SHUMEN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

STUDIA ACADEMICA ŠUMENENSIA

TRANSITION FROM LATE PAGANISM TO EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN THE ARCHITECTURE AND ART IN THE BALKANS

edited by
Ivo Topalilov and Biser Georgiev

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Contents

Preface 7

Evidence of Christianity in Viminacium: a study on historical sources, epigraphy, and funerary art 11
Ivan Gargano

Early Christian architecture in Ulpiana 30
Halûk Çetinkaya

Réflexions sur les monuments de culte chrétien dans l'urbanisme. Scénographie urbaine en Scythie entre adaptation et transformation durant l'antiquité tardive 47
Irina Achim

Early Byzantine basilica with a tomb in Ostrovica village substructure near Niš (Serbia) 72
Miša Rakocija

A Lead Seal of Constantine the Great from Serdica 82
Dochka Vladimirova-Aladzhova

Scènes de pêche sur les mosaïques de la péninsule balkanique: tradition romaine et iconographie paléochrétienne 89
Photini Kokkini

The painted Roman tomb on the lower Danube. Aspects regarding the Crossover from Paganism to Christianity in funerary symbolism 125
Ioana Mureșan

Fons Vitae in Late Antique monuments in Bulgaria 154
Vania Popova

The Aureole and the Mandorla: Aspects of the symbol of the sacral from ancient cultures to Christianity 199
Rostislava Todorova

The architectural elements of the profane structures and the motif of 'Railing of Paradise' in the early Christian tombs in Sirmium 224
Ivana Popović

Contributors to the volume 239

Preface

The third successive volume of Studia academica Šumenensia is dedicated to the problems associated with the transition from Late paganism to Early Christianity in the Balkans. This is a topic that has attracted attention since ancient times, as it led a change in religion, ideology, doctrine; one of the most complicated and complex transitions that take place within a society. Moreover, it marks the beginning of a new world, an empire, a new ruling doctrine, a worldview that defines the main aspects in the lives of a significant number of people in the society at that time. That is why the interest in the proposed theme did not subside over the centuries, what is more it is reinforced by the fact that the lands that are studied are located in the hinterland of Constantinople, the new capital of the Christian Empire. Developments in it immediately resonate and stimulate similar processes in the areas in the Balkans and Asia Minor.

The penetration and spread of Christianity is a topic that affects almost every aspect of ancient people's lives. This volume will focus on two main areas: the penetration of Christianity and its impact on the urban development and topography, as well as the emergence, establishment and development of the specific Christian art in the Late Antiquity.

Christianization of Viminacium municipality is the topic of Ivan Gargano's research. The town episcopacy founded in the 4th century – an act for which evidence can be found mainly in epigraphic monuments and written sources – allows bishops of Viminacium to play a proactive role in the dispute between Arians and Orthodox on the side of the latter. Despite the turbulent times, the Christian community seems to have lasted at least until the 7th century. As to archaeological data, which are based on a studied necropolis on the south of the city, they reveal the advent of Christianity among the population in the first half of the 4th c. It seems that the Christians were buried in plain, as well as in well-decorated with frescoes tombs, which probably belonged to the elite. At this time the pagans and Christians used the same necropolis. Most archaeological data, however, have been discovered not in Viminacium, but in the vicinity – mainly tombs and funeral chapels with mostly cruciform design revealing the penetration of Christianity in the rural land as early as Constantius II.

Another study on the penetration and spread of Christianity is written by Halûk Çetinkaya on the case of Ulpiana. According to the hagiographical sources the Christianity was brought by the Roman soldiers Ss. Florus and Laurus and Ulpiana became a bishopric center in the 4th

century. However, despite this, the study of Christianity in Ulpiana and the Christianization of its society, is at its beginning. In this respect, the study under consideration is of significant importance as it presents not only the older excavations, but the results of the Turkish archaeological expedition which started in 2012. Along with the two churches already discovered, a new octagonal baptistery and probably the church of Ss. Florus and Laurus near the baptistery were exposed. The two phased basilica was richly decorated with mosaic pavements which consisted of geometrical patterns, birds, and at least of 22 donors' inscriptions in Latin, one of them mentioning a certain comes. The construction of the Christian religious buildings was an initiative of the local Christian community, as well as imperial. It was made having in mind the specifics of the local topography, and the traditions, as well as the Christian requirements. By this not only the topography of the Late antique city has been changed, in many cases radically with the dominating Christian basilicas, but new 'sacred places' have also been created for the Christian community. There was only one step to identifying the sacred Christian sites with the important public ones.

The study of Irina Achim is devoted to the place the Christian cult monuments occupied within the Late Antiquity urban space in the so-called 'Minor' Scythia. By using archaeological information she tried to establish the sequence of various activities which followed in the Christian topography in the predefined geographical area. The systematic analysis of the Christian architectural buildings allows defining the place and role of the church within the city, and makes possible a more detailed discussion on the separation between the sacred and the profane when the city received its Christian outlook.

The study of Miša Rakocija on the basilica of St. Archangel Gabriel discovered near Ostrovica village reveals one of the ways how the new Christian religious building was constructed and created a new 'sacred place' for the local Christian community. It seems that the church of the 5th-6th century was in fact built over a tomb, identified as a Holy tomb of earlier time, a phenomenon accepted by that time in the Balkans. The possibility that it might be regarded also as mausolea of some prominent personalities should not be excluded.

Some studies in this volume are devoted to the establishment and development of the Christian and contemporary art according to the monuments found in the region. There is no doubt that initially the Christians accepted and reused the pagan symbols, iconography, themes etc. by putting in them a particular Christian meaning.

The first article of this section deals with the primary publication of a lead seal found during the excavations in Serdica. On its obverse three

figures are presented, the central one is a bust en face; on both sides are shown two smaller heads, but not in equal size, turned to the central image. Such iconography is a novelty and it is believed that the images of Constantine I and his sons Crispus and Constantine II are presented. It is probably made after their quinquennalia in 321.

A theme whose roots go back to the Roman tradition, and is used with another meaning by the Early Christians, is of the 'fishing men' as the study by Photini Kokkini reveals. It seems to be one of the common subjects of Roman mosaics which have passed to Early Christian repertory. The study is based on the discovered mosaic pavements trying to understand to what extent the Early Christian artists have adopted the scene, which in the 6th century was spread over only in public buildings (basilicas). It is believed that the scenes dated to the Early Christian period are images related to the Christian Cosmos or to the Baptism, as episodes from the Bible or neutral decorative depictions.

One could find a good example of how the funerary symbolism, despite the change of its spiritual message, did not change but adapted to the new context in the research of Ioana Mureşan. She has studied the painted tombs found on the Lower Danube dated mostly to the 4th century A.D. where she identified four major funerary themes based on the frescoes discovered in Viminacium, Tomis, Durostorum and near Sirmium: the funerary banquet, the rider motif, the pair of peacocks suggesting the Afterlife, and the procession of servants. Her main conclusion is that they all serve to express the social status of the deceased.

Another symbol which was widely spread in pagan and Christian art, such as the Fountain of life (fons vitae) in Late antique mosaics in Bulgaria, is discussed in the study of Vania Popova. Its seems that fons vitae was a convergent symbol from at least the Early Roman period presenting a spring, well, vessel or fountain with the meaning of fertility, abundance, happy life on the Earth and in the happy Elysian fields.

After 313 another meaning was put on it following psalm 42 and the scene is used in basilicas, baptisteria and Episcopal residences. By copying and combining separate elements from the ancient repertorium, new iconographies appeared with flanking animals and birds, with a pinecone as the end of the strobilion and plants and fruits growing from the vessel. The new meaning is initiation, ablution, baptism, Death and Salvation in the baptisteria; of Paradise, Christ and the pure Faith in the basilicas; of the Gathering of Waters in the Episcopal residences; of the structure of the Christian cosmos, fertility and abundance in the houses of the Early Christians; and of the Salvation and the happy life in the Paradise in the tombs. The Fountain of Life was the only figural motif in the period of an-

iconical mosaics, connected with the liturgy and by the end of the 5th century it lost its importance and was transferred to a usual element of the decoration.

The study presented by Rostislava Todorova deals with the conception of the sacred space in which God dwells and its visual representation in the Christian iconography. It is made by discussing the origin of the mandorla symbol that appears on the intersection of the metaphysical and the material space. It seems that the Christian art has developed two basic types of mandorla as a means for expression of the Glory of God in its splendour and spatial character. A few extant patterns from the Balkan Peninsula and its neighboring areas from the first centuries of the Early Christian and Byzantine art show the long-lasting ancient notion of representing the sacred space of gods, the dwelling place of the divine by the vesica piscis symbol and its successors.

Another motif called 'railing of Paradise' is studied by Ivana Popović on the frescoes of tombs from Sirmium. It is considered that this motif represents the boundary between the two worlds, the earthy and the heavently one and the author distinguishes three versions of the iconographic representation of it: cancelli with herms and balusters, and a fish scale that was used to represent the architectural element. It seems that in the context of Christianity their meaning has been transformed, so the garden fence symbolizes the 'railing of Paradise' and what is behind that was the heavenly landscape rather than an imperial park.

