



INSTITUTE OF ARCHEOLOGY
AND ART HISTORY OF ROMANIAN
ACADEMY CLUJ-NAPOCA



UNIVERSITATEA TEHNICĂ
DIN CLUJ-NAPOCA

JAH
JOURNAL OF ANCIENT HISTORY
AND ARCHAEOLOGY

editura
MEGA

Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14795/j.v13i2>

ISSN 2360 266x

ISSN-L 2360 266x



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JOURNALS

No. 13.2/2026

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Design & layout: Petru Ureche



EDITURA MEGA | www.edituramega.ro
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HISTOGRAPHY

SERBIAN JOURNALS OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH AND THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY ON THE POSITION OF CHRISTIANS IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Abstract: Numerous studies have been written on the position of Christians in the Roman Empire. This paper will emphasize the sources related to this issue and the works published in Serbian journals that were issued during the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century in the Kingdom of Serbia and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The journals in the Kingdom of Serbia that speak about the position and persecution of Christians during the reign of Emperor Nero are *Škola*, *Rodoljub*, *Učitelj*, *Podmladak* and *Vesnik srpske crkve*; and in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: *Danica*, *Beseda*, *Golub*, *Pravoslavlje* and *Novi srpski vek*. Based on the aforementioned works, the paper aims to highlight how the position of Christians in the Roman Empire was viewed during the reign of the persecutor emperor. Furthermore, by analyzing the works in these journals, the paper will examine how the position of Christians during the time of Emperor Nero was intended to serve as an example for the youth of the 19th and 20th centuries in developing Christian morality.

Keywords: Nero, Christians, position, persecution, Rome, Serbian journals.

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During the 19th century, a systematic study of the classical antiquity emerged, which formed the foundation of upbringing and education, while the classical heritage became an indispensable chapter in the history of European civilization.¹ Among the Serbs during this period, there was also the development of scientific and critical historiography, as well as significant progress in the study of the ancient past. The cultural-historical framework that is the subject of this research is the period of late Romanticism and the beginning of the Realism of Svetozar Marković, who began his political and social activism in 1868. This period is simultaneously one of the most significant eras for the formation of the modern Serbian state. New ideas did not come to the Serbs from Western Europe, but rather via the Russians, with the main slogan being liberation.² However, this period was also a time of fragmentation for the Serbian people, who lived divided between two states – the Ottoman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The struggle

¹ BOŠKOV 2016, 11; AKSENTIJEVIĆ 2023, 9; AKSENTIJEVIĆ 2024, 203.

² ČOROVIĆ 1936, 2–5; ALEKSIĆ-PEJAKOVIĆ 1965, 5; ĐORĐEVIĆ 1967, 208; SKERLIĆ 1997, 203–204; DEERETIĆ 2022, 225–255; AKSENTIJEVIĆ 2024, 204.

waged by the Serbs south of the Sava and Danube rivers was an armed one against a centuries-old Ottoman enemy, while north of those rivers, the struggle was different. It was a battle for education and upbringing, as well as an institutional struggle for survival waged through the most vital organization that had preserved them – the Church. The Serbs attempted to safeguard their rights through autonomy and the work of the Church-People Assemblies which, unfortunately, became assemblies of discord during this period, playing directly into the hands of the Austro-Hungarian state in its efforts to Magyarize the Serbs.³

Despite the complex situation in which the Serbs found themselves during this period, the institutional struggle for rights in the Dual Monarchy meant that, despite the heavy pressure and control imposed by Vienna and Budapest, they managed to publish around 260 newspapers and journals between the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century; specifically, from the signing of the Austro-Hungarian Compromise in 1867 until the outbreak of the First World War. On the territory of the Kingdom of Serbia, that number was significantly higher, around 600 journals. Such a large number can be attributed to Serbia's independence, which was gained at the Congress of Berlin in 1878.⁴ Journals represent a primary historical source and simultaneously serve as an illustration of the period and the current circumstances in society. Based on the topics they address, we also learn what elements of the ancient world and classical past were important for the upbringing and education of Serbian youth, as well as for the formation of the moral principles of the future Serbian state that would emerge through liberation and unification. The terms *journal* and *gazette* were used interchangeably during this period. Thus, there were “journals for entertainment, instruction, and art”, “gazettes for entertainment and literature”, “journals for Orthodox theological science and church life”, or gazettes that were intended “for Christian instruction”. The goal of every journal was the same: to enlighten the people.⁵ Within the framework of studying classical themes in Serbian journals, we can observe that a prominent place belongs to the position of Christians in the Roman Empire during the reign of Emperor Nero.

