

LINKING DIFFERENT TRADITIONS AND INFLUENCES: SOME REMARKS ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FROM THE MONTENEGRO TERRITORY IN THE ROMAN PERIOD*

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Introduction

Montenegro was part of the Roman province of Dalmatia. To the Romans gazing out across the Adriatic Sea, the area was always one of the Illyrian provinces that represented 'the other side'. After the conquest, however, the Adriatic became a part of the Roman *mare nostrum*, and as such it was filled with harbours and opened up to commerce, as well as becoming the threshold for the penetration of the Balkan Peninsula¹. Dalmatia can also be placed within the group of the 'Danube-Balkan' provinces, which, thanks to their geographical position, history and culture, have always been a meeting point between East and West². Here, the mixing of the Greek-Roman *koiné* with local traditions offers some particularly interesting socio-cultural insights. The process of Romanization began after the creation of the province under Augustus (10 AD) and developed yet more during the Flavian age. It was at this time that the appellation Dalmatia replaced the previously used Illyricum.

Illyrian-Roman *municipia* were created, while the already existing links between Dalmatia and other Adriatic provinces, in particular *Venetia et Histria*, were intensified. This process lasted until Late Antiquity, when, thanks to the reforms of Diocletian, Dalmatia was then divided into two distinct provinces, Dalmatia and Praevalitana to which last Montenegro belongs³.

* I would like to thank Tatjana Koprivica and all my Montenegrin colleagues for giving me the opportunity to discover their beautiful country. Many thanks also go to Philip Ditchfield for improving my English and to Antonio D'Eredità for reproducing the plans 1, 2-4, 7, 9, 11, 15, 20.

¹ See ZACCARIA 2015, 13-14. On the relations between the two sides of the Adriatic Sea through the ages, see, among others, PAVAN 1958; 1980; 1991; Aquileia, la Dalmazia e l'Ilirico 1985; BRACCESI, GRACIOTTI 1999; MARION, TASSAUX 2015.

² RINALDI TUFFI 2000, 205-222.

³ For a summary of the history of the region, see RINALDI TUFFI 1989, but WILKES 1969 remains a fundamental work. On the events related to the conquest, see especially WILKES 1969, 13-77, while, on Late Antiquity, see 416-437. On Dalmatia in general, see also SANADER 2009. For specific researches, see DAVISON, GAFFNEY, MARIN 2006. For the economy of Dalmatia, see ZANINOVIĆ 1977 and for the historical events of the Imperial age, ZANINOVIĆ 1999. On the Late Antique province, see the recent work of STEVOVIĆ 2014.

For contemporary historiography the Adriatic is an important area of research, not just for what it represents in terms of commercial and cultural exchange, but also as a boundary between differing models of eastern and western civilisation⁴. Since the 1970s, scholars ‘of the two sides’ have tried to share archaeological data and review the written sources in order to more accurately reconstruct the history of this area⁵.

Montenegro, in particular, possesses significant Roman archaeological remains, dating from the beginning of the Imperial age right up until Late Antiquity (Fig. 1). Unfortunately, however, the archaeological data is quite heterogeneous. Often it is not easily accessible, and there are no specific studies on the documentation of this period as a whole. In recent years, research has intensified in the area, also with the cooperation of foreign archaeological missions, in particular from Italy, but this documentation is barely known outside the specialists.

From the ‘global’ methodological perspective most accepted in recent archaeological studies and with attention to the broader Mediterranean context, I present a brief overview of Roman archaeology in Montenegro on the basis of the literature available in Italy, focusing on some case studies in which a mixture of different influences and traditions is particularly evident.

1. The towns

From an archaeological point of view, the most significant sites of Roman Montenegro are essentially three towns⁶: *Doclea* and *Municipium S.* in the inner area and *Risinum* on the coast. Stari Bar seems to have been scarcely inhabited – if at all – during Roman times, providing medieval deposits that lie beyond the scope of this research⁷.

1.1 *Doclea*

Doclea was the most important city in the south-eastern part of the Roman province of Dalmatia and played an important role during the Imperial age until Late Antiquity. Only about a fifth of the town has been excavated (Fig. 2), despite investigations beginning at the end of the 19th century. In 1890, thanks to the initiative and the financial

⁴ On the presence of the Adriatic area in contemporary historiography, see ZACCARIA 2015.

⁵ Specific bibliography in ZACCARIA 2015.

⁶ On the cities of Dalmatia in general, see WILKES 2003.

⁷ BOŠKOVIĆ 1962. Research in Stari Bar by the University Ca’ Foscari of Venice: GELICHI, GUSTIN 2005; GELICHI 2006a; GELICHI, ZAGARČANIN 2013. Remains from the Roman age come from the territory of Bar, see ZAGARČANIN 2013.



Fig. 1 Map of Montenegro, with the main Roman archaeological sites (modified *after* [https://atlante.unimondo.org/Paesi/Europa/Europa-meridionale/Montenegro/\(livello\)/mappe](https://atlante.unimondo.org/Paesi/Europa/Europa-meridionale/Montenegro/(livello)/mappe)).

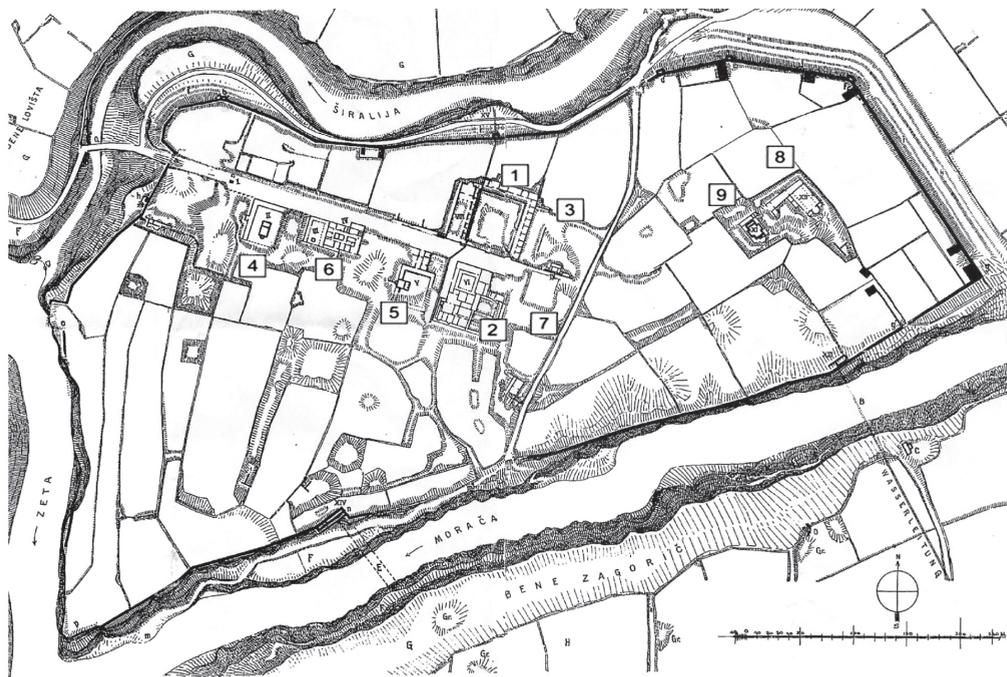


Fig. 2 Doclea: 1. *Forum*; 2. *Thermae* (Baths); 3. The so-called *Capitolium* temple;
 4. So-called Temple of the Goddess Roma; 5. *Domus* with a little temple; 6. So-called Temple of Diana;
 7. Small *Thermae* (Baths); 8. Church A; 9: Churches B and C (after STICOTTI 1913 (1999), pl.1).

support of Prince Nikola of Montenegro, P.A. Rovinski, a Russian scholar, carried out the first excavations in the central part of the site⁸. In 1893, J.A. Munro, with other British scholars, excavated the Christian basilicas A, B and the cruciform church C⁹. Afterwards, systematic research was carried out by the Balkan Commission of the Academy of Sciences of Vienna, under the direction of an Istrian scholar, Piero Sticotti, to whom we owe the first monograph on the town¹⁰. In 1947-1948, the site was cut through by the construction of a railroad that destroyed some areas of the ancient city. The Serbian archaeologist D. Srejšović and other Yugoslav archaeologists carried out more research in the city in the period 1954-1964¹¹, while J.J. Wilkes dedicated many pages to Doclea in his monograph on Dalmatia¹². More excavations were conducted by the Centre for Conservation and

⁸ For the first investigations, see KOPRIVICA 2013.

