

DALMATIAN HEXACONCHS

Summary

Dalmatian hexaconchs represent a special architectural type within the corpus of Croatian pre-Romanesque architecture. It is about a dozen churches mostly of a memorial character or a nortatory function with estimated beginning of building roughly dated in the 8th to 11th century. They are grouped in Northern Dalmatia, more precisely in Byzantine towns on the coast - Zadar, Split, Trogir and in the hinterland of Zadar, in the area of Ravni kotari. The churches are preserved in archaeological remains that most often suggest their geographic image and show similar characteristics: six radially arranged semicircular apses around the circular core over which the tambourerises with a dome, almost the same dimensions and construction technique by matching the cracked slabs in to irregular rows. The only one completely preserved is the church of Holy Trinity in Split which allows reconstruction of the churches. The shape of the hexaconchs resembles the formofan early Christian baptistry oft he Cathedral in Zadar and certainly served as an example in the architectural shaping of the hexaconchs. Despite the similarities,the churches differ in the analysis oft he exterior and their purpose. The interior of the hexaconchs was conceived simply with a high altar septum in the center of the church which divided three eastern apses of the shrines from the three western apses. Fragments of liturgical stone furniture were foundin almost all of the hexaconchs. The importance of stone bas-relief is great because on the basis of it sstylistic analysis the churches can be dated more precisely. Numerous authors have written about this typology group so the group have been explored in detail. However, the origin of the shape, function and more precise dating of the hexaconchs structures in Dalmatia is still not fully resolved.

Keywords: Dalmatian hexaconchs; apses; pre-Romanesque architecture; dome; pilasters