Sailing in the Adriatic Sea in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Saintly Protagonists and Sacred destinations
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This work presentation will explore Christian views on sailing with some of the Graeco-Roman background and will try to define the differences between pagan roman rituals and Christian practices on the Adriatic Sea. While the brief review of the pagan evidence in the sources on maritime rituals on the sea show many common places considering complaints about personal misfortunes accompanied by certain danger and fear, Christian written evidence of sailing suggest that the devotional practices of seagoing people were aimed especially at obtaining the intercession of Almighty God, Christ, Virgin Mary and saints. It was after the pagan antiquity when Christian saints assumed the role previously held by pagan deities providing a direct relation between themselves and the God. Thus, the presentation aims to provide hagiographic data in order to better understand the historical, cultural and social aspects of the movement of people and goods with a Divine protection from the 4th to the end of 8th century. The Adriatic Sea itself became a sacred space that can be observed as a place of opportunity for saints and relics travelling from one place to another, one town to another and permits the drawing of the outline of the regional saintly topography. The hagiographic sources provide us with the episodes most commonly attesting their protagonists' safe and successful journeys even during the winds and storms. The best known and most recognizable are the martyrs of the Diocletian's persecution which had an easy going, simple and fast journey. The historically attested Christian martyrs whose passions have survived within the geographical context of the Adriatic Sea such as Saint Domnius who came from Rome to Salona, Saint Anastasius from Aquileia to Salona, Saint Anastasia from Aquileia to Thessalonica and from Thessalonica to Illyric have been chosen on the basis of the specific data they offer. On the other hand, translations of the holy relics of saints who were transported safely across the Adriatic in both directions and the other ones who arrived by the sea from eastern Byzantine centres to the Adriatic coastal towns have survived and deserve to be presented within their historical context. The best known are Saint Anastasia came from Constantinople to Zadar and Agape, Hionia and Irene from Solun to Zadar and Chrisogonus travelled from Aquileia and arrived safely to Zadar. The persistent appearance of the holy relics invoked their protective power and represented security and safety of the maritime journey undertaken by various protagonists. By examining local and regional examples we find different maritime routes used by the local and regional saints in order to arrive safely to their destination. Since these texts do not necessarily reflect the religious reality of the time, and sometimes remain vague and general, one of the questions to be discussed is the value of the written sources and their limitations and benefits. Do they really offer references that can be considered historically authentic? The study will thus focus on the ideal perception of Christian religious practices of travelling by the sea in the mentioned period. Furthermore, the paper will deal with the presentation and interpretation of the narrative episodes which attest one of the aspects of mobility and its significance within the maritime routes of the Adriatic Sea and will examine the conditions of the regional religious conditions.