

The Diocese of Naron (Ecclesia Naronitana)

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Izvleček

Krščanski skupnosti naronitske škofije (*Ecclesia Naronitana*) je treba pripisati največje zasluge za pokristjanjevanje ljudstev, živčih v osrednjem delu vzhodnega Jadrana. Že zgodaj so glasniki vere širili krščanstvo na to območje, najprej vzdolž transportnih poti, ki so povezovalе mesto Naron s Salono, in po dolinah Neretve, Trebižata in Bregave v Hercegovini. Sv. Venancij, ki je kot mučenik umrl med letoma 257 in 260 n. št. neke med Dalmati (*inter Dalmatas*), je svojo misijonsko pot začel ravno z območja Narone. Naronska škofija je bila ustanovljena pred Marcelom (*Marcellus episcopus Ecclesiae Naronitanae*), edinem po imenu znanem škofu Narone. Zgodnje krščanske bazilike v zaledju Narone so bile zgrajene in okrašene v istem arhitektonskem slogu. Zatorej lahko upravičeno domnevamo, da so bila ozemlja, ki ležijo v neposredni bližini Narone in tudi v dolini Neretve, pod jurisdikcijo naronskega škofa. Otoki Mljet, Korčula in Lastovo, polotok Pelješac in makarska obala so bili del epitavske (*Ecclesia Epitauritana*) in salonske škofije (*Ecclesia Salonitana*) ter po letu 533 n. št. tudi mukurske (*Ecclesia Muccuritana*). Vsaj od 6. stol. naprej je imel salonski (nad)škof vrhovno cerkveno avtoriteto v Dalmaciji. Cerkvene stavbe, prvotno cerkve, locirane v zaledju, ki so ohranile svojo prvotno funkcijo ves srednji vek, kažejo na to, da nekaj segmentov krščanstva, ki se je širilo iz Narone, ni usahnilo po prenehanju delovanja naronske škofije.

Ključne besede: rimska provinca Dalmacija, zgodnje krščanstvo, naronska škofija (*Ecclesia Naronitana*)

Abstract

The Christian community of the Diocese of Naron (*Ecclesia Naronitana*) deserves the most credit for the Christianization of the population living in the central part of the Eastern Adriatic. From very early times, heralds of the faith brought Christianity to this region primarily along the transportation routes that connected Naron with Salona, and the valleys of the Neretva, Trebižat, and Bregava rivers in Hercegovina. St. Venantius, who died a martyr between 257 and 260 A.D. somewhere amongst the Delmatae population (*inter Dalmatas*), departed on his missions from the Naron region. The Diocese of Naron was founded before the appearance of the name of its only known bishop, Marcellus (*Marcellus episcopus Ecclesiae Naronitanae*). The early Christian basilicas in the inner hinterland of Naron were built and decorated according to the same architectural style. Accordingly, it can be reasonably presumed that the territories gravitating towards Naron and its basin were under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Naron. The islands of Mljet, Korčula and Lastovo, the Pelješac peninsula and the coast around Makarska were all part of the Diocese of Epidaurus (*Ecclesia Epitauritana*) and the Diocese of Salona (*Ecclesia Salonitana*), and after 533 A.D., of the Diocese of Muccurum (*Ecclesia Muccuritana*) as well. From at least the 6th century onwards, the (arch) bishop of Salona had supreme ecclesiastical authority in Dalmatia. Sacred buildings, primarily churches located in the inner hinterland, which managed to maintain their original function throughout the Middle Ages, indicate that some segments of Christianity that spread from Naron did not cease after the disappearance of Naron.

Keywords: The Roman Province of Dalmatia, Early Christianity, the Diocese of Naron (*Ecclesia Naronitana*)

INTRODUCTION

The Christianization of the inner central Eastern Adriatic hinterland is owed to the Diocese of Naronā and even more so to the Diocese of Salona, whose beginnings can be traced as far back as the Apostolic times.¹ Judging from the acts of the Salona Church Councils² of 530 and 533 A.D., presided over by the archbishop of Salona, Honorius II (528–547),³ the Church of Salona played a leading role in organizing the Christian institutions in Dalmatia. The missionaries of Naronā aimed their efforts primarily at the population inhabiting the territories which gravitated economically, culturally, and by transportation routes towards Naronā and its basin. The surviving clergy of Naronā and the Christianized population, as well as those of the Diocese of Sarsenterum (*Ecclesia Sarsenterensis*),⁴ all contributed towards the Christianization of the Slavic-Croatian people who settled these territories later on.

AN OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH TO THE PRESENT

Until now, only a single study has been dedicated to the Diocese of Naronā, which only partially deals with the diocese itself and the question of the bishop's jurisdiction. According to this work, prior to 533 A.D. when the Diocese of Muccurum was founded,⁵ the Diocese of Naronā comprised the former *ager* of Naronā (the region of Ljubuški up to Klobuk; the regions of Mostar and Čapljina – all in Hercegovina; the Pelješac peninsula, the islands of Mljet, Korčula and Lastovo); the territory of the *municipium Novae*, (the region of Imotski) and the territory of the *municipium Dilluntum*,

(the region of Stolac) and the Makarska coastline.⁶ The border between the Diocese of Naronā and the Diocese of Salona – before the foundation of the Diocese of Muccurum – is placed in the Makarska district, between Epidaurus and Naronā, south of Pelješac.⁷ The three basilicas discovered in Naronā do not exclude the possible existence of still more basilicas.⁸

In his works on early Christian archeology on the Eastern Adriatic coast⁹ and the late Roman architecture of Naronā, Nenad Cambi also studied the Diocese of Naronā.¹⁰ According to him, the border between the Diocese of Naronā and the Diocese of Epidaurus was south of Pelješac; the border with the Diocese of Salona up until the foundation of the Diocese of Muccurum was at Makarska, while the basilica at Cim in Mostar was its border to the north.¹¹ According to Branka Migotti, the border between the Diocese of Salona and the Diocese of Naronā (before the foundation of the Diocese of Muccurum) was on the Cetina River.¹² Together with the Diocese of Salona, the Diocese of Iader, and the Diocese of Epidaurus, Nenad Cambi contends that the Diocese of Naronā was one of the most important dioceses on the Eastern Adriatic.¹³ Naronā influenced the entire region, especially the continental hinterland, whereas the Diocese of Salona had the leading role in the coastal region. Cambi presumes that there existed several early Christian buildings,¹⁴ among them three basilicas¹⁵ – whose style (single aisle buildings with an apse and rooms built alongside its lateral walls) definitely influenced the ecclesiastical architecture in the whole region,¹⁶ particularly in its inner hinterland;¹⁷ the coastal region of Lučnjak,¹⁸ Gubavac¹⁹ and Sutvara in the Pelješac

¹ Ad Rom. 15, 19–21: *Ita ut ab Hierusalem, per circuitum usque ad Illyricum repleuerim euangelium Christi. Sic autem hoc praedicaui euangelium, non ubi nominatus est Christus, ne super alienum fundamentum aedificare: sed sicut scriptum est: Quibus non est adnuntiatum, de eo uidebunt: et qui non audierunt, intellegent.* Ad Timoth. II, 4, 10: *Festina uenire ad me cito. Demas enim me dereliquit, diligens hoc saeculum, et abiit Thessalonicam: Crescens in Galliam, Titus in Dalmatiam.* Comp.: Cambi 1976, 239–240; Kovačić 2008, pass.

² Dodig, Škegro 2008, 9–23.

³ Regarding this bishop: Kuntić-Makvić 1998, 997–1002.

⁴ Puljić, Škegro 2006a, 7–50; Puljić, Škegro 2006b, 219–241.

⁵ About this diocese: Škegro 2008a, 9–26; id. 2008b, 291–303.

⁶ Vučić 2005, 159, 163, 167.

⁷ Vučić, Antička Naronā /www.vid.hr/narona.htm [date of accession Okt. 2010].

⁸ Vučić 1998, 102–105; id. 2003, 202.

⁹ Cambi 1976, 246–247.

¹⁰ Cambi 1984–1985, 33–59.

¹¹ Cambi 1984–1985, 44.

¹² Migotti 2008, 355, map 1, 356.

¹³ Cambi 1984–1985, 58.

¹⁴ Cambi 1984–1985, 35.

¹⁵ Cambi 1972, 62–63; id. 1976, 246–247; id. 1984–1985, 35; id. 1989, 2398, fig. 7.

¹⁶ Cf.: Ribarević Nikolić 1998, 693–714.

¹⁷ Cambi 1976, 247; id. 1978, 145–146; id. 1980, 145, 146, 147; id. 1984–1985, 36.

¹⁸ Fisković 1963–1965, 156–163; id. 1980, fig. 27 a–b; Cambi 1984–1985, 50, fig. 16.

