

Saints' Cults and the Dynamics of Regional Cohesion (Dubrovnik, 18–20 Oct 12)

Dubrovnik (Croatia), Oct 18–20, 2012

Deadline: Mar 1, 2012

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Conference organized by
Croatian Hagiography Society HAGIOTHECA
and
CULTSYMBOLS Project of the ESF EuroCORECODE Programme

The topic proposed as the focus of the fourth Hagiotheca conference, in collaboration with CULTSYMBOLS Project of the ESF (www.cultsymbols.net), is the way in which the cults of saints contributed to the creation of spatially delimited (regional) collective identities in the Middle Ages. The notion of regio can be understood broadly, as a flexible category which covers spatial entities of various sizes and kinds. The cult of saints often functioned as a cohesive (or disruptive) forces which helped people to attach to (or detach from) particular regions. The saints belonged to the symbols which helped to bind and break communities. Thus, the study of the cult of saints could offer significant contribution to the study of concepts of regional identity through scrutinising the spatial aspect of the notion of the saintly patrocinium. The conference shall investigate how these cults contributed to the changing internal divisions, the fluctuating evolution or resurgence of local, territorial and national (regional and transregional) identities.

The quotation used in the title is a part of a twelfth-century liturgical hymn for St Denis written by Adam of St Victor, and though we might wonder whether with „regio“ the author refers to the whole Kingdom of France, it is clear that the boundaries of the saint's patrocinium are inclusive, and suggest cohesion (*tota regio*). A later medieval attempt at elaboration of the levels of patrocinium, using the term regio rather vaguely, is brought in Henry of Langenstein's sermon on St Elisabeth, and shows well the difficulties (apparently not realized by the fifteenth-century German author) of establishing clear connections between various spatially-defined communities and saints:

"It should be known that, in accordance with the general opinion of theological tradition, angels undertook the care and governance of regions [regionum] and races [gentium], cities [urbium] and men. Similarly, the saints of God are entrusted with the spiritual care of and power over peoples [populos], regions, and cities where they happily lived and were buried, and [where] they left their relics, shined forth through miracles and bequeathed their examples of sanctity or, at least, where through the consecration of churches in their honour they had been received as patrons or patronesses. Consequently, when any race [gens], city [urbs] and country [patria] is placed under the rule of these leaders who immediately minister to the supreme governor, with good reason every

race venerates its saintly men and women as its own gods and goddesses with enhanced solemnity, prays for them with greater devotion, and fears their anger and resentment more.”

The conference aims at discussing the ways in which various forms of identity are being negotiated, defined and constantly redefined at different levels of communities and societies. We would like to analyse how saintly figures were able to or were subjected to manipulations/appropriations/domestications or transformations that made them easier to identify with and sometimes simply constructed them in ways to make them function as markers of different kinds of spatially defined identity. Finally, we encourage the approach to the cults of medieval saints and their modern appropriations as a vehicle for studying changing cultural values related to social cohesion and identity, to the interactions between centre and periphery, between the medieval Latin culture and regional interests, political and cultural agendas. For examining all this, we welcome the inquiry into the reflections of these cults in different media (texts, images, relics, devotional objects and architecture, liturgy, music).

We invite papers discussing the following questions with respect to the medieval period (or rather from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period) addressing various regions of Europe, for example:

- how do hagiography and other media related to saints' cults conceive of the geographical aspect, especially the broadly understood notion of "region"?
- what are the mechanisms of construction of the spatially-delimited collective identities through the cult of saints? How do the saints' cults and related representations (acquisition of relics, advertising the miracles, commission of texts, art objects and architecture...) contribute to the symbolic manifestation of these communities?
- what are the means of spreading intra- and inter-regional influence, and of the transfer of models of sainthood? How can we identify the centres and the promoters of such interactions?
- how do the cults of saints change according to the dynamics of territorial distinctions in the longue durée, and how do they conform to the changes in the organisation of the political territorial units?

Please, send your proposals with abstracts of about 300 words to the following address by 1 March 2012 to cuius.patrocinio@gmail.com

for more information visit <http://cultsymbols.net/>

Reference:

CFP: Saints' Cults and the Dynamics of Regional Cohesion (Dubrovnik, 18-20 Oct 12). In: ArtHist.net, Jan 17, 2012 (accessed Jun 10, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/2522>>.