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CONSTANTINE I AND NEW MILITARY ARCHITECTURE IN THE BALKANS

The elevation, of Constantine I by the military to the Roman imperial throne in 306 signaled the beginning of a new, decisive epoch that, among crucial historical events also witnessed the beginning of the disintegration of the Tetrarchy, the establishment of Christianity as the official state religion, and the creation of a new capital - Constantinople.[1] From 306, Constantine's decisive activities bore witness to a steady eastward military progress,form the empire's westernmost frontiers in Britain to the inauguration of Constantinople, the new center of the empire, in 330. Following the defeat of his main adversary, Maxentius, in 312 at the Milvian Bridge, near Rome and the issuing of the celebrated edict In Milan, in 313, Constantine returned to the eastern sphere of the Empire, spending most of his remaining time in his native Balkans.

The second half of Constantine's reign (ca. 314-337), in most respects, was focused on the Balkan Peninsula.[2] His building activity was major, though very little of it survives. Archaeology and written evidence, however, provide clues that substantiate our knowledge of Constantine I, as one of the great emperor-builders. His extensive building program in the Balkans was crowned by his grandest single achievement: the construction of Constantinople, the new capital of the Roman Empire. A massive urban undertaking, it involved harbor facilities, a network of streets, public buildings, as well as the first circuit of city walls.[3] Begun after the defeat of his last adversary, Licinius in 324, it was inaugurated six years later. As such, it was one of a series of his 'temporary capitals' in the Balkans, including also Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovica), Naissus (Niš), Serdica (Sofia), and Thessalonike. Naissus, Constantine's birthplace, was a major urban center. It was lavishly built and fortified, though nothing of its archi-

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1 N. Lenski, "The Reign of Constantine," *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, ed. N. Lenski (New York, 2006), pp. 59-90.

2 S. Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans from Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent* (New Haven and London, 2010), Ch. 2, "Constantine and His Successors, 312-ca. 400," pp. 43-71.

3 C. Mango, *Le developpement urbain de Constantinople (IVe - VIIe siècles)*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1990); also, Id., "The Shoreline of Constantinople in the Fourth Century," *Byzantine Constantinople. Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*, ed. N. Necipoğlu (Leiden, Boston, Köln, 2001), 17-28.

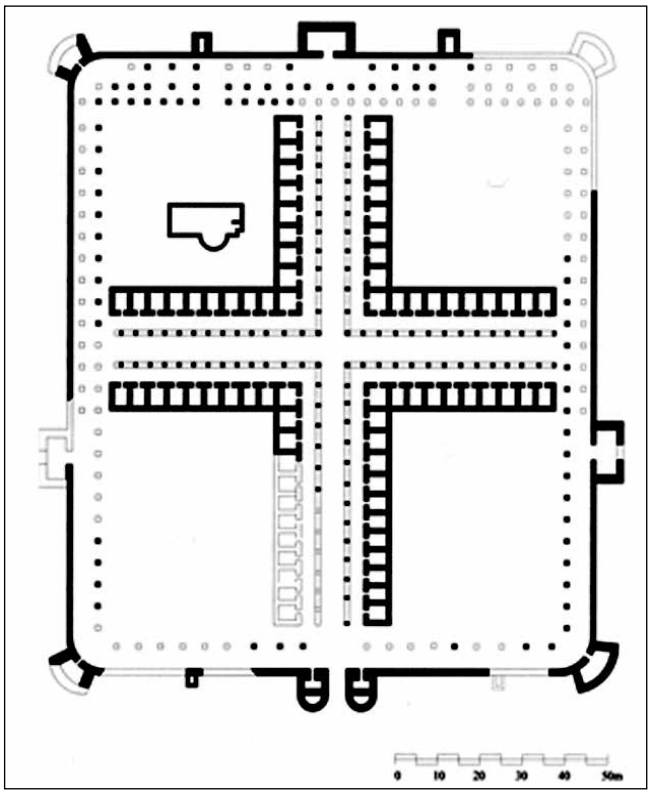

Fig. 1 Drobeta (near TurnuSeverin, Romania), Military Camp, as re-constructed By Constantine I

