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## **STATE PROPAGANDA AND ART: MONUMENTS FROM THE SERBIAN SECTION OF THE LIMES REGION\***

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The best representatives of Roman Empire state propaganda are the structures built by the emperors, their portraits, coins issued in their names and works of applied art. In different historical periods, these monuments carried a different political message. The monuments of art from the Serbian section of the Limes and its hinterland clearly show that this region was of exceptional importance, not only for the defence of the Empire but also for the consolidation of the official imperial propaganda. The large number of porphyry sculptures found in the territory of present day Serbia reveals the importance of that territory from a strategic-propagandistic point of view. Despite being situated within palatial complexes, these sculptures were erected at exceptionally important strategic locations where the presence of the army and activities connected with its actions were clearly confirmed.*

**KEY WORDS: ROMAN ART, ROMAN STATE PROPAGANDA, PORTRAITS OF ROMAN EMPERORS, PORPHYRY SCULPTURES.**

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The best representatives of Roman Empire state propaganda are the structures built by the emperors, their portraits, coins issued in their names and works of applied art. In different historical periods these monuments carried a different political message. Bearing in mind that the protection of the frontiers was always one of the priority tasks, the considerable number of monuments discovered in the centres along the Limes and in its hinterland were great artistic achievements but also played a significant part in the imperial propaganda. The monument which denotes Trajan's strategic preparations for the war against the Dacians on the Danube represents a distinctive work of art. Trajan renovated and widened the road along the Danube, the construction of which had started as early as the reign of Tiberius. The restoration or construction of the section through the Iron Gates is attested by the inscription known as the "Tabula Traiana", from AD 100. Placed on a rock above the Danube in the Lower Gorge and carved in the shape of a temple facade with a tympanum, it reveals a complex iconographic composition. Below the tympanum is a frieze with an eagle and winged genii. Below the tympanum is the inscription tablet shaped as a *tabula ansata* whose triangular ends are decorated with rosettes and behind them are the dolphins. The tablet with the inscription is supported by a nude male, a personification of the Danube, i.e. the river god (*fluvius*) Danubius (Fig.1).<sup>1</sup> The fact that Danubius is supporting the inscription plaque emphasises that the emperor is celebrating his successful war against the Dacians in the presence of the river god, who helped him to achieve the victories under the protection of Jupiter.

In his first war against the Dacians (AD 101-102), Trajan defeated the Dacian king Decebalus, but failed to capture his capital city, *Sarmisegetusa*, and conquer his kingdom. It was obvious to both sides that the peace that was concluded was only a short-lived armistice. Trajan used the lull between the first and second Dacian war to reinforce the Danube limes and prepare a new campaign. The most important of his architectural undertakings was the construction of a bridge across the Danube, connecting the fortress of *Pontes* in *Moesia Superior* and the fortress of *Drobeta* in *Dacia*. The basis of the bridge, engineered by the architect Apollodorus of Damascus, according to the depictions on Trajan's column in Rome and on the coins, consisted of 20 stone piers supporting the wooden superstructure. Part of one of those stone piers is visible today at Kostol, i.e. at the

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<sup>1</sup> Hirschfeld 1874, 418; Petolescu 1986, 343-344.



Fig. 1 – *Tabula Traiana*, Iron Gates-Donja Klisura (documentation of the Institute of Archaeology Belgrade)

site of *Pontes*. The bridge was built to facilitate access to the Dacian territory. A bronze head of Trajan's father, found near the bridge pier in the Danube river in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, demonstrates the importance of the site of *Pontes* and the bridge itself. This monument, a powerful, robust, but also rounded-off sculpture, is representative of the veristic style of Trajanic portraiture (Fig. 2). The portrait, dated according to the stylistic characteristics to the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> and the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, is a superb work of art, hollow-cast, with traces of gilding, and is 29 cm high. It was formerly attributed to Trajan's biological father. However, it



Fig. 2 – Portrait of Trajan's father, bronze, Kostol-Pontes (documentation of the National Museum in Belgrade)



Fig. 3 – Portrait of Albinus, marble, Karataš - Diana (documentation of the National Museum in Belgrade)

could be part of the life-size statue of Trajan himself that was displayed on the upper section of the final arch of the bridge.<sup>2</sup>The turbulent situation in the Danube Limes involved the restoration of existing forts and the construction of new ones along the Danube. In the urban centres near the military camps the works of the state propaganda were erected to extol the Roman values in a situation when the protection of the territory from the barbarian penetrations was a very important goal. Marble and bronze heads of the emperors are the testimony that imperial statues were important parts of residential structures. A marble head, identified as a representation of Emperor Albinus (193-217 AD), was found in the military camp of *Diana* (Karataš).<sup>3</sup> This part of the monumental sculpture was modelled in an art style characteristic of the time of the late Antonines (Fig. 3). A fine bronze head of Emperor Macrinus, found in Boleč (*Mons Aureus*) near Belgrade, reveals very clearly the tendencies of late Severan art. Its short hair and thick long beard are treated in a very fine, graphic way (Fig. 4).<sup>4</sup> This is a fine portrait of the emperor who ruled only one year (217 AD). A marble head of a larger than life size statue represents a strong and determined middle-aged man who is looking into the distance with wide open eyes (Fig. 5). According to analogies from the numismatic material, this head is identified as a representation of the emperor Carus (282-283 AD). The other reason for such an interpretation is the finding place of the head. It was found at *Margum* (Dubravica), a military camp and urban centre on the banks of the Mlava river, in the region where Diocletian defeated the usurper Carinus, the son of Carus.

