

# THE *GRADUS DESCENSIONIS* IN THE PRESBYTERY OF ST LAWRENCE'S CATHEDRAL IN TROGIR

VANJA KOVAČIĆ

UDC: 726.591(1-22)“04/14”  
-93“04/14”

Original scientific paper

Manuscript received: 05. 03. 2008.

Revised manuscript accepted: 04. 04. 2008.

V. Kovačić

Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia

Conservation Department in Split

Porinova 2

21000 Split, Croatia

*During the conservation treatment of the ciborium and while the high altar in St Lawrence's Cathedral in Trogir was being put in order, in the north, a squarish opening was found from which there is a vertical drop to some steps. A flight of five steps leads to a narrow corridor that angles off like a labyrinth below the altar of the cathedral. This installation must have belonged to an Early Christian church, and derived its shape from the pattern of the original tombs of the Roman martyrs, to which underground passages led. The Early Christian church under the auspices of which the Romanesque church in Trogir was built during the time of peace that prevailed in the province in the first part of the fifth century, when the ecclesiastical centre of Salona and churches throughout the metropolitan see were renewed. The relics of St Lawrence were probably deposited in the Trogir confessio at the time of the great renovator of the churches in Dalmatia, Hesychius, bishop of Salona, and after the triumphant campaign of the Augusta, Galla Placidia, who re-established the continuity of the Theodosian dynasty in Ravenna.*

Trogir came into being on a small island between the mainland and the island of Ciovo. It was built in late Hellenism and has to this day preserved its original orthogonal urban layout, while from its origins to the early fifteenth century it was several times girt with defensive city walls. In the sources of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages it is mentioned as a *civitas*, although it did not at that time have the status of a diocesan see. In the northeast quarter alongside the main city square is the Romanesque Cathedral of St Lawrence (Lovro), with a nave and two aisles, and in the southeast corner is the

Romanesque church of St John the Baptist, alongside which was once a Benedictine monastery (fig. 1). The apsidal ends of both churches are on the edges of the settlement, while with their front elevations they correspond with the two lateral cardos.

The most recent investigations in the cathedral have revealed elements of the way the chancel is organised underneath the high altar, as well as the uncommon form of the *confessio*, in which the relics of the cathedral's titular saint were formerly deposited.<sup>1</sup> On the northern side of the dais of



Fig. 1 Aerial photograph of the historical core of Trogir with St Lawrence's Cathedral in the north east and the Church of St John the Baptist in the south east



Fig. 2 View onto the chancel of Trogir Cathedral with ciborium

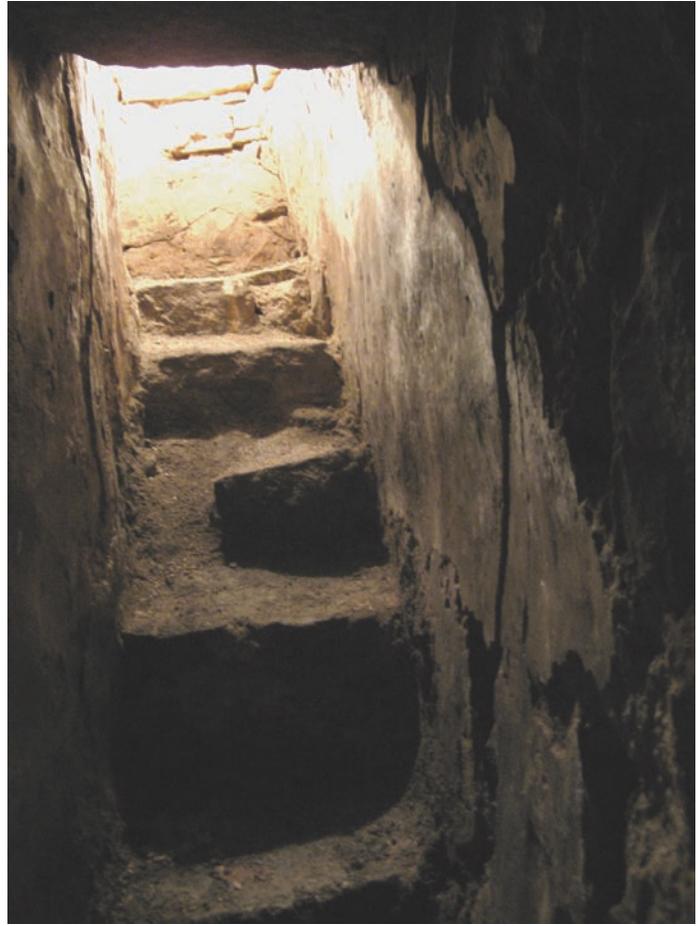


Fig. 3 Entrance arm of the confessio with steps

the ciborium (fig. 2), a square opening precisely covered by a slab was found, leading, vertically, like a well, to some steps. A flight of six steps lead to a narrow corridor that angles twice below the altar (fig. 3). The corridor is covered with solid stone slabs, and the walls are plastered with a light reddish mortar. The western arm of the corridor ends with the smooth face of a plastered wall, and on the southern side there are two inbuilt niches, one over the other, with a sharp edge that shows the trace of a stone lattice that was once built in here (fig. 4-7). In several places parts of a transenna of white and grey marble with a scale (*squamae*) motif were found; they probably once closed off the niche for the relics (fig. 8).

Below the Baroque altar at a depth of about 1 m from the paving of the chancel, on a thick layer of mortar and packed earth, marble tiles in the form of triangles, rhomboids, and rectangles were found (fig. 9). They once belonged to the paving of the old presbytery decorated in the *opus sectile* technique (fig. 10).<sup>2</sup> Under the layer with marble tiles, a compact layer of soil with pieces of mortar, fragments of frescoes, pottery, and a section of a small marble column were found. On the white ground a ribbon-shaped motif ending in an eye was painted in brown-yellow paint; on a second fragment there were red and white stripes (fig. 11).

The installation below the chancel must have belonged to an Early Christian church and was shaped on the model of the authentic graves of the Roman martyrs, which were reached by underground corridors. The Trogir *gradus descensionis*, then, symbolically reproduces the descent into the grave. The corridor beneath the altar of the Trogir cathedral, with its modest dimensions, allows only the privileged portion of the clergy access to the venerable relics, while some kind of *fenestella*, which according to analogy we can suppose to

have been on the altar, enabled the congregation to have contact with the relics of the saint.