¹⁹ Fisković 1980, 151–155; Cambi 1984–1985, 50, fig. 17.

channel,²⁰ Ubli – on the island of Lastovo,²¹ as well as the monastic complex on the island of Majsan in the Pelješac channel.²² He considered the northwestern part of the island of Mljet part of the Diocese of Naronia,²³ as well as the basilica at Zmijavci in the region of Imotski.²⁴ The 530 and 533 A.D. Church Councils acts of Salona; its former status as a Roman colony (*Colonia Iulia Naronia*), and the fact that it was one of the three juridical-administrative convents in Dalmatia (*conventus iuridicus*), were sufficient evidence for Cambi to consider Naronia as the centre of a very important diocese.²⁵ Like Igor Fisković,²⁶ Cambi dated the intense Christianization of the rural Dalmatian regions to the 6th century.²⁷

Regarding the Christian topography of Naronia, Frane Buškariol (1957–1989)²⁸ registered five early Christian basilicas on its territory (on the Prud – Pelješac – Korčula aqueduct route below the Vid – Prud – Ljubuški road,²⁹ in the Erešove marshes³⁰ on Popričica,³¹ and finally in Lučice – under the current church of St. Vitus³²). He presumed that the basilica on the Prud – Pelješac – Korčula aqueduct route dated back to the mid 4th century³³ and that it was renovated in the mid 5th or 6th century, after the cataclysmic destruction of Naronia during the second half of the 4th century.³⁴ Buškariol did not exclude the possible existence of another or even more basilicas in Naronia.³⁵ The fact that the architectural development of Naronia was interrupted at the turn of the 6th and

7th centuries did not necessarily mean the end of life in the Naronia region.³⁶

Emilio Marin regards Naronia as a missionary religious centre for the hinterland,³⁷ whose ministry certainly did not cease with the passage from ancient times.³⁸ During the 6th century it was a well organized Christian community with a bishop at its head and three basilicas: (in Naronia under the church of St. Vitus,³⁹ and at the Erešove marshes site – *fig. 1*).⁴⁰ According to Marin, the early Christian building style found in the hinterland⁴¹ and the Southern Dalmatian islands spread from Naronia.⁴² While not attempting to define the territory of the Diocese of Naronia, Marin pointed out that until 533 A.D., when the Diocese of Muccurum with its centre in Makarska was founded,⁴³ its southern border was the Diocese of Epidaurus; in the northwest it shared a border with Salona. Marin did not exclude the possibility that Naronia actively existed up until the 9th century,⁴⁴ confirming this theory by pointing out the existence of churches in its inner hinterland.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the basilica under St. Vitus' church – built according to Marin in the early 5th century⁴⁶ and renovated under Emperor Justinian I (527–565),⁴⁷ along with its baptistery (*fig. 2*)⁴⁸ – also confirms its survival until the 9th century.⁴⁹ The emergence of early Christian basilicas in the inner Naronia hinterland was a consequence of the Christianization of the Dalmatian surroundings during Justinian's reign,⁵⁰ more precisely after the re-conquest of Dalmatia (534–537)⁵¹ – however, not all authors agree on

²⁰ Fisković 1980, 143–151; Cambi 1984–1985, 50, *fig. 18*.

²¹ Marconi 1934, 16–27; Jeličić, Nikšić 1980–1981, 57–61, tables IV–V; Fisković 1980, 234–236, *fig. 29*; Cambi 1984–1985, 50–51, *fig. 19*; *id.* 1989, 2422, 2423, *fig. 25*.

²² Fisković 1980, 230–233, *fig. 23, 24, 25*; Cambi 1984–1985, 52–53, *fig. 20, 21*; *id.* 1989, 2420–2422, *fig. 23*.

²³ Cambi 1984–1985, 55.

²⁴ Cambi, Gamulin, Tonković, 1999, *pass.*; Cambi 2007, 90.

²⁵ Cambi 1984–1985, 44.

²⁶ Fisković 1980, 236.

²⁷ Cambi 1976, 268–269; *id.* 1984–1985, 43.

²⁸ Buškariol 1989, 147–153, pl. I–IX; Marin 1999, 131–148.

²⁹ Buškariol 1986, 122–123; *id.* 1989, 148–152, 136; Vučić 1998, 102–104.

³⁰ Cambi 1976, 246; Buškariol 1989, 148; Marin 2001, 9–80.

³¹ Cambi 1976, 247; *id.* 1989, 2398, *fig. 7*.

³² Buškariol 1989, 148, 152.

³³ Buškariol 1989, 148–152.

³⁴ Buškariol 1989, 152.

³⁵ Buškariol 1989, 152.

³⁶ Buškariol 1986, 27; *id.* 1989, 148, 151, 153.

³⁷ Marin 1997, 65.

³⁸ Marin 1993, 364; Marin *et al.* 1999, 232.

³⁹ Marin 1998a, 475–506; *id.* 1998b, 547–551; *id.* 1994–1996, 9–94; Marin *et al.* 1999, 241–245.

⁴⁰ Marin 1998b, 545, 551; Marin *et al.* 1999, 239, 245; Marin, 2001, 9–80.

⁴¹ Marin 1998b, 543–544; Marin *et al.* 1999, 237–238.

⁴² Marin 1994–1996, 29.

⁴³ Marin 1998b, 545–547; *id.* 1994–1996, 29; Marin *et al.* 1999, 239–241.

⁴⁴ Marin 1993, 361–368; *id.* 1995, 265–275; *id.* 1998b, 543–560; Marin *et al.* 1999, 217–227; 237–254.

⁴⁵ Marin 1998b, 559; *id.* 1998c, 10; Marin *et al.* 1999, 253; Basler 1990b, 55–60.

⁴⁶ Marin 2003, 12.

⁴⁷ Marin 1994–1996, 10, 17, 22, 25.

⁴⁸ Marin 1993, 361–368; *id.* 1998b, 543–560; *id.* 1994–1996, 25–26; *id.* 2003, 12.

⁴⁹ Marin 1998a, 484; *id.* 1998c, 15, 28.

⁵⁰ Marin 1998b, 545; Marin *et al.* 1999, 239.

⁵¹ Marin 1994–1996, 29.