During the period of the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, journals published on the territory of the Kingdom of Serbia (*Škola*, *Rodoljub*, *Učitelj*, and *Vesnik srpske crkve*) and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (*Danica*, *Beseda*, *Golub*, *Pravoslavljje*, and *Novi srpski vek*) wrote about Nero and his attitude toward Christians. Articles and texts regarding the position of Christians during the reign of this Roman emperor were intended to serve as a moral lesson. They were written during a period of great victories for the Serbian people, but also one of immense pressure on the Serbian Church, whose patriarchal seat during this era was located in Sremski Karlovci.

The paper published in *Vesnik srpske crkve* speaks directly about the Roman emperor Nero and was released under the

title *The Jubilee of the Freedom of Christianity*.⁶ This paper is actually dedicated to the anniversary of the Edict of Milan, which is characterized as the triumph of Christianity. The author states that the Romans preserved their laws and treated both their own religion and the religions of conquered nations with respect, but this was not the case with Christianity because it was not the faith of a specific nation, but rather aimed to become a world religion. Thus, the author believes that Christianity was not persecuted as long as it was identified as a Jewish sect rather than an independent religion,⁷ and he disparages the Romans of that era, calling them a “degenerated world”. Among the emperors who were persecutors of Christians, the paper singles out Nero and Diocletian. For Nero, the author points out that he was a “monster of a man”, while he has no words of praise for Diocletian either,⁸ though he emphasizes that Galerius, rather than Diocletian, was actually to blame for a large number of the persecutions during that period.⁹ Connecting national history with the victory of Christianity over classical polytheism, the author also points out that the passage of the Edict of Milan is similar to the victories of the Serbian people in the Balkan Wars, where there were as many trials and tribulations as there were during the adoption of the aforementioned edict.

The short story published in the journal *Rodoljub* is titled *The Martyrs*, representing Christian Golgotha right from the title itself.¹⁰ The author is unknown and signed under the pseudonym “Uncle Vasa”. Describing the era of the first Christians, he states that it was a period when churches were not built nor bells raised, but rather the liturgy was performed in houses, cellars, and underground tunnels. Describing the rule of Emperor Nero, the author points out that “since the world began, there has been no worse emperor than he was”,

⁶ *Vesnik srpske crkve* was the official publication of the priestly association and was published during the period from 1890 to 1914. The editorial board emphasizes that it is a “journal of the priestly association, and as a periodical for Christian instruction and clerical improvement, it has always striven for its pages to truly be filled with sound Christian doctrine and that which can essentially serve as wholesome nourishment for its every reader, and especially for the priest, who before all others needs to be the teacher of the flock entrusted to him”. Its contents include papers on church history and the history of religion, which is the dominant subject given that it is a church journal. In addition to papers on these topics, works on the history of education and philosophy were also published. ANONIM 1896, 1–2.

⁷ LUKIĆ 1914, 11–15.

⁸ This stance of the alleged defense of Diocletian, who is portrayed as a pagan in the journals of this period, was also put forward in the paper by Laza Obradović, who points out that in one phase of his life, Diocletian actually defended Christians. See more: OBRADOVIĆ 1884, 282.

⁹ In his presentation, the author also describes the struggle between Constantine and Maxentius, as well as Constantine's vision and dream. Following the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, convinced that Christianity had granted him victory, Constantine, along with Licinius, issued the Edict of Milan, which the author presents within the text. As a result of the Edict of Milan, the author directly notes the abolition of the punishment of crucifixion, as well as the subsequent abolition of gladiatorial games. LUKIĆ 1914, 18–27.