At the very beginning of the fifth century in the catacombs under the great Roman Basilica of St Lawrence, there is mention of a tomb *ad mensam martyris Laurentii descenditibus in crypta parte dextra de fossore*.<sup>3</sup> This is the germ of the origin of later crypts that, apart from the tomb chambers, also had an entry passage and a place for interments around the tomb of the martyr. As early as the time of Constantine, architects had to solve the problem of how to place a church of basilical form on top of a grave that was deep below the surface. In the churches of Rome there is a clear link between the body of the saint and the Eucharistic table, which was to become a constant in all the basilicas of the martyrs in western lands. While in the West there was a liturgical cult over the tombs of the saints and martyrs, in the East the churches of the martyrs consecrated to Christ were raised on the holy sites of theophanies. The corridor of the crypt in the Constantinian church of Eleona on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem is disposed in a way similar to that of the Church of St Lawrence in Rome.<sup>4</sup> Although they show architectural similarities, particularly in the long corridors with steps that go towards subterranean chambers, in the Holy Land the churches were created on sites of some powerful Christian tradition and not over the body of some apostle or martyr. They were rather related to the life of Jesus, from the Nativity to Calvary and the Ascension, and to the life of Mary, from the Annunciation to the Church of the *Dormitio Virginis* on Sion and the Basilica of the Assumption on the Mount of Olives.<sup>5</sup> In the cave of the martyrdom of the Egyptian martyr St Menas, the descent into the crypt through a door on the outside of the northern nave was via a lateral staircase to a cubicle with



*Fig. 4 Northern arm of the confessio covered with slabs of bituminous limestone*



*Fig. 5 Part of the corridor of the confessio covered with stone slabs*



*Fig. 6 Western arm of the confessio with broken slab*



*Fig. 7 Details of niche for sacred relics in the confessio of Trogir Cathedral*



Fig. 8 Fragments of marble transenna



Fig. 11 Fragments of fresco painting

the tomb of the martyr, accompanied radially on the western side by the tombs of the congregation cut into the rock.<sup>6</sup>

In the Trogir cathedral, there is no authentic crypt; rather, this is a corridor below the presbytery, a miniature installation with an angled ground plan for access to the sacred relics of the martyr (fig. 12). The *confessio* was surely not accessible in this way to the ordinary members of the congregation, but only to select clerics on special occasions. Only in medieval architectural solutions did a crypt in the true sense of the word develop, with a direct entrance into the axis of the church and an *introitus ad sanctum* that led into a wider space under the apse.

Because of later reconstructions of the Trogir cathedral, the appearance of the Early Christian chancel that was placed over the underground passage was totally destroyed. Although the continuity of the cult site with the altar directly over the *confessio* covered by a medieval altar ciborium was



Fig. 9 Excavation area under the high altar with fragments of marble paving and large stone slabs over the confessio



Fig. 10 Parts of marble paving

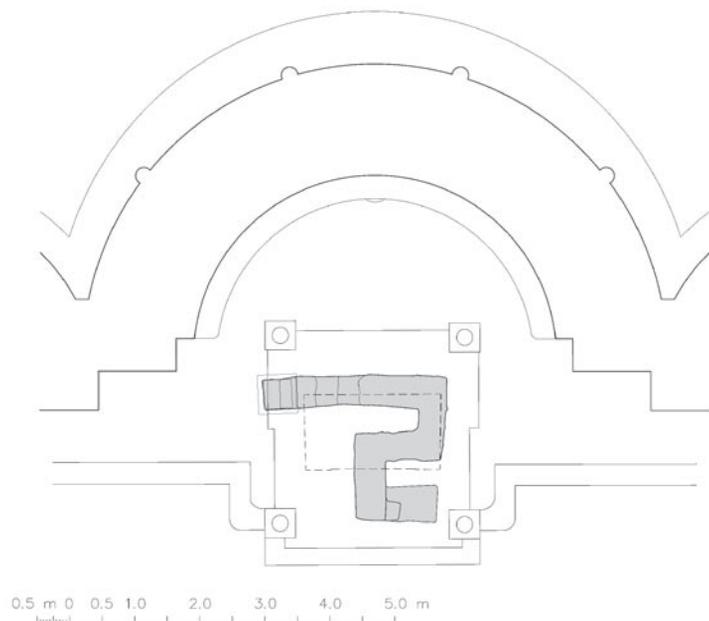


Fig. 12 Ground plan of the confessio

preserved (fig. 13), it is only possible to speculate about the actual appearance of the Early Christian presbytery. From the very small fragments of the marble paving and the altar

