

SIRMIAN MARTYRS IN EXILE
PANNONIAN CASE-STUDIES AND A RE-EVALUATION
OF THE ST. DEMETRIUS PROBLEM

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The study of the cult of the fourth century martyr, St. Demetrius of Thessalonica, has been a focal point of hagiographical research since the 18th century. It was always the most eminent experts of history and hagiography who dealt with questions of his identity and of the history of his cult, which has had a distinguished role in orthodox Christian religious and cultural tradition, on the one hand, and is closely connected with such historical events like the invasion of the Avars and the Slavs into the Balkans, on the other. Problems of Demetrius' cult have been investigated by scholars in academic fields ranging from art history and archaeology to history and philology. The biggest challenge, however, was assigned to scholars of hagiography who were continually expected to provide solution to the puzzling problem of the origin of St. Demetrius and his cult.

Therefore, in the course of the last two centuries there have been a lot of different hypotheses put forward to provide suitable solution for this problem: ideas and assumptions based on various art-historical, archaeological and literary observations, or sometimes only on national ideologies or even fantasy. However, there were no attempts made to put the whole problem into the wider context of the Illyrian hagiographic tradition and to make a detailed comparison between the history of St Demetrius' cult and the afterlife of other Pannonian and Illyrian martyrs. In the following, then, after a critical analysis of the St Demetrius problem and its proposed solutions, a number of comparative case-studies will be carried out to map the history of other late antique Illyrian martyrs. These presumably will help us to have a better view of the whole problem of the martyrs' migration and to provide a fresh solution for the origin and development of St Demetrius' cult.

‘Sirmium or Thessalonica?’

If one would like to condense into one single phrase the whole complexity of the problems concerning the cult of St Demetrius, it would be a “tale of two cities”, Sirmium and Thessalonica, competing for the birthplace of the greatmartyr Demetrius.

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Originally the situation was quite simple. According to the the earliest version of the martyr's passion,¹ the so-called *Passio prima* after Demetrius' death his body was just rapidly buried "with a mound of earth" at the very place he was killed.² Afterwards, there was a "small structure"³ erected to house the relics. Later, however, because of the "powerful healings and graces that have occurred in this place",⁴ Leontios the prefect of Illyricum, founded a "gloriously adorned church" in Thessalonica in his honour. To this information the second recension of the account, the so-called *Passio altera* considered generally as a later version of the saint's history,⁵ adds that Leontios was afflicted with a mortal illness and he built the church after having been healed by the martyr's intercession, but as a kind of souvenir he brought a little piece of the relics with him to his seat in Sirmium. There he again founded a church in the honour of Demetrius, where he deposited the relics he was given in Thessalonica.⁶ The series of events, then, is completely clear. Thessalonica, the hometown and burial place of the martyr was the first to have a church dedicated to Demetrius, and then came Sirmium with its smaller and – apparently secondary – church and allegiance to St. Demetrius.

The problem became more complicated after the publication of two important early hagiographical sources in 1894, that of the so-called *Syriac Breviary* and the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*. Curiously, these ancient martyrologies, deriving from a Greek Vorlage probably from the second half of

¹ The classification of the legends was done by the 18th century Bollandist De Bije, who distinguished three recensions of the passions (see *ASS* Oct. IV. (1780), 50–52) and his conclusions are ever since accepted. According to his view, the first and presumably earliest version is the so-called *Passio prima* *BHG* 496 which was edited by H. DELEHAYE in his *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires*. Paris 1909, 259–263. There exists a ninth-century Latin translation of it by Anastasius Bibliothecarius: *BHL* 2122. Interestingly this translation was the only source of what was known in the West concerning the martyr and numerous later legends of Demetrius derive of it: e.g. *BHL* 2126 and the legend in the fourteenth-century collection of Petrus de Natalibus (ix, 110), the accounts of the martyrologies, and also the story recorded by the twelfth-century Vincentius Bellovacensis in his *Speculum historiale* (xii, 149) along with the abbreviated story in the collection of Pierre Calo (cf. A. PONCELET, *Le légendier de Pierre Calo*. *AB* 29 (1910), 5–16; 97 and 101). The second recension is the so-called *Passio altera* (*BHG* 497 edited in the *Acta Sanctorum Octobris IV*, Bruxelles, 1780, 90–95), while the third is a later recast by Simeon Metaphrastes (†1000), *BHG* 498 and edited in *ASS* Oct. IV (1780), 96–104.).

² DELEHAYE, *Les légendes* (as footnote 1 above), 262: τῆς γῆς ὅσον οἶόν τε ἦν ἔκρυψαν.

³ DELEHAYE, *ibid.* 262: οἰκίαν ἐπὶ μικροῦ πάνυ τοῦ σχήματος

⁴ H. DELEHAYE, *ibid.*: Ἐκ τῶν... ἐν τῷ τόπῳ γενομένων δυνάμεων ἰάσεων τε

⁵ See e.g. H. DELEHAYE, *Les légendes* (as footnote 1 above), 262, 103–109; P. LEMERLE, *Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de Saint Démétrius*, II, *Commentaire*. Paris 1981, 198–203; J. C. SKEDROS, *Saint Demetrios of Thessaloniki: Civic Patron and Divine Protector 4th-7th Centuries*. Harrisburg 1999, 60–70.

⁶ *ASS* Oct. IV (1780) 94E–95A.

the fourth century,⁷ do not contain any information concerning St. Demetrius of Thessalonica. Instead, they mention only a certain St. Demetrius of Sirmium,⁸ who according to the Hieronymian Martyrology was deacon of the Sirmian church.⁹

As the martyrdom of St. Demetrius is to be dated around 304¹⁰ and as almost all significant Thessalonican martyrs from around the time of Demetrius are present in the martyrologies, one would expect his name to be present in the martyrologies as well.¹¹ Based on this lack, therefore, some researchers have concluded that the Sirmian and the Thessalonican martyrs are somehow related.

Solutions and Hypotheses

It was Ernst Lucius who – in light of the martyrologies – first brought attention to the problem of the two St Demetrius martyrs and their possible connection, but he still treated them as two separate martyrs.¹² Not much later the famous Jesuit scholar, Hippolyte Delehaye in his book on military saints wrote that in his view, the two martyrs Demetrius are the same. “For” – he concludes in another work – “the inside location of the Thessalonican basilica in the city, the late origins of his cult and the information found in the martyrologies suggest that the saint’s tomb was originally in Sirmium, and the relic was translated to Thessalonica”.¹³ “Besides,” – he adds – “there is a kind of abnormal aspect in

⁷ On the date and importance of these martyrologies, see R. AIGRAIN, *L’hagiographie: Ses sources, ses méthodes, son histoire*. Bruxelles 2000, 32–50 and recently K. SCHÄFERDIEK, *Bemerkungen zum “Martyrologium Syriacum”*, *AnBoll* 123 (2005) 5–22.

⁸ *Breviarium Syriacum*, *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, II/1, Bruxelles 1894, LV. and *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, *ibid.* 41.

⁹ *In Syrmia Demetrii diaconi*.

¹⁰ The date in the first line of the Greek Passions, which states that the execution of Demetrius took place “when Maximianus Herculus conquered the Goths and the Sarmatians” (*ASS* Oct. IV, 1780, 90E: Μαξιμιανὸς, ὁ καὶ Ἐρκούλιος, ὑποτάξας Γόθθους, καὶ Σαρωμάτας), undoubtedly refers to the military successes of Maximianus in the Balkans in 303 and 304. Compare: Lactantius, *De mort.* 13.2 (ed. CREED, Oxford Christian Latin Texts. Oxford 1984, 20.).

¹¹ Such as the Thessalonican martyrs Agape, Chionia, and Irene (April 2.) or Fronto (March 14.) and other saints whose inclusion was already highlighted by D. WOODS, *Thessalonica’s Patron: Saint Demetrius or Emeterius?*, *Harvard Theological Review* 93 (2000) 221–234, here 222–223.

¹² E. LUCIUS, *Die Anfänge des Heiligenkults in der christlichen Kirche*. Tübingen 1904. 227 footnote 3.

¹³ H. DELEHAYE, *Les origines du culte des martyrs*. Bruxelles 1912, 263–264: «L’emplacement de la basilique de Thessalonique en peine ville, les origines tardives du culte à cet

the martyr's posthumous glory".¹⁴ According to Delehaye's hypothesis, then, the events as related in the *Passio altera* and *tertia* happened precisely the opposite way around, for the Thessalonican relics were not taken from there to Sirmium by Leontios, but the relics of the deacon St Demetrius who suffered martyrdom in Sirmium were transported to Thessalonica, and the Thessalonican tradition was only established later .