Portraits of Trajan, or his father, of Albinus, Macrinus and Carus, found in the centres situated in the Serbian part of the Danubian Limes, had been made in the traditional style of the contemporary Roman art. However, since the age of Diocletian and the establishment of the Tetrarchy (293 AD), imperial portraits experienced a radical change in style. Sculptures of emperors became frontal, carved from a single block, with cubic heads without any individual features, but with big, wide open eyes, bordered by heavy eyelids. The dominant eyes with the graphically modelled corneas and the drilled pupils suggest gazing far into the distance, while the face lacks any expression. This form of imperial portrait in

2 Popović 1987, 176, cat. 104; Ratković 2007, 238-239, cat. 2007; Ratković 2015 2015, 113-117.

3 Rankov 1987, 209, cat. 170.

4 Kondić 1972, 51-59, Fig. 1-10; Popović 1987, 209-210, cat. 171; Popović 2013, 288, cat. 18.

plastic art and on coins was supposed to express the new idea regarding the power of the ruling collegium, and also the new moral values. New imperial portraits were intended to represent the political morality of tetrarchs, i.e. they were the physiognomic expression of the need for order, discipline, moral values and ruling in accordance with the Roman tradition. Red porphyry, the hardest stone on Earth, was the ideal material for the manifestation of the new ideology. Porphyry sculptures reflect the imperial idea of that time in the most radical and most consistent way; they are the proof of the legalising of a new wish to send a clear and powerful message to the whole Empire regarding the virtues of the collegium of four rulers and about their unity.<sup>5</sup> This was achieved by using imperial figures deprived of any individual facial characteristics that were emanating the idea of the equality and similarity (*similitudo*) of the Augusti, who were brothers (*fratres*), and of the Caesars, who were their sons (*filiū Augustorum*).<sup>6</sup> At the same time, these figures were supposed to symbolise the concord of the emperors (*concordia*), and the legality of the four rulers.

However, while the statues of emperors in the time before the Tetrarchy had been erected in the military camps along the Danube and in nearby civil settlements, the porphyry sculptures from the time of the Tetrarchy, judging by the finds discovered so far, were not erected in the military centres on the Limes but in the imperial palaces situated in the hinterland, i.e. in the north-eastern part of modern Serbia (*Felix Romuliana* – Gamzigrad; Šarkamen) or in the Pannonian section of the Limes (*Sirmium*) (Fig. 23). An exception is a fragmented porphyry head allegedly found in Tekija (*Transdierna*), which is nowadays in a private collection (Fig. 6). Considering the lack of data about the circumstances of its discovery and the exact finding place of this head, the question is being asked whether it was really found in Tekija, where it could have arrived during transportation from Egypt across the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea and further, along the Danube, or it was found in some other place nearby, as a part of some other sculpture, maybe the one from Šarkamen.<sup>7</sup> The head represents a very good example of the ‘hard style’ of tetrarchic art. The wide open eyes with heavy eyelids are dominating, and the deep horizontal wrinkles on the forehead give the face a

<sup>5</sup> Smith 1997, 183.

<sup>6</sup> Laubscher, 2000, 217.

<sup>7</sup> Popović 2017, 88-89.

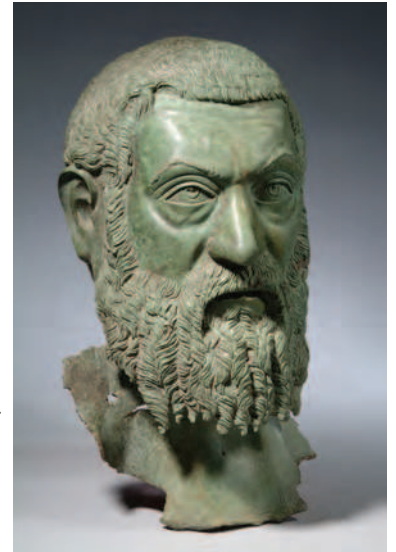


Fig. 4 – Portrait of Macrinus, bronze, Boleč, *Mons Aureus* (documentation of the City Museum Belgrade)



Fig. 5 – Portrait of Carus, marble, Dubravica - *Margum* (documentation of the National Museum, Požarevac)



Fig. 6 –Portrait of a tetrarch, fragmented, porphyry, Tekija-Transdierna (private collection)

