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DIOCLETIAN'S PALACE AND SPLIT: TRANSFERRING IDEAS
FROM A MARITIME VILLA TO A CHRISTIAN CITY

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In our student days when we participated all together in the excavations in Split, one of the most fascinating urban sites in the world, Ivan was our senior colleague and a young mentor. We worked in different sectors in the Palace and on different tasks, and finally published some chapters in the six volumes of the excavation reports (MIRNIK 1989; SCHRUNK 1989a). In the days of youth and at the beginning of our archaeological careers, retirement was so far in the future. The future is here now for Ivan, although this tireless scholar will never really retire.

This article is dedicated to the memory of our work together in the Palace and is a tribute to the lasting friendship with our colleague and a dear friend.

Today, and from our point of view, Diocletian's palace is in the city of Split. In Late Antiquity, a city grew in the Palace, transforming its fabric but did not break with its ideas. Diocletian had an ideal concept, or perhaps had several concepts for his building, which many scholars have tried to understand (McNALLY 2009a; PEJAKOVIĆ 2006 is the most creative).

Looking back at centuries of historical changes, his concept appeared so versatile and layered that it functioned in different ideologies, was adaptable to different functions, and, above all, it assumed new meanings in changing times. This essay examines two points in the building's history. We explore certain architectural concepts and spiritual ideas that governed Diocletian in his building. Then, we try to understand how those concepts and ideas transferred to a city, particularly a late-antique and Christian city. We would like to propose that the idea of a city, rather a symbolic-ceremonial city, was in Diocletian's mind already and that his ideas of memory and authority were readily adaptable to a Christian city.

The relevance of imperial birthplaces became especially high for the state ideology in the Tetrarchic period. The military leaders, or perhaps better called warrior emperors (MITCHELL 2007, 52), from the Illyrian and Danubian provinces built fortified birth-residences and burial monuments in their homeland, near the provincial capitals and major military and civilian communication lines. Diocletian led the way with his unique monument, located practically in the suburbs of Salona and on the major land and maritime routes in Dalmatia. Galerius constructed his palace, named Romuliana after his mother, at the present-day Gamzigrad near Zaječar (ŽIVIĆ 2003). Maximinus Daia built a fortress-residence at Šarkamen near Negotin (TOMOVIĆ *et al.* 2005). The Adriatic Sea and the Danubian roads were essential for the seamless connectivity between the eastern and western halves of the Empire. The land roads also led through the home territory, and the prime recruitment territory of the rival emperors and pretenders, the crucial fact in the cases of many battles fought in the Danubian region after Diocletian's retirement. The leaders' power base rested there and their memory imbued continuing power in the successors from the same regions. Those walled palaces were both the memorial places of the builders of the new state order and secure residences for the emperor and his mobile forces in the strategic areas of the Empire. Homeland mattered even in Rome, although Rome mattered less and less. However, the last in line and the final victor, Constantine, had a vision, more than a cross in the sky. He changed the historical course and built a new birthplace for the Empire. His successors were no longer provincial warlords but the sons of a new metropolis.

Diocletian's palace was a unique concept and design among those imperial birthplace fortress-memorials, and generally among imperial villas. Xavier Lafon recently wrote about its place in line of imperial maritime villas. While the Julio-Claudian and even Flavian maritime villas in Italy are quite well known, those from the time of Trajan on are rather obscure and unknown to specialists of Late Antiquity (LAFON 2009, 298). Diocletian's villa may be, in his view, the last in line and may help clarify Trajan's maritime villa in the present-day Civitavecchia north of Rome, known from Pliny the Younger's writing (Pliny, *Ep.* VI, 31, 1) and from some archaeological remains. Lafon sees similarities in the villas' location in the landscape, their castrum-like design, and their port installations (mentioned by Pliny), which might have had both military and civil function on a frequently traveled maritime route (LAFON 2009: 304). The recent findings of the Diocletianic harbor at Split give further meaning to Lafon's parallels (DELONGA 2007; CAMBI 2009).

