity’s dependence on dominant Judaic and Late Antique ideas. The formation of the Christian worship space occurred through a transformation introduced by the liturgy, incorporating it into the space inherited from Late Antique architectural forms, determining the sanctity of the place. The complexity and Christian understanding of sacred space, its gradation, and the development of New Testament Christian worship were influenced by a renewed connection with the established Old Testament liturgical practice, namely the Tabernacle of Witness, which was “in every way the prototype of the Church.” The architectural hierarchy of the Tabernacle and physical separation of the “sanctuary above the sanctuaries” were reflected in Christian worship spaces.

On the other hand, the intertwining of ideological and religious principles, after the recognition of Christianity, was reflected in the symphonia of the Church and the Empire. The dignity of royal patronage, the role of the emperor as the “leader of the economy of salvation”, the strengthening of the clergy and the large number of new Christians required a new architectural syntax of the highest order.

In this work, the influences of constituting and gradating the sacred space of the Christian Church in relation to liturgical practice are examined. Special attention is directed towards the architectural articulation of the altar space and the emergence of the altar screen, which emphasised, separated, and embellished the hierarchy of holiness. Furthermore, the construction of the organic unity of the Church in the Early Byzantine period was based on establishing a harmonious relationship between the ranks of the heavenly and earthly hierarchy, crowned with the eschatological dimension of Christianity.

**Veronica Borelli** “In principio erano parole: l’abside tra ricerche etimologiche e liturgia”

L’abside, come parte della basilica cristiana, è indicata nelle fonti più antiche, latine e greche, come *apsis* (ἀψίς), *exedra* (ἐξέδρα) e *tribunal*. Dal VI secolo in poi in ambito romano e in seguito per tutte le principali lingue europee, vi fu un progressivo consolidarsi dell’uso quasi esclusivo di *apsis* per indicare questo specifico spazio e un conseguente “disfarsi” degli altri lessemi. La ricerca etimologica ha messo in luce non solo la grande varietà dei significati compresi nel vocabolo *apsis*, nodo, maglia giuntura, ruota, arcobaleno, disco (anche solare), arco ma anche i possibili slittamenti semantici fino ad abside in senso proprio. Questa varietà di significati, che è assente negli altri termini, ha storicamente consentito al vocabolo di “farsi lingua”, condividendo attraverso la solidità semantica di un solo significato, l’abside della chiesa, le immagini architettoniche associate e quindi la prassi liturgica. Alcune rappresentazioni care all’iconografia cristiana si rintracciano già nei primi significati del sostantivo ἀψίς: orbita, volta celeste, arco, quindi luogo associato alla vicinanza al Cielo e ciò aggiunse autorevolezza alle celebrazioni liturgiche. Associando lo studio degli etimi di questi tre vocaboli con la funzione della liturgia e dell’architettura sembra chiaro come siano state le situazioni storiche e sociali a definire il vocabolo *apsis* come denominazione e come significato di una parte della chiesa a cui oggi ancora si riconosce un esclusivo simbolo culturale.

**Julia Beltrán de Heredia Bercero, M. Gemma García Llinares** “La difusión del triconque de la Italia meridional en la arquitectura cristiana hispánica”

La presencia en Hispania de arquitectura cristiana con ábsides triconques es muy escasa. Dejando al margen los mausoleos funerarios y otros espacios residenciales, más tarde reutilizados con finalidad religiosa, únicamente podemos referirnos a las basílicas localizadas en los conjuntos episcopales de Sant Just i Pastor en Barcino (Barcelona) y Egara (Terrassa), ambas de inicios del siglo VI, y a la Basílica de Dumio, en San Martí, en Braga, de mediados del siglo VI.

En la Italia meridional hay una gran difusión de los triconques a partir del siglo V y una conexión entre la planta triconque y el culto a los mártires. Cimitile y la obra de Paulino de Nola parecen ser el modelo a seguir.

La relación de Barcino con Paulino de Nola es bien conocida, y la de Barcino con Egara que fue una escisión de este obispado también. Ambas diócesis, estuvieron muy relacionadas, dándose una coincidencia muy significativa de obispos, advocaciones y modelos constructivos. Cimitile, Barcino y Egara parecen cerrar un círculo que comparten un modelo arquitectónico monumental. En la presente comunicación analizaremos este proceso y la arquitectura triconque como modelo funerario-martirial de influencia oriental.

**Catharine Hof** “Satan’s Works Pomp and Worship – The Architecturally Staged Exorcisms at the Baptistery of the Tetraconch Church in Resafa/Northern Syria”

This study explores the baptistery of the Tetraconch Church, constructed in around 510–520 AD. The Tetraconch Church, situated in Resafa, Northern Syria, has been explored in the past and is presumed to have served as the bishop’s church from the 6<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Its baptistery, though clearly identifiable after the discovery of the base of a font, remains otherwise not well understood. Our new investigation involves an intricate analysis of three architectural components: the baptistery’s inner chamber with the font, a connected rectangular annex to the north, and a previously unrecognised exterior open hall along the church’s eastern side, – all in the context of the Early Christian

baptismal rite in the Late Roman eastern provinces. The investigation combines architectural, structural, and decorative evidence, the interpretation of symbolic elements, and the reconstruction of liturgical sequences. It proposes that an extended monopitch roof on the church's eastern front constituted a hall for awaiting baptismal candidates. The rectangular annex, imbued with symbolic architecture, likely served as the baptistery's outer chamber, where final exorcisms were performed pre-baptism. The actual baptism, probably by infusion, occurred in the inner chamber. The study incorporates historical contexts and sources, particularly Cyril of Jerusalem's *Mystagogical Catecheses*. Parallels with Early Christian baptismal rites and architectures, notably those of Qal'at Sim'ān and Kaoussié, are drawn, with the later rather following Antiochene ceremonial rules. The occurrence of dual baptisteries in a single location is also probed, with a second facility at Resafa's Basilica A and also seen at Zenobia/alabīya. The presence of two baptisteries could denote confessional allocation or be a response to a significant pilgrim influx. Overall, the study offers fresh perspectives on northern Syrian baptistery design, functionality, and symbolism.

**Snezhana Filipova** “Early Christian Churches in the Republic of North Macedonia with Rare Features”

Some of the Early Christian church buildings in the Republic of North Macedonia possess unusual or rare features (architectural elements, forms, or church furniture) and this paper will concentrate on their position, decoration or possible explanation of purpose or reason for introducing. These features are:

1. Kuklion (*Stobi*, Konjuh), which probably allowed believers to look at the relics in the crypt without interrupting the mass, or to sing prayers to martyrs as was practised in Syria in monastic churches. Seven features/elements will be discussed:
2. Rare position of an ambo in the altar space (Konjuh, new basilica), two ambos in the same church, (Konjuh, new basilica),
3. Outer entrances to the apse, to the compartments of the eastern space, and to the aisles;
4. The presence of an inner and an outer narthex that can be explained by the necessity to conceal the sacred mysteries from outside;
5. Misalignment of the entrances from outer to inner narthex.

6. Exonarthex with tribelon
7. Ambo accessible from the western side (Bargala, Episcopal basilica)

Also, there are general phenomena to consider that relate to the whole site-city, as is the case of *Stobi*, where each Christian basilica inside the city has a baptistery of its own, or the presence of bird and animal bones under the altar tables in the small crypts or repositories. As well as the inscriptions praising the ktetor, the visual decoration may light the eternal flame for his/her memory.

**Sebastian Watta** “Die Inszenierung von Stiftertätigkeit in den Bauinschriften spätantiker Kirchen des westlichen Imperium Romanum“

In der Spätantike entstanden im Westen des Imperium Romanum neben Bauprojekten, die von Angehörigen des Kaiserhauses initiiert wurden, ab der Wende vom 4. in das 5. Jh. vermehrt Gemeinde-, Memorial- und Coemeterialkirchen sowie Kapellenbauten, für deren Errichtung und Ausstattung begüterte Finanziers aus den Gemeinden, sowohl Laien als auch Kleriker, Mittel beisteuerten.

Als Medium der Inszenierung dieses Engagements dienten Bauinschriften, die unter Verwendung eines variantenreichen Textformulars Bezug nehmen auf die Neuerrichtung, Renovierung oder bauliche Modifikation eines Kirchenbaues, seiner Binneneinheiten oder funktionalen Anbauten. In ihrem Formular dokumentieren und kommemorieren diese Inschriften das finanzielle Engagement einzelner Individuen, die gemeinsame Leistung bestimmter Gruppen oder auch der gesamten christlichen Gemeinde einer Siedlung. Bisweilen vermitteln sie zudem auch noch weitere Informationen zur Bauinitiative und zu den am Bauvorgang beteiligten Personen. Die inhaltlichen Aussagen der Texte gilt es allerdings jeweils mit dem bauarchäologischen Befund zu konfrontieren.

Auf der Textebene spiegeln die Inschriften religiöse und soziale Diskurse der Zeit, wobei in der gezielten Ansprache für unterschiedliche Rezipienten ebenso die materiale Umsetzung und die räumliche Verortung des titulus im Ausstattungskonzept des jeweiligen Baus Entscheidendes zum Aussagepotenzial beisteuerten. Sozio-kulturelle Bedeutungsebenen vermittelten die Inschriften etwa auch durch das

Assoziationsspektrum, das mit den genutzten Trägermaterialien, den angewandten Techniken und formalen Umsetzungen verbunden war.

Vielfach an neuralgischen Punkten des Kirchenbaus angebracht, etwa an liminalen Orten, also in Bereichen des Übergangs (Eingänge, Durchgänge usw.), besaßen die Inschriften in ihrer Ausgestaltung und ihre architekturbezogene Kontextualisierung ein Vermittlungs- und „Aktivierungs“-Potenzial für ein – größeres oder auch ein stark begrenztes – Publikum.

Das Projekt im Rahmen des inzwischen abgeschlossenen Heidelberger SFB 933 „Materiale Textkulturen“ (Prof. Dr. Christian Witschel/ Dr. Sebastian Watta) untersuchte den Handlungs- und Rezeptionskontext dieser kirchlichen Bautituli und ihre zentrale Rolle in der Ausprägung eines spezifisch christlichen „Euergetismus“.

**Antonio Manuel Poveda Navarro** “Arquitectura y escultura litúrgicas del monasterio Episcopado de Elo (El Monastil, Elda, España)”

En este trabajo presentamos varios elementos arquitectónicos bizantinos y godos, además de los nuevos hallazgos de escultura arquitectónica, de un primitivo monasterio protobizantino, que al ser conquistado por los godos del Reino de Toledo, lo utilizaron brevemente como sede de un episcopado, que cuando perdió este rango eclesiástico, fue convertido de nuevo en un monasterio, pero ahora visigodo. Con esos elementos arquitectónicos se pueden asociar varios instrumentos de la liturgia que se desarrollaba en la iglesia que se ha identificado, en el yacimiento arqueológico de El Monastil, donde se dispone de importantes indicios de que fue el lugar ocupado por un pequeño pero importante enclave romano, bizantino y godo, denominado Elo, citado por los itineraria latinos y altomedievales, pero también en los concilios episcopales de Toledo, donde se menciona a la sede elotana. Todo ello corresponde a una fase histórica de los siglos VI y VII d. C.

**Elie Essa Kas Hanna** “Le origini dei modelli architettonici delle chiese orientali (V-VIII sec.): committenza o liturgia?”

L'intervento vuole analizzare il rapporto fra committenza, liturgia e architettura per individuare le origini degli schemi architettonici impiegati negli edifici di culto cristiano in Oriente. Tale analisi a prima vista può sembrare del tutto secondaria, oltre che difficoltosa considerata la vastissima estensione territoriale e le molteplici peculiarità architettoniche locali che costellano ogni provincia. Sebbene vi sia una incommensurabile quantità di opere pubblicate sul tema, oggi l'argomento non appare del tutto esaurito grazie al progresso dalle ricerche archeologiche nell'area in esame. Con la presente sintesi si vorrebbe dunque affrontare la tematica non solo attraverso una proiezione sul come si costruisce una chiesa, ma attenzione anche il significato di cosa sia una chiesa. Il primo interrogativo chiarisce le predilezioni progettuali che discendono dalle esperienze singolari che ciascun popolo espone grazie alla propria sensibilità e alla preparazione acquisita attraverso i secoli. La seconda domanda potrebbe restituire invece informazioni utili sulla struttura dell'edificio di culto, il suo simbolismo, in quanto espressione di una specifica costituzione ecclesiologica e quindi non del tutto assoggettato ad alcuna libertà progettuale e forse tantomeno liturgica. Le basiliche doppie, le basiliche sollevate su un alto podio, le chiese a pianta centrale, le chiese a pianta trasversale sono solo alcuni dei modelli sviluppati in questa parte dell'impero nei centri urbani e rurali. È doveroso sottolineare che taluni modelli furono adottati unicamente in specifiche regioni piuttosto che in altre, basti pensare a quelli dell'Armenia e di Tur 'Abdin. Si intende pertanto analizzare questi modelli architettonici da diverse angolazioni, dai luoghi della celebrazione allo spazio architettonico e liturgico, dalla luce dello spazio sacro a quella per la liturgia. Infine, si vuole arrivare alla comprensione di quale sia l'elemento da cui scaturiscono questi modelli delle chiese: abilità architettonica, liturgia o committenza?

**Stanislav Stanev, Jeni Tankova** “The Liturgical Planning of the Episcopal Basilica of *Philippopolis*”

Although the long exploration history of the Episcopal Basilica of Thracian *Philippopolis* was recently summarised (17<sup>th</sup> Congress of Christian Archaeology, 2018), the interpretation of the liturgical planning of the basilica’s church complex is still awaiting its proper consideration and due publication.

After a thorough examination of all the archaeological data available on site, the functional organisation of the basilica’s complex has been studied. The complex was accessible from streets through its forecourt; the access to the basilica was provided through the atrium porticos in the north and south sides, an arched door-way in the east side, and the five narthex doorways leading to the nave and aisles.

Separation walls built in *intercolumnia* of the basilica’s northern and southern colonnades evidence that the nave was inaccessible (while visible) from the aisles. So, only through the narthex three doors could pilgrims or those wishing to contemplate the relic(s), enter the nave to proceed further east to the *deambulatorium* for veneration; one would do this only when there was no liturgical celebration.

As for the architectural setting of the Eucharist liturgy, there are several functional units of particular interest that this presentation puts forward for discussion, one of which is that the southern pair of rooms might have served as a *skeuophylakion*. Special attention is paid to the *ambo* of the “bridge type”, installed not far from the *presbyterium*.

**Basema Hamarneh, Michaela Loeffler-Leutgeb** “The Ecclesiastic Complex of al-Jumayil in Provincia *Arabia* (modern Jordan). Preliminary Remarks on Architecture and Liturgical Functions”

The paper intends to present the recent discovery of the double church complex at the site of al-Jumayil (Jordan). The rural settlement is situated about 3 km to the southwest of Umm er-Rasas, and about 40 km southwest of the Diocesan city of Madaba (Provincia Arabia). The town is built on a hill between two valleys; it comprises a compact habitat mostly of large and medium sized houses, production compounds, quarries, and water cisterns. The religious complex, identified in the archaeological excavations running in the village since 2021, is built on the



southern slopes of the hill, on the edges of the core settlement, and is enclosed by a wall. The two side-by-side single-nave churches with an east-west orientation are approximately of the same dimensions, though are concluded by two unequal-sized apses (3.5 m and 2.5 m). The two buildings, dated to the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, were used at the same time and at least until the 10<sup>th</sup> century as evinced from pottery evidence. This long chronological time span sheds new light on the fate of Christian monuments in the Islamic era, and offers insights into the resilience of the local communities and continuity of settlement patterns in the diocese. The aim of the discussion is to address the on-going research on the spatial organisation of the ecclesiastical complex, of the diversity of functions, and the structural and architectural elements revealing the complexity of the liturgical practices, in addition to a comparative analysis with other dated churches in the immediate surroundings within the diocese of Madaba in Late Antiquity.

**Patrizio Pensabene, Javier A. Domingo** “La Rotonda di S. Donato e il Foro Romano di Zara”

Nella costruzione della rotonda di S. Donato, verso la fine del sec. VIII, si verifica un massiccio uso di materiale di reimpiego nelle fondamenta dei muri, sotto il pavimento e probabilmente anche nel colonnato interno. Di questo si conservarono nella seconda fase degli inizi del IX secolo le due colonne che sostengono tuttora gli archi del triforium, mentre il sesto del colonnato venne sostituito da pilastri, contemporaneamente alla costruzione di una galleria sopraelevata interna.

Solo nel sec. XIX, quando si scavò l'interno dell'edificio per recuperare il pavimento originale del foro romano su cui si era costruita la chiesa, si osservò la grande quantità di materiale architettonico ivi reimpiegato (blocchi, fusti, cornici e altri elementi, sistemati in mucchi). Questi materiali servirono a generare una piattaforma sopra la quale poter appoggiare tutta la rotonda. Durante gli scavi gli spolia disposti sotto il pavimento furono rimossi, mentre rimasero in vista quelli su cui poggiavano i muri, i pilastri e le colonne che saranno oggetto del nostro studio.

Ci siamo interrogati sul perché di questa modalità di reimpiego, che nascondeva gran parte degli elementi architettonici nelle fondamenta e sotto il pavimento, e per quali cause verso la fine del sec. VIII

vi era ancora la possibilità di disporre di un insieme così numeroso di materiali diversi, tenendo conto che già sul foro era stato costruito nel sec. V il complesso episcopale con materiale reimpiegato. La risposta forse è da collegare con il particolare contesto storico in cui s'inserisce la costruzione della chiesa; in un momento che vide le dispute fra i bizantini e i carolingi per il controllo di questa parte della Dalmazia, e che si conclusero solo nel 812 d. C. con la pace di Aachen che riconfermava la primazia bizantina nella zona dell'Adriatico, scegliendo come capitale della Dalmazia proprio la città di Zara.

**Zrinka Serventi, Marina Jurjević** “The Church of Sv. Vid (St. Vitus) in Gornji Karin: Architecture, Art and Burial”

Archaeological excavations of a complex site of Sv. Vid (St. Vitus) have been ongoing since 2018 at the location of Slana in Gornji Karin. During the five campaigns of archaeological research, the site has revealed the remains of one nave church with numerous auxiliary rooms, dating to the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> century, and the surrounding necropolis, as well as the remnants of older structures, most likely dating to the Principate period. Among the Early Christian remains, quite distinctive is the cruciform baptismal font, while the entire architecture of this church is prominent in the wider territory of southern *Liburnia*. Numerous, varied fragments of stone church decorations, particularly of the altar screen, stand out among the archaeological finds and are unique for the extended area of Northern *Dalmatia*. Therefore, in this paper we will analyse the architecture of the said sacral complex, at the same time taking into consideration the specificity of the church decorations and the necropolis that surrounds it. The church will also be compared to analogous sites in the wider territory of the Eastern Adriatic and placed in the context of ancient *Corinium*, the Roman settlement to which this site is attributed.

**Alexander Ivanov** “*Domus ecclesiae* in the Diocese of Thrace”

The beginning of Late Antiquity is set long before the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. Peter Brown writes that the change that occurred at the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD has nothing to do with the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. Yet the change at that time was described by

Cassius Dio, who wrote that ‘After the death of Marcus [Aurelius] history passed from a golden empire to one of rusty iron’ (Dio, 72. 36. 4). At that time, Christianity continued to spread throughout the territory of the Roman Empire. The famous *domus ecclesiae* at Dura Europos is one of the few places in the empire where Christians are believed to have gathered (congregated) before the appearance of ecclesiastical architecture as we know it today.

From the territory of the Diocese of Thrace, there are single monuments dating from before the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, which testify to the presence of Christians. The buildings from the period between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD that could be tied to Christians are also singular. Their interpretation, in most cases, is controversial. Until now, an attempt has not been made to gather together information about such edifices. Recent studies looking at the upper limit of pagan temples show that they continued to function and coexisted with Early Christian churches. However, the problem is the absence of churches certainly dated into the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, as well as pre-Christian buildings - *domus ecclesiae*. For this reason, the research focuses on the possibility of distinguishing such edifices. Cases where earlier buildings were converted into churches are also considered.

**Mei Yang, Ji Zhiwei** “The Development and Interpretation of Architectural Space in Christian Churches – A Comparative Study on the Space Syntax of Churches in *Lugdunum*”

As the custodians of Christian doctrine, churches play a pivotal role in religious activities. The latest archaeological excavations have revealed three distinctive Christian churches (temples) in the past two thousand years in *Lugdunum*, nestled in the foothills of the Pyrenees. These churches exhibit varying architectural spatial forms across different periods of Christianity’s development. It is rare to find such comprehensive developmental forms of Christian churches within the confines of a single town simultaneously. This paper undertakes an interdisciplinary comparative study utilising archaeology, architecture, history, and computer science to analyse the “centre” and “path” aspects of the architectural space found within these three church sites (archaeological sites). Employing space syntax theory as the research tool, from the perspective of quantitative analysis, the organisation and environmental shaping of the spatial forms of the basilicas, crosses

(with cloisters), and other types of churches during different historical periods are discussed. By delving into church functionality, horizon modelling, and multi-level architectural spaces through quantitative analysis, this study offers a fresh perspective for refining research on traditional Christian churches, while also providing insights into their preservation efforts. Furthermore, it explores optimising religious spirit and church space by conducting overall spatial calculations for Christian churches, according to the study of spatial order; this provides reference and new ideas for the design of modern Christian churches.

### **SESSION: Epigraphy and Prosopography**

**Snežana Ferjančić** “Christian Community of *Sirmium* in Light of Epigraphic Evidence”

The Flavian colony of *Sirmium* in Pannonia has yielded a fair number of Christian inscriptions. Most of these monuments are mere fragments, containing a couple of partially preserved lines of text or a few letters. A number of inscriptions, however, provide valuable information on the Christian community of *Sirmium* and the identities of the believers. The aim of this paper is to present and review these epigraphic monuments. They enrich our knowledge on Early Christianity in the Danubian and Balkan provinces of the Roman Empire. Epigraphic evidence from Sremska Mitrovica contains information on the ethnic structure of the Sirmian Christian community. It reveals persons originating from the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. Two inscriptions explicitly mention Syrians, while others record people bearing Semitic names. Onomastic evidence also reveals believers of Germanic or possibly Celtic origin. Christian inscriptions from *Sirmium* testify to the ecclesiastical organisation in the city. They mention an exorcist, a deacon and a nun. In addition, epigraphic evidence provides information on the social status and occupations of the Christian believers in *Sirmium*. For instance, one epitaph mentions a soldier who died in Aquileia, while another records a cup bearer of Constantius II.

**Valentina Virgili** “Le comunità cristiane durante la prima fase della dominazione islamica attraverso la documentazione epigrafica a Rihab e dintorni”

L'intervento qui proposto prende spunto dalla mia tesi dottorale intitolata “Le comunità cristiane durante la prima dominazione musulmana attraverso le testimonianze epigrafiche in: Israele, territori Palestinesi e Giordania”. In Giordania il periodo preso in esame presenta molte attestazioni relative a restauri e costruzioni ex novo degli edifici religiosi.

Nella diocesi di Bostra, nel villaggio di Rihab e nella zona collinare di Tell Rahiba sono state ritrovate sei chiese appartenenti al primo periodo della conquista islamica del territorio giordano. A Rihab sono state costruite due chiese dedicate rispettivamente a San Mena e a Sant'Isaia, entrambe nel 634, alla vigilia della presa, dei musulmani, di Bostra. In entrambi i testi viene menzionata la figura dell'arcivescovo e metropolita Teodoro di Bostra; ricordato anche nella c. d. chiesa siriana datata, grazie al suo nome, intorno al 637. Un altro edificio di culto, appartenente al monastero di San Costantino Niceforo, è stata restaurata, grazie allo scioglimento dell'enigma della datazione, intorno all'832, quindi in pieno IX secolo.

A Tell Rahiba, a sud di Rihab, è stato innalzato un grande complesso ecclesiastico composto dalla chiesa di San Sergio (661) e dalla cappella del martire Filemone (663). La realizzazione della ricerca è stata effettuata tramite un'analisi approfondita dei testi, contenenti elementi di vario genere che hanno aiutato a conoscere meglio la comunità locale, per ricostruire gli avvenimenti che interessarono l'area geografica analizzata dall'avvento del dominio islamico.

Le iscrizioni presentano degli indizi significativi nel dimostrare la tolleranza dei musulmani verso le popolazioni conquistate, che non provoca alcuna crisi definitiva nella struttura religiosa delle comunità cristiane. Si tratta di dati che finora non sono mai stati esaminati complessivamente, ma solo frammentariamente.

**Matteo Pola** “Funerary Practice and Aristocratic Self-representation in Early Christian Rome”

The analysis of the Late Antique elite’s burials that are archaeologically traceable in the suburbs of Rome allows us to obtain a varied picture of the methods of self-representation typical of the Late Roman world. As has already been noted, the senatorial aristocracy of Rome seems to have made use of the city itself as a prestigious backdrop for its own commemorations, taking advantage of a certain void created by the absence of the emperors, often engaged on the most unstable fronts of the imperial borders. This also seems to be valid in the context of the aristocratic funeral commemorations, often compared to important imperial models that peremptorily marked the suburban landscape of Rome.

Within this framework, which often reflects the canons of that well-known climate of hierarchization, social mobility, and the “transformation” to which the aristocracy was subjected in Late Antiquity, a whole range of specific funerary practices stands out, which is recognisable in the study of the historical sources. This paper intends to provide a reasoned compendium of these practices, which include the various phases of the funeral, the banquet in honour of the deceased, the *coena novedalis*, and other events whose material traces can be recognised in the tombs of the elites and which had the ability to impact in a striking way on the Early Christian monumental development of Rome.

**Jelena Vukojević** “Celebrating Virtue: Exploring Women’s Portrayals in Funerary Inscriptions”

In the context of the Roman world, funerary monuments transcend mere memorials, emerging as invaluable artifacts that offer profound insights into social ideals, aspirations, and communal values. Epitaphs, as a distinct literary form, consistently extol the remarkable achievements and virtues of the deceased, with a particular intrigue reserved for dedications to women. These epitaphs vividly depict qualities such as chastity, devotion, fidelity, and an unwavering commitment to domestic responsibilities—a poignant reflection of the prevailing archetype of the virtuous matron.

This study aims to examine the attributes associated with women within the epigraphic tradition, exploring the nuanced expressions of these qualities and tracing their evolution over time, notably with the emergence of Christianity. Christians continued the epigraphic tradition, infusing their narrative by artfully merging tradition with innovation—replacing certain elements while preserving others. This prompts a comprehensive exploration into alterations, enduring elements, and the introduction of new ideals and behavioural models.

Utilising illustrative examples and a comparative methodology, the research seeks to distinguish enduring values from those newly introduced. The goal is to provide a nuanced understanding of the evolution of the model of female virtue and explore how the methods of expressing these qualities have transformed over time.

**Francesca Beltrame** “Officine epigrafiche e iscrizioni funerarie cristiane nell’Aquileia tardoantica: identificazione e caratteristiche distintive”

La ricerca dottorale della scrivente, finalizzata alla realizzazione di un corpus delle iscrizioni funerarie cristiane rinvenute ad Aquileia e nel territorio limitrofo, è stata l’occasione per esaminare nel loro complesso le testimonianze afferenti a questo settore del ricco patrimonio epigrafico aquileiese.

Analizzando e confrontando tra loro tali documenti, sono stati individuati dei materiali che presentano importanti affinità nella gestione dello spazio e nell’impaginazione dei supporti, nelle caratteristiche paleografiche, nella struttura e nei formulari degli epitaffi, nei temi, negli schemi e nella realizzazione degli apparati simbolico-decorativi.