⁹ MUNRO *et al.* 1896. T. Koprivica studied the documentation in the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Oxford.

¹⁰ STICOTTI 1913; RINALDI TUFFI 2012, 478-479.

¹¹ SREJŠOVIĆ 1967 and 1968.

¹² WILKES 1969, 259-261.

Archaeology in Cetinje between 1997 to 1999, 2003 to 2005 and again 2010 to 2019, but are in part unpublished¹³. New studies and archaeological investigations have been dedicated to the ancient city in recent years by the Museum of Podgorica in cooperation with the Italian University of Urbino¹⁴, the Ca' Foscari University of Venice¹⁵ and the British School at Rome¹⁶, the aim of which was to promote cultural tourism in Podgorica through the protection of its historical and archaeological heritage¹⁷. The Historical Institute of the University of Montenegro has recently carried out more work in the town. In particular, Doclea was the subject of the PhD thesis by Tatjana Koprivica who also presented a paper in this conference¹⁸. The Historical Institute of Montenegro initiated a collaborative programme with the Institute for Ancient Mediterranean Studies (ISMA) in 2015 and together with the Institute for Technologies Applied to Cultural Heritage (ITABC), both recently merged in the Institute of Heritage Science (ISPC), of the Italian National Research Council (CNR) in 2016. Other specific archaeological projects are also in progress¹⁹.

In this paper, I will not analyse the Doclean monuments in detail, but I would like just to mention some aspects of the Roman architecture of the city to place it in a wider context.

The history of the city can be reconstructed in broad terms from literary and epigraphic sources²⁰. Originally inhabited by the Illyrian tribes of the *Docleatae*, the site was conquered by Octavian in 35 BC, when its inhabitants were then part of the *conventus* of Narona. Doclea, so named after the local tribes, became a *municipium* probably in the Flavian period, when the main monuments were built²¹.

¹³ RINALDI TUFFI 2012, 478. Archaeological excavations have been carried out in recent years and are still ongoing. See BAKOVIĆ 2010 and 2011; ŽIVANOVIĆ 2014 and 2018.

¹⁴ RINALDI TUFFI, BARATIN, PELOSO 2010: topographic relief carried out in October 2007. See also BARATIN 2010.

¹⁵ GELICHI *et al.* 2012.

¹⁶ For the geophysical investigations, see in particular PETT 2010.

¹⁷ The results of these researches have been published in the series *Nova Antička Duklja* 1-9 (2010-2018).

¹⁸ T. Koprivica, *The Architecture of Late Antique Doclea. Possibilities of Reconstruction*, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, April 2016. See also Koprivica in this book.

¹⁹ This book collects the results of the joint research project *Mediterranean Cultural Heritage. Italy and Montenegro. Perceptions and Perspectives* (2015-2016) between ISMA-CNR and the Historical Institute of Montenegro, University of Montenegro. For the biennium 2017-2018, a Joint Archaeological Laboratory between ISMA and the Historical Institute of Montenegro was carried out. In addition a bilateral project between ITABC-CNR and the same Institute for the study of other Montenegrin archaeological sites was set up. Recently, a new project on Doclea has been financed for the years 2018-2020 as one of the Great Relevance Projects of the MAECI (see ALBERTI 2019 for the first results).

²⁰ WILKES 1969, 166-167.

²¹ In the local inscriptions the name *Flavius* appears 28 times: see WILKES 1969, 260 and 316 and Pelcer-Vujačić in this volume.

The site is located on a plain, surrounded by mountains; it holds a strategic position at the confluence of the Zeta and Morača rivers, being placed on the west and south-east sides, while to the north there runs the mountain stream Širalija (Fig. 3). The Zeta river valley, in particular, had a great influence on the development of Doclea, thanks to its mild climate and fertile soil. To the south-east of the city, beyond the Morača river, the remains of an aqueduct have been found, but the bridges across the rivers have not been properly identified²².

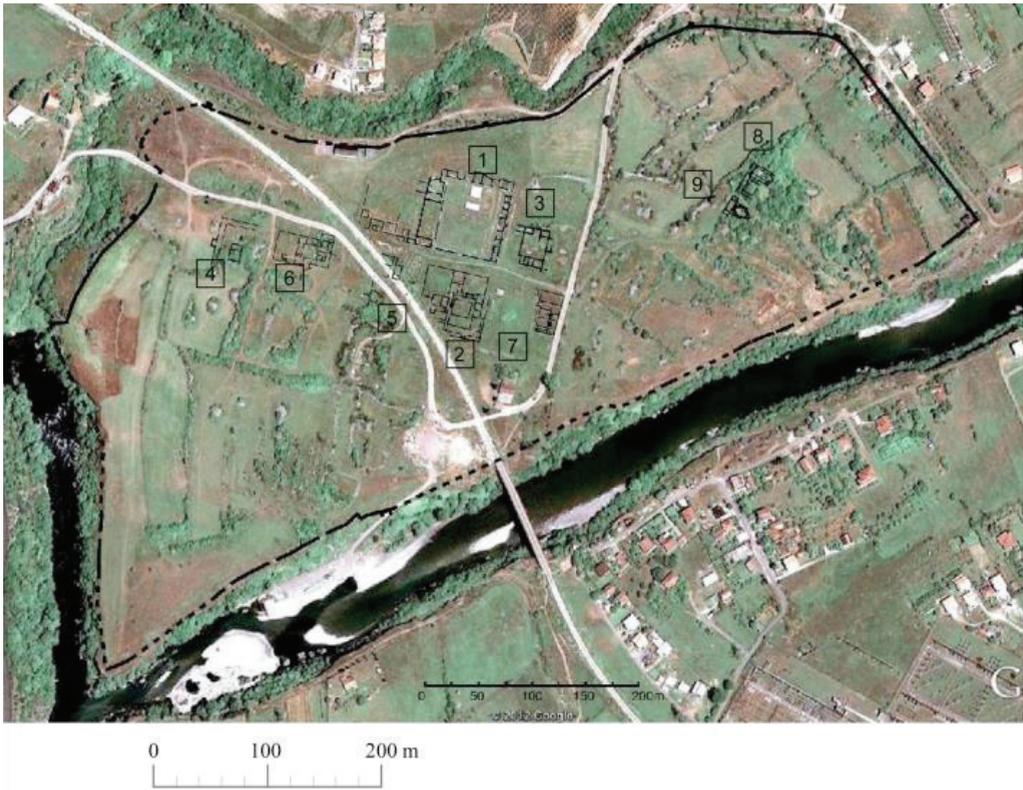


Fig. 3 Doclea: aerial photo, with indication of the excavated areas (*after* Google maps).

The city was fortified: the walls enclose an area of approximately 25 hectares²³. Preserved almost throughout their entire perimeter and often almost up to their original height

²² RINALDI TUFFI 1989, 94.

²³ According to WILKES 1969, 363, the city walls are 'the most impressive remains in the province' (description of the walls, 364-365).

(Fig. 4), these walls were 3-6 m high, possessing a breadth that varies from 2 to 3 m²⁴. The main gate could be in the west wall, but nothing is known of its plan. This part of the fortification contained about twenty inscriptions, originally set up in the *forum basilica*, the latest dating to 254²⁵. According to J.J. Wilkes, 'two periods of construction can be detected in the Doclea walls, the later additions being some external towers on the north side facing the Širalija torrent bed'²⁶. According to M. Živanović and A. Stamenković the city walls of Doclea belong to the mid 3rd century or later: 'We suggest the hypothesis that the construction of city walls of Doclea took place under the patronage of a Roman emperor in the second half of 3rd and during 4th century'²⁷. Unfortunately, studies on the masonry techniques are lacking, while comparisons with other similar structures have yet to be undertaken, so such dates must be treated with caution.