Beside its maritime location and function, Diocletian's villa had a suburban location in relation to the provincial capital of Salona, only 6 km away. We do not know how much Diocletian's life in retirement was linked to Salona, but the writers close to his time mentioned his villa and his tomb as near Salona (Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* XXIII.497). Eutropius says explicitly: *Diocletianus privatus in villa, quae haud procul a Salonis est, praeclaro otio consenuit...* (Eu-

trop. *Brev.* IX.28). St. Jerome recorded Diocletian's death in the residence of his villa – »*in villae suae palatio*« (Hieron. *Chron.* 2332). In the minds of his contemporaries, the countryside location and the relation to Salona were relevant and presumably best known to the public. The relevance could have been both on account of his birthplace and on the city's prominence in the Empire. In the shipping section of Diocletian's Edict of Maximum Prices Salona was the only named port-city in the eastern Adriatic (ARNAUD 2007). Salona must have benefited from Diocletian's authority and fame. It received from him two new epithets that clearly illustrated its new status - Felix Valeria.

An imperial villa so close to an urban center does evoke the situation of the capital of Rome and the long tradition of imperial villas in its surroundings. Perhaps Diocletian had that connection in mind as another reason why Salona deserved to be called Felix. In the new study on elite villas in the suburbs of Rome (distance of up to 40 km), G. Adams (2008) divided them into three categories: maritime, hinterland and imperial. The reviewer J. Rossiter found those categories convenient but not meaningful, because of many overlaps (ROSSITER 2011: 610). Diocletian's villa, maritime and imperial, is a case in point. Each villa is suburban in its socio-cultural landscape. The socio-functional relationship to its *urbs* is however rarely clear without any literary or historical text (FENTRESS – MAIURO 2011). The suburban location of Diocletian's villa, as well as other Salonitan suburban villas, would be well worth further study at another time. There are also certain chronological and architectural parallels with the fortified villa at Mogorjelo in relation to Naron. This fortified, late-antique villa with a clear agricultural function, but also with later Christian additions within its compound, leads us to a discussion about the function and spiritual ideas of Diocletian's palace.

Adams' study places a special emphasis on the entertainment spaces in the suburban villas around Rome. Diocletian's concept of focal spaces gave the most weight to imperial ideology, ceremonies and memory, while the entertainment seemed limited to dining and bathing. The concept of entertainment itself is complex, but not less so than the identity of spaces across time and cultures (ROSSITER 2011: 610-611). The emphasized ceremonial identity, apparently intended by the emperor in the villa's initial concept, was another unique feature among the imperial villas, as S. McNally noticed. She studied the architectural ornament of the Mausoleum and the Temple (traditionally attributed to Jupiter), the two ceremonial buildings enclosed in their temenoi and centrally located within the palace complex (McNALLY 2009b). She discussed the »layers of associations« of the ornamental griffins, erotes and scrolls and pointed out close parallels with the ornament of Trajan's Forum in Rome, seen also in the juxtaposition of the tomb and temple there. We may imagine that the Peristyle might have had a basilical effect for those standing in it, adding another element of comparison with Trajan's Forum. However, the open colonnade in Diocletian's palace allowed the views of the opposed tomb and temple (originally three temples, two round and one rectangular). McNally connected the overall message of the ornament with »past military victory, contemporary prosperity, and hopes for good fortune after death« (McNALLY 2009b: 288).

We have noticed that those same imperial ideas on the three temporal planes revolving around Diocletian featured on his coinage (*RIC* V-2 and VI). The metal – gold for the governing class, silver for the military and civic officials, and copper for commoners – mattered as much as the political slogans of the reverse legends targeting these classes. C.H. V. Sutherland called the legends »tetrarchic, military and reassuring« and »strong and explicit« as those back in the Early Empire (*RIC* VI, 145-146). The legends on gold and silver coins evoked the personifications of *Virtus Augg.*, *Providentia Augg.*, *Pietas Augg.*, *Felicitas Temporum*, *Securi-*

tas Orbi, Fates Victrices, Virtus Exercitus, Virtus Militum, and an early and common *Victoria Sarmatica*. The emperor was linked with the divine and the human on bronze coins in everybody's hands. The legends were *Iovi Conservatori* (holding Victory on the globe) and, the most common and minted empire-wide, *Genio Populi Romani*. The latter would evoke in every citizen the grand new times of the Empire under a truly good emperor in Trajan's mold. The lasting legacy of the founder of the new order was promoted after his retirement on bronze coinage with his image (D N Diocletiano Beatissimo/Felicissimo P F Sen Aug) and the message *Providentia Deorum Quies Augg*. It may be interesting to note that most mints apparently ceased producing those coins after the tetrarchic meeting in Carnuntum in November 308. The mint of Antioch continued them into 310 and the mint of Alexandria until 313 (*RIC* VI, 608, 678, 683). Should we see here the tenacious tradition of the East (especially Egypt) or some lingering loyalty of the mint officials in Diocletian's former core territory?

