

THE EMPEROR JULIAN, NAISSUS AND SIRMIMUM

Introduction: Illyricum on the Third Century

At the very beginning of Late Antiquity we find out that the role of that province, peripheral before, was largely enhanced because of its strategic location acting as hinge between the two halves of the Empire and the value of the important first line legions stationed there. Formed from local stock since Principality times, the Illyrian troops claimed their elite status very soon, already at the end of the Second Century, when Septimius Severus was proclaimed emperor at Carnutum, main military center and headquarters station of the Illyricum army¹. An able commander himself, leading that well provided first quality troops with all kinds of specialists and high combat reputation, Severus easily took control of all Italy and Rome, where the legitimate emperor Didius Iulianus acted quite poorly and was abandoned by his own forces². After that Severus temporally placated other contestant to power, Clodius Albinus in the West, dealing the title of Caesar or subordinated ruler to him before marching with his Illyrian Army eastwards to face the ultimate of his rivals, Pescenius Niger, proclaimed himself emperor at Antioch. But the East Army proved to be no match for the Illyrians, and leaving the besieged Byzantium behind, Severus defeated his rival in two pitched battles in Asia Minor before the definitive and last showdown at Issos, the legendary location of Alexander's victory, where the whole eastern army (some 20.000 men) was annihilated³. After punishing and prosecute former Niger's partisan and allies in the East (194-196), Severus was finally ready to turn back to Gaul and face his last opponent, whom he needed anymore. Albinus was ruling alone in the West since 195, but this time the Celtic Legions of Spain, Britain and Gaul proved to be a real challenge to the Danube Legions. The battle of Lugdunum (197) was long and bloody, and the two large armies fought to death⁴. When the westerners were already singing their victory on the battleground, a desperate counterattack of massive cavalry unites turned the tide and won a hard victory for Severus when almost every-

¹ HERODIAN II 10; II 9, 12-13. CASSIUS DIO, LXXIV 14, 3-4.

² HERODIAN II 6, 6; 11, 7. SHA, *Didius Iulianus* 9, 1-2.

³ CASSIUS DIO LXXV 6-8; HERODIAN III 2-4; 4-5; 6, 8-9.

⁴ Cf. M. P. WUILLEURMIER, "La bataille de 197". *Galia* 8 (1950), pp. 146-148. HERODIAN II 7, 2. CASSIUS DIO LXXVI 6. OROSIUS VII 17, 6.

thing was lost at the moment⁵. But Severus was at the end sole emperor and able to settle his dominion all over the Empire and build his own Dynasty⁶. From that time on, the backbone of the Roman Army no doubt was made of that Danube, Illyrian Legions⁷.

Naissus and Sirmium on the Third Century

Mayor junction roads and former military barracks from the first roman occupation, both centers turned to be first rate cities, with key strategic role and big importance. Both were provided with stone walls and became powerful fortresses. Gathering points of the provincial army in a land suited for recruitment and training zones, they were too administrative and commercial locations. As early as 236-238, the emperor Maximinus was thinking of Sirmium as his base of operations for a campaign against the sarmatians at the other side of the Danube, meaning that it was already able and well suited place⁸. It's worth noting that the able emperor Probus (276-282), skillful general and brave commander himself, was a native of Sirmium, and the tetrarch Maximian Herculus (285-310) came from Sirmium surrounding area⁹.

The "Military Anarchy" (235-284) and the Tetrarchy (285-324)

When the last descendant of Severus was slayed in 235, heavy turmoil started. It was a disastrous time who was about to bring to an end the very Roman Empire¹⁰. The Illyricum became a place of great clashes and battles, with high instability, barbarian invasions and uprisings. Mayor confronta-

⁵ HERODIAN II 7, 5-6. SHA, *Severus* 11, 2.

⁶ The total association of Severus family to imperial power came in 198 with the appointments of Caracalla as Augustus and his second son Geta as Caesar. But Caracalla (born 188 in Lyons) was Caesar since 195 and Geta (born 189 in Mediolanum) waited to have Augustus rank until 202.

⁷ CASSIUS DIO LXXVI, 15, 2. Cf. J. STRAUB, "Die *ultima verba* des Septimius Severus", *Bonner History Augusta Colloquium 1963*, Bonn, 1964, pp. 171 ff. Nor Herodian, Aurelius Victor, nor the Augustan History, nor even Marius Maximus, main source of the latter, have noticed such formulation that has echoed both in modern and contemporary historiography. The words allegedly made by Septimius in his deathbed coincide perfectly with what was their way of understanding the Government of the Empire, i.e. the militarization. However, Zonaras, Byzantine epitomist, summarized in the 12th century, the Roman history of Cassius Dio transmitting the sentence in the following way: «Keep the Concorde, enrich the soldiers, but do not forget of the rest». Formula more in line with the political action carried out by Septimius, and, by what we know today of his reign, more in line with reality.

