RESEARCH ARTICLE

ARCHEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL DATA FOR DYRRACHIONIN DURING THE TRANSITION FROM LATE ANTIQUITY TO THE MIDDLE AGES

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Abstract
The monuments of paleochristian period have an important place in the cultural fund of Dyrrachion city (Δυρράχιον). Studying these monuments in the archaeological sphere becomes even more difficult because of the fact that they inherit some monuments and a definite matter derived from the diggings done only in the Castle and Macellum of the late Antiquity. (Fig.1). Nonetheless, even historical resources for the IV-IX centuries are restricted to offer a hypothetical reconstruction of ancient – medieval Dyrrachion. Even though these are the circumstances, examining some archaeological and historical data on Dyrrachion, there can be noticed a series of features which highlight the trajectory of the economic and cultural growth of the city during the transition period from late antiquity to middle ages (late 4th century – late 9th century).

Key words: archaeological, historical, data, late antiquity, middle ages, Dyrrachion city

Ancient late buildings and their survival in the middle Ages.
I.1. Byzantine castles
From the whole system of fortification, the south-west wall long 490 meters represents the best preserved line up to our times from late antiquity. (Fig.1).
The barbaric attacks and the earthquake strikes during the 4th to 6th century A.C. gravely damaged the protective basis of Dyrrachion. The city emperor Anastasius I (491 – 518) originated from the senatorial aristocracy had built one of the strongest castles of the time for the revival of the city. The emperor’s investment was found as evidence on the inscriptions found in the bricks of the southwest wall holding the seal “Anastasius the employer”.
The walls of the castle were mainly built with bricks and mortar, where the thickness of the horizontal space in between bricks (6 – 8 cm) is larger than that of the bricks, which is estimated up to 4.5 – 5 cm. An approximate calculation of the building materials quantity it results that more or less 15 million bricks, 120 thousand m³ of strong mortar and approximately 35 thousand m³ of stone for the foundations were needed to build the castle. These castle walls built only with bricks and strong mortar mixed with ceramic pieces are also an evidence of a known technique in the outer wall of Constantinople also built by the emperor Anastasius I.1

The southwest wall of the castle is compound of four bastions with the same number of vails. In this line there are preserved in relatively good conditions four bastions in six angled shape, (named with the letters: A, B, C, D, E: the inner – between walls: A- B, B-C, C- D, D- E and E-F; and two entrances; one in the length of the vail A – B and the other alongside the vail D – E.
The bastions have been designed considering the shaft as a symmetric axe maintaining the same distance throughout all the length of the southern wall. Thus the distances from bastion A to bastion B; from bastion C to bastion D; also from D to E, maintain the same distance to the module of origin: each 80 m distance away from each other. There is only one exception from this rule the distance from bastion B to C as the shortest distance, approximately 72 meters.
The bastions which reach a height of 11.00 meters have been designed and built in two floors, the lower one has served just as a warehouse and the upper floor, the so called the floor of the loopholes and the pinnacles. The lower and the upper floors are connected through wooden stairs. Opposite the pinnacles it is laid the platform which served for the guards movement. The height of the vails is about 9.00 meters, but it is to mentioned that this value is not the initial height because the cultural depots have obviously raised the level of the ground. The initial height has also been affected by the damage of the pinnacles, which resulted in its diminishment. If it were that, we may add the part of the pinnacles to this value, then the real value of the vail’s height reaches about 11 meters. The width of the vails moves in between 3.20 – 4.00 meters. From a par calculation it results that the average width of the vails it should have

1From 60 built works during Anastasius epoch, the castle of Dyrrah is listed alongside the most important military buildings of the Byzantine space: Hrysou(1981). There are also evidenced bricks with monograms of Justinian I (527-565): which suggests that he has also invested in the reconstruction of the city after the earthquake that took place during his period, year 522: Hoti & Komata ,2006.
been 3.80 m – 4 m. The width deflections observed in different points of the platform have been because of the damages that the fortification system had gone through in different periods.

During the early Middle Age centuries, the castle was submitted to a partial reconstruction and to some repair in given segments. The fortification system is still with the same dimensions of the 6th century as it is noticed also by the chronicler Ana Komnena. ("Alexsiade", V, I, 1). (Fig.3).