Interestingly, historical and archeological research later seemed to support Delehaye's hypothesis about the martyr's Sirmian origin with a number of further evidences. Jacques Zeiller in his work on Christianity of the southern Danube provinces, for example, accepting Delehaye's view explains the transfer of the cult with the invasion of the Huns. The Huns, in fact, were arriving in large numbers in the Balkans at the beginning of the 5th century, and they conquered and destroyed Sirmium, the capital of the province of Illyricum in 441 as well. At the time of the siege of Sirmium, however, the Roman administration (namely the prefect and his office) fled to Thessalonica. According to Zeiller, then, the fleeing prefect may have taken the relics of St Demetrius to Thessalonica, and the Thessalonican tradition might have been established along with the foundation of the basilica, at the end of the 5th to the beginning of the 6th centuries.¹⁵

In 1926 András Alföldi, who attempted to identify the prefect Leontios mentioned in the passions, came to the conclusion that he was identical to a prefect of Constantinople of the same name.¹⁶ This Leontios before having been promoted to the position in Constantinople, probably became prefect of Illyricum around 434, and, as Alföldi argues, he must have had to flee the barbarian invasions threatening Sirmium in 441.¹⁷ The English archeologist Michael Vickers, unaware of Alföldi's study, arrived at the same conclusion, trying to identify the prefect mentioned by the passions as the aforementioned Leontios. According to his hypothesis, the passions were still fully aware of the prefect's name; however, in order to emphasize the glory of Thessalonica, they reversed the events. Leontios, therefore, probably did not take relics from Thessalonica to Sirmium, but rather carried them from Sirmium to Thessa-

endroit, l'indice fourni par le martyrologe porteraient à croire que le tombeau de saint se trouvait plutôt à Sirmium et la relique enseglentée à Thessalonique.»

¹⁴ DELEHAYE, Les légendes (as footnote 1 above) 107: "je ne sais que quel aspect anormal à la gloire posthume de St Démétrius".

¹⁵ J. ZEILLER, Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l'Empire Romain. Paris 1918, 82–83.

¹⁶ On the person of the prefect see below p. 164–166.

¹⁷ A. ALFÖLDI, Der Untergang der Römerherrschaft in Pannonien. II. Berlin/Leipzig 1926, 96 footnote 1: "daß ... Leontius die Reliquien des Demetrius aus Sirmium nach Thessalonica bringt und nicht umgekehrt."

lonica whilst fleeing the Huns, and thus established the martyr's cult in Thessalonica.¹⁸

The archaeological excavations in the St Demetrius basilica at the beginning of the 20th century produced similarly interesting results. For in 1917 the basilica was badly damaged in a fire, which nevertheless opened up a number of previously inaccessible areas to archaeological exploration. An unusual cross-shaped pit was uncovered in the course of these excavations, in which a vessel containing a kind of brownish-coloured powder was found.¹⁹ The first explanations naturally considered the unearthed area to be the martyr's tomb. Soon, however, André Grabar, on the basis of some Greek and Balkan parallels, regarded the cross-shaped pit as the *enkainion* of the basilica.²⁰ Regularly the *enkainion* had to contain relics, preferably those of the patron saint of the church. The vessel, therefore, should also contain some relics of St Demetrius, but it seems improbable that the brown powder represents the mortal remains of the martyr. According to some, it is more likely to be the remains of the bloody clothing of St Demetrius,²¹ whereas others believe the vessel contains "blood-soaked" earth, soil discoloured by the blood of the martyr, the so-called *lythron*, a popular type of relic in the 6th century.²² What seems most certain, however, is that the martyr's mortal remains could not have been present in Thessalonica by the time of the foundation of the basilica. Consequently, the church, in sharp contrast with what the passions unanimously relate, was not built above the tomb of St Demetrius.

Interestingly, this view is confirmed by certain passages of the *Miracles of Saint Demetrius* too, which suggest that the 7th century compiler of the collection, Archbishop John of Thessalonica, did not know exactly whether the relics were indeed in the church or not.²³ This is equally confirmed by the fact

¹⁸ M. VICKERS, Sirmium or Thessaloniki? A Critical Examination of the St. Demetrius Legend. *BZ* 67 (1974) 337–350.

¹⁹ First described by G. and M. SOTERIOU, The Basilica of St. Demetrius [in Greek]. Athens 1952, 61–62.

²⁰ A. GRABAR, *Martyrium: Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique*. I. Paris 1946, 456.

²¹ According to the Soterious (as footnote 19, 61 above), the powder is dried remnants of blood collected by the martyr's servant as told in the *Passio altera* (ASS Oct. IV, 1780, 94D: τὸ ὀράριον τοῦ Ἁγίου, ἐν αὐτῷ ἀνελέξατο τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ), while Lemerle has interpreted it as the remainder of the ribbon (ὀράριον) soaked in the sacred blood. See P. LEMERLE, Saint-Démétrius de Thessalonique et les problèmes du martyrium et du transept, *Bulletin de Correspondence Hellénique* 77 (1953) 660–694, here 661.

²² On the various interpretations of the find, see SKEDROS, Saint Demetrios of Thessaloniki (as footnote 5 above) 59.

²³ In the first chapter of the first book of the *Miracle*, for example, one can read: "where the relics are told to lie" (Cf. P. LEMERLE, Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de Saint Démétrius. I. Paris 1979, 66: τὸ λεγόμενον κιβώριον..., ἐνθα φασί τινες κεῖσθαι ὑπὸ γῆν τὸ

that the Thessalonican clergy was unable to provide relics for Constantinople even after repeated requests from various Byzantine emperors. These appeals were either refused,²⁴ or fulfilled by a “supplementary” relic, such as a container of the “fragrant soil” from the martyr’s church, presented to Justinian in the 6th century,²⁵ or later the *myron*, a miraculous oil flowing from the tomb.²⁶

Based on the above facts, Michael Vickers in 1974 reconstructed the early history of the St Demetrius cult the following way. According to him, the Sirmians fleeing from the Hun onslaught – most likely led by the Sirmian prefect at the time, Leontius – brought with them some relics of their local deacon-martyr, Demetrius. After their arrival in Thessalonica, they placed the relics in a smaller building, until a real church was erected for them. This temporary building, he believes, is the smaller construction mentioned by the *Passio prima* as “a small format building”,²⁷ later transformed into the martyr’s impressive basilica.²⁸ According to Vickers, the martyrdom was originally commemorated on April 9th, the date appearing in the martyrologies, whereas the traditional feast of Demetrius on October 26th originated presumably in the date when the relics were transported to Thessalonica.²⁹

Vicker’s conclusions were apparently supported by the subsequent archaeological excavations in the Thessalonican basilica. For the vestiges of a smaller building predating the basilica were found as early as after the 1917 fire. This building might have been present at the time of the arrival of the relics in Thessalonica, or it might have been the sanctuary which was then constructed

πανάγιον αὐτοῦ λειψάνον). For this and similar cases, see LEMERLE, Saint-Démétrius (as footnote 21 above) 665–667.

²⁴ As in the case of Emperor Maurice, who at the end of the 6th century wrote a letter to Eusebius bishop of Thessalonica requesting a relic of the saint. However, Eusebius tactfully declined to fulfill it claiming that no one knows where the relics were and those who had firm faith in their hearts did not need such forms of contact with the martyr. See LEMERLE, *Les plus anciens recueils* (as footnote 23 above) 89.

²⁵ According to the letter of Eusebius to the emperor Maurice, Justinian also attempted to acquire some relics from Thessalonica. He has even sent some people to dig them out from the basement of the church, but a flame sprang up before them and a voice was heard forbidding them to dig further. Instead, he had to be satisfied with a “supplementary” gift, that of the fragrant soil from the saint’s supposed tomb, the so-called *lythron*. See LEMERLE, *Les plus anciens recueils* (as footnote 23 above) 90, lines 8–10.

²⁶ Use of the *myron* as a relic is proved most notably by the ampullae found in ever greater numbers starting from the 10th century both in private and official use. See A. GRABAR, *Quelques reliquaires de saint Démétrios et le martyron du saint a Salonique*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5 (1950) 3–28.

²⁷ DELEHAYE, *Les Légendes* (as footnote 1 above) 262: οἰκίαν ἐπὶ μικροῦ πάνυ σχήματος.

²⁸ VICKERS (as footnote 18 above) 346–350.

²⁹ VICKERS, *ibid.* 349.

for them.³⁰ Research indicated, however, that the basilica itself was built after the fall of Sirmium and the supposed relocation of the prefect from Sirmium to Thessalonica in 441, presumably above the earlier, smaller building, around the end of the 5th or the beginning of the 6th centuries.³¹

From the 1970s onwards Delehayé's theory of the Sirmian origin as elaborated by Zeiller and Vickers has become widely accepted in hagiographical research and the study of Byzantine literature. Today almost all of the most important reference books indicate that Saint Demetrius had originally been a Sirmian martyr, and it was only later that his cult was connected with Thessalonica as a consequence of the turbulent era of the great migrations.³²

Nonetheless, Greek scholars have published again and again articles and monographs trying to refute the above mentioned arguments and to uphold the Thessalonican origin of the martyr. The first such text was published almost immediately after Vickers' paper³³ and was followed by a number of similar

³⁰ This could possibly be the small-format construction mentioned in the *Passio prima*, as footnote 4 above, and SOTERIOU (as footnote 19 above) 37–47. Compare: J.-M. SPIESER, Thessalonique et ses monuments du IV^e au VI^e siècle. Contribution à l'étude d'une ville paléochrétienne. Athènes-Paris 1984, 214.

³¹ According to Spieser the basilica was founded in 510 (SPIESER, as footnote 30 above, 165–213) whereas according to Cormack in 500 (R. CORMACK, The Making of a Patron Saint: The Powers of Art and Ritual in Byzantine Thessaloniki. *World Art: Themes of Unity and Diversity*, ed. I. LAVIN. Pennsylvania 1989, 3, 549.), and Skedros believes it was between 475–500 (SKEDROS, Saint Demetrios, as footnote 5, 37–39 above). Speck has similar views: P. SPECK, De miraculis Sancti Demetrii, qui Thessalonica profugus venit oder Ketzerisches zu den Wundergeschichten des heiligen Demetrius und zu seiner Basilika in Thessalonike, *Poikila Byzantina, Varia IV* 12 (1993) 257–261.