⁸ SHA, *Maximini Duo* 13, 1.

⁹ For Marcus Aurelius Probus, see SHA, *Probus* 3, 1; AURELIUS VICTOR 37, 4. Seems he tried to implant in Sirmium's country land, around mount Alma, a viticulture seeding program as in the frontier zones of Gaul: *Probus* 18, 8; EUTROPIUS IX 17, 2; AURELIUS VICTOR 37, 3. He is reported too as creator of public works near the city, changing the course of Savus river and digging in for drying swamp areas; reportedly soldiers killed him because of that heavy job burdened on them (*Probus* 21, 2). For Maximian, EPITOME DE CAESARIBUS 40, 10.

¹⁰ AURELIUS VICTOR 24, 9-10; HERODIAN II 6, 14.

tions are dated around 258-259 in Mursa (nowadays Osijek) where emperor Gallienus (253-268) defeated the first of a large list of usurpers, his former general Ingenuus¹¹.

But from the Decius time onwards (249-251), the so called Illyrian Emperors were able to hold on all troubles and little by little destroy both usurpers and invaders¹². The same usurpers were sometimes forced to assume power against their will by their excited or desperate troops, they also fell victims of intriguing military cabals and also become prey of their own excessive ambitions or political blindness. But they stood the ground too and even helped to defeat barbarian raids and develop the New Roman Cavalry, main weapon to crush all invaders in the Danube and Rhine sectors and also for the brilliant victories in Africa, Egypt and the overwhelming defeat inflicted to the Persians in 297¹³. Here we have to merit the work and ideas of Aureolus and Regalianus, cavalry generals who, although their bitter destiny as killed rebels, helped greatly to form the massive cavalry army of Gallienus who freed Italy from the Alamannic invaders in 259¹⁴.

The Restoration of the Roman Order

When Claudius II, another Illyrian, acceded to the purple he soon was able to destroy the Goths after gathering his formidable army in Naissus. So after great ravaging and strife dating from 260, the Illyricum was finally free of war and barbarian raids in 268¹⁵. His successor, Aurelian (270-275) continued his deeds and the list of Illyrian Emperors both putting to an end bloodlessly the Gallic Empire of the West (259-274) and restoring roman rule in the East after defeating Palmyra¹⁶. Carus and his sons (282-285) blasted the last enemy resis-

¹¹ EUTROPIUS IX 8; ZONARAS XII 24.

¹² See C. G. BRAUER., *The Age of the Soldier Emperors. Imperial Rome, A.D. 244-284*. Park Ridge 1975. A. MÓCSY, "Pannonien und die Soldatenkaiser". *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt II*, 6 (1977), pp. 557-582. Curiously enough, the very Decius was reported to be a native from a village near Sirmium too (AURELIUS VICTOR 29, 1.).

¹³ Cf. J. W. EADIE, "The Development of Roman Mailed Cavalry". *The Journal of Roman Studies* 57 (1967), pp. 161-173; K. DIXON & P. SOUTHERN, *The Roman Cavalry*. London 1992; M. MIELCZAREK, *Cataphractii and Clibanarii. Studies on the heavy armoured cavalry of the Ancient World*. Lodz 1993; S. MacDOWALL & C. HOOK, *Late Roman Cavalryman (236-565)*. Oxford 1995. Once more, there's reported a massive rally of Illyrian and Moesian troops for the overwhelming victories of Galerius in the East; see OROSIUS VII 25, 10-12. A cleric himself, he had no choice but to admit the great military value of the Tetrarchs, devotees of the Sun God and other pagan worship.

¹⁴ Aureolus was himself the general of the cavalry army who crushed Ingenuus at Mursa, so, as first commander of the "New Cavalry", he should be credited at least with half of the merit of the formation of that corps, together with Gallienus, who carefully helped and supported the clever ideas of his brilliant commander. Cf. L. BLOIS, *The Policy of the emperor Gallienus*. Leiden 1976.

¹⁵ SHA, *Divus Claudius* 7-9 (with the numbers of Gothic foes and casualties largely exaggerated). When the emperor fell ill because a plague, he was brought to Sirmium where he died (OROSIUS VII 23, 1).