*È sembrato, così, di poter riconoscere le mani di alcuni scalpellini e/o l’opera di alcune officine lapidarie, che ricorrevano a modelli e cartoni loro peculiari. In certi casi, inoltre, è parso di poter ricondurre alcuni titoli ad una produzione di buona qualità, forse connessa con botteghe che conti-nuavano a lavorare nel solco della tradizione officinale, in un periodo, per contro, generalmente caratterizzato dallo scadimento delle tecniche.*

Sulla base di questi riconoscimenti, si sono formulate alcune riflessioni in merito all’operatività dei lapidici nell’Aquileia tardoantica; al loro rapporto con la tradizione epigrafica di carattere sepolcrale del-

le epoche precedenti; all'organizzazione e alla ripartizione del lavoro all'interno delle botteghe; alla possibile presenza di "imitatori", che in maniera più approssimativa cercavano di riprendere le caratteristiche distintive della produzione di officine più rinomate; al rapporto con i committenti e con le aree cimiteriali in cui erano esposte tali iscrizioni.

**Antonio Manuel Poveda Navarro, José Luis Fuentes Sánchez** "Epigrafía paleocristiana y episcopal del obispado Papers Visigodo de *Oretum* (Granátula de Calatrava, Ciudad Real, España)"

El objetivo es presentar un grupo de inscripciones relacionadas con la Iglesia episcopal de *Oretum*, ofreciendo información sobre los obispos que ocuparon la silla de un importante obispado, también se presentará una lauda sepulcral sobre un mosaico cristiano, que menciona a un diácono de la misma iglesia romano-goda. Las inscripciones se datan entre los siglos IV y el VII d. C. Algunos de sus textos ya se conocían, pero recientemente ha habido dos grandes descubrimientos, una lápida monumental, que amplía el número conocido de sus obispos, y el citado mosaico donde se menciona el nombre de uno de sus diáconos.

**Alexandra de Varax** "Christian Inscriptions under the First Umayyad caliph in Karak (Jordan)"

Over the course of the past century, around 600 Christian tombstones with Greek inscriptions have been discovered in what is known today as the governorate of Karak (Jordan), in the vicinity of the Byzantine city of Charakmoba, in the province of *Palaestina Tertia*. A large proportion of these findings remain unpublished. These funerary inscriptions are noteworthy due both to their number and to their common formulations. For the most part, they date back to the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century to 674. The later examples bear the hallmark of varying degrees of Hellenization, noticeable in the use of the Greek language, in the Hellenization of Nabatean and Arabic names and, more sparsely, in the epigrams inspired by Christian Greek poetry.

From temporal references marked on these stones, we know that a small number of them were engraved at the pivotal period of the end of the Byzantine rule. This period coincided with the beginning of



Islamic rule in this region, at the time of the first major battle between the warriors of Muhammad and the Byzantine troops, at the battle of Mutah (629), located close to Charakmoba. A dozen were engraved under the reign of the first Umayyad caliph, around 30 years after the Muslim conquest of the province of *Palaestina Tertia*. As such, they are the last trace, on inscriptions, of a Christian presence in this land. Thus, these inscriptions are valuable for the study of Christian life on the eve and the beginning of the Islamic occupation.

In this paper, I aim to present the latest Christian tombstones, to show the permanence of Christian signs and of the Greek language during the initial years of Islam in the province.

**Giuseppe Falzone, Danilo Mazzoleni** “La pubblicazione delle antiche iscrizioni cristiane di Roma: *status quaestionis*, aggiornamenti e nuove acquisizioni. L'edizione di *ICVR XI*”

Dal progetto iniziato da Giovanni Battista de Rossi alla nova series inaugurata nel 1922 da Angelo Silvagni, la pubblicazione delle *Inscriptiones christianae urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores* consta oggi di dodici volumi (*ICR I-II*; *ICVR I-X*) ed un supplemento (Gatti 1915), che raccolgono oltre 40.000 epigrafi. L'ultimo, il X, a firma di Danilo Mazzoleni e Carlo Carletti, è stato pubblicato nel 1992 e completa l'edizione delle iscrizioni cristiane rinvenute nei cimiteri e nelle basiliche del suburbio romano. Restano da pubblicare le *inscriptiones intra moenia*, gli indici e gli aggiornamenti. Alle prime, in particolare, è destinato il volume XI delle *ICVR*, attualmente in preparazione, che comprenderà le epigrafi, in prevalenza monumentali e note in buona parte solamente da sillogi, presenti negli edifici di culto all'interno del circuito murario. Raccoglierà, altresì, tutti quei testi funerari pertinenti con certezza a cimiteri urbani post-antichi o comunque sicuramente riconducibili ad ambito urbano e committenza cristiana. Le ricerche, avviate da una équipe costituita nel 2022 dai curatori del Corpus, ha determinato il censimento di oltre 200 evidenze e prodotto risultati in parte soddisfacenti. In questo contributo, oltre allo *status quaestionis*, si darà conto della metodologia della ricerca epigrafica in corso e verranno presentati i suoi primi e più significativi risultati.

**Domenico Benoci** “Rupestral sites in Palermiti (CZ)”

As part of the land survey during the Vivarium Project archaeological campaign in July 2023, a series of rupestral units with traces of Christian cultic presence located near Palermiti (CZ) was brought to the attention of the Pontifical Institute of Christian Archaeology team. The present contribution aims to report the dynamics of the report and the first iconographic and epigraphic analysis, advancing some considerations about the possible topographical and chronology context, spanning between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century.

**SESSION: Funeral practice**

**Michèle Gaillard** “Les chrétiens et la mort : approche spatiale et sociale à travers les sources archéologiques (Nord-Est de la Gaule, Ve-VIIe siècles)”

Un certain nombre de recherches et de synthèses récentes permettent de rassembler les données archéologiques concernant:

- le rôle des sépultures et des nécropoles dans la naissance de nouveaux sanctuaires, urbains (mises au point sur les cités épiscopales dans les volumes de la Topographie Chrétienne des Cités de la Gaule, 1989-2014) et ruraux (Terrier 2014, Schneider 2014, Bonnet, 2022),

- l'impact des sépultures vénérées sur l'organisation architecturale et liturgique des églises (multiples exemples dans Chevalier-Sapin 2012 et Gillon - Sapin 2019),

- l'évolution de la situation des sépultures et des édifices qui y sont associés dans l'espace urbain (Galinié – Zadora-Rio, 1996 et Gaillard 2020).

À partir de ces données accessibles mais pas toujours prises en compte, il s'agira de se pencher sur quelques exemples bien documentés. Grâce à un examen attentif des sources archéologiques et des sources écrites, on s'efforcera de restituer les circulations des laïcs et des clercs, lors des offices ou des cérémonies liées au culte des saints, dans les espaces situés dans et à proximité des sanctuaires des martyrs ou des saints.

Toujours en prenant appui sur quelques exemples connus par l'archéologie et aussi, dans la mesure du possible, par les sources écrites, l'expansion, la situation et l'organisation des inhumations *ad sanctos* pourront faire l'objet d'une étude sociétale: en particulier grâce au mobilier archéologique, on s'attachera à y déceler les différenciations selon le rang social, comme à Saint-Denis (Périn – Vallet 2004; Wyss 2015), ou selon le genre.

**Natasha Luigia Antonino** “Contentitori ceramici e banchetti funebri nel complesso catacombale tardoantico di Canosa di Puglia (Italia)”

Le indagini svolte dalla Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra (Ispettorato per le catacombe della Puglia) in diversi insediamenti ipogei, inquadrabili tra la metà del IV e la metà del VI secolo, del complesso catacombale di Canosa di Puglia (Puglia centro-settentrionale, Italia), hanno portato al rinvenimento di diverse testimonianze strutturali e materiali relative allo svolgimento di pratiche funerarie connesse al rito del *refrigerium*. Uno degli indicatori riconducibili a questa pratica rituale è senza dubbio la presenza di contenitori ceramici, da mettere in relazione al rito dell'offerta di cibo e bevande ai defunti, alla consumazione di pasti funebri presso le tombe o alla loro evocazione virtuale e simbolica. Dall'analisi dei contenitori rinvenuti, emerge una presenza sostanziale di recipienti attribuibili a scodelle in ceramica fine da mensa di produzione africana e orientale, brocche, coppe e coperchi in ceramica comune acroma e dipinta e pentole, casseruole e tegami in ceramica da fuoco di produzione locale o di importazione (africana ed egeo-orientale), in alcuni casi dal profilo quasi interamente ricostruibile.

All'interno degli insediamenti ipogei indagati si ipotizza non solo il consumo di pasti funebri, ma anche lo svolgimento di pratiche di cottura o di riscaldamento in loco dei cibi, documentate negli strati di frequentazione funeraria dalla contestuale presenza di tracce di combustione, cenere, piani di cottura e di numerosi frammenti di contenitori in ceramica da fuoco. Il confronto, inoltre, dei dati desunti dall'analisi tipologica del vasellame con quelli provenienti dalla documentazione archeozoologica, nell'ottica di un approccio multidisciplinare, fa emergere un quadro coerente. Infatti, l'assenza di tracce di combustione sui resti osteologici animali, tra i quali prevalgono ossa di maiale, pollo e ovicaprino, e la significativa presenza di pentole in

ceramica da fuoco suggerisce il ricorso al bollito come la principale tecnica di cottura di carne, utilizzata per la preparazione di pietanze liquide e semiliquide.

**Marko Janković, Vladimir Mihajlović** “Dining with the Christian Dead: The *Mensa* Type Burials in *Remesiana*”

During the recent excavations of the Late Roman eastern necropolis of the town of *Remesiana* (the province of Dacia Mediterranea), dated to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, six specific funerary structures were excavated. Although varying in size, their form is consistent and includes the remains of the drywall foundation of a horseshoe plan, with the apsidal ending on the western side. Furthermore, in the inner middle of the rectangular eastern side, the remains of another smaller space of a horseshoe base were found in four out of six cases. In other words, this type of funerary structure had a plan of an enclosed apsidal space inside which another considerably smaller apsidal surface was “inscribed” on the inner side of its eastern foundation drywall. The distinct crescent shape of the structure, as well as its downsized repetition on the eastern inner side, indicate that this was the so-called *mensa* type of grave.

Presumably, the horseshoe drywall base was a supporting structure for a wooden bench that served for sitting or reclining. The similarly shaped surface encompassed by a semi-circular bank had the function of a platform for a “*sigma*” type of table. The whole construction above the grave, thus, had the form of a semi-circular bench and a small table in its centre that served for funerary commensal practices. Taking into account the representations of exactly such a kind of banqueting arrangement in the catacomb frescoes in Rome, as well as the personification of agape (ἀγάπη) in some of the cases, it is possible to suggest that the tomb structures found in the eastern necropolis of *Remesiana* were a materialisation of a funerary “love feast” and, hence, of a strongly Christian association.

**Raffaella Giuliani** “L'altare nelle prime chiese cimiteriali di Roma: alcuni casi di studio”

Lo studio dell'altare nelle prime chiese ha sempre costituito un argomento di grande problematicità negli studi di archeologia cristiana. In questo contributo, sulla base di alcuni recenti interventi di restauro conservativo e strutturale e di scavo archeologico attuati in chiese annesse ai complessi catacombali romani, l'autrice propone qualche spunto di riflessione utile ad arricchire la discussione. Gli esempi presentati riguardano in particolare due proposte ricostruttive: quella dell'area presbiteriale nella Basilica di S. Ermete sulla via Salaria Vetus e quella dell'altare altomedievale ad corpus nella cripta dei Santi Pietro e Marcellino presso le omonime catacombe della via Labicana. Saranno presentati confronti anche con altri monumenti analoghi situati presso cimiteri paleocristiani, nonché riferimenti alle fonti letterarie antiche sull'argomento.

**Dimitri Cascianelli** “Restauro e scoperte nelle catacombe di Calepodio: la mensola di Alfius e la ricostruzione del prospetto architettonico della tomba di papa Callisto”

Nell'estate del 2022, per celebrare i 1800 anni dalla morte di papa Callisto (217-222), la Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra è tornata a prendere contatto con le catacombe di Calepodio sulla via *Aurelia Vetus*, promuovendo una serie di operazioni di valorizzazione e messa in sicurezza degli ambienti, pur riservando un'attenzione particolare alla c.d. cripta storica (A1).

In vista di un intervento che riguardi i frammenti pittorici di epoca altomedievale che illustrano le vicende della *Passio Callisti*, tra i quali spiccano il momento del martirio e quello della deposizione, si è provveduto al restauro dei reperti marmorei collocati lungo lo scalone di ingresso (S4) e nei pressi della sepoltura del pontefice, tra cui quella mensola ex voto che in virtù dell'iscrizione incisa sulla faccia principale (*SANC(to) CALLISTO ALFIUS VOT(um) SOL(vit)*) assurge fra le testimonianze più significative del culto tributato a San Callisto durante i primi secoli dell'era cristiana.

Nel corso di tali operazioni, è stato individuato l'originario incasso della mensola marmorea, situato in prossimità della tomba ve-

nerata. Questa significativa scoperta, abbinata al ritrovamento di un capitello di ridotte dimensioni stilisticamente affine alla mensola, consente di formulare un'ipotesi ricostruttiva del prospetto architettonico che monumentalizzava la tomba di Callisto, calamitando l'attenzione dei pellegrini che si recavano in visita a "*sanctum Calistum papam et martirem*", come riportato nella *Notitia ecclesiarum*.

**Albert Ribera i Lacomba, Andreu Muñoz, Isabel Escrivà** "*In die sancti Vicenti: nuevas consideraciones sobre la articulación ritual de la topografía cristiana de Valentia*"

En las últimas décadas, la investigación histórico-arqueológica ha acrecentado significativamente el conocimiento sobre la topografía urbana de la Valencia paleocristiana y visigoda. Por su interés y singularidad, el principal objeto de estudio y foco de debate lo han constituido el conjunto de edificios cristianos y áreas funerarias fuertemente vinculadas al culto vicentino. Sin embargo, las aproximaciones a una contextualización global en relación con las acciones rituales que configurarían la vida litúrgica de la ciudad se reducen a algunas apreciaciones relativamente sucintas en el marco de estudios más amplios y relativos a otros particulares. Esta coyuntura puede deberse, en parte, a la ausencia de documentación específica vinculada al desarrollo de la liturgia estacional de la *Valentia* tardoantigua.

A partir de un enfoque interdisciplinar, esta contribución se dispone a llevar a cabo una confrontación analítica entre los indicios arqueológicos y documentales disponibles que pueda derivar en una serie de conclusiones objetivables capaces de aportar nuevas consideraciones sobre la articulación ritual de la topografía cristiana de la ciudad. Nuestro propósito no es llevar a cabo una definición concreta y exhaustiva de los pormenores de dicho fenómeno. Contrariamente, pretendemos aproximarnos a un marco conceptual más general en el que se desarrollarían aquellas actividades culturales que actuarían como trabazón y dinamizador común entre urbanismo, arquitectura sagrada y vida religiosa durante los últimos siglos de la antigüedad cristiana en Valencia

**Alessandra Cerrito** “L’infanzia perduta: sepolture di bambini nelle catacombe cristiane”

Una recente indagine sulla catacomba di Monte Stallone a Formello (Roma) ha fornito dati sufficienti per mettere a fuoco mentalità, organizzazione, peculiarità e prassi delle sepolture di bambini; il confronto con altre catacombe cristiane ha permesso di mettere a punto una griglia di coordinate comuni.

**Hristo Preshlenov** “*Depositio ad sanctos*. Tomb and Church in Nesebar (Bulgaria)”

The Christian church embodies the functions of a house of prayer and a living temple, whose holiness is achieved through the rite of consecration - a tradition, arising from the Holy Eucharist at the graves of the martyrs. Both the graves and the place where the holy relics are laid are holy places. Lay people are buried around the temples.

According to Venetian sources from the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the relics of St. Theodore Stratilates, St. Sisto, Apostle Bartholomew and Apostle Andrew were kept in the “St. Sofia” basilica, which, in 1257, were moved to “St. Nicholas” church in the Venetian quarter of Constantinople. In 1441, the byzantine Princess Mataisa Kantakouzene Palaiologina was buried there.

In the Early Christian basilica at the western city gate, where the tombs of the founders of the polis are located in a pagan *heroon*, a one-chamber building, resembling the early martyrs’ graves, was discovered. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, it was inscribed in the basilica, around which lay people were buried during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. The crypt chamber was preserved during the reconstruction of the basilica in the third quarter of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, into a cross-domed church. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, a necropolis arose around a single-nave church, built in the abandoned church.

The *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae* mentions the martyrdom of St. Irina in *Mesemvria* from the 4<sup>th</sup> century, thus preserving the memory of the transfer of her relics (from the crypt in the north-western basilica?) to the monastery of the “Holy Mother of God Eleusa” in the north-eastern area of the peninsula. Lay people were buried west and east of the monastery. The western necropolis

was formed in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, when tombs were built in the narthex. During the renovation of the basilica in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, burials were carried out in the northern and central nave and around the temple.

Lay people were buried in the 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century, the 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century, the 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century and the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century around the south-eastern basilica (collapsed into the sea), topographically inherited by a medieval church, renovated in 1704 and now known as “St. George the Old”.

**Dominik Stachowiak** “Revisiting the *ad sanctos* Burials in Late Antique Thessaloniki”

*Depositio ad sanctos* is the term used for the Christian practice of burying the dead near martyrs’ graves or relics. The custom is widely known in the scholarship through literary sources such as the writings of Saint Augustine and some epigraphic evidence, but mainly the works of A. Grabar and E. Dyggve. According to these, the Christians believed that a saint’s unique connection with God was maintained even after his death, and thus his earthly remains could yield special powers. A believer buried near a martyr’s grave would gain access to the saint’s connection with the Almighty; the closer, the better.

This practice has long been (or is thought to have been) observed by archaeologists, who use it to explain the topographical features of various archaeological sites. The present study will focus on the case of Late Antique Thessaloniki, where several extramural churches of various architectural types have been encountered in the past decades. Almost all of them were subsequently connected by scholars with particular martyrs known from the written sources. When, in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the relics of the saints were moved inside the city, the desire for *ad sanctos* burials is determined as the primary cause for moving the cemeteries *intra muros*. However, a closer look at the chronology of the graves, along with a spatial analysis of their relationship with the churches, may lead to a partial revision of the old narrative regarding the popularity of the practice of *ad sanctos* burials in Thessaloniki and the prevalence of some particular localisations, with the relative neglect of others.



**Jacob A. Knechtel** “Bishop - Tomb - City. Episcopal Burials as a Reflection of Ecclesiological and Social Transformations between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages”

Burials always function on several levels: a self-designed grave represents the self-expression of the buried as well as an attempt to control future perception in the collective memory. This observation took on special significance with the rise of Christianity: in this time of religious, political and social upheaval, the power-conscious class of bishops strived for influence and used tombs as a powerful communication media.

The lack of standardisation in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century Episcopal burials, while hindering any meaningful categorisation, proves to be insightful for investigating these clerics' pious intentions, personal preferences, individual goals and obstacles. This recently started doctoral project analyses the tombs of five interregional influential bishops dating between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century AD: Ambrose of Milan, Damasus of Rome, Paulinus of Nola, Martin of Tours, and Optatus of Timgad. These burials are examined as multi-layered case studies, starting from the microcosm of the tomb itself formulating the deceased's self-expression and continuing to the mesocosm of reception (by successors and society) and the macrocosm of the general social situation of the ecclesiastical see that restricted or empowered the bishops.

This innovative methodology allows a holistic approach to these early bishops' tombs, which enables considerations regarding how individual personalities adjusted not only to personal taste and wishes, but also to social expectations. Every bishop and each ecclesiastical see provided individual preconditions and, therefore, (in-)abilities to shift or remodel social expectations. However, social expectations and norms may have evolved and rendered the tomb improper, enforcing change to the burial. This process may also have worked the other way around by forcing expectations to adapt after establishing the tomb. A preliminary reanalysis of the tomb of Ambrose in Milan has already presented some thought-provoking results.

**Ivana Popović** “Funerary *Mensae* and their Platforms from *Pannonia Inferior* and *Dacia Mediterranea*”

Most of the finds of *mensae* originate from the Mediterranean coast and the islands, as a local tradition later adopted by the Early Christians. In the Balkan hinterland and in south Pannonia, these finds are mostly encountered in *Sirmium*, and, according to the existing documentation, some chance finds come from the nearby sites. A few platforms for the *mensae* were recorded in the tombs in *Sopianae*. All these finds pose certain questions regarding the diffusion of Mediterranean cultural influences, the methods of their distribution as well as the Christian origin of some of these monuments. As could be seen after the examination of finds from the Lower Pannonia and *Dacia Mediterranea*, the *mensae* and stone platforms of the *mensae* shape could be classified into two groups. The first group includes finds from the southern part of Lower Pannonia, from the valleys of the rivers Sava and Drava, and primarily from *Sirmium*. The second group includes finds from *Sopianae*, the hilly terrain of Lower Pannonia to the west of the Danube, and finds from *Remesiana*, a city on the *Naissus – Serdica* road in the *Dacia Mediterranea*. In the first group are finds of marble *mensae* of diverse mouldings and in the second are stone platforms of *mensae* above graves covered with earth.

**SESSION: Urbanism and Topography**

**Federico Lizzani** “...δίδωσιν αὐτῷ ὑπὲρ τῆς αὐτῆς ἁγίας ἐκκλησίας... τὰς διαφερούσας αὐτῇ οἰκίας τὰς ἐν τῇ βασιλευούσῃ πόλει (V. Olymp. 5). Una rilettura archeologica delle donazioni di patrimoni immobiliari aristocratici a Roma e a Costantinopoli”

Il presente contributo si propone di indagare la consistenza patrimoniale e il volume delle donazioni – che derivano, talora, da quelle singolari manifestazioni di «carità eversiva» – da parte di ben note clarissimae a favore della comunità cristiana, a Roma e a Costantinopoli, e di restituire, attraverso una rilettura della documentazione disponibile, la struttura di tali proprietà urbane e le ricadute sul piano topografico, operando – ove possibile – un riscontro sistematico con il tessuto archeologico. Nello specifico, si analizzerà la composizione dei patrimoni (si pensi, a titolo esemplificativo, a quelli di Olympias e

Vestina), partendo da un tentativo di restituzione archeologico-topografica dei termini impiegati in riferimento a tali organismi, che assumono talora forme macroscopiche.

L'obiettivo dell'intervento è di analizzare il “fenomeno” della struttura immobiliare di ambito urbano, confrontando le realtà romana e costantinopolitana, con particolare riferimento alle sue trasformazioni in senso funzionale e, senza dubbio, di natura strutturale. Si tornerà, ove possibile, pur tenendo conto della parzialità dei dati disponibili, sulle proposte di localizzazione e sulla distribuzione di tali organismi multifunzionali e monoproprietari. Attraverso i dati deducibili da fonti letterarie di diversa natura, si intende riconsiderare la struttura e la destinazione funzionale dei beni – non necessariamente contigui – che compongono le proprietà, prima e dopo la loro alienazione. Considerando il carattere macroscopico delle unità, l'acquisizione da parte della comunità cristiana di interi comparti urbani spinge pure a indagare la distribuzione degli immobili rispetto alle nuove fondazioni ecclesiastiche e a ricostruire gli esiti dei progetti urbanistico-architettonici che interessano tali consistenti lasciti, valorizzando quelle operazioni di riorganizzazione e rinnovamento delle preesistenze.

**Benyamin Storchan** “The Development of Monasteries, *loca sancta* and Pilgrimage along the Jerusalem-*Eleutheropolis* Road in the Byzantine Holy Land”

The Judean Foothills stretch over 10 km in the centre of modern Israel between the Jerusalem-Hebron mountain range to the east and coastal region to the west. During the Early Roman period this area was well developed and flourished with many rural villages centred on the toparchy of Beit Nattif. After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the failure of the Bar Kochba revolt led to the near complete destruction of rural settlements. The establishment of *Eleutheropolis* with the regional settlement vacuum in the background set the stage for the establishment of numerous monasteries during the Byzantine period. The road system developed in the Roman period was maintained and became a vital route for ancient pilgrimages. This lecture will review both intra and inter-site perspectives based on the archaeology of the churches, monasteries and pilgrimage sites and logistics centres that developed along the road. While most monasteries were small, divisions of size and function will be considered in order to show a pat-

tern of clear hierarchal organisation. Moreover, inter-site development processes are best highlighted by the excavations at the Church of the Glorious Martyr. The site was first established as a small chapel built into a hewn cavern during the late 5<sup>th</sup> century at the site of the tomb of an unnamed martyr. The location of the site near the road led to its increasing popularity, eventually receiving imperial funding during the reign of Tiberius II Constantine in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Imperial investment may have been used as a form of imposing control and formalising the pilgrimage routes to the *loca sancta* of the *Eleutheropolis* diocese.

**Robert Stark** “Life on the Edge of the Desert: The Medieval Makurian Community of Ghazali”

With its adoption by the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the introduction of Christianity into Nubia marked the advent of the so-called medieval period in what is today Sudan. During this period, three Kingdoms developed, namely, Nobadia in the north, Makuria between the Third and Fifth/Sixth cataracts of the Nile River, and Alwa in the south, within which Christianity would come to be the defining socio-cultural worldview into the 15<sup>th</sup> century. By the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE, the extensive coenobitic monastery of Ghazali was established in the Wadi Abu Dom region of the Bayuda Desert, approximately 15 kilometres from the Nile, within the territory of Makuria. Enclosed within the monastery walls are dormitory spaces, two churches, milling and associated storage spaces, food preparation and refectory spaces, what may have been a tannery and leather or rope manufacturing facilities, annexes and magazine spaces, as well as bathing and latrine areas. Outside of the monastery walls are iron smelting facilities, the nearby structural remains of a lay community, located over a small hill to the southeast of the monastery, and four cemeteries, with Cemetery 2, directly south of the monastery, being associated with the monastic community, while Cemeteries 1, 3, and 4 have been associated with use by lay individuals. The conversion to Christianity and the introduction of monasticism into the region marked a distinct transition, not only in the religious worldview and eschatology but also in approaches to daily life and engagement with the broader socio-cultural landscape, including the funerary realm, where a marked transition in interment style and cemetery use is evident. Examining questions around burial, diet, health, and mobility at Ghazali, this presentation focuses on daily life within the Bayuda Des-

ert community following the adoption of Christianity in the region, as understood from analyses of the over 100 burials thus far excavated at the site.

**Albert Ribera i Lacomba, Llorenç Alapont** “The Episcopal Cemetery of *Valentia* (5<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> centuries): from Roman Habits to the Total Visigothization of Anthropology and Funeral Rites”

The Episcopal cemetery lies on the south-eastern side of the forum. It grew around the site where St. Vincent was tortured. The tombs were installed from the 5<sup>th</sup> century onward. The first tombs were similar to the Roman ones. During the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, Bishop Justinian erected a new complex, a cruciform building incorporating his own mausoleum, into St. Vincent’s sepulchre. Roman tradition had prevailed until this edifice. The population buried within this area belonged to the upper-class, and the tombs are differentiated by their typological, stratigraphic, and anthropological aspects.

From the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the morphology and the ritual changed inside the Episcopal cemetery. New tombs were placed on top of the older ones, and the modest, individual, and simple tombs of Roman tradition were covered and replaced by large, collective, monumental burials. Ritual objects appeared as well as two different types of offerings: symbolic and personal items. The anthropological characteristics also changed, with Mediterranean individuals being replaced by those with Northern features.

