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Sirmium – Thessaloniki – Iustiniana Prima: The Migrations of Late Antique Cults and Architectural Concepts

Abstract

Three cities, Sirmium, Thessaloniki and Iustiniana Prima had very prominent role during Late Antiquity. Their position was apparent through their wealth, their cults and their architecture, primarily of Christian religious buildings. Also, all three of them had one more important thing in common – they were connected by migrations of populations, first from the northern part of the Empire towards the Mediterranean, namely from Sirmium to Thessaloniki, and then once again from the Mediterranean to its hinterland, namely from Thessaloniki to Iustiniana Prima. The consequences of those migrations were the translation of relics and cults, and the appearance of one specific architectural type, the basilica with a transept.

Key words: *cults, St. Demetrius, Sirmium, Thessaloniki, migrations, Late Antiquity, basilica with transept, Iustiniana Prima*

One of the main topics of a recent presentation by Enrico Zannini considered the problem of defining the late antique city as the 'city of people' as opposed to the 'city of monuments', as is the common point of view of different disciplines when dealing with the cities of the mentioned period.¹ He listed some important, although mostly disregarded criteria that define the urban way of life, i.e. not only great public monuments and temples but water supply, housing, trading, etc. In this paper I would like to discuss another important yet often disregarded feature of a late antique city – namely the nourishing of saintly cults, presented by examples of three large urban centers: Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovica), Thessaloniki and Iustiniana Prima (Caričin Grad near Lebane).

Although established in the 1st century AD, the ancient city of Sirmium gained its importance only at the beginning of the 4th century as the *sedes imperii*.² Numerous public buildings were erected at that time, like the

1 E. Zanini, Coming to the End: Early Byzantine Cities after the mid-6th Century, in: *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies. Plenary Papers, Belgrade 22-27 August 2016*, ed. S. Marjanović-Dušanić, Belgrade 2016, 127-140.

2 В. Поповић, Sirmium – град царева и мученика, in: *Sirmium. Град царева и мученика (сабрани радови о археологији и историји Сирмијума)*, ed. Д. Познановић, Sremska Mitrovica 2003, 42; М. Mirković, *Sirmium. Istorija rimskog grada od I do kraja VI veka*, Sremska Mitrovica 2008, 30, 64.

large baths or the imperial palace with hippodrome for example.³ Yet, the beginning of the 4th century in Sirmium was not only marked by the fact that the city had a high imperial status, but also by some less pleasant events. Namely, the earliest known Christian community in Sirmium produced its first martyrs during the Diocletian's persecutions 303-305, so the city started to be mentioned in written sources as the city of martyrs.⁴ Their number was quite large because the city was the seat of the prefecture of Illyricum until the invasion of Huns in 441.⁵ During these persecutions, the cruelest in Roman history, Sirmium acquired martyrial cults as one of its most important characteristics, which helped the town acquire the title of the Christian bishopric and pilgrimage center. It maintained such a position until it was entirely ruined by fire in 583, a year after Avars conquered the city.⁶ The testimonies to Sirmium's status among other important centers of martyrial cults can be found in written sources and epigraphic monuments, but the most remarkable can be traced in the remains of the architecture of the Christian martyrial shrines.⁷

Martyrologia are the main source that allow us insight into the names and acts of several important saints who were put to death in Sirmium, and whose cults were known and celebrated throughout the Empire. One example is the cult of Quattuor Coronati, actually five Pannonian sculptors, to whom the titulus in Rome was dedicated.⁸ Another is that of the Sirmian bishop Irenaeus, whose cult was also popular in many parts of the Empire.⁹

3 В. Поповић, Е. Ochsenchlagler, Касноцарски хиподром у Сирмијуму, *Старинар* 26 (1975), 57-70; И. Поповић, Сирмијум – царска резиденција, панонска метропола и хришћанска „глава Илирика“, in: *Константин Велики и Милански едикт 313. Рађање хришћанства у римским провинцијама на тлу Србије*, ed. И. Поповић, Б. Борић-Брешковић, Belgrade 2013, 108.