³² See, for example R. AUBERT, Art. Démétrius de Thessalonice, *Dictionnaire d'Histoire et Géographie Ecclésiastique* 14 (Paris 1960) 1493–1499 or V. SAXER, Art. Demetrios the Martyr, *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* I. (Cambridge 1992) 225, ill. R. JANIN, Art. Demetrio di Tessalonica, *Bibliotheca Sanctorum* IV. (Roma 1964) 556–564; M. JARAK, Martyres Pannoniae: The Chronological Position of the Pannonian Martyrs in the Course of Diocletian's Persecution. Westillyricum und Nordostitalien in der spätrömischen Zeit, in: *Westillyricum und Nordostitalien in der spätrömischen Zeit*, ed. R. BRATOŽ. Ljubljana 1996, 263–289: 274–276; R. BRATOŽ, Verzeichnis der Opfer der Christenverfolgungen in den Donau- und Balkanprovinzen, in: *Diokletian und die Tetrarchie: Aspekte einer Zeitenwende*, ed. A. DEMANDT/A. GOLTZ/H. SCHLANGE-SCHÖNINGEN. Berlin 2004, 209–251, here 217–218.

³³ G.J. THEOCHARIDES, Sirmium or Thessalonike? A reexamination of a critical examination of the legend about St. Demetrius *Makedonika* 16 (1976) 269–306 [in Greek with English summary on p. 307–308.]

articles.³⁴ Recently another Greek scholar, James C. Skedros, summed up the findings of earlier Greek research in a complete monograph.³⁵

Although Skedros repeatedly states that his objective is not to determine the origin of the cult of Saint Demetrius³⁶ he tackles the problem in a number of places in his book. Of course, as most Greek scholars, Skedros does not accept Delehaye's hypothesis about Demetrius' Sirmian origin. Instead, he represents a standpoint that itself is something of a peculiar mix of views. He in fact rejects the documentary value of the martyrologies and instead attempts to reconstruct the origin of the cult relying on the text of the passions. And although he does not share Delehaye's view that always the shorter and simpler passion is more historically authentic and earlier,³⁷ he accepts only the *Passio prima* as a trustworthy source. Moreover, he considers the elements of the Leontios-narrative in the *Passio altera* concerning Sirmium (the narrative about the origin of the church in Sirmium and the Demetrius relics therein) a late fiction which was inserted in the text during the 8th century to explain the Sirmian veneration of Saint Demetrius, a very prominent cult at the time.³⁸

According to Skedros, by the 8th century the cult of Saint Demetrius in Sirmium had become so significant that "the city of Sirmium could easily have claimed a local allegiance to St. Demetrios".³⁹ All this, Skedros argues, can be explained by the fact that some time towards the beginning of the 6th century the Emperor Justinian – who devoted a great deal of effort to strengthen his empire's borders not only with fortifications, but also with the relics of saints, and thereby through their intercession – probably sent a Demetrius relic to Sirmium, which (according to Skedros' view) laid the long-term foundations of a local, Sirmian cult for St Demetrius.⁴⁰

In reality, however, this hypothesis of Skedros – along with a number of his other arguments⁴¹ – is highly improbable. For, as has already been noted, Justinian did indeed try to acquire Demetrius' relics from the Thessalonican church, even by force as the *Miracula* tell us. However, in the end he was

³⁴ A. MENTZOS, The veneration of St. Demetrios in Byzantine Period [in Greek]. Athens 1994 and Ch. BAKIRTZIS, Le culte de saint Démétrius, *Akten des XII. Internationalen Kongresses für christliche Archäologie* (Münster 1995) 58–68.

³⁵ SKEDROS, Saint Demetrios (as footnote 5 above).

³⁶ SKEDROS, *ibid.* 2: "It is not an investigation into the identity and history of the martyr Demetrios".

³⁷ SKEDROS, *ibid.* 64–65.

³⁸ SKEDROS, *ibid.* 22–27.

³⁹ SKEDROS, *ibid.* 28.

⁴⁰ SKEDROS, *ibid.* 27–28.

⁴¹ As, for example, his views on the martyrologies which he believes to be untrustworthy concerning the early martyrs of Thessalonica. On the critic of this attitude, see WOODS (as footnote 11 above) 222–223. More generally see the review of X. LEQUEUX, *AnBoll* 119 (2000) 168–170.

unsuccessful and instead of the martyr's body he had to settle for the "fragrant soil" from the church,⁴² which, of course, "he relished" – as the *Miracula* state – "as if it were in fact the martyr's real body".⁴³ However, it is especially this last comment which makes it seem unusual that he would place this precious "supplementary" relic obtained with such difficulty in so remote a town as Sirmium, which during his reign was not even under Byzantine rule.

For after the Huns conquered the city in 441–442, not much later it was ruled by the Ostrogoths, then by the Gepids, and then again by the Goths.⁴⁴ The rule of the Goths over Sirmium was recognized by the Emperor Anastasius in a separate contract in 510 AD.⁴⁵ Although it is true that in 535 Justinian has managed to reconquer Sirmium, his rule, however, was short-lived and the Barbarians almost immediately retook possession of the city.⁴⁶ Therefore, it seems very improbable that Justinian would have placed relics in the barely reconquered town, without any of the sources mentioning such an event.⁴⁷ However, even if we accept the historicity of such an assumption, it still appears very unlikely that the relics allegedly located in the city by Justinian in the sixth century would be able to create such a strong Demetrius-tradition which could survive by the 8th century and induce Sirmians to "claim a local allegiance to St. Demetrios".⁴⁸

However, the most astonishing attempt to solve the difficult problem of the "Sirmium or Thessalonica" question is that elaborated by David Woods who wanted to connect the Thessalonican Demetrius with two Spanish military martyrs, Emeterius and Chelidonius. On the basis of the account of Prudentius

⁴² As footnote 25 above.

⁴³ LEMERLE, *Les plus anciens recueils* (as footnote 23 above) 90: ὅπερ μετὰ πάσης ἀπέλαβε χαρᾶς, ὡς αὐτὸ τοῦ μάρτυρος τὸ σῶμα δεξάμενος.

⁴⁴ See M. MIRKOVIĆ, *Sirmium – Its History from the I. Century AD to 582 AD*, in: *Sirmium I. Archaeological Investigations in Syrmian Pannonia*. Beograd 1971, 45–54.

⁴⁵ On this contract and the sources of it, see E. STEIN, *Zur Geschichte von Illyricum im V-VII. Jahrhundert*, *Rheinisches Museum NF* 74 (1925) 354–364, here 362–363.

⁴⁶ According to Procopius (*Bellum Gothicum* I,7, 1–10, ed. H. B. DEWING. London 1978, 438) "the Gepaedes have taken possession of Sirmium at the moment the Emperor Justinian took it away from the Goths", see also: E. STEIN, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*. Paris 1959, II, 435; F. E. WOZNIAK, *East Rome, Ravenna and Western Illyricum: 454–536 AD*, *Historia* 30 (1981) 351–382, here 381; MIRKOVIĆ (as footnote 44 above) 52.

⁴⁷ See the objections against Skedros' view by Woods (WOODS, as footnote 11 above, 225–226), who writes that with this hypothesis Skedros "finds himself in the position of denying the translation of relics from Thessalonica to Sirmium as attested by the literary tradition, while assuming a similar such translation at some undetermined later date that has left no trace in the tradition whatsoever."

⁴⁸ Especially since Sirmium – although the Byzantine troops once again succeeded in reconquering the city in 567 – not much later came finally under Avar rule as a result of a long and cruel siege in 582. The inhabitants fled, and the city was in ruins for a long time. On these events, see below footnote 105.

regarding the relics of these two martyrs (interestingly a ring and a scarf just like in the case of St Demetrius) he argues that “the cult of St. Demetrius has its origin in some misunderstanding concerning the presence of some alleged relics of St Emeterius at Thessalonica”⁴⁹ whose name was simply misread as Demetrius.

This almost grotesque hypothesis, which was refuted almost immediately on the subsequent pages of the same journal where it was published,⁵⁰ marks clearly the nature of the hypotheses surrounding the “Sirmium or Thessalonica” problem. So one cannot but agree with Woods who at the end of his provocative article writes that his reconstruction is no more speculative, “than the hypothesis that currently holds sway, that St. Demetrius of Thessalonica is identifiable with the St. Demetrius the Deacon of Sirmium”.⁵¹

Although this objection seems true and the hypothetical character of Delehaye’s view on the martyr’s Sirmian origin is always acknowledged in scholarship,⁵² in contrast with the “speculative” attempt by Woods, it can be supported by the historical and archaeological evidences listed above. That is why one can only wonder that adherents to the Delehaye hypothesis have never tried to compare the Demetrius problem with the cases of other Sirmian martyrs, whose later history – in many respects similar to the fate of St Demetrius – may shed some more light on the origin of his cult and contribute to a better solution of the “Sirmium or Thessalonica” problem. In the following, then, a comparison will be made between the afterlife of some other Pannonian martyrs and the cult of St Demetrius and on the basis of the results gained, a new reconstruction of the history of Demetrius’ cult will be formulated.