Shumen, November 2016 Ivo Topalilov and Biser Georgiev

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Evidence of Christianity in Viminacium: a study on historical sources, epigraphy, and funerary art

Ivan Gargano

Abstract: The Roman city of Viminacium – founded in the 1st century AD along the Danube, right in the middle of the Balkan area – went through a period of intense development and prosperity during the second half of the 3rd century and for all the whole 4th century.

Economic wealth and political importance of Viminacium during this period are the reasons that led to the establishment of a bishopric in the city, which is widely documented by many sources gathered along the middle and lower reaches of the Danube. These sources provide the name of some relevant bishops and may provide interesting information about Viminacium's position in the religious controversy against Arianism.

The first relevant information about Christian archaeology we can gain is the total absence of any find indisputably related to the Bishopric Complex in the city, or to any other building resembling urbane or rural churches. However, scholars have found some epigraphs, tombs, paintings and sepulchral buildings that represent indisputable evidence of Christians in Viminacium.

Key words: Late antiquity, Viminacium, christianization, literary sources, archaeology, bishop, epigraphy, burials

Резюме: Римският град Виминациум, основан през I в. на брега на р. Дунав, преминал през период на интензивно развитие и просперитет през втората половина на III – IV в. Икономическата му мощ и политическо значение довели до основаването на Епископска катедра в града, широко документирано в много извори. Тези извори предават и имената на някои от епископите, както и свидетелства за ролята на Виминациум в религиозните противоречия между ортодоксални и ариани. И докато за ранния период липсват каквито и да било археологически находки, свързани с Епископския комплекс или други религиозни сгради, основно градски и извънградски църкви, то са открити надгробни епитафии, гробове, станописи и гробни сгради, които представят християнизирането на Виминациум.

The Roman city of Viminacium – founded in the 1st century along the Danube, right in the middle of the Balkan area – went through a period of intense development and prosperity during the second half of the 3rd

century. This development was achieved not only for logistical reasons but mostly thanks to the status of 'Roman colony', which was bestowed upon the city during the reign of Gordian III;[1] and thanks to the reform of the provinces made by the emperor Diocletian,[2] which granted the city the status of capitol of *Moesia Prima*.

By the end of the 3rd century and for all the 4th century several emperors visited this center: in a fierce battle near the city, Diocletian defeated Marcus Aurelius Carinus[3] and then came back to visit it more than once,[4] whereas Constantine, during his travels, stopped by the settlement in many occasions.[5] In 338 Viminacium was also ground for the assembly between Constantine's progeny and Athanasius,[6] in which a new division of the territories of the Empire was defined.[7] The last recorded emperor to visit the city was Gratian, in 381.[8]

Between the 4th and the first half of the 5th century the city was still a flourishing settlement and the commercial hub of the region. Very significant of this period is an episode told by Priscus about a Greek merchant, who had built a huge fortune in Viminacium before being captured in a Hunnic raid;[9] this story is a record of both the economic development of the city and the growing threat represented by the Huns. The long period of prosperity of Viminacium, in fact, ended brutally around the second half of the 5th century: according to many written sources the city was destroyed by the Huns during a raid in 441.[10]

By the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th century Viminacium fell under the control of Germanic people that – as suggested by many artifacts found in the necropolis of Burdelj and Više Grobalja[11] –

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[1] This information is confirmed by many epigraphs, on which the city is defined '*colonia*' – see for this Mirković 1986; Spasić-Djurić 2002; Milošević 2001.

[2] Rees 2004, 90.

[3] *Itin. Hier.*, 10. 19-20.

[4] *Cod. Iust.,* 2.19.8 - 5. 16. 20 – 6.2.11 - 8.35. 5, 44.22, 50. 16 – 9. 22. 12.

[5] *Cod. Iust.* 8.10.16. *Cod. Theod.* 12. 1. 21.

[6] Athan., *Apol. ad Constantium Imperatorem,* 5. 11.

[7] Piganiol 1972, 82-90.

[8] *Cod. Theod.* 1. 10. 1.

[9] Priscus *Fr.* 8; see also Mirković, 1986, 25.

[10] Priscus *Fr.* 2; see also Vulić 1938, 15; Mirković 1986, 25. Procopius tells of a city burnt to the ground, but it might have been exaggerated just to highlight the reconstruction by Justinian - see Procopius, *De Aed.* 4. 5.

[11] We have no archeological evidence of the Germanic settlement of the 5th century and we don't know whether it was related to the roman buildings. Next to the Byzantine relics of the 6th century, instead, Germanic shacks possibly belonging to conscript soldiers have been discovered - see Ivanišević *et al.*, 2006.

settled there and started a flourishing handicraft activity. Not many years later though, the settlement was recaptured by the Byzantine army within the general program for the recovery of the Balkan territories, initiated by emperor Justinian and well recounted by Procopius in his '*De Aedificis*'.[12] Justinian established once again *Moesia Prima* as a Roman Province and ordered to rebuild an actual city just on the opposite bank of the Mlava river, in front of the old Viminacium; he demanded the construction of a stronghold and appointed the new settlement as a bishopric.[13]

The stronghold then capitulated in 584 at the Avars and the Slavs,[14] but the Byzantine army reconquered it soon after. However, in the beginning of the 7th century *Biminakion* was invaded again by the Slavs, which this time managed to overcome the Byzantines and imposed their control over the settlement. The last mention of the city comes from Theophylact Simocatta, who recounts that just after the Byzantines had reconquered the city after the first invasion, the generals Priscus and Komentiolos launched a counterattack towards the Avars and the Slavs.[15]

Economic wealth and political importance of Viminacium during the 4th century are the reasons that led to the establishment of a bishopric in the city, which is widely documented by many sources gathered along the middle and lower reaches of the Danube.[16] These sources provide the name of some relevant bishops such as *Amantius* and *Cyriacus*;[17] the first of them is mentioned also by Athanasius as one of the signatories of the Acts of the Council of Serdica.[18] As inferable from a letter sent by Pope Celestinus in 424 to nine bishops in East Illirycum,[19] in the first half of the 5th century the city was still recognized as a bishopric. Five of those bishops are mentioned

[12] Proc. *De Aed.* 4. 5.

[13] The new settlement didn't rise on the ruins of the old *castrum* but was built on the left bank of the Mlava, just where it intersects the Danube and forms a defensible peninsula. *Spolia* from the old city were used in the reconstruction. For further information - see Milošević 1988, 39-57; Popović 1988, 1-35.

[14] Teof. Sim., *Hist*., 1.2.2 – see also Daim 2008, 413; Mirković 1986, 25;

[15] Teof. Sim., *Hist*., 1. 3. 5; Paulus Diac., *Hist. Rom.,* 16; see also Mirković 1986, 26.

[16] At the present status of research, we don't have any archeological evidence of the importance of *Viminacium* for the expansion of Christianity in the region: no relics of the bishopric palace or other Christian places of worship have been found, indeed. However, as written later in this article, many Christian burials and epigraphs unearthed in the area confirm what was told in the historical sources – see Milinković 2012; Zeiller 1968.

[17] He held this office surely in 356; Athanasius mentions him as '*Cyriacus Misiae*' in Athan. *Epist. ad Episcopos Aegypti et Lybiae* 1. 8.

[18] Athan. *Epist*. 46.

[19] *Epist. et Decreta Celistini*, 3.

in relation to their diocese whereas the other four – *Sapius*, *Paulus*, *Aeternalis* and *Sabatius* – even though they are not linked to any specific bishopric, we can infer that they can be associated with *Creta*, *Moesia Prima*, *Dardania* and *Dacia Ripensis*.[20]

Another letter[21] sent by emperor Leo I to all the bishops in the Roman territories, instead, may provide interesting information regarding the Hunnic raids in the 5th century. In the letter, in fact, no bishop ruling over *Moesia Prima* is reported, this perhaps confirming the hypothesis that in the region, therefore in Viminacium, both the ecclesiastical and the imperial power had collapsed after the upheavals of those years, leaving a vacancy in the jurisdiction.[22]

Considering what Procopius[23] stated in some of his writings, we also know that during the 6th century Viminacium, along with the city of Singidunum, had been drawn again under the rule of Byzantium, which rebuilt the settlement and secured it by erecting a stronghold and restoring the bishopric;[24] posed under the control of the bishop of Justiniana Prima.[25]

In order to obtain a proper overview on the development of Christianity in Viminacium, it is fundamental first to gain wide knowledge of the certain evidence gathered so far on the existence of a Christian community in the settlement.