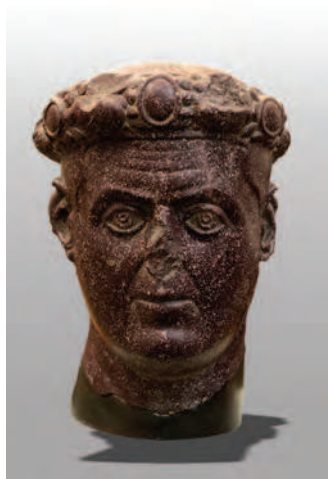


Fig. 7 –Portrait of Galerius, porphyry, Gamzigrad – Felix Romuliana (documentation of the National Museum, Zaječar)

severe and serious expression, indicating rage and threat. These stylistic characteristics connect the head from Tekija with the bust from *Athribis* in Egypt, which is identified in literature as a representation of Galerius, Diocletian, Licinius or Maximinus Daia.<sup>8</sup> There are also similar dilemmas regarding the identification of the head from Tekija, defined as the head of Licinius,<sup>9</sup> i.e. of Galerius or Licinius.<sup>10</sup>

Porphyry sculptures discovered in the imperial palaces belong to different types of figural compositions and have been discovered in different archaeological contexts.<sup>11</sup> A large number of partially preserved sculptures come from Galerius' fortified palace of *Felix Romuliana*, which is, according to its architectural decoration, a distinctive monument of the tetrarchic ideology.<sup>12</sup> Without doubt, the most important is the portrait of the emperor Galerius (293-311) (Fig. 7). Galerius' portrait, although showing the main characteristics of a tetrarchic portrait, horizontal wrinkles on the forehead and wide open eyes, gazing far into the distance, is characterised by softened and drooping facial features; it might be even said by its certain individuality. However, what distinguishes it most from other tetrarchic portraits is the insignia on his head. It is a combination of the triumphal crown (*corona triumphalis*) and the crown of imperial priests. On the crown, medallions designed for precious stones, symbols of a triumphal crown, alternate with busts of the tetrarchs, i.e. of the gods whose earthly representatives they are. Diocletian is represented as Jupiter, Maximianus Herculus as Heracles, to the left of Diocletian is Constantius Chlorus in a paludamentum, and to the left of Maximianus Herculus is Galerius in scale-armour (Fig. 8).<sup>13</sup> A crown with the busts of gods could only be worn by imperial priest, so this insignia defines Galerius as the supreme priest in the service of his divine family. This insignia also has a triumphal character, defined by the jewels in it and by the fact that Victoria is crowning the emperor with it. Only the fingers of the right hand of this goddess are preserved on the crown and fragmented parts of the body probably also belong to her: a wing, right hand and right foot (Fig. 9 a-b).

8 Kiss 1984, 95-97.

9 Срејовић 1959, 253-263.

10 Sydow 1969, 143; Bergmann 1977, 158, 166, 166-167; Kiss 1984, 96.

11 Popović 2017, 47-53; 72-74; 82-86.

12 Popović 2017, 67-73 (with quoted literature).

13 Sreјović 1994a, 47; Sreјović 1994b 151.



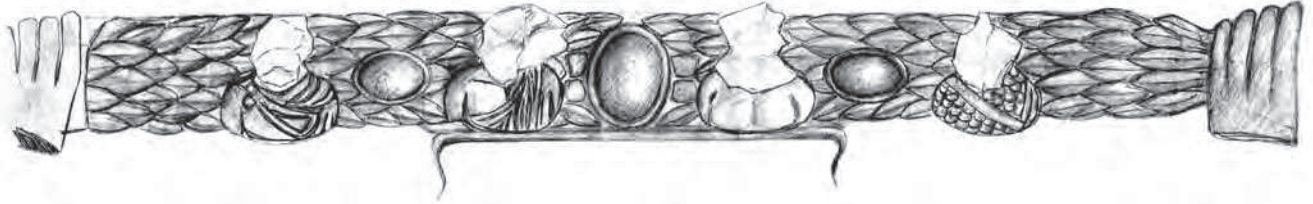


Fig. 8 - Insignia on the  
Galerius head,  
Gamzigrad -*Felix*  
*Romuliana*  
(drawing A. Premk)

The height of Galerius' head (34 cm) shows that the emperor's statue was of a larger than life size, i.e., if the sculpture was standing, the height would have been around 2.5 m. It is supposed on the basis of the corresponding dimensions that, besides the head, a porphyry hand of the left arm, in which there is the earthly globe, also belongs to that sculpture, (Fig. 10), so the colossal figure would represent Galerius as the cosmocrator. This is an iconographic solution that we also encounter on the representation of Diocletian in the temple of Amon, in Luxor,<sup>14</sup> and, later, in the representations of Constantine the Great, on coins<sup>15</sup> and on the colossal bronze statue from the Capitoline Museum.<sup>16</sup> According to the female hand on the wreath on Galerius' head, this emperor-cosmocrator is being crowned by Victoria. We could partly reconstruct the appearance of Galerius' statue on the basis of the description of one, regrettably destroyed, work of art. Namely, from the written sources we learn that a bronze statue of such an iconographic design was erected in honour of Galerius in the vestibulum of the palace in Antioch.<sup>17</sup> Although there is an opinion that this sculpture was made after AD 305, based on the supposition that only Augusti, and not Caesares, were allowed to be represented as cosmocrators,<sup>18</sup> we think that it was erected on the occasion of Galerius' victory over the Persian emperor Narses, at the end of 297, when, after the conquest of Armenia and the incursion into Mesopotamia, Diocletian

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14 La Rocca, 2000, 19, fig. 15; Del Bufalo 2012, 77, fig. 97.