The Illyrian Parallels

In the 5th and 6th centuries there were numerous Pannonian martyrs’ relics taken to other cities, to flee migrating barbarian troops, and in their new homes there were new, independent local traditions born around the figure of these “fugitive” saints. In such important cultural and religious centres as Rome or Aquileia a local cult of these Pannonian martyrs had already come into existence even before the translation of the relics had taken place. Later, these

⁴⁹ WOODS (as footnote 11 above) 230.

⁵⁰ J. C. SKEDROS, Response to David Woods, *The Harvard Theological Review* 93 (2000) 235–239.

⁵¹ WOODS (as footnote 11 above) 234.

⁵² See e. g. Lequeux, who in his argumentation in favour of Delehaye’s concept notes, that “Il s’agit bien sûr d’une hypothèse”: LEQUEUX (as footnote 41 above) 170.

local traditions, and in some cases under the influence of the later arrival of the relics, went through rather interesting transformations.

Quirinus

One of the best-known Pannonian martyrs is Quirinus, the bishop of Siscia (today Sisak in Slovenia) who was captured during Diocletian's persecution and executed in 304 in the territory of Savaria (today North-West Hungary), where a basilica was erected above his relics.⁵³ At the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 5th centuries the martyr was a widely known and popular saint. Even the Chronicle of Jerome pays tribute to his suffering,⁵⁴ and the famous Latin poet Prudentius wrote a hymn in his honour.⁵⁵ His name, as the bishop-martyr of Pannonian Savaria, appears of course in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*.⁵⁶ At the beginning of the 5th century, however, when the invasion of the Huns began to pose an increasing risk to the people of Savaria, the local congregation was forced to make a sudden decision, of which a paragraph of the passion of Quirinus states:

When, however, the Barbarians overran the territory of Pannonia, and the Christians fled Savaria, they took with them the holy body of the martyr-bishop, Quirinus. They placed it next to the third milestone on the Via Appia [in Rome] at the basilica of the Apostles Peter and Paul, where they once lay and where Christ's holy martyr, Sebastian rests in a place called Catacumbas. There was a church dedicated in his honour which was worthy of them, ... in which the saint's presence manifests itself to this very day.⁵⁷

⁵³ On Quirinus and his basilica, see E. TÓTH, Late Antique Imperial Palace in Savaria (The Questions of the so-called Quirinus Basilica), *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae* 25 (1973) 117–137; M. JARAK (as footnote 32 above) 278–280; D. GÁSPÁR, Christianity in Roman Pannonia: An Evaluation of Early Christian Finds and Sites from Hungary. Oxford 2002, 116–118; R. BRATOŽ, Verzeichnis (as footnote 32 above) 212–213.

⁵⁴ Hieron. Chron. a. 308 (*GCS Eusebius VII*. Ed Helm, Rudolf, 229.).

⁵⁵ Prudentius, Peristephanon VII. (*CSEL*, 61, 362–365).

⁵⁶ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* (as footnote 8 above) [70]: *In Sabaria civitate Pannoniae Quirini*.

⁵⁷ TH. RUINART, *Acta sincera martyrum*. Ratisbonae 1859, 524: *Facta autem incursione Barbarorum in partes Pannoniae populus Christianus de Scarabetensi urbe Romam fugiens, sanctum corpus Quirini Episcopi et Martyris afferentes, secum deduxerunt. Quem via Appia milliario tertio sepelierunt in basilica Apostolorum Petri et Pauli, ubi aliquando jacuerunt, et ubi S. Sebastianus Martyr Christi requiescit, in loco qui dicitur Catacumbas: aedificantes nomini ejus dignam ecclesiam ... ubi praestantur beneficia ejus usque in hodiernum diem.*

The martyr's abovementioned church is still standing, and it is perhaps one of the most beautiful Roman catacombs,⁵⁸ but nonetheless it did not become the final resting place of the relics. Some fragments ended up in other cities, for example in Fulda or Tegernsee in Germany, and probably this is how Aquileia in northern Italy acquired them.⁵⁹ However, for the inhabitants of the city he might have been a martyr who apart from his name was completely unknown, so, as a kind of interpretation for the highly venerated, but presumably almost totally unknown martyr, a few decades later the name Quirinus appears among the names of the local bishops, as a successor to Saint Mark the Evangelist, the alleged founder of the episcopal see of Aquileia.⁶⁰

Hermogenes / Hermagoras

Another martyr from Illyricum, Hermagoras, lector of the church in Singidunum (today Belgrade), who is also mentioned in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* under the name Hermogenes, underwent a similar but perhaps more adventurous fate.⁶¹ Hermogenes also suffered martyrdom during

⁵⁸ Concerning the translation of the relics, see T. NAGY, A Quirinus reliquiák translációjának időpontja Pannonia prima későrómai sorsának tükrében (The Date of the Translation of Quirinus' Relics in Mirror of the History of Pannonia in Late Roman Period). *Regnum* 6 (1944–1946) 244–257.

⁵⁹ There still exists a reliquary in Grado (G. NOGA-BANAI, Workshop with Style. *BZ* 97 (2004) 531–542, here 539–541.) which – according to its inscription – contains some relics of Quirinus and which according to its recent interpretation was originally in the possession of the Aquileian clergy. Interestingly even the transfer of Quirinus' relics is preserved in the local historical tradition which holds that the relics were saved by the Aquileian bishop Paul to Grado in 568. See *Chronicon Gradense*, ed. G. MONTICOLO (*Fonti per la storia d'Italia*, 9). Roma 1890, 40.

⁶⁰ On Quirinus in the list of Aquileian bishops see *ASS Iun. I.* (1695) 381: “S. Marcus Euangelista, S. Hermagoras, S. Helarus, S. Chrysogonus, S. Quirinus”. Noteworthy is also the legend of St. Maximilianus (*ASS Oct. VI.* (1794) 54E) where there is mention about a certain Quirinus who originally was bishop of Lorch, but later elected to be the bishop of Aquileia where he was crowned as a martyr. On the Aquileian tradition, see R. EGGER, Der heilige Hermagoras, *Karinthia* 134–135 (1947) 16–39, here 27 and R. BRATOŽ, Krščanstvo v Ogleju in na vzhodnem vplivnem območju oglejske cerkve od začetkov do nastopa verske svobode. Ljubljana 1986, 180 and C. SOTINEL, Identité civique et christianisme: Aquilée du IIIe au VIe siècle. Rome 2005, 238.

⁶¹ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* (as footnote 8 above) [36]. The Bollandists in the 18th century had already alluded to the identity of the two saints, Hermogenes and Hermagoras. *ASS Aug IV.* (1739) 588. In 1911 this view was adopted by S. RITIG, Martyrologij srijemsko-panonske metropolije, *Bogoslovska smotra* 2 (1911) 353–358, and later by T. NAGY, Die Geschichte des Christentums in Pannonien bis zu dem Zusammenbruch des römischen Grenzschatzes. Budapest 1939, 59. Detailed research by Rudolf Egger only confirmed this, compare: EGGER (as footnote 60 above) 217–219. His

Diocletian's persecution of Christians in 303–304, most likely in Sirmium, where he was brought from Singidunum under orders from the prefect.⁶² Although a written source similar to the narrative about the transfer of the Quirinus relics is not preserved, his relics probably arrived in Aquileia at the beginning of the 5th century as well, where by the 6th century all information had been forgotten concerning the martyr, except for his name. Therefore, when the city was forced to prove the entail of its episcopal see in order to strengthen its influence and authority, the martyr Hermogenes, due to a misreading of the saint's name as Hermagoras, became its first bishop. According to a legend born around this time, Hermagoras was consecrated by Saint Mark the Evangelist himself, who was sent by Peter the Apostle to found the episcopate, and he suffered martyrdom in Aquileia, in Nero's time.⁶³

Anastasia

Even stranger is the narrative about Saint Anastasia, who was also martyred in Sirmium and whose name is also found for the date of December 25. in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, as a martyr of Sirmium.⁶⁴ A highly interesting Roman legend, or rather a whole cycle of legends appears almost simultaneously to the martyrologies, sometimes even incorporated into certain of their manuscripts, which depicts her as a Roman lady of noble origin. The original Latin legend of Anastasia, which at the beginning of the 9th century was translated into Greek, combines four different narratives, connected with each other only by means of the figure of Anastasia. The narratives are in fact separate passions (of Chrysogonus; Agape, Chionia, Irene; Theotime and her children; and of Anastasia herself), in which Anastasia appears as the physical

view was accepted later by B. SARIA, Noricum und Pannonien, *Historia* 1 (1950) 436–486, here 450 and more recently by V. B. PROZOROV, The Passion of St Domnius: The Tradition of apostolic Succession in Dalmatia, *Scrinium* 2 (2004) 219–239, here 225–226. However, most Italian scholars have not accepted Egger's hypothesis: S. TRAMONTIN, Origini e sviluppi della leggenda marciiana, in: *Le origini della Chiesa di Venezia*, ed. E. TONON. Venice 1987, 167–186; G. CUSCITO, Martiri cristiani ad Aquileia e in Istria. Documenti archeologici e questioni agiografiche. Udine 1992, 17–26. See the detailed presentation of their arguments by R. BRATOŽ, Krščanstvo (as footnote 60 above) 41–68.

⁶² Compare the data of the passion: *ASS* Aug. IV (1739) 412–413.

⁶³ See the detailed argumentation by R. EGGER (as footnote 60 above) 225–240.