The first relevant information we can gain is the total absence of any find indisputably related to the Bishopric Complex in the city, or to any other building resembling urban or rural churches. Even though such buildings must have existed, in the current status of the research their presence on the territory has not been spotted even by the aerial photography, which has provided just a general outline of the area.[26] However, scholars have found some epigraphs nearby – written either in Latin or Greek – that represent indisputable evidence of Christians in *Viminacium*, even if it is not always possible to define in what context these inscriptions were discovered. The first find is a funerary epigraph engraved

[20] Zeiller 1968, 149.
[21] Evagrius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2, 9, 10.
[22] Zeiller 1968, 149.
[23] Proc. *De Aed.* 4. 5.
[24] In '*Synecdemus*' by Hierocles, *Biminakion* is classified as a metropolis of the eparchy of Moesia – see Hier. *Synec*. 657. 2
[25] *Nov. Iust.* 11. & *Nov. Iust.* 131.
[26] I will perform a deeper analysis of this topic in my PhD thesis, which is a study on Viminacium during late antiquity. In this work I will focus on the problems related to the bishopric and the progresses achieved by field research.

on a clay-brick (41 x 41 x 5 cm) (fig. 1)[27] found in 1979 in the necropolis of Pećine; the inscription, consisting of six different lines, shows important differences in size between the capital letters[28] that form the words, but also a quite precise layout.



SIIIA quae qui-
escit in pace
3 *Romaea bi-*
duaann(is) XIV
deposita VI
6 *id(us) Feb(ruarias)*

Fig. 1. Funerary epitaph on a clay-brick from Pećine (after Mirković 1986, 178, fr. 218)

The first word cannot be clearly identified but it is unquestionable that it stands for the name of the deceased, who originally was probably named 'SINIA'.[29] She is described by the term 'BIDUA' – which means 'widow' – followed by the number of years since the death of her husband. This line (3) is particularly important for recognizing the woman as Christian, since specifying the years of widowhood was extremely significant to them.[30] Moreover, 'QUIESCIT IN PACE' (1) and 'DEPOSITA' (5) are meaningful clues of the woman's religion as well.[31]

[27] Mirković 1986, 178, fr. 218.
[28] Letters between 2, 5 and 5 cm – see Mirković 1986, 178, fr. 218.
[29] Suggested by the presence of an oblique line between the second and the third vertical line - compare it with Diehl 4224D; see also Mirković 1986, 178.
[30] In (4) I chose to read 'ANNIS' instead of 'ANNORUM' basing on a comparison with Diehl 1581, 1742, 2142 and 4752, in which the ablative case or the accusative case are used when referring to this phenomenon.
[31] For regarding the occurrence of 'QUIESCO' – see Diehl *index*, 575-578. Regarding the usage of 'DEPOSITUS' instead – see Carletti 2010, 222-234.

A second epigraph – another funerary inscription, engraved on a broken marble slab (36 x 56 x 2 cm)(fig. 2) – was found in unknown location and is currently lost; however the text, perfectly readable, has been copied and goes as follows:

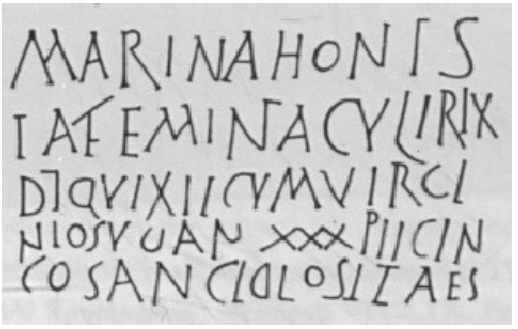


Fig. 2. A funerary epithaph on marble slab (after Mirković 1986, 177, fr. 217)

Marina honis-
ta femina cultrix
di q(uae) vixit cum virgi-
nio suo ann(is) XXX P. <L>icin
Cosanciolo sita es(t)

The term 'CULTRIX DI', rather than 'HONISTA',[32] is clear evidence of the woman's faith, since this expression is extremely common among several Christian inscriptions;[33] 'VIRGINIO' refers to her husband.[34]

A third funerary epigraph,[35] equally found in unknown background, presents instead a bilingual inscription[36] written on a damaged marble plate (40 x 45 x 4 cm.) in both Greek and Latin:



Fig. 3. Funerary bilingual epitaph (after Mirković 1986, 178, fr. 219)

Οὐαλέριος ἐμῷ Θεοδύ[λῳ. Τόδε μέν μνῆμα]
ἐμον·ἦ δέ δόξα σή·μαθ[έτωσαν οὖν παῖδες]
τοὺς θρέψαντας φιλ[εῦ·χάριν ἔχω σοι]
καίζῶν καί ἀναπαυό[μενος διά πα]
ντος. Valer(ius) [meo Theodu]
lo. Haec [memoria]
quidem me[a tua autem laus]
Discant igit[ur pueri]
Nutritores a[mare. Gratiam habeo li]
bi vivus et qu[iescens in perpetuum]

[32] As Mirković 1986, 178, n. 217.
[33] Diehl 1925/1931; 1049, 2148 – 2477, No. 330.
[34] Regarding the usage of this term – see Janssens 1981, 107-112.
[35] Mirković 1986, 178, fr. 219.
[36] Letters 2-3, 8 cm - see Mirković 1986, 178, fr. 219.

The main feature of this epigraph is the simultaneous presence of both languages,[37] either of them transmitting exactly the same text. The terms 'ΤΡΕΨΑΝΤΑΣ' (3) and 'NUTRITORES' (9) show how the deceased was buried by his foster parents;[38] whereas spread throughout the inscription we can see several symbols that identify the religious matrix of the plate: at the beginning of text (1) an unidentifiable monogram is engraved that Diehl believes to be of Christological origin, two crosses (2) and a Constantine's christogram (5).

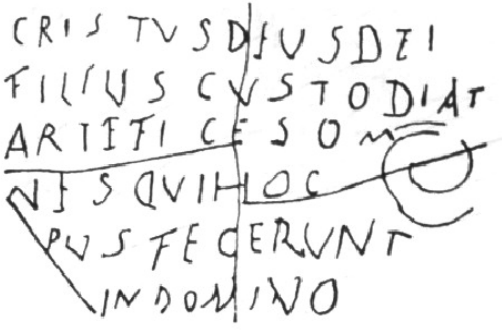
Even if of minimal relevance, we can also count as evidence a fragment of an inscription found on a limestone slab[39] (36 x 72 x 13 cm) that carries a text in Greek introduced by a christogram (fig. 4).



ΧΡ ΓΡΑ[---]

Fig. 4. Fragment of an inscription
(after Mirković 1986, 179, fr. 220)

On the other hand, an extremely significant inscription is found on a clay-brick (41 x 55 x 2,5 cm)[40] whose text is fully and perfectly preserved and goes as it follows:



Cristus deus dei
filius custodiat
3 *artefices omnes*
qui hoc
5 *[o]pus fecerunt*
in domino

Fig. 5. Inscrption on clay-brick
(after Mirković 1986, 177, fr. 216)

[37] For further information on the bilingual inscription – see Felle 2007, 475-482.
[38] Regarding the relationship *nutritores/alumni* – see Janssens 1981, 181-190.
[39] Mirković 1986, 179, fr. 220.
[40] Mirković 1986, 177, fr. 216.

What makes this inscription so important can be easily seen at the first line (1), where Christ is identified as 'DEI FILIUS', the 'son of God'. This epithet, in fact, is a sign of Orthodox Christian faith and was put there to state a clear refusal of Arianism,[41] which confirms the description given by Athanasius about Viminacium being an Orthodox center during the religious tensions in the 4th century. After the declaration of faith we can see some words that show the identity of the authors of the inscription, as they call themselves 'ARTEFICES' (3) – literally 'the makers' – and ask for Christ's blessing after the conclusion of a work 'IN DOMINO' (6), 'made for the Lord'. From this we can infer that the epigraph was made by manual workers or masons, who probably took part in the construction of a holy building or an artifact of worship on which this epigraph was placed.[42] This inscription significantly grows in importance if we take in consideration what stated at the beginning of the article: since there are no finds of churches or holy buildings of any kind in or around the city, this epigraph could potentially be the only evidence of their existence.

One last inscription has been found near Svetinja, next to the ruins of some Byzantine buildings: it is a Greek cross engraved on a clay-brick from the 6th century.[43]

More consistent and significant information comes from the southern districts of Viminacium, where excavations carried out from 1976 until 1997 unearthed more than 13.500 burials performed either by cremation or inhumation; some are very basic whereas some other are monumental tombs richly decorated. Since burials of various kind attributable to different faiths have been found in this part of the city, we can infer that this necropolis was used also by Christians.[44] In the necropolis of Pećine[45] graves carrying symbols and inscriptions that classified them as indisputably Christian have been discovered. In this area, in fact, was found the burial of a child coming from a period within the 4th and the 5th century covered by clay-bricks, which contained two silver rings decorated with a christogram engraved in variation 'X' and

[41] For further information - see Ferrua 1991, 155-266.
[42] Compare it with Diehl 1925/1931, No. 2330
[43] Zotović 1994, 66.
[44] Zotović 1995; Milošević 2005.
[45] We know of a cross from the 6th century found in the burial of a child in the Germanic necropolis of Više Grobalja, which however doesn't provide any information regarding the Christians in the old roman settlement.

'I'.[46] Other significant finds related to this necropolis are those regarding several burial buildings that contain some clay-brick coffins in trapezoidal shape, which have been unearthed throughout the whole area; one grave of the same kind has been discovered also in the site of Pirivoj and two in Više Grobalja. Each and every of these coffins present a specific feature: the inside walls of the structure are decorated with frescoes that, despite their artistic value, were not intended to be shown outside but were there just for the deceased.

