

Session Proposal

European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) 12th Annual Meeting

Krakow, Poland

19th to 24th September 2006

Organizers: Mirosław P. Kruk, Aleksandra Sulikowska-Gaska, Marcin Wołoszyn

Theme:

Archaeology and Material Culture: Interpreting the Archaeological Record

Session Title:

Sacralia Ruthenica - Archaeology about the Christianisation of Eastern Europe (10th - 13th Century)

Abstract:

The basic objective of the symposium's organisers is a discussion about devotional objects of the Orthodox zone (Byzantine-Rus' zone) dating from the 10th -13th century. Three basic types of objects have been taken into account: encolpia, cross-pendants, and stone icons.

Four groups of issues can be differentiated in the scheduled symposium:

1. Byzantine / Rus' Heritage in Contemporary Europe

The specific character of the Byzantine Commonwealth's history resulted in the fact that the major part of the cultural heritage of this area is located outside the borders of the medieval Byzantium and Rus' and the Orthodox areas in the Balkans. The first part of the symposium will be devoted to the problem of preparing and publishing information about the relics of the Byzantine-Rus' zone stored in museum collections of Western European or Northern European countries.

2. Medieval Devotional Objects: a Sign of Faith or Ornamentation?

Large numbers of crosses and icons have been found throughout Eastern Europe. The functionality issue of these items has been discussed for 150 years – do they testify to the faith of their owners or were they simply used as ornamentation? Disputes on this subject concern not only Rus', but Scandinavia as well. A serious drawback in the discussion is the scarce knowledge about devotional objects from the area of the Byzantine Empire where the Christianisation of Eastern Europe began. The organisers, by means of inviting Byzantium experts to the symposium, attempt to extend the discussion on the function of the devotional objects onto the area of the Byzantine civilisation.

3. Ex Oriente Lux? – Orthodox Devotional Objects Outside the Borders of the Byzantine-Rus' Civilisation

Large numbers of devotional objects of Orthodox character have also been found in other areas, in particular in Scandinavia. Discussions have been carried out since the 19th century about the presence of Byzantine missions in the north of our continent. However, maybe the

Scandinavian encolpia finds testify to the great attractiveness of Byzantine civilisation and not to its missionary activity.

4. Gender Studies

Devotional objects found in graves are predominantly in the burial places of women. This fact, as well as other factors, has made the contemporary medieval academic circles greatly interested in the issue of a quicker and a more complete Christianisation of women in comparison with men.

Publications such as *Rom und Byzanz im Norden* (M. Müller-Wille ed. 1997 ; 1998) and *The Cross goes North* (M. Carver ed. 2004) are an excellent example of the extensive contribution of archaeology into the discussion on the Christianisation of our continent and the formation of great cultural zones. The symposium under preparation should provide more thorough information about the formation process of the so-called *chrétienté nouvelle* in Central Europe.

The symposium will be accompanied by an exhibition of devotional objects stored in the National Museum in Cracow and the National Museum in Warsaw. The organisers of the symposium are preparing a monographic survey of the relics from both museums, which is scheduled for publication by September 2006.

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