Сл. 1 Дробета (поред Турну Северина, Румунија), Војни кампо, реконструкција по Константину I

tecture associated with Constantine remains standing, and relatively little of it has been archaeologically retrieved.[4] Sixth-century Byzantine author, Stephen of Byzantium, refers to Naissus as "Constantine's *ktisma* (creation)", though it was substantially laid waste by the Huns in 441. Rebuilt and re-fortified by Justinian I, Naissus was destroyed again by the Avars in 614. Serdica, ca 150 km southeast of Naissus, was another candidate on Constantine's list of potential capitals. Referred to as "my Rome", according to the 12-cent Byzantine historian, Ioannis Zonaras, Constantine resided there between 316 and 321. Between 322 and 323, he was in residence in Thessaloniki, where his construction of a major harbor facility had probably the final confrontation with Licinius as its principal objective.[5] The following year, 324, in fact, did bring about Licinius' demise. This was immediately followed by Constantine's final choice for the new capital site at the crucial junction between Europe and Asia. The ancient Greek colony, Byzantion, subsequently a relatively minor Roman town on the same location, was chosen and underwent an immediate, major urban transformation. Situated on the northeastern end of the Sea of Marmara, at the point of junction with the Bosporus passage to the Black Sea, the new capital,

4 M. Rakocija, *Konstantinov grad – Starohrišćanski Niš* [*The Constantine's City – Ancient Christian Niš*], Niš 2013.

5 Lenski, p. 75.

named Constantinople, after its founder, was inaugurated on May 11, 330. Of the extensive building program undertaken by Constantine, only his honorific column, damaged and without the crowning sculpture of the Great Emperor, as well as of all contemporaneously built structures in its vicinity, remains standing.

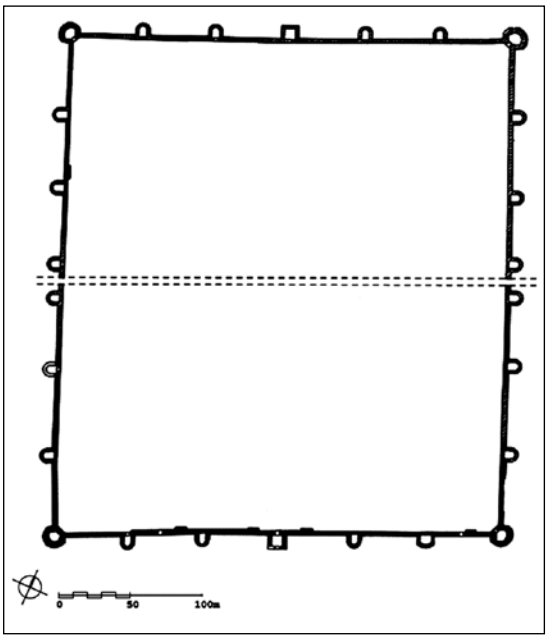

Fig. 2 Castrum Scampis (modern Elbasan, Albania)

Сл. 2 Castrum Scampis (данашњи Елбасан, Албанија)

The clearest evidence of Constantine's building activity in the Balkans is based on his aggressive and extensive construction of military architecture. Conscious of the increasing threat coming from various tribes and peoples living across the erstwhile relatively lightly defended Roman frontiers, Constantine focused on re-establishing these, as more secure borderlines, manned by larger numbers of permanently stationed troops. The phenomenon became particularly evident on the Danube limes in the northern Balkans, especially in the course of the second half of the 3rd century, and on account of the Roman military permanent withdrawal from Dacia in 271. Under the tetrarchic reforms the re-fortification of the Danube limes began, whose restoration was advanced with renewed determination. The mid-third century intrusions and plundering by various barbarian tribes, some reaching as far south as Athens and Corinth laid bare the weaknesses of the interior Balkan territories and routes of primary importance in the life of the eastern Roman empire. Nor were the Romans unaware that the natural resources of the Balkans into which they had invested considerable resources were exposed to threats from barbarian intrusions. Thus, not only was a tighter security of the frontier lines essential, but individual fortifications of the interior settlements, industrial, and military establishments also became high priorities.