Only one specific tomb of those found in this area in 1990 shows very visible signs of Christian background, even though quite recent grave robberies have heavily damaged its cover (fig. 6).[47] The analysis of the grave goods belonging to a woman and three men found in it suggests that this grave might be placed within the first half of the 4th century.[48] These frescoes, painted on all the four sides of the tomb, are still perfectly preserved. On the western side there is a white christogram on blue background put in a laurel wreath, which is delimited by two red bands hemmed with green stripes and surrounded by a vegetable spiral motif;[49] on the eastern side a kàntharos is painted within two facing peacocks and stylized trees under vines, grapes and spirals;[50] on the northern side is painted a knight spearing a lion surrounded by a blue and green vegetable motif; on the southern side there is a knight with his dog hunting some sort of felid, again set on a vegetable motif that fills every empty space. All the depictions in these frescoes are strongly rooted in the collection of bucolic tradition in art, to which the peacocks, kàntharos and hunt scenes refer.

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[46] Zotović 1994, 65.

[47] Korać 2007, 259 n. 5517.

[48] Korać 2007, 259.

[49] This Christogram appears in many tombs from the 4th century found along the lower-reach of the Danube, like in Pécs or Niš, and it has significant importance. The comparison with these graves could help dating the one we are discussing now. For further information see Gàbor 2008; Zsolt 2007; Rakocija 2009; 2011.

[50] For the Early Christian tradition, these animals represent the immortality of the flesh that will resurrect in Christ, thus they are common in paintings and frescoes. We can see similar depictions on the mosaics in the Mausoleum of Constantina in Rome, San Vitale in Ravenna; or in the catacombs of Rome and Syracuse. We have the same depictions also in other graves found in Viminacium itself – see Pieri 2008, 3980; Korać, 2007.



Fig. 6. A tomb form the necropolis of Pećine (after Grašar *et al.* 2012)

The hunt is a very recurrent motif on various steles in Viminacium[51] and associates huntsmen with knights: the painting in the grave, therefore, indicates the will of the deceased to be identified as a member of a wealthy elite, along with the intention to be identified as a Christian.

We also know of a lead sarcophagus[52] that, if it had not gone lost, would have been a reliable source of information. The only valuable evidence one could gain from this find now, instead, is an incomplete description[53] where it is told that the two long sides of this sarcophagus were decorated with three crosses, which reasonably suggest Christian affinity. The description, unfortunately, is too vague to advance any possible dating or to infer any other information.

Another reliable evidence of Christianity is a set of precious artifacts made of silver – goblets, bowls and spoons all dating variously between the 4th and 7th century – it is very likely that they were used for liturgical purpose.[54] The oldest of these artifacts, a silver goblet from the end of the 4th century,[55] is characterized by a christogram engraved on the bottom of it;[56] together with this one, two other goblets with a Christian Cross and the letters 'B' 'Z'[57] carved on them have been found in a storage, next to four silver spoons which carry the letters 'A S E' on the grip.[58]

Five more goblets found in a different location represent a very intriguing discovery: these relics, in fact, were originally dated around the 6th century;[59] however, the possibility that the goblets might come from the 5th century has been also considered.[60] This last proposal may lead to the hypothesis that the Christian community was still present and active in the area in spite of the Hunnic raids of that time, which might have been much less harsh and destructive than originally thought.[61]

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[51] Mirković 1986.

[52] See AA. VV. DACL 1925, *cercueils en plombe,* 3282-3286 and Franchi de' Cavalieri 1916/1917, 214-215, n. 1-2.

[53] Vulić 1909, 133.

[54] Ilić 2006.

[55] Ilić 2006.

[56] Ilić 2006, 49.

[57] Ilić 2006, 49.

[58] Ilić 2006, 49.

[59] Ilić 2006, 49.

[60] Popović 1994, cat. 277-281; Kondić 1994, cat. 319-324.

[61] I will carry out a wider study on these artifacts in my PhD thesis, in which I will explore in more detail the actual effect of the barbarian raids on the city and its population.

At the present status of the archeological studies on Viminacium, everything that has been described so far constitutes all the reliable evidence gathered up to now on the presence of Christians in the city. In addition to this, however, there are also several ruins of religious buildings that could be considered valuable finds, although their origin cannot be certainly ascribed to the Christian community and scholars haven't found sufficient data to prove their hypothesis on them yet.



Fig. 7. A frescoe from a tomb from Pećine (after Raičković & Milovanović 2011)

One of these debated relics is a tomb[62] unearthed in Pećine in 1983, which comes in the typical trapezoidal shape and presents evident signs of

[62] Since the original one was destroyed during some operations on the power plant Kostolac B, nowadays we can only see a copy of it, whereas the authentic frescoes are exhibited in the museum of Požarevac.

grave robbing on the external walls;[63] frescoes well preserved have been found inside it, together with the rests of a mature man and a young woman.[64] The grave is commonly placed under the reign of Constantius II.[65] The portrait of a woman is painted on the western wall , whereas the eastern one is decorated with a man painted in full body; the northern and the southern walls, instead, present specular decorations: a peacock facing a kàntharos within a frame of thick red lines and thin green lines, surrounded by flowers and wreaths.[66] Among these four decorations, the most important are certainly the ones on the western and eastern walls. The first can be considered a self-celebration painting, for the woman portrayed has her head enclosed in a blue nimbus[67] surrounded by two red wreaths, which holds both strong artistic value – it highlights the face of the woman – and clear symbolic meaning – it connects undoubtedly the painting to the deceased (fig. 7).[68] Even though this grave is considered by many as a non-Christian one,[69] some other stated that the painting is supposedly the depiction of a saint,[70] a celebration of the defunct giving her a holy aura. This hypothesis, however, is hardly credible inasmuch in the grave no symbol, inscription or artifact has been discovered that could be identified as certainly Christian; and because in Viminacium – unlike other cities in the region such as Sirmium, Singidunum and Naissus[71] – we don't know of any saint or martyr especially worshipped or connected in any way to the settlement. The only certain information we can gain from this tomb, indeed, is that the woman portrayed was member of the local elite[72] – as inferred by the garment and the presence of the nimbus – and that the depiction of the woman in half-length can be attributed to the roman artistic tradition, for which nobles and higher class people were pictured in such way.

[63] Korać 2007, 247.
[64] Korać 2007, 247.
[65] Korać 2007, 247.
[66] The vegetable motifs fill the space around the main depictions and, together with the peacocks and the kàntharos, give bucolic atmosphere to the painting.
[67] This illustration originated during the time of Antonine dynasty period and merged into the Christian art in the 4th century. It was used for conveying a message of transcendental power associated with emperors, people who had been useful for the community, gods or Christ; when used in grave paintings it was a sign of immortality for the deceased – see Ahlqvist 2001, 221; Jastrzebowska 1994.
[68] The nimbus here might indicate that the woman was very important for her community.
[69] Korać 2007, 247.
[70] Janicjević 2009.
[71] Zeiller 1968, 105-108.
[72] It does not matter that the paintings were not visible from outside, because self-representations were intended to be a message to carry into the afterlife.

However, also the painting on the eastern wall – the servant pictured in full-length – is quite significant, since it reinforces the self-celebration message delivered by the other decorations in the grave. The man, painted carrying a huge tray with two loafs on it,[73] resembles two other portraits of servants, one in 'Tomb with Cupids', Viminacium,[74] and the other in a tomb in Silistra.[75]

Besides this highly debated sepulcher, also the relics of five monumental vaults have been unearthed in the area of Pećine and one in the necropolis of Burdelj; among those in Pećine, one comes in cruciform shape whereas the other four present multiple apses, as the one from Burdelj does. All of these constructions have been dated between the end of the III century and the V, and some of them have ruined pavements that show signs of later maintenance works. Some have advanced the hypothesis that the pavements may have been worn out by crowds of believers, thus indicating that the buildings were used for funerary rituals.[76] Although the usage of these structures was clearly very high and frequent, no evidence that could undoubtedly prove any affinity with Christians have been found inside them, thus they are not certainly recognizable as funerary chapels. It is more likely, indeed, that the vaults hosted the relatives of the deceased during religious celebrations of various kind. As much as it is true that occasional usage by small groups of believers wouldn't explain such bad condition of the pavements, we should also bear in mind that there were many more burials which went lost,[77] therefore we can likely deduce a higher turnout of believers that lasted possibly for periods longer than those examined.