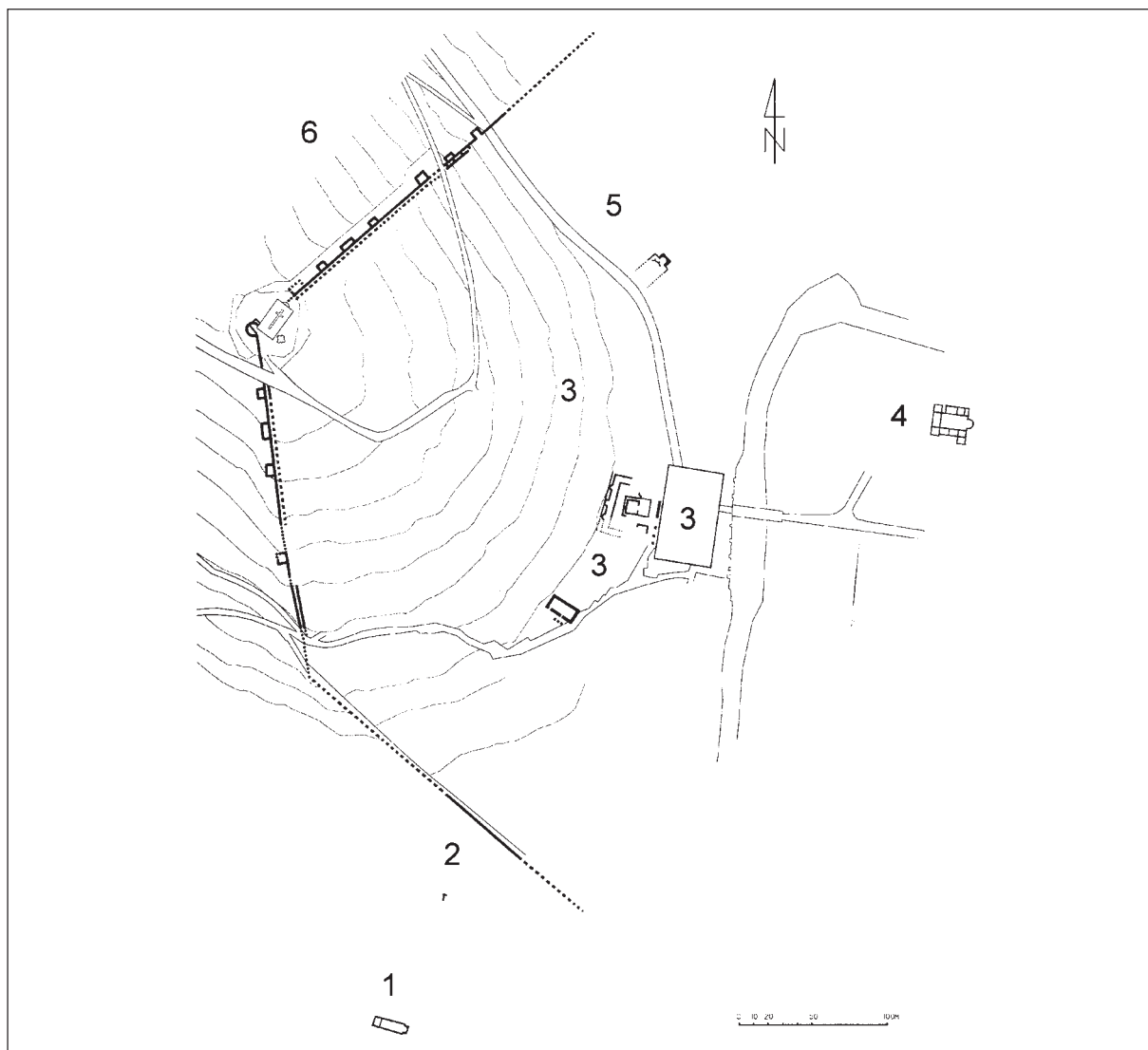


Fig. 1: Naronitan basilicas (according to Marin 2001).

Sl. 1: Naronske bazilike (po Marin 2001).

Fig. 2: The basilica under St. Vitus' church (according to Marin 1994–1996).

Sl. 2: Narona. Bazilika pod cerkvijo Sv. Vida (po Marin 1994–1996).

Fig. 3: The basilica on the Erešove marsh site (according to Marin 2001).

Sl. 3: Narona – Erešove bare, bazilika (po Marin 2001).

this.⁵² The erection of the basilica on the Erešove marshes site (fig. 3) – dated during the last phase of the construction of Narona, at the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century,⁵³ also does not exclude the possibility that Narona existed

up until the 9th century,⁵⁴ which is another vital confirmation of the Christianity of Narona.⁵⁵

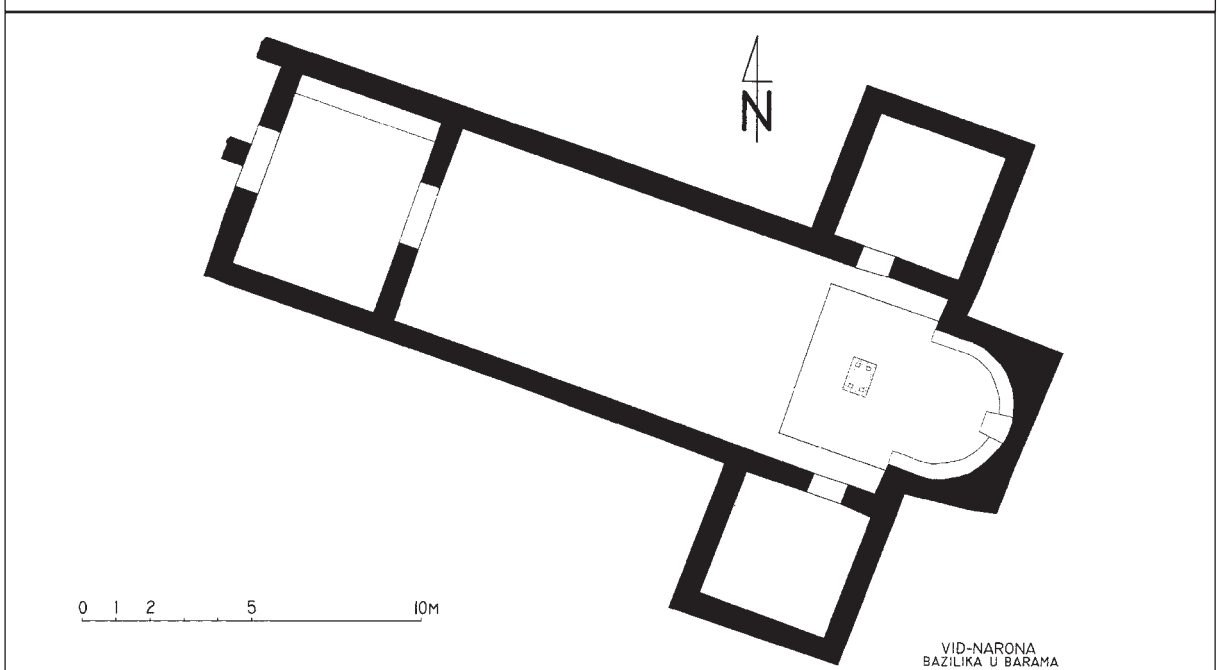
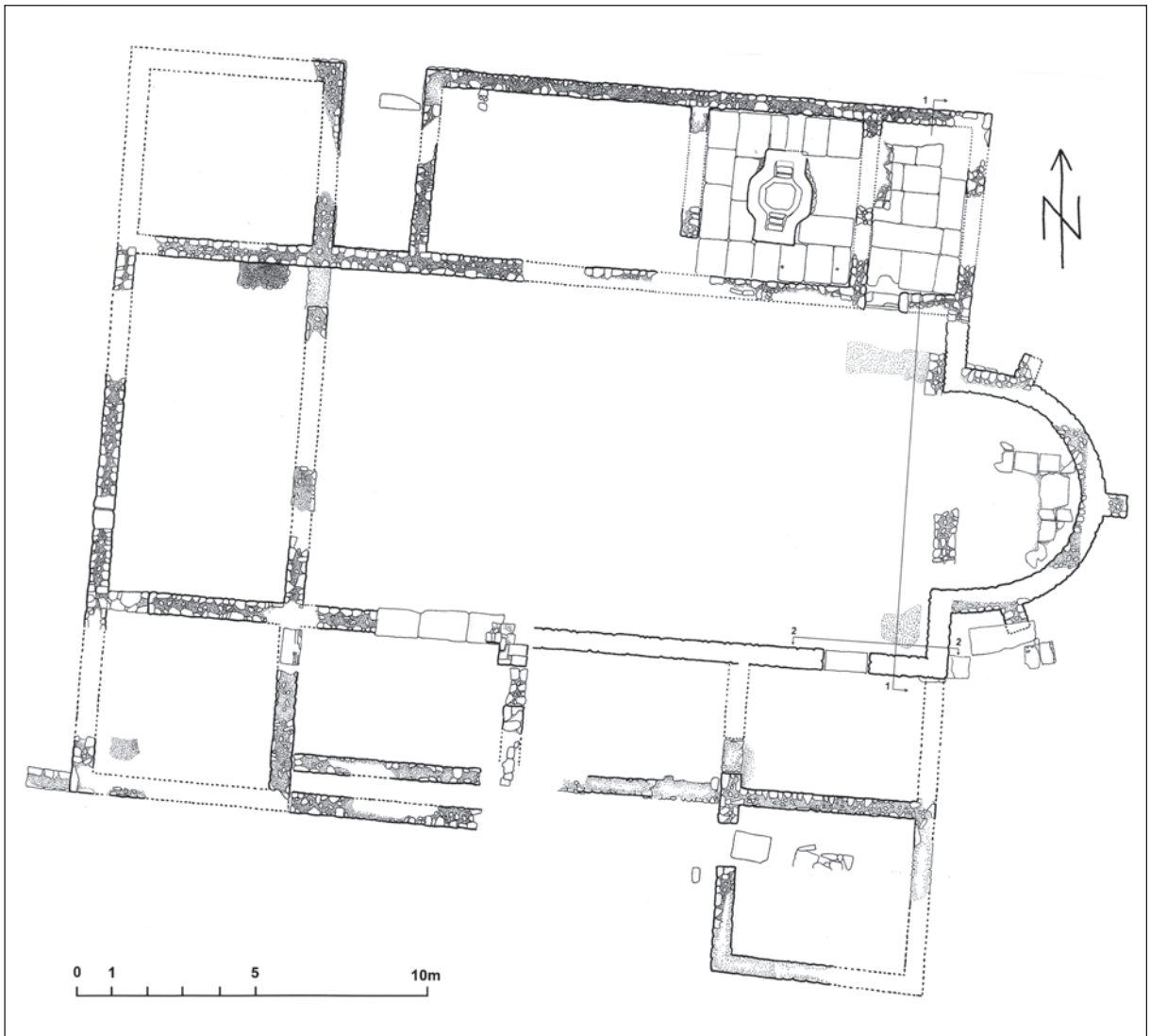
Pascale Chevalier, who studied early Christian architecture in Dalmatia extensively, proposed that the basilicas in the regions of Western Hercegovina

⁵² Jarak 2005, 306; Caillet 2008, pass.

