

Conference Report

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SYMPOSIUM TITLE: LXI SETTIMANA DEL CISAM – CHIESE LOCALI E CHIESE REGIONALI NELL'ALTO MEDIOEVO

DATE AND LOCATION: 4-9 APRIL 2013, SPOLETO, ITALY

SPONSORED BY: CISAM – CENTRO ITALIANO DI STUDI SULL'ALTO MEDIOEVO

The LXI *Settimana* of the CISAM, that took place from April 4th to 9th 2013 in Spoleto, was dedicated to *Chiese locali e Chiese regionali nell'Alto Medioevo* – Local Churches and Regional Churches in the Early Middle Ages. A title and a subject that may sound quite traditional, but that, due to their conscious ambiguity, proved to be still lively. In what follows, I will try and give an idea of the most important lines of research that guided the various sessions; therefore, I will follow a thematic order rather than a strictly chronological one.

After the greetings of the CISAM President, **Enrico Menestò**, in the opening lesson **Giuseppe Cremascoli** traced a very wide discourse, with a *longue durée* inspiration, about the self-consciousness of being Christians and Church(es) face up to the outer world, ranging from Peter's words to the Carolingian "State Church" (but also with some references to Francis of Assisi).

The first days of the *Settimana* were dominated by lessons and debates about the Church of Rome. Many speakers, for the whole week, were indeed called to investigate from different points of view the various aspects of the development of the Church of Rome, its

transformation from a local church, that only claimed – and was sometimes acknowledged with – a simple moral primacy, to the universal Church *par excellence*. Some interventions proposed large syntheses about general historical processes also involving the Roman Church, such as the development of the Church's institutional structures based on the dioceses in the first times of Christianity (**Giorgio Otranto**); the relationships between Rome and the Eastern patriarchates and the growing competition with Constantinople (**Enrico Morini**); and, more generally, the relationships between centers and peripheries of the Christian world (**Giuseppe Fornasari**).

Other lessons were more directly focused on Rome and the popes, even if from very different points of view and in different periods. **Sofia Boesch Gajano** concentrated her lesson on Gregory the Great, and especially on his position about the primacy of Rome over Christendom: a primacy that he seldom affirmed explicitly, but that he variously practiced, because it was at the level of governmental practices that such primacy was questioned, and thus needed to be reaffirmed. **Giulia Barone** stressed the ever shifting relations between Rome and the kings and emperors from beyond the Alps and the inner structures of the Roman Church between the 9th and the 11th century. Focusing on the same period, **Michel Sot** analyzed the reasons why and the ways by which early medieval local Churches proceeded to write their histories. He underlined the central role of the Roman *Liber Pontificalis* as a model for such operations, and illustrated its influence on the *Gesta episcoporum* produced in Auxerre and Rheims. **Wilfried Hartmann's** lesson focused on the growing authority of the pope as a judge in episcopal disputes in post-Carolingian times (late 9th-10th century), and the central role of the Pseudo-Isidorian decretals in this process. **Glauco Cantarella** discussed some controversial moments of the relationships between the popes and the Normans in the second half of the 11th century, linking them to their respective processes of self-legitimation.

Missionaries and missionary activity were also strictly connected to the popes, even if in ways whose interpretation by modern historiography was somehow questioned by the contributors of the *Settimana*. Both in the missions coming from England to the continent in the 7th and 8th centuries (**Ian Wood**) and in those by Winfried-Boniface to the regions east of the Rhine in the 8th (**Klaus Herbers**), the role of the pope, usually indicated as active, was instead presented as reactive. He responded to solicitations coming from

outside, and first of all from the missionaries themselves, giving them his approval, but rarely proceeding to autonomous missionary enterprises. Nevertheless, as **Alba Maria Orselli** showed, this yet revisited role of the pope was still central to legitimate missions and supply them with indispensable tools such as books and links to local authorities.