Among the buildings that are considered funerary churches we can enumerate three structures with three apses discovered near the necropolis of Pećine and a building of cruciform shape. The first of triconchal vaults, dated to the reign of Constantius II,[78] has been found nearby a roman *villa* and contained the tomb of a woman[79] and the tomb of a child.[80] In the

[73] Regarding the meaning of bread in Roman religion – see Torelli 1995.
[74] Korać, 2007, 261, G 160.
[75] Dimitrov 1958/1997; Atanasov 2007. The design of these human bodies fits perfectly in the style of Post-Constantin Roman art, for which the characters are completely disconnected from the surrounding space. The heads are very round and the eyes big and expressive, which is an anticipation of Byzantine abstract art (Borda 1958, 366); the bodies are very flat and the bodily nature is inferable only by the dispositions of the clothes. Other Examples of this kind of funerary paintings can be found in numerous Roman catacombs – see Nestori 1993.
[76] Zotović 1994/1995.
[77] Years of grave-robbery have severely compromised the relics.
[78] Milošević 2005, 180.
[79] In a lead sarcophagus – see Milošević 2005, 180.

building we can see the remains of two different pavements: the first covered the graves, whereas the second must have been built in order to replace the older one, which presents evident signs of erosion; however, cement patching can be spotted on the newer one as well.[81]

The second building, dated to the second half of the 4th century,[82] unfortunately has been found in very poor conditions and only some parts of two walls[83] are left of it, although the remains of a burial have been discovered inside. Just by this building, however, an area (20m x 15m) containing burials from the 12-13th century of ten men, nine women, five children and three indefinable corpses have been spotted.[84] This could indicate that the vault might have been very significant for the people living nearby, who perhaps used it as a funerary chapel, even though the lack of Christian finds and burials within the construction seems to suggest different usage. In the third construction[85] – dated between the end of the 4th century and the beginning of the 5th century[86] – four burials, older than the ones in the apses, have been unearthed from the central section: the tombs were separated from the rest by dividing walls and were covered by bricks of hypocaust[87] that worked as temporary pavement.

The last building[88] found in Pećine presents a cruciform shape and could be entered through a flight of steps, which leads into a central square area covered by groin vaults and surrounded by three *arcosolia* overtopped

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[80] Zotović 1995, 340. The rests of the body were missing; it is likely that they were stolen during a tomb-raid. The sarcophagus was made of lead and presented a hole on its cover, probably used for deposing funerary offers in the tomb.

[81] It is likely that the building contained many other burials, whose presence may have led to the high turnout of people that ruined the pavements.

[82] Mikić & Korać 2012, 185.

[83] Milošević 2005, 178. These walls divided the vestibule from the central hall. We can suppose that a vault covered the building, whereas we can infer its planimetry by the traces of the foundations.

[84] Zotović 1994, 62.

[85] Zotović 1995, 342. The main structure is made of clay-bricks and cement, whereas the three apses were built on it subsequently and more roughly. A demand of space higher than the one originally estimated probably is the reason behind this expansion, and the mediocre result may indicate that workers had to hurry: two burials in fact were found under the northeastern apse and three under the southeastern one. However, the expansion might have been motivated also by a matter of style, since the three apse buildings were very common in *Viminacium*.

[86] Zotović 1994, 73.

[87] Zotović 1995, 341.

[88] Korać 2007, 255. Scholars have found several coins in this building, which perhaps could help dating it to the second half of the 4th century.

by barrel vaults.[89] In this structure evidence of transit of people, reasonably for ritual purposes, can be inferred by the bevels on the stairs and the ruined pavement, on which cement patching can be easily detected.

As we can understand from the information summarized in this article, the dynamics of the development of Christianity in Viminacium are still largely unclear: there is, indeed, great discrepancy between the high value that written sources have attributed to the city as Christian center and the little archeological evidence we have found of this value.[90] As far as we know from historical sources, in the 4th century the city was undoubtedly a very important bishopric and even if archeology have not yet found validation of this, we can reasonably believe that further studies will prove more successful. Overall, the studies on Viminacium led us to classify the city in the group of Balkan settlements that present a necropolis equally used by Pagans and Christians, and to the discovery of an important monumental Christian tomb made in the traditional late-roman architectural style but decorated with the sign of the new religion.

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[90] We haven't found any relics of the bishopric from the 4th-5th century, nor any of the one from the 6th century.

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Early Christian architecture in Ulpiana

Halûk Çetinkaya

Abstract: Christianity was most probably brought to Ulpiana by Roman soldiers. It must have been a bishopric since in a limited space it has four Early Christian buildings. Two churches were excavated in 1950's. The one in the northern cemetery was built on top of Roman sarcophagi and graves. It had floor mosaics with dedicatory inscription in Latin. The second church is near the Northern gate. As the first one it has a basilical plan. It also had floor mosaics but they did not reach our time as the previous church. Both churches were dated to 6th century.

Two other buildings, namely the baptistery and the church of Ss. Florus and Laurus, were discovered and excavated by the author between 2012 and 2015. The baptistery is octogon whereas the church is in a basilical plan. The church had two phases: mid 4th and early 5th century. It has 22 floor mosaic inscriptions. All of them dedicatory and in Latin from 4th century.

Key words: Early Christianity, Early Christian basilica and baptistery, floor mosaics with donor names, Latin dedicatory inscriptions, Saints Florus and Laurus

Резюме: Най-вероятно християнството е било разпространено в Улпияна от римските войници. Той е бил епископски център и за момента са проучени четири раннохристиянски сгради. Две от църквите са проучени през 50-те години на XX век, едната разположена в северния некропол, а другата – в близост до северната порта на града. И двете имат базиликален план, като и двете са били украсени с мозаични подове. И докато при втората той не е запазен, то при първата е разкрит, като съдържа посветителни надписи на латински език. И двете базилики са датирани през VI в.

Останалите две сгради, които са баптистерий и църквата „Св. СВ. Флор и Лаурус", са проучени от автора между 2012-2015 г. Баптистерият е октогонален, докато църквата има базиликален план. Последната има две фази: от средата на IV в. и началото на V в. Тя също е украсена с подови мозайки, съдържащи 22 посветителни надписа на латински език.

The ancient city of Ulpiana is 12 km from the city centre of Prishtina, the capital city of Kosovo, and 2 km from the nearby town Gračanica. The oldest name of this region is Dardania. It derived its name from Dardans. Information about them is derived from sources of their neighbouring

cultures, since there are no sources left by them. The earliest mention of Dardans is by Homer. Their name was included in the list of newly conquered regions by the Macedonian king Philip II (359-336 BC). Dardans allied themselves with Romans against Macedonians but their independence was short lived since they were subjected to Rome around 28 BC.[1] According to Strabo, Dardans, one of the strongest people of the region in the past, were living in misery around 25 BC.[2] This region became a new province under Romans and was named Moesia after Moesi's. This newly established province was divided into two: Moesia Superior and Moesia Inferior prior to 86.[3] Ulpiana was within the boundaries of Moesia Superior. Dardania still survived as a geographical area but smaller in size and as part of Moesia Superior in 2nd century.[4] Later, this region was named as Dardania and it became a Roman province. For this incident reigns of Aurelian, Diocletian and Justinian I. were suggested.[5] But the most favoured view is the reign of Diocletian.[6]

The site of Ulpiana was not known until the first quarter of the 20th century. It was mostly thought to be at the same place as the township of Ljpjan because of its namesake similarity. The site was discovered in the first quarter of the 20th century by Bošković.[7] Archaeological excavations commenced in 1953 continued at intervals in the following decades. Based on pottery analysis it was proved that Ulpiana was settled in 1st century by Romans. Alas, no data was obtained to identify the name of the settlement.[8] The site of Ulpiana was believed to be settled prior to the Roman arrival. During the first years of archaeological excavations it was claimed to be a Prehistoric settlement.[9] Small objects found on site led to such conclusion. But it has to be approached with caution since these objects could have been carried away easily by nature or human activities. One of the most important factors for the site of Ulpiana must have been mining activities in the region. There are mines which have been exploited as early as Prehistoric period. The region was well known of its mines of silver and gold during the Roman period.[10] During the excavations in 1980's

[1] Papazoglou 1978, 136-187.
[2] Strabo VII, 6.
[3] Mócsy 1974, 68.
[4] Ptolemaei III, 9-4.
[5] Papazoglou 1978, 196-197, f. 210.
[6] Szilágy 1964, 1386-1387.
[7] Bošković 1926/1927, 272.
[8] Fidanovski 1990, 31.
[9] Čerškov 1959/1960, 376.
[10] Gassmann & Körlin 2011, 128.

a discovery of urns from the late Bronze age-Brjnica culture (1350-950 BC) indicated the earliest settlements of Ulpiana.[11] Although it was claimed that the site was inhabited by Dardans between the Late Bronze age and the Roman period, there are neither archaeological nor epigraphical materials confirming this idea.[12]

The first mention of the name of Ulpiana in ancient sources is at the beginning of the 2nd century in Ptolemaios. It was mentioned together with Scupi, Naissus and Arribantium.[13] Ulpiana was founded by the emperor Marcus Ulpius Traianus (98-117) and named after him. It is generally considered that Ulpiana was given the status of *municipum*, either at its foundation[14] or soon afterwards in the 2nd century.[15] Until 5th century there is no mention of Ulpiana in the sources. It must have been damaged by the invasions of Huns[16] and Goths in the middle of the 5th century.[17]

Although not included in the list of 24 cities of Dardania[18] damaged by the earthquake of 517/518, Ulpiana also must have been affected. After this earthquake, the city walls, much damaged and idle, were pulled down by Justinian I (527-565). There were no city walls before 4th century, and upon their construction constant maintenance was needed until their re-construction in 6th century.[19] Justinian I beatufied the city and refounded it under the name of *Iustiniana Secunda.*[20] It was suggested that after the invasion of the Slavs in 618 Ulpiana was uninhabited.[21] The reason for the re–use of the material form Ulpiana in the construction activities in the vicinity is claimed to be for that reason. The most visible place of use of spolia is the monastic church of Gračanica, where epitaphs were used in the lower parts of walls.