Fig. 4 Doclea: a section of the city walls to the north of the *forum* (photo by the author).

²⁴ For a recent study on the walls, see ŽIVANOVIĆ, STAMENKOVIĆ 2012.

²⁵ WILKES 1969, 365: 'this part of the building may have taken place during the insecurity of the third century, although a much later date is possible'.

²⁶ WILKES 1969, 365.

²⁷ ŽIVANOVIĆ, STAMENKOVIĆ 2012, 137. On fortification in north-western Roman Empire see VON PETRIKOVITS 1971.

The archaeological remains are located in the central area of the site. The excavated buildings are in the western sector, arranged along a road, running from west to east. This road is the continuation of another that came from Naronā and led to a gate that was identified in the western section of the city walls, but is now no longer visible²⁸. On the southern side of the road there is the so-called temple of the goddess Rome, a private house, the so-called temple of Diana, a large bath-house complex and a smaller bathing set-up. On the northern side, there is also an area with many structures yet to be studied, the *forum* with the *basilica*, and another temple²⁹. Today, the railway cutting through the site does not allow us to easily recognise the relationships between the buildings to the north and south sides of the road.

The main monument is the *forum*, dedicated by M. Flavius Fronto and his wife Flavia Tertulla, in memory of their son M. Flavius Balbinus, as indicated in an inscription. The *forum* is a large paved area (60 by 55 m), which is square in shape and surrounded by porticoes and buildings, except on the south side, where the main street passed (Fig. 5)³⁰. On the north side there are constructions of different sizes: in the middle there is a podium 8 m square and 1.5 m high, probably appropriate to a sacred building, whose access steps are not preserved³¹.

A row of *tabernae* and other structures are situated on the east side, while a *basilica* is to be found on the west one. The latter is divided in two parts, the larger, rectangular, 50 by 13 m, with a single row of columns across each end, and the smaller, to the north (13 by 10 m) with an apse in its north wall (Fig. 6)³². The general layout of the complex has no parallel with the other better-known *fora* of the Adriatic region, such as those of Pula, Zara and Naronā, all built in the Augustan age, where a rectangular shape is employed³³. The roughly square plan here, attested too in some smaller towns in Dalmatia³⁴ as well as in other provinces, in particular in Britain³⁵, finds one good parallel in Rome, in the architecture of the Templum Pacis³⁶. The comparison of this last with the *forum* of Doclea, more or less its contemporary, is compelling. That said, there are many differences in size and lay-out. According to S. Rinaldi Tufi, this scheme could have been inspired by military architecture,

²⁸ STICOTTI 1913, 56-59. The scholar noted soon after, to the east, the foundations of a triumphal arch, but no traces remain.

²⁹ On the main public buildings of Doclea see SFAMENI, KOPRIVICA, D'EREDITÀ 2019.

³⁰ Description and reconstruction of the *forum* and the *basilica* by STICOTTI 2013, 106-138; see also WILKES 1969, 371.

³¹ According to WILKES 1969, 371, this building could be a senate house.

³² The architectural elements such as the large shelves boast stylistic features of the Flavian age. Consider the arrowheads separating ovules: RINALDI TUFI 2012, 479.

³³ RINALDI TUFI 2012, 479.

³⁴ See WILKES 1969, 368, fig. 18: plans of other *fora* in the province, like *Asseria* and *Aequum*.

³⁵ See, for example, the *forum* in Silchester (FULFORD 1993).

³⁶ MENEGHINI, SANTANGELI VALENZANI 2007, in particular 61-70; GAGGIOTTI 2009; TUCCI 2009.

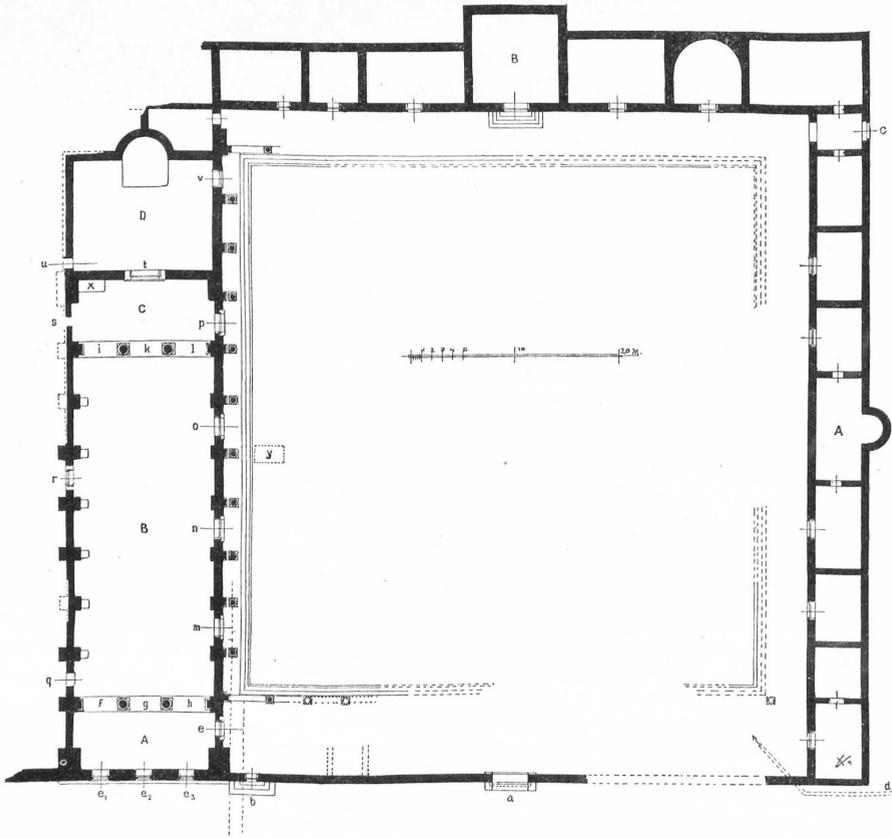


Fig. 5 Doclea: plan of the *forum* (after STICOTTI 1913).



Fig. 6 Doclea: the *basilica* from the south side (photo by the author).

and in particular by the *castra* that were built in large numbers during the intense military activity of the Flavian emperors³⁷. D. Srejšović has also proposed that the *forum* of Doclea performed the function of the *Caesareum* or place of imperial cult, a role that in the 3rd century would have been transferred to the temple of the so-called goddess Roma³⁸. According to this scholar, moreover, this architectural type would have originated in Egypt: the many small finds coming from Africa and Asia Minor, discovered during the research in the Doclean necropolis, would strengthen 'the intensive connections that existed between this part of the Balkans and the eastern provinces'³⁹.

In recent years and on the east side of the *forum*, a building has been excavated, to discover and define its dimension and features. It is a temple, oriented N-S: a prostyle tetrastyle structure of about 7 x 14.5 m, it was built in the central part of a sanctuary, closed on the west, south and probably east sides by a set of rooms, while a porch faces onto the main street (Fig. 7)⁴⁰. The temple has been interpreted as the *Capitolium* of the city. If that were the case, the fact that it faces the *decumanus* would make it extremely peculiar. In the other cities of the Adriatic area, such temples always face the *forum*⁴¹.

In the city, two other sacred buildings are known, both hypothetically identified by a fragment of a pediment decoration, one depicting a bust of the goddess Roma on a clypeus and the other piece a bust of Diana⁴². The so-called temple of the goddess Roma, dated to the 3rd century AD, was of the tetrastyle prostyle *in antis* sort, set on a podium with steps in the façade; the temple was enclosed by a wall and faced the main road⁴³. The so-called temple of Diana was very similar in plan and was inserted into a *temenos*⁴⁴. Unfortunately today the temples are almost completely destroyed. The plans follow well known models also present in the Adriatic regions⁴⁵. Unfortunately, the religious buildings preserved in both the Augustan region of *Venetia et Histria* and in the Illyricum-Dalmatia province are not numerous, so it is difficult to make comparisons. Only in Pula are more complex situations attested, while the

³⁷ RINALDI TUFİ 2012, 479. According to P. Gros, 'même si la thèse est aujourd'hui contestée, il est difficile de ne pas retrouver au moins formellement dans cette organisation sommaire et efficace le souvenir des *principia* des camps légionnaires où en général une salle allongée occupe l'un des côtés de l'aire de rassemblement' (GROS 2011, 226).