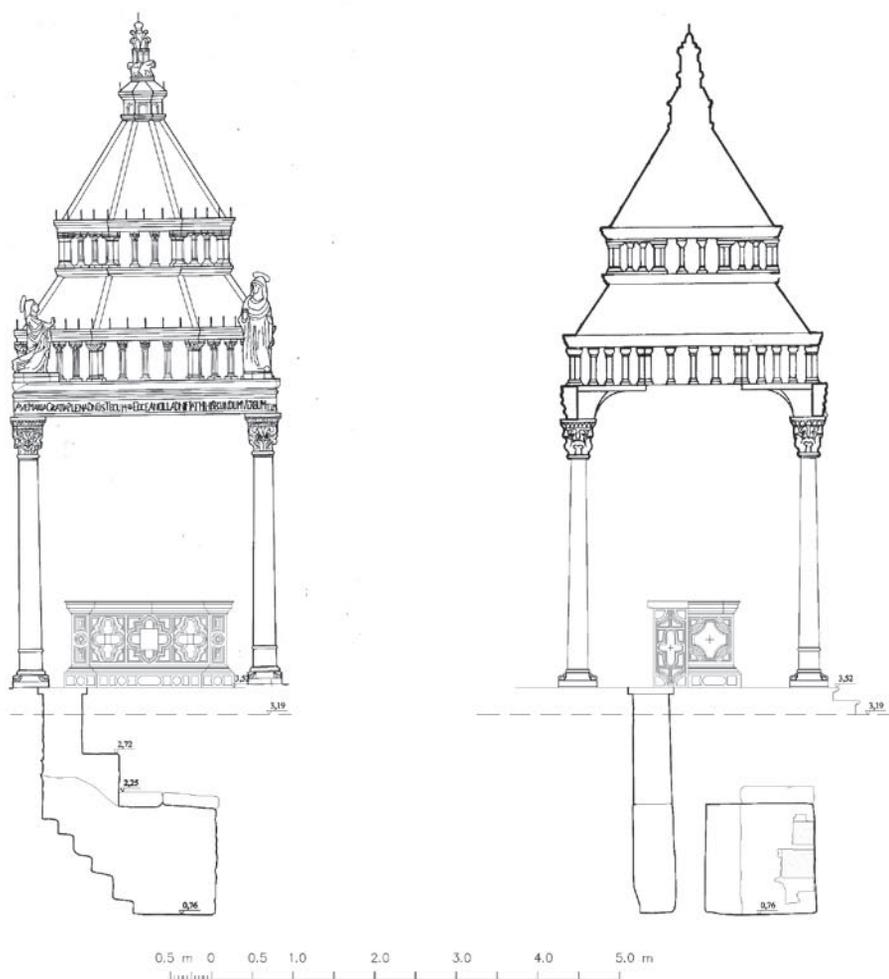


Fig. 13 Transverse section through the chancel with the confessio

transenna, we can assume that in the altar there was once a *fenestella* affording contact with the holy relics, and that the richly decorated chancel must have been enclosed with altar rails. The Trogir form of the grave under the altar links the pseudo-crypt element and the *confessio*, because the descent down the corridor on the northern side that, like a labyrinth, arrives at the niche for the reliquary, is reminiscent of the ancient *hypogee*, the Roman catacombs and the caves of Palestine that symbolically imitate *anditus* as a transition to the grave of the martyr. The place under the altar with the relics of the martyr was the martyrium, which was often cross shaped, and had a niche where a casket containing the relics of the martyr would be kept. In the monumental Basilica of St Demetrius in Salonica is a glass phial containing the precious blood of the martyr, and in the eastern Balkan region specially constructed funeral crypts of reduced dimensions (internal martyrium), with an arm in which there are steps, have been found. In Tropaeum Traiani (Scythia minor) in the basilica cistern (Basilica C) there is a small depot for reliquaries with steps in the southern arm; in the basilica with the transept (Basilica D) on the southern side of the crypt there are steps, and in the eastern wall there is a niche for relics; while in Basilica A there is a large crypt with an inscription about the construction of the church in the second half of the fifth century.<sup>7</sup>

In the Early Christian churches of the island of Brač we can find cruciform *confessio* with steps and a niche for relics like those in Povlja and Lovrečina, while in the Postira basilica there is an L-shaped *confessio* with an asymmetrical arm for the steps. In Salona, the Early Christian basilica at

the site Šuplja Crkva has a *confessio* in the form of a Latin cross with lateral *aediculae* for relics and marble panelling in the interior. In Sepen Bay near Omišalj on Krk island a cruciform *confessio* has been discovered, the western arm of which contains stairs, while the other arms of the cross were for relics.<sup>8</sup>

It was possible to enter the Trogir pseudo-crypt until the eighteenth century, at which time, during the construction of the late Baroque altar, one more stone step along the line of the base of the ciborium was added, which once and for all covered the stone slab over the entry into the underground corridor.<sup>9</sup>



Fig. 14 Early Christian apse behind the Romanesque Church of St John the Baptist in Trogir

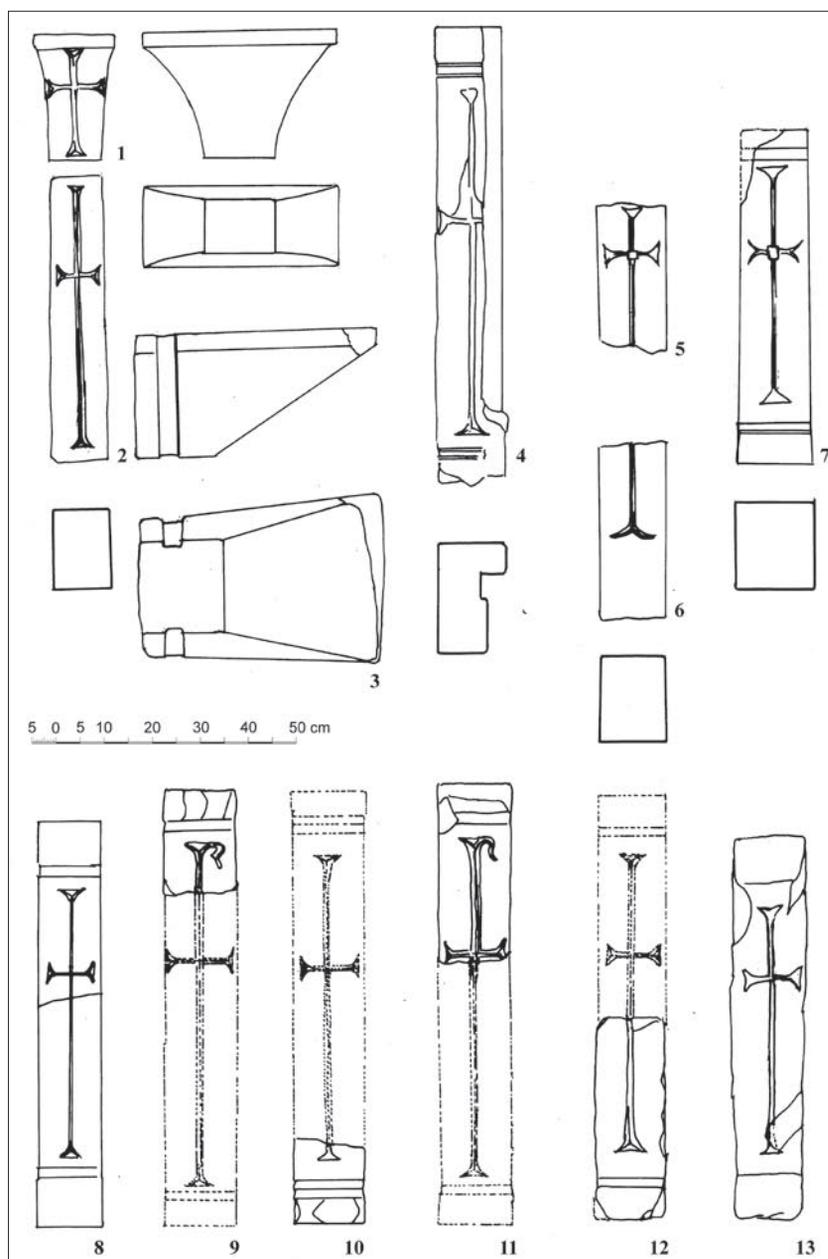


Fig. 15 Pilasters of Early Christian windows and imposts from Trogir: church of St Nicholas (1), St Sebastian's church (2, 6), St Lawrence's cathedral (3), the Island of Fumija (4), St Mary's church (5), Berislavić palace (7), St Barbara's church (8, 9, 10), church of St John the Baptist (11), Statileo-Statilić palace (12), house in Ribarska street (13)