Starting with the Danube limes, it is evident that already under the Tetrarchs, and continuing under Constantine, the re-fortification of earlier – especially second-century timber fortifications – was underway, being replaced by new, stone construction of more effective encampments that became normative. The case of the fortified camp at Drobeta, modern Turnu Severin, Romania, on the north side of the Danube, is a fine example[6].**(Fig. 1)** The original, fortified

[6] Ćurčić, pp. 45-6; also, P. MacKendrick, *The Dacian Stones Speak* (Chapel Hill, 1975), pp. 163-5.

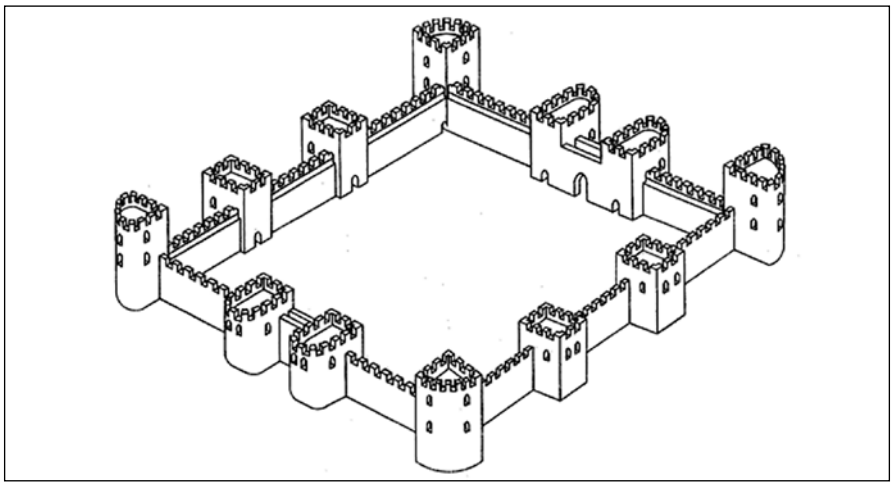

Fig. 3 Castellum Ad Picaria (modern Vig. Albania)

Сл. 3 Castellum Ad Picaria (данашњи Виг, Албанија)

camp was constructed under Trajan (98-117) as part of the fortification system protecting the northern end of the river, directly opposite the camp of Pontes, near modern Kostolac, on the south side, in Serbia. The two sites were linked by a major bridge built across the Danube by Apollodorus of Damascus, one of the great engineers of antiquity. The role of the bridge declined soon after with the Roman withdrawal from Dacia, and the bridge was physically dismantled under Hadrian (117-38). Nonetheless, the military role of Drobeta continued. It was rebuilt on the same site but with a different layout using a rigidly regular plan with heavily fortified stone walls. The intersecting system of interior streets did not utilize a corresponding system of entrance gates. The new fort, instead, featured only one, on the side facing the river. Security measures with the reduced number of exterior gates, appears to reflect a new reality that affected the planning of Drobeta at the time of Constantine.

Especially characteristic in this period became fortified encampments protecting major roads, such as those found in several examples on the Via Egnatia from its western starting point at Dyrrachion, modern Durres, Albania. The largest among these was the castrum Scampis, at modern Elbasan, Albania.[7] **(Fig. 2)** Built ca. 330, Scampis was a huge military base, measuring ca 348 x 308m, with an interior area of ca. 10ha. Its original function must have been that of a *castrum* accommodating a large military encampment, enclosed by stone walls featuring 26 projecting towers and two symmetrically disposed gates, on the west and the east side, guarding the Via Egantia traversing its interior at its midpoint. The placement of the gates and their relationship to the main road clearly reflected its original function.