¹⁰ The journal *Rodoljub* was published between 1886 and 1887 in Požarevac. Twenty issues of this journal were printed, and from the sixteenth to the twentieth issue, the journal was published in Belgrade. The owner, publisher, and printer was Đorđe Kimpanović, while the editor of the journal was Milan Ubavkić. The journal also published illustrations that accompanied specific texts, tracking the storyline of the main body of work. It was published four times a month and carried the subtitle “a journal for youth”. KISIĆ/BULATOVIĆ 1996, 101.

³ VASIN 2015.

⁴ AKSENTIJEVIĆ 2024, 204–205.

⁵ PEKOVIĆ 1992, 12.

specifically emphasizing that “he killed his own mother and his teacher”.¹¹ The author concludes this based on Tacitus’ account of the murder of Nero’s mother and the suicide of his teacher, Seneca.¹² In the rest of the short story, which Uncle Vasa narrates to Radosav, a second-grade pupil, the text describes the struggle of Christians in the Colosseum, where “bloodthirsty beasts with gaping jaws charge at the wretched victims”.¹³ The paper was intended to serve as a moral lesson for Serbian youth, which we can conclude at the end of the author’s exposition, where it is emphasized that “the martyrs, who endured the most horrific physical torments for Christ, laid the foundation with their bones for the great building we call the Church of Christ”.¹⁴

Laza Obradović also writes about the position of Christians in the Roman Empire during the reign of Emperor Nero in his paper *The Persecution of Christians*, published in the journal *Učitelj*.¹⁵ This paper also served as material for teaching Christian doctrine in the fourth grade of lower primary school. The author did not acquire the materials to cover this significant topic easily, and therefore expresses due gratitude to a teacher in Savamala, Mihajlo Nikolić, who provided him with certain source materials. In the text, the author evaluated Emperor Nero as a “mad tyrant who once conceived a crazy and wicked whim to see what it would look like if all of Rome were set ablaze, and out of his own foolish pleasure ordered the town to be set on fire from several sides”.¹⁶ To deflect all suspicion from himself, Nero blamed the Christians. In the continuation of his account, the author goes on to describe numerous atrocities committed by the Romans against Christians, then details the reign of Diocletian, and concludes with the story of the

suffering of the Forty Holy Martyrs of Sebaste as the zenith of the attacks on Christians.¹⁷

In addition to the journal *Učitelj*, the journal *Škola* was also published in Belgrade, which was intended for school youth.¹⁸ Numerous examples of human virtue, such as friendship, truth, and goodness, were presented in this journal, and Emperor Nero was featured in one such paper. Speaking of goodness, the author points out that even individuals who did not possess good overall life traits, including Emperor Nero himself, still possessed it. Namely, the author states that when Nero was supposed to sign a death warrant, he said: “I wish I didn’t know how to read and write”.¹⁹ The aforementioned sentence is derived from the description provided by Suetonius Tranquillus, although the ancient writer does not mention God or gods, but rather good fortune.²⁰

The journal *Podmladak*, intended for high school youth, was also published in Belgrade.²¹ Comparing Serbian youth with Roman youth, one of the authors states that Roman youth did not lag behind the Serbian in terms of “mischief”. He finds an obvious negative example in Nero, whom he describes as a “cunning little schoolboy”, emphasizing that Serbian students should not be like that. To support his claims when describing Emperor Nero, the author seeks confirmation in historical sources, citing the account of Suetonius Tranquillus.²²

The paper published in *Beseda*²³ speaks indirectly about Emperor Nero and is dedicated to the Christian Church in the first centuries.²⁴ The anonymous author states that Christians suffered greatly in the first centuries, “for everyone thought they were pleasing God by killing them”. He refers to the Roman Empire as the “ecumene” or *orbis Romanus*,²⁵ while he finds the answer to the question of

¹¹ VASA 1886, 69.

¹² TACIT Ann. XIV 3–10; XV 60–64.