⁵³ Marin 2001, 32, 35, 39–42, 46–50; id. 2003, 12.

⁵⁴ Marin 2001, 39, 40.

⁵⁵ Marin 2001, 41.



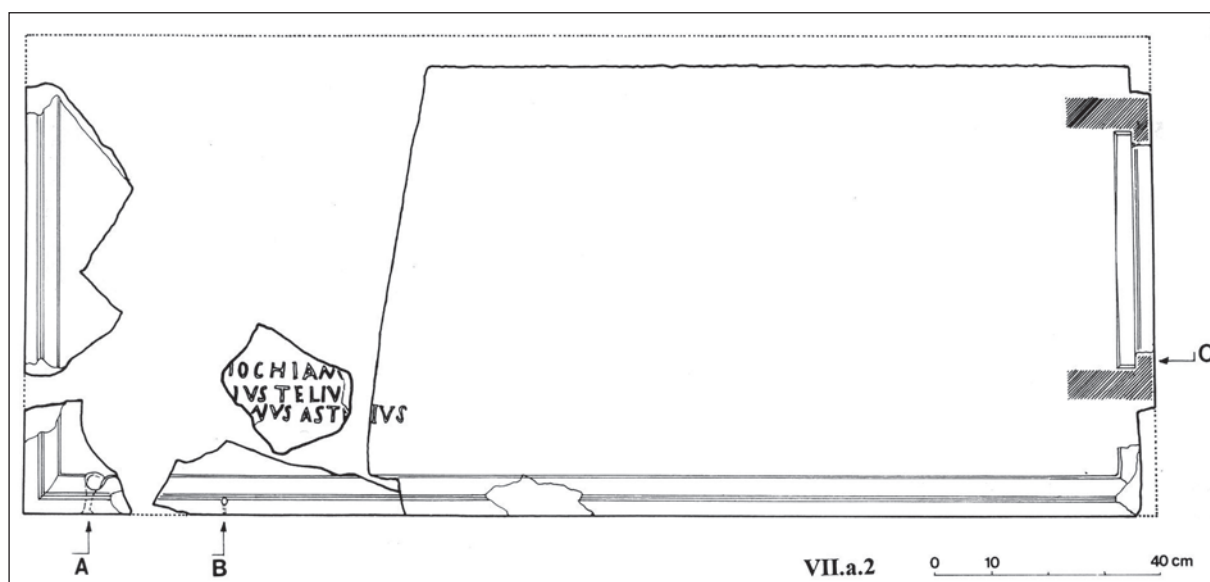


Fig. 4: Tombstone fragments from Kapljuč (Salona).

Sl. 4: Salona – Kapljuč. Odlomci balustra.

and Stolac,⁵⁶ those on the islands in the Pelješac channel,⁵⁷ at Polače on the island of Mljet, at Ubli on Lastovo, and on the island of Sućac, all belonged to the Diocese of Naronā.⁵⁸

ST. VENANTIUS AND NARONA

The roots of the Christian community of Naronā are much older than the events that followed the edict of 392 promulgated by Emperor Theodosius I (379–395), which ordered the destruction of the remaining pagan temples throughout the Empire,⁵⁹ especially after Justinian's military and political campaigns in Dalmatia. Confirming this theory would be the case of St. Venantius, whose activities are linked to the region of Naronā, which is particularly true now that it is known that the letters IVS on the tombstone fragment from Kapljuč in Salona (fig. 4),⁶⁰

are no longer considered related to him. Numerous authors like: Daniele Farlati (1690–1773),⁶¹ Jacques Zeiller (1878–1962),⁶² Frane Bulić (1846–1934),⁶³ Dominik Mandić (1889–1972),⁶⁴ Atanazije J. Matanić (1922–2004),⁶⁵ Đuro Basler (1917–1990),⁶⁶ Slavko Kovačić,⁶⁷ Vicko Kapitanović,⁶⁸ and others point to the *Martyrologium Hispaniense* of Joannes Tamazus de Salazar for the connection between St. Venantius and Naronā.⁶⁹ According to the *Martyrologium Hispaniense*, St. Venantius departed from this region for his missions to Pannonia.⁷⁰ He was killed during one

part of his name. Comp.: Bulić 1986, 137; Egger 1926, 108, Nr. 285 + 156a, fig. 62; Brøndsted 1928, pl. IV, no. 5: [Ant] iochian[vs] / [Gaia]nvs / Teli[vs] / [Pavlinia]nvs / Aste[r]ivs.

⁶¹ Farlati 1751, 563–564, 566, 569–570, 589.

⁶² Zeiller 1918, 49–52.

⁶³ Bulić, Bervaldi 1913, 19–24; Bulić 1928, 58–64; id. 1986, 44.

⁶⁴ Mandić 1935, 8; id. 1963a, 4, 16.

⁶⁵ Matanić 1969, 978–979.

⁶⁶ Basler 1986, 38–39; id. 1990a, 56–57.

⁶⁷ Kovačić 2008, 32.

⁶⁸ Kapitanović 2006, 14–16.

⁶⁹ Farlati 1765, 163: *In Dalmatia illustris observat memoria Martyrium S. Venantii Episcopi Toletani; cuius corpus a Joanne Pontif. Maximo IV. in Oratorio sui nominis apud Baptisterium Constantini, in omnium maxima Lateranensi Romana ecclesia translatus adservatur*. Farlati 1751, 563, 589: *Cum in Galliam Narbonensem, negotiis instantibus, Pannoniasque lustraturus abiisset, apud Dalmatas martyr effectus, aeternam remunerationem promeruit*.

⁷⁰ Farlati 1751, 563–564, 566, 589: *Cum in Galliam Narbonensem (= in Dalmatia Naronensi), negotiis instan-*

⁵⁶ Klobuk, Dolac – Vitina, Borasi, Tihaljina, Crveni Grm, Biogradi, Čerin, Donja Blatnica, Mogorjelo, Bačina, Staševica, Nerezi, Osinj, Crnići, Borojevići, Pješivac, Ston, Vranjevo Selo, Zablac.

⁵⁷ Majsan, Lučnjak, Gubavac, Sutvara.

⁵⁸ Chevalier 1996b, 24.

⁵⁹ Marin 1998c, 118.

⁶⁰ Marin 1994, 30–31; id. 1998c, 25–26; id. 2007, 252. Frane Bulić connected them to St. Venantius. Cf.: Bulić, Bervaldi 1912–1913, 19–20, tab. 10; id. 1928, 67, fig. 1: [Venant]ivs. The reconstruction of the gravestone – mensa resulted in the names of the four Salonitan martyrs, including also the presbyter Asterius – the letters IVS were a



Fig. 5: The territory of Delmatae.

Sl. 5: Delmatsko ozemlje.

of his journeys, and the bellicose Delmate, living in the territory between the Neretva and Krka rivers, the Glamoč-Livno-Duvno region, and the Adriatic sea (fig. 5), were the ones accused (*apud Dalmatas martyr effectus*). His death can be dated to the reign of Emperor Valerian (253–260), between 257 and 260.⁷¹ However, his martyrdom cannot be related to Delminium⁷² or the alleged Diocese of Delminium.⁷³ The earlier mentioned *Martyrologium* refers to him as Toletan (*S. Venantius episcopus Toletanus*), which can undoubtedly be identified as the bishop of Salona (*episcopus Salonitanus*).⁷⁴ There is no undisputed evidence that St. Venantius was the founder of the diocese, or the first bishop of Naron – as has been presumed,⁷⁵ although this possibility should not be excluded. St. Venantius only provides proof that in the Naron region Christianity existed during the mid 3rd century, if not earlier. Just as St. Paul the Apostle had done two centuries earlier, St. Venantius as bishop could strengthen his flock in their faith on his missionary journeys and organize ecclesiastical institutions. Yet, judging from the scarce material

clues remaining, the number of Christians during his time was not great. They consisted mostly of foreigners who might have lived in Naron itself or in the villages or estates in its vicinity (*villae suburbanae, villae rusticae*).