I.2. Macellum

The traces of the Macellum structure were ascertained by the beginning of the year 1987, during some building actions taken for the construction of a square behind "Aleksander Moisiu" Culture Palace. (Fig.2).

After the examinations of the preliminary excavations, it was stated that Macellum was built over the ruins of roman terms. It constituted the main compositional code for the evolution of the urban plan of Dyrrachion during palaeochristian period, because it was settled in the main square of the city.

Macellum has the main surroundings according to a scheme where all the building structures follow the line of the concentric circles. They start from the podium centre in a circular form, continue with the colonnade and the circular vestibule ending with the circulated wall of the commercial convention. This architectural solution makes us wonder about the circular form with a diameter of 72 meters and an overall surface of 5000 m2.

Circle type colonnades with a diameter of about 40 meters engirdle the portico. The platform is laid inside the space of the colonnade (from which it has been discovered 5/6th of the surface which scales up to 1050 m2), paved with marble tiles. The podium is settled in the center of the platform, in its south-eastern part there is a well and in its south-western part a pit.

The podium’s shape is that of a cylindrical stump with a diameter of 5.75 meters and a height, which goes up to 0.90 m. Its structures, built with uncounted stones and with rough limy mortar, which are also built over rectangular slab made of concrete; that inside part of the slab holds the inscription of the podium’s stump. It is almost certain that the central block might have served as a plinth to hold a statue (Hoti, 1996); because a fragment of a marble statue was found near the podium. (A man’s hand of a natural size holding a cup on its hand).

The platform occupies the whole surface from the edge of the podium up to the inner plinth of the retaining wall of the colonnade. Its platform is divided into two concentric sectors: a) the central sector juxtaposed around the podium (with a radius of 3.20 m) most probably paved with mosaics; and b) peripheral sector paved with marble tiles of the preconesian type.

Some inscriptions in Greek letters are carved on the surface of some tiles: πΑΤ on one side of the basement (positions number 1 and 13-14), εγ (number 22) etc. it is not so clear their meaning but it is obvious that these inscriptions served as outlines for orientations or the numbers served to tell their positions. Meanwhile, in one of the west side tiles it is outlined a circled figure divided in eight radial sectors inside which it is carved the cross and the text of a bilingual inscription (Greek and Latin):

ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΝΟΥΒΕΛΛ = Κωνσταντίνου του νοβέλλου?

It is held that this inscription is related with the cult of the Constantine the Great; a feature encountered mostly during the late period of the 6th century, time when it was greatly commemorated the work of this personality, as a supporter of Christianity constitution. The portico with a relatively large surface has been under clear sky, such a position it might have also served as a public square. The podium itself might have served to hold an imperial statue. The piece of sculpture found in its ruins perhaps it belongs to a statue exposed on the podium platform.

Fig. 2. View of the Macellum, 1990.

The porch with the width of 5.30 meters, occupies the whole space of the corridor confined amid the parietal wall of the portico and the inside wall of the commercial environments. The porch has had an organizing role from the functional point of view, so that it could have a frontal free communication with the portico; on the other hand, it served to facilitate the traffic in the commercial environment groups.
The up-to-date records of the excavations show that both the portico and the porch did not have a cover or a roof, but they were in the open. Commercial premises lie on the back of the porch, where are clearly distinguished the ruins of eight commercial units. (A-F and A'-B) 2 From them, the foundations structures and few remnants of retaining walls are preserved. Each of the premises, with a surface of 20-27 m², is treated as a separate volume in asymmetrical shape: irregular quadrilateral or trapezoidal. In some of the wall bricks (size: 35x29x5 cm) stand stamps with Christian symbols and monograms the same as those encountered in the castle of the late antiquity period 3. The presence of the counter ruins in areas A and B shows that they were destined for the sale of meat and fish. Counters were constructed with bricks built in various ways, partly exploiting the internal sites or a corner of the shop 4. During the discovery of macellum, there were also discovered 56 medieval graves. They were found located directly on the platform of the portico, in the floor of the porch, on the ruins of shops, and outside them. Macellum was built on a square near the north western corner of the Roman terms about 1.40 m above the level of their ruins, not exploiting any of the premises of the previous structures. Surrounded by other buildings of Christian religion this monument occupied a central position in the urban composition of the early Byzantine city. 5. The plan metric and architectural solution of Macellum offers us an example of the commercial environment, which on one hand keeps close to the Roman tradition (circular colonnades, the type of capitals) and on the other hand reflects a compositional scheme somewhat special 6. Macellum structures are harmonized in conformity with other ancient late buildings. The axis of entry into the monument is almost parallel to the back of route that connected the monument with the closest gate of the south-western perimeter wall ("secret gate"). (Karaiskaj & Bace, 1975).