⁶⁴ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* (as footnote 8 above) [6]. On the Sirmian origins of her cult, see JARAK (as footnote 32 above) 284 and BRATOŽ, Verzeichnis (as footnote 32 above) 222.

and moral support for the suffering martyrs, and finally suffers martyrdom herself in Rome.⁶⁵

Interestingly however, up to the 6th century the relics of Anastasia were not present in Rome, for according to a ninth century historian, they were taken from Sirmium to Constantinople in the 5th century, probably as a result of the popularity of the legend.⁶⁶ It is perhaps not the relics, then, what stands in the background of the “Roman legend” of Anastasia, but a mysterious 4th century church dedicated to Anastasia. The origin of the church, which most surely bore the name of its founder, Anastasia, sister of the emperor Constantine,⁶⁷ was all but lost by the end of the 4th and beginning of the 5th centuries. Thus a narrative of a martyr who was later to be called Saint Anastasia the Roman evolved during the 5th and 6th centuries, as an explanation for the name of the church.⁶⁸ According to the legend, Anastasia is of course of Roman ancestry, born to a noble Christian family. Previously married, she lives a chaste life, and devotes all her energy to the support of the martyrs. Nevertheless, the narrative

⁶⁵ The Latin and Greek versions of the text in H. DELEHAYE, *Étude sur le légendier romain*. Bruxelles 1936, 221–249; and 250–258.

⁶⁶ The translation of the relics is dated to the year 470 AD by Theophanes the Confessor (C. DE BOOR, *Theophanis chronographia*, 1. Leipzig 1883, 111: Τῷ δ' αὐτῷ ἔτει ἠνέχθη τὸ λείψανον τῆς ἁγίας Ἀναστασίας ἀπὸ τοῦ Σερμίου καὶ κατετέθη ἐν τῷ ναῷ αὐτῆς ἐν τοῖς Δομνίνου ἐμβόλοις). On the church of Anastasia in Constantinople, see L. RYDEN, A Note on Some References to the Church of St Anastasia in Constantinople in the 10th century, *Byzantion* 44 (1974) 198–210. The church, from where the relics were taken to Constantinople was probably the chapel of St. Anastasia next to the St. Demetrius church, mentioned in the last lines of the *Passio altera: πλησίον τοῦ σεβασμίου οἴκου τῆς καλλινίκου μάρτυρος Ἀναστασίας* (ASS Oct. IV, 1780, 95 A).

⁶⁷ Early Roman churches often bore the name of the founder, later, however, when the origin of the name faded, it was interpreted as the name of a saint, on the analogy of churches named after martyrs and other saints. For the title of St. Anastasia and its connection to Anastasia, sister of Constantine, see V. SAXER, *La chiesa di Roma dal V al X secolo: amministrazione centrale e organizzazione territoriale*, in: *Roma nell'alto medioevo*. Spoleto 2001, 2, 493–637, here 559; R. LIZZI TESTA, *Aquileia e Sirmium fra agiografia e fondazioni titolari*, *Antichità Altoadriatiche* 57 (2004) 243–272, here 254–256 and also in R. LIZZI TESTA, *Senatori, popolo, papi: il governo di Roma al tempo dei Valentiniani*. Bari 2004, 117–118.

⁶⁸ Compare ZEILLER, *Les origines* (as footnote 15 above) 85–86, and DELEHAYE, *Étude* (as footnote 65 above) 158–161. Paul Devos later came to the same conclusion in connection with a version of the legend that had become independent. Compare: P. DEVOS, *Sainte Anastasie la vierge et la source de sa passion*, *AnBoll* 80 (1962) 33–51. Quite recently, Stefen Diefenbach has put forward a new hypothesis on the origin of the „Roman” Anastasia arguing that it was not the founder of the Roman church who gave the title Anastasia, but there were originally some relics – transported from Sirmium in the 5th century – deposited in the church, and it was because of the forgotten origin of these that a new legend was created to shed some light on the mysterious Anastasia. See S. DIEFENBACH, *Römische Erinnerungsräume: Heiligenmemoria und kollektive Identitäten im Rom des 3. bis 5. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* Berlin 2007, 351–353 and 373–376.

did preserve some of the saint's "Sirmian connection". In helping the martyrs Anastasia arrives in Sirmium, where she is imprisoned, repeatedly questioned and tortured, and finally taken by ship to the island of Palmaria, where she ultimately suffers martyrdom.⁶⁹ According to the view of Hippolyte Delehaye, the compiler of the narrative most probably knew well that the saint had suffered martyrdom originally in Sirmium; that is why he takes her to Sirmium for the sake of "historical truth", "where she is consequently captured, imprisoned, but immediately escapes because", – as Delehaye argues – "it should be avoided that a patron saint of a Roman church would be put to death in Sirmium".⁷⁰

The "Quattuor coronati"

Even more complicated is the problem of another Pannonian group of martyrs, the account on the sculptors Claudius, Nicostratus, Simpronianus and Castorius known by the name "The Four Crowned Martyrs". The Pannonian sculptors also suffered martyrdom during Diocletian's persecution of Christians, for they refused to make a statue of the god Aesculapius. The emperor sentenced them to death, and they were put in lead coffins and thrown into a nearby river. A passion attributed to an official called Porphyrius, originally written in Latin and later translated into Greek, recounted the narrative of their martyrdom.⁷¹ Besides the numerous chronological and topographical inconsistencies,⁷² there is a rather strange appendix at the end of the narrative. According to this short passage, after the death of the martyrs Diocletian travelled to Rome from Sirmium and there built a large temple for Aesculapius, where he forced everyone to sacrifice to the god.

And when all of them were forced to sacrifice, there were four officers who were also forced to make sacrifice. They, however, refused. This was immediately reported to the Emperor Diocletian, who then ordered them to be beaten there, in front of the statue, by iron rods. After having been tortured for a long time, they finally gave up their spirit. Their bodies were thrown to the dogs on the street, and there

⁶⁹ For the Sirmian section of the legend, see DELEHAYE, *Études* (as footnote 65 above) 221–249.

⁷⁰ DELEHAYE, *Études* (as footnote 65 above) 162: "Elle est jetée en prison mais bientôt délivrée, car il faut éviter de faire mourir à Sirmium la patronne d'un titre romain."

⁷¹ The edition of the Latin and Greek version: ASS Nov. III. (1910) 765–779.

⁷² The numerous errors and mistakes are listed in ASS Nov III. (1910) 759 and N. VULIĆ, *Quelques observations sur la Passio sanctorum coronatorum*, *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 11 (1934) 156–159.

they lay for five days. Then the holy Sebastian⁷³ and the bishop Miltiades⁷⁴ gathered their remains and buried them with other saints on the Via Labicana, at the third milestone from the city. However, since this happened two years later, but also on November 8. [as the martyrdom of the Pannonian sculptors], but the names of these saints were impossible to find, the holy bishop Miltiades decided that their feast day should be held under the name of Saint Claudius, Nicostratus, Simpronianus, and Castorius.⁷⁵

The two stories, namely that of the Pannonian sculptors and that of the anonymous Roman soldiers who were later venerated under the name of the sculptors, have kept researchers preoccupied for more than a century. Scholars have proposed a wide range of explanations to solve the problem,⁷⁶ but instead of becoming enmeshed in the tangled history of research on this question, let us simply mention the currently accepted explanation, which – as we shall see – provides numerous parallels with the problems concerning Saint Demetrius.

According to the scholarly consensus, the anonymous Roman soldier-martyrs are identical to the Pannonian martyrs, whose veneration was adopted in Rome during Constantine's reign by the Emperor's court, keenly interested in preserving the family's Illyrian traditions.⁷⁷ The site of their cult on the Via

⁷³ The "holy Sebastian" probably refers to the famous martyr Sebastian, for the Pannonian sculptors appear in his passion as well. See below footnote 79.

⁷⁴ Bishop Miltiades was a real person: he was Roman pope between 311–314. A. LUMPE, Art. Miltiades, Papst. *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* 5 (Herzberg 1993) 1537–1538.

⁷⁵ ASS Nov. III. (1910) 778–779: *Cumque omnes ad sacrificia compellerentur, quattuor quidam cornicularii compellebantur ad sacrificandum. Illis autem reluctantibus, nuntiatum est Dioclitiano augusto; quos iussit ante ipsud simulacrum ictu plumbatarum deficere. Qui cum diu caederentur, emiserunt spiritum. Quorum corpora iussit in platea canibus iactari; quae etiam corpora iacuerunt diebus quinque. Tunc beatus Sevastianus cum Militiadem episcopum collegit corpora et sepelivit in via Labicana, miliario ab urbe tertio, cum sanctis aliis in arenario. Quod dum eodem tempore sed post duos annos evenisset, id est sextum idus Novembris, et nomina eorum reperire minime potuissent, iussit beatus Miltiades episcopus ut sub nomina sanctorum Claudii, Nicostrati, Simproniani et Castorii anniversaria dies eorum recolatur.*

⁷⁶ For example ZEILLER (as footnote 15 above) 88–104; DELEHAYE, *Études* (as footnote 65 above) 64–73; NAGY, *Die Geschichte des Christentums* (as footnote 61 above) 61–65; D. SIMONYI, Sull' origine del toponimo 'Quinque ecclesiae' di Pécs, *Acta antiqua* 8 (1960) 165–184.; or more recently J. GUYON, Les Quatre Couronnés et l'histoire de leur culte des origines au milieu du IXe siècle, *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome. Antiquité* 87 (1975) 505–561 and JARAK (as footnote 32 above) 281–284 and BRATOŽ, Verzeichnis (as footnote 32 above) 221–222.