¹⁶ Cf. A. WATSON, *Aurelian and the Third Century*. London & New York 1999 pp. 70-89; ZOSIMUS I 61, 1-2. That pagan author brings us the longest account of the war with

tances and gave way to Diocletian (285-305), master of the Roman Recovery and Tetrarchy founder. When that politic and govern system was implanted, Sirmium become new imperial capital of the Caesar Galerius (293-305). From now on, the capitals would be placed in the strategic fortresses and key junction road and frontier zones that the Illyricum was well provided of, and Rome city lost quickly its former capital status and remained only as a ceremonial and symbolic place.

Constantine and the Fourth Century

After the abdications of Diocletian and Maximian, a series of civil wars lasting from 307 to 324 shook again the Roman Empire until the sole survivor, Constantine I (306-337) was able to control all lands and armies, building his own politic and religious program and settling his Dynasty, the Second Flavians.

In that times the role and importance of the Illyricum was even enlarged after the administrative reforms of Constantine. The five new prefectures were created around 332 and one of them featured Africa, Italy and Illyricum, an administrative unit who was to survive until the Lombard invasion of 568. We need to note again that Constantine the Great was born in Naissus around 272 and he never lost sight of his homeland¹⁷. The new provinces were also implanted there, and its political value and military role was kept. One-night sanctuary for the fleeing Licinius after the battle of Cibalis in 316, Sirmium was Constantine's capital before moving to Serdica (326-329); in fact, one of his sons, the longest survivor Constantius II, was born in Sirmium, and later another of his sons and Augustus, the younger Constans I, used Sirmium as a capital too (339)¹⁸. But when Constantine died his successors were unable to maintain the stability and internal peace of the Empire and soon new conflicts and usurpations begun. The short-lived reign of Constantine II was swallowed by Constans I in 340, and he was recognized as sole ruler of the West. But the opposition to him in his land grew fast and he was dethroned in 350, pursued and killed by his most important general, the *comes rei militaris* Magnentius (January 350). The key strategic role of the Illyricum was shown again then, because both

Palmyra (I 50 ff.).

¹⁷ We need to note that when forging his origins, Constantine chose to assume direct descendent from Claudius II Gothicus (268-270); that emperor won a superb triumph against the barbarians that were dangerously approaching Naissus. It seems clear the emperor Claudius before the battle gathered his legions in the city itself, where probably population was deeply frightened and distressed. No doubt after this crushing victory all the city's denizens, both Christians and pagans alike, cheered and hailed Claudius army when coming back to town. The sight of the victorious roman troops returning in brilliant parade, led by the emperor himself by horse, clad in armor and purple, was surely never forgot by eyewitnesses, who remembered forever that moment with awe. We can even assure that a kind of "cult" to the local hero Claudius started then, and was still alive and fresh in Constantine's childhood. The deep respect and devotion to the character flowed once again when Constantine himself was sole emperor and he needed a political and dynastic background; so he turned to the brilliant savior of his hometown. Thanks to the professors LARS RAMSFELD and GRAHAM JONES for the wonderful conversation and great ideas in summer 2012.

¹⁸ For Licinius, ZOSIMUS II 18, 4; for Constantius birth there, JULIAN *Or.* I 4d.

Constantius II (the sole survivor of Constantine's I sons) and Magnentius were eagerly trying to control this middle land between East and West. The fake usurpation of Vetranio in the Danube lands at the beginning of the springtime (350) was a mere politic plot of Constantia, sister of Constantius, for keeping the Illyrian Army idle and avoiding them to join massively Magnentius western army. Constantius II, finally ready, marched to face Vetranio and after a decisive meeting in Naissus, dated significantly on 25 of December 350, an harangue to the Illyrian troops made by Constantius himself wondrously made the soldiers give up the uprising, abandoning Vetranio and joining his own ranks¹⁹. It was

