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Ulpiana: A historical potential for the new Prishtina

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Abstract

This article is based on studies conducted at Polis University of Tirana on the "Urban Planning Theory and Laboratory" course organised during the academic year 2017-2018.

This research aims to treat the historical analysis of one of the peripheral settlement of Prishtina: Old Ulpiana. The work aims to underline the influence that can have the old Ulpiana in the city of Prishtina, and on the same time the objective is to open a possible point of view on which the future development of Prishtina can be based on the historical culture that is found in his periphery.

The purpose of the article is to emphasize the potential of Prishtina as a new capital not so much in the content of the city itself, but in its "periphery" made up by elements of historical value and archaeological finds on the surrounding of the city. These "satellite cities" can be the devices that can increase a touristic economy and can, also, make the inhabitants aware of an operational schedule of architectural and urban elements.

The methodology is based on emphasizing the geographical, historical, cultural and traditional potentials of the historic settlement of Ulpiana. Starting from this case, further studies can be deepened on all the other old settlements that surround Prishtina in order to highlight the historical and cultural potential of the entire Prishtina's region.

Introduction

According to the categorization made by Kosova's Ministry of Culture, Ulpiana is a locality in the vicinity of Gračanica, in the Prishtina Region, belonging to the Roman period and the late antiquity. The discovery of Ulpiana's ruins started at the beginnings of XX-th century. This settlement and its discovery have a great influence on the history of Prishtina as well as all over Kosova. It points to the early history of these areas and to the culture that surpasses the national influence as it

is a settlement where important traffic flows cross in the Roman period and beyond.

Until a few years ago, Ulpiana was only part of academic discussions or experts in the archeology field. It never, even now, has been part of a broad political, economical, social or urban discussion. The attention, in this moment, not only of the academic world, aims to emphasize the potential that Ulpiana can give to Prishtina a global potential that makes it able to compete with the other capitals on the European or

¹ / The subject of "Urban Planning Theory and Laboratory" was developed with the third year of the master classes in Architecture and Urban Design and Urban Planning and Management. During the academic year 2017-2018 the course was led by Prof. Dr. Besnik Alij and Dr. Llazar Kumaraku assisted by Msc. Ermal Hoxha and Msc. Eranda Janku. The subject of the course is changed every academic year and on this year was chosen the study of Prishtina with the aim to construct a new architectural image for the newest capital city in Europe. Student David Pemaj assisted in the graphic conception of the schemes used by the author for illustrations.

global level. Nowadays, in a period of rampant globalization, where the narrowing of time and history is a fact (AUGE, 1995), it becomes increasingly important to emphasize some of the long-lasting values that are able to save the rampant consumption of history and of its representation. Emphasizing some of the key values that are capable of resisting time and transitional modes and their proposal as permanent realities becomes most important in the period that we are living. Today. In contrast to three decades ago, where the intellectuals thought that globalization would homologate all realities in a single, it is always clear that only what is really local can become global. In this stands the value of this writing that requires, by emphasizing the geographical, historical and cultural values of Ulpiana, to make a contribution for the internationalization of the city of Prishtina.

Kosova and Ulpiana

In addition to what we have just explained about increasing the identity of a settlement based on its specifics, we can write that one of the main aspects of Prishtina deals with the great historical and archaeological richness that is found around it. The

aim is to emphasize this character and to avoid the premodern vision of the city focused in a single-center, and to guide this vision to a territorial scale that touches the entire region and its surroundings. This action shifts the attention from the urban settlement of Prishtina to its surroundings to show that the values of this city are not only inside its boundaries but are widespread throughout the territorial area of the region.