⁷⁷ Constantine and his family come from Illyricum, more precisely the city of Naissus (today Nis in Serbia), where the memory of the first Christian emperor's and his mother's, Saint Helen's local origins are alive to this day. Compare: T. D. BARNES, *The*

Labicana attests to this. The four saints venerated there, however, had been slowly forgotten, and by the 5th century their names appeared in various other legends completely unrelated to the original narrative of these saints, simply indicating the effort to explain their cult in the city of Rome.⁷⁸

At the end of the 6th century, however, when the Avars had definitively conquered the province of Illyricum, and along with it the city of Sirmium, a large number of refugees fled from the Balkans southward, and thereby to Rome as well.⁷⁹ Not only did these refugees bring with them the relics of their saints, as already mentioned, but they also brought the traditions connected to their saints and martyrs. This is how the “authentic”, fourth-century narrative of the four Pannonian sculptors’ suffering arrived in Rome towards the end of the 6th century.⁸⁰ As we have seen, however, by this time the Romans venerated the four soldier-martyrs buried on the Via Labicana as their own saints. Public opinion at the time, therefore, found itself in a quite awkward situation: They honoured the same four saints, using the same names, nonetheless the refugees as well as the inhabitants considered these saints to be their own. This is why it was decided that the two narratives – the original Pannonian passion and its later, local “Romanized” version – should somehow be reconciled, thereby creating the version of the four crowned martyrs known today, with the characteristic appendix explaining the local Roman tradition and reconciling it with the original narrative.⁸¹

New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine. Cambridge, Mass. 1982, 40–42. A different view is taken by DIEFENBACH, *Römische Erinnerungsräume* (as footnote 68 above) 345–348, who assumes that the early Roman cult of the Pannonian martyrs has originated in a church on the Mount Coelius (titulus Aemiliana) and not in a subterranean catacomb as that on the Via Labicana.

⁷⁸ All four appear in the passion of Saint Sebastian, and they convert to Christianity inspired by the suffering of the martyr. They are drowned by the soldiers – just like in the “original” narrative –, and they become martyrs. See the text in *ASS* Ian. II. (1643) 269.

⁷⁹ On these refugees, see MIRKOVIĆ (as footnote 44 above) 57, and GUYON, *Les Quatre Couronnés* (as footnote 76 above) 520, footnote 1 and V. POPOVIĆ, *Le dernière évêque de Sirmium*, *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 21 (1975) 91–111, here 108–110.

⁸⁰ Sirmium’s supposedly last bishop, Sebastian, who led the see between 567 and 582, probably fulfilled an important role in this. He led the refugees to Rome, and according to Popovic, he probably took part in the editing of the new passion (compare: Popović, *Le dernière évêque*, as footnote 79 above, 109–110.) It is perhaps a residue to his role that the passage at the end of the passion relates how the “holy Sebastian” helped gather and bury the remains of the Roman soldier-martyrs? (See the text cited above.)

⁸¹ GUYON, *Les Quatre Couronnés* (as footnote 76 above) 516–529.

Conclusions to draw

In addition to the fact that the later histories of the above-mentioned martyrs seem to complement and mutually explain each other, they also allow us to get some insight into the beginnings of the Thessalonican veneration of Saint Demetrius, as well. For we have seen that in the background of these later legends around the Pannonian martyrs there often lie relics saved from the barbarian intrusions, such as in the case of Quirinus or Hermagoras, while in other cases it is simply the cult of saints radiating from Pannonia or Illyricum to North Italy or even to Rome, which eventually could also have been enriched by some relics, as in the case of Anastasia or the “Four Crowned Martyrs”.

Why could this not have happened in the case of Saint Demetrius as well? We know that the Sirmian martyr-deacon was well-known enough that his veneration reached more distant churches as well, since his name appears even in the Syriac martyrology from the beginning of the 5th century.⁸² Moreover, an important basilica was built in his honour as early as the late 4th century in Ravenna.⁸³ His cult, then, could have easily arrived in Thessalonica at the end of the 4th or beginning of the 5th centuries as well, where a church might even have been built in his honour.⁸⁴ However, it is also possible that his veneration, similarly to the above-mentioned cases, was also enriched by some relics being transported to Thessalonica in the wake of the barbarian invasions, perhaps even after the fall of Sirmium in 441–442, as in the case of Anastasia whose relics were translated to Constantinople in 470.⁸⁵ However, some 100–150 years later there might have been new, local Thessalonican narratives and legends created around the figure of the mysterious martyr Demetrius. Just as we have seen through the above-mentioned examples, where the passing of some 100–150 years after the arrival of the cult to a new place proved more than enough to obscure the memory of the “original” traditions, and to allow

⁸² As footnote 8 above.

⁸³ The church is mentioned by the historian of the church of Ravenna, Agnellus, in his work *The Book of Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna* written in the beginning of the 9th century. (Agnelli qui et Andreas liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis, ed. O. HOLDER-EGGER, *MGH Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. VI-IX*. Hannover 1878, 271). Here he states in relation to the bishop Saint Apollinaris that once, when he was arrested, he was taken to a place about six miles from the city, where “today the old church of Saint Demetrius is standing” (*ubi ecclesia beati Demetrii antiqua structa est*). On the church itself, see G. CORTESI, *La basilica della casa bianca*, *Atti del I. Congresso Nazionale di Studi Bizantini (Archeologia – Arte)*. Ravenna 1966, 43–64.

⁸⁴ Perhaps this is the small-format building mentioned in the *Passio prima* and excavated by the archeologists. Compare above footnotes 4 and 30.

⁸⁵ See footnote 66 above.

new, local legends to be born in order to explain the veneration of the churches of the saints, of whom only the names had remained.

This is, then, what probably happened in the case of Saint Demetrius as well, whose basilica in Thessalonica – as we have already mentioned⁸⁶ – was probably founded in the first decade of the 6th century, about 100–150 years after the cult was thought to have been transported from Sirmium devastated by the Huns. Whereas the passions – since they all make mention of the Thessalonican basilica of Demetrius⁸⁷ – very probably stem from the period after the foundation of the martyr's basilica, for they try to give some kind of explanation for the existence of the church with their narrative about Leontios as its founder, a detail which is present in all three versions.⁸⁸

This hypothesis seems to be supported by a still unnoticed attempt to identify the often mentioned prefect Leontios. According to Jean-Michel Spieser, the prefect Leontios mentioned in all versions of the passion should be identical to the Illyrian prefect Leontios, who is referred to by a number of sources in connection with the year 510.⁸⁹ For in this case the information given by the *Passio prima*, stating that the church in Thessalonica was built by a prefect named Leontios, would perfectly match the results brought to light by archaeology and art history. The basilica – just as it is recorded in the passions – would have been built by an Illyrian prefect called Leontios, sometime at the very beginning of the 6th century. In this case there would be no need for the earlier, rather complicated and shaky conjectures concerning the identity of this mysterious prefect Leontios which seem to rest on quite dubious foundations.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ As footnote 31 above.

⁸⁷ SPIESER (as footnote 31 above) 214, footnote 315 who dates the *Passio prima* to the 6th century, while Skedros (SKEDROS, Saint Demetrius, as footnote 5, 24) puts the *Passio altera* to the 8th.

⁸⁸ The foundation of the church in Thessalonica by Leontios is recorded in all three versions of the passion, with the difference that while in the *Passio prima* (DELEHAYE, *Légendes grecques*, as above footnote 1, 262) there is only a simple narrative about Leontios and the new church in Thessalonica, in the *Passio altera* (ASS Oct. IV (1780), 94D) and following the latter also the *tertia* (ASS Oct. IV (1780) 102E–F), connects Leontios with the foundation of the Sirmian church as well.

⁸⁹ SPIESER (as footnote 30 above) 214 footnote 315. Joannes Lydus also mentions the prefect Leontios in his *De magistratibus* 3, 17. (A. C. BANDY, *Ioannes Lydus. On powers or the magistracies of the Roman state*. Philadelphia 1983, 158), and so does the *Codex Justiniani* at several places (CJ 7, 39.6; CJ 1, 12.2.9). See the detailed references by J. MARTINDALE, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, II (AD 395–527)*. Cambridge 1980, 672–673.

⁹⁰ It was only Vickers and Popović who took this possibility into account, but Vickers considered the year 510 to be too late for the foundation of the Thessalonican basilica, and, therefore, did not accept this identification. While Popović rejected this view as being not reconcilable with the translation of the relics from Sirmium to Thessalonica.