A numberof encampments of this type were related to the same function in principal, despite their widely differing sizes. A fine, relatively well-pre-

[7] Ćurčić, p. 46.

served example is the *castellum* of Ad Picaria, modern Vig, Albania.[8] **(Fig. 3)** Conceived along the same planning outline in all respects, the *castellum*, in this case featured merely a fraction of the floor area size of the *castrum* Scampis. A preserved inscription identifies its builder as Licinius, Constantine's brother-in-law, and gives a date of 311-13. Comparable, but somwhat larger than Ad Picaria, was Castra Nicaea, near present-day Kale-Dolenci, farther west on the Via Egnatia, in Macedonia.[9] **(Fig. 4)** Measuring 122 x 125m, Castra Nicea, like *castrum* Scampis, accommodated a regular settlement within its walls in the course of the fifth century. Another similar fortified settlement, evidently straddling the important road from Naissus leading to Serdica, and further on to Constantinople, was Remesiana, a product of Constantine's building program. **(Fig. 5)** Roughly 0.5 hectares in floor area, situated in present Bela Palanka, eastern Serbia, ancient Remesiana has been partially excavated, but it is clear that its trapezoidal circuit of walls with twenty projecting towers was clearly a miniscule fortified urban settlement, types of which became quite common in the Balkans during the last decades of the third, and the first decades of the fourth century.

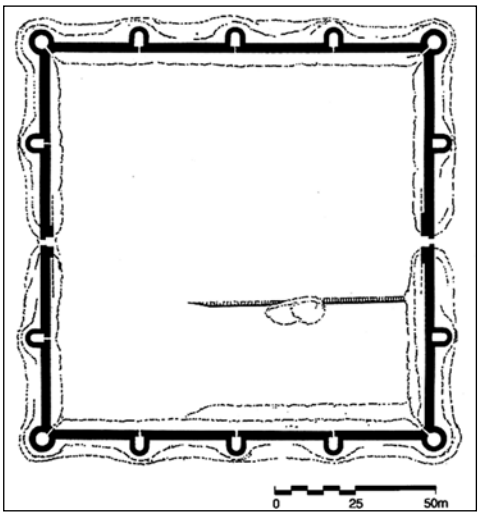

Fig. 4 Castra Nicaea (near Kale-Dolenci, Macedonia)

Сл. 4 Castra Nicaea (поред Кале-Доленци, Македонија)

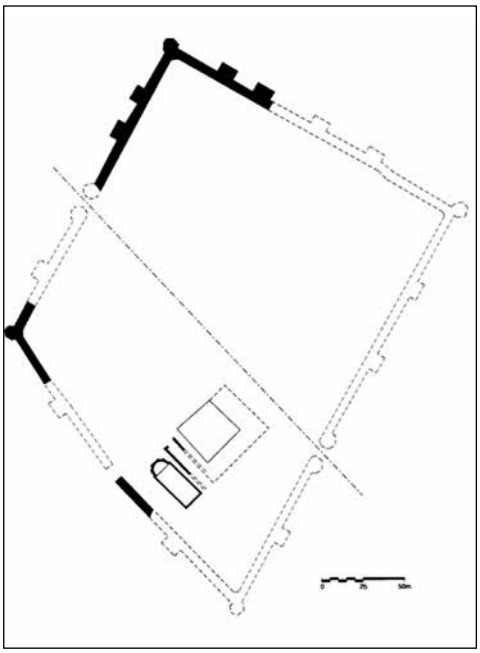

Fig. 5 Remesiana (present BelaPalanka, Serbia)

Сл. 5 Remesiana (данашња Бела Паланка, Србија)

