Since 1968 a team from the Town Planning Institute of Dalmatia and the University of Minnesota has been excavating in Split, on the Adriatic coast of Yugoslavia. The excavation is part of a program of joint Yugoslav-American archaeological research supported by the Smithsonian Institution through foreign currency grants. Two things are outstanding about the site: its origins, and its continuous history. Here stands one of the most important and best preserved monuments from the Roman world, the palace of the Emperor Diocletian. This palace has been continuously occupied ever since it was built, and is today the core of a thriving modern city. Archaeological investigation is simply another stage in its development. The attempts to discover the original character of the palace, and to trace the major changes in its use, are taking place in the middle of its continuing life, and are contributing to plans for its future.

The degree of continuity is due to the adaptability of the original structure. Not so much a building as a large complex, it combines elements of the luxurious country estate, or villa, with those of the military fort, and incorporates features, such as a royal tomb, not usually found in either fort or villa. It is this combination of elements which makes the study of the original so fascinating, and which opened the way to its later life. Diocletian built the palace at the end of the third and beginning of the fourth centuries after Christ, as a place of retirement following his abdication after a strenuous reign of twenty years. Two of his most famous policies, the attempts to annihilate Christianity and to control prices throughout the Empire, had failed, but he had nonetheless succeeded in establishing a measure of security after the troubled years of the mid third century. Now, it was said, he wanted to live in the country and grow cabbages. The elaborate structure he built for that purpose remains one of the most conspicuous testimonies, and permanent contributions, of his remarkable career.

Split must have been a pleasant setting for his last years. The Dalmatian coast of Yugoslavia is a narrow strip framed between sea and islands on one side, mountains on the other. Halfway down the coast are the ruins of the ancient city of Salona, which in the Roman period was the capital of the province of Dalmatia. Tradition says that Diocletian was born there. By Salona, a small peninsula runs westward into the Adriatic, and there, on a broad, shallow bay facing south, the Emperor built his palace. Apparently the site was open country, with at most a small fishing village in the neighborhood.

Several centuries after Diocletian's death, probably just after 814, recurrent barbarian invasions drove the citizens of Salona to abandon their good harbor, and seek shelter within the walls of the palace. These original walls encompass an area of about nine and a half acres right on the bay. The settlement which the refugees created has spread far beyond those limits. The city now reaches across the peninsula almost to the ruins of Salona and has a population of 140,000. This richness of past and present, with all the complexities in between, creates unusual problems, and offers unusual rewards to the excavator. Many of these have become clear as work progresses.
The Town Planning Institute of Dalmatia is largely responsible for inaugurating the new era of work in the palace. Study of its remains had begun in the eighteenth century with the five-week visit of the Scottish architect Robert Adam. At the beginning of the twentieth century two major books appeared, those of George Niemann and of Ernest Hebrard working with Jacques Zeller. Their works indicate clearly the gaps in their information, but propose restorations which have usually been accepted uncritically. Until quite recently, little archaeological investigation was done. Hebrard made a few soundings, and so did the prominent Yugoslav scholar, Franc Bulic. Extensive excavation began in 1968 in the atmosphere of social, cultural, and economic expansion which has characterized Yugoslavia since the end of the Second World War. Work at Split was initiated by the Institute for the Preservation of Monuments of Dalmatia, and continued by the Town Planning Institute under the direction of Jerko Marasovic, now Yugoslav co-director of our work. Large areas of the southern palace substructure were cleared. Discoveries included baths in the southwest, and two round temples. Working conditions were difficult. No stratification was preserved in the areas dug, and for few kinds of pottery or other small objects.

Two basic principles govern recent archaeological work in Split: both arise from the concept of the palace as a continuing entity. The first is that the accretions of successive periods should be preserved, and added to. No one wants to clear the whole area to its Roman levels. Valuable structures of later periods will remain, and new ones will be built. One view may someday take in a pre-Romanesque belfry on a Roman wall flanked by a Renaissance palazzo. It will also take in the clothelines and dressing articles of the inhabitants, because the second principle is that conservation of older structures is best achieved by assuring their continued use. Split has survived from different periods can be reconstructed and reused. In this case, therefore, concrete slabs cantilevered from six columns will span the whole space. It will resume its original function in the town, but anyone who is interested will be able to descend beneath the paving to see a bit of the early history.

On the other hand, the ground floor which we cleared in the southeastern tower is completely preserved, and all Roman: its walls are of solid ashlar construction with the original door and windows. Its original ceiling, which was of timber, had long gone, and a new ceiling had recently been built, which allows the halls and corbels for the original beams to show. The floor is of many laminated layers of mortar, and has become uneven with the passage of time. A new floor will have to be placed above it, and then the space can serve as a shop or office. There is even a tentative proposal to put down a transparent floor over the beautifully preserved hypocausts of the western baths and have a discothere.