15 Lo Cascio, 2000, 338, fig 1.

16 Ensoli, 2000, 71-81; Presicce, 2005, 139-155, fig. 12-13.

17 *Amm. Marc.*, XXV, 10, 13.

18 Seston, 1946, 182, note 4. But, the earthly globe can be also observed as a symbol of cosmic power of all the tetrarchs. After the opinion recently set forth, Galerius is wearing its image on his armor, in the scene of sacrifice on the frieze B I 17 from the triumphal arch in Thessalonica (Dušanić 1995, 85), which, in its turn, confirms that this symbol was in the artistic representations being connected with him when he was still Caesar.

Fig. 9 - Parts of Victoria's figure: a) wing; b) right arm, right foot (documentation of the National Museum, Zaječar)

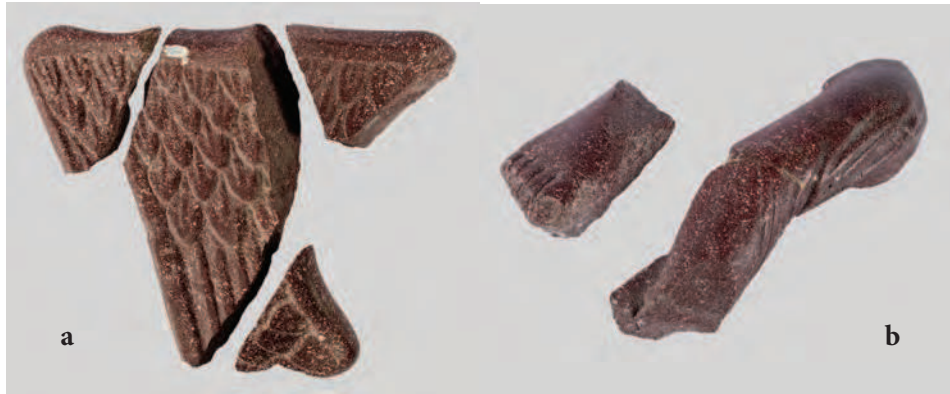


Fig. 10 - Left hand with globe, porphyry, Gamzigrad - *Felix Romuliana* (documentation of the National Museum, Zaječar)



organised for himself a triumphal welcome in Antioch.<sup>19</sup> It is possible that Galerius, inspired by that statue from Antioch, commissioned a porphyry sculpture, intending to place it in *Romuliana*, the place of his birth and in the future imperial complex where he intended to retire after the celebration of his *vicennalia*. However, that statue represents him not only as a cosmocrator and triumphator, but, according to the wreath on his head, also as the highest priest. Answers to the questions of when and on which occasion the statue conveying this complex message was erected, have to be sought in the analysis of the historical circumstances, and also of the ideological – propagandistic aspects of power at the time of the First Tetrarchy. Such an iconographic pattern could have been the result of Galerius' triumph over the Persians in 297 and of the impression that the luxury of Oriental courts and customs had on him, so it is not impossible that the statue was placed in Gamzigrad in the following year, i.e. in 298,<sup>20</sup> although the reason for that act could also have been the celebration of the triumph of the tetrarchs in Rome in 303.<sup>21</sup> However, there is an opinion that the sculpture of Galerius from Gamzigrad was part of a composition representing Victoria crowning two Augusti, a scene whose iconography is known from the coins minted in 293 in Cyzicus and Antioch,<sup>22</sup> and also from the pilaster on the eastern gate of the later fortress in Romuliana.<sup>23</sup> According to this theory, the porphyry group consisting of two Augusti and Victoria was erected in the period between 306 and 311, and represents Galerius to the right, and Severus or Licinius to the left of Victoria.<sup>24</sup> On the basis of the dimensions of the foot, which we assume belongs to Victoria, the height of her figure would be around 80 cm, which would fit into the dimensions of the supposed composition with the imperial figure of about 250 cm that she is crowning (Fig. 11). However, as only the wing, right foot and part of the right arm of Victoria's figure are preserved with the hand holding the back segment of the crown on Galerius' head, the position of her left arm could not be determined with any certainty, all the more so because the remains of another wreath and/

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19 Eutrop., IX, 25.

20 Popović 2007, 291.

21 Srejšović 1994a, 47; Srejšović 1994b, 152.

22 RIC V.2, 251, no 292; 290, no 601 (Cyzicus); 254, no 313, 291, no 615, 616 (Antioch).

23 Srejšović 1994b, 146, fig. 8-9; Laubscher 2000, 247, Abb. 25-26.

24 Laubscher 2000, 242-250.

Fig. 11 - Possible view of the scene Victoria crowning Galerius and Severus or Licinius (drawing B. Popović)



or of an imperial head with it have not yet been found. If this is a composition depicting two emperors being crowned by Victoria, which was erected in 298 or 303, then to the right of the goddess would have been a sculpture of Diocletian, while Galerius would have been to the left of the goddess. Although we find the second solution more probable, considering the symbolism of the insignia as a combination of the triumphal crown and the crown of the imperial priests – most often represented among finds from Asia Minor, and the circumstance that the triumph of Diocletian and Galerius over Narses was celebrated in Antioch, the fact that Victoria is holding the crown on Galerius' head in her right hand, does not speak in favour of such a solution.