³⁸ SREJŠOVIĆ 1967.

³⁹ STEVOVIĆ 2014, 118.

⁴⁰ The results of the archaeological investigations carried out inside some rooms of the complex, in particular in the n. 3, have been published in *Nova Antička Duklja* II and III.

⁴¹ BAKOVIĆ 2011, 19.

⁴² For a detailed analysis of Doclea cults, see T. Koprivica in this volume.

⁴³ RINALDI TUFİ 1989, 91.

⁴⁴ RINALDI TUFİ 1989, 92 had already noted how the temple had been reburied and that nothing was visible of the excavated remains.

⁴⁵ WILKES 1969, 374.



Fig. 7 Doclea: plan of the so-called *Capitolium* temple (after BAKOVIĆ 2010, plate at pp. 76-77).

façade with four elements is already in use in Augustan buildings in Salona and Naronā⁴⁶.

In the same area of the town a private dwelling was also excavated. The house (30 x 23 m) contains more than twenty rooms arranged around a courtyard and a bath-suite (Fig. 8). The building is particularly interesting because of a little temple in its own enclosure that was incorporated into it⁴⁷. Examples of religious buildings of this type are to be found within

⁴⁶ RINALDI TUFİ 2012, 478.

⁴⁷ WILKES 1969, 375-376.

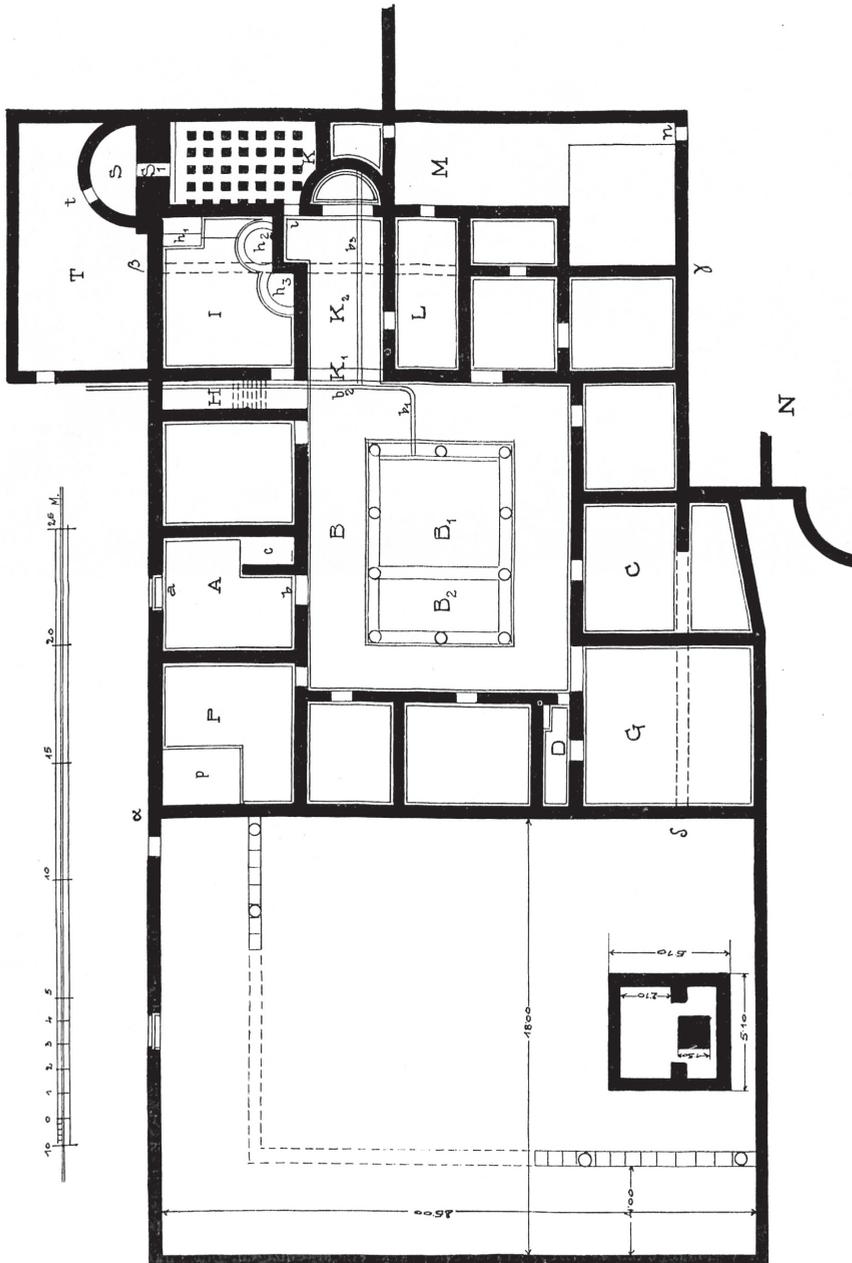


Fig. 8 Doclea: plan of the *domus* with a little temple (after STICOTTI 1913, 78, fig. 37).

some Pompeian houses dating back to the last phase of life of the city⁴⁸. According to J.J. Wilkes, 'its prominent position in the city, together with the private temple, leaves no doubt that this was the residence of one of the wealthiest families, probably the *Flavii* who built the *forum*'⁴⁹. Unfortunately, this building is also in a very poor state of conservation.

Finally, in front of the *forum*, a large bath complex has been identified (Fig. 9)⁵⁰. These baths are more elaborate and luxurious than those present in Salona, but they do not seem to have an axial and symmetrical arrangement which would allow us to recognise a so-called 'imperial' plan⁵¹. Apparently built in the early years of the Flavian city⁵², they have different building phases, attested to by the overlapping of masonry structures⁵³.

In order to make a structural and planned study of the complex and establish comparisons with similar buildings, a study of the characteristics of each phase is first necessary. To the east of these structures, another bath complex has been identified, designated as 'small baths' (Fig. 10), and as yet to be investigated. The two bath complexes were probably part of a same large building as shown by the results of the geophysical survey⁵⁴.

In 1893, J.A. Munro excavated three churches in the east area of the town. The first possessed three naves (basilica A), another had perhaps a basilical plan (church B) and the last a cruciform plan (church C), and was built after church B⁵⁵. New research carried out by the University Ca' Foscari of Venice dates churches A and B to the 6th century (Fig. 11)⁵⁶. It is likely that basilica A was the first to be built. It was flanked by a porch, service rooms and by another building whose form and function are not currently definable. Church B was built subsequently, it sports a narthex with two small rooms at the ends. In the last phase, the central part of this church was occupied by a new building in plan like a Greek cross (church C) (Fig. 12)⁵⁷. It reuses building blocks and architectural elements coming from the

⁴⁸ For comparisons with *domus* in Pompeii, see BASSANI 2008, 93-98 and catalogue nn. 32-36.

⁴⁹ WILKES 1969, 376-377.

⁵⁰ STICOTTI 1913, 98-103.

⁵¹ RINALDI TUFFI 1989, 93; 2012, 479.

⁵² WILKES 1969, 379-381: according to the scholar, however, 'the Doclean baths survived almost untouched by later alterations'.

⁵³ Research carried out in 1997-1998, unpublished, shown that in the *thermae* there are at least four or five different phases. See SFAMENI, KOPRIVICA, D'EREDITÀ 2019

⁵⁴ COZZOLINO, GENTILE 2019.

⁵⁵ KOPRIVICA 2014 studied the documentation preserved in the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology of Oxford.