¹⁹ Apparently it was the same Constantia, sister of the Emperor, the plotting machine of this plan to undermine progress towards East of the Gallic troops (cf. A. PIGANIOL, *Historia de Roma*, p. 433, which follows PHILOSTORGIUS, III 22). See also B. ENJUTO SANCHEZ, „Las mujeres de la domus constantiniana y su actuación en la guerra contra el usurpador Magnencio“, in M. J. NASH, S. TAVERA GARCÍA (eds.), *Las mujeres y las guerras: el papel de las mujeres en las guerras de la Edad Antigua a la Contemporánea*. Salamanca 2003, pp. 45-51. EUTROPIUS (X 10) also offers us in his *Epitome* a very favorable image of Vetranio, which perhaps he met. On the contrary, AURELIUS VÍCTOR (41, 26) despises it: „completely uneducated and fairly foolish“. Cf. B. BLECKMANN, „Constantine, Vetranio und Gallus Caesar“. *Chiron* 24 (1994), pp. 29-68; J. F. DRINKWATER, „The revolt and ethnic origin of the usurper Magnentius (350-353) and the rebellion of Vetranio (350)“, *Chiron* 30 (2000), pp. 131-159. The proclamation of Vetranio took place March 1, 350. This event received a detailed treatment in the sources, with the majority of the authors taking advantage of harangue in the Homeric style of Emperor Constantius in front of the gathered soldiers of both armies, to polish the most its artifice and rhetorical talents: Julian, (III) 76 c-77b; ZOSIMUS II 44; THEMISTIUS 37a-c II, III 45 b-d, 80 c VI, LIBANIUS *Autobiography* 81: [...]“After the overthrow of tyrants, that Constantius removed, one through persuasion [Vetranio] and the other by force [Magnentius].“ AURELIUS VÍCTOR (42, 1-4) said for its part that: „Constantius, ten months later, thanks to the strength of his eloquence, overthrew his imperial power and relegated him to private life [i. e. Vetranio].“ He was the only one who reached this glory, from the birth of the Empire, because his oratory and his clemency. Therefore when much of the armies of one and the other side had gathered, pronounced once a speech as if it were a trial, got through his eloquence that normally had to be obtained with difficulty or with great bloodshed. This fact sufficiently demonstrated that the oratory talent is important not only in peacekeeping but in war; thanks to him are more easily including the most arduous, if one stands out for its moderation and integrity“. Meanwhile, ZOSIMUS (II 44, 4) clearly stated that the soldiers were bribed. Surely Vetranio had under his command the germ of what would later become the pseudocomitatense army of the Illyricum (cf. NOTITIA DIGNITATUM Or.IX, where nine legions of this type can be seen), although news of ZOSIMUS (II 42, 5) tells us that the Illyrian Cavalry had already joined the forces of Magnentius. It is possible that the mostly Pagan and closely identified with the West Illyrian infantry was thinking about deserting too, joining his fellow riders; the potential of Magnentius would had been then certainly considerable. We should recall that the elite *Ioviani* and *Herculiani* legions manned by Illyrian soldiers, were already serving in his army, and could be another incentive to Vetranio's men for dropping out; because surely they would like to fight on his countrymen's side. As a result, it can be said that the early arrival of Constantius II in the province was providential. Vetranio was allowed to retire to private life and live comfortably, which reinforces the theory exposed about this „artificial“ usurpation whose final seemed agreed from the very beginning. For D. BOWDER the fact is also evident as well (*The Age of Constantine and Julian*, London 1978, p. 46), and she described the seizure as ‘a maneuver of Constantius’. The interview took place during the curious and significant date of December 25, 350, in the important Balkan city of Naissus, the current Nis (Serbia). We can find another similar example already in Byzantine times. Cf.

a charade, arranged from the very first moment: far from being executed as customary, Vetrano took off his own diadem and purple tunic, giving them theatrically to his Lord, and was allowed by Constantius to retire and live peacefully at his home until the end of his days²⁰. The suspicious happening was of course noted by contemporaries; although some of them give account of the official version, perhaps by political reasons or by fear of reprisals, later historians made plain the swindle, and even Julian related the event with no little, although disguised, mockery²¹.

Magnentius tried unsuccessfully to storm Sirmium, and assaults on Mursa likewise failed²². He lacked siege machinery and was fatally trapped between city walls and the approaching Constantius army. Bloodshed followed at Mursa (351), and Constantius won an expensive victory who was itself “*a damn and monstrous drama*”, as Julian quoted²³. Western Army was horribly decimated and East army huge losses put up the overall casualties to 53.000 roman soldiers dead on the ground; veteran and skillful troop almost impossible to replace and that will pound greatly over the Empire’s future operative and defense capacities²⁴.

After Magnentius was finally surrounded and committed suicide in 353, Constantius II stayed in the West for some years trying to restore situation. He used again Sirmium as imperial court and army headquarters between the years 357-359, while he was campaigning on the other side of the Danube²⁵. Ammianus Marcellinus reported a rebel cabal in the city against his rule²⁶.

THEOFILACTOS VI 8, 1-3.

²⁰ AURELIUS VICTOR 42, 2.

²¹ JULIAN *Or.* I 26c; 32a – 33c, and *Or.* III 76c – 78a. Discretely and sober, while his own life was in danger, he was unable to shut down his Greek spirit in full; in disguised words, Julian was having fun, demeriting his cousin’s absurd achievements calling time after time Vetrano “an old man” and depicting Constantius talking foolishly to 20.000 horsemen at the same time. Very touchy, as always; sure his philosopher friends had a lot of fun when Julian got to Constantinople at the end and they were finally able to freely read it.