From a certain point of view Prishtina, as the biggest city can be equivalent to Kosova, and in this sense when we write about Kosova we write about Prishtina, too. Kosova has historically been traversed by two main roads, which today are two of Europe's most important corridors. These two corridors are near, almost all of the historic settlements that are positioned along these roads. (fig.1)

The study shows that most of the historic settlements are located along the two main historic roads Lezha - Nish (Lissus - Naissus) and Thessaloniki - Skopje - Belgrade. In the Lissus-Naissus axis, we find settlements like Vlashnje, Sopi, Ulgar, Ulpiana, Vindenis, while in the other axis Thessaloniki - Skopje - Belgrade we find the settlements of Paldenica,

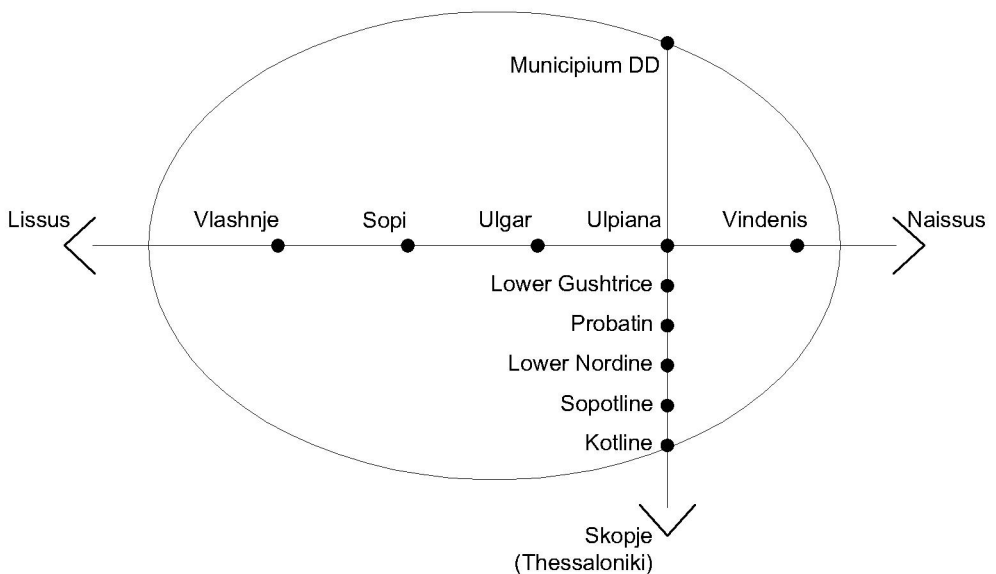


Fig 1 / Scheme of the two main roads that meet in Ulpiana during which the main ancient settlements are found. Source / author

Kotlina, Pobratin, Lower Gushtericë, Ulpiana, Pestovo, Municipium DD. It is clear that when it comes to the intersection of the two main axes, Ulpiana becomes the most important historical settlement of the Roman period.

We also note that these archaeological settlements are a very valuable asset in the development of archaeotourism. These settlements can be grouped into 5 groups listed in 1) Prishtina, 2) Leposavic-Mitrovica, 3) Peja-Klina, 4) Gjakova-Prizren, 5) Ferizaj-Gjilan (fig.2).

All of these clusters are located in the

airline not far from fifty kilometres apart. This finding, related to the fact that Prishtina appears as a node from which directly connected all these settlements appears as a great potential capable of influencing the rapid and further development of archeotourism. At this point, Prishtina appears as a very important node able to provide guests structures accessible from every corner of Kosova's archaeological site, in 90 minutes maximum. This fact affects the urban development of the city of Prishtina, but it also expresses the risk of the impoverishment of other settlements. The historical background of Prishtina,