Aspects of the development dynamics of the Dyrrhachion in the IV-IX century.

The period of late antiquity for the port of Dyrrhachion is the time to intensify trade ties with many provinces and cities of the Mediterranean (Hoti & Komata, 2004) In the early centuries of the Christian era, in the Balkans, the main trend was to establish new municipalities and cities. Some excavation results in areas D and E are presented in the article published by: Hoti & Metalla & Sheikh, 2004. Dyrrhachion’s manufactury during the sixth century has produced large quantities of bricks with different size. In some of their sides have been faced different types of monograms. Among them have been also faced fragments by the monograms of Emperor Anastasius I (491-518) and Justinian I (527-565): Zheku, (1972); Hoti, (1996).

Macellum must have had the weights room, the toilet (WC), etc. Any of the premises may have served even for keeping the livestock. Their slaughter, by keeping on the rituals of worship, should be done at the square of the podium. In the north and east of the monument were found Christian buildings belonging to the same time frame, the V-VI century. The presence of several cult buildings near and around it shows that this monument has played an important role in urban formulation for the decoration and enrichment of the city centre of Paleochristian period. See for these: Hoti, (1996).

During the VII-VIII centuries we also have a kind of poverty of the daily-use facilities, a phenomenon that occurs not only in the inventory of the graves; but also in cultural layers deposited in the Macellum ruins and in other monuments discovered in Durres. See: Hoti, (2005), 57-58; Such a phenomenon associated with a significant reduction in the monetary circulation, due to the import restriction, whereas such a situation was also accompanied by a significant weakening of economic and political dependence from Byzantium. Spahiu, (1979-1980); Hoti & Kyrto, (1991). In the seventh century the number of monetary workshops significantly decreased during which this emperor made many investments in his native city. The data obtained from the current excavations indicate that this monument has been accessible at all times of the Late Antiquity, even in the first decades of the middle Ages. In the first half of the seventh century; after the demolition; it seems that Macellum has lost its function and has been turned into grave. Abandoning the city centre and its transformation into a cemetery, is a phenomenon that has also occurred in of the Balkan Byzantine cities and those of Asia Minor.

The need for a broad market was an expression of the increasing of this city's role as a provincial metropolis and the capital of the Province of New Epirus. Having worked as a monumental complex: with an open portico (porch) where took place even the activities of the province community; a tradition started since the Theodosian dynasty onwards, the monument spaces, other than as a trading place, served as the Forum of Byzantine province. This dual character of the monument is also faced in some other Paleochristian Macellums of other Byzantine cities. (Claude, 1969). The construction of Macellum might have been realized in the late fifth century and more likely might have been raised during the reign of Anastasius I (491-518); a period during which this emperor made many investments in his native city. The data obtained from the current excavations indicate that this monument has been accessible at all times of the Late Antiquity, even in the first decades of the middle Ages.

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commercial premises of Macellum; except imperial Byzantine coins, were also found ceramic objects (amphorae; lamps; etc.); jewellery objects; glass objects, etc., some of which seem to belong import items.

Since the mid sixth century onwards it is concluded an increase in manufacturing activity of the city. In Dyrrhachion it operated a manufacture for producing construction materials, together with the latter also a thin ceramic manufacture. Monograms faced in bricks (some of them belonging to the emperors Anastasius I and Justinian I) and Christian symbols (crosses, palm branches, Eucharistic elements, etc.) testify to the role of imperial authority and the church as "defensor civitatis." Objects originating from manufacturing and commercial centres of the Mediterranean, discovered in stratigraphical contexts of Macellum, at the foot of the castle and elsewhere, can be found in some aspects:

1- They can be seen in the products of the architectural decorative Palaeochristian sculpture, commissioned by the parlour of the Aegean, imported directly from the parlour of Preconnesus (island in the Sea of Marmara), as a key construction site of the Empire, very rich in marble mines. The majority of these facilities are widely used for the construction of Christian worship, in the building of Macellum and in various amenities.