Archaeological excavations begun in 1953 and yielded enormous results until 1959. The northern, western and southern cemeteries; parts of city walls and its northern gate, a large church near that gate, another church in the northern cemetery, a stylobate of a Roman temple and walls

[11] Cvetković-Tomašević 1983, 67.
[12] Berisha 2007, 8.
[13] Ptolemaei III, 5.
[14] Mirdita 1978, 164.
[15] Mommsen No. 1686.
[16] Petković 2003/2004, 241.
[17] Iordanis 285-286.
[18] Marcellinus, Celeris et Venantii XI-1.
[19] Parović & Pešikan 1981, 63-65.
[20] Prokopios IV i 28-30
[21] Parović & Pešikan 1981, 57-58; Fidanovski 1990, 7-9.

of a Roman military camp in the east outside the city. A Roman villa, the rest of the city walls and the towers of Ulpiana were discovered during the excavations of 1980's and 1990's. In 2000's French[22] and German teams[23] together with Kosovar Albanian historians and archaeologists did geo-physical surveys and excavations at different locations.

Christianity in Ulpiana

Christianity flourished in the Balkans as early as 1st century. Its spread was most probably because of the soldiers. Ulpiana was no exception. The first mention of Christians in Ulpiana is by means of the martyrdom of the twin brothers Ss. Florus and Laurus. The brothers were from Constantinople and worked on a pagan temple construction in Ulpiana. Upon performing a medical miracle, their Christian identity was deciphred and they were dumped into a very deep well and martyred in 2nd century.[24] Their skulls were kept in Constantinople at least in 14th and 15th centuries.[25] This information is provided by Russian pilgrims who visited Constantinople. It is interesting to note that the cult of Ss. Florus and Laurus spreaded very rapidly afterwards in Russia. They were known to be healers of horses.[26]

Clergy members from Dardania and Macedonia are mentioned in the sources between 4th-6th centuries such as bishops Machedonius and Paul who participated in the council of Serdica in 343 and the synod of Constantinople 553 respectively.[27] Another important name from Ulpiana is Gregentius. According to the tradition, Gregentius of Ulpiana was sent to Ethiopia and Yemen during the reign of Justin (518-527) to ease problems among different Christian groups.[28]

Ulpiana, most probably was a bishopric before the invasions of Goths in the second half of 4th century.[29]

Until 545 Ulpiana was known as the Metropolis of Dardania. After that date, in order to ease the rivalry between Serdica and Iustiniana Prima, this title was given to the latter.[30]

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[22] Hajdari *et al*. 2008, 449-458.
[23] Berisha *et al*. 2012, 82-88.
[24] Delehaye *et al*. 1940, 345 ff.
[25] Majeska 1984, 42, 152, 162, 186, 290, 293.
[26] Hohlova 2009, 209.
[27] Gerland 1931, 41; Zeiller 1967, 156-163.
[28] Iordanis LVI 285-286.
[29] Iordanis LVI 285-286.
[30] Popović 1989/1990, 279-280.

Christianity must have been accepted widely in Ulpiana. Numerous christian buildings should be taken as a proof of it. There were at least four Early christian structures in the city based on our current knowledge (fig. 1).

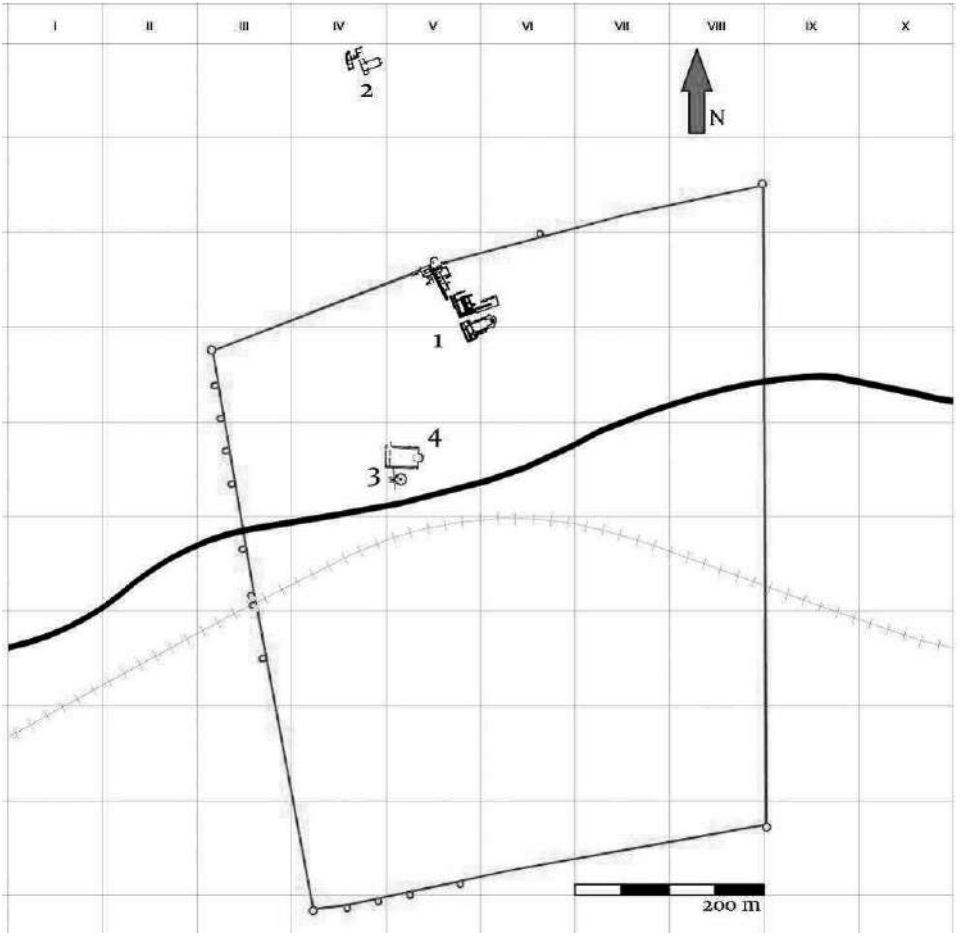


Fig. 1. Plan of Ulpiana (author)

1. Church near the Northern gate

The first church was discovered during the excavations of Čerškov in 1956.[31] Basing on the historical martyrs of the city it was named as 'church of martyrs'.

[31] Popović & Čerškov 1956, 326.

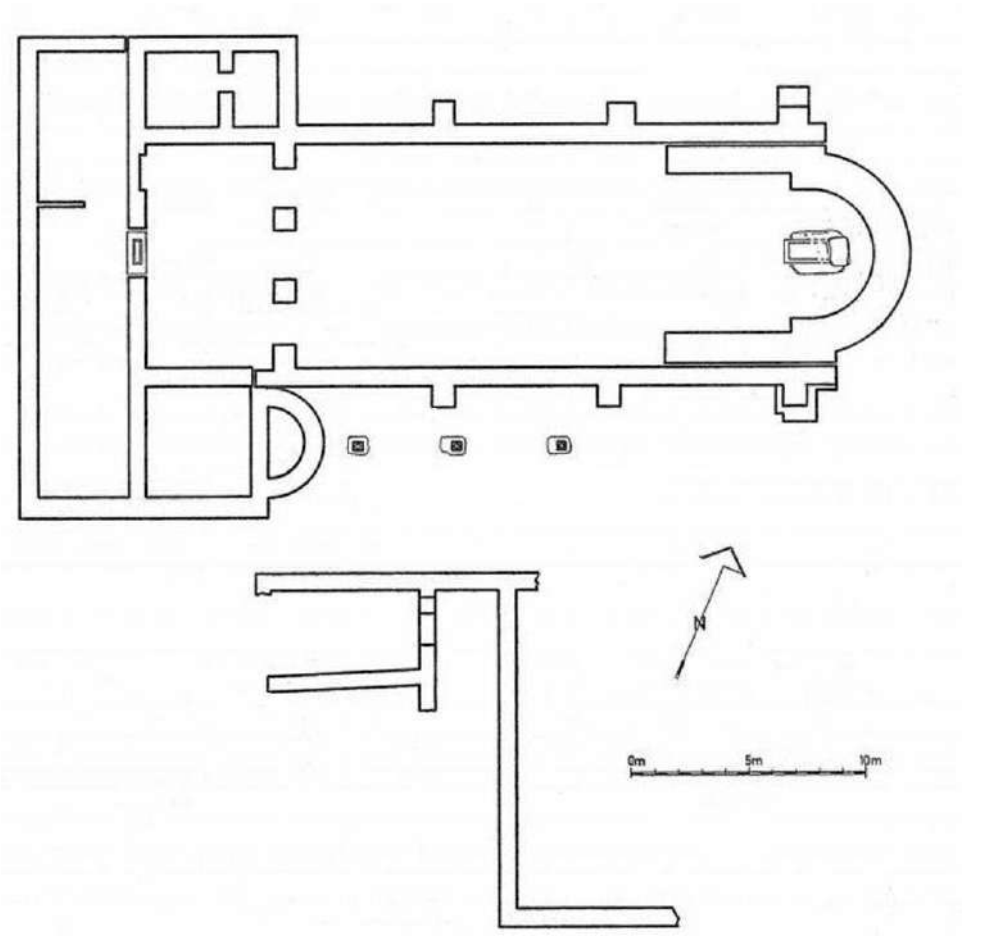


Fig. 2. Plan of northern church (after Parović & Pešikan 1981, pl.4)