⁵⁶ GELICHI *et al.* 2012. On some issues of early Christian and Medieval constructions in Doclea and Bar, see ZAGARČANIN 2012. The churches have a different orientation than the buildings in the central area of the town.

⁵⁷ GELICHI *et al.* 2012, 27.



Fig. 9 Doclea: aerial view of the bathing complex (modified by Antonio D'Eredità from 2017 Google Earth).



Fig. 10 Doclea: the so-called small *thermae* (Baths; photo by the author).

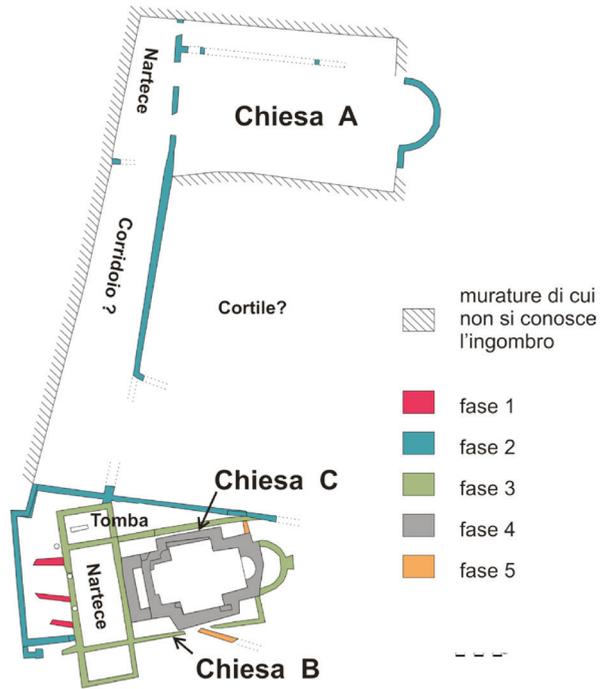


Fig. 11 Doclea: the churches A, B and C (after GELICHI *et al.* 2012, 25, fig. 13).



Fig. 12 Doclea: the cruciform church C (photo by the author).

forum and the civil *basilica*, whose ruination could not be dated⁵⁸. Some scholars propose to identify the church as that of St. Mary, documented in the 9th century⁵⁹. According to a widespread schema observable in the Adriatic area and in particular in Aquileia, Poreč, Grado and Salona in the 6th century⁶⁰, the churches are placed side by side. According to N. Duval and Vl. Popović it would be ‘un quartier chrétien par excellence où les deux églises montrent la présence d’un complexe avec le caractère de résidence d’un évêque’⁶¹.

The Eastern Goths ravaged the town in 489 and an earthquake damaged it in 518; the town was probably reconstructed in the age of Justinian, but it was destroyed again by the Avars and Slavs in 609.

Due to these attacks, the population of Doclea moved to Gradina at Martiniči as it was better defended; in due course it would also become the seat of the bishop⁶². Since Doclea shows a remarkable ecclesiastical organisation in the 5th to 6th centuries, it is thought that it was the original Episcopal seat before the bishop moved to Shkodra⁶³. Regarding in general the christianisation of the Praevalitana province, G. Hoxha observed that historical sources, archaeological data and the Acts of the Church indicate an area with a mixture of eastern and western influences in its spiritual and material culture⁶⁴.

Although Doclea had an important Late Antique phase, mainly witnessed by the churches, the overall layout of the buildings in the central area of the town remained almost untouched. However, in the main monuments it is possible to note some walls built with different techniques that attest to a prolonged use of the area. Recent excavations have also brought to light workshops inserted into existing buildings, as is common in Late Antique and early medieval Roman cities⁶⁵.

1.2 *Municipium S.*

The site in Komini, near present-day Pljevlja in the central Balkan area, is known as

⁵⁸ On the Christian complex in Doclea, see also STEVOVIĆ 2014, 122-126.

⁵⁹ VUJIČIĆ 2007, 45: if this date is correct, then church C would testify that Doclea continued to exist for at least two centuries after the destruction wrought by the Avars and Slavs at the beginning of the 7th century.

⁶⁰ RINALDI TUFİ 2012, 480.

⁶¹ DUVAL, POPOVIĆ 1984, 552-553.

⁶² KORAĆ 2001.

⁶³ ZAGARČANIN 2014. Other Christian churches are located north of Doclea, at Doljani and in other sites, see NIKOLAJEVIĆ 1989 and STEVOVIĆ 2014, 126-127.

⁶⁴ HOXHA 2005, 186.

⁶⁵ REHREN, CHOLAKOVA, ŽIVANOVIĆ 2012: from the middle of the 4th century and during the 5th, some of the rooms of the temple complex, now abandoned, were transformed into a small-scale glass workshop (see also ŽIVANOVIĆ 2014).

Municipium S⁶⁶. The name of the Roman *municipium* is not reported either in inscriptions or in the literary evidence, but probably the abbreviation S in one inscription refers to the name of the *municipium*⁶⁷. Far from the main routes of communication, the Roman city existed from the 1st to the 4th centuries AD. Excavations were carried out in 1964-67 and 1970-77: nearly 700 graves, many with inscriptions were discovered in two cemeteries⁶⁸. The large number of Illyrian names in the inscriptions attests to the native component of the population being very strong⁶⁹. The funerary portraits are executed in the same style and modelling, but with different physiological characteristics: a group representing people with plump oval faces is found on most Roman monuments, while other reliefs show people with pronounced cheekbones and chins, making the face look triangular⁷⁰. Here is an example, in figurative art, of how local traditions were able to survive in a Romanised context.

1.3 Risan

The other cities of Montenegro are situated along the coast. Pliny the Elder remarks that from *Epidaurus* (modern Dubrovnik) *sunt oppida civium Romanorum Rhizinium, Acruvium, Butuanum, Olcinium, quod antea Colchinium dictum est, a Colchis conditum*⁷¹.

The best known city from an archaeological point of view is Rhizon/Risinum, the modern Risan in the gulf of Kotor⁷². The geographical position of the bay of Kotor was always of huge geopolitical importance and in the region between Naron and Lissos, Risan was the preeminent port⁷³. In antiquity, the site was very important: in the 3rd century BC, during the reign of Queen Teuta, it was the capital of the Illyrian kingdom and was one of the most important strongholds during the first Illyrian war. Sea routes connected Rhizon with the Adriatic and the Mediterranean, constituting at the same time a highway for Mediterranean trade, technology transfers and exchange of ideas. Probably in the Augustan period a *municipium* was established, but the site may also have received a colony. Families coming from central and southern Europe are attested but, in the 1st century, the ruling class

⁶⁶ The site was known from late 18th century by reports of travellers and explorers that recorded Roman monuments in Pljevlja and its environs. See MIRKOVIĆ 2012, 1-6.

⁶⁷ MIRKOVIĆ 2012, 28, n. 1.

⁶⁸ Austrian soldiers carried out excavations in a Roman necropolis in the village of Komini in 1899, but it was only from 1964 to 1967 and from 1970 to 1977 that A. Cermanović-Kuzmanović carried out systematic excavation in the necropolis. For bibliography, see MIRKOVIĆ 2012, 6-8.

⁶⁹ MIRKOVIĆ 2012, 9-23.

⁷⁰ MIRKOVIĆ 2012, 23, figs. 11-17.

⁷¹ Plin. *NH* III, 144.

⁷² WILKES 1969, 254-255.

⁷³ DYCZEK 2004, see in particular 101-15 for the written sources and the history of the site.

was exclusively of Italian origin. The Illyrian fortress was situated on the hill of Gradina, where the ancient Roman town was also located. The first archaeological excavations of the Illyrian settlement were made by Sir Arthur Evans in the 1870s⁷⁴, quickly followed by more campaigns in and around it during the late 1800s and early 1900s⁷⁵. In 2001, the Centre for Research on the Antiquity of Southeastern Europe of the University of Warsaw began work which yielded important results⁷⁶. Since the settlement was a key maritime centre, port and anchorage, the archaeologists of Warsaw have carried out underwater surveys, looking for the remains of the ancient port⁷⁷.