Recent researchers of Trogir's urban development have put forward the hypothesis that the cathedral retained the continuity of a cult site on the foundations of an Early Christian church, although their research has not provided any trustworthy archaeological evidence for this idea. We should mention that excavation alongside the apse of Trogir Cathedral did not reliably confirm the typology of an Early Christian church,<sup>10</sup> for below the stone bench that follows the main apse and the two side apses along the external side, the wall drops down to about 2.90 m below the level of the outside pavement. The narrow curve and the form of the apse as well as the structure of the building do not fit in with the morphology of Late Antique churches, and three apses were not common in the Salona circle. These apses are usually deep, with the centre of the circle to the east of the triumphal arch, while the projection of the centre of the arch falls on the *loculus*. Hence we believe that the wall discovered below today's apses on the outer side of the church is in fact



Fig. 16 Early Christian window mullion with capital from Trogir Municipal museum

the foundation wall of the Romanesque cathedral. The broad semicircular apse of an Early Christian church found at the rear of the Benedictine church of St John the Baptist showed that there are two dominant strata in monumental religious architecture – Early Christian and the Romanesque (fig. 14).<sup>11</sup> The discovery of an Early Christian *confessio* in the cathedral has shown the same complexity in the building: the monumental Romanesque cathedral has preserved under its altar the most precious part of the Early Christian church.

The cemetery basilica lay on the mainland part of Trogir in the area called Travarica, partially covered by today's road.<sup>12</sup> It had a semicircular apse with a *subsellia*, and we hypothesise that several priests took part in the liturgy, probably saying prayers for the deceased. The floor was covered with *tesserae* of white mosaic, and the church dates to the fifth and sixth centuries. To the north

of the apse, two sarcophagi with smooth lids have been found, not far away from part of a casket with a *crux quadrata* and a lid. According to the presumption of Don Frane Bulić, it is from this Early Christian cemetery that the inscriptions on sarcophagi dating to the first half of the fifth century derive; they were found in secondary use in the precinct of the cathedral and the Church of St John. The apse of the Trogir cemetery basilica had a diameter of 7.8 m, which would have been in line with most of the Salona churches, which varied from seven to eight metres, while only the Salona cathedral had a much bigger span in the chancel. The Early Christian apse below the Benedictine Church of St John had a somewhat smaller span of 6.4 metres in diameter. For the present, it is not possible to determine whether burial took place exclusively alongside the cemetery basilica at Travarica or whether some of the deceased had wished to be interred *ad sanctus* in the cathedral. Inside the city we can find Late Roman graves "a pozzetto" like that in the ground floor of the

Garagnin-Fanfogna Palace (today Trogir Municipal Museum), in which a Justinian *decanumia* has been found.<sup>13</sup>

The earlier described *confessio* has at its end a loculus for relics that is not in the axis of today's cathedral, but located somewhat more to the south. Hence future research should show whether between the Early Christian church and the Romanesque cathedral some slippage of the longitudinal axis occurred, or in other words to what extent apart from the continuity of the chancel the other parts of the architecture overlap.

During archaeological investigations of the urban nucleus of Trogir, particularly on religious premises, several small columns with incised crosses have been found (11), as well

as capital impost slabs that had belonged to the windows of the nave of some Early Christian basilica and also a granite double pillar with a foliated capital from some monumental two-mullioned window (fig. 15-16).<sup>14</sup>

In the interior of the main apse of the cathedral in the centre of the Romanesque *subsella*, an acanthus capital is incorporated as the foundation stone for the *cathedra*. It has not been noted to date, although the bench on the front side decorated with Romanesque blind arcades and interrupted in the central part was subsequently panelled with wood. In Trogir, Corinthian capitals with acanthus leaves were frequently used in later periods (fig. 17). In the construction of the Romanesque loggia on the main square, ancient columns



Fig. 17 Different types of acanthus capital found in Trogir: in the *subsella* of the Cathedral, in the Romanesque loggia, in the Church of St Barbara, on the western door of Church of St Mary, in the lapidarium of Trogir Municipal museum

with some Roman capitals were used; similar capitals were used in the Church of St Barbara, as well as on the western doors that lead from the pre-Romanesque Church of St Mary to the Church of St Sebastian. In the lapidarium of the Trogir Municipal Museum two such capitals from unknown sites are to be found (inv. no. 663 and 664).

Similar Corinthian capitals of the Asian type from the last decades of the third century and first decades of the fourth are to be found in Diocletian's Palace in Split, as well as in the Temple of Jupiter that the emperor renovated in Salona in the new, eastern part of the city.<sup>15</sup> The marble elements of the ancient buildings, the bearing columns, and the decorated capitals were highly valued materials in the building of the Christian basilicas in the province, and they can be seen in Salona churches and in other coastal centres. All the structural elements mentioned – the capitals of the arcades and the pilasters of the two-mullioned windows with impost capitals – suggest the possibility that the Early Christian church below today's cathedral was of the basilica type.

The cult of St Lawrence, the titular saint of Trogir's cathedral, who suffered a martyr's death while he was a young deacon in Rome, was extremely popular during the fourth and fifth centuries, and is listed in the Canon of the Mass among the original lists of saints.<sup>16</sup> During the pontificate of Pope Sylvester I, Emperor Constantine built a basilica over the saint's grave in a crypt in the Via Tiburtina in Verano. As *Liber Pontificalis* has it: *Eodem tempore fecit basilicam beato Laurentio martyri via Tiburtina in agrum Veranum supra arenario crypte et usque ad corpus sancti Laurenti martyris fecit gradus ascensionis et descensionis. In quo loco construxit absidam et exornavit marmoribus purphyreticus et desuper loci conclusit de argento et cancellos de argento purissimo ornavit, qui pens. Lib. I...* The triumphal risen saint is seen also on medals under a baldachin over an open grave enclosed with silver latticework as the martyr's grave was disposed in Verano during the time of Sylvester I and once again during the time of Sixtus III. In the 430s, the *confessio* over the grave of St Lawrence was renovated, a silver statue of the saint was placed in an aedicule with porphyry pillars closed with partitions of solid silver.<sup>17</sup>