The fortified palace and the memorial complex in Šarkamen, at the site of Vrelo, can, most probably, be linked with Maximinus Daia, Galerius' nephew, who wished to build a residential and sacral complex in this place like the one in *Romuliana*.<sup>25</sup> Fragments of a porphyry figural composition have been found at this site on a few occasions. The sculpture could be relatively well reconstructed (Fig. 13), because parts of the pedestal, parts of lateral sides of the throne, and parts of the body of the sitting figure were found (Fig. 12 a-g).<sup>26</sup> It has become clear that these are parts of a sculpture of the *Emperor on the throne* type and also to the same type belongs the sculpture from Alexandria that was allegedly representing Diocletian.<sup>27</sup> The lateral sides of the throne of both sculptures were decorated with the ellipsoid and rectangular fields, modelled in relief, imitations of sockets for gems and cameos. This system of decoration, enriched with the addition of rhomboid sockets, also appears on the edges of the cloak of the Šarkamen sculpture. Similar motifs also appear on other similar tetrarchical monuments, such as a fragmented belt (?) from *Sirmium*<sup>28</sup>.

Finds of porphyry sculptures from *Sirmium* shed new light on the ideological-propagandistic system of the age of the Tetrarchy. In the course of archaeological excavations of the northern section (on site 85) of the palatial complex in *Sirmium* that started in 2002, fragments of porphyry were sporadically registered in 2004 and 2005, making it entirely clear, with the find of a fragment of a skull

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25 Popović 2017, 80-83 (with quoted literature).

26 Јанковић 1981, 88-92, сл. 4.

27 Delbrueck 1932, 96-98, Taf. 40-41; Del Bufalo 2012, no S 42.

28 Popović 2016, 380, cat. 8; Popović 2017, 126, cat. 8.

Fig. 12 - Sculpture of the type Emperor on the throne, fragmented, porphyry, Šarkamen: a-d) parts of the left lateral side of the throne – back leg and lateral surface; e) part of the sculpture next to the left ankle consisting of a pedestal for the feet and of the cloak edge; f) left foot of the figure; g) part of the shoulder in a cloak (documentation of the Museum of Krajna, Negotin)





Fig. 12 - Sculpture of the type Emperor on the throne, fragmented, porphyry, Šarkamen: a-d) parts of the left lateral side of the throne – back leg and lateral surface; e) part of the sculpture next to the left ankle consisting of a pedestal for the feet and of the cloak edge; f) left foot of the figure; g) part of the shoulder in a cloak (documentation of the Museum of Krajna, Negotin)

with an auricle in 2012, that a porphyry sculpture or a figural composition is in question. The exceptional finds of the head and the bust on a globe, registered in 2014, have confirmed that a complex porphyry composition is in question. The porphyry fragments were found around an octagonal structure, the marble bases of four columns of which were also registered (Fig. 14). After the conservation of 50 porphyry fragments, it was concluded that there are parts of three heads, one bust on a globe and another bust, probably identical but fragmented, fragments of sculpture and of the architectural composition. Two fragmented heads were imperial portraits (Figs. 15, 16) and one belongs to an Egyptian priest (Fig. 17). The analysis of the fragments of porphyry sculptures from *Sirmium* has confirmed that they were made in different periods, representing at least two archaeological horizons. The first one is related to the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> – the first years of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. to the rule of Diocletian and his Caesar Galerius (fragmented head of the emperor, Fig. 15), while the other one, from the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, belongs to the reign of Constantius II (fragmented head with a diadem in the hair, Fig. 16). It is difficult to draw a conclusion as to when the head of the Egyptian priest (Fig. 17) was made. The most interesting sculptures in this find are the busts of emperors on a globe. A preserved bust of an emperor on a globe (Fig. 18) was placed on an ellipsoid pedestal with a protrusion for fixing the globe to it, which was fitted into a square opening at the base of the globe. The bust is depicted in armour, with a cloak thrown over it, folded around the neck and clasped with a fibula on the right shoulder. Only one bulb of the fibula is preserved. We can draw the conclusion, based on this, that it belongs to the early variant of bulbous fibulae with a poorly developed bulb, of the type Keller 1 / Pröttel 1 A, dated to the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup>