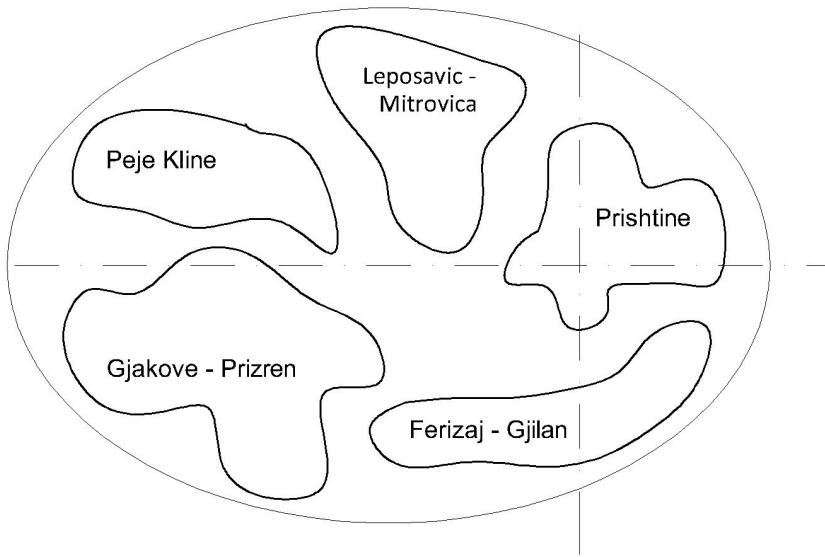


Fig2 / Scheme of groupings of Kosova's main historical settlements on a distance ranging from 5 to 50 km. Source / author.

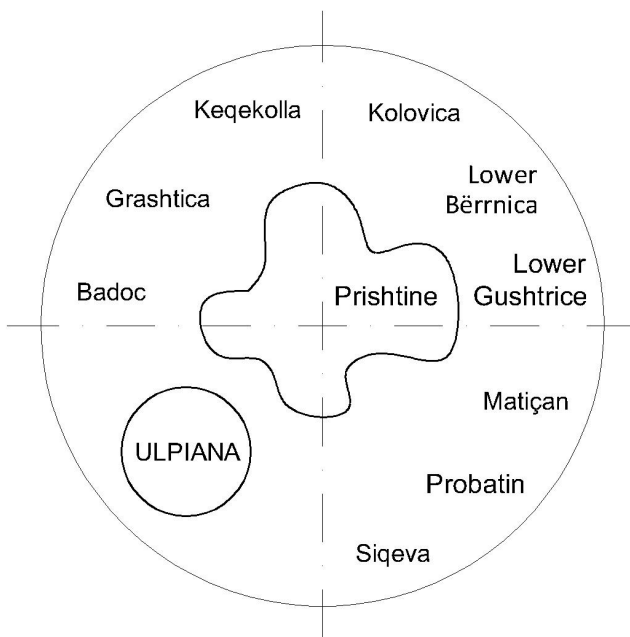


Fig3 / Scheme showing the main points with a historical heritage to be explored in a way to highlight the historical values of the Prishtina Region. Source / author.

which is in its surroundings, include Badoc, Lower Bërrnica, Grashtica, Keqekolla, Kolovica, Matiçan, Siqeva and Ulpiana (fig.3).

The archaeological findings in the entire Prishtina region emphasize the great historical heritage and increase the territorial integrity of Prishtina from the cultural point of view. From all these cases, the case of Ulpiana will be analyzed in its details by defining in this way a possible methodology for analyzing other cases in order to emphasize all the historical and archaeological riches in its surroundings.

Prishtina - Ulpiana

The settlement of Ulpiana, as we mentioned earlier located in the intersection of the two main axes, was discovered at the beginning of the last century. Ulpiana is a settlement of ancient origin, but the maximum development is set by historical researchers between the second half of the third century and the first half of the fifth century. At urban level, Ulpiana appears as a *Castrum Romanae* formed by two main axes *Cardo Maximus* and *Decumano Maximus* (fig.4).

Within the enclosing walls of the settlement, near the north gate is located the second sector with the church and the Bishop Basilica Sector that is thought that represents the centre of the city where *Cardo Maximus* is crossed with *Decumano Maximus*, forming a forum according to this type of settlement.

According to Fidanovski, in the mid-third and fourth centuries, Ulpiana had the statute of *Municipum Ulpiana Splendissima* (FIDANOVSKI, 1990, p.8 cited in BERISHA M. 2014, p. 296). This status indicates the high level reached in that period by Ulpiana settlement. In this period, Ulpiana's urban structure appears built over a *Cardo-Decumano* roman plant.

According to studies at Çetinkaya

(2016), the main constructions that are currently discovered in Ulpiana shows a clear Christian character of the settlement from the third century and later. In Ulpiana we are in the presence of the four main ruins: the Basilica, the Baptistery, the church near the northern gate of the city and the church outside the walls called *Memoria* because of the cemetery. These ruins demonstrate an exercise of Christian faith brought to Ulpiana by the Roman soldiers that had their own martyrs represented by *Ss. Flouri and Lauri*.