As it has because many of its parts were visible through the centuries. The Museum became, and continues to be, a church: it is proposed that Diocletian's dining room become a restaurant. After archaeological investigation is completed the palace should emerge, not as a museum, but as a revitalized urban core.

A study made in 1966 showed that many buildings within the Roman walls were standard, and that much space was being used for storage, rather than for residential or commercial purposes. The city hopes to change this. Excavation is carried on in areas which will be renovated. We have excavated in a garden, in a hotel basement, under the floors of shops, and in spaces cleared by demolition of substandard housing. The planners want to see what will be discovered about the history of an area, so that future building can always preserve and respect earlier remains, perhaps incorporating them for some new use.

Each situation calls for a different solution. We worked in one area which had been a Laraman square by an old house. The house was demolished. The excavation uncovered buildings from a variety of periods. First, in Docielian's time, a bath had been built there—the second one discovered in the palace, called the eastern bath. By it were many Roman walls, perhaps a little later. Then, after deliria had accumulated for a while, some crude medieval walls were added in an open space outside the bath. Finally, the bath was partly demolished, and the whole space was occupied by solidly built medieval houses and a narrow street. From this sequence many inferences can be drawn about a changing society. Its technology, population, standards of living, etc. We took down some of the later walls to study the bath heating system, but did not want to clear the whole site to its earliest level. Instead, enough was left to illustrate the historical sequence. There is no way that a site containing such segments...
Only this belief that study of the past is an integral part of the development for the future makes our work possible. Excavation in a city requires the closest cooperation with a variety of local authorities. When Robert Adam landed in Split, he found that "to the soothing expectations of the pleasure of my task, the certain knowledge of its difficulties soon succeeded." Everyone who has tried to work here has encountered the same problems he enumerates, arising from the building of modern houses into older structures, but the suggestions of the Venetian governor made Adam's position untenable. In our experience the grave technical difficulties have been greatly alleviated, although never entirely solved, by the sympathy and enthusiasm of both officials and private citizens. The Housing Enterprise has concentrated its urban renewal efforts in the quarter where we wished to work. The Water Board has rerouted water and sewage lines around our trenches, once in advance, several times unexpectedly, since the position of pipes laid in the Austro-Hungarian period is not always known until we discover them. A cobbler vacated his shop for a month last summer, leaving shoes hanging on the walls while we dug beneath his floor to trace a mosaic. Last winter for several days people jumped sideways out of their house door so that we could look for continuation of the eastern bath walls under the city wall.

The most persistent problems have been statics, earth removal, and water seepage. The static problems are caused by past building activities. It appears that sometime in the late Middle Ages or early Renaissance (fourteenth to fifteenth centuries) there was, at least in the southeastern palace area, a period of rebuilding which dwarfs any renovation before or since. Great pits were dug to remove stone from the Roman walls for reuse. The debris from demolished buildings collapsed or was dumped into these pits, and on any free spaces. Houses were then built precariously over the half-deestroyed walls and the loose fill. In the first year of our excavations John Wilkes from the University of Birmingham in England began to map some of the rooms in the southern palace block, right beside the east wall. In one sounding, he reached the Roman floor almost ten meters below the modern surface. To his dismay, he found that nearby Roman walls had been partly or completely robbed out, so that extension of the excavation would imperil adjacent houses. Over the next three years a combination of demolition and elaborate shoring gradually solved the problems of statics, but left the necessity of digging through several meters of fallen building material, a mixture of loose rubble and great chunks of solid wall. To maintain straight trenches, either horizontally or vertically, was impossible. An east-west section across the whole area has had to be placed together out of two years' work digging and the drawing of small sketches before they collapsed.
Spring 1973

The variety in construction and decoration appears also in plan, where one learns to expect the unexpected. Symmetry and regularity are present, but not as rules. There are several piers in the northern palace, and, on the same alignment, several more piers fifty meters away in the south. The piers are spaced in the same manner. Scholars had assumed that they could safely restore a continuous line of piers, all with a street in front and the same kind of rooms behind. In fact, there appears to be no connection between the groups. The two baths are located symmetrically in the southeastern and western palace, but their plans and construction are completely different, and so far as we can tell, neither one is itself at all symmetrical in design. The more we work, the more we realize how unsafe it is to generalize from any single find about practice in the palace as a whole, and the more we realize what a multiplicity of techniques there are to be studied.