4 Н. Delehaye, *Les origines du cultes des martyrs*, Bruxelles 1912, 293-295; J. Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l'empire Romain*, Roma 1967, 79-104; М. Мirković, *Sirmium*, 115; М. Jarak, *Ranokršćanski mučenici Panonije*, in: *1700 godina svetih srijemskih mučenika: Zbornik radova s međunarodnog simpozija o 1700. obljetnici Sirmijsko-panonskih mučenika (304.-2004.)*, ed. D. Damjanović, Đakovo 2011, 54.

5 *Iust. Nov. XI*, ed. Iul. Pacius, Genevae 1580.

6 М. Мirković, *Sirmium*, 109-111.

7 О. Шпехар, Сирмијумски мученици и креирање идентитета ранохришћанског града, *Зборник Народног музеја* 21/2 (2014), 25-52, with bibliography.

8 *Analecta Bollandiniana, Tomus II*, eds. С. de Smedt, G. van Hooff and J. de Backer, Paris-Bruxelles, 1883, 31; Н. Delehaye, *Les origines*, 295; П. Мијовић, Сирмијумски скулптори и каменоресци - Quattuor coronati, in: *Sirmium и на небу и на земљи (1700 година од страдања хришћанских мученика)*, ed. Д. Познановић, Sremska Mitrovica 2004, 114; P. Tóth, *Syrmian martyrs in exile. Pannonian case-studies and a re-evaluation of the St. Demetrius problem*, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 103/1 (2010), 159-161; М. Jarak, *Ranokršćanski mučenici*, 58.

9 *Acta Sanctorum, Martii, Tomus Tertius*, colligere coepit J. Bollandus, G. Henschenius et D. Papebrochius, Parisiis et Romae 1865, 553; J. Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes*, 79-81; Р. Поповић, *Рано хришћанство на Балкану пре досељења Словена*, Belgrade 1995, 42; В. Поповић, Блажени Иринеј, први епископ Сирмијума, in: *Sirmium: град царева и мученика*, ed. Д. Познановић, Sremska Mitrovica 2003, 260;

Even more famous was the cult of Anastasia, a young maid who also suffered and died for Christ in Sirmium at the beginning of the 4th century.¹⁰ The migration of her relics is well known to us, thanks to her importance. Primarily, at the second half of the 5th century her earthly remains were transferred to the capital, to the newly erected temple dedicated to her. After regaining the dominance in Diadora the Byzantine emperor gave her relics as a gift to this city as a sign of forgiveness, at the beginning of the 9th century. The relics were still in the city in the time of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913-959). The cult was also very popular among Ostrogoths, maybe as a result of the fact that they spent some time in Pannonia. After moving to the northern part of the Apennine peninsula, they even dedicated a church to her in their own capital, Ravenna. Her relics were also mentioned in Carolingian monastery of Fulda around 815.¹¹

Despite interesting transfers of relics and cults, the biggest challenge yet, for all of those who research the cultural history and the visual culture of the late antique Balkans, is the tracing of possible paths through which the cult of Sirmian deacon Demetrius was spread through the Empire. St. Demetrius was a deacon in the time when bishop Ereneus led the Christian community in the city, and they were both martyred in April 304.¹² More than a century later, one written source - *Passio Secunda* of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki - linked the cult of Sirmian saint to a Thessalonian martyr of the same name, thus providing a very interesting topic for many future researchers.¹³

Пасија св. Иринеја Сирмијскога (translation and notes by М. Милчин), in: *Sirmium и на небу и на земљи (1700 година од страдања хришћанских мученика)*, ed. Д. Познановић, Sremska Mitrovica 2004, 186-187.