For the topic of this paper, one private building is particularly interesting: discovered by D. Vuksan in 1930 in the modern city centre, by the sea, it was called the 'villa of Hypnos' due to the presence of a mosaic depicting Hypnos⁷⁸. It is a four-sided building, with rooms arranged around a central space that was identified as an *atrium* (Fig. 13), indicating to Vuksan that he had found a Roman villa. Further excavations were carried out in 1963 in previously uninvestigated parts of the building: the archaeologists then responsible also interpreted the courtyard as a typical *atrium* of a Roman house⁷⁹. In 2004, Polish archaeologists decided to carry out a regular excavation in order to complete the documentation of the mosaics and to establish the history of the building⁸⁰.

The building was built in an area sloping down towards the sea, over the bed of a stream: it was therefore necessary to create a stable supporting platform⁸¹. The rooms are arranged around a central courtyard, surrounded itself by a portico; many rooms have mosaic floors (Fig. 14).

The western and eastern wings are almost identical; within them two narrow rooms were identified as staircases. On the northern side there is a long rectangular room situated behind a series of smaller rooms, while the southern wing has four rectangular rooms. The main entrance cannot be reconstructed, but it is possible that it was located to the south (Fig. 15).

The only figurative mosaic found represents Hypnos, the god of Sleep (Fig. 16): this image is unique for a mosaic floor and, according to some scholars, it could be a symbol of death⁸². The other floors present geometrical forms and occasionally stylised vegetation. The composition is similar: a rectangle or square in the centre, two smaller rectangles often near to

⁷⁴ EVANS 1883-1885 and 2006.

⁷⁵ For the history of research, see CIOLEK-KOWAL 2010.

⁷⁶ See in particular DYCZEK 2008 and 2011-2012 and the studies collected in *Novensia* 21, 2010.

⁷⁷ KARPINSKI 2010, 125-163.

⁷⁸ VUKSAN 1931 and 1932.

⁷⁹ MARKOVIĆ 1964.

⁸⁰ Reports by P. DYCZEK (2004; 2008).

⁸¹ DYCZEK 2010, 57.

⁸² DYCZEK 2009.

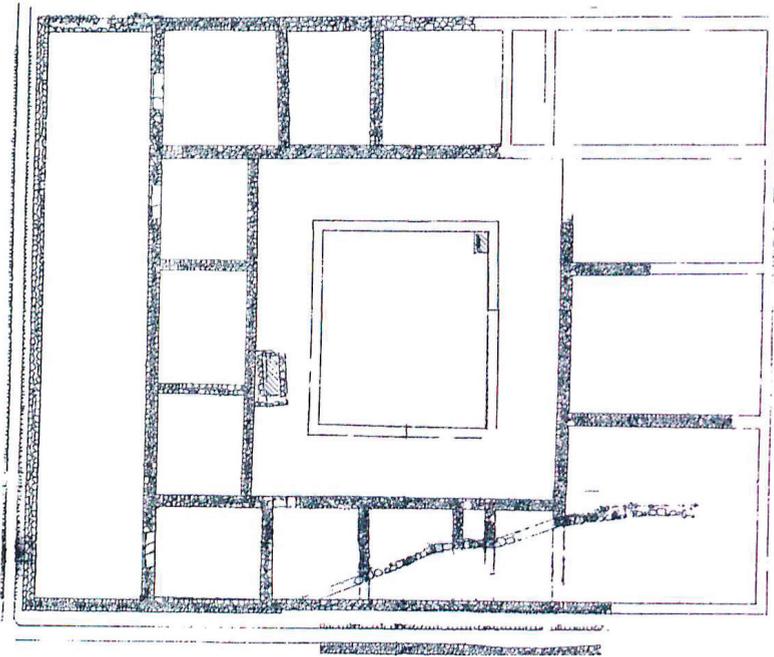


Fig. 13 Risan, villa of Hypnos: plan (after VUKSAN 1932, fig. 1).



Fig. 14 Risan, villa of Hypnos: the central courtyard (photo by the author).

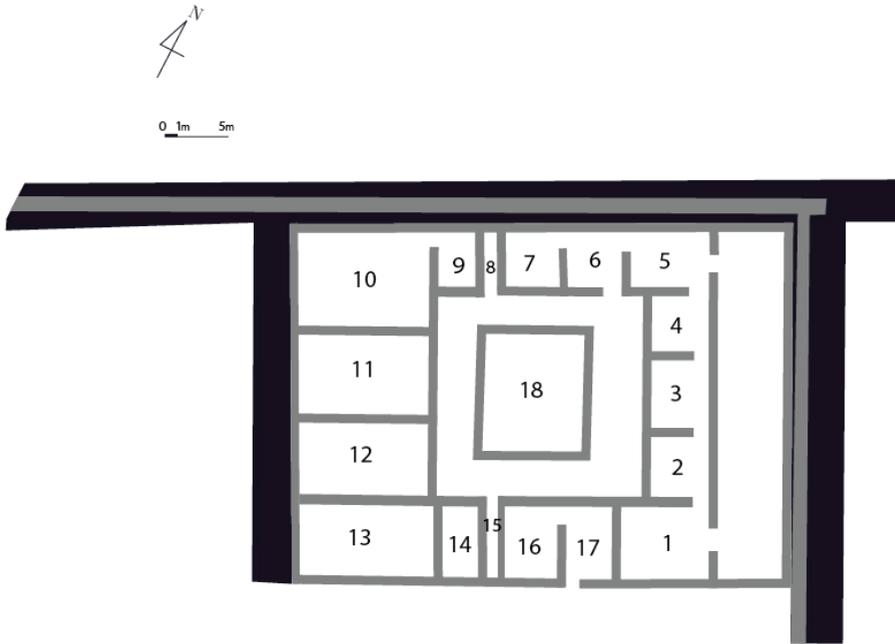


Fig. 15 Risan, villa of Hypnos: plan of the villa after the recent investigations (after DYCZEK 2012, 221, fig. 3).



Fig. 16 Risan, villa of Hypnos: the mosaic depicting Hypnos (photo by the author).

the short sides (Fig. 17). Black and white predominate. The decorative motifs reflect different traditions: some patterns have a Greek origin and date back to the 1st century BC, while others come from Italy or Gaul and date from the 1st century AD onwards⁸³. Some of them are from North Africa. In particular, emblems similar to that of Hypnos, but with different subjects, can be found in African pavements in the mid-2nd century. The African connection in the Risan mosaics is exceptional, and is particularly noteworthy since this is the earliest example of such a link in this region⁸⁴. Excavation data is lacking: the mosaics can be dated, only on the basis of the decorative motifs, to the reign of Antoninus Pius, between 138 and 161 AD. A coin of Constantine and some red slip ware ceramics places the destruction of the building in the first half of the 4th century⁸⁵.

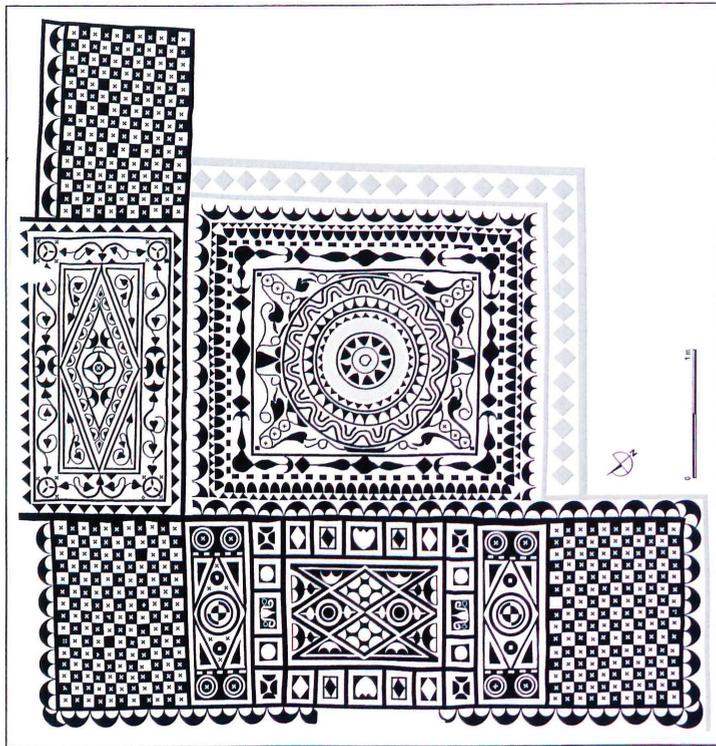


Fig. 17 Risan, villa of Hypnos: the floor of Room 1 (after DYCZEK 2010, 64, fig. 14).