Based on the map worked from Çetinkaya (2016), the territory of Ulpiana represents more or less a square form that tends towards a trapezoidal shape (fig.5).

Strange, according to this plan, is the presence of the surrounding towers only in the south and west of the city walls. Different authors based on the archaeological findings shows that these walls have a thickness of three meters. Always according to the analysis of the plan of Çetinkaya (2016), the fortified area of the Ulpiana settlement is approximately 36 hectares.

This area does not mean the maximum extension of the city of that period, because there are other ruins of buildings outside the walls, such as *Memoria*, *Western Necropolis* or *Tuma* in the North. Although, they are mainly funerary constructions, we can construct a hypothesis which must be verified in other researches that Ulpiana may have been extending beyond the fortified walls, since it is known that in the ancient times the cemeteries were not built outside the city but inside, as Sitte points out in his book *Der Stadtbau* (SITTE, C., & STEWART, C. T. 1945). The tradition of extracting cemeteries outside the city was practiced in Europe after the order of Napoleon in the early 19th century. This confirms the fact that the city of Ulpiana in the 4th century had a greater



Fig4 / Photo of the Cardo Maximus. Photo by the author (June 2019)

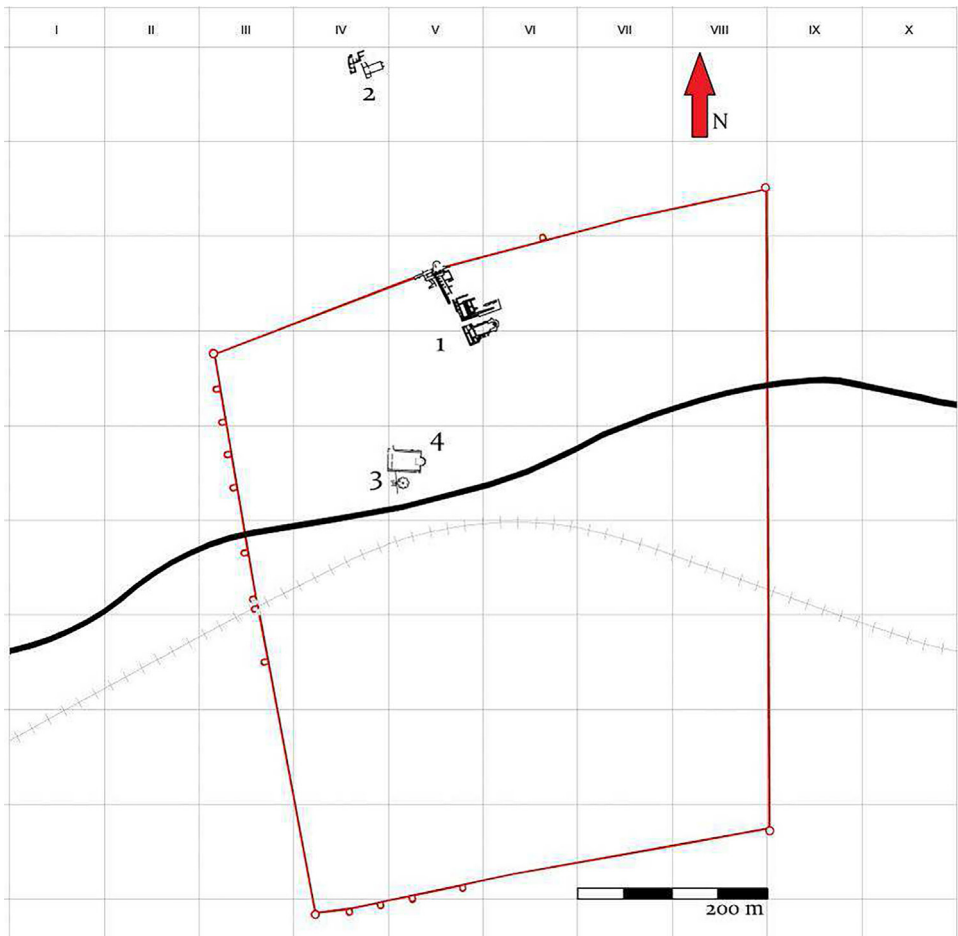


Fig5 /Planimetry of archaeological finds in the Ulpiana settlement. There are clearly distinguished three sectors found since now and the walls surrounding the settlement. According to the drawing, the walls appear to be reinforced with towers in the west and south of the city. Design from Çetinkaya H. 2016.