Soon after Emperor Theodosius I left Constantinople in 389 and arrived in Mediolanum, work started on the building of a great imperial residence with a monumental palatine church that had a central ground plan in the form of a double shell and an eastern martyrium of octagonal form containing the relics of St Lawrence. Later, the eastern chapel was dedicated to St Hyppolitus the Martyr, the soldier whom St Lawrence had baptised in the prison cell, and who underwent martyrdom immediately after the Roman deacon; the northern chapel is dedicated to Pope St Sixtus, who was tortured immediately before St Lawrence. Theodosius I was from Spain, as was St Lawrence, which is why the imperial family particularly revered this saint and adopted him as the patron of the Theodosian dynasty. Another promoter of the St Lawrence cult was Pope Damasus I, in the second half of the fourth century; Lawrence was the only saint, apart from the Apostles, to have a vigil on the eve of his feast day, in Rome and Milan.<sup>18</sup>

During the fifth century the cult of St Lawrence was extremely widespread in the Milan diocese, and numerous churches were dedicated to him, in conjunction with St Sixtus and St Hyppolitus. The origin of the cult in Milan is confirmed by the construction of a Church of St Lawrence in Florence,

consecrated in 393 by Bishop Ambrose of Milan.<sup>19</sup> After the incursions into Italy by the Visigoths, Honorius withdrew from Milan to Ravenna in 402, and, forced into making an alliance with Ataulf, the heir of Alaric, gave him his sister Galla Placidia as his wife. Because of a conflict with her brother Honorius, in 423 Galla Placidia and her son Valentinian III had to leave Italy, but on the way to Constantinople they endured a shipwreck and a miraculous rescue. Returning by the land route, they entered Salona with an army and spent some time in Diocletian's Palace, the imperial estate in Split.

In Salona, the Augusta and her son, the future emperor of the Western Roman Empire, were ceremoniously greeted by Bishop Hesychius *cum clero et populo*. It was at the time of that respected bishop that the renovation of the cathedral in Salona was completed, the episcopal complex was renewed, and the defensive city walls were completely reconstructed after the Theodosian dynasty had once again taken control in the West, as witnessed by inscriptions dated to Theodosius II and Valentinian III, which once decorated the city walls.<sup>20</sup>

Returning to Ravenna the Empress, in fulfilment of a vow, commissioned the Church of St John the Evangelist (426-430) and the great Basilica of the Holy Cross. On the southern side of the narthex stands a cruciform chapel dedicated to the Roman martyr, also called the Galla Placidia Mausoleum. In the lunette is a monumental depiction of St Lawrence with a cross on his shoulder, by him a glowing griddle, the attribute of his martyrdom, and a cupboard with the gospels that he kept as papal treasurer. At that time, members of the faith would return from pilgrimages to Rome with consecrated mementoes like medals depicting the triumphal resurrection of St Lawrence or ivory caskets for relics with depictions of visits to the great Roman martyria such as found in Samagher by Pula (today in the Archaeological Museum in Venice, Inv. Avory 279).<sup>21</sup>

Galla Placidia continued with construction adjacent to the palatine Church of St Lawrence that her father had built in Milan. Between 423 and 450 she added an octagonal imperial mausoleum later dedicated to St Aquilinus to the south of the monumental quatrefoil.

At the beginning of the fifth century, things in Dalmatia calmed down after the inroads of the Visigoths and the barbarians. During the time of Bishop Hesychius, who completed the magnificent cathedral of Salona (*Nova post vetera*) the organisation of the metropolitan see was carried out and church discipline was reaffirmed. The bishop was in correspondence with St John Chrysostom, former bishop of Constantinople, who from his exile in Cappadocia sent an appeal to him on behalf of the persecuted church of the East. Particularly important are the letters that Hesychius sent to Pope Zosimus in connection with the organisation of the metropolitan see.<sup>22</sup> This pope, as well as several of his heirs, is buried at the grave of St Lawrence in Rome, who, like Leo the Great (440-461), called him a martyr of the same level as the apostolic leaders St Peter and St Paul.<sup>23</sup>

The cult of St Lawrence the Martyr was widespread on the Adriatic coast, and it was probably soon after Trogir that the churches in Stobreč and Lovrečina on Brač were dedicated to him. St Lawrence is the titular saint of the Early Christian church in Stobreč, the former Hellenistic colony of Epetion, which had all the natural and historical preconditions to become an important settlement but which, in the shadow of nearby Salona and then Split, did not achieve anything like the brilliant rise and fame of Trogir, turning instead into a purely rural settlement.<sup>24</sup>



Fig. 18 The well in the Trogir Cathedral and inscription over the grave of St John Bishop of Trogir – *Corpus Divi Joannis hic inventum*

The first mention of a church dedicated to St Lawrence in Trogir is a transcript of the will of Quirinus, the primate of Salona, whose predecessors erected this church. In the transcript of the document of 503, Quirinus of Salona states that he has renovated *Ecclesia beati Laurentii martiris* in Trogir, which was in ruins, and in his will furnished it with liturgical vessels, crosses and crowns. However, because of the way in which it is dated, doubt has been cast upon the authenticity of this document.<sup>25</sup> Still, the finding of a *confessio* in the presbytery of the cathedral and the tomb inscriptions throw new light on Quirinus' testament, and it will continue to be a source for the interpretation of early church history in Trogir.

A number of inscriptions on fifth-century sarcophagi have been found around the vestibule of Trogir Cathedral and alongside the church of St John. The inscription from a Trogir sarcophagus mentioning *ecclesia catholica* is dated to 402, when the emperors Honorius and Arcadius shared the title of consul for the fifth time.<sup>26</sup> This is in the general context of and in the year when the capital of the Western Empire moved from Milan to Ravenna. Also found in Trogir is a fragment of a marble sarcophagus with the motif *Traditio legis* from the late fourth or early fifth century, the product of a Roman workshop showing features of the Theodosian revival in sculpture.<sup>27</sup>

The successful handling of political conditions is also reflected in the organisation of the metropolitan see, as well as in canon law, and the term *ecclesia catholica* is regularly mentioned in the funerary epigraphy of the first half of the fifth century. At the same time, churches in Dalmatia began to be named after saints with the practice of consecrating altars with the relics of martyrs. Although the remains of Lawrence the Martyr remained in Rome, and his church, along with those of St Peter, St Paul, and St Mary the Great, was in all the pilgrim itineraries, relics for the dedication of the Early Christian church would probably have been sent to Trogir. In a first rate medieval source created in a Byzantine imperial scriptorium of the mid-tenth century, Constantine Porphyrogenitus collected data about the provinces and government of the empire afterwards called *De administrando imperio*. Trogir is mentioned among the diocesan cities of Dalmatia, and along with the characteristic morphology of the islet, the emperor mentions that in the city "lies the holy martyr Lawrence the archdeacon".<sup>28</sup>