10 About the different versions of legends cf. P. Tóth, *Syrmian martyrs*, 157-159.

11 *Theophanis Chronographia*, Vol. 1, recens. C. de Boor, Leipzig, 1883, 111; Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, English translation by R.J.H. Jenkins, ed. by Gy. Moravcsik, Budapest 1949, 139; И. Николајевић, „Martyr Anastasia” у Фулди, in: *Sirmium и на небу и на земљи (1700 година од страдања хришћанских мученика)*, ed. Д. Познановић, Sremska Mitrovica 2004, 124-125; D. Mauskopf Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge 2010, 174-175; Д. Прерадовић, Преноси реликвија из Византије на Јадран у периоду између VI и XI века, in: *Ниси и Византија XI*, ed. М. Ракоција, Niš 2013, 192, 195-197.

12 Н. Delehaye, *Les origines*, 293; J. Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes*, 79-83; Р. Поповић, *Рано хришћанство*, 42-44.

13 Some of the works that deal with the problem of the relationship between Sirmian and Thessalonian martyr are: Н. Delehaye, *Les origines*, 263-264; J. Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes*, 81-83; М. Vickers, Sirmium or Thessaloniki? A Critical Examination of the St. Demetrius Legend, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 67 (1974), 337-350; Р. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans*, T. II, *Commentaire*, Paris 1981, 199-202; Р. Поповић, *Рано хришћанство*; В. Поповић, Култ светог Димитрија Солунског у Сирмијуму и у Равени, in: *Sirmium: град царева и мученика*, ed. Д. Познановић, Sremska Mitrovica 2003, 279-289; М. В. Панов, The creation of the cult of St. Demetrius in Thessalonica: Byzantine invention?, *Гласник на Институтот за национална историја* 52 (2008), 75-86; P. Tóth, *Syrmian martyrs*; М. Jarak, Ranokršćanski mučenici, 62; D. Dimitrov, Who executed St. Demetrius? An attempt at a forensic report, in: *Serdica Edict (311 AD): concepts and realizations of the idea of religious toleration*, eds. V. Vachkova and D. Dimitrov, Sofia 2014, 133-141.

At the time when the Huns invaded the Balkans, destroying all the important towns on their way, Sirmium was not spared. The bishop and the prefect of Illyricum, followed by the numerous refugees, moved to the safer place, to Thessaloniki, the largest urban centre in that part of the Empire. The text of Justinian's XI Novella testifies to this, providing the information that the former Sirmian prefect Apremius or Appenius was among those who moved to Thessaloniki and that he continued to perform there the same duty, since Thessaloniki became the new seat of the Prefecture.¹⁴ Together with the civil, church and military administration, and with the common people, the cults 'moved' as well, first and foremost because they represented the guarantees for the wellbeing, but also because the relics were the most valuable possessions of any Christian town, defining its position within the entire Christian world. It seems that it was during these turbulent times that the cult of St. Demetrius of Sirmium somehow became entwined with the already existing cult of the local Thessalonian saint of the same name, as is suggested by the vague passages in *Passio Secunda* of St. Demetrius. The text provides the information about one prefect of Illyricum, named Leontius, whose seat was at that time in Thessaloniki. In his town he built the church of St. Demetrius after the saint's relics healed him of some illness he gained while staying in Dacia. Afterwards, Leontius undertook a voyage to Sirmium, in order to build there a church dedicated to the same saint. He actually wanted to transfer some of saint's relics to Sirmium, but in a dream the saint told him not to dislodge or to move his earthly remains but to take a piece of *orarium* and his *chlamys* in a silver reliquary instead. Prefect obeyed and, after arriving to Sirmium, he erected the church of St. Demetrius in the vicinity of the church dedicated to St. Anastasia.¹⁵ One possible archaeological proof of the existence of St. Anastasia's church in Sirmium is today preserved in the Museum of Srem in Sremska Mitrovica (fig. 1).¹⁶ It is an inscribed stone plate, which testifies to the fact that the basilica dedicated to this very popular female saint was indeed situated somewhere in or around the town, but there is still no positive proof about its location or about the church of St. Demetrius in its vicinity.