Fortifications were traditionally related to cities, although in Late Antiquity some rural estates were walled. Rome received new fortifications just before Diocletian's time. Diocletian built his own fortified *urbs* with colonnaded streets, an imperial victory memorial in the metropolitan fashion of the 2nd century and a residential *palatium* overlooking the sea. The northern part of the villa compound also had an urban character with *insulae*-like quadrants. It is tempting to see the symbolism of the *Urbs* in the tripartite division of the walled enclosure – *insulae* for the *populus* in the north, the imperial monuments in the center (associating with *Roma aeterna*), and the imperial residence in the south. Suburban villas often had their own burial sites, as did the Tetrarchic birthplace memorials. The metropolis of Rome had grand imperial tombs and victory memorials outside and inside the walls. The grandest of them all and centered in Rome was Trajan's Forum. Further temptation is to relate Diocletian's walled villa again with the early tetrarchic coins and the image type on reverse that shows the tetrarchs sacrificing before a gate in a multi-turreted enclosure (three to eight towers).

The relevance of Diocletian's unique building for the state as a whole, or for its residents after his death is poorly known. For the contemporaries in the fourth century, it was worth knowing about a scandal involving the theft of a purple curtain (*velamen purpureum*) from *Diocletiani sepulcrum*, which was considered high treason (Amm. Marc. XVI.8.4). The memorial, stately role of the place apparently maintained its relevance. The personalities involved in the incident were both slaves and free, presumably residents there. In the following century there were further glimpses into the compound's social history. The most relevant is the listing among the state workshops of »*gynaecium Iovensium Aspalato*« in *Notitia Dignitatum* (*Occ.* XI) of the third decade in the 5th century. If it was within the walls, in its northern half, as has been generally accepted, we may recognize the general pattern of economic changes and diversification in late-antique villas and cities. We have argued elsewhere for economic and demographic changes on maritime villas in the Adriatic, and on the island of Brioni in particular, caused primarily by the militarization of the region in the 5th and 6th century (BEGOVIĆ – SCHRUNK 2011). The area was of strategic importance and port-forts, like the *Kastrum* site on Brioni were economically viable and secured maritime traffic of supplies and troops, as did the port-forts in Italy (CHRISTIE 2006: 368-373). The maritime and fortified character of the Palace and its economic relevance for the state were crucial factors in its successful transformation and survival as a city. The evidence of imported fine wares and amphorae of the 4th-early 7th century found in the Palace shows a populated site and integrated into the empire-wide exchange (SCHRUNK 1989b; WILL 1989). The late 6th century Adriatic geography of *Ravennatis Anonymi* listed *Spalathron/ Spalatrurn* as *civitas* (*Cosm.* IV.16, V.14). It reflected

the demographic reality and a new social organization centered on bishoprics in the Adriatic cities and countryside. (SUIĆ 2003: 341-392). In the mid 10th century the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus wrote that Diocletian founded »*tou Aspalathou kastron*«, which was a little palace (*palation mikron*)« (DAI 29). It was traditionally a »*palation*«, an imperial residence, but since the late 6th-early 7th century the entire walled complex was primarily a *civitas*, or a *kastron*, in the Byzantine terminology. We may understand Porphyrogenitus' words in this context of the four centuries of Byzantine geography and terminology in the Adriatic (GOLDSTEIN 1999).