8 Ćurčić, p. 47,

9 I. Mikulčić, *Spätantike und Frühbyzantinische Befestigungen in Nordmakedonien* (München, 2002), pp. 271-2.

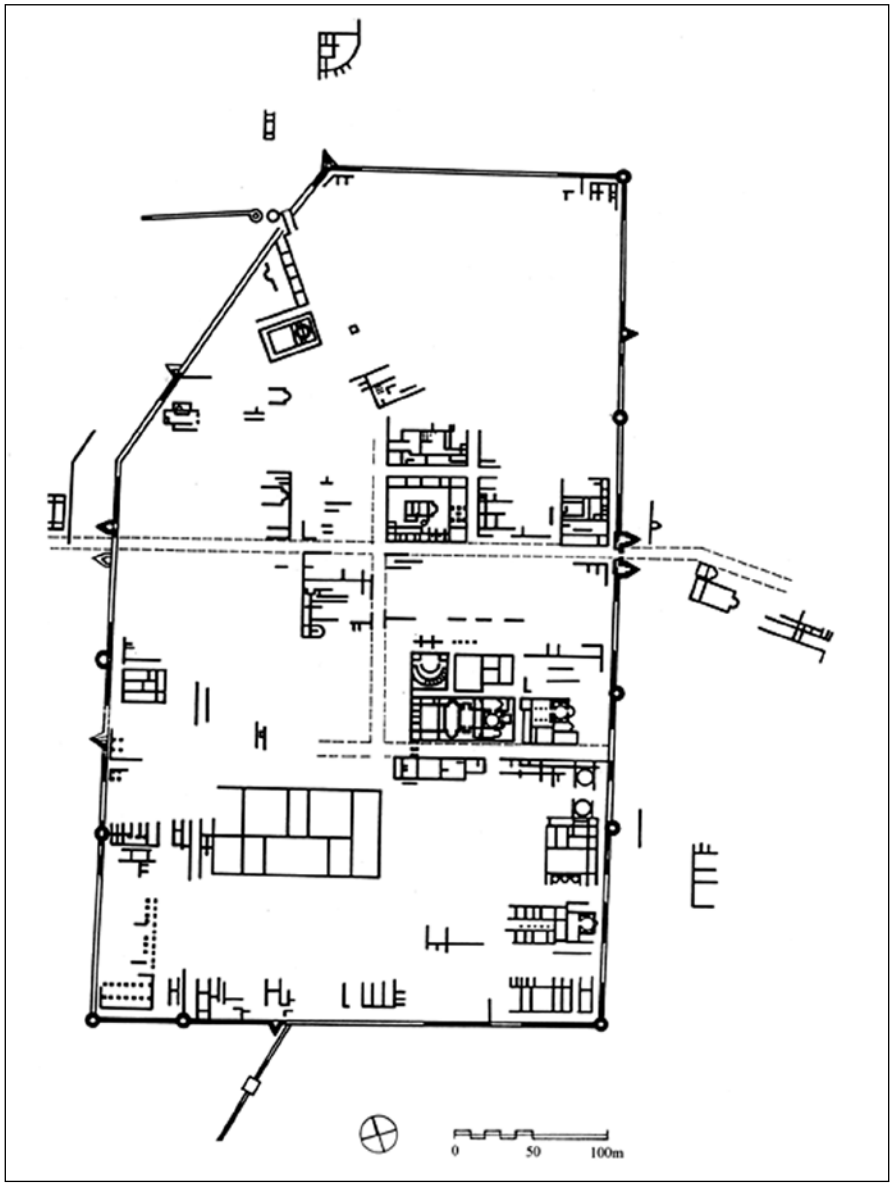

Fig. 6 Serdica (Sofia, Bulgaria)

Сл. 6 Serdica (София, Бугарска)