The part of *Passio Secunda* that considers described events is very interesting and inspiring,¹⁷ but as a legend it must be taken with some degree of

14 *Iust. Nov. XI.*

15 M. Vickers, Sirmium or Thessaloniki?, 342-343; P. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils*, 200-201.

16 I. Popović, S. Ferjančić, A new inscription from Sirmium and the basilica of St. Anastasia, *Starinar* 63 (2013), 101-114.

17 C. Walter, St. Demetrius: The Myroblytos of Thessalonika, in: id., *Studies in Byzantine Iconography (Collected Studies Series)*, London 1977, 159.

caution. Therefore, we must turn to tangible visual culture in order to discover the possible ties between the two cities. Unfortunately, as is already mentioned, the archaeological proofs of the cult of St. Demetrius in Sirmium are completely lacking so far, except for one church that can, primarily by its architectural features, be linked to late antique Thessalonian church architecture. Namely, the intramural church of Sirmium, a three-aisled basilica with a transept dated to the 5th century (fig. 2),¹⁸ reveals certain similarities to the large 5th century basilica of St. Demetrius in Thessaloniki (fig. 3).¹⁹ Of course those similarities are mostly formal and consider the disposition of architectural spaces, above all the very type of the basilica with wide semicircular eastern apse and a transept, which even from the time of erecting the Old saint Peter in Rome became associated, among others, to the martyrial function.²⁰ But the Thessalonian and Sirmian churches were both built inside the city ramparts, i.e. closer to the idea of the Constantinian Lateran Basilica or the later church of St. Thecla in Milan, also built with transept,²¹ which define them as urban churches. Presented information led some scholars to state that the Sirmian church is dedicated to St. Demetrius,²² but this relatively new hypothesis must be taken with great reservation, since there are no definite proofs for it yet. Still, the available data indeed testify to the strong cultural relations between two major metropolises, which may well be the result of the migration of Sirmian people and their settling in Thessaloniki, as well as of the migrations of cults that somehow tied together two saints named Demetrius.

The cult of saint can be traced in Sirmium until the 11th century,²³ but there are not enough information about it later on. However, it must be pointed out that the modern name of Sirmium - Sremska Mitrovica - suggests

18 В. Поповић, Култ светог Димитрија, 288; М. Јеремић, Култне грађевине хришћанског Сирмијума, in: *Sirmium и на небу и на земљи. 1700 година од страдања хришћанских мученика*, ed. Д. Познановић, Sremska Mitrovica 2004, 67.

19 P. Lemerle, Saint-Démétrius de Thessalonique et les problèmes du martyrium et du transept, *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 77 (1953), 660-694; R. F. Hoddinott, *Early Byzantine Churches in Macedonia and Southern Serbia. A Study of the Origins and the Initial Development of East Christian Art*, London 1963, 125-155; R. Krautheimer, S. Ćurčić, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, New Haven 1986, 125-129; S. Ćurčić, Christianization of Thessalonikē: The Making of Christian „Urban Iconography“, in: *From Roman to Byzantine Thessalonikē. Studies in Religion and Archaeology*, eds. L. Nasrallah, Ch. Bakirtzis and S.J. Friesen, Cambridge Mass. 2010, 227-228.

20 R. Krautheimer, Il transetto nella basilica paleocristiana, in: *Actes du Ve congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne, Aix-en Provence 13-19 septembre 1954*, Città del Vaticano-Paris 1957, 288.

21 Ibid., 289.

22 И. Поповић, *Сирмијум*, 115.