¹³ Certain authors note that Rome became a stage for the bloodiest and most gruesome death penalties during the imperial period, and that these punishments were the consequence of civil wars, “the onslaught of a corrupt mob and foreign scoundrels”. Gladiatorial combats were just one in a series of cruel tortures and punishments. The capital punishments included throwing from a high cliff, tearing the body apart with horses and wagons, bricking up a person alive, which was described as an “act of foul self-will”, execution by the wheel in various forms, suffocation in smoke, and drowning, which according to Livy was introduced following the severe crime of matricide, as well as execution by ax, severing the nose of an adulterer, blinding, amputating a leg, or breaking bones, the latter of which was mostly applied to runaway slaves who had been captured. Specific punishments were applied to Christians, such as driving iron nails into the head, shoulders, or chest. See more: KVANTER 1902a, 59–60; KVANTER 1902b, 68–69; KVANTER 1902v, 76; KVANTER 1902g, 83–85; KVANTER 1902d, 100–101; KVANTER 1902d, 108–109; KVANTER 1902e, 117–119; KVANTER 1902z, 131–133; KVANTER 1902z, 142–143; KVANTER 1902i, 151–153; KVANTER 1902j, 168–170; KVANTER 1902k, 191–192; KVANTER 1902l, 201–203; KVANTER 1902lj, 215–218; KVANTER 1902m, 234–236; KVANTER 1902n, 274–277; KVANTER 1902nj, 288–292.

¹⁴ VASA 1886, 70.

¹⁵ The Main Committee of the Teachers’ Association in the Kingdom of Serbia published its own journal, which simultaneously served as the official publication of the Teachers’ Association for Education and Upbringing. The journal *Učitelj* was published in Belgrade from 1882 to 1912/14 and was a periodical for primary school teachers. Over its long period of publication, it counted many teachers across Serbia among its contributors. Themes from the ancient past and Christian doctrine were published in the form of lectures and were intended for primary school students. See more: PROTIĆ 1883, 189–191; D. J. P. 1884a, 233–235; D. J. P. 1884b, 250–252; J. D. J. 1884, 265–268; OBRADOVIĆ 1884, 279–284; NIKETIĆ 1886, 141–143; KISIĆ/BULATOVIĆ 1996, 93.

¹⁶ OBRADOVIĆ 1884, 282.

¹⁷ OBRADOVIĆ 1884, 283–284.

¹⁸ One of the very first school journals was precisely *Škola*, whose subtitle stated that it was a “journal for teachers, parents, and children”. The journal began publication in 1868 and ceased due to the Serbian–Ottoman War in 1876. The editor of the journal was Milan Đ. Miličević (1831–1908), who bears the epithet of the “Serbian Plutarch”. See more: KISIĆ/BULATOVIĆ 1996, 71; AKSENTIJEVIĆ 2023, 10–11.

¹⁹ ANONIM 1869a, 284; AKSENTIJEVIĆ 2023, 14.

²⁰ SUETONIUS Ner. 10; AKSENTIJEVIĆ 2023, 15.

²¹ The journal was published three times a month during the period from 1897 to 1898 under the editorship of Momčilo Ivanić. KISIĆ/BULATOVIĆ 1996, 131.

²² While citing the story of this ancient writer, the author makes an error, as Suetonius does not mention Achilles in the account that the author presents in his paper. Suet. Ner. 22; ČIČA 1897, 222.

²³ The journal *Beseda* was published in Novi Sad during the period from 1868 to 1870. The subtitle of the journal read “a periodical for church, school, and public needs”. The editor of the journal was the priest Andrija Monašević (1817–1871). After graduating from the seminary in Sremski Karlovci, he served as a parish priest at the Cathedral and the Almaš Church. He became a regular member of Matica srpska in 1864. In addition to his editorship at *Beseda*, he was the editor of *Duhovni zbornik* and contributed to *Sedmica*, *Školski list*, and *Srbobran*. MILOVIĆ 2018, 82.

²⁴ In addition to *Beseda*, a paper of similar content was also published in the journal *Javor*. The paper is a translation from German by an anonymous translator whose identity has not been resolved by the registry of anonymous translators. In the paper titled *The Origin of Christianity*, the author describes the conditions within the Roman state during that period. The paper is well-sourced. Among the sources, the author utilizes Tertullian’s *Apologetics*, as well as the writings of Saint Augustine and the Venerable Bede. See more: DRAPER 1890a, 473–476; DRAPER 1890b, 506–510; DRAPER 1890v, 524–527.