In addition to the new military encampments, and small fortified settlements related to major roads traversing the Balkans, Constantine's building program, appears to have included older urban settlements, that having undergone invasions in the second half of the third century, were re-fortified, and given a new urban context. One of the most impressive of these appears to have

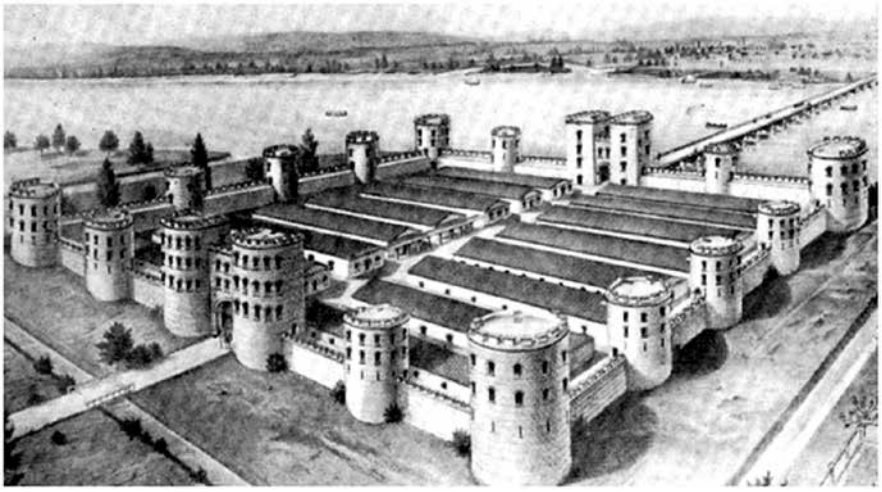

Fig. 7 Castellum Divitia(Deutz, Germany)

Сл. 7 Castellum Divitia (Deutz, Немачка)

been Serdica, present day Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria.[10] **(Fig. 6)** Originally a Thracian settlement, Serdica became a Roman administrative center in 46 AD, reaching a level of considerable prosperity under Trajan and Hadrian. The city suffered a number of attacks – in 170, and again in the mid-fourth century, follow by repeated rebuilding and strengthening of its fortification walls. Recognizing its strategic importance, Constantine made Serdica his temporary headquarters between 316 and 322. Referring to it as **"my Rome"** he may have temporarily toyed with the idea of making it his new capital. Traversed by the main east-west road, Constantinian Serdica shared its chief planning characteristics with other contemporary urban centers, linking two major city gates, at the opposite ends. The southern half of the fortified enclosure appears to have been occupied by the imperial palace. The idea of establishing Serdica as a permanent imperial residence – if the idea existed as such at all – must have come to a quick end by 324, with Constantine's final victory over Licinius, and his prompt choice of Byzantion, the future Constantinople, as the new capital of the Roman Empire in which he would permanently settle in 330, seven years before his death.

Constantine 's march across Europe, between 306 and 324, maps his rise to power, from his succession to the imperial throne following the death of his father Constantius I and the termination of the Tetrarchy with the defeat of his last adversary, Licinius. Thus, Constantine the Great became the single ruler of the Roman Empire, returning the tradition of imperial governance as it existed before the establishment of the Tetrarchic system by Diocletian in 282. Among his many outstanding achievements, Constantine I was also known as a great

[10] M. Stancheva, "Za Konstantinoviia kvartal v Serdika," *Serdika, Sredets, Sofiia*, tom 2 (Sofiia, 1994), pp. 53-79; also: T. Ivanov, "K'm problema za ukrepitenata sistema na Serdika (II-VIv.)," *Serdika, Sredets, Sofiia*, tom 2 (Sofiia, 1994), pp.29- 52.

