

Symposium Classicum Peregrinum Lonato del Garda, Italy. 21-24 June, 2018 - Blessings and Curses in Antiquity News

ACCADEMIA SICILIANA DEI MITICI NEWS

Symposium Classicum Peregrinum in Lonato di Garda (June 21th-24th 2018)

Last June 21th-24th our Academic Diego Romagnoli, as a regular member of Accademia Marchigiana di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti – Istituto Culturale Europeo, has taken part to Symposium Classicum Peregrinum 2018 in Lonato di Garda. He will do a report as follows.



The promoters of Convention: Prof. Patricia. A. Johnston, Prof. Attilio Mastrocinque, Prof. Elisa Zentilini and some of the participants

Symposium has been organized by Prof. Attilio Mastrocinque & Prof. Elisa Zentilini of University of Verona, by Prof. Patricia Johnston of Brandeis University of Boston and by Prof. Lazlo Takacs of Péter Pázmány Catholic University of Budapest. Prof. Christopher Faraone of University of Chicago and Prof. Giovanni Casadio of Società Italiana di Storia delle Religioni have participated to it. Comune di Lonato del Garda, Associazione storico-archeologica La Polada and Le fornaci Romane di Lonato del Garda, have contributed too.

Topic of Symposium has been *Blessings and Curses in Antiquity*. Famous scholars, and university teachers, and many researchers from various countries have taken part to it.



La Rocca di Lonato

La Rocca or Castle of Lonato is a fortified X century building placed above the residential area of Lonato del Garda (province of Brescia) looking at Lake Garda. Counts of Montichiari were the first owners of the Castle, which is strategic in terms of military defense. In 1376, it became property of Scaligeri and Visconti successively. Barnabò Visconti strengthened the Castle by means of building of extended walls including the inhabited hamlet.

In 1404, the rock and Lonato

switched to Gonzaga of Mantua. Then it became property of Republic of Venice, and from 1509 to 1515 came back to Marquises Gonzaga of Mantua. Isabel of Este, who was wife of Francis II Gonzaga, stayed here. In 1797, there was a bloody battle below the walls of Castle, known as *The Battle of Lonato*. It occurred between the French army commanded by Napoleon Bonaparte and the Austrian one guided by Feld Marshall Peter Vitus von Quosdanovich. Around 1920 Senator Ugo Da Como bought the building that actually is property of the foundation having the name of him.

Prof. Mastrocinque and Prof. Johnston have expertly coordinated and moderated the sessions of Symposium divided into panels and held within the impressive framework of Rocca di Lonato and the high-profile location of Biblioteca Civica. The final panel has been within the Lonato's Roman furnaces. By getting full attention and general approval, lecturers have expressed in a brilliant way an ample rank of pertinent arguments to the general matter.

Congress hall of Lonato's Castle



In June 21 at Rocca di Lonato, after the opening ceremony of Symposium Classicum Peregrinum 2018 (held by Prof. Patricia A. Johnston of Brandeis University with the introduction of Prof. Chris A. Faraone of Chicago University), Prof. Francisco Marco Simón has chaired the session of the opening day and has initiated to the proceedings. The participation of well-known British scholar R.L. Gordon of University of Erfurt has been relevant. In his work, he has treated the problem if the tables containing curses represent a specific knowledge-practice, or better, if they are a result of knowledge of priests.



Museo di Lonato. La Casa del Podestà.

Senator Ugo da Como gave the custody of the Casa to Antonio Tagliaferri, architect in Brescia. He refurbished and enriched it with artistic treasures and a precious Library having got over 50.000 volumes dating from XII century. In accordance with the testament of the Senator, the Casa and its Library were assigned to the foundation Ugo da Como, approved in 1942

Both the second and the third day of Symposium have been split into two session because of the wide participation and the extent of materials.

The first session has specifically treated curses in Rome, in Italy and in the Greek-Roman world. Blessings have been treated in the afternoon of June 23. In that context, Attilio Mastrocinque has discussed the very important argument *The Roman consecratio as a public curse*.

Among all of the various high level works, some lecturers have got inspiration from ancient writers like Homer (*Iliad* and *Odyssey*) and Vergil (*Aeneid*). In particular Lorina Quartarone has highlighted that the mentioned verses of Vergil's *Aeneid* about Aeneas and Dido contain blessings and curses formulas.

Then Marie-Laure Freyburger has made a reference to the sacred in Cassio Dione. By various fragments of this writer, she has stressed that the *favor* and *disfavor* of gods were due to specific acts and words. Then she has highlighted the divine nature of the Tribunes of Plebs' charge, usually conferred to men of great influence. They were responsible of *Augustalia* and must be *sacrosancti*, namely they must be *sacra*-walls and *sancta*-holy, i.e. pillars/walls/support for people.

Alain Blomart of University of Barcelona has treated the definitions and the Roman rites of *Devotio* and *Evocatio*. The prayers of both included magical elements. By the

analysis of ancient text, he has stressed that the *Evocatio* was not only limited to a military context, but also there was a similarity between *Devotio* and *Evocatio* and some juridical concepts. Indeed prayers created an oath/contract with divinities and a legal *status* enjoyed by things, persons, places and cities. This *status* could explain the fact that people caught by enemies incurred a *capitis deminutio* assimilating them to *status* of passed away and, consequently, of social disqualification. In this way, Imperialism and *Bellum iustum* were justified. Furthermore, in time of peace the *status* could be lessened by de-consecration.

The Biblioteca Comunale



During the session of afternoon of June 23, our Academic Diego Romagnoli (who had already taken part to Symposium Classicum Peregrinum 2016 in Tarquinia with an article on *Mithras Demiourgos*) has introduced his own paper entitled *Benevolentia et malevolentia deorum in Mithraic, magical and theurgic rites*. He has treated both the affinities due to syncretism of late antiquity and the differences among various rites of these different disciplines.

On June 24, the last panel of the final session has had as a topic “*Games, Fate and Chance*”. Salvatore Costanza has treated the erotic oracles and the invocations to Aphrodite in the astragalomancy. He has illustrated how such oracles by launching of astragals (dices made of animal bones) could have been obtained. They gave answers and advice and in this way, the sum of numbers attributed to gods pinpointed the fortune or the misfortune respect to him who asked oracles for a reply.

At the end of last panel and of works, a nice refreshment has followed. In addition to visit to Fornaci Romane of Lonato, a wonderful Tour of the Grotte di Catullo in Sirmione took place.



The Villa of Catullus, Sirmione. The remains of one of most beautiful Roman villas in northern Italy placed in an extraordinary and scenic position, the far end of Sirmione's peninsula.

In his verses, Latin poet Catullus, born in Verona and dead in 54 BC, sang Sirmione as a jewel of isles e of peninsulas of every sea and lake. Most recent surveys have established that the villa was built in Augustan era (end of I century BC and begins of I century AD.). Abandoned from III century AD, the building fell to ruin. Nevertheless, because of its own strategic location for a visual inspection of most of Lake Garda, the villa was inserted in the structure of defense placed around the peninsula (end of IV- begins of V century AD). Since then the remains of villa have hosted a necropolis.

Finally, we can assert that the *Symposium Classicum Peregrinum* 2018 has obtained a full success in keeping with to its purpose of analyzing the important reality of blessings and curses in Antiquity.

Group shot