²² ZOSIMUS II 49, 3. J. RODRÍGUEZ GONZÁLEZ, *Diccionario de Batallas de la Historia de Roma, 753 a. C. – 476 d. C.* Madrid 2005, pp. 586-587. Noteworthy enough, Sirmium was taken by Julian with no resistance few years after, but they fought with stubborn hardness then against Magnentius. We possible should explain the fact as a kind of dynastic loyalty to Constantine’s heirs amongst the populace, the militiamen and even the magistrates and landowners of the city.

²³ JULIAN, *Or.* III 57d.

²⁴ We agree with the assessment of R. S. CROMWELL, (*The Rise and Decline of the Roman Field Army*. Shippensburg 1998, p. 14), which defines them as „first class warriors who could have contributed much to the defense of the empire“. The Anglo-Saxon author was apparently very mindful of the opinion of EUTROPIUS (X 12, 1): „many troops of the Roman Empire were destroyed in this fight, soldiers that were prepared for any foreign war and could have given many triumphs and much security“.

²⁵ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XVII 13, 33; XIX 11, 1.

²⁶ Some personnel of imperial government and high bureaucracy, plus some high staff officials supposedly considered Constantius reign too much cruel and oppressive. That may indicate too some unrest or discontent due to the monarch religious decisions. Cf. XV 3, 7-11.

Julian and Illyricum: a lightning campaign

Julian (331-363), cousin and last kin of Constantius II, was proclaimed Caesar in 355, like his brother Gallus in 351. Constantius was faced to great dangers in both occasions and this time he sent Julian, with no experience and only philosophic background, to deal with the half invaded and chaotic Gaul. But against all prognostics, Julian became a wonderful commander and ruler, so in five years Rhine frontiers were secured again, peace and safety settled, supplies along all provinces granted and communication with Britain reopened. As the situation of people was firmly improved and prisoners came back, freed by the defeated Germanic chieftains, relations between the two cousins worsened quickly. Palatine intrigues and misunderstandings were not helping at all, so when Constantius asked Julian to send him the bulk of his new invincible Celtic Army of the West, leaving Gaul stripped of defenses, he saw the dreadful fate of his dead brother Gallus coming after him the same, and he decided to resist once the dissatisfied troops refused to leave their homelands to a far distant Persian frontier, and desperately hoping to stay with their families proclaimed Julian as Augustus in Lutetia Parisiorum at the winter of 360. Ill-fated negotiations followed, but soon both sides saw clearly that war was the only way to go.

Fearing to be blocked and surrounded by Constantius, as Magnentius was, and unwilling to give his cousin the necessary time to blackmail the Germanic tribes up to the Rhine to invade his domains, as Constantius did in 350, he boldly and rather dauntlessly decided to set Gaul frontiers with enough troops and gather the rest of his army to rush inside the lands of his opponent. Julian was controlling Gaul, Britain and Spain (like his cousin Constantine II from 337 to 340), so he needed first to gain the Illyricum, seize the mountain passes and secure the routes to the East; once accomplished that, he would be able to defuse any possible opposition in Italy, march throughout Trace and pressure Constantinople. Julian knew that any effective holding of the Illyricum would be impossible (or ineffective) without taking the main cities, like Naissus and Sirmium. But Julian let in Gaul his artillery train because he bet on quickness, boldness and a valiant approaching for achieving his goals; he knew he couldn't afford long sieges or lengthy military operations. So he divided his army in three parts; he went down the river himself with the smaller part, using surprise to quit all eventual resistance. His quaestor Jovius and the general Jovinus marched through northern Italy in an eastward move while the cavalry general Nevitta used the Rhaetia way²⁷. As good commanders themselves, they went by using unusual or less known roads, and misleading the enemy intelligence reports with that multiple penetrating, avoiding their real intentions to be detected and looking like a far more numerous army, creating havoc and confusion not by spoiling or sacking but using deception and setting nervousness²⁸.

²⁷ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XXI 8, 3.

²⁸ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XXI 9, 3-4. The spreading of rumors was no doubt an skillful and brilliant device set by the excellent spies, raiders, scouts and specialists integrated in Julian's fine army. They did their job so well that even the two Praetorian Prefects of Illyricum and Italy, Florentius and Taurus (deadly foes of Julian, by the way) lose nerve quickly and hastened in a coward flight eastbound to Constantius lands.

The same strategy allowed Julian to capture bloodlessly Sirmium, a strong fortress and military camp who under a conventional attack was far beyond Julian's capacities, as we shall see.