### **SESSION: Minor Arts and Iconography**

**Matteo Braconi** “Rappresentare il reale. Oggetti e manufatti della vita quotidiana nei programmi pittorici degli ipogei tardoantichi di Roma”

Diversi studi hanno avuto modo di scandagliare, nel tempo, i molteplici canali tematici che ispirano i progetti pittorici degli ipogei funerari di diritto privato a Roma. Anche per lo specifico cronologico della tarda antichità, è stato osservato come la materia artistica propriamente religiosa rivesta un ruolo eminente - ma non univoco - nell’at-

tuazione dei desideri espressivi dei destinatari di questi monumenti. La componente realistica, talvolta declinata pure in una prospettiva oltremondana, emerge da questi scenari pittorici in maniera inequivocabile, per tradurre in immagine le tappe di una escalation sociale, i progressi nel raggiungimento dei traguardi nella carriera professionale o religiosa oppure per raccontare le abilità e le qualità personali che hanno distinto in vita i committenti e/o i fruitori di questi ipogei.

In entrambi i casi, meno attenzione è stata riservata -al contrario- all'esame degli oggetti raffigurati all'interno di questi programmi pittorici, che si connotano per una attenta realizzazione e per una resa che appare talvolta strettamente dipendente dal dato reale. Il presente studio propone quindi di ragionare proprio sulle immagini degli elementi ispirati ai manufatti della vita quotidiana, disarticolandoli della trama narrativa a cui appartengono, al fine di osservarne le principali caratteristiche morfologiche e tipologiche e di verificarne la loro potenziale comparazione con le forme, i tipi e le cronologie degli equivalenti indicatori archeologici.

Osservati da questa prospettiva, i programmi pittorici degli ipogei romani di diritto privato possono essere considerati come veri e propri cataloghi visivi dei prodotti e degli oggetti della vita quotidiana, che hanno rivestito un ruolo centrale nei processi di affermazione e definizione di queste esigenti committenze.

**Francesca Paola Massara** “Apocrifi, avori e liturgia. Note iconografiche ed esegetiche”

Le fonti apocrife sono estremamente diversificate tra loro per cronologia, origine, formazione, genere letterario, contenuti dottrinali, scopi ed obiettivi dei redattori. A questa articolata letteratura collaterale, cui si aggiunge l'esegesi patristica, attinge l'iconografia paleocristiana e altomedievale per la produzione e la decorazione di preziose suppellettili liturgiche eburnee, quali pissidi, dittici, coperture di evangelario ed altri manufatti.

Il presente contributo si propone di osservare questa serie di raffinate opere di arte sontuaria, partendo da un aggiornato status quaestionis, e di inserirla nell'ampio ambito della produzione paleocristiana-

na, dai contesti monumentali ai grandi cicli decorativi degli edifici di culto. L'importanza di questi manufatti, legati prevalentemente all'uso liturgico, emerge sia per gli aspetti storici e storico-artistici, che per quelli iconografici ed esegetici.

Il movimento migratorio della trasmissione figurativa, e qualche volta anche stilistica, sembra compiere una spirale che attraversa Roma, l'Oriente, il Mediterraneo cristiano, prediligendo alcune scene che possano aggiungere al consueto sentimento devozionale un più forte valore teologico. Alcune raffigurazioni, inoltre, sembrano trovare particolare favore proprio nelle arti sontuarie, grazie alle quali episodi in apparenza marginali e poco noti hanno l'opportunità di viaggiare nel mondo mediterraneo.

**Lara Mührenberg** “Gender Trouble in the Catacombs – Construction(s) of Masculinity and Femininity in Late Antique Portraits of the Deceased”

Gender issues play an important role in Early Christian literatures that have been intensively investigated in recent decades. In contrast, a scholarly discussion regarding the visual sources is still largely lacking: What do the Early Christian images reveal about masculinity and femininity? How are sex and gender staged in these images? Is there a reflection of the phenomena discussed in the Early Christian literature in the images? Were new types developed or were existing motifs re-contextualised?

In my doctoral thesis (which will be submitted in mid/late 2024) I investigate these questions based on theories of gender studies as well as approaches from Bildwissenschaft and visual culture studies. This is because the phenomena that can be grasped in the written sources, which describe male and/or female aspects of a person, can also be recognised in visual sources as motifs with male and/or female connotations. I focus on parts of the pictorial decoration of the Roman catacombs, namely the depiction of gender-typical phenomena in the context of portraits of the deceased. I examine, among other things, the family constellations depicted, the virtues attributed to the dead and the way in which their social status has been staged and analyse these phenomena with regard to their implications in terms of gender.

My research project aims to uncover the construction of gender in the images – and how this has been created. The study of visual sources, thus, offers the possibility to explore power structures within the Early Christian society in the city of Rome in Late Antiquity and to analyse which potential spaces and possibilities for agency were allocated to individual members of the Christian community.

**Bartłomiej Żurawski** “Depictions of Adam and Eve in the Art of the 3<sup>rd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> century CE. Between Literary Sources, Liturgy and the Ancient Iconographic Tradition”

This paper critically examines the earliest portrayals of Adam and Eve in Christian art, delving into the intriguing dynamics within Early Christian artistic expression. It explores the intricate relationship between biblical narratives, other literary texts, and the established iconographic traditions of Antiquity. Notably, it uncovers the adaptation of pagan compositional schemes, prevalent in contemporary artistic practices, to illustrate both biblical and apocryphal stories. The scenes depicting the lives of Adam and Eve are systematically compared with specific themes derived from the canon of Greco-Roman art.

The study aims to clarify how pagan inspirations may have influenced the fundamental ideological content present in Christian imagery, moving beyond mere compositional similarities. A crucial aspect of this exploration is the profound impact of Early Christian baptismal liturgy on the visual representation of Adam and Eve during the nascent centuries of Christianity. The images of these biblical figures, therefore, emerge as allusions to the act of baptism—a visual reminder of its pivotal role in the journey towards salvation.

The paper further contends that the portrayal of Adam and Eve in art serves as a poignant reflection on the origin of sin and the indispensable role of baptism in cleansing the inherent guilt, as perceived by Early Christian practitioners. Rigorous scrutiny of source texts, including catechesis and theological treatises, becomes instrumental in deepening our understanding of how these primal figures and the concept of humanity’s fall from grace were contemplated in the formative years of Christianity.



By triangulating source texts, the nuances of liturgical practices, and the echoes of ancient pagan traditions, this study aims to unravel the intricate threads that weave together the iconography of Adam and Eve in Early Christian art.

**Charles Wastiau** “The Functions of Personifications in Early Christian Imagery in the West, 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century”

Personifications are omnipresent in Early Christian imagery: beneath the feet of Christ, in the company of biblical heroes or at the corners of burial chamber ceilings. Consequently, they provide a unique insight into the formal grammar of this period. Moreover, their prevalence across a diverse array of monuments, be it in pagan, Jewish, or Christian contexts, positions them as a relevant common denominator for studying the dynamic between Christian and non-Christian visual representations. In my doctoral thesis, I conducted an iconographic study encompassing all personifications within Western Paleo-Christian imagery, with a specific emphasis on *Caelus*, *Sol*, *Luna*, and rivers. By reintegrating them into the series to which they belong between the 1<sup>st</sup> century and the end of Antiquity, I gained numerous insights into their forms and meanings. Furthermore, by contextualising these observations within the historical and religious contexts of the time, I was able to delineate the diachronic and ontological evolutions of these figures.

In this presentation, I aim to share the results obtained concerning the functions of personifications in Christian imagery. These figures hold lesser significance in the image or are positioned on the margins, are conditioned or not by an underlying narrative, and generally represent a natural element. Their main function, however, is not to illustrate the nature, but to denote the divine essence of the character or the scene to which they belong. They are most often associated with Christ – contributing to the construction of Jesus’ divinity – or theophanic scenes, wherein the power of God is made manifest. Throughout this presentation, we will demonstrate that this function is the primary *raison d’être* of personifications, utilising numerous examples from funerary sculpture. We will further demonstrate that this role was, in essence, already assumed by personifications in the imagery of pagan gods and emperors.

**Barbara Crostini** “Branching out: the Symbolism of the Vine in the Dura Synagogue Reredos Mural and in the Antioch Chalice”

Among the murals of the painted synagogue at Dura Europos is a large tree with branches, whose shape suggests it be interpreted as a vine. This identification is appropriate not only with biblical images, but also with ancient Mesopotamian archetypes where the vine merged with the image of the paradisiacal garden with all its implications of fertility and happiness, but also civilisation. In my interpretation of the Dura synagogue as a performative space, I will analyse the reasons for this choice of background. I will further compare the iconography of this part of the wall, usually referred to as the ‘reredos’ of the Torah niche, with the extraordinary silver chalice from the treasure at Kaper Koraon where the branches of the vine that spread around this vessel are inhabited by seated figures (see: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/468346>). Considering Marlia Mango’s interpretation of this chalice within philosophical circles in Syria, I will argue that the two representations can shed light on each other, creating precedents for Eucharistic developments of the vine symbol.

**Jelena Anđelković Grašar** “Orans Figure: Protection and Prayer in the Power of the Hands”

The importance of the allegorical figure of the orans is already known from the early Christian community. Orans is a symbol of the soul of a Christian, which appears in male and female form, or often only a symbolic representation; while later it became associated with specific persons, and to the greatest extent was known as a prefiguration of the Mother of God. A specific quality of the Orans is its depiction in a praying posture with outstretched arms. This attitude indicates prayer and piety, while the figure’s presence next to the deceased indicates one’s salvation, i.e. Orans mediation in the same. The prayer position is known from ancient depictions of praying women and it is assumed that it was taken from there, i.e., the position of a person in the *expansis manibus* in Roman pagan art.

Besides these general remarks, this paper will focus on even older iconographical traditions, and attempt to detect the origin of this prayer posture with outstretched arms, and find the links and connections in gestural symbolism and religious meaning. Thus, the power

of prayer and protection with raised hands, besides the clear iconographical types, will be examined from various aspects of ancient people's lives: religion, beliefs, personal piety, social constructs, life-death philosophy, etc.

A particular focus of the paper will be on the Late Antique and Early Christian material and visual evidence from archaeological research and excavations with representation of figures with this prayer gesture from the Central Balkans region. The research will be oriented towards the identification/elaboration of the figures and their possible link to the Orans type. The comparison of the image and the archaeological context will allow valuable conclusions to be drawn that can contribute to the general knowledge about the Orans type of representations.

**Radu Petcu, Ingrid Petcu-Levei** “Representations of Saints and Orants from the Province of *Scythia*”

Our study focuses on the representations of saints and orants discovered on different objects from the province of *Scythia*. The representation of saints and orants on different objects (bricks, roof tiles, *ampullae*, amulets), demonstrates that symbols cannot be transmitted otherwise: the visual impact is much stronger than the spoken one. A saint can often be the patron of a church or even an altar, often accompanied by an image of himself (icon). Such an image can also become an object of veneration, thanks to its miraculous properties; therefore, the saint is the recipient of prayers. Illustrating the saving dimension of God's intervention in favour of the just, this scene encapsulates the soteriological references of the Old Testament texts, configuring them into a concise, expressive and attractive representation of the resolute persistence of the faithful. For example, the image of Daniel in the lion's den discovered on a roof tile at *Capidava*, a small fortress on the Danube Limes, is one of the most characteristic iconographic examples of the symbolic representation of prayer for salvation. Finding the scene in a military context represents bravery in the face of danger and death. To represent a certain belief, a naive illustration is sufficient, thus that moment remains marked with a symbolic load. According to the Early

Christian canons, the saints were depicted as God-given people who have a small part of His power, thus being able to perform miracles and protect from evil forces. They carry out their mission through prayers or sometimes through a gesture, without the intention of performing a miracle, thus being close to God. Throughout Christian history, the cult of saints and prophets has been an important phenomenon, for many centuries representing one of the main ways in which religious devotion was exemplified.

**Stefanie Archut** “New Considerations on Late Antique and Early Byzantine Stucco Decoration”

Plastic stucco was used as an integral element of interior decoration in both Greco-Roman Antiquity and the Middle Ages. However, research into this material during the intervening Late Antique and Early Byzantine periods has been limited. The widespread use of stucco decoration in sacred rooms during this period has been proven by numerous published findings. This opens up the possibility of comparatively and transregionally analysing the design potential of stucco decoration. The author’s PhD project, which will be completed in the summer of 2024, is dedicated to this goal.

Stucco decoration should be considered alongside mosaic, wall painting, and wall incrustation as a regularly used genre of Late Antique wall and vault decoration. However, stucco follows its own principles due to its material properties and production method. For instance, the material can be moulded in various ways to meet specific needs. Therefore, stucco decoration has an underrated potential for interior design and spatial effect.

The presentation will examine the production method’s unique characteristics and its correlation with design, such as the choice of motif or colour. It will analyse selected finds in their spatial context to demonstrate how the plastic decoration interacts with other materials. Focusing on the Early Christian church interior, it will reveal how the material developed its own visualisation practices over time, which have not been distinguished thus far.

The analysis provides a deeper understanding of the use of stucco

as a material in Late Antique visual arts. This can serve as an impetus for reconstructing additional stucco decoration programmes that are no longer extant, thereby making an underestimated genre of material more fruitful for current research.

**Bojana Plemić** “Iconography and Symbolism of the Shepherd Motif in the Art of the Central Balkans (4<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century)”

Representations of a shepherd beside its flock or with sheep on its shoulders are generally accepted as a theme from pagan bucolic art, which, during the Early Christian period, evolved into a biblical parable following the words from the Gospel of John that equalised Christ with the Good Shepherd. Such examples are numerous from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and are known from sarcophagi such as the Livia Primitiva, nowadays housed in the Louvre, or fresco paintings from catacombs such as those of Domitilla, Priscilla, or Marcellinus and Peter.

On this occasion, we have considered the shepherd representations in the art of the Balkans, where such scenes are mostly recorded from the early 4<sup>th</sup> century. Through analogies and analysis of the context of finding, where possible, we will point out the development of this motif using the following examples: monumental sarcophagi such as the Good Shepherd sarcophagus from *Salona* and the Jonah sarcophagus from *Singidunum*, the bronze statuette from the vicinity of Smederevo, jewellery like an engraved gem from Osijek and a silver ring from *Remesiana*, the famous reliquary from Novalja on the island of Pag and the floor mosaic from the transept of the southern basilica in Caričin grad (*Iustiniana Prima*).

Although most of these representations, despite the evident iconography pattern, do not explicitly represent the Good Shepherd as Christ's allegory, they have been shown as highly adaptable images in the context of Christian messages with different meanings. Consequently, their symbolism relates to the parable of the lost sheep according to the Gospels of Luke and Matthew or the general story of salvation, such as in various New Testament scenes or even Psalms, which could be one of the possible reasons for the prolonged continuity of scenes with shepherd representations in art from the mentioned area.

**Caroline J. Downing** “Paintings from a Late-4<sup>th</sup> Century Basilica in *Stobi*, North Macedonia”

Excavation beneath the 5<sup>th</sup> century Episcopal Basilica at *Stobi* revealed an exceptionally well preserved basilica from the late 4<sup>th</sup> or early 5<sup>th</sup> century. The building, named the Early Episcopal Basilica, contained an unusually complete set of paintings that, along with evidence from mosaic inscriptions, allows analysis of the building's entire decorative programme. The preserved paintings include aisle walls preserved several metres high containing imitations of *opus sectile* decoration with small figural panels above them, floral paintings and garlands from above the nave colonnade, and reconstructed ceiling paintings from the aisles featuring a coffered design and a running garland adjacent to the aisle walls.

At the end of the north aisle, close to the apse, a painting of the Good Shepherd was located, of which only the lower portion of the figure, flanked by Christograms, has survived. One of the small panels at the end of the north aisle depicts Daniel in the Lion's Den. Garlands around the edges of the aisles surround the entire church in a symbolic victory wreath, and can be interpreted as proclaiming the triumph of Christ over death. This interpretation is reinforced by the presence of a Greek inscription in the floor mosaic inscription within a stylised wreath that refers to the freeing of hearts from death.

The decorative programme, for the most part, accords well with the iconography of the late 4<sup>th</sup> century known from the Roman catacombs and from tombs and the few surviving early churches. Images of wreaths and garlands are frequently found in Christian tombs, as are Old Testament images of salvation such as Daniel in the Lion's Den and Jonah and the Whale, serving as a typology for the salvation promised by Christ. It is likely that more such scenes were painted above the aisles in the Early Episcopal Basilica; the upper walls were poorly preserved. The Good Shepherd, as the most common image in the Roman catacombs, and frequently found in Christian tombs such as those in Thessaloniki, symbolises Christ's sacrifice for the believers.

In a later phase of the Early Episcopal, a supporting pier was

constructed near the western doorway adorned with a unique image of rodents surrounded by vines. This image has no precedent in Early Christian art, so is difficult to interpret. It may be a symbol of the devil, as described by St. Augustine in his theory of Christ's cross as the "Mousetrap of the Devil." The vines surrounding it may be symbols of Christ's triumph. An image of Christ stepping on a lion and a snake found at the entrance to the baptistery of a 4<sup>th</sup> century church in Ohrid may have a similar symbolic function, demonstrating the power of Christ over evil at the entrance to the holy church.

Paintings from the Early Episcopal Basilica at *Stobi* comprise one of the most complete decorative programmes surviving from the late 4<sup>th</sup> century, and make an important contribution to the study of the iconography of the Early Church.

### **SESSION: Minor Arts, Iconography and Sculpture**

**Ivan Mileković** "A Christian Menorah: Understanding the Iconography of Menorah in Late Antique Churches of the Balkans"

During the late 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the existing Jewish communities on the Balkans became Christianized. As archaeological evidence suggests, the pre-existing synagogues were transformed into churches. While the Christianization of older sacral spaces is not an uncommon phenomenon in Late Antiquity, it should be noted that most of the Balkan synagogue-churches retained their previous decoration. This phenomenon received little attention from scholarship. Thus, its symbolic, dogmatic, and liturgical meaning should be studied. Based on three selected case studies, namely: the Synagogue of *Stobi*, the Synagogue of *Saranda*, as well as the Menorah found in the Metroon on the Athenian Agora, this presentation aims to question the Christian appropriation of the Menorah in the context of Patristic literature and Early Church doctrine, as well as its correlation to the liturgical space. Furthermore, this presentation aims to contribute to the redefinition of the Jewish-Christian communities on the Balkans.

**Alessandro Di Tomassi** “Gli apparati decorativi delle porte di ingresso dell’Ade e del Santo Sepolcro. Spunti per un repertorio iconografico delle formelle istoriate”

Nel campionario figurativo della Tarda Antichità, il motivo della porta di ingresso, sia in ambito pagano sia in quello cristiano, conosce oramai un numero piuttosto consistente di ricorrenze. L'intervento, pertanto, si propone di recuperare non solo le indagini già condotte sulla diffusione del tema iconografico della “porta dell’Ade” e sugli elementi architettonici che caratterizzano la traduzione in immagine del Santo Sepolcro, ma, più nello specifico, vuole collocare una lente d’ingrandimento sulle formelle istoriate che si dispongono sui battenti dei portali di ingresso. Un censimento sistematico che ha considerato tutti gli esemplari noti nella plastica funeraria e nei manufatti eburnei variamente inquadrabili in un arco cronologico compreso tra il III e il VI secolo d. C. sta permettendo di realizzare un catalogo dei principali temi iconografici presenti nelle formelle delle porte: se si eccettuano i casi relativi alle rappresentazioni di oggetti connessi al funzionamento delle porte (martelli, maniglie, serrature e chiavi), il nutrito repertorio iconografico si compone di protomi animali (leoni e arieti), di figure connesse alla mitologia classica (*gorgoneion*) e di scene tratte ora dalla materia bucolica (erotici stagionali) e ora ancora dalla tematica funeraria (erotici dadofori). Nel noto fenomeno di assimilazione del tema della porta nella cultura figurativa cristiana, le cosiddette “iconografie minori” approdano anche nelle formelle del portale della “Tomba vuota”, nelle quali, se in alcuni casi, nonostante le ridotte dimensioni del campo figurativo, le immagini consentono di identificare agevolmente le scene desunte dai referenti testuali biblici, per altre, invece, il loro immediato riconoscimento diventa più problematico. Alla luce di ciò, nel presente studio, particolare attenzione verrà rivolta proprio a queste ultime immagini di dubbia interpretazione, nel tentativo di decifrarle, prestando particolare attenzione agli attributi e agli schemi iconografici che ricorrono anche nei coevi programmi figurativi.



**Federico Biondani** “*Vos estis lux mundi*: le rappresentazioni degli apostoli nelle lucerne africane”

Fra i motivi cristiani presenti nelle lucerne africane, di particolare interesse sono le raffigurazioni degli apostoli, presenti sul disco ma soprattutto sulla spalla. Sono rappresentazioni che amplificano la connotazione simbolica dell'oggetto, considerando che gli apostoli sono i portatori della parola “illuminante” di Cristo e sono da Lui definiti *lux mundi* (Mt 5, 14).

In questo contributo si intendono considerare:

- la documentazione esistente, che comprende anche riproduzioni di età moderna non sempre riconosciute;
- la tipologia e la cronologia delle lucerne con queste raffigurazioni;
- l'eventuale utilizzo di matrici analoghe;
- la distribuzione e i contesti di provenienza, prendendo in esame anche i recenti ritrovamenti di Suasa (Ancona – Marche) e di Ravenna/Classe;
- lo schema iconografico generale in rapporto alle rappresentazioni del collegio apostolico testimoniate nell'arte figurativa paleocristiana (dalla sigillata africana ai vetri dorati) ma anche alle rappresentazioni pagane con segni zodiacali, con le quali queste lucerne sono state messe in relazione;
- l'iconografia dei busti e la loro disposizione (riconoscibili i lineamenti di Pietro e Paolo);
- il rapporto con le raffigurazioni del disco (per lo più simbolo cristologico) o della spalla.

**Ljubomir Milanović, Sanja Pilipović** “Budakalász Travertine Production: Early Christian Sarcophagus from *Singidunum*”

Travertine sarcophagi made in Budakalász quarry(ies) and *Aquincum* workshops appear in centres along the Danube from the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century to the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The prevailing form of these sarcophagi was the same, marked by a tripartite front panel incorpo-

rating a sunken and moulded central field intended for an inscription. This general quarry form was diversified by applying different decorative motifs to the moulded frame of the central field, in most cases different forms of the Norico-Pannonian volute. The uniformity of travertine Budakalász /*Aquincum* sarcophagi indicates that they were traded as semi-finished and then completed in the next phase.

All of these sarcophagi that take the traditional form of a coffin with a lid and a tripartite front panel can be found in a pagan context; however, one of them from *Singidunum* has been preserved within a Christian context. Christian motifs, namely the Good Shepherd and scenes from the cycle of Jonah, were applied on the field intended for inscription, probably in the second phase of the production in local *Singidunum* workshops. Although the distribution of Budakalász travertine finished and semi-finished sarcophagi closely followed waterway transport routes, it is notable that imports of these items are less common in places with significant local producers, as in *Singidunum*, were the Tašmajdan underground quarry of Badenian limestone was one of the most important regional quarries.

This paper will deal with the so-called Jonah sarcophagus from *Singidunum* and will examine the integration of the traditional Budakalász travertine sarcophagus into the Early Christian cultural and social background. It will take into consideration the context of the early, growing Christian community in *Singidunum* and the surrounding area as well as the importance of local workshops.

### **Ivan Gargano** “A Silver Reliquary from *Augustae* (Hurlets, Bulgaria)”

An interesting chance find occurred in an ancient site in the Bulgarian municipality of Hurletz, corresponding to the ancient settlement of *Augustae*, which, during Late Antiquity, was included in the province of *Dacia Ripensis*. The discovery of a small silver reliquary is of great interest for its significance as it is linked to the Christian presence in the town and constitutes the only available trace of the presence of this community on this site.

The reliquary has a very humble decoration but is characterised by a Greek inscription that bears a peculiar request for protection addressed to a woman, Asclepia, who is unknown to ancient hagiograph-

ic sources. Apparently, she was known for her activity as a healer and the inscription is currently the only archaeological evidence of devotion to this figure whose name, activity and day of commemoration can only be found in medieval texts.

Despite the fact that the object was discovered many years ago, it is very little known and, in the course of this presentation, I will discuss the main issues related to: its finding context, the literary sources concerning Asclepia, and the problems of chronology with which we have to deal when trying to date the object. In the end, the reliquary will eventually be placed within a broader framework concerning the cult of *santis* and relics in *Dacia Ripensis*.

### **Ivo Topalilov** “The Cult of the Relics in Late Antique Thrace”

The cult of the relics of the Christian saints in the 4<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> centuries in Thrace is one of the problems that have escaped the attention of scholars so far. This is unsurprising, given the seeming paucity of data at our disposal. Although scarce, however, the written sources and the results of archaeological excavations make it possible not only to reveal basic specifics of the dynamics of the emergence and development of this phenomenon, but also to reveal its importance for the development of the phenomenon as a whole in the Empire.

### **Dubravka Preradović** “Stato della ricerca sui culti e l’iconografia dei martiri paleocristiani di *Singidunum*/Belgrado (Ermilo, Stratonico, Montano, Maxima, Donato, Venusto, Ermogene, Fortunato)”

Negli ultimi anni si è registrato un crescente interesse della comunità scientifica per le questioni riguardanti i martiri paleocristiani originari di *Singidunum*, il che si lega anche alla rinascita dei loro culti nella chiesa locale. Il Congresso rappresenterà l’opportunità di approfondire le conoscenze di questi santi, ergo comprendere lo stato della ricerca sui testi agiografici e sulla loro iconografia, con l’obiettivo di tracciare le linee guida per le future indagini. Tra i martiri paleocristiani originari di Belgrado, un posto di rilievo è occupato dal diacono Ermilo e dal suo carceriere Stratonico, gli unici santi che hanno subito il martirio a *Singidunum*. Una raccolta di articoli scientifici dedicati a loro, pubblicata nel 2022, ha dimostrato che, nonostante le fonti mo-

deste, è possibile stabilire un solido dossier agiografico e iconografico per questi due santi.

Provenienti da *Singidunum* erano anche i santi che hanno subito il martirio a Sirmio nella primavera del 304 d. C. Tra di essi vi sono il presbitero Montano e sua moglie Maxima, nonché un gruppo di martiri, fra i quali Donato e Fortunato, diaconi della chiesa di *Singidunum*. Nello stesso giorno, probabilmente, fu martirizzato anche Venusto, fratello di Donato, e il lector di nome (H)Ermogene, come si legge nella *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* [BHL 2309], che recentemente ha avuto due edizioni critiche (M. Cerno 2008; H. Tamas 2022).

Una particolare attenzione sarà dedicata allo studio delle traslazioni delle reliquie dei suddetti santi, che evidenziano la posizione peculiare della diocesi di Pannonia, collocata tra la Chiesa di Costantinopoli e quella di Roma. Mentre le reliquie di Ermilo e Stratonico furono trasferite a Costantinopoli, dove godettero di una singolare venerazione, quelle dei martiri di Sirmio furono traslate nell'area nord-adriatica, ad Aquileia e a Cividale del Friuli (Donato, Fortunato, Venusto, Ermogene), è, secondo una tradizione tardiva, a Roma (Montano e Maxima).

**Marco Muresu** “Modani e matrici per la produzione di oggetti decorati con motivi cristiani. Caratteristiche, diffusione, utilizzo (sec. V–VII)”

Il contributo focalizza l'attenzione sui modani e le matrici per la produzione in serie di manufatti in metallo decorati con scene cristiane, ottenibili rispettivamente tramite la realizzazione di una lamina impressa o la tecnica di fusione a cera persa. Lo studio della diffusione in area mediterranea di tali oggetti entro un arco cronologico compreso tra il V e il VII secolo, condotto da una prospettiva archeologica, è in grado di aprire a interessanti prospettive di ricerca legate non solo all'ottenimento delle risorse materiali, ai processi artigianali, alle dinamiche di diffusione dei prodotti finiti e alle caratteristiche della relativa 'clientela'; da un punto di vista specificamente 'cristiano', infatti, modani e matrici rappresentano l'esito della scelta e della circolazione di iconografie, culti, simboli della devozione e bisogni di mercato 'specializzato' (es. il cd. 'artigianato ecclesiastico'), di cui si vuole tracciare le caratteristiche principali attraverso la disamina aggiornata dell'edito e l'apporto dato dalle ricerche più recenti.