Evidence of the original decoration includes carved architectural ornaments, fine colored marbles for moldings and revetments, fresco fragments, and mosaic mosaics. One anta capital found near the bath is typical of decoration in the palace. It is covered by classical acanthus leaves, but arranged very unclassically, in that they are markedly asymmetrical. The symmetry exists so that several small motifs can be inserted between the leaves on one side. These devices can be found in classical art, but never used in this way. The execution is painstaking. Throughout the carved decor of the palace we again and again find the use of classical motifs in a totally unclassical fashion, not through ignorance but through deliberate exercise of ingenuity. It is too early to say whether the impulse to change was aesthetic or symbolic. Study of the Roman fragments will be done by Ivan Minkin.

Now the palace is monochrome: once it was full of shimmering color. The crystalline white, veined green and red and honey and purple of fine marbles and porphyry imported from all around the Mediterranean decorated walls and floors, mosaics of glass and stone and gold leaf covered floors and vaults. No vault or wall mosaic remains in place but the small tesserae discovered by sifting Roman debris levels give abundant evidence of their existence. Nothing can be said about patterns, but we can see the rich and subtle variations of color that were employed, including lavish use of gold leaf, a relatively new luxury, sparkling through the glass. The four mosaic floors in a courtyard off the east palace gate impress for quite another reason, their slippiness. In each case, the excavation begins carefully at one end, and then becomes much more haphazard at the other—this is the result of a master working alongside novice assistants? The mosaic, and the fresco fragments, will be studied by Claudia Smith.

1 The foundation platform for the Mausoleum of Diocletian (cf. pp. 28-30, 40). In the background the central peristyle court of the palace can be seen, and an Egyptian scene brought here by the Emperor.

2 The hypocaust heating system of the Roman bath, discovered by the Town Planning Institute and cleared by the joint excavation in 1972.

3 A cauldron near the plunge basin of the eastern bath (cf. pp. 24-25, 32). (Town Planning Institute.)

4 Mosaic floor. At the extreme right there is a glimpse of the market booths lining the original Roman east-west street (decumanus), and at the left a complex of late medieval walls.
Approximately four thousand five hundred pieces of pottery have been catalogued in five seasons. Its study is being carried on by Margaret Katri, Janet Burton, and Emily Schwartz. Much of the pottery is coarse ware and medieval glazed ware, study of which is far less advanced than study of Roman fine ware. There are few uncontaminated strata in the palace, but there is stratified fill in a gardener's pit, in a dump between two houses, in layers between Roman and medieval floors, which can help in dating. Since 1960, all pottery has been retained, so that it can be re-examined as definition of significant types advances. In fact, a number of examples of important medieval fabrics have been recognized in "discarded" bags and subsequently catalogued. The type series used for preliminary pottery sorting now comprises about a hundred varieties.

The Yugoslav authorities have permitted shipment of some pottery to the United States for study during the winters. The Graduate School of the University of Minnesota generously supports research. Much remains to be done. We hope that study of the coarse ware may solve one of the major problems of medieval history: when did the Slavs penetrate into the coastal towns, which certainly remained Roman long after a Slavic kingdom flourished outside the walls? What urban developments, if any, can be associated with the ethnic change? Up to now, discrimination of late antique from Early Slavic roughware has proved difficult, but Mrs. Schwartz hopes to be able to clarify the picture.

Study of fine ware is already telling us something about fluctuations in standards of living, and in trade connections. Fine Roman ware continues to be imported for several centuries after the death of Diocletian, then stops. For several centuries only coarse ware of local manufacture was used; Split was poor, and isolated. Then glazed ware begins to arrive from Italy. The dates of the break, and resumption, of foreign trade, are not yet certain. In the early stages of our work it seemed that trade connections in the Roman and the medieval period were quite different. The Roman pottery came from the south and east, Africa and Syria, across the Mediterranean, while the medieval ware came from the northern Mediterranean coast, from Italy and Spain. This is certainly the predominant pattern, but the horizons of medieval Split are widening. This summer the previously complete lack of Byzantine pottery has been filled by a few examples, and there is even a plate from Syria.

Work in Diocletian's Palace, geared to the pace of Urban Renewal, will continue for many years. This joint program is drawing to a close. We have done almost all the excavating we plan to do. Now we hope there will be several seasons of study and writing before the final publications emerge. A provisional excavation report is already in press: a second will follow, and then, several specialized reports. This work involves a large team of Americans and Yugoslavs. It has been generously assisted by archaeologists and government authorities in both countries. I am sorry there is no room here to express fully our indebtedness to these people, and the satisfaction we have felt in participation in this successful cooperative venture. The work has many facets, and should contribute greatly to our understanding of Roman architecture in a critical period of transition, and of the processes of urbanization and ethnic change in the early Middle Ages.

1 Emily Schwartz and Richard Mewery, both from N.Y.U., working with the pottery type series in the excavation headquarters.

2 Pottery from Split: a) [improper Roman fine ware]; b) local coarse ware, probably Stevie; c) later medieval imported fine ware from Italy.

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