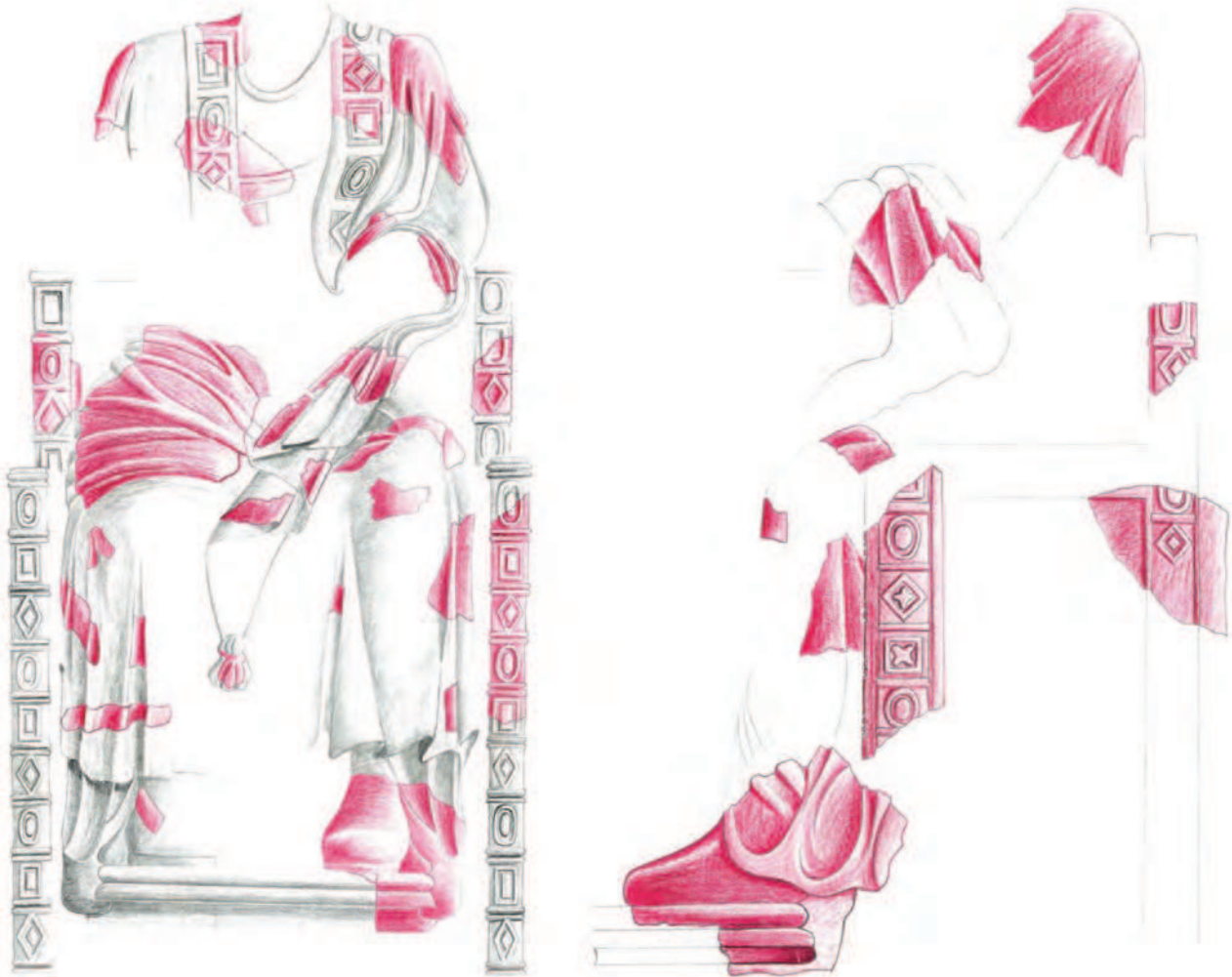


Fig. 13 - Reconstruction of view of the statue of the type Emperor on the throne, Šarkamen (drawing by A. Kapuran)

– the very beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>29</sup> Of great importance for the chronological determination of the busts and for their possible identification could be the representation on the single preserved medallion on pilaster A (Fig. 19), the architectural ornament of the eastern gate of the later fortress in Gamzigrad (*Romuliana*), depicted in the form of a military standard (*signum*). In three out of five round medallions which create this military standard there are two busts in each: of two

<sup>29</sup> Keller 1971, 32-35, fig. 11; Pröttel 1991, 349-353, Fig. 1 A.