**Marcello Cabriolu** “Il capitello delle facce di San Simplicio in Olbia – iconografia”

Recenti studi e pubblicazioni hanno permesso di rilevare, all'interno della Basilica di San Simplicio in Olbia – SS, sopra una delle colonne che separano la nave centrale dalle navatelle laterali, un capitello di forma quadrangolare già conosciuto in letteratura. Il capitello, registrato all'interno del Catalogo Generale dei Beni Culturali, è collocato a coronare una colonna posta a circa un metro dall'antica sede di un ambone in legno. Tale elemento, la colonna, è il quarto sostegno a destra, partendo dall'abside, su cui si imposta il claristorio che divide la nave centrale dalla navatella settentrionale, ovvero la navatella dell'epistola. Il capitello, o meglio la scultura ricavata dall'antico capitello, dovrebbe essere incluso nella prima fase costruttiva, quella che vedeva una piccola chiesa molto più corta della Basilica attuale, realizzata, secondo il Delogu, attorno all'XI secolo ma, a ragione di dati mensiocronologici, secondo l'opinione di chi scrive, tale edificazione potrebbe essere più antica.

**Dejan Dželebdžić, Dragana Dimitrijević** “Why did the Early Christian Authors Often Attack the Pagan Statuary?”

In Early Christian literature, a considerable number of both Greek and Latin sources are devoted to polemics against pagans, i.e. their beliefs and religious practices (e. g. *Contra gentes* by St. Athanasius of Alexandria). One of the major characteristics of these treatises is numerous attacks against the sculptures of pagan gods and goddesses. The reason why this well-known phenomenon still remains understudied probably lies in the fact that it is commonly understood as a literary *topos*. In this paper, we shall try to shed new light on the question, analysing the role the sculptures played in pagan cults and mysteries and Christian reactions, which varied from arguing against to destroying them.

**Giovanna Ferri** “Scolpire per i santi. Per un primo censimento degli arredi liturgici dei santuari cimiteriali di Roma”

L'intervento si propone di analizzare gli elementi di decorazione scultorea che, nei santuari cimiteriali del suburbio romano, contribuiscono a segnalare e a inquadrare le tombe venerate, rientrando a pieno titolo nei progetti di monumentalizzazione promossi dalla gerarchia ecclesiastica.

A partire dalla metà del IV secolo e con la progressiva diffusione del fenomeno del pellegrinaggio, infatti, in questi spazi vengono attivate nuove funzionalità, connesse allo svolgimento di cerimoniali e riti che ne testimoniano un crescente rilievo in ambito liturgico, prevedendo anche riconfigurazioni più o meno significative dal punto di vista dell'impatto spaziale.

Oltre al potenziamento degli apparati pittorici e all'inserimento di mense e altari, si possono individuare, spesso in condizioni frammentarie, elementi che suggeriscono la presenza di recinti marmorei e dispositivi di delimitazione, come plutei, pilastrini, transenne e cancelli. L'analisi delle coordinate iconografiche e tecniche di tali elementi si pone come scopo quello di restituirne la perduta relazione con la realtà per la quale erano stati originariamente concepiti e di seguire un tracciato stilistico sicuramente ricco e composito, che trova confronti puntuali nella produzione scultorea posta in opera nei monumenti del sopraterra.

Confrontati con le testimonianze archeologiche del contesto di rinvenimento, quando è noto, e di conservazione, ma anche con le informazioni offerte dalle fonti scritte, questi manufatti possono fornire elementi di novità nella ricostruzione delle forme di sviluppo monumentale e nella ricomposizione degli assetti decorativi e della pluralità morfologica dei santuari sotterranei del suburbio di Roma tra Tarda Antichità e Alto Medioevo.

**Chiara Sanmori** “Un frammento inedito di sarcofago dal territorio di *Marcellianum*”

L'insediamento di *Marcellianum* (*Regio III Lucania et Bruttium*) sede, come ricorda Cassiodoro nelle “*Variae*” di un'importante fiera e sede diocesana attestata storicamente per la prima volta in un'epistola

di papa Gelasio I (492-496) in cui viene citato il presule Sabino, è stato localizzato nei pressi del celebre battistero di San Giovanni in fonte databile al V-VI secolo.

L'individuazione di questo frammento inedito di sarcofago di tarda età costantiniana nell'attuale centro di Padula consente di aggiungere un tassello significativo al quadro ancora poco definito delle trasformazioni di questo territorio in epoca tardo antica e medievale, rappresentando, al momento la più antica testimonianza dell'esistenza nell'area di una comunità cristiana, della sua vitalità e dei suoi rapporti con Roma quale centro di produzione di questo tipo di manufatti.

**Andela Gavrilović** “Contextual Analysis of the Term “Holy Sion” on the Polycandela of the Sion Treasure (mid-6<sup>th</sup> century)”

The paper examines the meaning and context of the term “Holy Sion”, recorded on several rectangular polycandela of the Sion Treasure (mid-6<sup>th</sup> century). It deals with one of the most luxurious and important surviving church treasures of Early Byzantine art, which is usually referred to in the literature as the “Sion Treasure” because of the term “Holy Sion” mentioned above. The discovery of these items is wrapped in a considerable veil of mystery, and today the treasure is principally divided between the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, Washington, D. C., and the Archaeological Museum, Antalya, while a few objects are dispersed in private collections in England and Switzerland.

The objects examined in the paper include rectangular polycandela from the Dumbarton Oaks collection (DO 63. 35. 5; DO 63. 36. 6; DO 63. 36. 7; DO 65. 1. 8; DO 65. 1. 7) and the Antalya Museum (Antalya no. 1085; 1078, 1084, 1079, 1081). On the basis of the visual motifs surrounding the inscription “Holy Sion” and especially on the appearance of the monogram with the name and title of the high-ranking cleric, Bishop *Eutychianos*, who commissioned the rectangular polycandela and other objects of this treasure, a different possible interpretation of the term “Holy Sion” is offered than those mentioned in previous literature. Furthermore, this term is also analysed in the conceptual context of other inscriptions on the polycandela of this treasure, especially with regard to the specific context in which it appears within the invocation and in light of the relationship between the invocation and the function of the polycandela as liturgical objects. This

paper contributes to a better understanding of Early Christian silver objects, by shedding light on the function and use of the polycandela in both liturgical and everyday life.

**Sara Tacconi** “Le ‘fibbie reliquiario’: l’influenza della religione cristiana su oggetti nati per l’abbigliamento”

Il contributo ha l’obiettivo di fornire un quadro generale sulla tematica delle fibbie reliquiario di età bizantina, rinvenute in alcune regioni del Mediterraneo e databili tra il VI e l’VII secolo. In particolare modo, si vuole porre l’attenzione su alcuni aspetti che riguardano la morfologia, la decorazione e l’eventuale presenza di iscrizioni. Tale studio, infatti, potrebbe fornire fondamentali informazioni per individuare i possessori e i produttori di tali oggetti e per ricostruire le dinamiche culturali che hanno portato all’utilizzo di questo accessorio nato come complemento di abbigliamento, ma rivestito di una forte connotazione religiosa e tutelare e forse destinato ad una diversa funzione.

La protezione data dalla presenza delle reliquie all’interno del repero, ad esempio, è ulteriormente corroborata dalla scelta di motivi iconografici che amplificano la valenza profilattica della fibbia. Inoltre, tramite la comparazione con manufatti simili di ambito germanico, si vogliono proporre nuove possibili chiavi di lettura sui diversi livelli di interazione anche nella sfera religiosa tra il mondo bizantino e quello germanico.

**Helena Tumova, Enrico Cirelli, Judit Zöldföldi** “Provenance of Marble Artifacts in Late Antique Ravenna as an Indicator of Cultural Exchange”

This contribution presents the interim results of an international project aimed at determining the provenance of white marble artifacts and architectural elements in the Late Antique basilicas of Ravenna, *sedes imperii* of the Western Roman Empire. The preliminary results of the Czech-Italian-German project confirm the importance of statistically significant data of the interdisciplinary (archaeological, geochemical, and petrographical) approach to white marble artifacts and their evaluation within the framework of the Late Antique Mediterranean *koiné*. The results of the analyses have challenged previous as-



sumptions about the origin of individual artifacts from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, in particular sarcophagi and *ornatus basilicae*, and have led to discussion and revision of their proclaimed eastern provenance. The results were compared with stylistic analyses of presumed imported, prefabricated and locally produced artifacts.

**Ruth E. Kolarik** “Sculpture from the Episcopal Basilica at *Stobi*: State of the Question”

The sculptures from the Episcopal Basilica at *Stobi*, many of which are in the National Museum of Belgrade, have prompted much discussion since their discovery in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The unique nave capitals with their deeply undercut, freely composed designs of animals and plants are particularly noteworthy. Saria and Egger dated them to c. 500, while others, Nikolajević, Wiseman *et al*, favoured an earlier date of around the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century. Recent studies of the marble by Niewöhner have established that it came from a quarry in the region at Sivac, although he dates the sculpture to the late 5<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the scholarship does not take into account the results of recent research. To date, two distinct construction phases have been noted in the basilica, one probably in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century, the second, after significant damage probably caused by an earthquake (Pavlovski and Blaževska), a decade or more later. Study of the cuts in the north stylobate blocks by Snively established that the second phase nave colonnade had larger more closely spaced bases than the first, necessitating the moving of the barrier slabs to the aisles. Thus, the basilica sustained significant damage that involved rebuilding the colonnades. It is now necessary to ask to which construction phase do the capitals belong? Is it possible that some of them might have been reused from the first phase, while others are later? This study will also raise the issue of the relationships between provincial centres like *Stobi* and cosmopolitan centres. For example, where did the *Stobi* sculptors come from? A revised date necessitates a fresh look at capitals from the early 6<sup>th</sup> century and how the *Stobi* capitals relate to those from Proconnesian workshops.

**Martina Procaccini, Lorenzo Turini** “Reuse in the Middle Ages. Reflections on the sarcophagus with erotes in the Church of Santa Caterina d’Alessandria in Pisa”

The following contribution was created to present a fragmentary marble sarcophagus, dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, preserved under the high altar in the church of Santa Caterina d’Alessandria in Pisa, currently devoid of scientific studies. The work aims to restore the original iconographic scheme characterised in the centre by the clipped portrait of the deceased and on the sides two cupids (Erotes) with torches facing downwards, altered in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. This objective was achieved through comparisons with other coeval sarcophagi present in the Pisan and Urbe areas, finally proposing a more limited dating of the specimen. Ultimately, the study tries to reconstruct the movements of the marble case, starting from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, inside the church.

**Vratislav Zervan** “The Iconographic Repertoire of the *transennae* Fragments in Central Europe from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages”

The VEGA project 2/0082/24 “ The clergy in the choir, and the people outside the choir: Hierarchisation of the Sacral Space in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages” hosted by the Art Research Centre of the Slovak Academy of Sciences aims to analyse the art-historical (especially architectural), but also social and liturgical dimensions of sacred space in Late Antiquity and in the Middle Ages in Central Europe. Special attention is paid to the architectural structures that separated the clergy from the lay people or the men from the women. Altar and choir screens were often visual walls that had an important role in the liturgy and were the scene of various forms of para-liturgy or legal acts. The goal of the paper is to catalogue the fragmentarily preserved ornamental and pictorial decorations of architectural elements and archaeological objects found in Central Europe from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, which were probably part of such screens. The paper will attempt to reconstruct the possible purpose of the sponsors and artists. We will compare the motifs depicted on the objects with the rich material from the Adriatic and Mediterranean regions.

**Zoja Bojić** “The Shellal Mosaic: an Interpretation”

The Australian War Memorial in Canberra is today, since 1941, home to the Shellal mosaic, an Early Byzantine (561-562) floor mosaic from Palestine. Brought to Australia towards the end of the First World War, the mosaic is part of the public collection (although it is believed that some smaller segments of the composition remain elsewhere). It is of the type known as inhabited vine trellis.

This presentation aims to discuss two topics. The first one is a brief comparison of the style of the Shellal mosaic with some mosaic segments of the same provenance and type held in other locations in Australia. The second topic is focused on an interpretation of the mosaic and aims to contribute to our better understanding of its significance.

**Mariza Tsiapali** “Mosaics of an Early Byzantine villa in Oraeokastro, Thessaloniki, Greece”

In 2023, excavations were carried out on the west side of a new field, next to the well-known villa in Palaeokastro, Oraeokastro. In this area, in the previous years, the remains of a workshop had been revealed. At the same time, the excavation works brought to light several new rooms and constructions. Most of their walls were built in the same way as those of the main part of the villa. Some walls were also used by the workshop.

The rooms A2 and B2 both have mosaic floors. Three decorative borders run around the central section forming the framework. In room A2, the outer border includes triangles, while the interior has an interlaced ornament. In room B2, only the middle border includes a chequerboard ornament. The central section is divided into many panels. The mosaics feature geometrical and linear motifs, such as extended crosslets, rosettes and a running dog ornament formed into a circle, interlaced ornament, swastikas and circles.

Two other rooms in the area A3 are paved with tessellated mosaics. The north room bears a hexagon. A border of squares and triangles runs around the central square, which is covered with a Solomon's knot and interlaced ornament. The mosaic of the south room is in bad condition. We discern semi pyramids covered with interlaced ornament on the top.

The dominant colours of the stone *tesserae* are red, yellow, blue, black and white. They are preserved in rather good condition. They are dated from the late 6<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The excavation is currently ongoing and we anticipate that further important elements will be brought to light.

**Rossana Martorelli** Souvenir di pellegrinaggio: produzione e commercio di oggetti a memoria del viaggio devozionale

La consuetudine di vendere oggetti presso i luoghi di culto affonda le sue origini in età precristiana (ad esempio le statue della dea nei templi di Artemide) e perdura nei secoli successivi, legata alla nascita dei santuari martiriali e non. La proliferazione di itinerari di pellegrinaggio, poi, incoraggia i viaggi dei fedeli presso i luoghi venerati, sia a scopo devozionale che salutare, e il ricordo del percorso effettuato, reale e spirituale, si mantiene nell'oggetto tangibile. Manufatti in ceramica, vetro e metallo recano immagini collegate al contesto, come ad esempio le ampole di San Mena in Egitto.

Il presente contributo intende tracciare nelle linee generali questo aspetto della “vita quotidiana” degli antichi cristiani, partendo dalla produzione (e dai luoghi, quando individuabili) per giungere al commercio e alla diffusione, nel quadro più generale di un artigianato collegato specificatamente all'ambito ecclesiastico e religioso.

Lo sguardo viene rivolto all'intero territorio dell'impero romano nel IV secolo, poi suddiviso in regni barbarici nel V, sino alla restaurazione bizantina e ai primi secoli del nuovo stato, tenendo come limite ultimo il VII secolo.

**Jelena Erdeljan** “Dyonisiac Motifs from a Collection of Coptic Textiles from Belgrade”

The Museum of Applied Art in Belgrade is in possession of a little-known collection of Coptic textiles. This paper intends to present the mentioned collection to the academic public and, in particular, the wealth and variations of Dyonisiac motifs found on the pieces of textile

thereof. All pieces of Coptic textile from Belgrade display a number of iconographic subjects typical of Late Antique Egypt, such as the Dionysiac thiasus and other subjects related to Dionysus – vines, lions, panthers and other animals, as well as the so-called Coptic horseman. They are typical of the visual idiom that survived from the classical period into Late Antique Coptic Egypt and took on new meanings in the context of religious and cultural syncretism.

**Carla Salvetti** “Santi, trame, tessuti. Frammenti “copti” da collezione privata”

Fin dal XVII secolo e soprattutto tra l'Ottocento e gli inizi del Novecento un notevole numero di reperti tessili venne portato alla luce negli scavi effettuati in più località dell'Egitto – ove, grazie alle peculiari condizioni climatiche, si erano conservati in buone condizioni. Tali materiali andarono a costituire importanti nuclei espositivi nei Musei europei di arti applicate.

Ritrovati per lo più in contesti funerari, questi tessuti, ricchi di decori e ricami, furono spesso ritagliati in frammenti da collezionisti e antiquari per immetterli sul mercato, sempre più interessato a questo genere di reperti. Identificati con il nome di “tessuti copti” fanno parte dell'abbigliamento o dell'arredo caratteristico delle comunità cristiane dell'Egitto e provengono da fabbriche locali attive tra il IV e il IX secolo d. C.

Anche i frammenti tessili oggetto della comunicazione appartengono ad una collezione che, al pari di altri nuclei presenti in vari musei nel mondo, si può far risalire ad una donazione o ad un acquisto sul mercato antiquario intorno alla fine dell'Ottocento.

Da questa ricca collezione sono stati estrapolati solo alcuni lacerti con decorazioni di carattere antropomorfo, tipologia particolare di questa tarda produzione tessile, sensibilmente condizionata dalle istanze e dall'immaginario della comunità cristiana. Episodi testamentari o singole figure di santi e/o di monaci venerati nel Mediterraneo orientale o nello stesso Egitto sono infatti puntualmente rintracciabili nelle scene ricamate o, più semplicemente, nei clavi e negli orbicoli che ornavano queste vesti, spesso destinate a fruizione ecclesiastica.

L'appartenenza ad una collezione formatasi per acquisizioni non documentate, lascia aperti, per i frammenti in questione, due fondamentali interrogativi: l'inquadramento cronologico e il contesto di provenienza. Il presente contributo intende formulare alcune ipotesi e proposte per cercare, almeno in parte, di ricostruire i connotati specifici di questi materiali.

**Julia Amossé-Reveret** “Reliques et aménagements liturgiques dans l'Antiquité tardive en Bulgarie”

L'homme par sa nature même d'être sensoriel a ressenti le besoin probablement face à sa peur de la mort et de faire face à Dieu au moment du Jugement dernier d'être aidé par des êtres d'exception s'étant sacrifié pour la foi et la Gloire de Dieu. Le culte des saints ayant commencé autour de leurs corps a nécessité en raison de son succès et de sa diffusion, la mise en place des ossements saints dans un contenant et dans un édifice approprié pour les protéger.

En raison de l'écoulement de leur sang et leur souffrance, les fidèles vouèrent un grand intérêt à ces saints-martyrs, intercesseurs entre le monde terrestre et le monde spirituel. Cette nouvelle perception engendra une course aux reliques et de leur translation entre leur lieu d'origine et des édifices d'accueil.

L'emplacement des reliques pouvait avoir différents aspects, la pratique la plus courante étant sa mise en place sous l'autel. Si la depositio des reliques sous l'autel était loin d'être systématique pendant la période paléochrétienne et largement discuté pendant l'iconoclasme, il faudra attendre le Concile de Nicée II de 787 pour confirmer son obligation en Orient. Cette étude qui prendra en considération le territoire actuel de la Bulgarie de manière à ouvrir notre perception sur divers diocèses sera consacrée principalement sur les différents types d'aménagements mis en place pour leur préservation – fosses d'autel, cryptes ou encore autel sur caisson – du milieu du IV<sup>e</sup> au début du VII<sup>e</sup> siècle, et non sur l'objet en lui-même. Celle-ci permettra ainsi d'observer, malgré leur complexité, l'évolution des pratiques liturgiques ou des particularités locales.

**Teodora Georgievova** “Visual Expression of Private Female Devotion in the Area of Rome between the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> Century”

As Christianity slowly spread through the Mediterranean area and instilled itself as the only endorsed religion of the Roman Empire by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, martyrs, Christ, and Mother of God replaced *Lares* and other deities on private altars and apotropaic amulets. The important role women played in religious observance in the pre-Christian Roman Empire, while not entirely wiped out from the public religious life (arguments for which, especially for the period after the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, have been heatedly discussed by generations of scholars from the 1970s onwards), was relegated to the private female space. The private devotion may have been communal, as illustrated by the existence of female religious communities formed around the *matronae* following St. Jerome in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, which kick-started the female monastic movement in Rome. In my paper, I delve into the visual means that devoted women utilised to demonstrate their faith and which may have been used as aids in private liturgy. My focus is on the few material remains attesting such devotion, namely the votive medallion from the Vatican Museums (inv. n. MV. 60539. 0. 0) and the wall painting inside the oratory under the church of San Giovanni e Paolo, in Rome. By exploring the insight on the use and meaning of votive medallions for Early Christian private devotion, brought to the discussion by archaeology and cultural anthropology, and the primary sources attesting the devotional practices of the female religious communities, I uncover the differences and points of contact between the visual and ritual manifestation of individual and group female devotion in Early Christian Rome.

**SESSION: Novelties (Balkans)****Domagoj Tončinić, Vinka Matijević** “Newly Discovered Early Christian Archaeological Site in the Hinterland of *Salona*”

Since 2013, systematic archeological excavations have been carried out at a previously unknown site in the village of Velić, located in the hinterland of ancient *Salona*, the Early Christian centre of the Eastern Adriatic coast. To date, the remains of a rectangular ground

plan building with a semi-circular apse and two vaulted tombs have been documented there.

According to preliminary analyses, the object can be roughly dated to the period of Late Antiquity and interpreted as an Early Christian memorial chapel. In parallel with ongoing archaeological excavations, archaeological surface surveys and mapping of the surrounding terrain have been implemented. Both methods have confirmed additional objects in the vicinity of the memorial chapel. However, the greatest research challenges from the start were the minimal number of documented finds, the lack of any mention in the ancient written sources and older scientific publications, and the lack of clear analogies in the Roman province of *Dalmatia*.

Apart from finding the closest possible analogies, one of the directions of the site study that emerges is to consider the position of Velić in the context of the previously documented Early Christian sites in the hinterland of *Salona*. In this sense, it is a very significant fact that the site lies along the ancient *Salona – Argentaria* road, which led from *Salona* to *Tilurium/Pons Tiluri* and further to the interior of the Roman province of *Dalmatia*. Given the importance of this road, it may also be worth considering our site in the context of the main ancient communications.

While we are hoping that questions about its precise dating and interpretation will be answered with the continuation of archaeological excavations, this contribution to the 18<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Christian Archaeology brings an overview of the Early Christian sites documented in the hinterland of *Salona*, more precisely, in the vicinity of the *Salona – Tilurium – Argentaria* and *Salona – Tilurium – Narona* roads. Besides a basic overview of Early Christian sacral objects, it will consider the typologies of these archaeological remains, their purpose, and possible ancient substrate or mentions in the sources, as well as influences from the capital city. Such an approach, we hope, could help us to gain a better insight into the newly discovered Early Christian archaeological site in the hinterland of *Salona*.



**Božana Maletić** “Churches and Fortifications in Late Antique *Dalmatia*: Liturgical Space and Architectural Features”

The flourishing of fortified architecture in late antique *Dalmatia* represents a new important landmark recognisable across its varied topography. Only some of those fortifications have present an Early Christian church inside or in their immediate surroundings. Except for their preservation state and the discontinuity of archaeological research in the territories pertaining to the Roman province, these churches seem to be quite different from each other. Some characterise simplicity, while others show rather complex planimetry and architectural features, which imply an especially interesting use of liturgical space and often allow us to obtain striking information regarding the population in their surroundings. Although most of them need new excavations or are completely inaccessible, the most prominent cases will be analysed and considered regarding their contexts and all the factors that might have influenced some particular liturgical practice in a precise area. This kind of approach, somehow already experimented with in individual cases, has never been applied on a larger scale, despite the abundance of liturgical sculptures at many of these sites, and this will represent the main task of this presentation.

**Josipa Baraka Perica** “La topografia cristiana dell’*ager Iadertinus*”

L’*ager centuriatus* della città di Zadar, l’antica colonia *Iader*, scoperto dopo la seconda guerra mondiale sulla base dello studio delle foto aeree realizzate durante i bombardamenti degli anni 1943 e 1944, è uno dei meglio conosciuti e meglio conservati della *Dalmatia* romana. Nonostante sia ben conosciuto e conservato, per lo sviluppo recente della fotografia aerea e della tecnologia in generale, si è imposta la necessità di uno studio nuovo e approfondito indirizzato verso i fenomeni della sua persistenza nel corso di tutte le epoche.

In questa occasione un particolare interesse sarà indirizzato verso i cambiamenti intercorsi nella tarda antichità, soprattutto di quelli legati alle trasformazioni occorse nei processi legati alla cristianizzazione.

In base allo studio delle foto aeree della seconda guerra mondiale e di quelle moderne, in combinazione con le ricognizioni arche-

ologiche in situ, lo studio del materiale archeologico conosciuto e dei documenti d'archivio, sarà presentata un'approfondita topografia cristiana dell'*ager iadertinus* che offrirà una più completa idea sul primo cristianesimo, tra pratiche liturgiche e vita quotidiana, di una delle più importanti diocesi paleocristiane dalmate.

**Ivan Basić** “The Archiepiscopal Title of the Metropolitan of *Salona* in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Centuries”

Whereas the early church history of the city of *Salona*, in its capacity as a metropolitan centre of the province of *Dalmatia*, is well-researched, its subsequent acquisition of the archiepiscopal title received markedly less scholarly attention. Although the archiepiscopal title of this churchman is well-documented in both literary and epigraphic records alike from the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century onwards, more serious attempts to explain the origin, role, and significance of this title and, above all, the reasons for its sudden appearance in ca. 500, have remained unexplained. The development of the archdiocesan structure in *Dalmatia*, headed by *Salona*, can be attested beginning in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century (*terminus post quem non*); on the other hand, the title of ‘*archiepiscopus*’ was added to the previously established office of ‘*metropolitanus*’ a whole century later. The two were not synonyms, but have sometimes been treated as such in historiography, in turn leading to several terminological misunderstandings. Here, possible explanations and a recontextualisation of this abrupt introduction of the new ecclesiastical title will be offered.

**Morana Čaušević-Bully, Sébastien Bully** “Programme ANR MONACORALE: archéologie et topographie des monastères précoces – présumés – de l’espace insulaire et côtier dalmate”

Le programme MONACORALE-MONasterium CORpus Adriaticorum et Locorum Ecclesiasticorum, soutenu par l’Agence nationale de la recherche française (ANR), réunit depuis 2021 des chercheurs français, croates et italiens, archéologues, historiens, historiens de l’art, archéomètres, géomaticiens, etc.

Les recherches visent à établir un corpus des complexes monastiques et ecclésiastiques du littoral et des îles croates (Dalmatie et Istrie)

entre le IV<sup>e</sup> et le XII<sup>e</sup> siècle à travers une approche pluridisciplinaire combinant les données archéologiques, paléoenvironnementales, spatiales, topographiques, les sources littéraires, archivistiques, épigraphiques etc.

Dans un premier volet, cette communication visera à présenter de manière synthétique les principaux résultats des recherches et des prospections sur un corpus d'une quarantaine de sites à travers une documentation archéologique renouvelée (relevés topographiques, prospections géophysiques, datations archéométriques etc.). Une première catégorisation des sites visera à reconnaître de potentiels complexes monastiques entre le IV<sup>e</sup> et le VIII<sup>e</sup> s.

Dans un second volet, nous nous consacrerons aux résultats de la fouille programmée pluriannuelle du complexe ecclésial de Martinšćica, sur l'île de Cres. Les récentes recherches permettent aujourd'hui de proposer qu'une grande église paléochrétienne de plan cruciforme, datée de la fin du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle, fût construite en marge d'une villa maritime antique. En plusieurs états successifs, l'église a été dotée de nombreuses annexes, dont un baptistère, une citerne, une sacristie et un espace funéraire privilégié avec des tombes en *formae*. Dans une seconde phase datée des VII<sup>e</sup>-VIII<sup>e</sup> s., des modifications architecturales du complexe ecclésial paléochrétien, comme de nouveaux dispositifs artisanaux, économiques et domestiques, traduiraient l'installation d'une communauté monastique.