The Prefect Leontios of the *Passio prima*

In the 18th century, the prefect in question was identified by the Bollandist Cornelius Byaeus with a certain Leontios who was prefect of Illyricum between 412–413, and it was he who had been considered by Byaeus to be the founder of the Thessalonican church.⁹¹ This date, however, did not match the results of archeology and art history concerning the foundation date of the Thessalonican basilica, for the church, on the basis of its structure and style, seems to have been built later. Therefore, the view of András Alföldi and Michael Vickers cited above proved plausible, according to which the Leontios of the passions is identical to another Leontios, prefect of Constantinople who some time before his career in the capital – as Alföldi and Vickers argue – could possibly have been prefect of Illyricum.⁹² However, no sources report that Leontios of Constantinople might ever have led the province of Illyricum around 441, nor that he should have been the one who carried the Sirmian Demetrius relics from the Hunnic aggression to Thessalonica. What's more, he is even depicted as a kind of pagan intellectual who became famous of his efforts to renew the traditions of the Olympic Games in Constantinople,⁹³ which plan he finally had to give up due to the bitter resistance of St Hypatius and his monks.⁹⁴

Moreover, according to common scholarly opinion, the seat of the Illyrian prefect (the so-called *praefectus praetorio per Illyricum*) after the partition of the Roman Empire in 395 was no more in Sirmium, but in Thessalonica.⁹⁵ Therefore, when the Huns occupied Sirmium in 441–442, most probably a

See VICKERS, Sirmium or Thessaloniki (as footnote 18 above) 340, footnote 17 and V. POPOVIĆ, Die süddanubischen Provinzen in der Spätantike vom Ende des 4. bis zur Mitte des 5. Jh., in: Die Völker Südosteuropas im 6. bis 8. Jh., ed. B. HANSEL. München/Berlin 1987, 95–139, here 101: “könnte der illyrische Präfekt Leontios von 510 keinerlei Verbindung mit der Übertragung des Kultes stehen”.

⁹¹ *ASS* Oct. IV. (1790) 68C. This Leontius is listed as Leontius 5 by MARTINDALE, *Prosopography* (as footnote 89 above) 668.

⁹² See p. 148 above.

⁹³ See the references by MARTINDALE, *Prosopography* (as footnote 89 above) 669 who lists him as Leontius 9–10 and on the basis of Vickers' arguments, considers them as one and the same person.

⁹⁴ See Callinicus, *Vita Hypatii* 33,1–11. (ed. G. J.M. BARTELINK, *Sources chrétiennes* 177 (1971) 215–219). On these events, see F. R. TROMBLEY, *Hellenic Religion and Christianisation*, c. 370–529, II. Leiden, 1993, 83–85.

⁹⁵ See e.g. E. STEIN, *Zur Geschichte von Illyricum* (as footnote 45 above) 358 where he expressively writes that “die infolge der Reichsteilung von 395 geschaffene oströmische *praefectura praetorio per Illyricum* hatte ihren Sitz von Anfang an in Thessalonike und bestimmt nicht in Sirmium”.

prefect had not been residing in the city.⁹⁶ The flight of the prefect from the Huns, as assumed by Alföldi and Vickers, cannot be conclusively proved. There is only one single written source which mentions the escape of the prefect from Sirmium to Thessalonica, a decree of Emperor Justinian issued in 535, which reads as follows:

For since in ancient times there was a prefecture of Sirmium, the head of Illyria in civil and Episcopal matters, but it was subsequently, in the times of Attila, devastated, and Apraemius, the praetorian prefect of the Sirmian state fled to Thessalonica... And since at the present time our state has been increased through the grace of God, so that both banks of the Danube wash our cities... we have thought it necessary to transfer the prefecture, formerly constituted in Pannonia, to our nearby fatherherland [i. e. Justiniana Prima].⁹⁷

This novel, however, most probably contains a deliberate distortion. For in this law, the emperor created a new prefecture and thereby a new episcopal see as well in his native town of Justiniana Prima, not far from Sirmium (in the vicinity of what is today Caricin Grad). This prefecture was intended to oversee the northern part of Illyricum province, which was previously under Thessalonican rule, so the emperor had obviously curtailed the prerogatives of Thessalonica. Justinian then tried to justify this practical albeit probably not very popular decision among Thessalonicans with the obvious distortion that the prefecture used to be in the north, namely in Sirmium, and it had been transferred only temporarily to Thessalonica due to the devastation of Attila's Huns. So Justinian's decision to take the prefecture to Justiniana Prima, the successor of Sirmium, simply reinstated the old organization.⁹⁸ The only

⁹⁶ The same view is shared by J.-R. PALANQUE, *Essai sur la préfecture du prétoire du Bas-Empire*. Paris 1933, 52–56; POPOVIĆ, *Le dernière évêque* (as footnote 79 above) 104–105 and V. POPOVIĆ, *Die süddanubischen Provinzen* (as above 89 footnote) 106–108.

⁹⁷ Justinian, *Novella 11. 1–2.*: R. SCHOELL/W. KROLL (eds.), *Corpus iuris civilis, III. Novellae*. Berolini 1895, 94: *Cum enim in antiquis temporibus Sirmii praefectura fuerat constituta, ibique omne fuerat Illyrici fastigium tam in civilibus quam in episcopalibus causis, postea autem Attilanis temporibus eiusdem locis devastatis Apraemius praefectus praetorio de Sirmitana civitate in Thessalonicam profugus venerat,...* *Cum igitur in praesenti deo auctore ita nostra respublica aucta est, ut utraque ripa Danubii iam nostris civitatibus frequentaretur,...* *necessarium duximus ipsam gloriosissimam praefecturam, quae in Pannonia fuerat constituta, iuxta Pannoniam in nostra felicissima patria collocare.* English translation by F. H. BLUME, *Annotated Justinian Code* (<http://uwacadweb.u-wyo.edu/blume&justinian/novel1-20/novel1-20.htm>).

⁹⁸ This is interpretation of the law given by STEIN, *Zur Geschichte von Illyricum* (as footnote 45 above) 357–359; P. LEMERLE, *Invasions et migrations dans les Balkans*, *Revue Historique* 211 (1954) 265–308, here 267–269; POPOVIĆ, *Le dernière évêque* (as footnote 79 above) 102–104 and POPOVIĆ, *Die süddanubischen Provinzen* (as footnote 89 above) 107.

existing textual source for a possible translation of the seat of the prefect from Sirmium to Thessalonica, the famous Novella 11 of Justinian, then, cannot be used as trustworthy evidence concerning the history of the Illyrian prefecture.⁹⁹

The prefecture of Illyricum, therefore, had moved to Thessalonica more than a century before the basilica was founded, and what's more, even the power of the prefecture itself had not extended to Sirmium which since 441 was occupied again and again by various barbarian forces. So Leontios, the founder of the church in Thessalonica cannot be identical to the alleged prefect of Illyricum as argued by Alföldi and Vickers, and the whole hypothesis about Leontius' saving of the relics from Sirmium to Thessalonica seems to be a late and apparently mistaken scholarly fiction. Therefore the only remaining claimant for the foundation of the church is the sixth century prefect Leontios as proposed by Spieser. It is only him who fits perfectly with the result of the archaeological and historical research concerning the basilica just as it is recorded by the *Passio prima*.

What shall we make then of the Sirmium subplot in the *Passio altera*, the narrative about Leontios' founding of another, Sirmian Demetrius church and his translation of some of the martyr's relics from Thessalonica to Sirmium?

The prefect Leontios of the *Passio altera* – the Sirmian connections

The “Sirmian additions”, in my view, seem to play a similar role in the *Passio altera* as the narrative about St. Anastasia's capture, interrogation and torture in Sirmium placed in the middle of her later legend, namely they preserve details from the original story of the saint. For why else would the *Passio altera* mention that the giant gladiator, Lyaeus, the opponent of Demetrius' disciple, Nestor “defeated many not only in Rome, but in Sirmium as well”,¹⁰⁰ a piece of information that would otherwise be impossible to interpret. It would be difficult to give any other explanation to the mention of Sirmium alongside Rome, the center of the Empire and Thessalonica, the location of the narrated events and – what is apparently not less important – the seat of the Illyrian prefecture as well, if there were no connections at all between Demetrius and Sirmium.

⁹⁹ See the harsh judgement of STEIN, *Zur Geschichte von Illyricum* (as footnote 45 above) 359: “Damit ist erwiesen, daß Just. Nov. 11. als Geschichtsquelle für das V. Jahrhunderts wertlos ist.”

¹⁰⁰ ASS Oct. IV. (1780) 91A: οὐ μόνον ἐν Ῥώμῃ πολλοὺς εἰς τὸν λοῦδον ἀνηρήκη, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ Σερμίῳ.

The same is true for another passage in the *Passio altera* providing a precise description of the location of the Demetrius church in the town of Sirmium,¹⁰¹ and also for the whole narrative regarding its foundation by Leontius, which apparently plays an aetiological role as well. For it is typical of hagiographic literature to explain a current situation, building, or tradition posteriorly with a new narrative: a miracle or legend of the saint, or even by amending or rewriting his original story, just as we have observed in all of the above-mentioned Illyrian parallels. The *Passio altera* then obviously attempts to explain the origin of the St Demetrius church in Sirmium, which for some reason regained importance at the time of its composition.

But how could Sirmium and the Sirmian St Demetrius church have come to the centre of attention in Thessalonica at the time of the birth of the *Passio altera* so much that its author knew even the exact location of the martyr's church in Sirmium what he described as "near the laudable sanctuary of the victorious martyr Anastasia"? Such topographic awareness requires a forensic knowledge of the location, which would have only been possible during Byzantine rule of the city, or immediately afterwards, among exiles fleeing from their home. We know that Sirmium was under Byzantine rule for a very short time, from 567 till 582,¹⁰² and even received an independent bishopric, led probably until the Avar conquest of 582 by Bishop Sebastian, who has already been mentioned in connection with the "Four Crowned Martyrs".¹⁰³ The *Passio altera* therefore was born sometime towards the end of this fifteen year period, probably after the 582 conquest of the city, when the fleeing Sirmians looked for refuge in the more distant and safer centres of the Empire.