2- In the amphorae of typological eastern and a little western Mediterranean origin represented by: LRA 1-5, amphorae of Samos, spathetion etc., some of which have been in circulation until the first half of VII century. This rich collection of different types testifies for an intense trade of wine, olive oil and other food assortments.

3- In the Byzantine jewellery products consisting of Christian liturgy tools (studs, buckles etc.), that, regardless of assumptions about their origin, even these ornaments imported from Mediterranean markets through Egnatia and maritime routes, were very favourite in the jeweller markets of Dysrrachion and other cities of south western Illyricum.

In the repertoire of the best genre of the Byzantine handicrafts also take place a number of gold and silver dish found in the treasury of Vrap village (12 km near Tirana). Dishes decorated with various motifs are found together with belt buckles of Avar type dated between years 559-665. This hidden treasure about years 644-663, had as destination trading of these objects in the Episcopal city of Dyrrhachion.

During the period of Late Antiquity the most used sea lines were the routes (itineraries): Kerkyra–Patras–Corinth–Dyrrhachion; Dyrrhachion – Brindisi – Otranto; Dyrrhachion – Olcinium – Salona.

Just like all over the empire, during the VII-VIII century, also in Dyrrhachion, there is a limited development of the construction activity, in the extent that, in comparison with previous construction rhythms, they were insignificant and did not alter the physiognomy of Dyrrhachion city of the Palaeochristian period. Most of the ancient buildings of late antiquity continued to function even in early medieval beginnings. The Byzantine surrounding walls were preserved in the same condition. There were also in use some other monuments: the forum, the chapel of the amphitheatre, and together with them the Church of St. Anargyro, that is mentioned for the last time in a historical source of the year 714. Significant restrictions were also made in the monetary circulation, this as a display the financial system crisis in all Byzantium. Having been under the direct control of the Slavs and Avars, Via Egnatia, as the empire's main commercial artery, for some time, almost ceased to exist. These circumstances brought as a consequence a significant contraction of sphere of exchange and circulation of currency in the region of South-western Illyricum. But although the interruption of cash flow brought various difficulties in the economy and of manufacturer level of the city, nevertheless archaeological excavations and sources speak of the continuity of life in Dyrrhachion.

The city of Dyrrhachion (Δυρράχιον), being less affected by the crisis after the migration of peoples (late sixth century - beginning of VII century), was easier to integrate into the

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2In Dyrrhachion and in some medieval cities (Lissus, Pulcheriopolis Kanina etc.) was noticed that for the needs of refurbishing works but also the establishment of new buildings, ranging from the VII century onwards have been made limited investments for manufacturing building materials. The discovery, in recent years, of a ceramic workshop near the Dyrrachion Macellum, is a fact that during this stage it operated a ceramic production workshop. It is likely that the products of this workshop, by the beginning of the eighth century, have been items that have circulated in markets of Dyrrhachion Archondia: Hoti (2003).

3Numerical decrease of Byzantine coins was noticed from the time of Justin II, especially after him, phenomenon found in all Byzantine Balkan region. This state of non circulating coins except the narrow regional causes finds an explanation also with the general crisis of the financial system that affected the entire empire, starting from the time of Constans II (mid-seventh century) until the end of the eighth century: Hoti & Myrto, (1991):91-93

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new political - institutional formations undertaken by the imperial power.

Arhondia of Dyrrachion, created in the beginning of the 8th century, was a self - governance form of the city and its surroundings. The Archons mentioned there were the representatives of the local government of the city. In some Byzantine novels of the time, especially those of the 8th and 9th century, taking into special consideration in the Uspensky’s Taktikon (845 – 846), it is explicitly mentioned the Arhondia of Dyrrachion, as the biggest and the most important district in the coastal generations of east Adriatic. Dyrrachion and its harbor were mostly well known during this period as the largest military base of Byzantine fleet.(Hoti, 2005).