Fig. 19 Front of Romanesque sarcophagus with inscription

Just as the popes were buried in the fifth century alongside the tomb of St Lawrence in Rome, and Pope Damasus II was buried in 1048 in a sarcophagus in St Lawrence's, so too was John, bishop of Trogir in the second half of the eleventh and early twelfth century – who for his many miracles and pious life obtained the title of Blessed and, *via factu*, of saint – buried in the immediate vicinity of St Lawrence's reliquary in Trogir. After the Saracens attacked Trogir in 1123, the city and St Lawrence's cathedral took a lot of damage, and consequently the site of the bishop's grave was neglected and forgotten. His grave was between the main altar and the first pylon of the southern arcade, where in the 1940s the marble inscription *Corpus Divi Joannis hic inventum* was completely worn out and had to be replaced with a new one (fig. 18). Alongside the pylon is a well that was discovered at the time of the discovery of the bishop's body, when after the destruction of the cathedral, the location of the grave was forgotten, and found at a place where a laurel shoot grew in the mid-twelfth century. At that time, a sarcophagus was made for him; but during an attack by the Venetians in 1171 it was shattered and plundered, the saint's arm was taken to Venice; afterwards, however, in a miraculous manner, via angelic intervention, it was restored to Trogir.<sup>29</sup>

In 1661, at the time of Bishop Francesco Coccalini, a new well head was made of stone around the well; the water was used for baptism, for the Eucharist, and for healing the sick, because of its proximity to the grave of John.<sup>30</sup> There is a similar well at the site of the stoning of the Bishop of Split Arnir (Raineri) at Dubrava (August 4, 1180), whence sprang healing water, and a church was built in his honour. In the Church of Pope St Caius in Solin, water flowing from an altar-sarcophagus showing the labours of Hercules was considered to have miraculous properties.<sup>31</sup> A well of fresh water is a sign of baptism and rebirth, and returning to the life of Lawrence, deacon of Rome, we recall that he was closed up in a crypt by a well, where he christened the Roman soldier Hippolytus, and over that place, the church of S. Lorenzo in Fonte was later built.

During a rescue investigation alongside the first pylon of the southern aisle in 1998, as a part of the restoration of the cathedral's foundations, the exterior of the construction of the well was partially examined. The circular well head, of rough facture, goes down 1.34 m below the paving of today's cathedral, and is in part lying on the wall of the arcade. The cult of Bishop John, the construction of the Gothic chapel dedicated to him and his translation to the Renaissance chapel, the marking of the feast day of his death and the movement of the body (*inventio et traslatio*) almost entirely drove the cult of St Lawrence the Martyr out of his own cathedral. One of the burials *ad martyres* in the church that preceded the Romanesque cathedral must have been the Early Romanesque sarcophagus with an inscription and invocation to the Good Shepherd (fig. 19). Only the front side is preserved, with the inscription that was built in, face down in the floor of the vestibule of St Mary's (later to become the Church of St Sebastian) during the last sarcophagus burial in the thirteenth

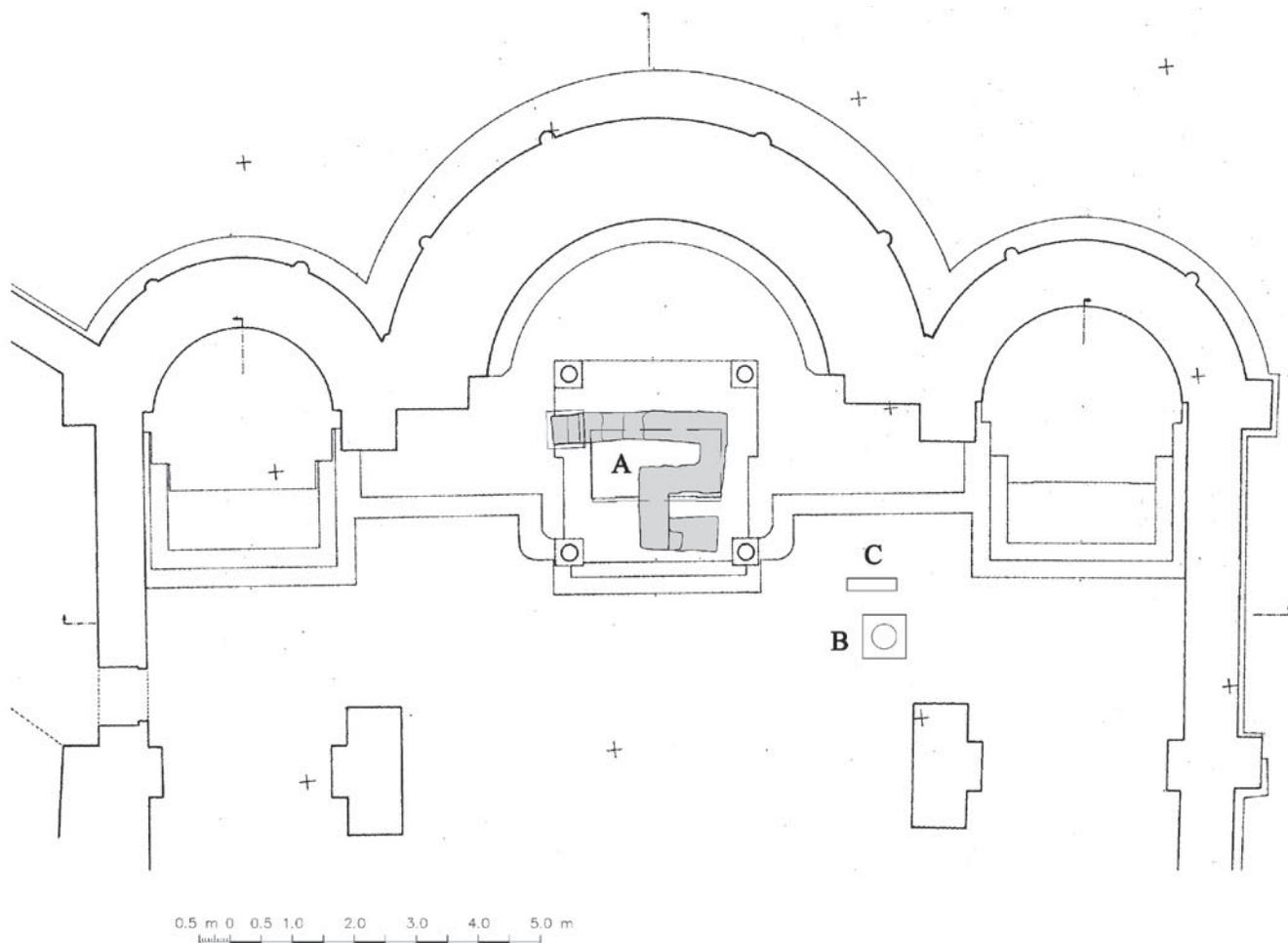


Fig. 20 Ground plan of the chancel of the Romanesque Cathedral of St Lawrence with the position of the confessio (A), the well (B) and the grave of St John Bishop of Trogir (C)