THE QUESTION OF THE EPISCOPAL OR CATHEDRAL BASILICA

The investigations conducted thus far do not offer a clear answer to the question as to whether any of the known basilicas of Naron were a cathedral or episcopal church (*basilica episcopalis*). Frane Buškariol thought that the basilica on the aqueduct route Prud-Pelješac-Korčula (whose erection he dated to the mid 4th century,⁷⁶ with a subsequent reconstruction dated in the mid 5th and into the 6th century)⁷⁷ was one “of the churches built in the spirit of the 530 and 533 A.D. Salona Church Council acts”.⁷⁸ In referring to the conclusions of Nada Klaić (1920–1988),⁷⁹ and her book where the signatures of the council’s participants – amongst others the bishop of Naron, Marcellus,⁸⁰ indicate that the basilica could have been the central episcopal church of Naron (fig. 6). Neither Emilio Marin,⁸¹ who did not exclude that there may have been a basilica under the church of St. Vitus,⁸² nor Pascale Chevalier, who considered the same basilica to be a possible cathedral of Naron,⁸³ offered a clear answer. The two basilicas from Mogorjelo near Čaplina in the vicinity of Naron⁸⁴ – dated to the first half of the 5th century,⁸⁵ are sometimes related to the episcopal see of Naron.⁸⁶ Considering its vicinity to Naron, the protection it could offer behind its strongly fortified walls, and its excellent position in relation to the hinterland of Naron, this possibility should not be excluded.

tibus, Pannoniasque lustraturus abiisset, apud Dalmatas martyr effectus, aeternam remunerationem promeruit....

⁷¹ Marin 1994, 30–31; Paškvalin 1995, 764.

⁷² Farlati 1751, 588, 590; Bulić 1928, 62–68; Mandić 1963a, 15–16; Basler 1986, 38–39; id. 1990a, 56–57.

⁷³ Cf.: Katičić 1998, 76–79; Škegro 2007, 283–302.

⁷⁴ Farlati 1751, 569; Zeiller 1906, 65, b. 2, 68, 72–74; Bulić, Bervaldi 1912–1913, 20; Bulić 1928, 55; id. 1986, 44; Marin 1988, 24.

⁷⁵ Basler 1986, 38–39; id. 1990a, 56; Kapitanović 2006, 15.

⁷⁶ Buškariol 1989, 148–152.

⁷⁷ Buškariol 1989, 152.

⁷⁸ Buškariol 1989, 151.

⁷⁹ Buškariol 1989, 151, n. 36, 147, n. 11.

⁸⁰ Klaić 1967, 81, 85; Bratož 1986, 389; id. 1987, 193.

⁸¹ Marin 1994–1996, 23.

⁸² Marin 1997, 49.

⁸³ Chevalier 1996a, 436–438.

⁸⁴ About the basilicas: Dyggve, Veters 1966, 44, fig. 21, pl. XVII, 2; Basler 1958, 45–60; id. 1972, 39, fig. 8; 1990, 91; Basler, Miletić, 1988, 331; Cambi 1984–1985, 36, 38, fig. 4.

⁸⁵ Marijanović 1990, 110–120; Paškvalin 2003a, 253–266; id. 1990b, 124, 125.

⁸⁶ Marijanović 1990, 117.

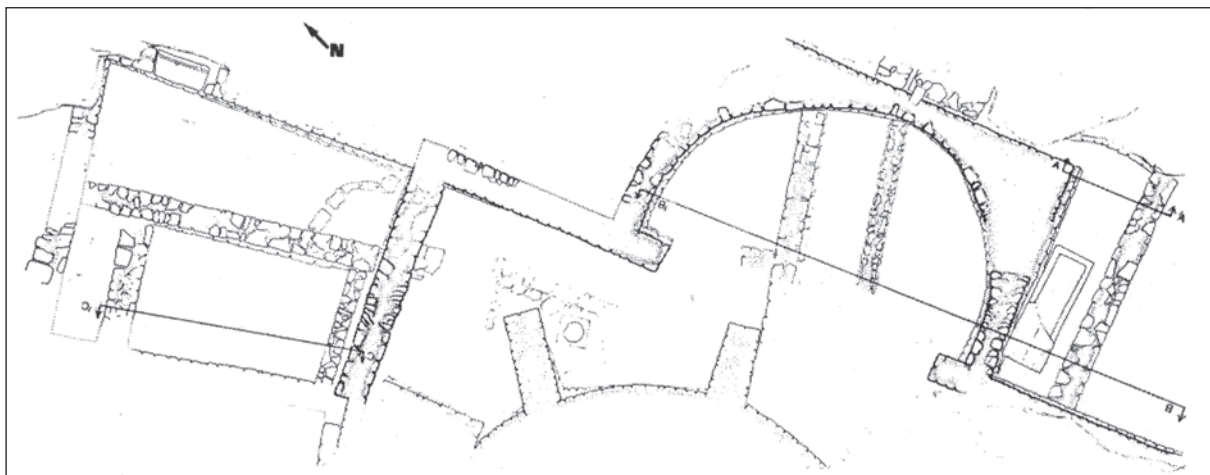


Fig. 6: The remains of two basilicas along the route of the water supply line Prud-Pelješac-Korčula (according to Buškariol 1989).
Sl. 6: Narona. Ostanki dveh bazilik na trasi vodovoda Prud-Pelješac-Korčula (po Buškariol 1989).

It is quite understandable that in dangerous times the bishop of Narona with his clergy and faithful could find safe refuge behind its fortified walls, and efficiently administer his diocese from there. Arguments that would confirm this are the facts that Mogorjelo was a major economic centre (*fundus*), whose primary role, just like that of Višići near Čapljina (*villa fructuaria*),⁸⁷ was to supply Narona with basic commodities,⁸⁸ and that dual basilicas “are usually found in diocesan centres”.⁸⁹

THE PROBLEM OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE DIOCESE OF NARONA

Christianity in Narona could have received a further stimulus in the period following the radical confrontation with pagan cults, particularly after 392 A.D., when the Emperor Theodosius I promulgated the edict ordering the destruction of pagan temples throughout the Roman Empire.⁹⁰ One can hardly believe that the major non-Christian temples of Narona – like the (*Augusteum*),⁹¹ the temple dedicated to the Roman emperors, whose destruction dates back to the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 5th century⁹² – could have survived. The construction of a somewhat more monumental Christian basilica,

or episcopal church, could have followed after the destruction of this symbol of the imperial cult, for which numerous Christians gave up their lives in Dalmatia. If the basilica under St. Vitus’ church had indeed been the episcopal or cathedral church – its building dates from the early 5th century⁹³ – it follows then that the foundation of the Diocese of Narona should also be dated to that period. Its construction coincides with that of the cathedral of Salona (early 5th century).⁹⁴ In this context the conclusion of Nenad Cambi that Iader, Salona, Epidaurus and Narona were 4th century episcopal sees is obvious.⁹⁵ The opinion of Emilio Marin setting the beginnings of Christianity in Narona only from the mid 5th century can hardly be accepted.⁹⁶ Keeping in mind that the neighbouring Mogorjelo Christians were evidently present during the 4th century (fig. 7a–b)⁹⁷ or within the first half of the 5th century,⁹⁸ it is plausible to assume that Christians may have also lived in Narona before that, or at least at the same time. Before the promulgation of the 313 tolerance act, Christians could meet for their religious services in some kind of private building (*oratorium*, *domus ecclesiae*), just as elsewhere in the Empire. It is not excluded that, like in Salona,⁹⁹ this building was in the outskirts of the city or some nearby villa or village. One of those from

⁸⁷ Čremošnik 1965, 147–260.

⁸⁸ Bojanovski 1969, 33, 45–47; Basler 1972, 42; id. 1984, 324; Škegro 1999, 183, 189, 190; Paškvalin 2003a, 254.

⁸⁹ Migotti 1994–1995, 122.

⁹⁰ Marin 1998c, 118.

⁹¹ Marin et al 2004, pass.; Marin 2003, 12, 14.

⁹² Marin et al 2004, 14.

⁹³ Marin 2003, 12.

⁹⁴ Marin 1994, 38.

⁹⁵ Cambi 2002, 209.

⁹⁶ Marin 1998c, 110; id. 1999, 12.

⁹⁷ Marijanović 1990, 110–120; Paškvalin 2003a, 253–266; id. 1990b, 124, 125.

⁹⁸ Paškvalin 2003a, 253–266.

⁹⁹ Cambi 2002, 213; Mardešić 2008, 317–319, fig. 2.