The organization of the Dyrrachion Province looked like archondian model that Byzantium had created for other provinces in Dalmatia, and elsewhere. In Archondia of Dyrrhachion (Δυρράχιον) it is also faced the type of the castle "Castra" as a form of reduced paleokristian city plan within the acropolis, a phenomenon that occurs in the Aegean basin (Amphipoulis, Christoupolis etc.)(Hoti,2005:57).

Since the beginning of this period new works are established in the field of ecclesiastical monumental constructions. Sources give us evidence that during the years 813 to 826 is built a monastery. A number of specimens of the architectural decorative plastic of the IX century (capitalis, newels, ornate geometric freezer fragments, palmettes, etc.), testify to the Byzantine-style buildings. A basilica with baptistery on newels dated IX century was discovered near the walls of the castle near the C tower (St. Nicholas) testify to the Byzantine activity, regardless of the local proto-Arberor population, was extended in a much wider region. Its region, often called by nominations as Dyrrakia, Dyrrakia etc., remained the major urban center, and the only military bases of Byzantium in the Adriatic coast. (Hoti,2005:58).

In the first decades of the eighth century, after returning of its naval forces in the Adriatic, the Byzantine Empire still continued to exercise its authority in the region of Otranto, on the outskirts of Ravenna, Venetia and in some islands of Dalmatia. (Prigent,2008). During the years 765-770 in the Adriatic Sea we have a visible presence of the Byzantine fleet, having as a supporting base the Dyrrachion port where the local administrative structures of Archon were operating. In the district of the local aristocracy of the city, as seen even in the readings of medallions, were also part the defensive military troops.(Kislinger, 2011). Durres citizen milita formally is identified as a well armed regiment which was led by the power of the authority of Archon, strongly supported by the ecclesiastical authority of the city. (Prigent,2008: 408).

Fig.3. Durres in 1861, engraving by H. Daumet and J. Sulpic

The beginning of IX century IX- the end of XI century) belongs to a period that the role of Dyrrachion city grew still further, particularly after the establishment of the Theme with the same name (811-815). Favourable geographic position of Αρβανον region, replication of the Via Egnatia, the strengthening of contacts with Western countries, increasing the value of Byzantine coin16, all this made possible that during the IX-X century to have a new impetus to economic.

16Increased circulation of coins becomes considerably since the time of Emperor Theophilus onwards. In the catalog of coins of this phase, after Theophilus, follow with currencies of Basil I (5 units), of Leo VI (30 units), the emperor who until now is represented with many coins. Afterwards continue with coins of Romanos I (3 units), of Constantine VII and Nikephoros II Phokas (3 pieces each), with an increase in the time of John I Tzimiskes (11 units) and Basil II (12 units)Hoti&Myrtos,(1991):92-93.

16 Early medieval pottery discovered in Dyrachcion, Kroia, Lissus, Pulcheriopolis etc. is represented by different categories of vessels. There predominate the pots jars, jerry and jugs. Among the vessels that carry typical new elements not only in typological treatment but also in their decoration, there are also the amphora-pitcher (type Otranto with its two variants).Hoti, (1999):238-239
names of places are preserved but there exist even the foreign sources names (Carina,Gerdec,etc.) related to the Bulgarian occupation,( History,2002).

During this time in the town market, were in circulation ceramic products and a diverse number of Byzantine jewellery consisting of earrings, rings, pendant, bracelet, and liturgy tools (crosses of type "Holy Land" and crosses), ect.(Hoti,1995)17. After the creation of Theme new political-administrative and church reorganization sped up the conditions for final transformation of Dyrhachion into a typical Byzantine-Arberórean city, among the most important in the west of the empire. There will not be long and in Byzantine novels for this city, will come to powerful feudal, coming from the ranks of the people belonging to the most outstanding part of the city community. In Bishitë i Pallës for the first time will be mentioned the topical name Xhelvë.

The formation of feudal civic culture is closely linked to the processes of Arberórean culture because Durres being the city in life continuity since antiquity, was one of the most powerful nuclei where was born the medieval Arber, main center of the social economic unity formation and linguistic and cultural unification of Arbanon region (Hoti,2005:58-59).

Bibliography:

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