23 S. Andrić, Bazilijanski i benediktinski samostan sv. Dimitrija u Srijemskoj Mitrovici, *Radovi zavoda za hrvatsku povijest* 40 (2008), 115-185.

that it once was the city of Demetrius, more precisely of Saint Demetrius. Yet, the cult continued to develop in Thessaloniki as one of the city's main cults, since St. Demetrius was treated as a miracle worker and healer, as was recorded in *Passio Prima* and in *Passio Secunda*. Thessalonian church dedicated to him became a focus of religiosity as well as of pilgrimage.²⁴

After the Hunic raids and until the end of the 5th century, there was no centralized rule in the central Balkans. The process of its re-establishing started at the very end of the 5th century, during the time of emperor Anastasius (491-518), and it was finished in the time of Justinian I (527-565).²⁵ During the reign of the latter, migrations obviously struck this part of the Empire once again, this time from Thessaloniki to the newly founded endowment of Justinian – the city of Iustiniana Prima.²⁶ The scholars are unanimous in identifying this town with the one discovered on the site of Caričin Grad near Lebane. It was an imperial city built by the emperor to mark the place of his birth, like many of his ancestors did before him.²⁷ The official court historian Procopius informs us that the emperor built the city provided with all the necessities for a large urban center and administrative seat to function.²⁸

The founding of a city *ex novo* in a previously non-urbanized place utterly changed the way of life in a wider area in its vicinity, and it demanded a completely functional civil, military and church administration. Written sources are mostly silent about the way the government was established in the city which, like Iustiniana Prima, was built *ex novo*. Despite that, it can be assumed that the administration, as well as the church prelates, arrived most probably from some other city of the Empire, which had already been administratively well organized. We can think of Thessaloniki as the hypothetical provenance of the inhabitants of the Justinian's new town. This assumption is based on the Iustiniana Prima's geographic position, and on the notice in the Justinian's *XI Novellae*.²⁹ In the *Novellae XI*, dated to April 14th 535 and addressed to Catelianus, the first Archbishop of Iustiniana Prima,

24 L. Brubaker, Elites and Patronage in Early Byzantium: The Evidence from Hagios Demetrios at Thessalonike, in: *Elites Old and New in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East. Studies on Late Antiquity and Early Islam* 6, ed. J. Haldon, Princeton 2004, 64.

25 A. Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity AD 395-600*, London 1993, 118.

26 O. Špehar, The Cruciform Church on Caričin Grad: Thessalonian architectural influence on the central Balkans in the 6th century, *Зборник Матице српске за ликовне уметности* 42 (2014), 69.

27 One earlier Roman example is that of Philip the Arab and the founding of Philipopolis, cf. H. W. Dey, *The Afterlife of the Roman City. Architecture and Ceremony in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, New York 2015, 21-24.

28 Procopius, *De Aedificiis*, IV. 1. 104.20-107. 2, ed. J. Haury, Leipzig 1913.

29 O. Špehar, *The Cruciform Church on Caričin Grad*, 69.

it is categorically stated that Iustiniana Prima was supposed to take all the jurisdictions from Thessaloniki.³⁰ Most of the scholars have doubts whether this transition of power ever actually happened,³¹ but despite that, *Novellae* provides proof of the close connections between the two cities. Once again we must look at what the material culture, above all the architecture, can offer us. The most confident suggestion can be observed in the sacred topography of Iustiniana Prima, which reflects the late antique migrations of architectural concepts from one large urban centre with a long history to the *ex novo* founded imperial city. Of course, the most distinctive features of this imperial city were created under the metropolitan influence that came directly from the capital – it is visible in the appearance of circular forum, in the existence of *via sacra* that connected all Christian temples into one cohesive structure dependant on stationary liturgy, as well as in some distinctive Constantinopolitan architectural features, such as polygonal apses of several churches.³² But we can also trace, mostly thanks to the architectural remains of once lavishly furnished and decorated temples, another path by which influences came from the Mediterranean into its hinterland and this path led from Thessaloniki to Iustiniana Prima. The diversity of church plans in Iustiniana Prima and sculptural, mosaic and fresco decoration, suggest wealthy and well educated *ktetors* who must have found the inspiration for their endowments in their homeland. It seems clear enough that the administrative, church and military officers in Iustiniana Prima were those *ktetors*, whose provenance could be tied to Thessaloniki as the seat of Prefecture. Since the basilicas are dominant in newly founded Justinian's city, the most probable origin of the prevailing architectural type was indeed Greece.³³