### **Mirjana Sanader, Iva Kaić, Mirna Cvetko** “Reflections on the Adriatic Island of Čiovo as a Place of Exile”

The Late Antique literary sources (*Cod. Theod.* 16. 5. 53; *Amm. Marc.* 22. 3. 6 and 28. 1. 23) mention the Adriatic island of Čiovo as a place to which the Romans sent exiled heretics. The island of Čiovo is situated just a few nautical miles from the well-known ancient Greek and Roman city of *Tragurion*. The aim of this work is to shed light on the possible reasons why this island was chosen as a place of exile for alleged heretics or for clerics who came into conflict with the imperial power. In order to obtain the best possible results, we will consider not only literary sources, but also available data on the geographical features of the island and its surrounding small islets as well as possible archaeological evidence of Early Christian activity on the island of Čiovo.

**Saša Čaval, Luka Škerjanec, Anja Ragolič, Edin Bujak, Adisa Lepić, Monika Milosavljević** “The Unknown & Unexpected: The Early Christian Centre in Milavići, BiH”

Milavići, a village cemetery near Berkovići in BiH, has a burial continuity of at least 800 years. With contemporary burials and over 400 medieval stećci tombstones, this cemetery also bears the toponym Crkvina, immediately catching an archaeologist’s attention. According to a local folktale, a Gypsy mother was washing children’s clothes, and as she put them to dry on the walls of the already abandoned church, the church mysteriously disappeared. It may have disappeared for several centuries, but it reappeared in 2023.

This paper presents a discovery of an Early Christian centre, which includes a large multiphase church complex with a well-preserved cross-shaped baptistery. The earliest building phase dates to the Late Roman period, according to preliminary scientific analyses. Later burials indicate that knowledge of the sacral building in the medieval period did exist, but the church was no longer in use. Despite the lack of written records, the structures’ dimensions indicate that this was a significant religious hub when it was in use. This discovery is of great importance for Bosnia and Herzegovina, far beyond simply adding another site to the list.

**Nicolay Sharankov** “Epigraphic Evidence of Early Christianity in Thrace”

The paper discusses the early inscriptional evidence of a Christian presence in Thrace, as well as the influence of Christianity on epigraphic habits during the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. The first traces of the new religion are found in funerary inscriptions and graffiti – usually connected with persons coming from the East, – however they were often hidden or encrypted so that people not acquainted with Christianity could rarely understand them. The comparison of epigraphic evidence with hagiographic sources also provides important information on the development of the Christianity of Thrace. During the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, Christian formulas and symbols are found side by side with pagan ones; even similar methods of concealment like isopsephy are attested both in Christian texts and in some connected with Eastern cults. After Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, a

sudden and abrupt change in epigraphic habits is observed – old types and common formulas disappeared to be replaced by an entirely new, although less rich in quantity, spectrum of inscriptions.

**Ralitza Bazaytova** “Relationship and Mutual Influences of Early Christian Centres in the Balkans: Public Knowledge about Archaeological Sites Connected with Historic Memories for St. Niketas of *Remesiana* as an Example and Motivation for Today’s Transborder Cultural Corridors”

Public knowledge about archaeological sites connected with historic memories of St. Niketas of *Remesiana* is an example and motivation for today’s transborder cultural corridors. As municipal and regional projects in Orthodox Balkan countries usually aim at strictly planned tourist developments by encouraging local investments over short time spans there is a need for larger public education of Balkan societies based on positive historical knowledge about revived archaeological remains from the epoch of Early Christian centres in today’s Serbia, Bulgaria, the Republic of North Macedonia & Greece. The scientific texts about archaeological finds regarding Early Christian centres in the Balkans from the time of the apostle Paul and Saint Lydia until Saint Niketas of *Remesiana* needs a specially adopted narrative, a new story to be told for larger groups of modern Balkan nations, mainly with the aim of reviving the ideas of Early Christianity for spiritual and cultural unity and for addressing issues regarding peace.

**Jasmina Davidović** “The Rise and Fall of Early Christian *Sirmium*”

*Sirmium* entered the Early Christian world with a bang at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century with extremely harsh persecutions of Christian believers. There is evidence in Christian writings of the later age that there were more than 200 people killed in the town just because they were strongly dedicated to Christianity. Many of them became martyrs and had churches built in their names. With the introduction of the Edict of Milan, this terrible situation abruptly turned into a very favourable one for the followers of Christian beliefs and *Sirmium*, as a sacred ground, became the place where church councils were held and produced certain regulations for the Christian development in

this part of the world. As it happens, *Sirmium* was also a place where emperors would stay, so everything that happened in the town had a great impact on the rest of the Roman world throughout the 4<sup>th</sup> century. However, this power to lead was quickly lost with the acceptance of, as it happened, the wrong side in the Christian dispute regarding understanding the essence of Christ's existence, by siding with the Arians. This brought about the end of the glorious Early Christian *Sirmium*.

**Davide Bianchi** “Late Antique Casket Mounts of the Upper Pannonian Provinces: a New Research Project

This paper addresses the visual decoration of Late Antique wooden caskets covered with richly adorned metal sheets, which were widely found in the Upper Danube provinces (in particular *Noricum Ripense*, *Pannonia Prima* and *Pannonia Valeria*). It will offer preliminary considerations on the pictorial motifs that constitute part of a new research project on these caskets, based at the Austrian Archaeological Institute-Austrian Academy of Sciences and financially supported by a grant from the Austrian Science Fund (FWF).

Particular attention will be paid to some composite iconographic cycles on casket mounts in which images belonging to the classical repertoire are situated alongside scenes from the Old and New Testament. The core of the new analysis are the selection criteria and symbolism of the images as well as their representative and iconographic motifs. From this perspective, this initial investigation will address how the arrangement of scenes and characters on similar depictions - specifically in the funerary painting of the Roman catacombs, on Early Christian sarcophagi and on gold glasses - was conceived on multiple semantic levels.

The careful examination of the decorations of Late Roman caskets from the Upper Danube provinces reveals not only their decorative schemes and iconographic motifs, but also how they reflect the richness and variety of religious ideas, the perception of the sacred, the rituals and social customs of the Late Roman populace and, lastly, the forms and modes of Christianisation of these frontier regions.

**Krisztina Hudák, Levente Nagy** “Centres and Peripheries in the Metropolis of *Sirmium*”

Our paper offers new analysis and aspects of the history and archaeology of the Hungarian part of Early Christian Pannonia, with special regard to the analogies from the Early Christian monuments of the Serbian part of Pannonia (*Pannonia Secunda*) concerning the Church's historical connections, martyrdom testimonies and works of art.

After investigating the relevant evidence of the possible networks between Christian individuals and communities on the basis of the historical and archaeological sources, we will raise again the question of centres and peripheries in the territory of the Metropolis of *Sirmium*.

**Mladen Jovičić** “New Evidence of Early Christianity at *Viminacium* (Serbia)”

For the Roman provinces of *Moesia Superior* in Antiquity and *Moesia Prima* in Late Antiquity, *Viminacium* served as both their capital and one of their largest cities. The oldest archeological evidence of Christianity in *Viminacium* corresponds to the 4<sup>th</sup> century, when the city was an important Christian centre and an Episcopal see, according to historical sources. Evidence includes many epigraphic inscriptions on brick or marble tombstones, and the Christogram symbol on a pendant, ring, brick, and fresco-painted tomb walls. Additionally, some scholars have assumed that luxurious family mausoleums discovered in city necropolises were used as sacred Christian places, given the lack of solidly verified remains of Christian sacral buildings. More than 14,000 burials discovered throughout decades of extensive archaeological excavation are the main characteristic of the *Viminacium* archaeological site. Four additional tombs that were recently discovered in the city's southern and eastern necropolises offer more evidence that Christians once lived in this area. The discovery of three rings and one pendant with Early Christian symbols—the *chi-rho*, ship, fish and anchor—indicates that these tombs are unquestionably Christian. The 4<sup>th</sup> century dating of the pendant and the first two rings lends weight to the argument that the Christians were significantly present in the city. However, the third ring discovered within a young man's grave

was especially interesting. The ring is dated to the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century and depicts an anchor surrounded by two fish. To date, it is the oldest Christian object from the site. This indicates that Christianity was practiced by the inhabitants of *Viminacium* a full century earlier than previously believed.

**Mihailo Milinković** “Spuren des frühen Christentums in den Bergen des Balkans. Jelica-Gradina und andere Beispiele”

In den befestigten frühbyzantinischen Höhenanlagen in Serbien, Montenegro und umliegenden Gebieten werden Überreste von Kirchen ausgegraben, die über die Verbreitung und bereits Konsolidierung des Christentums in entlegenen Berglandschaften des Balkans im 6. Jh. zeugen - bis zu Höhen von 1800 m ü. M. Oft sind diese Kirchen in schlichter Bauweise erstellt, aber es gibt auch Ausnahmen mit Bauplastik, Inschriften, Freskenbemalung und Mosaikböden. Außer der baulichen Überresten von Kirchen, z. T. mit Baptisterien sind auch andere Funde zu erwähnen: Grablagen, Grabkammern, Reliquiare, Ausstattung und Gegenstände, die sich im alltäglicher profaner Verwendung befanden, aber sichtlich mit einem christlichen Symbol gekennzeichnet waren. Dazu gehören z. B. Schmuck oder Fibeln.

Die Zusammenstellung zeigt nur ein vorläufiges Bild, den Forschungsstand. Es wird von der Annahme ausgegangen, dass sich die Kirchen in diesen befestigten Orten in das übliche Siedlungsbild einfügten, oft an der höchsten dominantesten Stelle innerhalb des Dorfes oder der Anlage mit zentralörtlicher Funktion errichtet.

**Sofija Petković** “The Seven Churches of *Romuliana*”

The archaeological site of Gamzigrad, near Zaječar in eastern Serbia is famous for its complex of the imperial residence *Felix Romuliana* and the memorial – funeral monuments on Magura, built by Emperor Galerius at the beginning of 4<sup>th</sup> century, in the period of the Second Tetrarchy. Life was renewed in the Late Roman *Romuliana* in the last decades of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, 70 years after the imperial residence was abandoned. Evidence of military units in the fortification of *Romuliana* have be discovered in small finds from the layers of the 4th and



5th centuries. The first traces of Christianity in *Romuliana* belonged to this period, among the small finds as well as in church buildings. In the western part of Palace I, the large Basilica I was constructed, probably at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> - beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. After the decline of the settlement in Gamzigrad during the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, caused by invasions of Huns in 441 - 448, the renewed Early Byzantine *Romuliana* started its life at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> -beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, probably during the reign of Emperor Anastasius I (491-518). This phase lasted until the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century and has the most intense cultural layers. The construction of the new Basilica II with a triconchal baptistery, on the location of Basilica I, built during the 5<sup>th</sup> century, could be dated in the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. In the same period or during the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, two more churches were built inside the walls of *Romuliana*: one with a cruciform baptistery in the eastern part of Palace I, above the building from the end of 4<sup>th</sup> century, and another to the west of Galerius' baths. Three more churches were discovered by geophysical prospection outside, to the west of the fortification.

**Alexander Manev** “A Newly Discovered Early Christian Church near *Ratiaria*”

In 2021, rescue excavations took place near Dimovo, in the Vidin region, in the northwest of Bulgaria. The site lays some 12 miles south of *Ratiaria*, the capital of the late antique province of *Dacia Ripensis*. On top of a steep hill, a small fortress was uncovered, which was in use between the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> and the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. In its first building phase, which took place until the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the site served as a provisions storage depot. After an interruption, it was probably used as a refuge for the local population from enemy attacks in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. During this period, a one-nave church was erected, attached to the curtain wall. It was built out of hewn rocks and white mortar. It is possible that bricks or clay were used in the upper section of the walls. Only the lower parts of the building are preserved, allowing for the reconstruction of the temple layout. It had a deep apse to the east, the inside of which was abutted by the masoned base of a bench. The entrance to the church was in the southwest corner. A

gallery made of timber possibly existed along the west and south walls, serving as a narthex. It is unclear how long the temple was in use for, but it was probably destroyed along with the settlement after 580 AD. It served as the parish church for the inhabitants of the fortress throughout its second phase. A few finds from the site can be connected to the Early Christian faith. This is one of the few known Christian temples within the Episcopal see of *Ratiaria*, which was located along the road that connects the city with the major centre at *Naissus*.

**Nadežda Gavrilović Vitas, Vesna Crnoglavac** “Early Christian Heritage at Constantine the Great’s Palatial-Residential Complex in *Mediana*, Niš”

During the archaeological excavations from 2000 to 2007, two Early Christian churches were excavated in the western part of Constantine the Great’s palatial-residential complex at the locality of *Mediana* in Niš, antique *Naissus*. Both churches belong to the earliest architectural types of Christian sacral objects and were used by Christianised Gothic *foederati* settled after 378 in *Mediana*, by imperial order.

The first excavated church was a humble structure with a mosaic of a Christogram and was probably used as a parochial church. The later excavated Early Christian church, only 8 m north of the first discovered church, had a *naos* and apse and was probably used for priests and bishops.

In this paper, we will analyse and interpret the architecture and the most representative finds discovered in two Early Christian churches at *Mediana* and we will also, through known analogies, answer different questions in the context of the use of the objects and their importance in the Early Christian period in antique *Naissus*.

**Vujadin Ivanišević, Ivan Bugarski** “Churches in the Vicinity of *Justiniana Prima*”

The erection of a new 6<sup>th</sup> century metropolis, *Justiniana Prima*, on the site of Caričin Grad, was part of a larger building project in a rural, hilly setting of the western parts of Dacia Mediterranea, which had also included the construction of nearby churches. This huge undertaking can be explained by Emperor Justinian's (527-565) wish to both commemorate his birthplace and his need to strengthen these parts of the empire. This newly-built city assumed the role of an archbishopric see as well as a pilgrimage centre. We know of nine churches within its ramparts, including a unique complex of five churches in a row in the eastern part of the Lower Town. Even after more than a century of archaeological research, some of them have been documented only recently, using LiDAR and GPR surveys.

These survey programmes also provided useful information on subsurface structures in the city's vicinity. Apart from the two previously excavated churches south of Caričin Grad, a large three-nave basilica was recorded in the middle part of the St Elias fort, built on a hill just east of the city. The church occupies almost a quarter of the fortlet's interior; this may well have been a fortified monastery. Another church, apparently three-nave, was recorded to the west of the city, and in addition to the church of the same plan below the Gornje Gradište in Svinjarica, another one was located by LiDAR in the eastern section of this fortification, too. Also particularly visible in the DTM is a single-nave church in the Upper Fort at Gradište in nearby Sekicol. Some 3 km to the south of Caričin Grad is the multi-layered fortification in Radinovac. A church from this hilltop has already been recorded, as well as another in the neighbouring village of Rujkovac, excavated by the locals in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Judging by the LiDAR scan, there were two further churches at the site.

Virtually all of the churches in the vicinity of Caričin Grad were built in *opus mixtum*, and can be thus regarded as parts of the original construction programme for the area of *Justiniana Prima*. After plotting them onto the map, we will study in detail their topographic locations, relationship with 6<sup>th</sup> century settlements, resource areas and communication networks, and suggest their particular roles in the overwhelming Christianisation of this part of the eastern Roman Empire.

**Vladan Zdravković** “Sacral Architecture in the Interior of Late Antique *Prevalis*: a Comparative Study of Church Buildings in the Fortifications of Samograd and Tumbarica near Berane”

While several urban settlements developed in the coastal area of the province of *Prevalis*, its hinterlands remained completely unurbanised. Valuable information about the vast mountainous interior is largely provided by archaeological research. This presentation is based on the results of several successive fieldwork campaigns conducted by a team from the Museum of Polimlje, Berane, Montenegro. Considering its prominent position towards neighbouring *Dalmatia* and valuable ore resources, one may conclude that the imperial administration was present there in full capacity; this was certainly the case during the reign of Justinian I (527-565). The ecclesiastical organisation followed the civil and military ones.

It was structured within dioceses, and the bishoprics were established in cities (*polises*) and lower-ranked settlements. The conditions under which the church centres were founded in northern *Prevalis* greatly influenced the typological choice of church architecture. On this occasion, I will present three churches from two Late Roman forts in the Lim river valley, Samograd and Tumbarice. Most probably, these fortifications had originally been intended to serve as *refugia*. In terms of topography, the Samograd fortlet was easier to access, which may have contributed to its transformation into a well-fortified monastery complex with two churches. On the other hand, it seems that the Tumbarice fort, comprising a more modest church, maintained its role of a strongly defended settlement.

**Irina Achim** “*Tropaeum (Traiani)*, «la ville à basiliques»”

Ville romaine dont le nom rappelle les victoires de l'empereur Trajan contre ses redoutables ennemis au nord du Danube, les Daces, *Tropaeum* est un centre urbain de Scythie assez riche en monuments de culte chrétien, qui suscite l'attention de la communauté scientifique déjà depuis la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle. Au début du XXe siècle, la cité romaine dans la vallée Urluia – connue aussi comme «Pompéi de Dobroudja», revient à l'attention du monde savant grâce à l'infatigable effort de documentation et d'interprétation du Monseigneur R. Netzhhammer, archevêque romano-catholique de Bucarest entre 1905

et 1924. Les paroles de R. Netzhhammer traduisent l'émotion sincère du prélat catholique, mais aussi l'étonnement du scientifique qui s'est penché, pour presque deux décennies, à maintes reprises, sur les antiquités chrétiennes de Dobroudja et, en particulier, sur celles de *Tropaeum*.

L'intervention proposée se place donc sous le signe du vocable de R. Netzhhammer, en s'appuyant sur la documentation archéologique disponible et sur un riche fonds d'archives de fouilles menées entre 1891 et 1909 par G. Tocilescu. La discussion porte dans un premier temps sur la topographie de la ville proto-byzantine et s'attarde ensuite sur les caractéristiques architecturales des églises paléochrétiennes qui constituent la parure monumentale de la cité. Un bref volet est réservé à l'apparat liturgique de ces monuments chrétiens. Les trois axes considérés constituent, en même temps, des réponses aux points d'interrogation sur l'évolution de la ville de sa refondation au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle jusqu'au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle, sur les particularités des monuments chrétiens qui prennent place dans la carte urbaine et sur les différentes influences qui s'exercent sur le patrimoine monumental de la ville durant sa dernière étape d'épanouissement.

**Albena Milanova, Nicolas Beaudry, Georgi Atanasov, Elio Hobdari**  
“Les sanctuaires des églises protobyzantines de *Zaldapa* (province de Scythie)”

Dès le début du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle, *Zaldapa* (Krushari, Bulgarie) était une place forte importante du nouveau dispositif défensif du Bas-Danube mis en place à la suite des invasions dévastatrices des Goths. Elle est mentionnée au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle par Hiérokès dans sa liste des cités de Scythie et comme un siège épiscopal dans les sources médiévales. Six églises *intra-muros* y sont connues à ce jour, toutes découvertes ou explorées au cours de la dernière décennie. Deux grandes basiliques se sont succédées au cœur de la cité, au croisement des voies principales; trois autres basiliques ont été élevées en périphérie, près des portes; la sixième est un monument tétraconque original à proximité du rempart oriental. Cette présentation proposera un premier bilan et une discussion des dispositifs liturgiques différents de ces six églises, dans le contexte de la christianisation rapide d'un milieu frontalier fort hétérogène.

**Carolyn S. Snively** “*Stobi* as the Capital of *Macedonia Secunda* – Topography and Urban Renewal”

Marcellinus Comes first referred to two separate provinces of Macedonia in 482 AD. Hierokles listed *Stobi* as the first city of *Macedonia Secunda*, which was mentioned for the last time in *Novella* 11 in 535 AD, an anomaly in a list of provinces subject to the ecclesiastical authority of *Justiniana Prima*. Investigations of the last 50 years, i.e., of the Yugoslav-American project in the 1970s, various projects between 1981 and 2008, and most recently the National Institute *Stobi*, have revealed both new buildings and new evidence for chronology. Despite the shortage of historical sources, it is gradually becoming possible to write a sketchy outline of the city’s history and to offer answers to some of the topographical questions the site poses.

Two events in Late Antiquity shaped the city we now see. During the 4<sup>th</sup> century, *Stobi* lost its Middle Roman urban centre, located near the Erigon river, to recurrent severe flooding. A number of large residences were constructed higher up the slope; the construction of the Inner City Wall in the 5<sup>th</sup> century formalised the loss. The second event was the designation of *Stobi* as a provincial capital, with all the administrative trappings and personnel required. During the last quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, an urban renewal began that continued—interrupted by an earthquake early in the 6<sup>th</sup> century—into the 520s or 530s. The construction of several churches including the Episcopal Basilica on the Terrace, a colonnaded street and Semicircular Court as a market area beside the new Commercial and Residential Quarter, a *proteichisma*, and perhaps a new aqueduct and a reconstructed water system are all changes that reflect the enhanced status of the city and of its bishop. We may suspect that other administrative spaces, e.g., a *praetorium*, are lurking in, as yet, unexplored areas of the city.

**Maria Noussis** “*Extra-muros* Basilicas in the Province of *Epirus Vetus*: Monumentality beyond the Walls”

Among the religious buildings listed in the province of ancient Epirus, shared between Greece and Albania, a special category stands out, that of extramural basilicas. Generally little discussed in the literature, they were privileged meeting places between the town and the surrounding area. The number and monumentality of these ba-

silicas, expressed in their size, the multiplication of their annexes and the richness of their decoration, cannot be explained by their funerary function alone. We will study the various roles and modes of operation of these places on the basis of a selection of buildings located on the outskirts of certain towns in the province, such as Nicopolis, Photikê and Butrint.

This examination will shed light on these intermediate spaces between the city and its outskirts, as well as on the role - religious, social or economic - that they were destined to play in the creation of a Christian topography between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **Konstantinos Raptis** “Remarks on the Christianisation of the Urban Landscape of Thessalonica”

Based on the archaeological evidence regarding the Late Antique ecclesiastical architecture and the monumental topography of Thessalonica, as well as relative references in Byzantine primary sources, this paper attempts to trace the gradual Christianisation of the urban landscape of Thessalonica from the period of the Diocletian persecution until the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Notwithstanding its apostolic origin, the Thessalonian Christian community and, therefore, the local Episcopacy during the early period after the Diocletian persecutions, grew and was strengthened gradually based mainly on the cult of its numerous local martyrs, which began immediately after the proclamation of the freedom on religious beliefs in 313, with the acts of Archbishop Alexander, during the period of Constantine I, and was further encouraged by the religious policy of the emperor Theodosius, who was baptised in Thessalonica by Bishop Ascholius, and, by issuing the Edict of Thessalonica in AD 380, imposed Orthodox Christianity as the official state religion of the Roman Empire. However, later sources refer to a large non-Christian community in Thessalonica during the late 5<sup>th</sup>-early 6<sup>th</sup> century, the members of which, according to an oral tradition that survived until the 9<sup>th</sup> century, were performing in public the pagan cult at the *insula sacra* of the city, where the temples of the ancient cult were concentrated, before they were baptized en masse by Archbishop Andreas (490-513) during the reign of Anastasius I. Thus, the question that arises concerns the rate of Christianisation of Thessalonica during the two centuries from the period of Con-

stantine I in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century, until that of Anastasius I at the turn of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, and how this is traced in the monumental topography of the city.

This paper traces, dates and interprets the archaeological evidence of the Christian presence in the city and examines the gradual expansion of its Christian urban landmarks. Thus, in relation with the urban evolution of Thessalonica, and regarding its monumental topography, it seems that, following its gradual Christianisation, the Christian landmarks were initially located at the outskirts or the periphery of the fortified city, and had not massively occupied its central sector, around the *decumanus*, before the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> or the early decades of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, when on the frame of the Acacian schism and with imperial funds this Late Antique provincial capital was transformed into a renowned Christian megalopolis, and the most significant city in the European lands of the Empire after Constantinople.

**Dimitria Malamidou, Laurianne Sève, Efthymios Rizos, Priscilla Ralli, Olga Boubounelle, Ioannis Chalazonitis** “An Ancient Christian Community from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Centuries: Newly Discovered Data from a Three-aisled Basilica in Palaiokastro, Terpni (Macedonia, Greece)”

This paper aims to present the results of geophysical prospection and excavation campaigns undertaken by the Greek Archaeological Service (Ephorate of Antiquities of Serres) and the French School in Athens on the site of Palaiokastro, a fortified hilltop settlement located near today’s village of Terpni in the Lower Strymon valley (Serres region, Greece). Known since the 1960s, Palaiokastro was first systematically excavated in 1993 when a Roman public building, later transformed into a five-aisled Christian basilica, was uncovered.

Geophysical prospection, which was conducted over the entire fortified area in 2022, detected, among other things, a three-aisled apsidal structure of the same orientation as the five-aisled basilica of the 1993 excavations. Excavations in 2022 and 2023 confirmed the basilica layout of the structure and its identification as a Christian basilica – the second of the site, centrally located at a small distance east of the considerably larger five-aisled one. Ceramic finds indicate that the site, well-integrated into the local and regional trade networks, enjoyed prosperity in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries.



The newly-excavated three-aisled basilica and a detailed architectural survey of the five-aisled one revealed interesting liturgical features and sumptuous decoration indicative of a prosperous and ambitious ecclesiastical centre, which has, so far, eluded scholarly attention. It remains a mystery whether the settlement of Terpni, which seems to have been a city (*polis*) – currently unidentified but known to have flourished between the Archaic period and the end of Antiquity (7<sup>th</sup> c. BC – 7<sup>th</sup> c. AD) – served as an Episcopal see within the province of *Macedonia Prima*.

**Joseph L. Rife** “The New Octagon Complex at Kenchreai: Architecture, Landscape, and Maritime Pilgrimage in Late Antique Greece”

A recent exploration of *Kenchreai*, the eastern port of Corinth, has revealed important new evidence of Early Christianity at one of the busiest ports in the western Aegean. Besides the well known church and burials, an octagonal martyrion has now been uncovered on the northeast edge of the harbour. This lavish building displays a concentric, double-shelled design with a mosaic pavement and a sculpted revetment. Deposits from the building’s construction and collapse date it to ca. 470/475-550/555 CE. It was erected directly over an Early to Middle Roman townhouse, conspicuous from the sea and accessible from the harbourside. The Octagon was approached through a long corridor with an antechamber ascending from the waterfront. Several impressive graves were placed around the Octagon and corridor, and the area was blanketed with numerous lamps left as votive offerings. An important member of the Christian congregation was perhaps the celebrated Phoebe, the deacon and patron whom Paul recommended.

This new discovery contributes significantly to understanding not only the architectural history, but also the Christianisation of urban landscapes and the maritime dimensions of religious travel. Similar to ecclesiastical structures across the Near East and Asia Minor, the Octagon at *Kenchreai* is very rare in Greece, belonging to a very small group of examples with martyrial associations, such as, for example, those at Philippi and Lechaion. Its particular emplacement in the renovated topography of the *Kenchreai* harbour after a massive earthquake presented the Octagon, as a bastion of Christian memory, at once as a destination and a symbol for Corinthian residents and sea-born travellers alike. It seems to represent the western horizon of a wider phe-

nomenon of religious visitation, or transient pilgrimage, that can be traced in coastal sites for traffic moving west from the Holy Land, such as in Cilicia and at Ephesus.