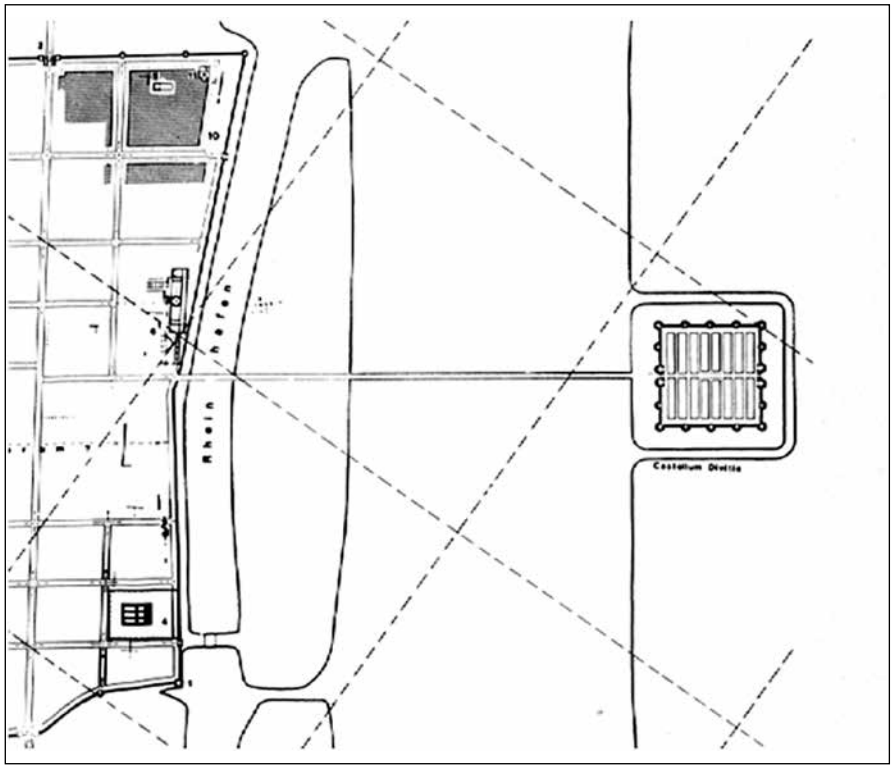

Fig. 8 Castellum Divitia with the bridge across the Rhein, linking it with Collonia Agripina (Cologne)

Сл. 8 Castellum Divitia са мостом преко Рајне, повезује га са Collonia Agripina (Cologne)

builder. Notable was his extensive contribution to military architecture and to issues related to security of the empire that was seriously undermined during the third century.

Constantine's contribution to military architecture is evident in the category of protecting the Empire's frontiers, especially in the areas of particular vulnerability to external invasions. Equally important was Constantine's concern regarding the security of internal travel and transportation. In both categories new architecture of military encampments emerged rapidly and became widespread. Placing of military encampments along important roads, as well at major river crossings, produced new planning schemes involving the passing of a major road through fortified military bases or placing settlements at opposite river banks. A number of securely dated fortified military camps allow for association of a particular concept of planning with the reign of Constantine. As noted in this presentation, main Balkan roads appear to have been made secure by having been straddled by walled military stations, their entrances protected by pairs of fortified gates at the opposite ends. It is especially notable that the oldest known dated construction employing these principles appears to

be associated with Constantine's construction in 310 of the fortified *castellum* Divitia (Deutz, Germany), protecting the eastern entrance to the bridge across the Rhein, and linking it with Colonia Agrippina, modern Cologne. **(Figs. 7 and 8)**[11] Equally significant was the employment of the very same conceptual scheme in the *castellum* Ad Picaria, built according to a preserved inscription by Licinius in 311-13 on the Via Egnatia, east of the Adriatic port of Dyrrachion (Fig. 3).[12] The years between 310 and 313, marked the peak of the short period of close collaboration between Constantine 1 and Licinius. These years resulted in the marriage between Constantine's half-sister and Licinius, and above all, in the joint signing of the Edict of Milan in February 313.[13] The preserved dated inscriptions from the *castella* Divitia and Ad Picaria, suggest that, at this crucial historical junction, the sharing of new military planning between the two co-emperors, may have also reach and passed its peak.