We must not forget that in the *ex novo* built town there were no previous traces of religious life, pagan or Christian, so the relics for such an important city, an imperial endowment, must have also been brought from different places. There has been no certain data about the cults and saints worshipped in

30 *Iust. Nov. XI.*

31 V. Кондић, В. Поповић, *Царичин град: утврђено насеље у византијском Илирику*, Belgrade 1977, 167; V. Bavant, Caričin Grad and the Changes in the Nature of Urbanism in the Central Balkans in the Sixth Century, in: *The Transition to Late Antiquity. On Danube and Beyond* (Proceedings of the British Academy 141), ed. A. Poulter, Oxford 2007, 368; V. Ivanišević, Caričin Grad – the Fortifications and the Intramural Housing in the Lower Town, in: *Byzanz – das Römerreich im Mittelalter, Teil 2, 2: Schauplätze*, eds. F. Deim and J. Drauschke, Mainz 2011, 747.

32 O. Špehar, The imperial city of Iustiniana Prima as a paradigm of the Constantinopolitan influence in the Central Balkans, in: *The Danubian Lands Between the Black, Aegean and Adriatic Seas (7th Century BC – 10th Century AD). Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress on Black Sea Antiquities (Belgrade, 17-21 September 2013)*, eds. G.R. Tsetskladze, A. Avram and J. Hargrave, Oxford 2015, 231-232.

33 R. Krautheimer, S. Ćurčić, *Early Christian*, 117-134.

Iustiniana Prima, but the total number of eleven churches, some of them detected very recently by geophysical survey but not yet excavated, suggest the existence of a quite large number of saints' relics.³⁴ For this paper, the most interesting is the one of the best preserved churches on the site - the three-aisled basilica with transept situated in the Lower City (fig. 4).³⁵ It is not the only church in Iustiniana Prima that demonstrates apparent Thessalonian influence,³⁶ but its architectural features are of great importance for presenting how the basilica of St. Demetrius in Thessaloniki continued to be a model for various architectural solutions in the Balkans. The basilica with transept in Iustiniana Prima had a large atrium in its western part, rectangular side chambers west of the naos and a transept in front of the polygonal apse. One must have in mind that it was a time when basilicas with transept were substituted with basilicas with the dome over the central nave,³⁷ so the direct influence for this type of building must be searched for in some earlier architecture. The analogue examples are two basilicas in Phillipi; one of them built as a basilica with transept in the 5th, and the other as a basilica with dome in the 6th century - completely in accordance with the popular architectural type of the period.³⁸ The 4th century shrines with transept, such as Old St. Peter in Rome, do not seem to explain adequately the problem of transfer of architectural concepts. Bearing in mind the fact that the connections with Thessaloniki were obviously very strong, which is testified by the sources such as mentioned Justinian's *XI Novellae* or the *Life of St. David of Thessaloniki*,³⁹ as well as the fact that the shrine of St. Demetrius was extremely important in the time of Justinian, who even wanted saint's relics to be transferred to Constantinople,⁴⁰ one can search for the possible architectural model in the most important Thessalonian pilgrimage place. Therefore, the basilica with transept dedicated to the towns' eponym saint is the most probable model, although the problem of polygonal apse in the east, the Constantinopolitan influence, still remains open.

34 V. Ivanišević, Caričin Grad (Justiniana Prima): A New-Discovered City for a "New" Society, in: *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Belgrade, 22-27 August 2016*, ed. S. Marjanović-Dušanić, Belgrade 2016, 118.

35 В. Кондић, В. Поповић, *Царичин град*, 109-117.