extent of thirty six hectares. According to the Ulpiana Archaeological Park guide, many researchers confirm Ulpiana's maximum reach may have gone up to one hundred twenty hectares.

Another characteristic highlighted by some of the most prominent authors like Hoxhaj (2006) and Çetinkaya (2016) is the spread and presence of the Christian faith in the Ulpiana settlement. While Hoxhaj (2006) highlights the phenomenological origins and phenomena of Christianity Çetinkaya (2016), describes the archaeological constructions found in Ulpiana's settlement by giving them a strong religious character that is related to Christianity but recognizing their pagan origins, as in the case of Memory. Perhaps this construction is also the pagan temple for which it is said that they built it and turned the two saints Lauri and Flouri into the Christian church, but to prove this hypothesis there is no complete

documentation.

On the architectonic side the three Christian churches according to Çetinkaya (2016), are composed of a central nave and two of them - the basilica adjacent to the baptistery and the church near the northern gate - are closed in their eastern extremity by an apse, while the church the so-called Memory has no apse. According to Çetinkaya (2016), the church near the northern gate (Fig.6) was built with stones that were reused from the Basilica (fig.7) in the center of the city. This hypothesis may be true if we speak only about the building of the absid of the church near the North Gate because it is clearly distinguished that the absid of this church has been added to a second period to the initial construction (fig.8).

The Church near the North Gate has morphological similarities and even the same geographic orientation with

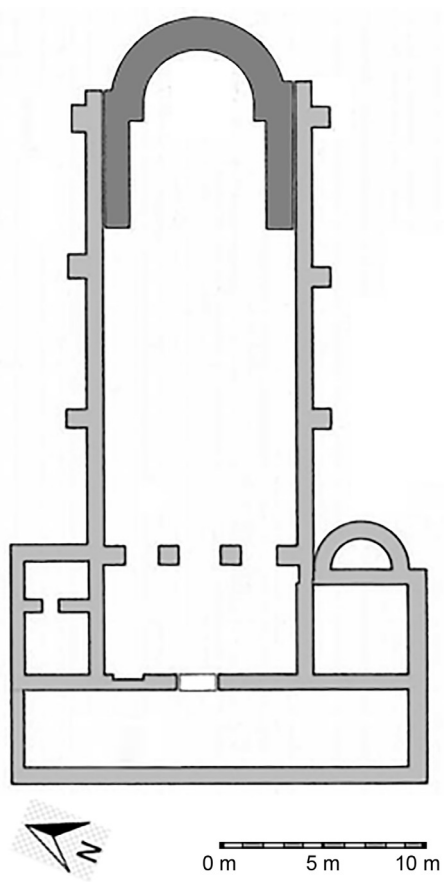


Fig6 / Redrawing of the plan of the church inside the city walls, near northern gate. With dark gray the church's absidie that may have been added to a second historical moment. From the tipological point of view the plan of the church appears similar with Memoria. Source / author

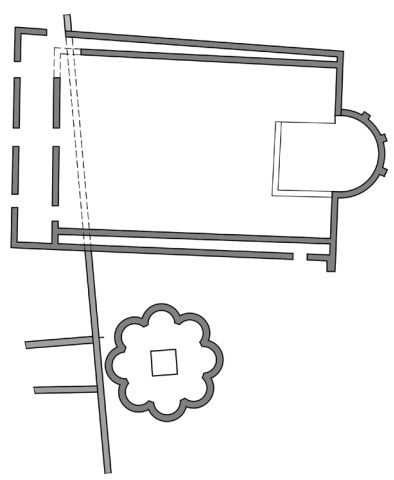


Fig7 / Redrawing of Memoria and the position of the white marble Sarcophagus. Memory is the earliest construction of the three Christian buildings of Ulpiana. Source / author