**Aleksandra Pawlikowska-Gwiazda** “Reuse in Late Antique Western Thebes: *Spolia* and other Architectural Elements in the Monastery of St. Phoibammon”

Western Thebes, located on the left bank of the Nile, opposite Luxor, in Upper Egypt, has functioned as a necropolis and a place of worship since Early Antiquity. Its long history and unique geography have fascinated travellers, treasure hunters, and scientists for centuries. Rock-hewn tombs of Egyptian officials and Pharaonic mortuary temples were repeatedly reused. The major transformation of this site occurred at the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries CE with the advent of Christian anchorites. Throughout the following decades, the city of the dead turned into the city of monks – tombs became hermitages, which then grew into larger monastic settlements, like *lauras* and monasteries.

Thus, the architectural layout of individual hermitages or monasteries was largely dependent on the immediate surroundings. Monks, having no access to quarries, gladly reused limestone or sandstone blocks or even granite fragments taken from earlier Pharaonic structures. An example of this common behaviour was observed in the Monastery of St. Phoibammon – one of the most prominent monastic sites, established at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century within the Temple of Hatshepsut.

The aim of this paper is to present the unpublished collection of architectural elements that could be linked to this monastery and, if possible, to discuss their original contexts.

**Priscilla Ralli** “Workshops and Churches in the Peloponnese (5<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> AD): Investigating Regional Economic Dynamics through Liturgical and Architectural Sculpture”

In the Peloponnese, where written records are scarce during Late Antiquity, archaeological data is a fundamental source of knowledge. To uncover the economic trends that were prevalent in the Pelopon-

nese region during the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, liturgical and architectural sculpture can provide valuable insights. This is because the churches from that period offer a privileged view since they represent the main contexts, survivors and investigated, that are available for that period.

While the study of this material makes it possible to exploit and enhance the erratic sculptures present in the warehouses of museums and archaeological sites, thus giving them a new voice, it only allows considerations on a large regional scale, since, especially for much of the post-antique data issued from excavations by the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the contexts are not always known. This matter, it is evident, does not apply to sculpture that was instead brought to light during excavations conducted in the numerous basilicas and churches in the Peloponnese.

Within these premises, the present contribution wants to offer an analysis of the Peloponnesian territory in the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries, privileging the sculptural data as an element to understand the mobilising technical, economic and human resources to investigate possible connections between different regional hubs.

**Kyriakos Fragkoulis** “The Baptistery of the Cathedral of Early Byzantine *Dion* (Macedonia, Greece): Planning and Design Particularities from the Perspective of Ritual, Architectural Influences, and Site Limitations”

The baptistery of the Episcopal Basilica of *Dion* is attached to the west side of the atrium, falling into the group of autonomous baptisteries that form a unified whole with the church. Specifically, it has a quadrilateral ground plan with its long sides being slightly greater than the width of the atrium. At the same time, the inside is divided by two transverse walls into three separate rooms. The middle one, which is a little bigger than the lateral rooms, houses the built baptismal font in its centre. As indicated by several planning and structural configurations, the baptistery was probably a later addition to the cathedral.

The main particularity of the *Dion* example is its place within the complex, as the majority of Early Byzantine baptisteries in Greece are annexed directly to the main church or the narthex, and rather rarely to the sides of the atrium, whereas an arrangement with the baptis-

tery lying to the west of the church is quite common in northern Italy and the neighbouring regions. The plan of our baptistery is relatively unusual too, because of the linear placement of its compartments one next to the other. In addition, the shape of the font is of special interest, being octagonal on the outside and resembling a Maltese cross on the inside — a fairly unique combination.

Here, after first examining the above particularities within their regional context and locating the closest parallels possible, we will attempt to investigate the role that ritual, architectural influences, and site limitations may have played in the shaping of this rather unusual baptistery, putting to the test our view that practicalities related to the serving of the liturgical needs and the handling of space must have been particularly decisive in the case of *Dion* as well as beyond.

### **SESSION: Novelties (Italy)**

**Alessandro Vella** “Il paesaggio devozionale circostante la basilica di S. Paolo f.l.M.: il culto del martire Timoteo, fra topografia cimiteriale e aspetti liturgici”

Dalla fine del IV sec., la basilica di S. Paolo svolse un ruolo determinante nel modellare il paesaggio devozionale del comparto suburbano circostante. Diversi sono, nell'area, i culti che risultano strettamente associati alla figura di san Paolo, come nel caso dei santuari memoriali costituiti dalla “cappella della separazione” (*ecclesia Apostolorum*) o dal *martyrium* delle *Aquae Salviae*, cui si aggiungono un oratorio dedicato alla lapidazione di santo Stefano e una chiesa di S. Tecla.

Tra questi, un caso particolare è rappresentato dalla tomba di san Timoteo: originariamente deposto in un ignoto cimitero della via Ostiense, il martire romano fu spesso confuso con l'omonimo discepolo dell'apostolo, fino ad essere traslato all'interno della basilica paolina, dove il suo culto fu precocemente integrato, in posizione assai rilevante, nella liturgia quotidiana del santuario.

Diverse ipotesi sono state avanzate rispetto all'originaria localizzazione del cimitero di S. Timoteo, cui il riesame delle fonti consente ora di attribuire la possibile presenza di un edificio di culto ad corpus.

Agli inizi del XX sec., i ruderi di una chiesa furono rintracciati nelle immediate adiacenze della basilica di S. Paolo dall'abate Ildefonso Schuster, che propose di riconoscerli i resti dell'*Ecclesia Sanctae Mariae de castro Sancti Pauli*. Il testo di un *Ordo officiorum Ecclesiae Lateranensis* del XII sec., tuttavia, menziona una chiesa di *S. Maria in turrim* collocata nell'area del quadriportico, in significativa consonanza con la situazione nota per l'antica S. Pietro.

Immaginando che la chiesa di *S. Maria in turrim* possa corrispondere all'omonima de *castro Sancti Pauli*, se ne concluderebbe che i resti visti dallo Schuster debbano identificarsi con un diverso edificio di culto, forse proprio il santuario ad corpus di S. Timoteo.

**Crystel Mamazza** “Riflessioni sulle ultime frequentazioni delle catacombe romane a partire dai graffiti devozionali. Il caso di San Callisto”

Le catacombe romane sono state definite da Armando Petrucci “le città sotterranee dello scritto” per la presenza di migliaia di graffiti che costellano le gallerie che portavano alle tombe venerate, visitate dai pellegrini. La reiterata frequentazione delle catacombe in epoca tarda, anche a seguito della rimozione delle reliquie, è in effetti testimoniata, oltre che dagli Itineraria, principalmente dai cicli pittorici e dalle centinaia di scritte a sgraffio lasciate dai fedeli. In particolare, lo studio dei graffiti è certamente rilevante per indagare le ultime fasi di vita delle catacombe romane, argomento della ricerca di dottorato della scrivente, soprattutto in mancanza di una documentazione di archivio. Lo studio, infatti, pone particolare attenzione a questo tipo di testimonianze estemporanee lasciate dai viatores nelle visite ai santuari martiriali. A questo proposito, è interessante riportare all'attenzione il

caso di un graffito tracciato ai piedi della scala realizzata da papa Damaso nell'area I di San Callisto, a circa 3 m. dall'antico piano di calpestio. È proprio quest'ultimo dato, ossia la quota, che, sebbene mai messo in evidenza dagli studiosi, è dirimente circa l'ultimissima frequentazione del cimitero. Infatti, l'incisione riporta significativamente “*Non est hic aliquid vade in pace*”. Il presente contributo intende, quindi, proporre una riflessione su questi dati e uno studio paleografico dei graffiti al fine di chiarificare le cronologie di fruizione dell'area dopo il generale abbandono dei cimiteri post V secolo.

**Giuseppe Cuscito** “Apporti aquileiesi e impulso giustiniano nell’architettura sacra dell’Alto Adriatico”

La cultura tardoantica, che coincide per larga parte con la cultura dell’ambiente paleocristiano, si sviluppa nella regione altoadriatica dall’età tetrarchica alla fine del sec. VI e, all’interno di questi tre secoli, credo di poter riconoscere almeno due fasi distinte: la prima, fino all’*e-versio* attilana (452), in cui Aquileia irradia la sua autorità e impone i suoi modelli artistici e culturali ben oltre i limiti dell’Alto Adriatico; la seconda, quando, pur sopravvivendo il prestigio di Aquileia, si costituiscono nuove realtà, come a Grado, e si fanno sentire con più forza gli influssi di altri centri, come Ravenna, che, assunta a sede imperiale nel 402, diventa tramite per l’introduzione delle conquiste artistiche di Costantinopoli nell’Italia settentrionale. Ad Aquileia, punto di riferimento dell’intera area veneta, la Chiesa è una presenza nuova nel panorama della città: essa è destinata a segnare i futuri sviluppi urbanistici e a proporsi come un elemento decisivo nell’esperienza architettonica e liturgica, che, nell’edificio di culto, trova il tema più nuovo. Perciò non è fuori luogo riconoscere nel complesso teodoriano della metropoli alto adriatica l’avvio di questa profonda trasformazione delle forme che caratterizza la tarda antichità nella capitale della *Venetia et Histria* e nel territorio prossimo. Così si può dire che la scelta della pianta rettangolare per il centro episcopale voluta dal vescovo Teodoro in età costantiniana condizionò ogni successiva soluzione adottata per gli edifici di culto tanto in Aquileia che nell’area di sua influenza. Nel tentativo di trovare per questa formulazione sperimentale un modello specifico di riferimento non sono mancate proposte, come quella di riferirsi alle domus ecclesiae precostantiniane con una connotazione sostanzialmente privata, che mette a frutto l’esperienza di un’edilizia a carattere utilitario. Le suggestioni della tradizione aquileiese riaffiorano in molte costruzioni che furono modello ispiratore per tanti edifici paleocristiani dell’Alto Adriatico in cui si ritrova la forma rettangolare compatta ed essenziale, caratterizzata soprattutto dalla mancanza dell’abside: è un tipo basilicale che, per la sua area di diffusione, è stato definito “altoadriatico”, nettamente distinto dalle strutture absidate, altrove affermatesi nella seconda metà del sec. IV. Il modello aquileiese, caratterizzato dalle due aule rettangolari parallele con funzioni diverse e dal battistero sull’asse della cattedrale vera e propria si ritrova con molte varianti in altre sedi vescovili dell’Alto Adriatico, dove vanno ricordati gli esempi istriani come le aule pre-eufrasiane di Parenzo e la basilica episcopale di Pola, databili per lo più alla prima metà del sec.

V. La riconquista giustiniana diede nuovo impulso alla vita culturale dell'Alto Adriatico, che peraltro aveva già visto moltiplicarsi i suoi luoghi di culto e aveva già fatto le sue prime sperimentazioni, movendosi tra scelte originali e influssi venuti dall'Oriente. Continuazione della cultura aquileiese e dell'impulso giustiniano si riconoscono nell'architettura promossa a Grado dal patriarca Elia (571-586) dopo l'esodo definitivo dalla terraferma. Si può dire che l'architettura paleocristiana di Aquileia trovi la sua ultima e più sorprendente espressione nel tritico gradese di S. Eufemia, di S. Maria e del battistero.

**Sabine Feist, Norbert Zimmermann** “The Constantinian Episcopal Church in Ostia – Results of a New Excavation Project”

The new excavation project in the area of the Constantinian Episcopal Church in Ostia was started in 2023 (S. Feist (Bonn), M. Heinzlmann (Cologne), N. Zimmermann (Rome), in cooperation with E. Borgia (Rome), funding: DFG). After the limited preliminary investigation in the 1990s, this new project will explore the architectural ensemble of basilica, atrium, presumed episcopium, and a later baptistery through stratigraphic excavations.

The Constantinian Episcopal Church in Ostia is a key monument of early ecclesiastical architecture. Unique among all of Constantinian church foundations, this basilica is the only church never reshaped by later interventions, so that it alone is available in its entirety for typological, architectural and liturgical investigations. Moreover, it is the first example of a “standard” basilica that was built neither as an *ex voto* foundation, an architectural shrine surrounding a venerated tomb, nor as a cemetery church.

In 2023, the excavation focused on the eastern part of the basilica, i.e., the area of the apse and the presbytery; the entire width of the building and almost a quarter of its length was uncovered. In addition to an unusual apse form (see Abstract: H. Boes on “Ravennatic, Neapolitan and now Roman? A new Constantinian apse form in Rome”), several other elements of the church's interior have been uncovered.

In our presentation we would like to outline the various building phases: the construction of the three-aisled basilica in the Constantinian phase, the installation of a *schola cantorum* in the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century

and the reconstruction of the south side of the apse and possibly the entire apse wall, probably in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The basilica was then completely destroyed in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

**Rosa Fiorillo** “La ristrutturazione giustiniana in Campania. L'esempio di Santa Maria di Rota a mercato S. Severino”

Si presentano i risultati dell'attività di ricerca dell'Università degli Studi di Salerno, diretti dalla sottoscritta, su Concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, in collaborazione con la Soprintendenza, nell'area dell'antica città di Rota, poi Mercato S. Severino, dove insistono i ruderi della chiesa di Santa Maria. L'edificio liturgico sorse su un'area dismessa di un importante villa imperiale che, per toponimo e posizione, è da considerarsi un vero e proprio centro di controllo amministrativo e fiscale. Tra la fine del IV secolo e la prima metà del secolo seguente alcuni degli spazi della villa andarono in dismissione, ma la funzione amministrativa continuò ad essere esercitata. Tra il 556 ed il 568, l'area rientrò nel progetto di risanamento voluto da Giustiniano e localmente operato da Narsete che, tra le difficoltà legate ai mutamenti istituzionali e fiscali principati nel V secolo, contribuì in maniera decisiva allo slittamento della proprietà fondiaria dall'aristocrazia laico-imperiale a quella della Chiesa.

Allo stato delle ricerche e sulla base dei dati archeologici possiamo dire che l'intervento dell'ex generale, ora console onorario, non fu rivolto al solo restauro degli edifici coinvolti dai disastri della guerra ma si ampliò con l'edificazione di numerose chiese rurali poste in proprietà statali. Si spiega così la presenza, tra i materiali di scavo di tegole integre con impresso il bollo circolare completo di croce monogrammatica e iscrizione retrograda “† *vir excellentissimus Narsis fecit*”, che si accompagnano ad ulteriori frammenti di tegole analoghe, a testimonianza di una volontà istituzionale che affianca quella dei *possessores* che dal VI secolo in poi realizzarono edifici di culto all'interno delle loro *villae*. Anche le costruzioni della cosiddetta “Rotonda di Nocera” e della basilica pestana, sembrerebbero inserirsi nella strutturazione di una nuova forma di gestione politico-economica in un territorio dove la cristianizzazione parrebbe essere avvenuta alquanto precocemente.



**Carlo Ebanista** “*Disiecta membra*: frammenti musivi dagli scavi nella *basilica nova* a Cimitile (Napoli, Italia)”

Il santuario di S. Felice alle porte di Nola, nell’attuale territorio comunale di Cimitile, rappresenta un caso singolare nell’ambito dell’archeologia della tarda antichità, in relazione alla compresenza dei resti degli edifici di culto e della coeva testimonianza di Paolino, il quale descrive gli interventi edilizi che, tra la fine del IV secolo e gli inizi del V, contribuirono alla trasformazione del complesso in un importante centro di pellegrinaggio. In modo particolare, la narrazione paoliniana offre una dettagliata descrizione della decorazione musiva della *basilica nova*, edificata tra il 401 e il 403.

Ai pochi resti tuttora *in situ* nel catino centrale dell’abside *trichora*, si aggiungono ora i lacerti rinvenuti durante gli scavi del 2015-17 nell’ambiente N1 annesso alla navata destra. L’indagine ha consentito di documentare le fasi di costruzione, frequentazione e abbandono del vano, al cui interno – dopo l’alluvione degli inizi del VI secolo – fu scaricato un ragguardevole quantitativo di materiali, tra cui 68 lacerti di mosaico e numerosissime tessere musive.

Il recente restauro dei frammenti, oltre ad evidenziare la tecnica esecutiva, le cromie originali e il degrado delle tessere, ha fornito informazioni sul repertorio iconografico. La ripartizione sulla base del colore e dei partiti decorativi ha evidenziato due gruppi: il primo è costituito da unità aniconiche, mentre l’altro da frammenti con motivi geometrici, fitomorfi e iscrizioni. Il modulo delle lettere esclude che i lacerti provengano dal *titulus* che corredeva il mosaico del catino centrale della *trichora*, suggerendo che i lacerti appartengano ai *tituli* posti da Paolino in corrispondenza delle absidiole laterali, per indicare che la destra era riservata alla conservazione degli arredi sacri e la sinistra alla custodia delle sacre scritture.

**Iolanda Donnarumma, Lorenza Longobardi** “Nuovi dati sull’ipogeo C nella catacomba di S. Gennaro a Napoli”

Alle spalle della basilica di S. Gennaro *extra moenia* si apre l’ingresso all’ipogeo C, identificato fino agli anni Settanta del secolo scorso, insieme all’adiacente vano H1, con un colombario per la presenza di nicchie quadrangolari sulle pareti est e nord.

A dispetto della rilevanza, connessa alla presenza di un *triforium*, di iscrizioni, affreschi e mosaici poco noti, l'ipogeo non è mai stato oggetto di un'analisi puntuale, ma solo di studi di carattere prevalentemente topografico che hanno finora orientato la datazione al IV secolo. Nell'ambito delle ricerche che dal 2010 la Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra conduce nella catacomba di S. Gennaro, è stato avviato lo studio sistematico dell'ipogeo C del quale sono state prese in esame stratigrafie, iscrizioni e decorazioni, nonché l'inedita documentazione d'archivio dell'Ispettorato delle Catacombe della Campania, nel tentativo di proporre un più dettagliato quadro cronologico delle fasi di escavazione e d'uso. I dati emersi hanno permesso un confronto con le novità che stanno intanto affiorando dalle ricerche sugli ipogei di diritto privato dei settori nord-est (ipogei E, G) e ovest (vani A0, A1, D1, D2, D3) del complesso ianuario da cui si evincono le significative trasformazioni che la catacomba subì nel VI secolo in rapporto all'impianto della basilica subdiale di S. Gennaro *extra moenia*, nella cui abside si aprono due fornicati destinati, molto probabilmente, al collegamento con le retrostanti gallerie cimiteriali. All'indomani della costruzione della chiesa, nell'ipogeo C numerose tombe a cassa, distribuite su più livelli, occuparono progressivamente lo spazio disponibile, obliterando le sepolture scavate nel tufo. A questa fase vanno ricondotte le testate, interpretate come nicchie, che rappresentano una prova delle scomparse sepolture *ad sanctos*.

**Elisa Possenti** “Trento, la chiesa anonima sul Dos Trento, vecchie e nuove ipotesi interpretative”

La chiesa anonima sul Dos Trento (Trento) fu costruita nel corso del V secolo sulla sommità di un rilievo collinare che dominava l'abitato della *Tridentum* tardoantica. L'intervento ripercorre le varie ipotesi formulate in merito alla sua funzione e cerca di individuarne la più verosimile tenendo conto dei dati archeologici combinati con la posizione e il ruolo della città di Trento in età tardoantica.

**Hannah Boes** “Ravennatic, Neapolitan and Now Roman? A New Constantinian Apse Form in Rome”

Until recently, the phenomenon of a pillar arrangement flanking the apse was mainly known from the Neapolitan and Ravennate regions. Thanks to a new DFG-funded field research project - a collaboration involving the Christian Archaeology Department of the University of Bonn (S. Feist), the University of Cologne (M. Heinzelmann), the DAI in Rome (N. Zimmermann) and the University La Sapienza in Rome (E. Borgia) - a further example of this architectural situation has been identified in the Episcopal Church of Ostia. During the excavation, a projecting wall belonging to the Constantinian period was found at the level of the later inserted chord of the apse. This wall, which likely had a now destroyed counterpart on the southern side, appears to have served as a foundation for a pillar – together they flanked the apse on both sides.

As there has been no detailed research on the architectural phenomenon described, this provides the basis for my PhD-project. The existence of an example near the city of Rome, which, in contrast to the other known examples, has a secure Constantinian date, is exceptional and provides the basis for a detailed examination. Through this investigation, conclusions about previously unanswered questions can be drawn. Among these is the inquiry into what the introduced pillars in the apse area actually supported and how the rising masonry can be reconstructed. Equally interesting is a reconsideration of the reconstruction possibilities in the apse area of Constantinian churches in Rome, incorporating the newly acquired knowledge from Ostia. The pillar arrangements in the apse are also reminiscent of the ambulatory often discussed for Rome. Hence, additional questions regarding the comparability and relationship of the two design concepts would be relevant. These considerations provide the opportunity to gain further insights into the genesis of Early Christian ecclesiastical architecture.

**Federico Marazzi** “Beyond Hagiography. The Origins of Montecassino in Light of Recent Archaeological Research”

The knowledge of the origins of the monastery of Montecassino has been strongly conditioned by the relevance of the hagiographic tradition relating to its illustrious founder, St. Benedict, which has made the analysis of the context in which this foundation took place during the second quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century very complex.

Although a recent tradition of studies has even gone so far as to question the historicity of the figure of Benedict, it is precisely the analysis of archaeological traces, combined with that of written sources seen in the context of the Italian reality of the time, that allows us to recognise elements of strong plausibility both in the figure of Benedict and in the path that led him to the foundation of one of the most famous and long-lived monasteries in the West.

The presentation will describe the results of new research that has allowed a broad reconsideration of the figure of Benedict and his relationship with Montecassino.

**Alberto Andreoli** “Topografia cristiana nella bassa pianura padana dalle origini all’alto medioevo”

La relazione intende fornire un contributo alla riflessione sulle dinamiche insediative e sull’organizzazione territoriale e giurisdizionale ecclesiastiche che hanno riguardato la regione basso-padana negli ultimi secoli dell’*èvo* antico e nel primo medioevo. L’ambito corografico considerato è costituito dall’areale – di forma grosso modo triangolare – circoscritto tra Ostiglia (MN) e il tratto litoraneo adriatico compreso tra Ravenna e la laguna veneta. In proposito, giova segnalare che l’indagine storico-territoriale su questo comprensorio non può prescindere dalla conoscenza della sua evoluzione fisiografica, in quanto fino alle moderne bonifiche meccaniche la geografia antropica (inclusa l’ecclesiastica) fu vincolata al mutevole contesto geomorfologico e ambientale; lo si è riscontrato nel caso delle sedi abitative, delle direttrici e delle infrastrutture viarie, dei sistemi di approvvigionamento e di circolazione delle merci.

All’epoca del principato l’unità territoriale si caratterizzò per un popolamento sparso, costituito da nuclei insediativi di limitata entità

demica (*villae, vici, pagi*), ancorati sulle emergenze naturali più stabili (dossi, gronde fluviali, cordoni dunosi litoranei); uniche eccezioni, per dimensioni e condizione giuridica, i municipia di Ravenna e Atria. Tra i centri vicani si distinse probabilmente l'agglomerato sorto sulle sponde di un'antica diramazione deltizia padana (il medievale Sandalo), presso le odierne località ferraresi di Voghenza e Voghiera.

Nel corso della Tarda Antichità la conurbazione fluvio-lagunare di Ravenna-Caesarea-Classis assurse a sede della corte e dell'amministrazione imperiale (a. 402), a sede metropolitana cattolica (a. 431 ca.), a capitale regia e sede della Chiesa ariana (periodo ostrogoto), infine a capoluogo bizantino (dal 540). Dal punto di vista urbanistico-architettonico, le nuove prerogative politico-istituzionali, socio-economiche, culturali e religiose, si tradussero in un progressivo adeguamento infrastrutturale e d'apparato. La predisposizione di numerosi edifici e installazioni culturali, assistenziali e funerarie (sacelli, oratori, cappelle, chiese, battisteri, monasteria, spazi cimiteriali, santuari), di committenza laica ed ecclesiastica, determinarono la progressiva cristianizzazione dell'articolato spazio urbano e suburbano.

Dei presidi insediativi ecclesiastici emergenti nel territorio riconducibili all'ambito cronologico d'interesse, si segnalano: il complesso della "Ca' Bianca" (sec. VI) a sud della *civitas Classis*; il centro religioso sull'argine sinistro del *Padus vetus* (sec. VI) a Motta della Girata (Comacchio); il *monasterium beati Georgii* fatto erigere sui *rura* [...] *Argentea* dall'arcivescovo Agnello (a. 569/570); il "sacello" rinvenuto a Pomposa (sec. VI/VII); il "complesso paleocristiano" di Tenuta Forzello, loc. San Basilio (Ariano Polesine, RO) (sec. IV-V).

Studi recenti hanno riguardato la cristianizzazione della pianura ferrarese e del Polesine e l'istituzione delle diocesi padane afferenti all'antica provincia ecclesiastica ravennate: la *sedis* di *Vinco haventia* potrebbe figurare come la più antica (sec. V ?), quelle di *Hadria*, *Comaclo*, *Ferraria* e *Gabellus/Gavellus* sono attestate in età esarcale e carolingia; l'originaria estensione degli ambiti giurisdizionali permangono indeterminate. Ricerche mirate alla comprensione della topografia cristiana delle *sedes episcopales* sono in corso di svolgimento.

**Donatella Nuzzo** “Un nuovo complesso ecclesiastico nel territorio della Puglia centrale (Parco archeologico di Monte Sannace, Gioia del Colle, Bari)”

Nell'ambito del Progetto di ricerca “Monte Sannace in età postclassica”, volto allo studio delle evidenze monumentali tardo antiche e medievali di un settore della Puglia centrale, è stato individuato un fonte battesimale. Il fonte presenta un impianto cruciforme con vasca centrale di forma ottagonale e gradini di accesso nel lato ovest, ed è rivestito da due strati di malta idraulica. Il ritrovamento del fonte e del relativo edificio culturale, in corso di indagine, si pone all'origine di diversi percorsi di ricerca relativi sia alla ricostruzione del complesso ecclesiastico e alla definizione delle pratiche liturgiche ad esso collegate, sia allo studio del processo di cristianizzazione che nel VI-VII secolo interessò il territorio della Puglia centrale. All'attività di scavo si collega un programma di ricognizione sistematica del territorio, allo scopo di definire i caratteri del popolamento e di individuare la tipologia degli insediamenti per i quali la nuova chiesa battesimale poté essere punto di riferimento dal punto di vista liturgico e sacramentale.

**Marta Venuti** “La diffusione del cristianesimo a Taormina: fonti letterarie e *realia*”

La diffusione del cristianesimo in Sicilia rappresenta uno degli argomenti maggiormente dibattuti del cristianesimo delle origini; il fenomeno lega il suo nome, tra gli altri, alla figura di Pancrazio il quale, inviato da Pietro in occidente, diviene il primo vescovo di Taormina. Dopo quasi un trentennio dall'edizione del primo dossier agiografico sul Santo, a cura di M. Van Esbroeck e U. Zanetti, la recente edizione del Bios da parte di C. Stallman Pacitti, ha rinnovato l'interesse verso la figura di Pancrazio, fornendo maggiori elementi per una più accurata rilettura dei dati disponibili. A questo si aggiungono le recenti acquisizioni della ricerca archeologica sulle fasi imperiali ed altomedievali di Taormina, attraverso le quali è possibile sviluppare nuove considerazioni. Il contributo si propone, pertanto, di fornire un aggiornamento sullo stato dell'arte integrando i dati ricavati dalle fonti scritte e i *realia*.