century. Similar graphic forms can be found in inscriptions of the second half of the eleventh and early twelfth century, and were in use when the discovery of the grave of St John, when a sarcophagus was made for his remains. The inscription on the front is anonymous, without any mention of the name of the departed, which is uncommon, for it must have belonged to a distinguished figure. Perhaps his reputation and sanctity were so great that no mention of his name was deemed necessary, while the key for solving the issue of the deceased's identity could have been in the inscription on the slab of the church over the sarcophagus. In the centre of the sarcophagus is a carved *crux ancorata* and a disc in the centre, in the tradition of anepigraphic Late Roman sarcophagi. It is inscribed on a medallion that was created from the cross with a wreath, and is in fact a symbolic depiction of the Resurrection. The deceased addresses Christ with the invocation "Pastur bone sanctissime", which is similar to John's prayer and plea for believers in the hour of his death, and also similar to the prayer in tribulation of David – Psalm 29, 30.<sup>32</sup> The form *pastur* and not *pastor* occurs in Dalmatian provincial Latin in Zadar and Trogir, and it is used here quite freely in the invocation.

If the sarcophagus was buried under the paving of the cathedral where the later inscription commemorates the finding of the body of St John, this would have been a privileged interment next to the arm of the subterranean corridor where the relics of St Lawrence were kept (fig. 20). Future research should define the architectural type of the Early Christian church that, during the time of the dedication to the deacon of Rome, had this complex form of installation for relics constructed under its chancel. The Early Christian church upon which the Romanesque church in Trogir was built came into being at the time of peace that prevailed in the province in the first part of the fifth century, when the ecclesiastical centre of Salona and the churches in the whole metropolitan see were renewed. The relics of St Lawrence were probably deposited in the Trogir *confessio* at the time of the great renovator of the churches in Dalmatia, Hesychius, the bishop of Salona, and after the triumphant campaign of the Regent, Galla Placidia, who, with the support of the Eastern Roman Empire, re-established the continuity of the Theodosian dynasty, in Ravenna.