Moving with light troops to the outskirts, he arrived to Bononea (nineteen miles far from Sirmium) by the river and sent his personal corps leader Dagalaifus to catch count Lucillianus in a raid, with full success. Lucillianus, designated to a military post in the surroundings, was recruiting troops near the barracks and trying to make a stand against Julian, but too slowly. We should recall that Sirmium outskirts were huge²⁹, and probably that's why the count was exactly there raising recruits and making his defense line. Soon after, we can only guess exactly how, Julian took control of the city without firing a bow³⁰. Possibly he used some kind of disguise who deceived the sentinels, or just rushed so fast inside the walls that caught unready all the defenders. That he might have akin or infiltrated personnel amongst the guardsmen or garrison don't seems likely. Probably he was only bold, or even lucky. Maybe tried to feign that he was Constantius himself, or used some kind of personal garb or emblems for fooling the enemy and made them to believe Constantius army was coming. Probably we will never know. But it seems that nobody considered fighting the newcomers. We are told of a crowd cheering Julian as he came, paving his way inside between two joyful lines of people with torches and maids

²⁹ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XXI 10, 1.

³⁰ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XXI 9, 5-6; XXI 9, 6-8. LIBANIUS *Or.* XVIII 111. Surprise infiltration using costumes, uniforms or equipment enemy is a constant throughout the history of the war. In ONASANDER (XXXIX 4-7) it's shown to capture enemy cities in the very daylight using speed and surprise. Julian could have thought in such devices when on the way to Constantinople took many cities and places without losing one man. The soldiers of Septimius Severus, with weapons hidden and dressed as peasants and skimmers, infiltrated into the city of Rome, in theory controlled by Didius Julianus, and also occupied roads and other vital points (HERODIAN II 12, 1; it was the year 193). Another Roman general really expert in this art was Sertorius (cf. PLUTARCH, Sertorius 3, 5-10, that recounts the night episode of the disguises at Castulus). AENEAS THE TACTICIAN (XXIX 1-11) explains the method to introduce weapons secretly in the cities, hidden and occulted conveniently, to be used later with total surprise. Perhaps the most famous case in recent times are the German commands in the West in 1944 during the Second World War; Cf. O. SKORZENY, *La Guerra Desconocida*. Madrid 1976. There the former Waffen SS Colonel of the *Das Reich* division tells his idea to dress his men in American uniforms. We should also remember the testimony of ZOSIMUS (III 10: 3) that relates the tremendous confusion that came to cause the speed of the rebel forces: „and as the news that the Emperor was coming expanded so broadly, and virtually everybody believed that it was Constantius reaching in, when they welcomed Julian instead, they all were filled with stupor and considered as a prodigy what had happened“. Cf. also MAMERTINUS VI 4-5. Concerning it all, we could bring up now the shrewd OROSIUS opinion (VII 40, 6), without a doubt a great expert in rebellions by the era in which he lived and wrote: „Nobody does a usurpation indeed but after mature it and by surprise, taking it out then secretly and defending your position then publicly; and the success of this action consists in being seen with the diadem and purple already taken, until they know who you really are.“ Although the Hispanic cleric referred at that time to Constantine III (407-411), we believe that its maxim could also be applied casually to Julian, and perhaps, for different reasons, even to Magnentius. But in any case, the condition of such characters tended to be extremely precarious in the majority of occasions, and as stated in his day professor A. SCHULTEN, „every usurper lives and dies with its luck“.

throwing flowers; even the local military joined the show, but clearly it wasn't the causing of Julian success³¹. Crowds only gather after events, when the dust is settled and they know what happened; they did not appear in the middle of a hostile operation area with high danger of being caught in crossfire or between two clashing armies brandishing their spears and swords. Thus Sirmium became the first and only Julian's capital as a rebel Augustus; Ammianus quoted the city as "populated and famous", so it's worth to note it was not a small achieving. How long did it take for Julian getting there from August? Some months for sure, but we should consider that he was entering triumphantly in Constantinople December 11th, so he probably gained Illyricum before early autumn³². There in Sirmium Julian wrote all his famous letters calling for the help of some traditionalist and pagan strongholds around, some of them only symbolic: Rome, Athens, Corinth and Sparta³³. Since he leaved Gaul and openly accepted war Julian hid his true religion no more, and while roving in Illyricum he consulted the livers of sacrificial victims and gazed the bird's flights³⁴. Before he gathered his Germanic and Gallic army for leaving, Julian organized chariot racing in Sirmium, a fine indication that roman civic life was kept alive there, and also a clever move for securing that local inhabitants would keep loyal and

³¹ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XXI 10, 1.