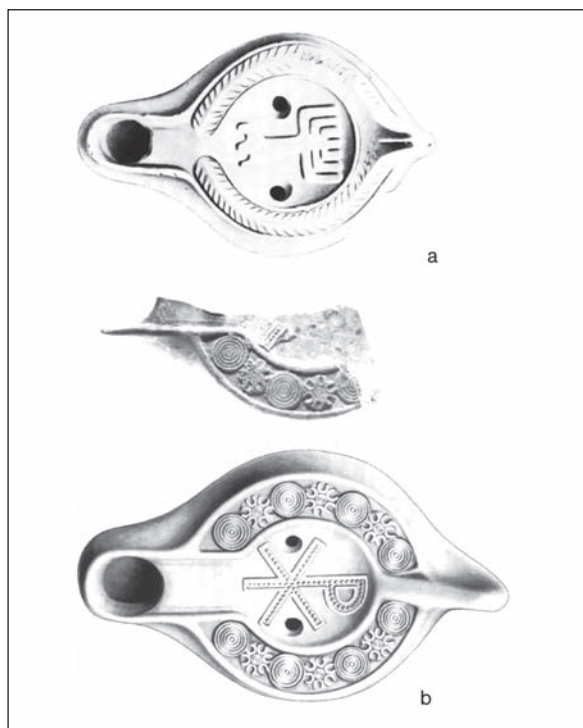


Fig. 7: a – Early Christian lamp (*lucerna*) from Mogorjelo (according to Marijanović 1990), b – Fragments and reconstructions of early Christian lamps (*lucernae*) from Mogorjelo near Čapljina (according to Marijanović 1990). Sl. 7: a – Mogorjelo pri Čapljini. Zgodnjekršćanska oljenka (*lucerna*) (po Marijanović 1990), b – Mogorjelo pri Čapljini. Odlomek in rekonstrukcija zgodnjekršćanske oljenke (*lucerna*) (po Marijanović 1990).

the last decades of the 3rd century, coinciding with the reign of the emperor Gallienus (253–268), was inside the Roman villa (*villa suburbana*) at Crkvina in Panik near Bileća, in the Trebišnjica valley.¹⁰⁰ A similar role is attributed to the so-called “house with mosaics” from Stolac.¹⁰¹ It is not improbable that the peristyle building with mosaics belonging to a large economic complex (*fundus*) in Višići near Čapljina¹⁰² might also have had the same function.

The Bishop of Naronā's Territory of Jurisdiction

According to available documents, there is no clear indication either of the jurisdiction or of

the territory of the Diocese of Naronā. Attempts to resolve the problem were based on the former Naronā *ager* and the administrative convent borders (although they cannot be related to the propagation of universal Christianity and ecclesiastical administration) as well as on the emerging Naronā basilica style with its decorative elements. Thus, central and lower Hercegovina, the Pelješac peninsula, the Makarska seacoast, the region of Imotski, as well as the islands of Mljet, Lastovo and Korčula were included in its territory.¹⁰³ However, there is no justifiable geographic or economic reason, and especially no transportation motive, as to why the Makarska seacoast area and the islands would be included in the Diocese of Naronā. The Makarska seacoast area has always been oriented towards Salona and its diocese, whereas Mljet, Korčula, Lastovo and the greater part of the Pelješac peninsula were oriented towards Epidaurus and its respective diocese, as otherwise the Diocese of Naronā would have remained divided geographically and in its transport routes. On the other hand, the bishop of Epidaurus would have been in an unenviable economical position – having to take care of his own diocesan clergy and the poor would have been an enormous burden. For the pastoral care of these territories on the coast and the islands, the bishop of Naronā must have had an entire fleet – which is hardly plausible considering the economic and social status of his diocese. The Diocese of Epidaurus and the Diocese of Salona, together with the Diocese of Muccurum from 533 A.D., were primarily dioceses situated on the coast and islands. The territories of Duvno and Buško Blato (Buško lake), whose orientation towards Naronā and its basin can be confirmed not only by the communication routes (fig. 8), but also by the Naronā basilica style with its ornamentation – of which the so-called whirling rosette is the most visible element¹⁰⁴ – are not even mentioned as part of the Diocese of Naronā. This above ornamentation has been recorded in the territories of Duvno and Buško Blato (Bogdašići – Šuica near Tomislavgrad (fig. 9a),¹⁰⁵ Karaula near

¹⁰⁰ Čremošnik 1974, 243–248; ead., 1984, 77–96; Basler 1988, 31–40; id. 1991, 1.

¹⁰¹ Truhelka 1892, 356–358; id. 1893, 291–295, Taf. 3; Čremošnik 1984, 63–77; Basler 1986, 16, fig. 3, 17; id. 1988, 32; id. 1990, 25, 26, fig. 8; Paškvalin 2003b, 45, 232.

¹⁰² Čremošnik 1984, 18–42.

¹⁰³ Cambi 1984–1985, 44, 55; id. 2007, 90; Cambi, Gamulin, Tonković, 1999, pass.; Chevalier 1996b, 24; Marin 1998b, 545–547; id. 1994–1996, 29; id. 1999, 239–241; Vučić 2005, 159, 167; id., Ancient Naronā /www.vid.hr/narona.htm [date of accession Okt. 2010]; Migotti 2008, 355, karta 1, 356.

¹⁰⁴ Flowers with an *oculus* in their centre and bordered with grape vine leaves and tendrils.

¹⁰⁵ Patsch 1902, 7, fig. 8; id. 1904, 227–228, fig. 103; Truhelka 1931, 156, fig. 62; Sergejevski 1961, 222, fig. 13: 223, fig. 15: 4; Basler 1972, 116, 117, fig. 123.

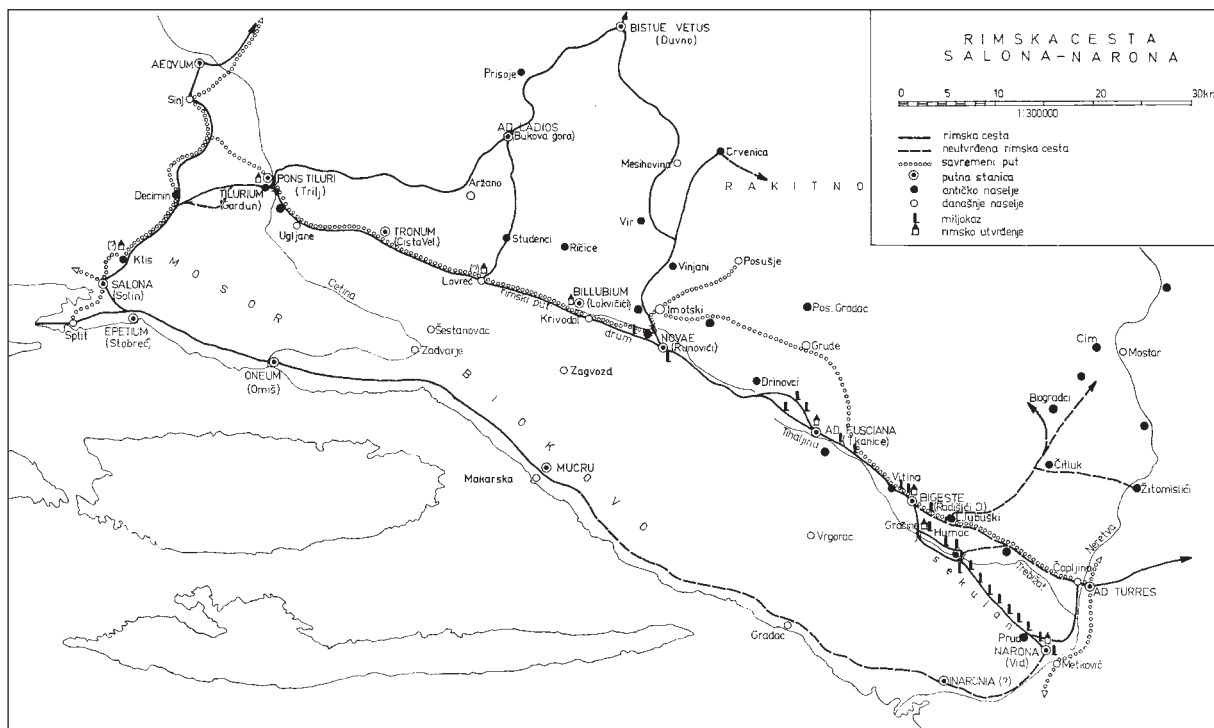


Fig. 8: The Roman road Salona-Narona with the rural routes (according to Bojanovski 1977).

Sl. 8: Rimska cesta Salona-Narona s stranskima priključcima (po Bojanovski 1977).

Tomislavgrad (fig. 9b),¹⁰⁶ Podgradina - Rešetarica near Livno (fig. 9c),¹⁰⁷ Široki Brijeg (Mokro - fig. 9d)¹⁰⁸ and Mostar (Han - Potoci - fig. 9e,¹⁰⁹ Cim - fig. 9f-g,¹¹⁰ Žitomislići - fig. 9h).¹¹¹ If the territories of Široki Brijeg and Mostar were in the Diocese of Narona - which is highly probable if communication routes, and economic and cultural elements are taken into consideration, then the territories of Duvno and Buško Blato could justly be included into its territory. Some authors, mostly because of the presence of a basilica at Cim, place the centre of the Diocese of Sarsenterum¹¹² or the Diocese of

Martari/Mactaris in the Mostar region.¹¹³ Chevalier also attempted to place the centre of the Diocese of Martari/Mactaris in Mostar and included the basilicas from the regions of Mostar and Konjic in northern Herzegovina.¹¹⁴ However, the Diocese of Sarsenterum has more recently been identified in the eastern Herzegovinian region and also around Ston on the Pelješac peninsula.¹¹⁵ Considering the relatively good routes of communication with Narona and the Konjic region (fig. 10),¹¹⁶ it is reasonable to include northern Herzegovina in the Diocese of Narona (at least up until the foundation of the Diocese of Sarsenterum). Up until the time of the foundation of the dioceses of Sarsenterum, Muc-

¹⁰⁶ Patsch 1904, 208, fig. 65; Truhelka 1931, 154, fig. 59.