²⁵ ANONIM 1869v, 3.

why Christians were persecuted during that period within Roman laws, which “were contrary to any new faith”. Drawing a parallel between antiquity and the contemporary events of his time, the author highlights those very laws. In all likelihood, he does this because of the introduced Law on Nationalities, which was hostile to every nationality living within the Dual Monarchy. Namely, the introduction of this law in September 1868 caused a culmination of discontent among the nationalities of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, including the Serbian population.²⁶ In this paper, Christianity aspires to spread among all peoples, and the Roman Empire recognizes this as a danger, just as Austria-Hungary saw a threat in the nationalities’ demands for equality.²⁷ Describing this segment of ancient history, the author utilizes church sources, relying primarily on Tertullian and his work *Apologetics*,²⁸ which he also critically interprets, questioning Tiberius’ decision to declare Jesus Christ a Roman deity. Specifically, Tertullian states that the Senate could not agree to this decision,²⁹ whereas the author of the paper doubts these words, arguing that the Senate would not have dared to refuse.³⁰ The text continues with a description of Nero’s reign, where he is called an “inhuman emperor” who burned Rome³¹ in order to blame the Christians.³² Regarding this accusation, the author quite accurately quotes the fifteenth book of Tacitus’ *Annals*.³³ While Nero is an “inhuman emperor”, Vespasian and Titus are “wise and just”, Domitian is “suspicious and self-serving like Nero”, and Nerva is a “good and peaceful old man”.³⁴ Although this paper was published in several parts, it was never completed. In the second part, the author notes that the work will continue, but that publication never took place. We are thus left deprived of the author’s description of Trajan’s reign and his attitude toward Christians, as well as the reign of Domitian, who was the complete opposite of Trajan when it came to Christians.

A paper on a similar topic, written in the form of an instructional short story, can also be found in the journal

²⁶ The nationalities attempted to change the disputed paragraphs through constant interpellations and rebuttals. Svetozar Miletić wrote at the time that for five full days, that black spot was under attack from Hungarian arrows, like a handful of Spartans at Thermopylae against a massive horde of Asian Persians. Vasin 2015, 204; MIKAVICA/LEMAJIĆ/VASIN/NINKOVIĆ 2016, 65.

²⁷ ANONIM 1869v, 4.

²⁸ During our research, we observed that among the primary sources for the authors of articles on Christianity in the early centuries was Tertullian, whose works were also utilized when discussing the spirituality of pastorship in the military. According to him, a Christian cannot serve in the army and go to war, regardless of the fact that there were Christians in the Roman legions, even within the legions “of Diocletian, the persecutor of the Christian Church”. See more: VUČKOVIĆ 1902, 362–363.

²⁹ TERTULLIAN Ap. V 21.

³⁰ ANONIM 1869v, 8.

³¹ A story was published in the journal *Bosanska vila* that speaks of Christian suffering following the aforementioned fire, and of the love between a Germanic man, one of Nero’s bodyguards, and a Christian woman whom he was supposed to burn at the stake. The story, of course, has no historical foundation and is presented as a legend. See more: KNEŽEVIĆ 1897a, 308–310; KNEŽEVIĆ 1897b, 326–328; KNEŽEVIĆ 1897v, 340–342; KNEŽEVIĆ 1897g, 361–366.

³² ANONIM 1869r, 35.

³³ TACIT Ann. XV 44.

³⁴ ANONIM 1869g, 35–36.

Pravoslavlje.³⁵ The short story about Emperor Nero is simultaneously the first short story published in the very first issue of this journal, and it bears the title *The First Christians*. The author speaks about the Christian liturgy in the Roman Empire, where the service is attended by senators, slaves, a Roman lady with her maidservants, and common people.³⁶ Through this enumeration, the author intends to express equality before the Christian God, Jesus Christ, in whose eyes a Roman senator and an ordinary slave are equals. The liturgy is interrupted by Roman soldiers who round up and capture the Christians, taking them the following day to the Colosseum to be brought before the Roman emperor, Nero. In the short story, Nero is characterized as a “wicked emperor”, and the Roman crowd as “corrupt, failing to see the misdeeds he commits”. All the captured Christians are burned in the Colosseum, with the author noting that this was how “the first Christians died in torment for the faith of Christ”.³⁷