³² The affirmation of SOZOMEN (V, 14) that Julian arrived in this city in October is not consistent with the later chronology of events, from the death of Constantius to the arrival at Constantinople of the new emperor. For this period see K. ROSEN, „Beobachtungen zur Erhebung Julians 360-361 n. Chr.“. *Acta Classica* XII (1969), pp. 121-149; J. SZIDAT, „Zur Ankunft Julians in Sirmium 361 n. Chr. Auf seinen Zug gegen Constantius II“. *Historia* XXIV (1975), pp. 375-378.

³³ The letters Julian wrote then were dedicated to Rome, Athens, Sparta and Corinth. We only have remaining the letter to the Athenians and a very brief mention in LIBANIUS (XIV 29 ff.) to the Epistle to the Corinthians. Cf. AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XXI, 8, 1; LIBANIUS, XVIII 111; ZOSIMUS III 10, 3 and MAMERTINUS VI 7. Apparently, these missives had the expected effect, at least in some areas: in Sirmium, where he was received as a hero, Julian Augustus sole gold coins were minted, and the same thing happened, surprisingly, in Thessaloniki, where Julian troops had not yet arrived (Cf. G. W. BOWERSOCK, op. cit., p. 60). It is possible that, at the same time that this important city, the secession of all Greece to join the Empire of Julian could happened. We should remember that the letter to the Senate and the people of Athens is a statement full of Greek civic pride and paganism. The Gallic mints of Lyon, Vienne, Trier and Arles already has had issued gold and silver coins with the effigies of the two sovereigns and sole Julian Augustus ones on the occasion of the Quinquennialia of the latter. Cf. also B. ENJUTO GONZÁLEZ, “La actuación de Juliano después de la proclamación de Lutecia: evidencias epigráficas y numismáticas”. *Hispania Antiqua* 24 (2000), pp. 343-354, specially, 350-351, and M^a MAR ROYO MARTINEZ, “El emperador Juliano II y el programa iconográfico de sus monedas”. *Documenta & Instrumenta* 7 (2009), pp. 161-186. Of course, if Constantius was busy, at least for the moment, on the Persian frontier and therefore Julian had a short and precious time advantage over him, it would be absurd that a disrespectful and aggressive propaganda had begotten from Gaul to accelerate the reaction from the East; but on the other hand, in their domains, Julian should endorse his power and ground his situation, and Numismatic emissions were a good way to do this.

³⁴ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XXII 1, 1. Julian himself reported that the whole army was following the sacrifices and pagan rites willingly. Cf. *Letters* II 26c.

grateful after his departing³⁵. But another surprise was waiting for Julian inside the city walls, because he found there the so called historian Aurelius Victor, author of the *De Caesaribus*. Seems that love for culture and paganism soon made the two man to understand each other; Julian appointed him as province governor of Pannonia Secunda, and continued his lightning campaign to the east after calling Victor to follow him to Naissus³⁶.

Because as quickly as with Sirmium before, he did succeed in Naissus. Another key city with strong walls and fortress fell easily in Julian hands³⁷. Looks like almost all the units located then in Illyricum put themselves at Julian's request like a single man³⁸. This time we don't even know a thing about Julian's fast arrival. But with his strategic sight he considered the importance of Naissus and he strengthened its defenses, so strongly that it only crumbled to the hunnish onslaught one hundred years before³⁹. Early in 361, when the news of the death of Constantius along the way near Mopsuestia in Cilicia arrived, Naissus eventually became the first Julian's capital as legitimate and sole Augustus⁴⁰.

After Julian's own death in his Persian war, Naissus and Sirmium kept again its main role. In 364 the emperors Valentinian I and Valens chose the important and high class suburb of Naissus called Mediana to gather the whole army there for sharing out legions and other units between them⁴¹. Shortly afterwards they entered jointly in Sirmium too⁴². After the debacle at Adrianople, the young Gratian was looking for a colleague to help him counteract the

³⁵ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XXI 10, 2.

³⁶ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XXI 10, 6. Sometime after, Julian even honored Victor with a bronze statue. AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XXI 10, 6; G. W. BOWER-SOCK, *Julian the Apostate*, Cambridge 1978 p. 59. Victor, which is called *historian*, met for the first time with Julian in Sirmium and then was called to Naissus as we just saw. Cf. H. W. BIRD, „Julian and Aurelius Victor“. *Latomus* 55 (4) 1996, pp. 870-874, where expresses his opinion that the historian was lucky and awake at the same time, meeting with Julian in the right time and place. For a contrary view, see C. E. V. NIXON, „Aurelius Victor and Julian“. *Classical Philology* LXXXV (1991), pp. 113-125. This author argues that works of the African are tremendously favorable to Constantius and that disapprove Julian actions implicitly from 355; the subsequent relationship between the two could be explained, as a result, in two ways: the unexpected (because of its amazing quickness) arrival of Julian to Sirmium was surprised, in addition to many others, the own Victor, who had to interview with Julian in a frankly embarrassing environment the rebel from the West later forgave, playing it down; or perhaps the fact that the African flattered previously as simple courtier to Constantius regardless he didn't feel any real appreciation to him, meanwhile cultural likings and religious thought soon worked out between Julian and himself easily paved the way to a mutual understanding.