An imperial, maritime and walled villa had become a port-fort and a Christian *civitas* by the early 7th century. Its suburban role was the last one to disappear formally. It took the »fall« or abandonment of Salona around 636/38 to make it a city in its full sense. The subsequent transferring of ideas of authority and memory from the *Romanitas* of Diocletian to the Christian worldview of the Salonitans completed the process. We could not dig up those concepts that gave the medieval meaning to the pagan buildings and to their relationship. We may try to find them in the beautiful but historically debatable narrative of Thomas the Archdeacon of Split (1201-1268), which in itself is an artifact of medieval Split (PERIĆ *et al.* 2006). Thomas wrote how Spalatum became populated by the refugees from Salona and assumed the status and authority of the Salonitan metropolis in the 7th century. We leave aside the debate of his historical accuracy and seek to understand the responses of a small segment of the late Roman society at the time of trouble and the threat of a break with their traditions. Their ideology, as »a set of ideas embodied in social action« was »a real material force« that contributed to their adjustment and survival. (SHANKS – TILLEY 1988: 181).

Thomas narrated about the fall of Salona under the Avaro-Slavic raids and the flight of her inhabitants to the neighboring islands. He moralized the story and saw the cause of the fall in citizens' disregard for civil and spiritual ideals. The Salonitans had difficult life on the islands because of shortages of crops and fresh water. They were thinking of returning to the mainland. Salona was in ruins and unsafe for return and rebuilding. A distinguished Salonitan, Severus, suggested that they move into the walled Spalatum and led the return. The wealthier citizens built houses, others settled in the towers, while the common people inhabited the substructures of the imperial apartments. Medieval sources mentioned the towers as homes of some noble families (BULIĆ 1927: 256-257; MARASOVIĆ 1980: 106). The archaeological evidence showed us that the original Diocletianic structures and spaces already underwent alterations and adaptations in the centuries after Diocletian's death and before the abandonment of Salona (MARASOVIĆ 1980; MIRNIK 1989: 25).

When the Salonitans' practical needs for living space and protection were met, the congregation aspired toward the reestablishment of its Christian institutions, equally important in their architectural, administrative and spiritual manifestations. Thomas placed those events also in the 7th century and connected them with the work of John of Ravenna, the first archbishop of Split, whose historical date was c. 800 (BULIĆ 1927: 191-192). In the material sense the Salonitan Church lost its monumental, urban architecture of the episcopal center, with the basilicas, baptistery and bishop's residence. It also lost the cemeterial basilicas with martyrs' and bishops' tombs outside the city walls. The ceremonial architecture embodied the glorification of the church and the bishop's authority of his metropolis. Even more important for the spiritual ideals of the congregation were the cemeterial cult buildings, which embodied the power and prestige of the martyrs and patron-saints. For some years before Salona's abandonment the tendency was already strong for introducing altar-graves and the cult of relics into

urban churches (DYGGVE 1951: 36-38, 59-61; GRABAR 1946: 316 ff). The ideals of victorious past, secure present and blissful eternity were thus synthesized in one place. It was not difficult for the Salonitan congregation to find suitable monumental buildings within the Palace to replace their episcopal complex. The ceremonial buildings of the Diocletianic imperial memory and authority were architecturally and ideologically familiar to them. However, the symbols of the cult and memory of the pagan emperor had to be removed. Thomas narrates how John of Ravenna »cleansed« the Mausoleum of the pagan remains for its new role. The circular and domed Mausoleum was close to the ideals of religious architecture of the time, especially in the Byzantine sphere. The next move was the transfer of the relics of the two Salonitan patron-saints to Spalatum. The saints were the »corner stones in the traditions of the bishops in the martyr-town« (DYGGVE 1951: 127). Domnius was the first bishop-martyr and Anastasius was the martyr around whose grave the later Salonitan bishops were buried. Thomas vividly told how John of Ravenna transferred their relics to the newly consecrated cathedral. Its interior with rectangular and circular niches was ideal for multiple altars. The quest for continuation of the authority of the Salonitan metropolis was fulfilled when the cathedral and the cult of patron saints were united, whatever was its historical context or the identity of the relics. There are many historical problems in the transfer story, above all the tradition that the relics of those saints were acquired by Pope John IV in 641 and buried in St. Venanzio in Rome (BULIĆ 1927: 196 -197; DYGGVE 1951: 126 - 128).