When it comes to the biography of the Roman emperor Nero, it can be observed that numerous authors described the burning of the city of Rome in their papers. A short story that speaks directly about this was published in the journal *Golub*,³⁸ where the Roman emperor was evaluated as “the most terrible tyrant and bloodsucker of the people”.³⁹ Nero himself was accused of being the mastermind behind the fire in Rome, and he is further presented as a “beast of a man, who is still spoken and told of with loathing today, and of whom it is rightfully said that he was a bloodsucking ruler and a public benefactor turned evil malefactor...”⁴⁰

In its supplement for the year 1870, the journal *Danica*⁴¹ published a historical novella by Mita Popović titled *Nero*.⁴² Although certain historical figures appear in this novella, such as Seneca, Nero’s mother Agrippina, or his wives Octavia and Sabina, the plot and storyline themselves are fiction within a historical context.⁴³ However, certain historical figures

³⁵ The journal *Pravoslavlje* was published during the period from 1910 to 1914 in Sremska Mitrovica. As can be observed from its subtitle, this journal was intended for “the Orthodox Serbian people for instruction in the holy Orthodox faith and Christian virtue”. The editor of the journal was the priest Vladimir Milutinović. The journal was meant to satisfy the religious needs of the Serbian people and to serve as an instruction in virtue for them, just as the early Christians possessed it. All the short stories published in this journal have as their theme the defense of Christianity and Christian virtue. ANONIM 1910, 1.

³⁶ ANONIM 1910, 11.

³⁷ ANONIM 1910, 12–13.

³⁸ The journal *Golub* was published in Sombor from 1879 to 1913 and was a “journal for Serbian youth”. The editor of the journal was Jovan Blagojević (1848–1918), who was simultaneously the editor of Sombor’s *Razvitak*. KISIĆ-BULATOVIĆ 1996, 86; STOKANOV 2014, 569–570; AKSENTIJEVIĆ 2023, 15.

³⁹ ANONIM 1899, 134.

⁴⁰ ANONIM 1899, 135.

⁴¹ *Danica* was the first Serbian youth journal printed using the orthography of Vuk Karadžić. It published literary contributions, biographies, travelogues, and articles on history and natural history. The journal gathered numerous young writers, such as Laza Kostić, Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, and Đura Jakšić. It was published in Novi Sad from 1860 to 1872 and was considered an informal journal of the United Serbian Youth KISIĆ-BULATOVIĆ 1996, 63.

⁴² Mita Popović (1841–1888) completed gymnasium in Baja and studied law in Budapest. He began his literary work precisely in *Danica*. In addition to historical short stories, he was also engaged in translation, translating from the Hungarian, French, and English languages. GAVRILOVIĆ 1903, 69–70; MILAČIĆ 1965, 560; KNEŽEVIĆ 2013, 161.

⁴³ The author does not provide an accurate description of the death of

and events in the novella are depicted authentically. Nero is characterized as a “bloodsucker”,⁴⁴ a “murderer, executioner, oppressor, pestilence, tyrant, arsonist, and plunderer”,⁴⁵ and the author describes the suffering of Christians in connection with Nero’s burning of Rome, during which “the Caesar struck his lyre and sang of the destruction of Troy”,⁴⁶ while “the mob, instead of pursuing the culprit, persecuted, slaughtered, pillaged, and killed the poor and wretched Christians”.⁴⁷