36 O. Špehar, *The Cruciform Church on Caričin Grad*. More about the similarities between the church of St. Demetrius in Thessaloniki and the basilica with transept in Caričin grad, cf. Б. Мано-Зиси, Ископавање на Царицином Граду 1949-1952, *Старинар* 3-4 (1952-1953), 130, 133.

37 R. Krautheimer, S. Ćurčić, *Early Christian*, 203, 239; В. Кораћ, М. Шупут, *Архитектура византијског света*, Belgrade 2010, 69, 73.

38 R. F. Hoddinott, *Early Byzantine Churches*, 169-173, 188-193.

39 *Iust. Nov.* XI; A. Vasiliev, *Life of David of Thessalonika*, *Traditio* 4 (1946), 115-147.

40 Ch. Bakirtzis, *Pilgrimage to Thessalonike. The Tomb of St. Demetrios*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002), 177; C. Walter, *St. Demetrius*, 158.

All above presented suggests that throughout the Late Antiquity spiritual and artistic links between the northern borders, central Balkans and Thessaloniki were tighter and lasted longer than has been usually considered. The inland of the Balkan Peninsula was an integral part of the Mediterranean late antique world, which is demonstrated by its architectural monuments and art in general. The so called sacred topography of the Balkans shows that influences were transferred along the imagined geographic vertical line, from the northern frontier of the Roman Empire, situated on the banks of the Danube, to the south of the Peninsula; that is the direction to follow the influences spreading from Sirmium to Thessaloniki and vice-versa. When it was founded in the 6th century, and considering the fact that at that time Sirmium lost its importance, Iustiniana Prima gained the role of religious and cultural centre of northern Illyricum. What we have learned from historical sources is further testified to, even strengthened, by the results of the research of the church architecture. The disappearing type of basilica with transept can serve as a proof of the strong relations between the eastern part of the Mediterranean and its hinterland. Despite various attempts to describe this period of history as a decline and fall of the old antique values,⁴¹ it seems quite the opposite – Late Antiquity only brought a completely different view of religiosity and sacredness, but all of its merits were still deeply rooted in ancient times, to which testify the connectivity of people, cities and cults through commerce, wars, religion as well as migrations.



Fig. 1: Inscription with reference to St. Anastasia discovered in Sirmium (from: Popović, Ferjančić, 2013, 102, fig. 1)

41 J. W. ERMATINGER, *The decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, London 2004; B. WARD-PERKINS, *The Fall of Rome and the End of the Civilisation*, Oxford 2006; A. MARCONE, A Long Late Antiquity? Considerations on a Controversial Periodisation, *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1/1 (2008), 6-7.