⁸³ For an analysis of the villa mosaics, see DYCZEK 2010 and 2012.

⁸⁴ DYCZEK 2010, 70. The scholar notes that an inscription found in Lambaesis attests to the presence of citizens of *Risinium* (CIL VIII, 2581: the inscription described a mounted statue of the Illyrian god Medaurus, reproducing a monument from *Risinium*, see DYCZEK *et al.* 2010).

⁸⁵ DYCZEK 2010, 60.

The Risan mosaics illustrate well the evolution of the mosaic ateliers in Dalmatia. From the very beginning these workshops show heavy influence from the Italic mosaicists. The first ‘mosaic school’ was created in the 1st century AD in Istria, under the influence of Aquileia⁸⁶. The school of Salona developed between the late 2nd and the early 3rd centuries, reaching its greatest development in the 3rd century. Then, though remaining as active, it declined in quality gradually during the 4th century. The combinations of decorative motifs originating both from the western provinces and from North Africa are characteristic of this production. Stylistic variations confirm the existence of a local Salonitan school-workshop and of other Dalmatian workshops. These include those of Narona, Senije, Iader, Tarsatica and Epidauros⁸⁷. It has been suggested that in Salona there was an actual mosaic school (a sort of academy) from which patterns and variants of pre-existing motifs emanated throughout the province of Dalmatia and influenced its workshops⁸⁸.

P. Dyczek proposed a new interpretation of the Hypnos villa⁸⁹, generally considered to be either a typical Italic *domus* or, since it is located outside the city, a suburban villa⁹⁰. According to this scholar, the hypothesis that it was a country villa should be rejected, since the soil conditions around it render the practice of agriculture impossible. The mosaics, which boast a highly decorated middle panel (Fig. 18), seem to suggest that the furniture would have been arranged around them and that the rooms could be essentially used as *triclinia* of different sizes to accommodate varying numbers of guests. The main rectangular hall may have been used for larger meetings, or as a dormitory. The building had an upper floor that could have held bedrooms, while other rooms on the lower floor could also have served as sleeping areas. Thus he argues that the so-called villa of Hypnos in Risan was in fact an inn (*hospitium*)⁹¹. The closest comparison would be with two similar houses discovered at Byllis in Albania that may have had a similar function⁹². Nevertheless, the type of *domus* or villa with rooms around a central space is widespread throughout the Roman world⁹³. In particular, it is possible to establish

⁸⁶ On the Salonitan mosaic school-workshop, see MATULIĆ 2003.

⁸⁷ For the mosaic school in Dalmatia, see MANO-ZISSI 1965.

⁸⁸ MATULIĆ 2003, 99.

⁸⁹ DYCZEK 2010.

⁹⁰ MIJOVIĆ 1980, 109; this type of villa can be compared with villas in Pannonia, precisely Eisensträdt, Balaca I, Gyulafiratoy Poganytelek-Tac I, that have a central space or an open peristyle. See also VASIĆ 1970.

⁹¹ DYCZEK 2010, 74.

⁹² CEKA 1992, 75. See also FERRIÉS, SKENDERAJ 2015.

⁹³ For some methodological thoughts on the identification of Roman inn, see LE GUENNEC 2016.



Fig. 18 Risan, villa of Hypnos: the mosaic in Room 2 (photo by the author).

precise comparisons with buildings of the *X Regio Venetia et Histria*⁹⁴, both urban and rural, as well as villas in Pannonia⁹⁵: all of which have a square plan with a central space or peristyle.

The foundations of another building, with mosaic floors, were found near the villa of Hypnos, under a road. Called ‘villa of the Meander’, it was built in the 2nd century, rebuilt in the early 4th century when it acquired an *opus sectile* floor and perhaps abandoned in the late 4th⁹⁶. Although the interpretation proposed by the Polish scholar for the villa of Hypnos is compelling, in the absence of other elements, it cannot be excluded that all we are dealing with here is a residential district. Beyond its functional interpretation, however, the Risan building constitutes a very useful case-study for the confluence of decorative motifs of different Mediterranean origins.

⁹⁴ DE FRANCESCINI 1998; BUSANA 2002; MATIJASIC 2001.

⁹⁵ MULVIN 2002.

⁹⁶ DYCZEK 2004, 108-111.

1.4 Other Roman towns on the Montenegrin coast

In other coastal towns, such as *Acrvium* (Kotor), *Butua* (Budva) and *Olcinium* (Ulcinj) the archaeological remains tend as yet to be very poor⁹⁷, but these sites might simply require further investigation.

Pliny places the Illyrian city of *Acrvium* among the *oppida civium Romanorum*⁹⁸, but it is not certain if it was a colony⁹⁹. During the restoration of the Cathedral of Kotor, fragments of an older church were found, which were then kept in a lapidary store. Further investigations were conducted after the earthquake in 1979, but only medieval remains were found¹⁰⁰.

In the Illyrian settlement of Budva (*Butua*), already populated by Roman citizens before it became a colony or *municipium*¹⁰¹, graves with Hellenistic-Roman objects were found in 1938. Sadly the grave goods are now mostly missing. Excavations recommenced after World War II, but the results were never published. After the earthquake in 1979, the excavation of the cemetery was completed and 4th to 5th centuries burials were identified. In particular, the great variety of glass objects from Mediterranean workshops present in the Budva necropolis provides an interesting picture of its trade relationships¹⁰². Glass vessels from Italian workshops were imported during the 1st and 2nd centuries, while the import of objects from Eastern Mediterranean lasted until the 4th century. The materials are now on display in the Archaeological Museum of Budva. In the same museum, there is a fragment of a decorated marble pluteus or iconostasis probably from an early Christian basilica of the 6th century¹⁰³.

Ulcinj (*Olcinium*) is the southernmost town of the Montenegrin littoral. According to Pliny, the city was founded by Colchis¹⁰⁴, but there are no materials related to an archaic phase. Excavations in the old town have revealed the existence of walls dating between the 4th and the 3rd centuries BC. After the fall of the Illyrian kingdom in 167 BC, the city became a Roman *oppidum*, but inscriptions in Latin have not been found¹⁰⁵.

⁹⁷ WILKES 1969, 257.

⁹⁸ Plin. *NH* III, 144; WILKES 1969, 256.

⁹⁹ RINALDI TUFI 1989, 97. Roman materials (sculptures, inscriptions) are kept in the Pomorski Muzej (Naval Museum).

¹⁰⁰ MARTINOVIĆ 2010, 179-181.

¹⁰¹ Plin. *NH* III, 144; WILKES 1969, 256.

¹⁰² LAZAR 2015.

¹⁰³ MARTINOVIĆ 2010, 179.

¹⁰⁴ Plin. *NH* III, 144.

¹⁰⁵ MARTINOVIĆ 2010, 182.

2. The countryside

The evidence regarding the countryside of Roman Montenegro is very poor. If much of the entire province of Dalmatia remains *terra incognita* in settlement terms, as V. Gaffney notes¹⁰⁶, this is especially true for Montenegro, where, until recently, no attention was paid to the study and interpretation of its historical or archaeological landscape. The new work conducted at Risan, Doclea and Stari Bar is based on modern non-invasive methods of studying the archaeological landscape. Numerous sites dating to early Roman times have been identified in the territory of Bar. To these we have to add the underwater archaeological finds that testify to strong trade links with different Mediterranean regions¹⁰⁷. It is thus possible to argue that settlements lay scattered along the coastal strip, concentrated around Bar, while their cemeteries were located on the more internal reliefs¹⁰⁸.