¹⁰⁷ Vrdoljak 1988; 125, pl. XI, 1; Petrincic, Šeparović, Vrdoljak 1988, 76, fig. 171, 173.

¹⁰⁸ Sergejevski 1961, 223, fig. 15: 3; Basler 1972, 102, fig. 101; id. 1990a, 92, fig. 37; Glavaš 2006, 38.

¹⁰⁹ Truhelka 1931, 153, fig. 58; Sergejevski 1961, 223, fig. 15: 6; Miletić 1962, 154-155, pl. III, 2; Basler 1972, 108, fig. 111, fig. 117; id. 1990a, 92, fig. 38.

¹¹⁰ Anđelić 1974, 193, pl. V, fig. 1, 2; id. 1999b, 18, 55, pl. V, 1, 2.

¹¹¹ Anđelić 1999a, 14, fig. 4a.

¹¹² Tomaschek 1880, 547; Mandić 1957, 65-68; id. 1959, 77; id. 1963a, 19-23; id. 1963b, 24-31; Anđelić 1980, 262; id. 1999a, 37; 1999b, 5; Basler 1984, 327, 339-340, fig. 103; id. 1990a, 101-102, fig. 47; id. 1991, 3; Bojanovski 1978, 114; id. 1988, 117, 135, 381; Dračevac 1987, 78;

Čače 1993, 390-391; Vidović 1996, 17; Šanjek 1991, 9; id. 1996, 33; id. 1997, 218; Atanacković-Salčić 1997, 23-24; Goluža 1998, 97; Kuntić-Makvić 2003, 38; Barun 2003, 48; Vučić 2005, 166; Catholic Encyclopedia, Bosnia and Herzegovina: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/026294a.htm> [date of accession Okt. 2010].

¹¹³ Chevalier 1996a, 394-400; Cambi 2002, 206, 209.

¹¹⁴ Chevalier 1995b, 22, 25: Cim, Sutina-Mostar, Potoci, Humi-Lišani, Kuti, Mokro, Bare, Ježeprašina, Lisičići and Razići.

¹¹⁵ Puljić, Škegro 2006a, 7-50; Puljić, Škegro 2006b, 219-241.

¹¹⁶ Bojanovski 1978, 66-98, add. I.

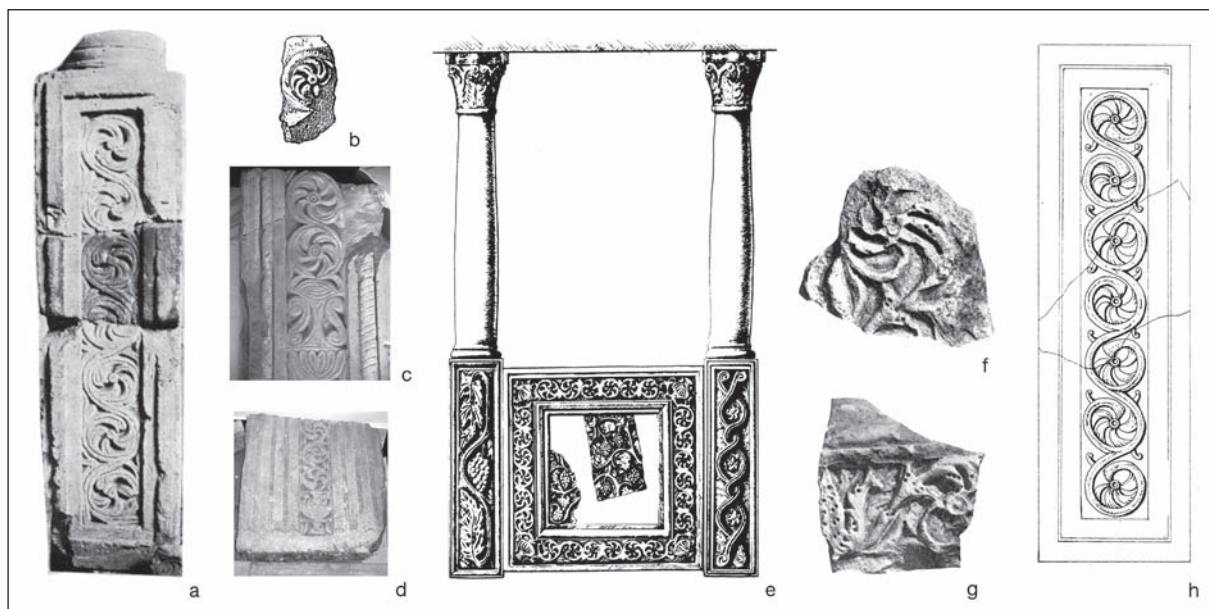


Fig. 9: a – The whirling rosette ornamentation from the basilica at Bogdašići – Šuica near Tomislavgrad (according to Basler 1972), b – a fragment of the whirling rosette ornamentation from Karaula near Tomislavgrad (according to Patsch 1904), c – the whirling rosette ornamentation from the basilica at Podgradina-Rešetarica (Buško Blato) (according to Petrinc et al. 1999), d – the whirling rosette ornamentation from the basilica at Mokro near Široki Brijeg (according to Glavaš 2006), e – the whirling rosette ornamentation from the basilica at Han-Potoci near Mostar (according to Basler 1972), f–g – The whirling rosette ornamentation from the basilica at Cim near Mostar (according to Anđelić 1974), h – Reconstruction of the whirling rosette ornamentation from the basilica at Žitomislići near Mostar (according to Anđelić 1978).

Sl. 9: a – Bogdašići – Šuica, Tomislavgrad. Vrtinčasti okras iz bazilike (po Basler 1972), b – Tomislavgrad – Karaula. Vrtinčasti okras (po Patsch 1904), c – Podgradina – Rešetarica, Buško Blato. Vrtinčasti okras iz bazilike (po Petrinc et al. 1999), d – Široki Brijeg – Mokro. Vrtinčasti okras iz bazilike (po Glavaš 2006), e – Mostar – Han-Potoci. Rekonstrukcija vrtinčastega okrasa iz bazilike (po Basler 1972), f–g – Mostar – Cim. Vrtinčasti okras iz bazilike (po Anđelić 1974), h – Mostar – Žitomislići. Rekonstrukcija vrtinčastega okrasa iz bazilike (po Anđelić 1978).

curum and Ludrum (*Ecclesia Ludroensis*),¹¹⁷ the territories extending from the Neretva marshes in the south to the Upper Neretva in the north, along with the Imotski region, western Herzegovina and the Duvno-Buško Blato region, all could have been part of the Diocese of Naron. To the northwest of the Diocese of Naron was the Diocese of Muccurum, which spread from the marshes in the southeast towards the eastern parts of Poljica in the northwest, and probably comprised the larger portion of Pelješac and the Central Dalmatian islands of Hvar, Korčula and Lastovo. The Neretva marshes and the mountain of Biokovo divided it from the Diocese of Naron.¹¹⁸ To the west of the Diocese of Naron was the Diocese of Ludrum, which at the time of its foundation was given the regions of

Čikola and Vrba – Muć (*Magnoticum, Magnioticum*), the Sinj and Vrlika regions (*Equitimum*), the Glamoč-Livno region (*Salviaticum*), and probably the Unac and upper Una valleys (*Sarsiaticum*).¹¹⁹ To the east of the Diocese of Naron was the Diocese of Sarsenterum, which occupied the territories of eastern Herzegovina – Stolac, Trebinja in the Popovo area, the Nevesinje highland, and the Dabar valley, as well as the region of Ston on the Pelješac peninsula.¹²⁰ The territory of the Diocese of Naron relied on the Neretva basin and its centre, Naron, economically and culturally as well as in routes of transport. Additionally, this is a compact geographical unit, which provided its bishop dignity in his office with an unburdened pastoral ministry.

¹¹⁷ Farlati 1753, 173; 1765, 291; Kukuljević-Sakcinski 1874, 198; Rački 1894, 16; Šišić 1914, 162; Klaić 1967; 83; Gunjača 1973, 54; Ivanišević 1994, 161; Dodig, Škegro 2008: *ut in Sarsentero, Muccuro et Ludro episcopi debeant consecrari....*

¹¹⁸ Škegro 2008a, 9–26; id. 2008b, 291–303.