After the fall of Sirmium, as we have seen in connection with the "Four Crowned Martyrs", one part of the Pannonian Christians fled to Rome, and the birth of the new "amalgam-legend" of the "Four Crowned Martyrs" combining the Pannonian and the local Roman traditions is probably related to their appearance there.¹⁰⁴ This is what probably should have happened in the case of the *Passio altera* as well, which also seems to be related to the appearance of Christians fleeing south of Sirmium to the capital of the province, Thessalon-

¹⁰¹ ASS Oct. IV. (1780) 95A: πλησίον τοῦ σεβασμίου οἴκου τῆς καλλινίκου μάρτυρος Ἀναστασίας.

¹⁰² On the Byzantine period of the city see the sources collected in S. SZÁDECZKY-KARDOSS, Ein Versuch zur Sammlung und chronologischen Anordnung der griechischen Quellen der Awarengeschichte nebst einer Auswahl von anderssprachigen Quellen. Szeged 1972, 66–71 and their interpretation by MIRKOVIC (as footnote 44 above) 52–57 and more recently W. POHL, Die Awaren: Ein Steppenvolk im Mitteleuropa, 567–822 N. Chr. München 2002, 52–70.

¹⁰³ On the bishopry and bishop Sebastian, as footnote 80 above.

¹⁰⁴ See page 161 above.

ica.¹⁰⁵ It is then the presence of these immigrants which may lie in the background of the sudden appearance of Sirmium and its St Demetrius tradition in Thessalonica, and the reason for the curious familiarity with Sirmian topography as well.

In light of all this, therefore, the *Passio altera* seems but a reconciliation of two distinct Demetrius traditions, the Sirmian and the local Thessalonican, but in sharp contrast with the case of the “Four Crowned Martyrs”, strictly from the point of view of the “receiving party”, the Thessalonicans. For if – to quote Delehayé – “the patron saint of a Roman church cannot die in Sirmium”,¹⁰⁶ where else could the emergent and quite disturbing Sirmian Demetrius tradition have originated than from Thessalonica alone, which had since become the new home of the martyr.

The author of the *Passio altera* – who must have been active some hundred years after the proposed early 6th century foundation of the church – worked out his explanation of the Sirmian tradition by trying to compose a historically valid narrative. Based on Justinian’s Novel 11, he was probably familiar with the tradition that Sirmium had once been the seat of the Illyrian prefecture.

The Novel would have had a considerable impact on Byzantine hagiography for we find its echoes even in the eight century *Life of St David of Thessalonica*. According to this legend, David, a sixth century solitary of Thessalonica, was asked by the archbishop of the city to travel to Constantinople and persuade the emperor Justinian to bring back the prefecture and the archbishopric to Thessalonica from its new place, the emperor’s “fatherland”, Justiniana Prima.¹⁰⁷ Curiously however, when speaking about the new location of the prefecture, instead of Justiniana Prima the text consistently mentions the town of Sirmium and depicts David as negotiating to avoid the diminution of Thessalonica in favour of Sirmium.¹⁰⁸ The inclusion of Sirmium

¹⁰⁵ After the capture of the city in 582, the inhabitants – exhausted after the siege and starvation lasting several months – could leave Sirmium unharmed. Indeed, most of the exiles fled towards the south, in the direction of Moesia and Dalmatia, according to the contemporary inscriptions. For the details on the siege, see the sources in: SZÁDECZKY-KARDOSS (as footnote 102 above) 71–72. There are two inscriptions by fleeing Sirmian Christians found in Salona: A. DOBÓ, *Inscriptiones extra fines Pannoniae Daciaeque repertae*. Budapest 1975, Nr. 250–251. For the evaluation of these sources, see MIRKOVIC (as footnote 44 above) 57–58; V. POPOVIĆ, *Les témoins des invasions avaro-slaves dans l’Illyricum byzantin. Mélanges de l’École Française de Rome. Antiquité* 87 (1975) 445–504, here 487 and POHL (as footnote 102 above) 70–75.

¹⁰⁶ Compare DELEHAYÉ, *Études* (as footnote 65 above) 162: «... il faut éviter de faire mourir à Sirmium la patronne d’un titre romain.»

¹⁰⁷ V. ROSE, *Leben des heiligen David von Thessalonike*. Berlin 1887, 9.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. ROSE, *ibid.* 9: ὅπως ἀναγάγη τῷ θειοτάτῳ βασιλεῖ Ἰουστινιανῷ, ... ὅπως μεταστήσῃ τὴν ἐπαρχότητα ἐκ τοῦ Σιρμείου εἰς τὴν τῶν Θεσσαλονικέων πόλιν. Ἐν γὰρ τοῖς καιροῖς ἐκείνοις ἡ ἐπαρχότης καὶ ὁ στρατὸς ἐν τῷ Σιρμείῳ ἔπραττεν.

instead of the original name of Justinian's hometown is generally interpreted as a simple error of the eighth century author of the *Life* who was probably influenced by the statement in Novel 11, that Sirmium once possessed the seat of the prefect and the archbishop.¹⁰⁹

The same information about the Sirmian residence of the prefect might have been used by the author of the *Passio altera* as well. In this case however, it is not a simple mistake or lapse of memory that the text speaks about a prefects residing in Sirmium, but an intentional falsification. It seems to be a literary device to provide a prompt solution for the problem of the embarrassing Sirmian traditions concerning St Demetrius. Thus the author places the actual founder of the basilica, the 6th century prefect Leontios, into the legendary past – the *antiquis temporibus* as stated by the Novel – when the prefect still resided in Sirmium. Moreover, he depicts him as the founder of a St Demetrius church in Sirmium, which however is said to be built only secondarily, *after* the construction of the Thessalonican basilica, as a mere reflection or “souvenir” of the Thessalonican cult of the martyr.

With this small anachronism, the *Passio altera* has gained a twofold result. On the one hand the martyr's new home, Thessalonica, was glorified by showing that its piety towards St Demetrius and the basilica itself has its roots in the legendary past, *in antiquis temporibus*. On the other hand, the saint's newly appeared Sirmian connections also received a sufficient and soothing explanation by highlighting its secondary character compared to Thessalonica.

The proposed solution

In light of the above observations then, the Thessalonican Demetrius tradition – in accordance with the today generally accepted theory of Delehaye – indeed seems to have originated in Sirmium. The veneration of the Sirmian martyr – a deacon according to the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* – had probably been rather well-known by the end of the 4th century, thereby reaching Ravenna and even appearing in the Syriac martyrology. This is probably how it had reached Thessalonica, near Sirmium, where it perhaps became fairly established. The cult probably gained more significance after the fall of Sirmium in 441–442, and might have even been enriched with relics from the occupied city. It eventually became so important that in the early 6th century the prefect Leontios residing in Thessalonica constructed a glorious basilica in Demetrius'

¹⁰⁹ See e.g. A. A. VASILIEV, *Life of David of Thessalonica*, *Traditio* 4 (1946) 115–147: 127; SKEDROS, *Saint Demetrios* (as footnote 5 above) 24–26 or more recently C. S. SNIVELY, *Thessaloniki Versus Justiniana Prima: A Rare Mention of the Conflict in the Life of Osios David of Thessaloniki*, in *Niš and Byzantium Symposium*. Niš 2007, 55–61.

honour. By this time however, the original traditions concerning the saint's origin and martyrdom had already been forgotten, just as we have observed in the above-mentioned cases, and a new legend – the *Passio prima* – was created to explain the existence of his cult in Thessalonica, according to which Demetrius had been a saint of local, Thessalonican origins and the city was consequently depicted as the place of his birth as well as his life and martyrdom.

Not much later however the Byzantines retook possession of Sirmium, but some 15 years later in 582, the city fell into the hands of the Avars – this time for good. After the long and strenuous siege the Sirmians fled from the Avar expansion to the larger cities of the Empire, thereby arriving in Salona, in Rome, and most likely in Thessalonica as well, taking their own traditions concerning the saints of their city. This is how the “Sirmian connection” of Demetrius came into prominence in Thessalonica towards the end of the 6th and beginning of the 7th century, and in all probability this is also why the *Passio altera*, which apparently makes a particular attempt to reconcile the two traditions, came into existence. It offered an answer, admittedly with some distortion, to the question of the Sirmian roots of the martyr by describing it as a mere descendant of the Thessalonican tradition.

Abstract

The question of the origins of the cult of the fourth century martyr, Demetrius of Thessalonica has been the focal point of hagiographical research since the first publication of his passions by the Bollandists in 1780. Since then there were the most divergent hypotheses put forward to explain the obscure beginnings of his Thessalonican basilica and his alleged connection to Sirmium and its martyred deacon, Demetrius. Different ideas and assumptions were proposed based on various art-historical, archaeological and literary observations, or sometimes relying only on national ideologies or even pure fantasy. However, there were no attempts made to put the whole problem into the wider context of the Illyrian hagiographic tradition and to make a detailed comparison between St Demetrius' cult and the afterlife of other Pannonian and Illyrian martyrs. In the present paper, then, after a critical analysis of the problem and its proposed solutions, a number of comparative case-studies will be carried out aiming to map the basic tendencies of the afterlife of the martyrs of Late Antique Illyricum which presumably will help us to have a better view of the whole problem of the migration of the Illyrian martyrs and to provide a fresh solution for the origin and development of St Demetrius' cult.