**Simone Schiavone** “L’altare della basilica paleocristiana dei Santi Apostoli in Roma: nuovi informazioni dal recente intervento di restauro e di riallestimento”

La basilica dei Santi XII Apostoli in Roma custodisce i corpi degli apostoli Filippo e Giacomo il Minore. Il loro arrivo è da porre in relazione alla costruzione della basilica documentata dal *Liber Pontificalis* nelle biografie dei papi Pelagio (556-561) e Giovanni III (561-574), sotto il quale venne consacrata. Il trasferimento di alcune ossa di Filippo da Costantinopoli e di Giacomo da Gerusalemme, di cui fu il primo vescovo, verso l’Urbe fu favorito dagli stretti legami intercorsi tra l’imperatore Giustiniano e Pelagio, prima della nomina a successore di San Pietro. Anche nella scelta dell’impianto architettonico, la nuova sede romana doveva richiamare il più celebre Apostoleion di Costantinopoli, riedificato e consacrato nel 550 dall’imperatore sul precedente edificio voluto da Costantino con l’intento di raccogliere tutti i corpi degli apostoli. Un vero e proprio atto di evergetismo che, a conclusione della guerra greco-gotica, faceva del nascente monumento il manifesto dell’avvenuta conquista bizantina.

L’intervento imperiale è apprezzabile del resto anche nelle fattezze dell’altare-reliquiario, sulla cui mensa si staglia una grande croce greca. Il manufatto, in lastre di marmo pavonazzetto interposte a pilastri in marmo lunense, è un prodotto di manifattura protobizantina, eseguito dalle maestranze verosimilmente greco-costantinopolitane presenti a Roma e operanti su materiale locale. Il restauro da poco ultimato, che è consistito nella pulitura, sigillatura, stuccatura e consolidamento delle parti immobili e mobili, preventivamente smontate, ha permesso di raccogliere informazioni innovative sulle modalità di assemblaggio in antico delle singole parti e di ricostruire la prassi liturgica e devozionale, documentata anche dai segni di frequentazione antropica in antico (figure aniconiche e iscrizioni graffite) e di effrazioni moderne. Il rilievo strumentale da laserscanner, che ha interessato l’intero complesso ecclesiale, ha permesso del resto di supporre una movimentazione dell’oggetto, contestualmente alla risistemazione dell’area presbiteriale in età altomedievale.

**Francesco Stilo** “The Christianization of *Bruttii*”

Calabria was indicated until the 7<sup>th</sup> century with the ethnic *Bruttii*, *Brettia* for the Greeks. The name Calabria, which previously designated the Salento peninsula, migrated in the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, replacing the previous name. If we can speak of a substantial continuity in the territorial extension from the Augustan *Regio III Lucania et Bruttii* to the Diocletian province, it is with the Byzantine conquest, which occurred as a consequence of the Greek-Gothic wars (535-553), that the unity of the province *Lucania et Bruttii* was shattered.

Except for the presence of Paul in *Reggio* in 61 *inde solventes devenimus Rhegium* for a single day *Et post unum diem, superveniente austro, secunda die venimus Puteolos* (*Actum Apostolorum* 28, 13), the first sources relating to the spread of Christianity in the region date back to the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The first epigraphic findings also date back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century, coming from *Taurianum*, *Locri*, *Reggio*, *Copia-Thurii*, and *Blanda Iulia*. The first Calabrian saint attested by objective evidence, Fantino, dates back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

In the following centuries, Christianity became more strongly structured; of the fourteen known dioceses, between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, it is possible to identify with certainty the first Episcopal attestation of two in the 4<sup>th</sup>, *Blanda Iulia* and *Taurianum*, two in the 5<sup>th</sup>, *Vibona* and *Scolacium*, eight in the 6<sup>th</sup>, *Tempsa*, *Nicotera*, *Myria*, *Rhegium*, *Locri*, *Croton*, *Copia-Thuri*, *Consentia*, and two in the 7<sup>th</sup>, *Cerillae* and *Trapeia*.

With the exception of *Consentia*, which is located inland, all the other dioceses are located along the Ionian and Tyrrhenian coasts; the Episcopal seats are, therefore, located in the oldest inhabited centres, repositing the system of distribution of city territories. There is no lack of rural dioceses, as in the cases of the *massae* of *Trapeia* and *Nicotera*, where the extensive territories belonging to the church certainly favoured the spread of Christianity.

It should be kept in mind that, although there are proposals in the literature relating to *Consentia* and *Locri*, it would not have been possible for *Bruttii* to accept with absolute certainty any proposal for the location of the cathedral. However, it can be stated that, at present, also in light of the new acquisitions, the most probable proposals were related to *Consentia*, *Trapeia* and *Vibona*.



**Noé Conejo Delgado** “L’uso rituale delle monete nelle tombe longobarde: pratica magica o economica?”

Tra le pratiche che definiscono la ritualità funeraria sviluppata nelle comunità longobarde dell’Italia settentrionale tra il VI e l’VIII secolo vi è la deposizione di monete accanto al defunto. Le monete, generalmente di epoca romana, potevano essere collocate, come parte del corredo funerario, sul corpo del defunto o all’interno di piccoli contenitori, oppure trasformate in elementi di decorazione personale, dove le monete venivano forate per formare parte di bracciali, collane o pendenti, anche con perle o vaghi di pasta vitrea.

Tradizionalmente, l’uso di questi pezzi è stato interpretato con una connotazione magica, cioè le monete, data la loro antichità o iconografia, potevano essere utilizzate come elemento magico o talismanico, che permetteva al defunto di proteggersi dalle forze del male nel pellegrinaggio verso l’aldilà. Tuttavia, studi recenti hanno dimostrato che la moneta romana svolgeva un ruolo importante nell’economia domestica di questo periodo, per cui i pezzi utilizzati per questi elementi decorativi non erano oggetti obsoleti, ma avevano ancora un valore economico per gli utenti. Partendo da quest’ultimo aspetto, un’analisi dettagliata e comparativa delle monete rinvenute in diverse necropoli longobarde dell’Italia settentrionale ci permetterà di fornire nuove interpretazioni di questa pratica rituale. In questo senso, e senza ignorare una prospettiva integratrice, proponiamo che la collocazione delle monete sui defunti longobardi possa rispondere anche a criteri e significati economici, che hanno avuto un’influenza sostanziale sulla composizione di questi elementi decorativi a base di monete.

### **SESSION: Novelties (Africa and the West)**

**Victor Ghica** “Recent Archaeological Work on the 4<sup>th</sup> Century Christian Sites of Kharga Oasis (Egypt)”

Home to the largest concentration of 4<sup>th</sup>-century Christian archaeological sites in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, Kharga Oasis has lately been extensively investigated by the ERC project DEChriM. This paper provides an overview of the recent excavations carried out by the DEChriM team in the area as well as of the survey of

South-Kharga, run for fifteen years by a team from the French Institute of Oriental Archaeology (Cairo), which is now in the process of being published by the DEChriM project. Additionally, the main results of the excavations at the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century *laura* of Ganub Qasr al-‘Aguz, in the Bahriyya Oasis will also be presented. The paper will particularly focus on several monasteries, a bishopric seat, a metropolis and a village, and will discuss in detail methods of dating.

**Artur Obluski** “The Forgotten Kingdoms of Nubia: A Regional Study of Christian Dominance in the Middle Nile Valley in the Early Christian Period”

This paper provides a comprehensive examination of the historical presence of Christianity in the Middle Nile Valley. This regional analysis delves into the political and cultural advancements of three prominent Nubian kingdoms—Nobadia, Makuria, and Alwa—spanning nearly a millennium. It offers insights into the material culture of these Christian kingdoms, encompassing urban planning, architecture, and arts and crafts, and their connections to the broader Christian oikumene and indigenous developments.

This study’s central theme revolves around the region’s religious history, tracing the adoption of Christianity around the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century CE to its gradual decline in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The paper will focus on the Early Christian period until the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

**Rhiannon Williams** “The Late Antique Churches of Kharga Oasis (Egypt): The Implications of Architectural Diversity on the Understanding of Early Egyptian Christianity”

Kharga Oasis is the southernmost of the five oases of Egypt’s Western Desert and, in Late Antiquity, it was a frontier zone of the Roman Empire. As a result of the large-scale abandonment of the region at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the subsequent lack of the types of agricultural and civil development programmes seen in the Nile Valley and elsewhere in the country, and, of course, the aridity for which Egypt is famed, Kharga contains a remarkable archaeological record, much of which pertains explicitly to Early Christianity.

Indeed, the oasis is home to at least 18 church buildings – four of which are associated with monastic complexes, the construction of each of which is able to be securely dated into the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The extent to which these churches differ in their architectural layout is striking, ranging from simple, re-purposed halls to purpose-built three-aisled basilicas, and everything in between. Although not the sole determinant – with money and available space certainly being influential factors –, these variations can be indicative of the ways in which these buildings were used and are, thus, invaluable with regards to the manner in which the Christians of Kharga practiced their faith. The presence or absence of apse side chambers, ambos, narthexes, and return aisles can be indicative of developments in the liturgy, while the fact that several of the monastic churches have elongated north-south oriented naves could attest to worship practices specific to monastic contexts. Furthermore, inferences can be made with regards to early baptismal practices thanks to two unique basin structures associated with two of the churches. Few corpora are comparable to that of Kharga, underlining the significance of the oasean material with regards to developing a better understanding of Early Egyptian Christianity.

**Agata Deptuła** “Severus of Antioch in *Nubia*. Tracing Early Christian Traditions in Qasr Ibrim’s Greek Manuscripts”

Qasr Ibrim, situated along the Nile between the first and second cataracts, stands as a significant medieval settlement, potentially serving as the capital of Nobadia, one of the three medieval Nubian kingdoms. Since the 1960s, the Egypt Exploration Society has conducted archaeological excavations, revealing a remarkable collection of textual sources in Greek, Coptic, Old Nubian, and Arabic. The project “Religious Literature in Christian Nubia: Greek Manuscripts from Qasr Ibrim”, conducted at the University of Warsaw, focuses on around 100 Greek objects discovered on the floor of Ibrim’s cathedral, a likely remnant of the cathedral library.

While some Greek manuscripts have been edited, the majority remain unpublished, with others necessitating a careful revision. These manuscripts include fragments of Biblical texts, hagiographic compositions, and liturgical materials, offering unique sources for reconstructing early Eastern Christian traditions. One such case are fragments of works attributed to Severus of Antioch, a focus of the

present paper. The pieces we have identified within the framework of the project supplement the Severan corpus with fragments of homilies and, more importantly, witnesses of the original, Greek versions of his hymns, so far accessible only through their Syriac translations.

Our explorations not only shed light on the cultural and religious significance of Qasr Ibrim during the medieval period, but also unveil hidden gems that contribute to a deeper understanding of Christian Nubian heritage and its connections to broader Eastern Christian traditions.

**Samir Aounallah, Alessandro Abrignani, Silvio Moreno, Nesrine Nasr, Mariano Morganti** “Il complesso culturale paleocristiano del Monumento circolare di Cartagine: scavi, ricerche e valorizzazione”

L'area archeologica localizzata a sinistra della collina del teatro romano di Cartagine è stata denominata, per circa 70 anni, “del Monumento circolare” perché, a partire dal 1951, furono messe in luce i resti di un enorme complesso monumentale da considerare straordinario per la storia antica della Tunisia.

Il complesso culturale di età paleocristiana è costituito da imponente monumento a pianta circolare e da un altro monumento a tre absidi, il cosiddetto “triconco”. Dopo circa 22 anni di abbandono, la nostra missione, nata dall'accordo con l'Institut National du Patrimoine Tunisie (INP), si è posta l'obiettivo di recuperare e di valorizzare queste vestigia della Cartagine cristiana al fine della fruizione mondiale, sotto l'egida dell'UNESCO. La nostra équipe è formata da: S. Aounallah (direttore scientifico), Silvio Moreno, Alessandro Abrignani, Nesrine Nasr, Mariano Morganti.

Il presente contributo, pertanto, si propone di presentare il progetto di valorizzazione ed esporre lo stato della ricerca, focalizzando l'attenzione sulla storia degli studi, sul rapporto tra il complesso monumentale e la topografia cristiana di Cartagine e, infine, sulla cultura materiale. Infatti, attraverso lo studio della classe della terra sigillata africana, che all'interno del sito ha un'ampia diffusione, è possibile delineare un quadro chiaro della diffusione del repertorio iconografico cristiano e delle attestazioni ceramiche, che così si inserisce nella complessa rete di commercio e produzioni locali che ha interessato, in questi secoli, la costa settentrionale della Tunisia.

Il XVIII Congresso Internazionale di Archeologia Cristiana è da considerarsi un'occasione irripetibile per far conoscere alla comunità scientifica le potenzialità dell'oggetto della nostra ricerca.

**Eduardo Cerrato Casado** “Santos, obispos, possessores y su papel en la construcción de iglesias en el Sur de la Península Ibérica”

En la construcción de iglesias en el Sur de la Península Ibérica, diversos actores desempeñaron roles cruciales, como los obispos, possessores (propietarios de tierras) y otros individuos destacados. Las fuentes epigráficas y literarias revelan la diversidad de comitentes que impulsaron la edificación de iglesias en la región. Los registros históricos muestran la intervención imperial en la construcción de la Basílica dedicada a Santa María en Ceuta, ordenada por el emperador Justiniano. Además, destacan casos de constructores individuales como Belisario y Euresio, quienes erigieron basílicas en Ategua y Cabra respectivamente, durante el periodo comprendido entre finales del siglo VII y principios del VIII. La evidencia arqueológica también resalta la participación de nobles como Sixerio y Wisente en la fundación de una iglesia en Antequera, datada entre los siglos VI y VII. Controversias rodean la placa conmemorativa de Gundiliuva, que sugiere la construcción de tres iglesias en un lugar llamado Natívola entre el 594 y el 607. La acción comitente de los obispos, aunque más difícil de determinar, se manifiesta en testimonios epigráficos relacionados con la consagración de edificios. Fundaciones episcopales se atribuyen a Salustio de Sevilla en el siglo VI y experimentan un auge a partir del siglo VII con obispos como Agapio de Córdoba, Pimenio de Medina Sidonia, Honorato de Sevilla y Justo de Acci. Los monasterios también desempeñaron un papel significativo, como los cenobios gaditanos construidos por San Fructuoso en torno al 650 d. C. y el levantado por el abad Locuber en Bailén en el 691 d. C. También debió ser de naturaleza monástica la basílica fundada por Eulalia y su hijo Paulo en Egabro en el 660 d. C. La presencia de monasterios familiares se evidencia en la Bética desde épocas tardoantiguas hasta la era mozárabe, según testimonios de San Eulogio sobre los monasterios

**David Martínez Chico** “Atunia y su anillo facetado. Una inscripción anular en El Carpio de Tajo (Toledo)”

Un excepcional anillo visigodo de bronce, completamente inédito, es presentado en esta monografía. La pieza procede de un paraje denominado Vega de la Barca, a unos tres o cuatro kilómetros del término municipal de El Carpio de Tajo (Toledo, España), cerca de la necrópolis visigoda de dicho municipio español. El anillo pesa 4,68 g. y su autopsia ha sido realizada hace poco por nosotros. Tipológicamente está facetado de forma subcircular, presentando hasta ocho caras, de 7 x 8 mm, con tendencia octogonal. En cada una de las caras se han grabado letras de tipo mayúsculo o capital. El diámetro interno es de 16 mm, mientras que el externo llega a los 20 mm. Atendiendo a estas medidas, el anillo sería de una persona adulta. Efectivamente tanto la inscripción (al completo, *A / T / V / NI / A / VIV / AS / +*), alusiva a la propietaria del anillo (*ATVNIA*), con un raro nomen, como la advocación (*VIVAS +*), sugieren una cronología del siglo VI d. C. A pesar de la rareza que supone la pieza a nivel tipológico hispano, un buen paralelo epigráfico y tipológico es el anillo Vyne o anillo de Silvano; hallado en Silchester (Hampshire, Inglaterra), fue realizado en oro y se data, en cambio, entre los siglos IV y V d.C. Cabe recordar que, para el contexto hispano, la pervivencia de la onomástica latina en época visigoda es un hecho bien contrastado. A esto debe sumarse la difusión del cristianismo cuya ideología se plasma en numerosos anillos, confiriéndoles la categoría de documentos históricos, con dedicatorias religiosas (en este caso, extraída de 1 Juan 4:16). Así nuestra “Atunia, vive [en Dios]” se sumaría a uno de esos tantos testimonios escritos, permitiéndonos comprender todavía más determinados contextos epigráficos.

**Virgílio Lopes** “The Religious Topography of Mértola and the Process of Christianisation in the Iberian Peninsular”

The present work is part of a line of research I have been developing since 1990 at Campo Arqueológico de Mértola - Mértola's Archaeological Field (CAM). My aim is to outline Mértola's contribution to the knowledge of the first stirrings of Christianisation in the south-western peninsular.

The results are part of various archaeological excavations carried out by the institution's team, for which I have been co-responsible. They have contributed, in an uninterrupted way, a great deal to the

knowledge of the cultural material and historical topography of the city of Mértola and its territory in the period of Late Antiquity.

As regards religious architecture, the late antique basilicas of Rossio do Carmo, Ermida de Santo António and the Mausoleum were built in the *suburbium* outside the city gates, in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century. The buildings of a possible forum, located in the area of the old necropolis, date from the same time, remodelled and adapted to the new requirements created by the introduction of Christianity. On the western side of the platform a building compound would have been created to house two monumental baptisteries. In addition to their sumptuous baptismal pools, today we still have traces of pavements adorned with mosaic panels marked by polychrome glass *tesserae* and frescoes. The quality and quantity of the buildings evidences a high point in the Christianisation of the local population.

Today, Mértola is a small town situated in the south of Portugal. The archaeological work carried out by CAM over the last 45 years has revealed important remains of the past from the first human settlements up to the present day.

**Sebastian Ristow** “Arbeitsstand der Christlichen Archäologie in den germanischen Provinzen. Zur Christianisierung von Römern und Franken zwischen Mainz, Köln und Tongeren”

In the big agglomerations of the Late Antique provinces of Germania there are not only new finds and features found in the capitals Mainz and Cologne. Especially the new excavations under the Church of our Lady in Tongeren are offering a lot of new material and also of methodological questions while interpreting Early Christian features. The lecture will show the new Tongeren and actual running Mainz church excavations as well as new finds from the sites and from Cologne. Here we have the material for questions of continuity not only in the churches but also in the palace of the *praetorium*, used up to Carolingian period. New features we have also in Ingelheim, new finds are shown from Bonn and Aachen as well as new interpretations at Kobern-Gondorf.

**Russell Ó Riagáin** “Christian Life and Death in Ireland and Northern Britain in Late Antiquity”

This paper will explore the tension between orthodox Christian liturgy and a broader diverse set of Christian practices related to everyday life and death in Ireland and northern Britain between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. This period covers the poorly understood introduction of Christian practices to these two areas through their interactions with the Roman Empire, followed by a relative explosion of textual, sculptural, architectural and archaeological evidence for Christian practices in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, which will be outlined both generally and through case studies of smaller territories. Evidence will be presented that the standardisation—if not Christianisation—of practices was far from immediate, with funerary practices such as cremation continuing in both areas down to at least the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

The paper will be bookended by a discussion of what might be termed “the First Insular Reformation”, when the Church further increased its control over funerary practices in Ireland and Britain, accompanied by major campaigns of construction activity at Christian ritual centers and textual production. This last phase falls outside the traditional timeframe accorded to Late Antiquity, having much to do with Carolingian reforms and the Viking Age. However, the processes at work in this period were a culmination of what went before, even and if they obscure much of the heterogeneity of popular practice in the preceding centuries. Therefore, understanding the evidence in this later period enables us to identify and understand what came before, as will be discussed. Doing so will help “demystify” and “de-exceptionalise” Early Christianity in Ireland and northern Britain, both of which areas are often treated as outside the early medieval European mainstream by both Insular and Continental scholars, despite repeated claims to orthodoxy by Late Antique clerics in the regions themselves.



**SESSION: Varia****Chiara Cecalupo** “Is Christian Archaeology about to Fall Silent? The Perils of Christian Heritage in Museum”

In recent years, a deep international discussion has been taking place on how to deal with ecclesiastical architectural heritage in disuse. This problem also involves religious museums, but few studies have been developed so far. On the other hand, no reflection on this theme has been carried out for museums and exhibitions of Christian archaeology, which are also numerous throughout the European continent and the Mediterranean.

The problem that will be addressed is clear, and rests on three premises. The first is that museums of Christian archaeology combine the communication problems of archaeological museums and those of religious heritage. The second is that museums are at the service of the community, therefore Christian archaeologists employed in the museum field must continually address the problem of communicating the discipline. The third premise is that we are witnessing an advanced secularisation of European society, together with a steady regression in teaching ancient history, art history and Latin in all countries of Europe. These assumptions will lead to the fact that many of the ways in which we communicate in museum today and many of the words we commonly use and take for granted in educational devices will soon no longer be sufficient to make the public understand.

The aim of this talk is therefore to present the first reflection on communication problems that we will have to face in the near future. It will present the problem and will serve to open the discussion on the topic of the valorisation of Christian archaeological heritage in museums. It is important to talk about this kind of peril for the first time in the in the international context of CIAC, to understand how contemporary problems affect our work and to begin working together on possible solutions.

**Jan Dominik Bogataj** “*Ubi Iob sedebat in stirquilinio*. New Findings on the Sanctuary of Job from the Manuscript Tradition of *Itinerarium Egeriae*”

Two finds of manuscript fragments from Egeria’s travel diary, the first in 1909 (de Bruyne) and the second in 2005 (Alturo), have significantly contributed to a better knowledge of the shrine dedicated to Job (ancient Karnaim, present day Al-Shaykh Saad, in southern Syria). Particularly, Arturo’s fragments from the *Codex Matritensis* provide a much better understanding of the historical origins of the tradition of worshipping the Old Testament prophet Job, as the preserved manuscript fragment describes in detail the very structure of the sanctuary. The paper is, thus, a pioneering exploration of the different ancient traditions of the veneration of Job, with particular attention paid to the link between new textual finds and the archaeological evidence.

**Zhou Zhihuan** “Some Observations on Circular Churches in Late Antiquity”

The circular church is a specific form of paleochristian architecture, belonging to the category of the central plan. As opposed to the basilica, a more common form of church, the circular form goes back to the ancient Greek *tholos*, a circular religious or funerary building with a cupola. This form was then adapted by the Romans and used for the pagan tomb, such as the imperial mausoleum. At the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, it gave rise to the *martyria*, together with the *ecclesia*, the two main forms of Christian buildings.

The transition from the *martyria* to the circular churches is linked to the celebration of the Christian liturgy of the martyr’s body. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre inspired Constantine the Great to build his own mausoleum and those of his daughters, as well as the circular churches. In Rome, bishop *Simplicius* built the Rotunda of Santo Stefano in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Other examples include San Michele Arcangelo in Perugia and the Rotunda of Galerius, also known as the Rotunda of Hagios Georgios. The circular form allowed Christians to concentrate on their cult from all directions during the liturgy. However, the lack of an apsidal area limits the dimension of the Christian ritual and resulted in the bishop not being able to face all the faithful during the liturgy. The modification and diffusion of the polygonal plan seems to be a solution and a combination of the cir-

cular form and the basilica form, which explains the success of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and San Vitale in Ravenna. The aim of this communication is, therefore, to examine the evaluation of the round church and to make some observations on its important role in the architectural evaluation from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages.

**Corinna Mairhanser** “Curtains as a Medium of Staging the Mystery of Faith”

Late Antique and Byzantine churches aimed to make divinity and religious concepts tangible, despite their abstract nature. The challenge was to maintain the mystery of faith without fully revealing it. To preserve the fascination of the sacred and the mysterious unknown, curtains were used in these religious contexts. How did they impact the visitors’ religious experience?

Pictorial evidence suggests that curtains often operated at thresholds, where they were arranged in various layers around the liturgical centre of the church, the Holy of Holies, in which the Christian belief manifested itself. Visitors moved systematically through these different spheres as they entered the church’s interior, without being able to experience them in their entirety. In the process of perception, these textiles evoked culturally standardised imaginings without allowing for verification by looking behind the curtain. From a cognitive and psychological perspective, this *velatio* is the most intriguing function of curtains, since the imagination of the beholder tries to visualise what is concealed. The activated phantasia surpasses the threshold of the hidden, creates its own reality, and leads to the illusion of a deeper insight into the sacredness of the church space. The mere sight and perception of the curtain is, thus, connected with the need to reveal the unknown and the fascination of the mysterious hidden. The desire to unveil the supposed mystery of faith is symptomatic of the perception of veils and curtains in churches, but it is only one aspect of their function as media of presentation, highlighting and marking transitions. Through their dynamic and performative qualities, curtains grab people’s attention, activate their imagination, and heighten their expectations.

This paper provides new insights into how curtains superelevate meaningful things of venerated people, create sacred spheres, and define holiness – even positioning the potentially visible, in a sense, “beyond the veil”.

**Lorenzo Cigaina** “Christus vs. Hercules: Struggle for Victory in Rome between the Tetrarchic and Constantinian Ages”

In the frame of the well-known confrontation between the Godman Jesus and the Graeco-Roman hero Hercules in patristic and pagan texts, this paper will explore some new iconographic issues from the city of Rome at the turning point in the years around the Edict of Milan (313 AD). The similarities between the two figures are bewildering: both were sons of the highest god, both died in great pain and, after resurrecting, ascended to heaven; during their lifetime they both benefited mankind through their example and deeds. Hercules, in particular, was considered by cynics a successful paradigm of virtues exercised while excelling as an allegory of the universal reason (*logos*) and as an example of obedience to his divine father for the Stoics. Christian thinkers reacted by clearly demarcating Jesus from other “sons of god” such as Hercules, Dionysos, Asclepius, Castor and Pollux, who were all born and, therefore, not eternal. Moreover, Hercules’ deification was credited to his virtue alone, thus excluding the intervention of the divine Grace. Following the renewed attention to the legacy of Hercules in the Christian era (e.g., A. Allan et al., *Herakles inside and outside the church*, Leiden 2019) the focus will be on the image of the suffering hero at the time of the earliest overt depictions of the Cross and the creation of the Passion sarcophagi. Departing from the identification of a sculpture as a suffering Heracles, the reception of this theme will be contextualised in the years of the Tetrarchy, as Maximian and especially his son Maxentius promoted in Rome a herculean theology of power. Some characteristics of such a depiction seem to reverberate in the Passion of Christ, possibly suggesting a kind of pagan counterreaction. Soon after the victory of Christianity, some iconographic elements migrated into the flourishing Christian art, being reinterpreted in the light of true faith.

**András Handl** “Piecing Together the Past: Insights of the ‘Hippolytus-Statue’ Project”

The ‘Hippolytus-statue’ is a full-size three-dimensional image depicting a bearded man in a philosopher’s cloak, seated and holding a book. As a probable Roman copy of a Greek statue, it also displays a Paschal calendar, an Easter computus, and a list of literary works. These suggest that Christians rededicated a ‘pagan’ statue in the ear-

ly 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. Remarkably, the statue was reappropriated during a period in which Christian intellectuals, such as Tertullian (c.200 CE), fulminated against any kind of sculptures.

After its rediscovery around 1551 and its ‘restoration’ in the workshop of the Renaissance antiquarian Pirro Ligorio (1512?-1583), the statue was cherished as ‘Hippolytus’, the erudite father of the (Roman) church. The eminent Margherita Guarducci observed however, that the legs of the statue are wrapped in a Greek-style female chiton. Ever since, it has controversially been discussed whether the statue was originally a male or a female, and whom it represented. What parts did the Christians reuse and, more importantly, why? What was its purpose? What precisely was rediscovered in 1551? Who came up with the idea of restoring it to ‘Hippolytus’ and why? Alternatively, is the statue nothing more than a 16<sup>th</sup>-century fraud perpetrated by a talented antiquarian?