It is a tripartite basilical church with narthex (fig. 2). The dimensions of the church are 33.5 x 13 metres. The eastern end of it terminates with one apse, whose walls in north and south have been thickened. Because of the unproportioned look of the apse I suggested that this was not its original place and it should have been further east. To test this hypothesis, Kosovo Archaeological Institute personnel carried out a sounding outside the apse at its norheast and came accross with floor mosaics. Instead of continuing and determining the limits of the apse and floor mosaics this work was halted for unknown reasons. Church was built of stone. Because of restorations it is impossible to suggest whether it was in the technique of opus incertum or not.

In 1955 four graves have been excavated. These were located in the apse, outside the church on the north and south respectively (fig. 3). [32] The grave in the middle of apse is similar in the manner and technique as the ones found in northern cemetery. This is a small burial with a barrelvault top. The lower part of it is of stone, whereas the top is made of bricks.

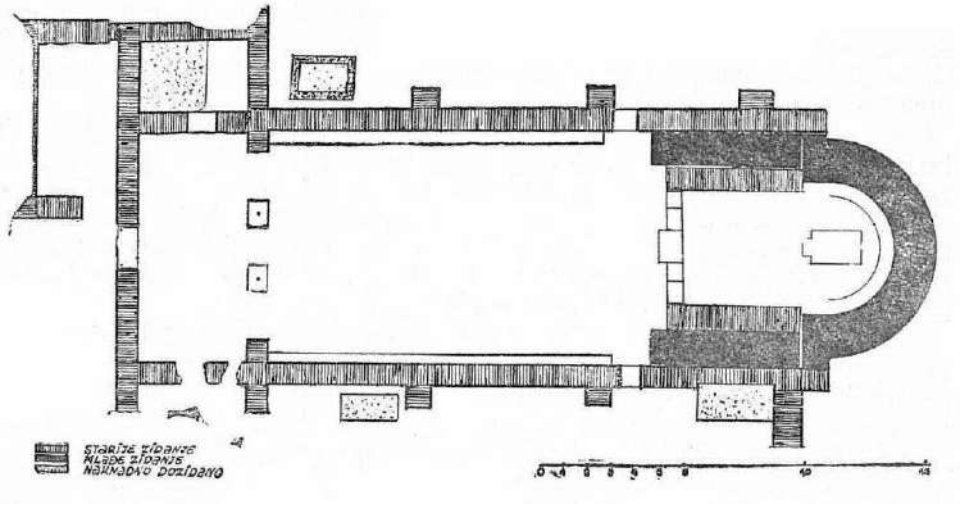


Fig. 3. Plan of northern church (after Popović & Čerškov 1956, pl.3)

As a pecularity, the narthex of this church is wider than its main part. In the southern and northern sections there are projections towards east creating a chamber -like appearance. The one in the northwest was turned into a storage room for excavation tools. Access to the nave was by means of a tripartite entrance. Two column bases were found in situ. In between them on the floor is a re-used grave stone with inscription. According to the excavators the church had five phases. The oldest phase had floor mosaics.[33] The church building was dated to 6th century.[34] Although there is mention of floor mosaics in the church, neither photos nor drawings of them have been published.

Outside the church, parallel to its southern wall three column bases were found in situ. Although it did not the attract attention of the excavators much, it was an important find (fig. 4). This is clearly indicating a parekklesion. The existence of parekklesia is known from 4th-5th

[32] Čerškov & Popović 1958, 321.
[33] Čerškov & Popović 1957, 325.
[34] Čerškov & Popović 1956, 326.

centuries and they were in several plans.[35] Parekklesia especially in the Middle Byzantine period (843-1204) became widespread and they were found in pairs, mostly parallel to southern and northern walls of the structure terminating with an apse.[36]

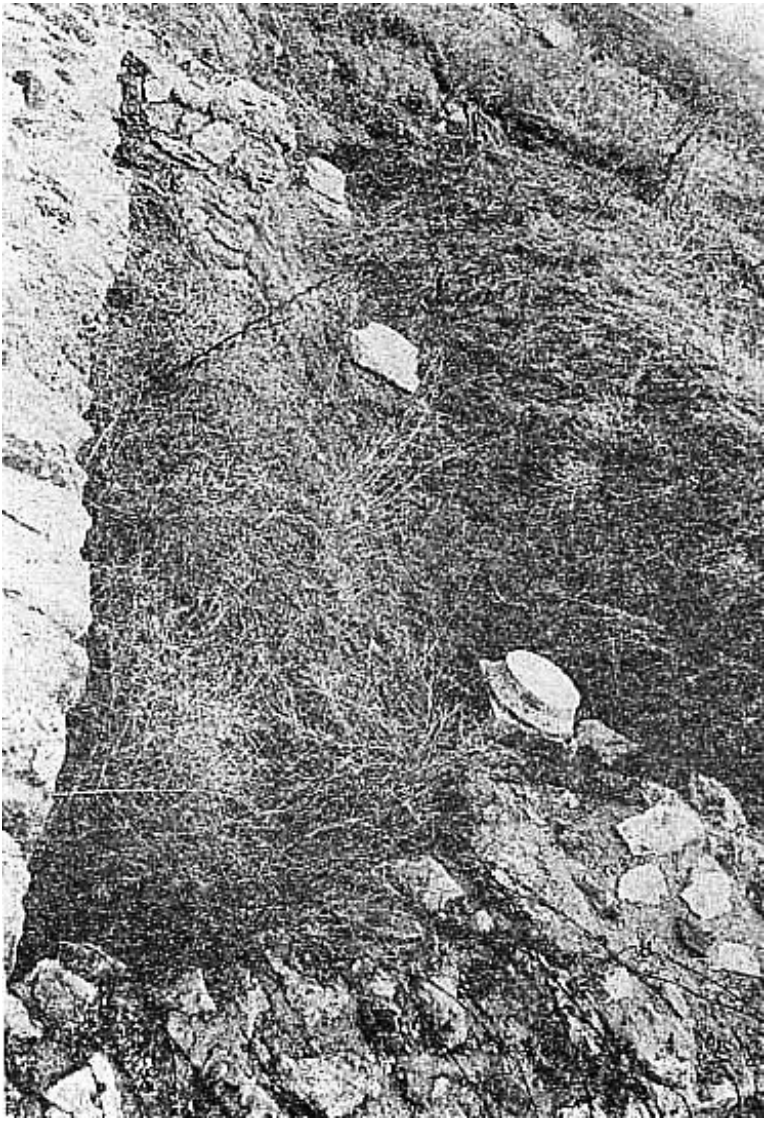


Fig. 4. Column bases next to the northern church (after Parović & Pešikan 1989, pl. 13)

[35] Johnson 1991, 1587.
[36] Çetinkaya 2003, 245.

Due to location of column bases, it is clear that parekklesion, at least on the southern side, was as long as the southern wall of the church. Since these kind of parekklesia were common in Middle Byzantine period, it may be suggested that parekklesion was added long after the church was built. If it was the case, the church and the city would have been in use much later than it was suggested even as late as 10th century, by which Dardania was believed to be Slavicized.[37]

2. Church on Northern cemetery / Memoria

This church was one of the first discoveries in Ulpiana. As excavations continued graves underneath and around the church were found. Graves were dated to 4th century, whereas the church was dated to 6th century.[38] This was a church terminating in the east with one apse. There are two chambers at the southern and northern parts of the narthex. They were there either because it was a church with side aisles, or these sections were added to a single naved building (fig. 5).