In addition to stories and short tales, in the journal *Novi srpski vek* we can also find a translation of a part of Henryk Sienkiewicz’s novel *Quo Vadis*.⁴⁸ In the translation, the novel is referred to as a short story. The plot takes place during the reign of Emperor Nero, who is frequently called “the red-bearded” in the novel, with which the author alludes to the emperor’s red hair.⁴⁹ In the translated section of the novel, certain flaws of this Roman emperor can also be observed, such as his “abominable verse-writing”,⁵⁰ alongside condemnations where Nero is called an executioner.⁵¹ Although the novel is dedicated to the rise of Christianity, which is portrayed through the beautiful Lygia⁵² and the enamored Petronius, who possessed great “external beauty”,⁵³ Christianity itself is initially presented through symbols in the translated parts. For instance, when Lygia meets Petronius, she draws the sign of a fish for him in the sand, which was the first sign by which Christians recognized one another.⁵⁴ The first indirect mention of Christianity can be observed in the final translated part, where Pomponia and Petronius speak about religion. Petronius asks Pomponia, “So, you believe in the gods?”, to which the wife of Aulus Plautius replies that she believes in one God.⁵⁵ It was Pomponia’s virtue that prompted Sienkiewicz to write his famous novel.⁵⁶ Namely,

Nero’s mother or the fate of Nero’s teacher, Seneca, while Poppaea Sabina is presented in a context different from the one found in historical sources, ranging from the manner of her introduction to this Roman emperor to her tragic death. Cf.: TACIT Ann. XIII 45–46; XIV 3–11; 63–64; XVI 6; SÜETONIUS Ner. VI; POPOVIĆ 1870, 115, 182–185.

⁴⁴ POPOVIĆ 1870, 48.

⁴⁵ POPOVIĆ 1870, 161.

⁴⁶ POPOVIĆ 1870, 133.

⁴⁷ POPOVIĆ 1870, 145.

⁴⁸ By its character, the journal *Novi srpski vek* was a continuation of the *Ilustrovaná ratna hronika*, which was published during the Balkan Wars. *Novi srpski vek* was published in Novi Sad from 1913 to 1914. The journal was published weekly until the outbreak of the First World War, with 12 issues coming the press. The journal’s editorial board took care that “the reading public would find both entertainment and sound instruction within it”, and for these reasons, they published a novel across all 12 issues, which was referred to in the periodical as a “short story from the era of Emperor Nero”. The novel was published in installments from the first issue of the journal until the outbreak of the First World War, when the periodical was shut down. The editor of the journal was the writer and jurist Milan Andrić (1845–1922). As a scholar of the Thökölyanum, he completed his law studies in Pest. He worked as an attorney in Baja and for a time served as a senator for the municipality of Ruma. He published his papers in *Danica*, *Vila*, *Stražilovo*, *Brankovo kolo*, and *Letopis Matice srpske*. The translator of Henryk Sienkiewicz in this journal is uncredited, but in all likelihood, it was the editor of the journal himself. ANONIM 1913, 37; LOPUŠINA 2004, 186.

⁴⁹ SIENKIEWICZ 1914a, 18, 19; SIENKIEWICZ 1914c, 38.

⁵⁰ SIENKIEWICZ 1914dž, 69.

⁵¹ SIENKIEWICZ 1914d, 61.

⁵² SIENKIEWICZ 1914b, 31.

⁵³ SIENKIEWICZ 1914c 39.

⁵⁴ SIENKIEWICZ 1914c, 53–54.

⁵⁵ SIENKIEWICZ 1914d, 92.

⁵⁶ The reading public’s interest in Sienkiewicz’s novel was immense. This

Pomponia was one of those rare women who, due to their devotion to home and husband, as well as their kindness toward everyone, deserve everyone’s respect, according to Veselin Čajkanović as well. In Sienkiewicz’s novel, Pomponia is a Christian, because for the author, that is the best and most direct explanation of her virtues. However, this hypothesis is neither justified nor necessary, because even in the polytheistic world, there were women and men with virtues that Christians later considered to be primarily their own traits.⁵⁷ Further translation of this novel was halted due to the outbreak of the First World War, leaving the started second chapter untranslated.