Thomas does not mention any new function of the rectangular and circular temples opposite the Mausoleum. The first evidence for the rectangular temple as a baptistery dates to the 12th century (BULIĆ 1927: 231; MARASOVIĆ 1980: 104). It is possible that one of the circular temples served as the first baptistery, or that the both circular shrines served as oratoria. In the crypt of the southern shrine a fragment of an altar screen was found (MARASOVIĆ 1980: 104). The large baths south-east of the Mausoleum could have been adapted as well. The Peristyle remained an integral part of the ceremonial center of the new church. Until recent times church ceremonies were performed in the Peristyle. The bishop would appear under the *prothyron* to bless his congregation (BULIĆ 1927: 190, n. 40).

Diocletian was an avid builder, even passionately oppressive in his way, as we may interpret the »*cupiditas aedificandi*« of his Christian critic Lactantius (*De mort.* 28, 1). The emperor would feel vindicated, if he could see his retirement edifice today. In Split, he would find his memory intact, as well as the walls and the ceremonial buildings that really mattered to him. It may be ironic but not surprising that those same buildings mattered greatly to the Christian inhabitants and to Salonitan refugees three hundred years later. They still matter to all of us, not easily giving up all of their secrets and letting us play with a »multitude of associations« (McNALLY 2009b: 283).

We wish to acknowledge our debt to the scholars of the Palace, Jerko Marasović, Tomislav Marasović and Sheila McNally, for much of our knowledge and for many ideas about the Palace contained in this article.

ABBREVIATIONS

DAI – Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*.

RIC V-2. – *Roman Imperial Coinage*, H. MATTINGLY and E. A. SYDENHAM (eds.), *Volume V, Part II* by P. H. Webb. London, 1933, reprinted 1968 and 1972.

RIC VI. – *Roman Imperial Coinage*. C. H. V. SUTHERLAND and R. A. G. CARSON (eds.). *Volume VI* by C. H. V. SUTHERLAND. London, 1967.

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DIOKLECIJANOVA PALAČA I SPLIT: PRENOŠENJE IDEJA S PRIMORSKE VILE NA KRŠĆANSKI GRAD

Grad koji se razvio unutar Palače u kasnoj antici promijenio je svoje tkivo, ali nije daleko odmaknuo od glavnih ideja koje su ga prethodno obilježavale. Suvremeni istraživači pokušavaju razumjeti Dioklecijanov originalni idejni koncept – ili nekoliko koncepata – koji stoje iza njegove građevine. Kada se u obzir uzmu stoljeća povijesnih promjena, koncept Palače i elementi njezine arhitekture čine se tako raznolikim i višeslojnim da su mogli funkcionirati u sklopu raznolikih ideologija, da su bili prilagodljivi različitim namjenama te, najvažnije, da su lako mogli prisvojiti nova značenja u novim vremenima. Ovaj rad proučava arhitekturne koncepte i ideologiju koji su vodili Dioklecijana te načine na koje su ti koncepti i ideje bili prenešeni na kasnoantički i kršćanski grad.

Arhitektura i lokacija Palače u odnosu na Salonu može se povezati s tradicijom elitnih primorskih vila te vila u predgrađima koje su tijekom 5. i 6. st. sve više poprimala ekonomsku i stratešku važnost u procesu militarizacije jadranskih krajeva. Utvrđena primorska građevina, Dioklecijanova palača, te ekonomska važnost tkaonica unutar njezinog područja, bili su važni faktori u njezinoj uspješnoj prenamjeni u kasnoantički grad-*castrum*. Dioklecijanov duhovni koncept simboličkog i ceremonijalnog grada te ideje autoriteta i spomeničke naravi objekta, uklopljene u arhitekturu, ukrase i raspored monumentalnih građevina unutar Palače, lako su se mogli prilagoditi konceptu kršćanskog grada. U raspravi o ukrasima na tzv. Jupiterovom hramu S. McNally povezala je značenje Palače s vojnim pobjedama u prošlosti, napretkom osiguranim od strane novog poretka u sadašnjosti i sretnom i blagoslovljenom budućnošću. Te imperijalne ideje, usredotočene na Dioklecijanovu ulogu u tri vremenske dimenzije, mogu se pronaći i na njegovom novcu. One su bile kompatibilne s kršćanstvom, pobjedom Crkve i biskupskim autoritetom. Fizičkim i duhovnim prenosom salonitanske dijeceze i kultova mučenika gubi se narav predgrađa, a Palača postaje grad u pravom smislu te riječi.