³⁷ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS (XXI 10, 5) calls Naissus “a well-supplied town”, and recalls that it was an excellent place, suited for the organization and casting of military operations.

³⁸ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XXI 12, 22.

³⁹ See note 46.

⁴⁰ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XXI 12, 1.

⁴¹ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XXVI 5, 1.

⁴² AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XXVI 5, 4.

Gothic menace, so he elected the Spanish Theodosius, and he acquainted him as Augustus of the East in Sirmium, with the army gathered as eyewitness, as customary (379)⁴³. Accordingly to the political and religious circumstances of the age, during the Fourth Century both cities were gradually Christianized⁴⁴.

Both cities featured still for long in the historical accounts. Ammianus describes one of the omens prior to Valentinian's death in Sirmium; a thunderstorm caused the forum, curia and part of the city's imperial palace burn to the ground⁴⁵. Horrific enough, Valentinian's son Gratian (375-383) after defeating the Alamanni in his own domains, used exactly the same way as Julian in 361 when he was desperately trying to reach his unfortunate and cursed uncle Valens and joining his army before the fatal Adrianople day: moving eastwards to Bononea by the river, and then to Sirmium, while his baggage train travelled there down the road⁴⁶. As we all know, all efforts were fruitless and he was unable to assist the East Army on time.

Epilogue: Naissus and Sirmium in the Fifth Century

Life went on in the Roman Empire, and so it did with Naissus and Sirmium. New problems and huge difficulties came after Theodosius death, as barbarian war bands and crumbling frontiers seemed to bring a bitter and harsh end to the roman provincial way of life. But able commanders still to come were fit even to deal with the worst enemies, and imperial power survived for almost a century more.

The emperor Constantius III, leader of the roman counterattack and the balancing of the West against Visigoths, was a native from Naissus, and we can consider him the last breed of a long and illustrious list of able generals and emperor-soldiers from the Illyricum. Married to Honorius sister Gala Placidia and appointed co-emperor, he died in 421, perhaps poisoned. But he was the father of the emperor Valentinian III (425-455), who saw the very sinking of nearly all Roman authority remaining in the West.

Naissus did not escape of the declining of the Fifth Century; it was sacked and destroyed by Attila's hunnish hordes and became a frontier post, waste and desert place between the two empires⁴⁷. Sirmium suffered the same fate and was conquered by the Huns (441). Too exposed now and unable to get a suitable defense from a weakened Empire, city declined and was taken several times, before being destroyed and lost definitively by the Avar attack in 582.

⁴³ OROSIUS VII 34, 2. We should assume that the ceremony of becoming emperor was a closed and rigid ritual, so we can turn to the account of the elevation of Julian by Constantius in 355 by AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS (XV 8, 4-17) to recreate the events at Sirmium in 379.

⁴⁴ M. RAKOCIJA, *The Cultural Treasury of Nis*. Niš 2001, pp. 41-84.

⁴⁵ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XXX 5, 16; ZOSIMUS IV 18, 1.

⁴⁶ AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XXXI 11, 6.

⁴⁷ PRISCUS, fr. 11.

Мигел П Санчо Гомез
ЦАР ЈУЛИЈАН, НАИСУС И СИРМИЈУМ

Наисус и Сирмијум су обе кључне тврђаве и важни градови веома милитаризованих округа и главне раскрснице свих трговачких и војних путева. Са појавом илирских царева ова места постала су и политички центри и царски градови, неколико царева су ту рођени, или на периферији, а неки од најважнијих догађаја у IV веку десила су се унутар њихових зидова.

У овом чланку ћемо покушати да понудимо свеобухватну слику Наисуса и Сирмијума и њихову улогу у каснијем царству, на њихов значај који се односи на преломни догађај: узурпација цара Јулијана у 361. години, када су Префектура Илирикум и њени најважнијим градови били суштински циљеви и прво поприште источног освајања. Брзи пад целе покрајине Јулијану било је витално достигнуће у сукобу без крви његовог рођака Констанција II.