In conclusion, we can stress that the extraordinary effectiveness for which Constantine was known as a military commander with an unmatched record of battlefield victories, was echoed by his status as one of the great Roman builders, whose particular involvement in new military planning and construction paralleled his achievements on battlefield.

Слободан Ћурчић

КОНСТАНТИН I И НОВА ВОЈНА АРХИТЕКТУРА НА БАЛКАНУ

Долазак Константина I (305-337) на престо Римског царства 305. године, наговестио је почетак нове, значајне епохе. Године 312. почетак великих промена обележен је Констнтиновим походом на Рим и његовом победом над ривалом Максенцијем у чувеној бици код Милвијског моста. Следећу, 313. годину, Константин је обележио издавањем царског указа у Милану, којим је Хришћанство, од забрањене постала озваничена религија Римског царства. Крећући се даље ка истоку, Константин је исте, 324. године, савладао и свог последњег ривала Ликинија, поставши тако једини владар целог Римског царства. Тиме је краткотрајана историја тзв. Тетрархије доживела свој крај. Исте године, Константин је донео и кључну одлуку о премештању Римске престонице, из древног Рима у Византион, некадашњу грчку колонију на улазу из Мраморног мора у Босфорски мореуз. У току следећих шест година, мали Римски град претворен је у нови центар империје. Прозван – Константинополис (Цариград) – по имену свога оснивача, Цариград је званично проглашен као главни град хришћанске Римске империје 330. године, и ускоро је постао кључна метропола Средоземља.

Сви Константинови историјски потези – хришћанизација царства, премештање државног центра из Рима у Цариград, као и повратак на консолидацију државне управе под једним владаром у систем какав је постојао пре цара Диоклецијана – имали су огроман и трајан значај. Константинов долазак на Балкан, био је обелажен великом грађевинском делатношћу, првенствено везаном за изградњу градских центара, почевши од Цариграда са градском луком и градским зидинама. Thessaloniki (Солун),

11 *Römer am Rhein*, Ausstellung des Römisch-Germanischen Museums, Köln (Köln, 1967), p. 72, p. 351; also: P. la Baume, *Colonia Agrippinensis* (Köln, 1964), fig. 29.

12 Cf. f.n. 8, above.

13 R. MacMullen, *Constantine* (London, New York, and Sydney, 1987), pp. 92-3.

други град по величини, такође је добио важну луку (322/23). Међу унутрашњим градовима, који су доживели велике промене, проширења и утврђења, најважнији су били Serdica (Софија), Naissus (Ниш), Remesiana, као и Troраeum Traiani (Адамклиси) на обали Дунава.

У категорију великих градитељских подухвата спадају и многа војна утврђења подигнута у првим деценијама IV века, посебно на јужној обали Дунава. Ова утврђења, представљају обнове старих фортификација из II века, као и наставак изградње нових у време цара Диоклецијана. Од значаја у првој групи је камп Дробета (Турну Северин, Румунија) на северној страни Дунава, подигнут у време цара Трајана (98-117), а у вези са подизањем великог моста преко Дунава од стране чувеног архитекте, Аполодора из Дамаска. Мост су демонтирали Римљани у време цара Хадријана, када су Римске трупе повучене из Тракије, док је камп Дробета обновљен у време Контантина I. Константин је подигао нови мост за прелаз преко Дунава између места Oecus (у Бугарској) и Sucidava (у Румунији). Отворен 328. године, мост је демонтиран пре 367. године, када је цар Валенс са трупама прелазио у Дакију. Трансверзални путеви у централном делу Балкана били су обезбеђени изградњом војних утврђења као што су била Castrum Scampis (данас Елбасан), Ad Picaria (Виг) у Албанији, Castra Nicea (Кале, Доленци) и Баргала у Македонији.