*Translated by Graham McMaster*

- <sup>1</sup> During 2007, after restoration, works on the ciborium went on with the arrangement of the high altar of the cathedral. After the altar had been taken down, the space beneath was investigated, surface covered with a thick layer of lime with many miniature fragments of Gothic sculpting.
- <sup>2</sup> J. B. WARD-PERKINS, *Dalmatia and the Marble Trade*, in *Disputationes Salonitanae*, Split, 1970, pp. 38-44; I. MIRNIK, *Obloga zidova Dioklecijanove palače*, in *Vijesti muzealaca i konzervatora Hrvatske*, XXIX/1, Zagreb, 1980, pp. 8-11; T. RIMONDO, *Unutrašnja dekoracija istočnih termi Dioklecijanove palače u Splitu*, in *Vjesnik za arheologiju i povijest dalmatinsku* 98, Split, 2005, pp. 151-158. A high quality *opus sectile* is preserved in the Mausoleum of Diocletian near the bases of columns and in front of the northeastern niche (the Chapel of St Anastasius). Cf. Fr. BULIĆ, LJ. KARAMAN, *Palača cara Dioklecijana u Splitu*, Zagreb, 1927, p. 21, 80; M. IVANIŠEVIĆ, *Stari oltar Svetog Staša u splitskoj prvostolnoj crkvi*, in *Starohrvatska prosvjeta*, vol. 17, Split, (1987), 1988, pp. 134-137. The remains of the marble pavement was found in the presbytery of the Early Christian church of St Cyprianus in Gata from the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Cf. J. JELIČIĆ-RADONIĆ *et alii*, *Gata – crkva Justinijanova doba / A Church from Justinian's Time*, Split, 1994, p. 50.
- <sup>3</sup> A. GRABAR, *Martyrium, Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique*, vol. I, Paris, 1946 (reprint London, 1972), p. 462; R. KRAUTHEIMER, W. FRANK, S. CORBETT, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae*, vol. II – fascicolo I, Città del Vaticano, 1962, pp. 1-146.
- <sup>4</sup> It was Saint Helena who had this Early Christian church built over the cave in which Jesus had taught his disciples (underneath today's *Pater Noster* Church).
- <sup>5</sup> A. GRABAR, *Martyrium*, *op. cit.* (n. 3), p. 305.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibidem* (n. 3), p. 438, 442, fig. 105.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibidem* (n. 3), p. 456, fig. 104; I. BARNEA, *Les monuments paleochrétiens de Roumanie*, Roma, 1977, p. 163, fig. 55/3, 57, p. 171, fig. 60/1; I. BOGDAN CĂTĂNCIU, *Les dernières modifications de l'urbanisme à Tropaeum Traiani*, in *Acta XIII Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christianae*, III, Città del Vaticano – Split, 1998, pp. 141-148.
- <sup>8</sup> I. FISKOVIĆ, *O ranokršćanskoj arhitekturi na otocima Braču i Šolti*, in *Arheološki radovi i rasprave*, VIII-IX, Zagreb, 1982, p. 178; J. BELAMARIĆ, R. BUŽANČIĆ, D. DOMANČIĆ, J. JELIČIĆ RADONIĆ, V. KOVAČIĆ, *Ranokršćanski spomenici otoka Brača / Early Christian Monuments on the Island of Brač*, Split, 1994, pp. 19, 23, 27-28, 35, 40, 43-44, 50; R. BUŽANČIĆ, *Reconstruction of the Confessio of the Early Christian Church in Postira on the Island of Brač*, in *Acta XIII Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christianae*, III, Città del Vaticano – Split, 1998, pp. 187-196; J. JELIČIĆ-RADONIĆ, *Liturgical Installations in the Roman Province of Dalmatia*, in *Hortus Artium Medievalium (= HAM)*, vol. 5, Zagreb-Motovun, 1999, pp. 135-138; M. ZEKAN, *Solin – krunidbena bazilika kralja Zvonimira (Šuplja crkva)*, in *Hrvatski arheološki godišnjak* 1, Zagreb, 2004, pp. 240-244; N. NOVAK, *Le chœur de l'église paléochrétienne de Mirine près d'Omišalj sur l'île de Krk*, in *HAM* vol. 5, Zagreb-Motovun, 1999, p. 127.
- <sup>9</sup> C. FISKOVIĆ, *Opis trogirске katedrale iz XVIII stoljeća*, Split, 1940, pp. 37-38.
- <sup>10</sup> N. CAMBI, *Problemi starokršćanske arheologije na istočnoj jadranskoj obali*, in *Materijali XII*, Zadar, 1976, p. 252; *Idem*, *Trogir u antici*, in *Mogućnosti*, 10-11, Split, 1980, pp. 952-953; I. BABIĆ, *Starokršćanski ulomci u Trogiru*, in *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji* 25, Split, 1985, pp. 25-47.
- <sup>11</sup> V. KOVAČIĆ, *Prilozi za ranokršćansku topografiju Trogira*, in *Diadora* 15, Zadar, 1993, pp. 291-310.
- <sup>12</sup> F. BULIĆ, *Ritrovamenti di un'antica chiesa cristiana a Traù*, in *Bullettino di archeologia e storia dalmata*, XXVII, Spalato, 1904, pp. 20-26.
- <sup>13</sup> This coin was minted in Constantinople. I am grateful to archaeologist Maja Bonačić Mandinić for her kind help.
- <sup>14</sup> V. KOVAČIĆ, *Prilozi za ranokršćansku topografiju Trogira*, in *Diadora* 15, Zadar, 1993, pp. 291-310. Recently, during an investigation of the foundations on the southern side of the cathedral, a large impost capital was found.
- <sup>15</sup> J. JELIČIĆ-RADONIĆ, *AVRELLA PRISCA*, in: *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji* 41 (2005-2007), Split, 2008, p. 9.
- <sup>16</sup> L. REAU, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, Paris, 1958 Laurent, diacre, pp. 787-792; V. L. KENNEDY C. S. B., *The Saints of the Canon of the Mass*, in *Studi di Antichità Christiana*, XIV, Città del Vaticano, 1963, pp. 132-136; E. KIRSCHBAUM, W. BRAUNFELS, *Lexicon der Christlichen Ikonographie*, Laurentius, VII, Rom-Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 1994, pp. 374-380.
- <sup>17</sup> R. KRAUTHEIMER, W. FRANK, S. CORBETT, *Corpus Basilicarum ...op. cit.* (n. 3), pp. 1-146.
- <sup>18</sup> S. LEWIS, *San Lorenzo Revised: A Theodosian Palace Church at Milano*, in *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Oct. 1973), pp. 197-222.
- <sup>19</sup> M. MIRABELLA ROBERTI, *La zona della basilica di San Lorenzo a Milano*, in *Atti e Memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria* 79-80 (n.s. 27-28), Trieste, 1979-80, pp. 477-494.
- <sup>20</sup> D. FARLATI, *Illyricum sacrum, II, Ecclesia Salonitana, Hesychius III, Episcopus Salonitanus XXX, Venetiis, 1753, p. 82. Anno 424. Theodosius Galam Placidiam Amitam suam Occidentis Augustam, ejusque filium Valentianarum Caesarem creat. Jubet Ardaburium ingenti collecto exercitu, cum Valentiano, et Placidia in Italiam proficisci, qui Salonam cum venissent, ut Socrates docet, ab Hesychio urbis Episcopo, Clero, populoque summa gratulatione ac laetitia recepti sunt.* J. JELIČIĆ-RADONIĆ, *Salona at the Time of Bishop Hesychius*, in *HAM* 13/1, Zagreb-Motovun, 2007, pp. 13-24.
- <sup>21</sup> D. LONGHI, *Il lato sinistro della capsella di Samagher e la memoria Costantiniana di S. Lorenzo*, in *Felix Ravenna CXLI-CXLIV*, Ravenna, 1991-1992, pp. 95-128.
- <sup>22</sup> J. JELIČIĆ-RADONIĆ, *Mozaici Simferijevo Hezihijeve katedrale u Saloni*, in *PPUD* 38, Split, 1999-2000, pp. 52-56.
- <sup>23</sup> R. KRAUTHEIMER, W. FRANK, S. CORBETT, *Corpus Basilicarum ... op. cit.* (n. 3), p. 9.
- <sup>24</sup> N. CAMBI, *Starokršćanska bazilika i benediktinski samostanski kompleks u Stobreču*, Split, 1974, pp. 1-18.
- <sup>25</sup> M. IVANIŠEVIĆ, *Trogir u povijesnim izvorima od 438. do 1097. godine*, in *Mogućnosti* 10-11, Split, 1980, p. 966.
- <sup>26</sup> V. KOVAČIĆ, *Ranokršćanski natpis iz Trogira*, in *Diadora* 14, Zadar, 1992, pp. 301-310.
- <sup>27</sup> I. BABIĆ, *Starokršćanski ulomci u Trogiru*, in *PPUD* 25, Split, 1985, pp. 30-32.
- <sup>28</sup> M. IVANIŠEVIĆ, *Trogir u povijesnim izvorima od 438. do 1097. godine*, in *Mogućnosti* 10-11, Split, 1980, p. 965; Ž. RAPANIĆ, *Iz prošlosti srednjovjekovnoga Trogira*, in *Mogućnosti* 10-11, Split 1980, p. 998.
- <sup>29</sup> I. LUCIĆ, *Život sv. Ivana Trogirskog (po izdanju Daniela Farlatija)*, K. LUČIN (trans.), Trogir-Split, 1998, pp. 22-103; V. KOVAČIĆ, J. NERALIĆ, *“Ymago angeli” trogirskog zlatara Tome Radoslavića*, in *PPUD* 41, Split, 2005-2007, pp.199-236.
- <sup>30</sup> C. FISKOVIĆ, *Opis trogirске katedrale iz XVIII stoljeća*, Split, 1940, p. 55.
- <sup>31</sup> J. JELIČIĆ-RADONIĆ, *Reljefi s prikazima Heraklovih djela u crkvi sv. Kaja u Solinu*, in *PPUD* 39, Split, 2001-2002, pp. 34, 42, 44.
- <sup>32</sup> P. LUCIĆ, *Vartal, Život svetoga Ivana biskupa trogirskoga*, Split, 1990, p. 106.