Emperor Nero was also written about indirectly when discussing his teacher, Seneca. The paper addressing this was simultaneously a lecture delivered by Svetomir Nikolajević in the hall of the Great School on 14 June 1880, and it was published in the journal *Otadžbina*.⁵⁸ The author intended to point out the importance of Stoic philosophy and its real-life application, believing that virtue can best be developed through Stoic philosophy.⁵⁹ Nero’s teacher, Seneca, is presented in the paper as the greatest representative of Roman Stoicism.⁶⁰ The author speaks briefly about Seneca’s biography, noting that he was a teacher and advisor to Emperor Nero who lived in abundance in his youth and in grand palaces in his old age.⁶¹ Frequently relying on Tacitus, the author mentions Thrax as one of Nero’s final victims, but fails to mention that Seneca was also one of Nero’s

can also be seen from the *Pozorišni list*, which informs us that the novel was performed in theaters worldwide. We do not know whether there were performances in the Novi Sad and Belgrade theaters, but its performance at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin is certain. The creator of the drama based on the novel was the French playwright Émile Moreau. According to the author, the Porte Saint-Martin theater took great care to “beautifully present Nero’s Rome”, and the costumes were meticulously crafted to appear authentic to the period of Nero’s reign. The Vestals and all the girls in costume demonstrated to the audience “that pagan beauty is eternal”. What was not well executed in the drama, according to the author’s view, was Nero himself, who strove to impose the intellectual and artistic supremacy of Hellenism; not content with being a mere amateur, he wanted to be an artist. FUKUJE 1901a, 7; FUKUJE 1901b, 17; FUKUJE 1901v, 23.

⁵⁷ ČAJKANOVIĆ 1911, 695–696.

⁵⁸ Among the leading literary journals of the final decades of the 19th century was *Otadžbina*, whose subtitle stated that it was a journal for “literature, science, and social life”. The journal was published from 1875 to 1892. It gathered a large number of contributors, primarily historians and writers. It published theater and literary reviews, as well as bibliographies of new books. Contributors to the journal included Đura Jakšić, Stevan Kačanski, Simo Matavulj, Stojan Novaković, Laza Lazarević, and many others. KISIĆ/BULATOVIĆ 1996, 83.

⁵⁹ NIKOLAJEVIĆ 1880, 249–250.

⁶⁰ Lucius Annaeus Seneca was born around 4 CE in Corduba, Hispania. During the period of Caligula’s rule, he became a member of the Senate, but he would not remain there for long. Namely, following an affair with Caligula’s sister, Claudius banished him from Rome in 40 CE. Eight years later, at the instigation of Agrippina, Claudius’ second wife, he returned to Rome and became the tutor to the future Roman emperor, Nero. According to Tacitus, Seneca lived a very moderate life. Under his influence, even the reign of Emperor Nero was initially competent. According to Đurić, Seneca was one of the most prolific writers in Roman literature. Out of his prose and poetic writings, fourteen works have been preserved for us: five prose and nine poetic. Seneca’s thoughts often closely approach Christian ethics; therefore, it should come as no surprise that the Church Fathers frequently considered him a secret Christian. TACIT Ann. XII 12 8; XV 63; SÜETONIUS Nero. 71; ĐURIĆ 1997, 456.

⁶¹ NIKOLAJEVIĆ 1880, 272.

numerous victims, an event about which Tacitus directly informs us.⁶²

Based on the numerous examples cited, we can draw the conclusion that Emperor Nero and the position of Christians during his reign were written about in numerous Serbian journals published in the Kingdom of Serbia and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The position of Christians during the time of Emperor Nero was intended to serve as an example for the youth in developing Christian morality. Although these were mostly anonymous authors, certain papers were also written by teachers. Here we can recall the words of N. Gavrilović, who states that “the primary duty of a professor was to convey knowledge in a practical and easily understandable way”.⁶³ Thus, the short stories published in these journals were likewise in the service of religious education as one of its essential tools. In the papers published in the journals of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the presentation of the current problems faced by the Serbian people is also noticeable. The anonymous author in the journal *Beseda* uses the moment of the introduction of the Law on Nationalities to express his disagreement with it in a latent manner. Due to the heavy pressures of permanent Magyarization and the control over the written word, numerous authors during this period remained unsigned, and it was precisely in such a latent way that they directed their message to the reading public. In contrast, this was not the case in the Kingdom of Serbia, as we could observe from Lukić’s signed paper, where the adoption of the Edict of Milan was compared to the victories of the Serbian people in the Balkan Wars.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was supported by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia (contract no. 451-03-136/2025-03/200184).

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