¹¹⁹ Škegro 2007a, 59–92; id. 2007b, 197–220; id. 2007c, 9–24.

¹²⁰ Puljić, Škegro 2006a, 7–50; Puljić, Škegro 2006b, 219–241.

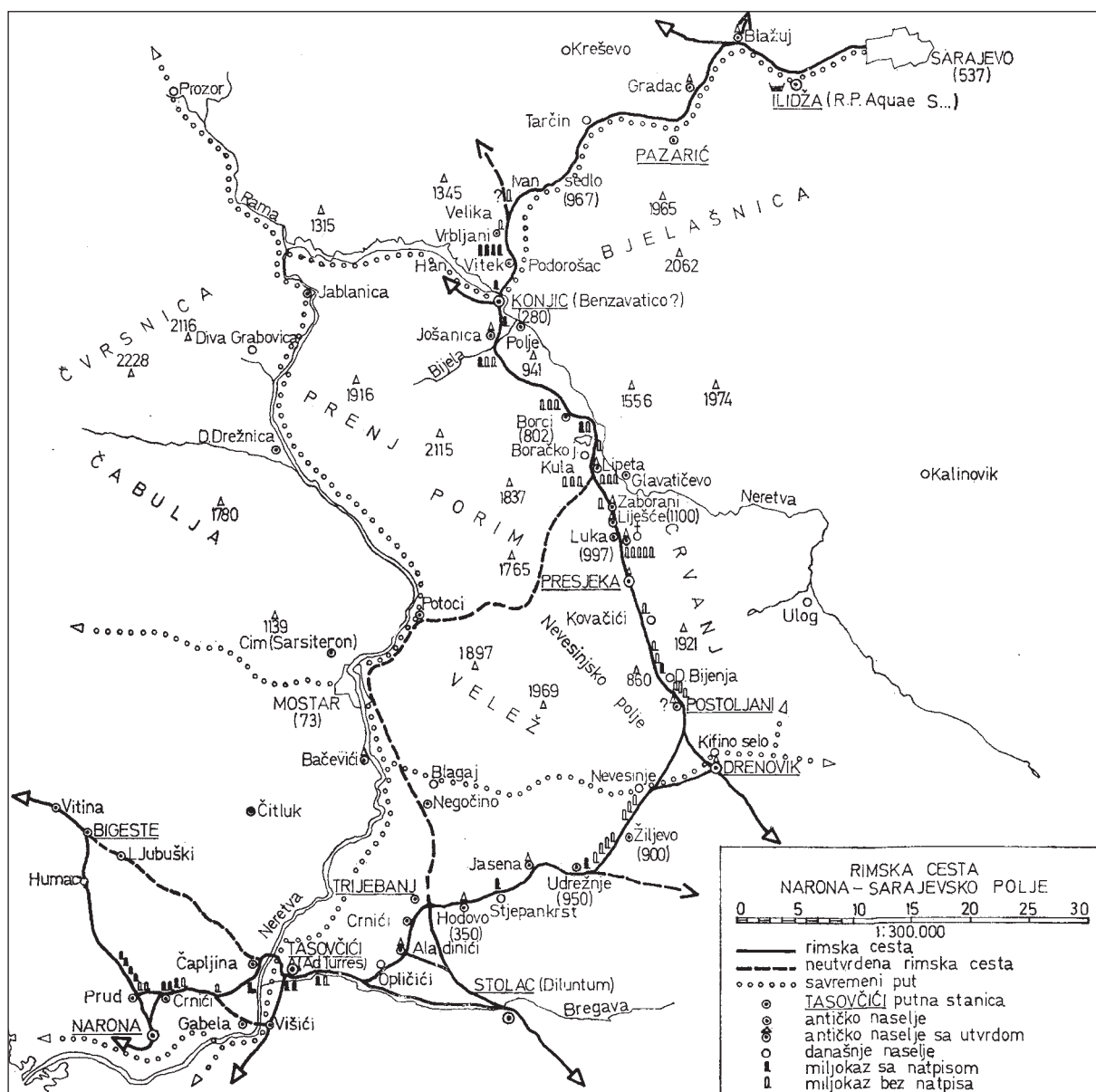


Fig. 10: The Roman roads NARONA – Northern Herzegovina (according to Bojanovski 1978).

Sl. 10: Rimskeceste iz Narone proti severni Hercegovini (po Bojanovski 1978).

CONCUSION

The Diocese of NARONA had an important role in the Christianization of the population inhabiting the inner central eastern Adriatic hinterland, particularly in the Neretva, Trebižat, Bregava, and Rama valleys and the surrounding regions. Research carried out so far has resulted in the discovery of several early Christian basilicas in NARONA and a number of basilicas in its hinterland, which testify to a process of Christianization in progress. However, these investigations have still not given a clear

answer to the question as to which of the NARONA basilicas was the episcopal, cathedral church of the diocese. If one were to judge by the evidence about St. Venantius in Salazar's *Martyrologium Hispaniense*, and the objects of Christian provenance from Mogorjelo dating probably to the 4th century or within the first half of the 5th century, it can be reasonably concluded that the beginnings of the NARONA Christian community must be considerably earlier than its only known bishop Marcellus, as documented sources show. The early Christian basilicas from the NARONA hinterland that retained

their original function well throughout the Middle Ages testify to the fact that all the segments of the Diocese of Naron did not cease simultaneously with its centre – Naron. Situated on the major road Aquileia – Salona – Epidamnus – Constantinopolis, and at an important port, it was a perfect starting point for the Christianization of the Dalmatian hinterland, where well organized communication

routes existed. Although there are no precise sources that can prove it, it can reasonably be assumed that the territories that geographically, economically and culturally gravitated towards the Neretva river basin (from the Neretva marshes in the south to the Konjic region to the north), Western Herzegovina, the Imotski region, and most probably the Duvno-Buško Blato region, were within its boundaries.

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Naronska škofija (*Ecclesia Naronitana*)

Povzetek

Naronska škofija je znana predvsem po svojem škofu Marcelu (*Marcellus episcopus Ecclesiae Naronitanae*), sodniku cerkvenega koncila v letih 530 in 533 v Salonu, ko je bil predsednik koncila salonski nadškof Honorij II. (528–547). Dosedanja arheološka raziskovanja naronskega območja niso razrešila problema naronske škofovske (katedralne) bazilike, kakor je spodletel tudi poizkus razlage zgodnjekršćanskega napisa na nagrobniku. Naronska škofija ima zgodnjekršćanski značaj, razvit že v času svojih misijonarskih odprav. Teh se je udeležil tudi škof sv. Venancij, ki je med 257 ter 260 izgubil življenje nekje med Dalmati (*inter Dalmatas*).

Najstarejši zgodnjekršćanski predmet z naronskega območja je odlomek glinene oljenke (*lucerna*), najden v zgodnjekršćanski baziliki v Mogorjelu pri Čapljini, datiran na konec 4. oziroma začetek 5. st. V ta časovni razpon spada tudi zgodnjekršćanska bazilika pod cerkvijo Sv. Vida v Naroni in jo občasno enačijo z naronsko škofovsko baziliko oziroma katedralo. Upošteva se časovno zamejitev naronske katedrale lahko tudi naronsko škofijo umestimo v že omenjeni čas.

Znotraj obzidja naronske citadele sta dve zgodnjekršćanski baziliki. Zaradi varnosti, ki ko je omogočalo obzidje, ni presenetljivo, da je naronski škof v času nevarnosti živel v trdnjavi na Magorjelu pri Čapljini. Nejasno je, kdaj in v kakšnih okoliščinah je naronska škofija padla v pozabo. Zagotovo pa je, da so se nekateri elementi naronskega tipa

kršćanstva obdržali in preživeli tudi avarsko-slovansko naselitev. Nekateri bazilike, ki so bile na območju naronske škofije, so obdržale svojo prvotno funkcijo še v srednjem veku. Širjenje tako imenovanega naronskega bazilikalnega tipa ter posameznih ornamentalnih motivov, s katerimi so okrašene te cerkve, lahko prostorsko zamejimo. Vsekakor se je ta prostor, ki je bil do leta 533 pod jurisdikcijo naronskega škofa, razprostiral na severu od močvirnatga dela Neretve do Konjice, vključujoč zahodno ter vzhodno Hercegovino (do zaledja Dubrovnika). Po ustanovitvi sarsenterske škofije leta 533, ki jo v zadnjem času iščejo na območju zahodne Hercegovine (območje Stoca, Popovega polja, Dabarskega polja, Nevesinjske planote) in polotoka Pelješac okoli mesta Ston, sta pod naronsko škofijo ostali na jugu dolina Neretve z močvirjem do Konjice na severu ter zahodna Hercegovina z mestoma Šuica in Duvnom ter območjem okoli Buškega Blata.

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