Fig8 / Photo taken from the end of the absid of the church near the Northern Gate. Source / author (June 2019)

Memoria (fig. 9) for which Berisha (2014) and Çetinkaya (2016) agree that it is one of the oldest in Ulpiana. It should be noted that the orientation of both of the above-mentioned churches is parallel to the direction of the northern wall of the settlement, while the orientation of the central

Basilica (fig.10) is entirely oriented towards the east by the longitudinal axis passing from the entrance and the absides. The common aspects between Memoria (Fig.9); (Fig.11) and the church near the northern gate (fig.06), orientation put aside, is the formal

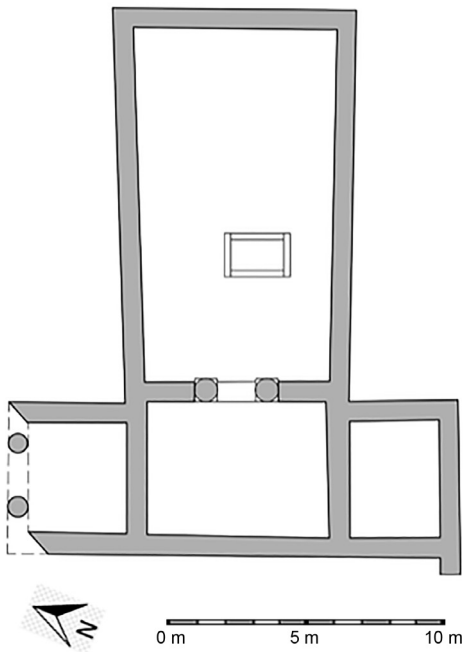


Fig9 / Redrawing of the Christian Basilica and the Baptistery located at the intersection between *Cardo Maximus* and *Decumano Maximus*. The basilica was built over the walls of a Roman villa.
Source / author



Fig10 / Photo of the Christian Basilica and the Baptistery in the background.
Source / author (June 2019)

typology. Both appear with a central nave and a narthex at the entrance. Narthexes in both constructions are composed by two side chambers. Particularities are that according to plans at the church near the North Gate, one of the side volumes closes with an apse, while in Memoria the north room of the Narthex may have had the function of entrance. This typology shows us that both constructions may have been born as pagan temples and after the conversion of society to the Christian

religion may have been transformed into churches. As far as the Bishop Basilica in the center of the city, many researchers conclude that it is built on the ruins of urban villa transformed into a basilica.

Ulpiana's values as a historic settlement among the oldest in the Balkans are not important only for the Albanian context, but for the entire world heritage, as Ulpiana proves through construction discoveries a great historical and cultural period that



Fig11 /Photo that shows Memoria, so called because of the many tombs that are there. It features white marble Sarcophagus. Source / author (June 2019)

can be useful for the Prishtina's history. The future Prishtina, in a global competition circuit with other European capitals, needs to emphasize its historical assets such as Ulpiana, in a way to emphasize its specifics. The work done since now demonstrate that the surrounding of Prishtina, not yet explored, is ready to be examined on all its potential to link with each other all the historical and cultural potentials.

Ulpiana represents one case of permanent reality that with its archaeological findings, together with the other findings surrounding Prishtina, can give to the city a new historical dimension based on the history of these places.

From the foregoing, it is clear that Ulpiana was at the center of large flows that have affected the culture, history, and traditions of this settlement. From the typological and architectural point of view, appears clear that the settlement of Ulpiana has been characterized by the stratification of different cultures that have influenced the image of the settlement.

The pagan temple that is transformed into a Christian church; the temple to which an absid is added; the footprint of the ruins of an Urban Roman villa on which a Christian Basilica is built, all of these cases demonstrate the way Ulpiana's settlement has been

expanded but this strategy may well function as a large-scale strategy for the entire region. Prishtina, where the archaeological property mentioned at the beginning of this article, holds great potential for the assertion into a European city.

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