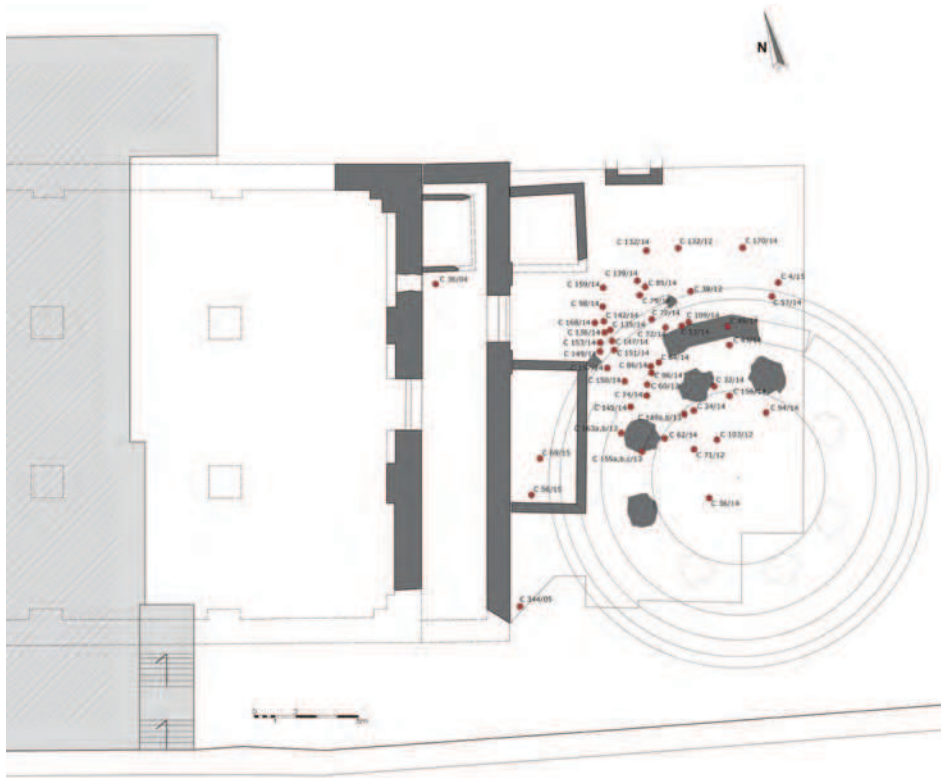


Fig. 14 - Octagonal building and finds of porphyry fragments, Sremska Mitrovica-Sirmium, northern part of palatial complex (plan by B. Popović)

Augusti – Galerius and Constantius Chlorus, two Caesares – Severus and Maximianus Daia, and of two older Augusti – Diocletian and Maximianus Herculus. They withdrew from their positions in 305 but they had the title *seniores Augusti*. This dates the erection of the pilasters in Gamzigrad to the period between their abdication on the Calendae of May 305 and the death of Constantius Chlorus in July 306. Their busts, represented in the lower medallion of this pilaster, were placed on a globe, bearing witness to the fact that even the porphyry busts depicted in such a way had a strong dynastic message. The imperial bust on a globe from Sirmium is from the same period or from a somewhat earlier time, when Diocletian and Maximianus Herculus were the ruling Augusti (293-305).<sup>30</sup>

Production of porphyry sculptures was in decline after the collapse of the second Tetrarchy. But herms with the figures of Constantine and Licinius (Fig. 20) could have been placed before July 25<sup>th</sup> of the 315, in Constantine's native city,



Fig. 15 - Head of a tetrarch, fragmented, porphyry, Sremska Mitrovica-Sirmium, northern part of palatial complex (documentation of the Institute of Archaeology Belgrade)

<sup>30</sup> Popović 2016, 371-390; Popović 2017, 49-67.



Fig. 16 - Head of an emperor (Constantius II?), fragmented, porphyry, Sremska Mitrovica-Sirmium, northern part of palatial complex (documentation of the Institute of Archaeology Belgrade)

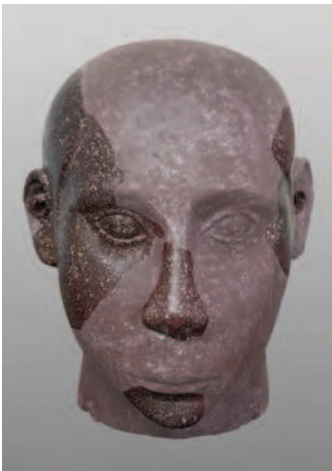


Fig. 17 - Head of an Egyptian priest, restored, porphyry, Sremska Mitrovica-Sirmium, northern part of palatial complex (documentation of the Institute of Archaeology Belgrade)

*Naissus*, which was in Licinius' part of the Empire. This monument was intended to glorify the idea of the rule of these two emperors, i.e. of the Diarchy, and, at the same time, it would also mark Constantine's *decennalia*.<sup>31</sup>

During Constantine's autonomous rule, a bronze sculpture of him was erected in *Naissus* and the head of that sculpture is regarded as one of the masterpieces of the Late Roman art (Fig. 21). This bronze portrait depicts a young, energetic man crowned with an imperial diadem (*corona gemata*), the image of an emperor in triumph. The life-size portrait of an unpretentious man with open and expressive features reveals military strength, wisdom, power and invincibility, but it also conveys a reticence, which demands respect, as well as displaying the image of a visionary. The imperial diadem determines the time when the portrait was made to the period between the years 324 and 330, according to analogies on coins from the eastern mints. The portrait defines the image of an emperor of a new world monarchy.<sup>32</sup>

Conflicts with barbarians on the Danube Limes did not stop, even during Constantine's reign. Evidence of that is the magnificent cameo made of multi-layered onyx found in the village of Kusadak, near Mladenovac, around 55 kilometres to the southeast of the modern city of Belgrade, i.e. in the Limes region (Fig. 22). The dominant scene on the Kusadak cameo is the figure of a horseman in triumph that, by its pathos based on the expressionism of the Hellenistic epoch, clearly resembles the image of the heroic king Alexander the Great on the large mosaic from Casa del Fauno in Pompeii.<sup>33</sup> The analysis of the representation on the Kusadak cameo reveals that all the iconographic motifs of the relief – the emperor with a diadem as Alexander, the emperor on horseback as Sol-Helios-Alexander, the emperor as an equestrian, warrior-like Trajan i.e. Alexander, the enslaved barbarians under the horse's hooves, and the barbarians with hands tied behind their back – had been used on various monuments of Constantine's epoch, although carried over from earlier epochs. They are not mere decorative elements, but have a strong political – propagandistic message. Scenes from the civil war against Licinius in 324 were not depicted on the cameo, but there were scenes from battles with barbarians, probably Goths and Sarmatians, in which Constantine triumphed in 322 and 323,

<sup>31</sup> Vasić 2001, 245-251.

