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ARCHEOLOGICAL RECORD OF THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF THE AREA OF CENTRAL BALKANS IN THE PERIOD 9th-11th CENTURIES

The Slavic settlement into the huge areas bordered by the Danube and the Sava, the eastern Adriatic coast, and the southernmost area of Balkan peninsula, resulted in the collapse of the military, administrative, and ecclesiastical system of the previous period. Destruction was avoided only by some coastline cities, where church organization was preserved so that these cities would become centers from which Christianity would spread among newcomers in subsequent centuries. The influence of latent Christianity without a church organization in central Balkans would not have been as strong as in the Adriatic hinterland. In these areas, important changes came about in the latter half of the 9th century, when the time of major events in the ecclesiastical history of Balkan peoples began. It was exactly the strengthening of Christianity in the peninsula that implied a more substantial return of Byzantine political and cultural influence.

The question remains how much the archeological research in Serbia south of the Sava and the Danube has contributed to a more successful appreciation of the Christianization process. The data available on this are numerous and diverse. They first imply archeologically verified remains of sacral facilities dated to 9th and 10th centuries, which undoubtedly testify to the spread of the church organization in these areas. The second category of data comes from the study of necropolises, types of burial and burial customs, which may help us assess how successful missionary work was, whether Christianization involved broad circles of the populace, and how much the conversion had changed their beliefs. Specific data are provided by archeological records providing symbolic finds testifying to the spread of Christianity in this part of the Balkans. These include parts of church equipment and items used in services, but also a plethora of finds usually interpreted as items used for expressing personal religious beliefs.