A research project (2018-2022) funded by the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) and two workshops held in Leuven/Belgium (2021 and 2022) addressed many of these pressing issues. The aim of this paper is to present the most important insights of the project after a very short introduction of the artefact. The presentation will conclude with some reflections about the *Sitz im Leben* of the statue in the context of the lived religious experience of Christians in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century in Rome.

### **SESSION: Novelties (The East)**

#### **Simeon D. Ehrlich** “An Occidented Church from Byzantine Ascalon”

Byzantine churches face east – except when they don’t. That is to say, while most Byzantine churches are oriented east, a select few are west-facing. There are historical contexts where occidented churches appear with greater frequency. For instance, the earliest churches were built before the adoption of orientation as the preferred practice. A second context is medieval France and a third is the Justinianic Levant – which brings us to Byzantine Ascalon.

Excavations at the Mediterranean port of Ascalon in the 1980s and early 1990s uncovered a building, interpreted as a bathhouse and brothel, immediately to the north of a structure with a large occidental apse. The apsidal building had been stripped to its foundations and no interpretation was offered beyond a large civic building of indeterminate function. A recent reconsideration of this context has shown that the “brothel” is in fact a baptistery built upon a disused bathhouse as part of the Christianisation of public spaces in Late Antiquity. The baptistery appears to be but one part of an urban ecclesiastical complex that also included a small vineyard and the large occidental apse.

Standing ruins of the Byzantine period at Ascalon were quarried in the late 1800s at the instruction of the Ottomans; however, this was not until after the first excavations were conducted at the site by Lady Hester Stanhope in the early 1800s. Accounts of her excavations point to the exposure of a large apsidal building that once served as a church. Shortly thereafter, the Scottish Orientalist painter David Roberts depicted a large occidented apsidal building at Ascalon.

This paper argues that the building excavated by Lady Hester Stanhope is an occidented Justinianic church – one then painted by David Roberts, and stripped to its foundations by the Ottoman quarrying, before its rediscovery and misinterpretation in modern times.

**Amedeo Ricco** “Le tombe perdute di Paola, Eustochio e Girolamo nella Basilica della Natività a Betlemme: riesame delle fonti e dei dati archeologici e ipotesi di localizzazione”

La posizione, nelle grotte sottostanti la basilica della Natività a Betlemme, delle sepolture dei celebri “cittadini d’elezione” della città – che qui vissero e morirono all’inizio del V sec. d. C. – è sempre rimasta un enigma. Il riesame delle fonti letterarie e degli indizi in esse presenti, unito a recenti sopralluoghi nelle grotte adiacenti a quella venerata della Natività, ci ha permesso di formulare una ipotesi di localizzazione.

**Gabriele Castiglia, Simone Schiavone, Giulia Spadanuda, Angelita Troiani** “New Research in the Monastery of the Shepherds’ Field in Beit Sahour (Bethlehem, West Bank)”

Starting from March 2023, the Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana (PIAC), in collaboration with the Custody of the Holy Land, initiated new archaeological investigations at the monastic site known as Shepherds’ Field in Beit Sahour, near Bethlehem, Palestine.

This paper aims to present the initial results of the excavations conducted in the monastery chapel – already partially explored by Father V. C. Corbo in the 1950s – which have provided a clearer understanding of its phases. This understanding was achieved through the analysis of a substantial quantity of ceramic artefacts and an updated examination of the construction sequence of the walls. Currently, there has been identification of the initial evidence of activity pre-dating the monastery. This phase is characterised by the presence of a quarry, upon which the subsequent construction of the chapel was based.

Two main phases of the chapel are now recognisable: the first likely dating back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century, characterised by a small single-nave church with an externally quadrangular apse and internally semi-circular. This was followed, probably in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, by a significant expansion, including the addition of a new polygonal apse (rendering the older one non-functional) and a series of annexed rooms immediately south of the worship area.

The study of the Shepherds’ Field context aims to deepen in the coming years, extending to areas outside the complex that have never been investigated. This research fits into a broader analysis of the evolution of monastic geography in the Bethlehem area. There is hope to identify evidence from later periods, especially related to the transition under Islamic rule, which remains entirely unknown in terms of timing and methods in the Shepherds’ Field region.

**Giulia Spadanuda** “Recording Monasticism in the Provinces of *Palaestinae* during the Byzantine Period: a New Methodology and Case Study”

Drawing inspiration from my Ph.D. research, this contribution aims to reassess the proliferation of monastic settlements in the three provinces of *Palaestinae* (*Prima*, *Secunda*, and *Tertia*) during the Byzantine period. In fact, a significant transformation occurred in this region under the rule of Constantine, driven by the progressive evolution of *Palaestinae* into the Christian Holy Land. This change was marked by the growing practice of pilgrimage and the increasing number of monastic sites. Literary sources provide insights into the architectural components of a monastery, whether it be a *coenobium* or a *laura*: cells for monks, one or two churches, a refectory, a bakery, an infirmary, courtyards, cisterns, and a hospice for pilgrims. Additional rooms have been uncovered during various excavation seasons in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in recent years, revealing installations for oil and wine presses. Starting from the last century, interest in monastic sites in the Holy Land has significantly increased, leading to the need to establish a method for their identification. Over time, various approaches have been proposed, resulting in the creation of models useful for pinpointing monastic sites that emerged in urban, rural, and desert environments. The result was the creation of several corpora or encyclopaedias that encompass a systematic collection of monasteries and their characteristics.

The purpose of this contribution is to reconsider the methods used so far in identifying monastic contexts, and especially to propose a new one, eliminating, where necessary, sites that cannot be considered as such due to a lack of significant factors. The contribution of written sources is undoubtedly essential to carry out this work, but it will be complemented with data from material culture for the development of a new case study and mapping of monastic sites in this territory.



**Ambra D'Alessandro** “Ricostruire Gerusalemme: nuove proposte per la ricostruzione topografica della città Santa partendo dall'*Antonini Placentini Itinerarium*”

Studiare la topografia urbana di Gerusalemme richiede inevitabilmente un approccio attento all'analisi, alla rilettura e all'interpretazione delle fonti scritte, strumenti fondamentali per la ricostruzione dell'assetto urbano ed extra urbano della città.

In particolare, lo studio di alcuni *itineraria* di età bizantina, seppur con modalità e intenti differenti rispetto al racconto topografico, offre importanti riferimenti ai principali Luoghi Santi descrivendone spazi liturgici e ricostruiti dettagliando la conformazione di alcuni complessi. Attraverso un'analisi attenta, emergono sia rimandi espliciti che impliciti fornendo preziosi elementi che consentono talvolta di definire un terminus ante o post quem per gli edifici stessi. È importante sottolineare come anche le stesse omissioni di specifici luoghi nelle fonti si rivelano altrettanto significative, fornendo spunti per riflessioni più ampie e approfondite.

L'*Antonini Placentini Itinerarium* costituisce una delle più complete relazioni di viaggio circa i Luoghi Santi nel periodo bizantino. Nel suo viaggio il pellegrino, partendo da Piacenza, percorre la tradizionale rotta dei pellegrinaggi altomedievali in Terra Santa, descrivendo con minuzia di particolari il Santo Sepolcro e gli edifici religiosi presenti in città, fornendo alcuni dettagli molto interessanti.

La ricerca proposta intende focalizzarsi sulla rilettura dell'*Antonini Placentini Itinerarium* al fine di avanzare nuove proposte in riferimento alla collocazione topografica di alcuni complessi religiosi, attraverso il confronto con gli altri *itineraria* e *descriptiones* di età bizantina sulla città. Questo approccio si svolge con una consapevole attenzione al legame intrinseco tra questi e il Santo Sepolcro. Tale studio non solo intende tracciare le trasformazioni urbane ed extra urbane nel corso dei secoli, ma offre anche una visione privilegiata per comprendere il ruolo significativo del complesso costantiniano nell'identità e nella struttura della città Santa attraverso le diverse epoche storiche.

**Václav Ježek** “The Church in *Azotus Paralios*/Ashdod Yam Israel and Female Diaconate”

The recently discovered church in *Azotus Paralios* (Ashdod Yam) / Israel, has yielded new information regarding the importance of female diaconates and female clergy generally. The strange and extraordinary burials of female figures within the church precinct can be proof of the liturgical role of females, especially in the period of Justinian the Great. The rather enigmatic church discovered by Alexander Fantalkin has yielded interesting architectural features coupled with important mosaics, combined with numerous burials inside the church. The archaeological record testifies to the church functioning for centuries, with various modifications to its architectural plan. The dating of the various parts of the church remains unclear. The size of the church would suggest that the area and the church was associated with an important saint or saints, perhaps linked with the monophysite or other Christian movements. *Azotus Paralios* seems to have gained special prominence during the period of Justinian the Great, especially in relation to his policies related to international commerce, political influence and involvement in Israel/Palestine. The church and its related structures were abruptly destroyed perhaps during the Sassanid invasions. Part of the church contains what appears to be a reliquary in the form of a tomb.

The unparallel female burials and other archaeological elements pointing to female figures associated with this site has prompted the author, who has also participated in excavations at this site, to formulate a new reinterpretation of female clergy and female liturgical roles in the period of Justinian the Great. The contribution analyses some of the features of the site related to possible female clerical positions and the role of women generally. We then analyse the situation of females in relation to the church and ecclesial hierarchy in the period of Justinian the Great and compare the literary evidence with the archaeological evidence.

**Mariusz Gwiazda** “Marble Use in Secular and Sacral Spaces in Southern Levant of the Early Byzantine period”

The objective of the paper is to specify how marble was used in the Early Byzantine *Phoenicia*, *Palaestina*, and *Arabia*. So far, the utilisation and trade of this material in southern Levant between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD has not been the subject of synthetic research. The presentation will address a number of scientific problems. The most important of these is to determine the following: What kind of marble objects (architectural elements, liturgical elements, etc.) were used in Early Byzantine southern Levant? In what spaces and buildings was this material used and who mainly used it?

The identification of the place and manner of marble utilisation is based on gathering data about all published finds of marble objects from archaeological sites. Models of terrain accessibility in southern Levant allowed the definition of the extent and diversity of their distribution, taking into account the character of the sites (cities, villages and monasteries) and the distance from the ports on the Mediterranean coast. These studies indicate that, compared to the Roman period, there was a clear increase in the number of sites with marbles during the Early Byzantine period. Surprisingly, this coincides with a drastic reduction in the importation of this material to the Levant compared to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries CE.

**Ronja Fink** “The Afterlife of Ancient Oracles: a Case Study in *Lycia*”

The pagan sanctuary of Sura in Lycia was an important place of worship of Apollo. Against the backdrop of breath-taking natural features, pilgrims received oracles derived from fish activity at a freshwater spring. Literary and epigraphic sources from the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial period give accounts of the oracles of Sura. For the late antique and Byzantine period, the only written reference to the site is a record by Stephanos of Byzantium. Archaeology must, therefore, be consulted to retrace the afterlife of the Apollo oracle of Sura in the Early Christian period.

In a marshy plain, surrounded by steep mountains, a Hellenistic temple, sacred spring and a Late Antique church are situated close to one another. The Doric temple is located on the eastern side of the

plain near a sulphurous freshwater spring. Its water mixed with sea water flowing into the plain at high tide creates an unusual environment for fish, which were essential to the oracle. The three-aisled basilica from the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century lies on a slightly elevated plateau. Bedrock is integrated into parts of the church. The apse of the church is located at the exact height of the spring, approximately 40 m apart, and appears to correspond with it. This interaction gives rise to several questions regarding the oracle's afterlife in the Early Christian period. How does Early Christian architecture interact with the pagan shrine and its use of the spring? What role do natural phenomena play in the continuity of cults in Early Christian Lycia? Does the addition of a church here suggest change or continuity in Lycia's sacred topography?

These questions will be posed in this paper and are part of a dissertation on Continuity and Change in Lycian Sacred Topography in Late Antiquity.

**Spyridon Panagopoulos** “The Martyrs and the Greek-Roman Spectacles”

The Christians of the first centuries were a small group of faithful and devoted individuals who were persecuted by the authorities for their religious beliefs. The story of how this small group of “disciples and followers of Jesus” gained power within the empire, despite being persecuted several times, is a wonderful story of blood. In the bloodshed by the victims of the persecutions, the martyrs of Christianity, Christians, and Gentiles found inspiration and steadfast faith in Christ. Christians desired martyrdom as well as its reward it was worth the sacrifice it required. Martyrdom was something Christ's followers sought with zeal because they believed that in this way, suffering and sacrificing him himself for Christ, they would thereby gain a place in the heavenly kingdom. So martyrdom for them became a way of resistance against the evil empire and a way of accomplishing the work of the one true God on earth. In this paper, we will investigate the relationship of the martyrs with the Greco-Roman spectacles and how they influenced the confession of faith and its strengthening in martyrdom.

**Joanna Ciesielska** “Forging Faith: Bioarchaeological Insights into the Formation of the Christian Community in the Medieval Kingdom of Alwa”

In the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century, modern Sudan was divided among three distinct kingdoms: Nobadia, Makuria, and Alwa. Among these, the establishment of Soba, the capital of the southernmost kingdom of Alwa, remains enigmatic. Excavations spanning from the 1950s to the 1990s, uncovered remnants of multiple churches and associated cemeteries in various parts of the site, which offered a window into the burial practices and the significance of religion to the local community. Burials adjacent to these churches (mostly dated to the 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> century), some within crypts, demonstrate a strong connection between the deceased and the sanctuaries of faith. Such *ad sanctos* burials reflect the Christian doctrine of intercession, with proximity to religious establishments deemed prestigious and spiritually advantageous. The presence of these elite burials suggests that the burgeoning Christian community in Soba was tightly woven into the fabric of the city’s religious and social life. The application of laboratory techniques sheds light on the origins of Soba’s early inhabitants and the formation of its ethno-cultural landscape. The results of the isotopic analyses suggest that these individuals had a local background, carrying significant implications for our understanding of the city’s establishment. While some researchers speculate that the initial settlers might have been remnants of the Late Meroitic kingdom, others propose a shared ancestry with the founders of neighbouring kingdoms such as Nobadia and Makuria and/or connections with the Nuba people from the Kordofan region to the south and southwest of Soba. The results of this study paint a compelling picture of a community with deep local roots, fundamentally shaping our understanding of the city’s establishment. This presentation unravels the intricate tapestry of the religious and social dynamics that shaped the Early Christian enclave in the 6<sup>th</sup> century kingdom of Alwa.

**POSTER SESSION:****Gabriel Garza Algaba** “New Perspectives on the Christianization in the territory of the Vascones between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Centuries”

El principal objetivo de esta investigación es, a partir de la documentación material, conocer el cristianismo en el «territorio vascón» entre los siglos IV y V. La geografía escogida comprendería las ciudades que las fuentes clásicas (Estrabón, Tito Livio, Plinio y Ptolomeo) asocian al mundo vascón, correspondiente a la actual Navarra, noreste de Guipúzcoa, la zona noroeste de Zaragoza y parte meridional de La Rioja. Mi estudio abarca los siglos IV y V, momentos en los que aparecen las primeras evidencias de esta religión. La novedad de este estudio reside en que las investigaciones que se han desarrollado hasta la fecha sobre la cuestión no han tenido en cuenta las evidencias materiales desde una óptica holística, y plasmar dichos hallazgos en el póster junto a varios mapas.

Entre dichas evidencias destacan: la estela funeraria de Rusticola de la villa romana de Gallipienzo; tanto los enterramientos de la Catedral de Pamplona, como el cáliz cristiano y el osculatorio extraídos de la excavación de esta misma; la posible necrópolis paleocristiana de *Curnonium*; la lauda sepulcral dedicada a Ursinus de Gracurris; las cruces del foro de la ciudad romana de Los Bañales; la mal llamada «Sinagoga» de Sádaba; el sarcófago paleocristiano de Castiliscar; el posible baptisterio de Calagurris, además de algunos fragmentos cerámicos con cruces cristianas; la inscripción referente al archidiacono Saloniarius de *Cascantum*; las losas funerarias cristianas de Vareia; el crismón del arco cristiano de Mendivil; la estela romana cristiana del valle de Goñi; y el aplique de vestimenta de Fitero.

**Josipa Baraka Perica, Dijana Ćemal, Anđela Duvnjak, Klara Glavota, Ivan Mašković, Monika Špoljarić, Luka Žarković** “Christian Death in the Dalmatian Countryside”

This poster aims to provide an overview of the typology of Early Christian graves within rural churches and an overview of the selection of positions for burials (inside or next to sacral buildings). The primary objective is to improve the understanding of Christian funeral

customs in rural areas, and to identify the hierarchy of burial sites. According to archaeological research, rural churches are often built in places that were previously used for burials or rural shrines and are rarely without graves. The most interesting and representative Dalmatian examples from the many available will be showcased in this poster.

**Francesca Beltrame** “On the Traces of the Aquileian Sarcophagus with the Greek Epitaph of Biktoria”

On 19<sup>th</sup> July 1796, the Barnabite Father Angelo Maria Cortenovis, a central figure in Aquileian antiquarian research in the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, reported to Gaetano Marini the discovery of a Greek Christian inscription (Vat. Lat. ms. 9046, f. 222). The epigraph, engraved on a stone sarcophagus, was found at Beligna Abbey, south of Aquileia, and commemorated Biktoria, wife of Eusebios, who died more or less at the age of 30, on the fifth day of the month of Peritios.

In addition to this epistle, the epitaph is remembered only in one of Cortenovis’ diaries (BCUd, ms. f. pr. XVI/596, ff. 40’, 42) and in one of the volumes of the *Inscriptiones christianae latinae et graecae aevi milliarrii* by Marini (Vat. Lat. ms. 9072, f. 488, n. 5); it does not appear either in *IG XIV* or in the *Inscriptiones Aquileiae* by Giovanni Battista Brusin. Then, after a long silence, it seemed that the first to report its existence again in 1994 was Father Antonio Ferrua, who had taken up the transcription of Vat. Lat. ms. 9046, f. 222, not without some interpretative uncertainty.

However, some documents in the Austrian State Archives of Vienna and some communications in the *Mitteilungen der K.K. Zentral-Kommission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Kunst- und Historischen Denkmale* showed that between 1880 and 1882, the sarcophagus still existed, was located in Salcano and had already attracted the attention of some scholars.

Furthermore, these testimonies contained a very precise apograph of the epitaph, which allowed the correction and clarification of Cortenovis’ transcription. Indeed, in this way, it was understood that the deceased came from the *kome Atarkon*, most likely coinciding with the vicus that Atarca the Syrian merchant commemorated in a Christian inscription from 440, discovered near Ivrea, was originally from (CIL V, 6812).

**Massimiliano David** “Towards a New Image of Late Antique Ravenna. Problems, Perspectives and Evidence”

The extraordinary heritage of preserved Late Antique buildings in Ravenna is at the beginning of the polarisation of studies around the topic of their structure and decorative apparatus. Scientific research on the territory of Ravenna and the definition of its limits is scarce, as are investigations on urban planning and hydrography.

In the last two decades, new lines of research with stratigraphic excavations have made it possible to reread the many significant aspects that had long remained in the shadows, such as the disappeared buildings (S. Lorenzo in Cesarea), the church of Sant'Agata Maggiore or the strategic complexes of S. Croce and S. Giovanni Evangelista. Even Theoderic's mausoleum, the object of many studies, may reveal new questions to solve. From the point of view of field research, the Melissa Project is currently engaged in the study of the Church of Saints John and Paul, intended as a key to obtain a correct reading of the local aspects of Christianisation of the city-walls during the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

The present contribution summarises certain published and unpublished results from the most recent studies conducted by the research groups headed by the University of Bologna and, more recently, by the Sapienza University.

**Tomislav Fabijanić** “New Early Christian Inscription from *Dalmatia* with the Name of a *marmorarius*”

Vir is an island approximately 30 km to the northwest of Zadar (*Iader*), one of the most important Early Christian centres on the eastern Adriatic coast. Furthermore, Vir was a part of the Nin (*Aenona*) municipal territory, another important Roman and Early Christian centre. In 2013, the University of Zadar, in collaboration with the Archaeological Museum of Zadar, started excavations of the Smratina site on the island of Vir. On the site, the remains of two churches were found, one built inside the other. The larger church was built in several phases. It has a polygonal apse and can be attributed to Early Christianity. The smaller church belongs to the medieval (Romanesque?) period. More than 20 graves have also been excavated on the site, some with Byzantine jewellery. Of special importance are the remains of an Early Christian altar



screen. These were re-used in the medieval period as building blocks during the construction of a grave. The grave (marked as “grave 10”) did not contain any osteological remains. However, two pilaster fragments bear the name of the *marmorarius* called *Marcilianus*. The presentation will focus on that particular inscription, which is a rare example of an inscription that bears the name of an artisan involved in the decoration of Early Christian churches on the eastern Adriatic coast.

**Riccardo Iannuccelli** “Le scoperte ottocentesche di palazzo Fiano al Corso”

Traendo ispirazione dal mio progetto dottorale, il poster si propone di contestualizzare il rinvenimento di epigrafi funerarie di V secolo intra muros attraverso il caso studio di palazzo Fiano al Corso (Roma). Qui, in stretta contiguità con la basilica di S. Lorenzo in Lucina e di poco ad Ovest della via Lata, nel 1872 vennero rinvenuti due sarcofagi in marmo di età antoniniana e un buon numero di epigrafi funerarie. Tali manufatti, per quanto non condividano il medesimo orizzonte cronologico, sono tutti pertinenti all'istallazione di un sepolcreto tardo attratto con certezza dalla basilica urbana.

Valorizzando i dati epigrafici del contesto archeologico attraverso l'analisi dei formulari, della paleografia, dei supporti e del riutilizzo delle lastre epigrafiche stesse, sarà possibile distinguerle in due gruppi: un primo nucleo di iscrizioni, databile al V secolo e proveniente dai cimiteri romani e un secondo, più tardo, relativo alla fase originaria del sepolcreto di S. Lorenzo in Lucina e databile al secolo VIII.

**Gaia Mariotti** “Costumi isiaci su alcuni fondi dorati provenienti dalle catacombe cristiane di Roma?”

Il poster intende far luce su alcuni fondi dorati provenienti dai cimiteri cristiani di Roma che sembrano presentare costumi legati al culto di Iside. Si tratta di manufatti oggi conservati al Museo Cristiano vaticano e databili per lo più al III secolo d. C., di cui si proporrà l'approfondimento storico artistico ed iconografico, fine ad una nuova possibile ipotesi interpretativa.

**Lyuba Traykova** “Buckles with Christian Symbols and Inscriptions from Bulgaria”

Belt buckles are part of the main elements of clothing with a functional purpose. They are subject to fashion and change relatively quickly. This makes them reliable chronological indicators. When they are found in reliable archaeological contexts, especially in necropolises, they offer information about gender based on anthropological research. They also potentially reveal information about the social position and ethnic identity of their bearers, about human mobility, production and trade. The buckles with Christian symbols and inscriptions shed some light on the penetration of the Christian religion into everyday life and the army. Their decoration indicates belonging to the Christian religion. The inscriptions are a prayer for help and protection.

The number of finds from Bulgaria exceeds the number of published finds from the territory of the Early Byzantine Empire.

**Lyudmil Vagalinski** “Christianity in *Heraclea Sintica* (Archaeological Evidence)”

*Heraclea Sintica* is located in the SW corner of Bulgaria on the boundary between ancient Thrace and Macedonia. The city was founded in the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC by Macedonian colonists in the lands of the Thracian Sinti. Almost by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, there were no traces of Christianity. In the 380s, Early Christians destroyed a sanctuary of the goddess Nemesis at the forum. Very soon after that (t. p. q. AD 388) a massive earthquake struck the city. Before 425 a public building (pagan temple?) next to the north-east corner of the forum was converted to an Early Christian church. It is among the few (stratigraphically) reliably dated Early Christian temples in south-west Bulgaria. In the 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> century, the three-aisle basilica was the central and maybe the only public building in the city. At that time the church was extended to the west. The forum was totally derelict. The Heracleans buried their closest people in it and in preferred proximity to their basilica. A roof-tile stamped with a cross reveals the Christian affiliation of the buried underneath it and that of the producers. The ceramic image of a warrior-saint (?) reveals the presence of a Christian population on the Acropolis in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Life in *Heraclea Sintica* stopped after the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

**Valentina Virgili** “Il ruolo del vescovo nelle costruzioni o restauri degli edifici culturali durante la prima dominazione musulmana in Israele, nei territori palestinesi e in Giordania”

L'intervento qui proposto prende spunto dalla mia tesi dottorale intitolata “Le comunità cristiane durante la prima dominazione musulmana attraverso le testimonianze epigrafiche in: Israele, territori Palestinesi e Giordania”. In queste aree, nelle iscrizioni musive dedicatorie ufficiali, la figura del vescovo è riconducibile, spesso, al ruolo di promotore dei lavori ma viene anche utilizzata per datare un determinato restauro o costruzione ex novo di un edificio ecclesiastico. Infatti gli esecutori effettivi sembrano essere i componenti della gerarchia ecclesiastica minore oppure le famiglie aristocratiche locali.

Sono state, anche, ritrovate delle epigrafi che menzionano i soli membri della gerarchia ecclesiastica minore, in villaggi (Khirbet Tawas), spesso, distanti dai centri diocesani. Si può supporre che volessero far capire la propria indipendenza e autonomia nella costruzione degli edifici culturali senza chiedere un aiuto o sostegno alla sede episcopale di riferimento.

Quando si trovano menzionate le figure di corepiscopi o periodoti è possibile ricondurre il ruolo del vescovo a quello di committente. In questi casi l'intervento, probabilmente, è diretto da parte dello stesso vescovo. Inoltre è interessante rilevare che queste figure, si trovano spesso testimoniate all'interno dei complessi monastici oppure nelle comunità dove dei funzionari laici si erano occupati dei lavori.

Confrontando i testi epigrafici è stato possibile dare un apporto concreto a questa problematica relativa al ruolo del vescovo nei lavori svolti nell'ambito della propria diocesi.

**Maja Zeman, Ana Marinković, Suzana Damiani, Ivana Ožanić Roguljić** “Discovering the Old Dubrovnik Cathedrals. The Afterlife of Late Antique and Early Christian Marbles in the Middle Ages”

The project “Discovering the Old Dubrovnik Cathedrals” was initiated in 2018 as an interdisciplinary cooperation of five Croatian institutions on the scientific processing of all movable finds from the locality of Dubrovnik Cathedral, excavated in the 1980s. This multi-layered, urban locality shows continuous building activities that

culminated after the earthquake of 1667, when the Baroque cathedral was built on the site of two earlier churches: the Romanesque cathedral, and the so-called first church, or the Byzantine Basilica.

As the archaeological research initiated in the 1980s was never completed and the excavated remains of two earlier churches were, to a greater extent, 'spared' of the restoration interventions, a more detailed analysis of architectural structures preserved in situ was also enabled. Numerous structural transformations, in parts even evidence of micro adaptations have been identified, leading consequently to the preliminary conclusion that the oldest basilica could have been built as a result of the architectural 'recycling' of some earlier edifice of yet unknown function. With that in mind, newly discovered Late Antique and Early Christian marble sculptures, complemented by the great number of heterogeneous marble fragments that were all stored in the Cathedral lapidarium after the 1980s research and never processed, are now subjected to a more detailed analysis.

The poster presentation aims to display this marble repertoire for the first time, as well as to present the new methodological approach applied in order to eventually establish the function and form, chronological and stylistic analogies, or the original provenance of specific objects. The new approach required a close evaluation of the respective archaeological context and the state in which Late Antique and Early Christian marbles were first discovered at the locality. As a result, a complex typology of their later reuse was established, including different modes of non-destructive secondary interventions, thus giving us valuable insights into the correlations between their prime materiality and the development of new stonemason technologies during the Middle Ages.



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