<sup>32</sup> Delbrück 1912, 121; L'Orange 1933, 64; Weitzman 1979, 16-18, cat. 10; Kondić 2013, 300, cat. 47. Cvjetičanin 2017, 198-201.

<sup>33</sup> Weitzman 1979, 83, cat. 71; Kondić 2013, 301, cat. 46; Cvjetičanin 2017, 202-203.



Fig. 18 - Bust of an emperor on a globe with a pedestal, porphyry, Sremska Mitrovica-Sirmium, northern part of palatial complex (documentation of the Institute of Archaeology Belgrade)

obviously in accordance with the idea of an emperor as the protector of the state from enemies.<sup>34</sup>

A short survey of monuments of art from the Serbian section of the Limes and its hinterland clearly shows that this region was of exceptional importance, not only for the defence of the Empire but also for the consolidation of the official imperial propaganda. These ideas were demonstrated in various ways in different time periods. Imperial portraits from the time before the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century discovered so far had been located in the military camps and civil settlements next

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<sup>34</sup> Popović 2005, 435-446.



Fig. 19 - Representation on a medallion on pilaster A: Diocletian and Maximianus Herculus as seniores augustii, Gamzigrad -Felix Romuliana (documentation of the Institute of Archaeology Belgrade)



Fig. 20 - Portrait of a diarch, porphyry, Niš - Naissus (documentation of the National Museum Niš)

to the camps. The situation changed after Diocletian established a new ideological and political system – the Tetrarchy. Despite the fact that this emperor built a series of fortifications along the right bank of the Danube in the Pannonian section of the Limes and also visited garrisons situated in the lower Danube valley,<sup>35</sup> imperial sculptures and busts made of porphyry are missing in the military camps and they were erected within the imperial palaces (Fig. 23). This was in accordance with the state policy of the tetrarchic period. The large number of porphyry sculptures found in the territory of present day Serbia reveals the importance of the territory from a strategic-propagandistic point of view. Nevertheless, despite being situated within palatial complexes, these sculptures were erected at exceptionally important strategic locations. *Sirmium* was a military base and from there Diocletian and his Caesar Galerius waged wars against the barbarians.<sup>36</sup> The military presence at *Romuliana* was confirmed at the very end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and, after that, at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> century by the finds from graves outside the fortified palace,<sup>37</sup> while many military units (*cohortes I Cretum; I Aurelia Dardanorum*) were stationed in *Naissus* and there was also a workshop for the production of weaponry and military equipment.<sup>38</sup> The presence of the army and the activities connected with its actions resulted in economic progress and this was the basis for the development of artisan activities and, consequently, for the creation of the works of art of political and propagandistic character.

*Translated by Aleksandar Popović*

35 Seston 1946, 297.

36 Popović 2017, 33-35.

37 Petković 2009, 251-275; Popović 2010, 317- 326.

38 Vasić 2013, 91-93.



Fig. 21 – Portrait of Constantine the Great, bronze, Niš-*Naissus* (documentation of the National Museum in Belgrade)

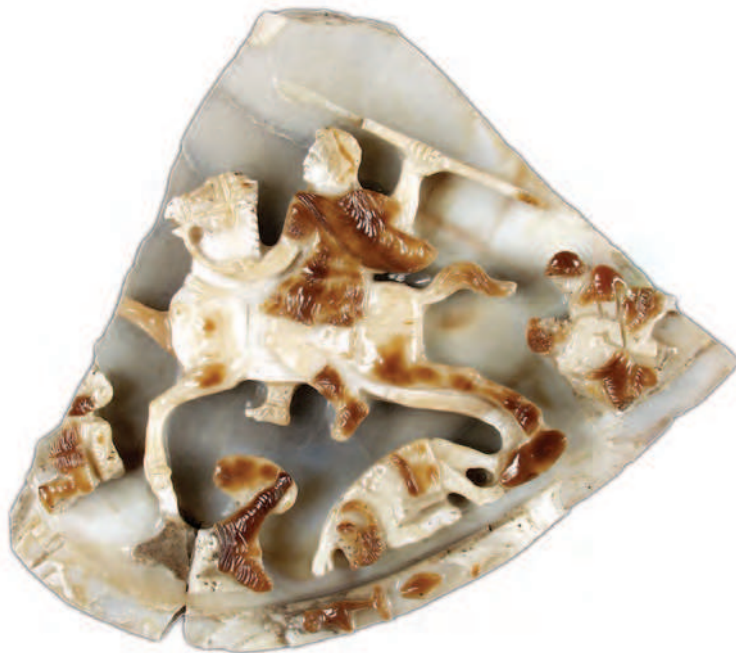


Fig. 22 – Cameo from Kusadak, multi-coloured sardonyx (documentation of the National Museum in Belgrade)



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