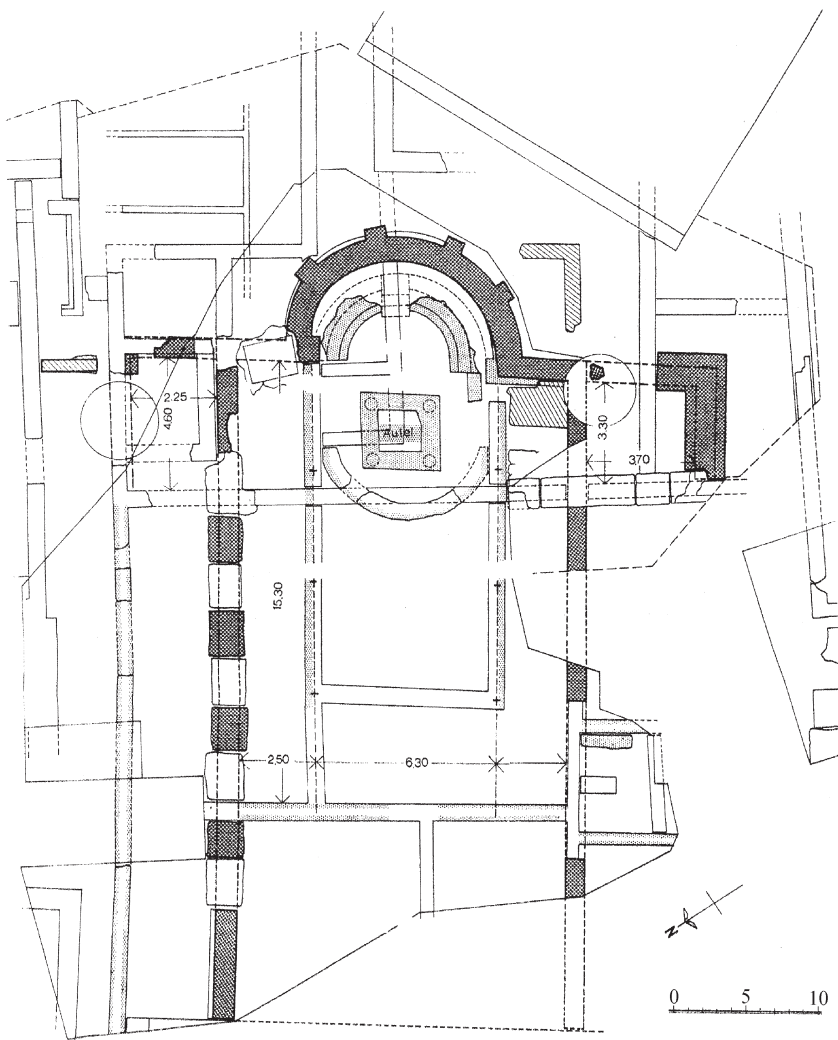


Fig. 2: Urban basilica in Sirmium, ground plan (from: Јеремућ, 2004, 60, сл. 17)

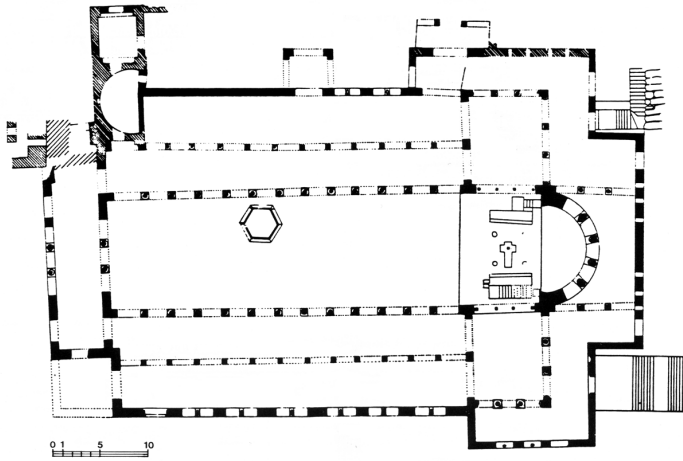


Fig. 3: Church of St. Demetrius in Thessaloniki, ground plan (from: Кораћ, Шлуним, 2010, 22, сл. 7)

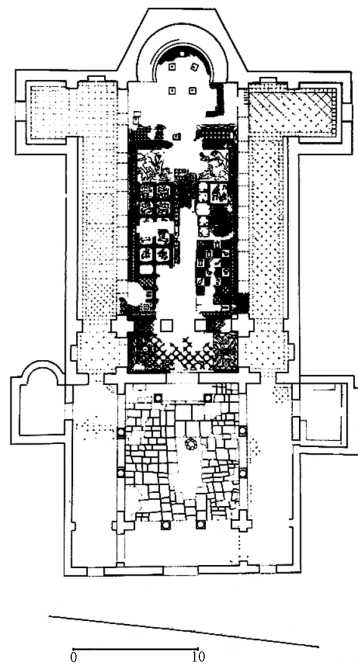


Fig. 4: Basilica with transept in Caričin Grad/Justiniana Prima, ground plan (from: Кондић, Поповић, 1977, 110, сл. 82)