The Church of Rome also appeared repeatedly in a series of lessons dedicated to ecclesiastical structures and functions, both on the local and the universal level. Great attention was paid to bishops and the shifts in their authority during the Early Middle Ages: Carolingian bishops trying to cast themselves as moral leaders for the kingdom in times of crisis (**Raffaele Savigni**); Ottonian bishops contending to one another the control of local monasteries (**Wolfgang Huschner**); bishops involved in the *reformatio* of their clergy in different moments and following different ecclesiological models (**Andenna**). Bishops were also investigated in their relationships with the local contexts within which they operated: **Nicolangelo D'Acunto** demonstrated how strongly local politics influenced episcopal elections in Ottonian and Salian times, while **Alfredo Lucioni** examined the developments of the relations between local bishops and monasteries. Episcopal administration of ecclesiastical properties was analyzed by **Cosimo Damiano Fonseca**, who underlined the distance between the quite clear canonical regulation and a fluid diversity of situations at the level of practice; and, from another point of view, by **Susan Wood**, who illustrated the often competitive relations between bishops and local lords for the control of private churches.

The growing importance of ecclesiastical government and bishops depended in large part on the necessity to provide for the pastoral care of the Christian flocks. An acute reading of the sources allows us to recover the terms used to designate local churches, but also the disputes between neighboring bishops for their control (**Mauro Ronzani**). Bishops also needed to prepare the local clergy to their pastoral duties and to constantly remind them about it: that is evident in the Carolingian period, when bishops posed themselves in terms of cooperation with rural and peripheral priests and, through the institution of deans, promoted new ways to communicate with them (**Charles Mériaux**), but also provided to their cultural and doctrinal formation by the means of manuscript collections of liturgical, theological and homiletical texts for everyday use (**Carine Van Rhijn**).

A very high level of attention was commendably paid to some material aspects and sources for the study of the history of early medieval Churches. Ecclesiastical architectures and their developments can help us to get a better understanding of the material conditions of Christian communities and solutions they thought up for the practice of religious rites (**Gisella Cantino Wataghin**), as well as the strict relationships between rite and structure, and their mutual influences (**Sible De Blaauw**). Competition between local Churches was also put in place through liturgy and liturgical manuscripts (**Eric Palazzo**) and the right to produce coins, often impressed with the figure of the saint patron of the town (**Michael Matzke**). Last but not least, liturgical clothes are a very underestimated source that, if correctly compared with the written sources, can say much about the economical wealth and liturgical practices of the local Churches (**Maureen Miller**).

In the final days of the *Settimana* the focus shifted to the “other” Churches, sometimes proto-national, but mostly peripheral – if seen from Roman perspective. The archaeology-dominated lesson by **Giuliano Volpe** was about late antique Churches of *Apulia*, where excavations have allowed the reconstruction of long periods of history otherwise covered only by very incomplete, and very late, written sources. Local liturgy, and its strenuous preservation, featured the Church of Milan predominantly, but not exclusively, in the early middle ages (Cesare Alzati). Lastly, “national” Churches such as the Hispano-Visigothic one (**Pablo C. Diaz**), the Eastern ones arisen from the missionary activity of the 10th century (**Roman Michalowski**), and the Anglo-Saxon Church in the age of the Danish conquest (**Timothy Bolton**) were examined in order to underline their specificities, as well as the common feature of a political, even governmental in the case of Visigothic Spain, use of Christianity and conversion.

The LXI *Settimana* of the CISAM has therefore recovered a series of historiographical problems that seemed to have been fully exploited about early medieval Church history, such as the development of the popes’ primacy over the Christian world and the formation of the local structures of the Church. Something that frequently emerged in the debates was the sheer definition of “local” and “regional” Churches; if every Church, even that of Rome, can be seen and studied as a local Church, with local interests and concerns, it becomes harder to define a “regional” Church. This is why some contributors suggested identifying local and regional Churches with bishoprics and archbishoprics or metropolises

respectively, thus maybe also suggesting an alternative, and possibly better, title for the *Settimana*; it is nevertheless possible that the actual title has been chosen just for the open ways in which it allowed the subject to be interpreted and analyzed. By way of conclusion, a very important aspect to underline is the great value of the use of different sources, both written and material, and the continuous need of a dialogue between Italian and foreign scholars for mutual enrichment.