S. Gelichi notes that ‘there is an absence of settlements of at least a minimal institutional importance in the Roman-Hellenistic age on the coast between Budva and Ulcinium’, but this absence ‘seems to have been compensated, at least from the Late Imperial Age, by a series of *villae*, testified by direct archaeological finds (mosaics and structures) or indirectly, as, for example, for the small group of tombs found in Sutomore in 1971’¹⁰⁹. Nevertheless, only two villas have been excavated.

In the early 1900s, in the locality of Mirišta in Petrovac na Moru, on the coast between Budva and Bar, a mosaic floor was found, along with fragments probably coming from other rooms (Fig. 19)¹¹⁰.

The decorative motifs – vine leaves, knot of Solomon, kantharoi – date the mosaic to the last decade of the 3rd century AD¹¹¹. Excavations at the site were undertaken in 2006 and the results of the 2006-2011 campaigns were published in 2014; another monograph is in preparation¹¹². New rooms were discovered, and more building phases recognised (Fig. 20). The first phase is dated to between the late 1st and early 2nd centuries AD; between the 2nd and the 3rd centuries, the building was enlarged in its western part. Thereafter, an important

¹⁰⁶ GAFFNEY 2006, 104.

¹⁰⁷ ZAGARČANIN 2013.

¹⁰⁸ For some evidence from the territory of Bar, as well as from underwater research, see ZAGARČANIN 2013, 27-33.

¹⁰⁹ GELICHI 2006b, 10-11.

¹¹⁰ The first study is NIKOLAJEVIĆ-STOJKOVIĆ 1957.

¹¹¹ MIJOVIĆ 1980, 110.

¹¹² ZAGARČANIN 2014.

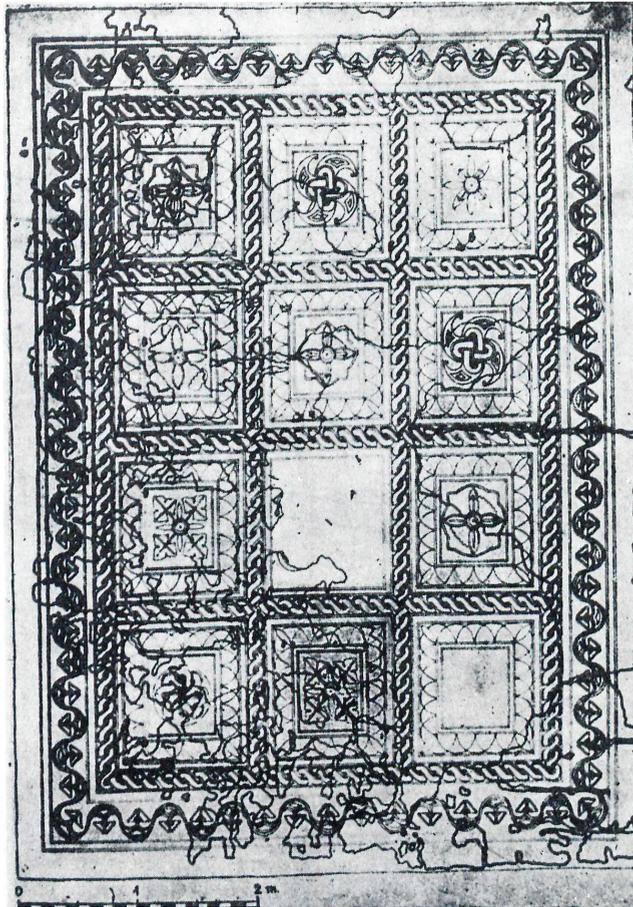


Fig. 19 Petrovac na Moru: the Late Antique mosaic (after MIJOVIĆ 1980, 97, fig. 4).

building phase ensues with rooms having mosaic floors and areas for the production of oil, all dating to the 4th century¹¹³. The particularity of the building at this stage is the presence of a series of pools inside the rooms, the function of which is not clear. M. Zagarčanin suggests that in this phase the building was not a villa, but a place of worship, a sort of *sanatorium* connected with a bathing complex that is not preserved. More investigation is needed¹¹⁴: building underwent a violent destruction in the 4th century, the cause of which is uncertain; further changes are attested in the 6th century¹¹⁵.

¹¹³ ZAGARČANIN 2014.

¹¹⁴ ZAGARČANIN 2014, 49-50.

¹¹⁵ ZAGARČANIN 2014, 51-52.



Fig. 20 Petrovac na Moru: plan of the villa (after ZAGARČANIN 2014, 23, fig. 1).

Another villa has been partially excavated in the Kruce Bay, between Bar and Ulcinj, in 1984¹¹⁶: two rectangular rooms and a bathing complex with three fragments of mosaic floors were dated to the 6th century¹¹⁷. However, the structure seems older and the finds only bear witness to the last phase of the site's occupation¹¹⁸. The villa is similar to that of Petrovac in its seaside location, for the presence of rooms decorated with mosaics and for a Late Antique chronology. According to S. Gelichi, however, the possibility that these buildings were connected to estates still remains hypothetical and even their chronology ought to be reassessed on the basis of more reliable archaeological data¹¹⁹.

Mosaic floor fragments have been found both on the coast and inland: 'it is only reasonable to assume the existence of Late Roman villas with *latifundia*, which later passed into the ownership of the Church'¹²⁰. I. Stevović mentions the *villa rustica* on the site Podvhr-Crkvine, situated below Gradina in Martiniči, near Doclea, which would have a Christian temple¹²¹.

Other villas, unpublished, are reported in Buliarica (between Bar and Petrovac) and in Pjaca Vranovica, near Tivat¹²². The recovered materials also suggest a direct connection between these settlements and the Adriatic-Mediterranean trade routes¹²³.

Conclusions

In conclusion, we can observe how Roman archaeology in Montenegro is yet to be satisfactorily explored. That said, the available documentation is strongly suggestive of a high level of cross-cultural exchange. Meeting point of ancient cultures and peoples, Roman Montenegro quickly became incorporated into the Imperial system, as evidenced by all the monuments built in its cities. Doclea, in particular, is representative of this phenomenon: the main buildings so far known in the Roman town fit perfectly in the 'official' Roman tradition and also find precise comparisons in aulic architectural models, as can be seen in particular in the case of the *forum*, the temples and the baths. In Doclea, there is no perception of a possible

¹¹⁶ MIJOVIĆ 1987, 120 and 149.

¹¹⁷ GELICHI 2006b, 13 and pl. 1.9

¹¹⁸ GELICHI 2006b, 14.

¹¹⁹ GELICHI 2006b, 14.

¹²⁰ MIJOVIĆ 1980, 108. ZAGARČANIN 2015 also indicates the presence of a Roman villa in the small island Prevlaka near Tivat, and the mosaics of a thermal complex (1st-3rd centuries) found under the dormitory of the monastery of St. Michael the Archangel (ZAGARČANIN 2016).

¹²¹ STEVOVIĆ 2014, 128. The site is not published and it is not possible to verify the relationship between the villa and the 'Christian Temple'.

¹²² GELICHI 2006b, 13.

¹²³ GELICHI 2006b, 13.

reduction in the inhabited space in Late Antiquity, a phenomenon commonly found in many cities of the Empire. The research, which up until now has been limited to church buildings, needs to be widened, in order to better reconstruct the dynamics of the abandonment of the city in the early Middle Ages.

More research is also needed in the other Roman cities of Montenegro and their hinterlands. On the basis of the discovery of the mosaic fragments both on the coast and inland, it is reasonable to assume the existence of many Roman villas, all of which require further investigation. As regards the coastal settlements, it is likely that these villas represent the phenomenon of scattered settlement that was a common pattern on the Roman coastlines. As for cross-cultural contacts, further studies on the production of mosaics and, above all, on the production and circulation of ceramics and other materials all still needs to be further developed.

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