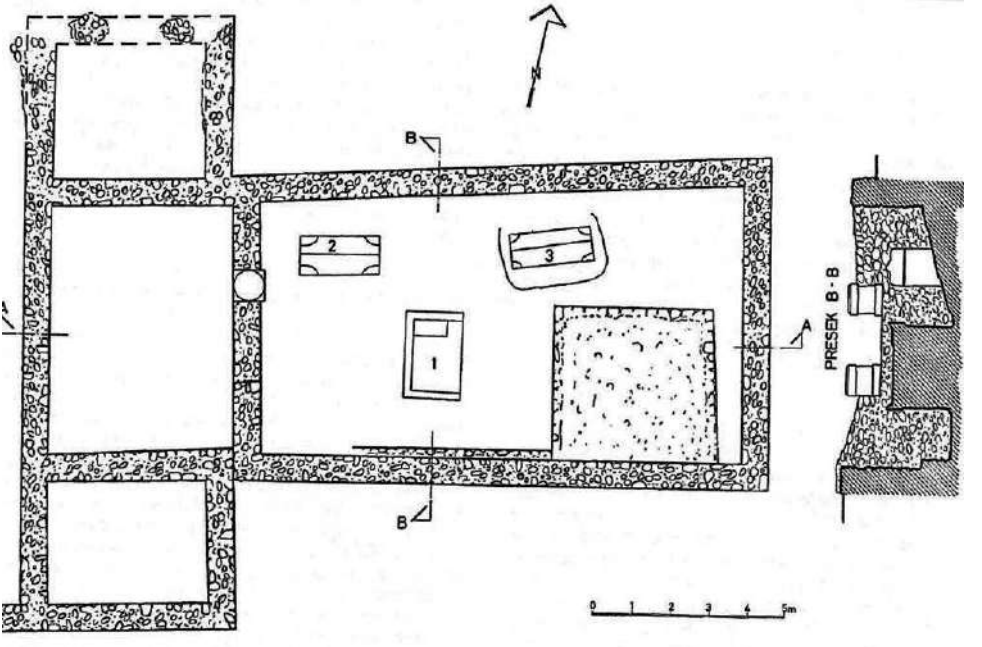


Fig. 5. Plan of of church in northern cemetery (after Parović-Pešikan 1981, pl. 6)

[37] Milich 1995, 190.
[38] Popović & Čerškov 1956, 326.

The entrance from narthex to the nave was by means of an opening with a two-columned door, of which column bases were found in situ. In front of this door there was a floor mosaic with geometrical patterns and dedicatory inscription in Latin. It was dated to the first half of 4th century. In later years of excavation there is no mention about this mosaic and hence it could be taken that it was not preserved. It is clear from the material visible even today that on the same spot was a Roman house. Probably at a later date when it fell into disuse, different functions were given to the site. The church and the northern cemetery at the moment are outside the city walls. The city walls were built in 4th century and constantly repaired until 6th century.[39] By the time of the church construction either rivlet on the north was taken as a natural defence or the population of the city increased and the limits of the city grew towards the north. The latter view may be more convincing, since under normal circumstances there are no cemeteries within a city.

3. Baptistery

In 2012 the first archaeological excavation of Turkey in Europe begun under my direction. The location was chosen based on survey and archive work. The excavation site was approximately in the middle part of the city. During 2012 excavation season five niches and a baptismal basin, in the form of a cross and made of re-used bricks, were unearthed. In the following year three more niches were uncovered and an octogonal baptistery was unearthed (fig. 6). The widest part of the baptistery is approximately 13 metres. A long wall in the direction of south-north was discovered next to the western entrance. Outside this wall towards west a small hypocaust was found. Inside the baptistery in front of the western entrance the floor was paved with lime. Approximately two meters away large blocks of stone and a water canal was discovered. These were taken as a sign of a pre-baptistery settlement, probably a Roman house at the same site. Between the southern and northern parts of baptistery there is an inclination. The difference in height is 0.4 metre. This is clearly an indication of an earthquake. It could be the one on 28 August 358 with the epicentre of Nicomedia which destructed large parts of Macedonia.[40]

[39] Parović & Pešikan 1981, 63-65.
[40] Guidoboni *et al*. 1994, 255-259.



Fig. 6. Baptistery from the air (author)

Next to the baptistery, burials of one female and one male, in the direction of east-west were found. Both were in their 20's and according to the carbon 14 tests done by Hungarian Atomic Institute they were buried in late 5th-early 6th century. Despite the ban of burial within and in the vicinity of the baptisteries, by the council of Auxerre in 578 it may have been disregarded since it was a local council.[41] Since there was one baptistery as a norm in early Christian period[42] our focus shifted to locate the main church of the city. Approximately 5 metres to the north of the baptistery, two parallel walls in the direction of east-west were discovered. As excavation continued it was clarified that they belong to the main church of the city.

4. Church of Ss. Florus and Laurus ?

As excavations continued, a two phased church with the dimensions of 20 x 40 metres was unearthed. This was a church in the form of a basilica. It has two side aisles and a nave which ends with a single apse in the east. There is no atrium. The first church, built in mid 4th century,

[41] Howell 2011, 281.
[42] Fletcher 1924, 208.

was destroyed due to an earthquake. Probably at the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 5th century another church was built on the same spot. It was narrowed on the northern and southern side approximately 1 metre on each side (fig. 7). In 2015 excavation season a very intriguing discovery was made. There were five skeletons laid on the southern wall of the First church. Two of the skeletons, both of which are female, were in better condition. Based on the anthropological analysis made on the spot, it was determined that one was in her 20's, whereas the second one was in her 40's. Most probably, these skeletons belong to the people who died in the church during the earthquake and were buried as a sign of respect and privilege.

The entrance to the church is by means of three doors in the west which leads into narthex. The passage to the nave was by means of another set of three doors. The central one was the most damaged. Most probably it had a two-column arrangement. The southern entrance is in a better condition. On its floor there is a re-used white marble slab. A hole on this slab indicates the position of the door. 1 metre away on the southern wall there is another marble slab with a hole which also proves that there was a door as well.

The nave was separated from the side aisles by columns. Underneath these columns there were large stone slabs whose traces can still be observed. The nave ends with an apse on the east. The templon before the apse was approximately 0.4 metre high and stood on stone pieces. There are traces of a synthronon of the First church in the apse.



Fig. 7. View of baptistery and church of Ss. Florus and Laurus ? (author)

Floor mosaics in the church were first discovered in 2013. Except for two birds in the southern nave, all of the mosaics have geometrical patterns (fig. 8). There are also



Fig. 8. Floor mosaics with birds and kantharos (author)

22 inscriptions in Latin. These are dedicatiory inscriptions with the names of the donors. The longest inscription is next to the main entrance of the church at narthex. This inscription survived partially. The term 'comes' in the inscription is the most interesting issue on the mosaic (fig. 9).



Fig. 9. Floor mosaic inscription (author)

This word was used as a term of nobility in Late antiquity. In the meantime it was used for the commanders of the army. Considering the importance of the army in the area and their camp in the vicinity this might have been the dedication of the army commander in the city. The best preserved mosaics were found in the southern end of the narthex. The rest of the mosaics are in the aisles. There are very small fragmentary pieces of mosaics in the nave. When the Second church was constructed, the floor mosaics were paved by mortar in most of the floors except for the area in front of the templon which was paved with bricks. When the Second church was constructed, probably due to lack of finance and expertise mosaics were not made or restored. The most important pattern on the mosaics is the cross. It is one of the most important criteria for

dating. Since there is a ban on depicting a cross on the floor by Theodosius II in 427, it provides *termius post quem*.[43] Mosaics with crosses were mostly in the northern aisle (fig. 10) except for a small portion in the southern aisle.



Fig. 10. Floor mosaic with crosses (author)

One of the most important criteria for the dating of structures are coins. All the coins, except for a silver one, were made of copper and bronze. The oldest is from the reign of Geta (209-211) and the newest is from the reign of Justin (518-527). Approximately 90 % of the legible coins are dated to 4th century. One coin among all has a special value. This was issued by Crispus. He was one the sons of Constantine I and was believed to rule after his father. Prior to our discovery there were 2-3 examples in the world.[44] He was executed by his father for unkown reasons.[45]

During the excavations on the southern and northern sections pieces of glass with charred wooden pieces were found. This was taken as an indicator that windows had wooden frames.

The impact of an earthquake, probably the one in 517/518, can be observed at the main entrance from the narthex to the nave and on the

[43] Krueger & Mommsen 1872, I-8-1.
[44] Sutherland *et al*. 1966, Aquileia 41.
[45] Hohlander 1984, 99.

floor of the nave as a whole. There are several deep pits as a result of heavy pieces collapsing on the floor.

After the earthquake instead of building again on the same site, it has been decided to build a new church; most probably the one near the northern gates. All the material available was taken to be re-used from the main church. The church we discovered is the main church, since it is located next to the baptistery, the largest structure in the city and decorated lavishly with mosaics. No inscription concerning its dedication was found. Since it was the main church of the city it would be safe to assume that it was dedicated to Ss. Florus and Laurus. Our discovery of the 4th-5h century baptistery and the two phased 4th-5th century church are the biggest discoveries in the city since the beginning of the excavations.

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Réflexions sur les monuments de culte chrétien dans l'urbanisme. Scénographie urbaine en Scythie entre adaptation et transformation durant l'antiquité tardive

Irina Achim

Abstract: This paper investigates the place that Christian cult monuments occupy within the Late Antiquity urban space in the so-called 'Minor' Scythia. Using only archaeological information, the aim is to recreate a sequence of the edilitary activity during the Late Antiquity and define a Christian topography of the urban structures in a predefined geographical area. The systematic analysis of the Christian cult monuments calls for a synthetic re-evaluation of the urban décor, authorizes a series of conclusions regarding the place and role of the church within the city, seen as an architectural entity, and last, but not least, makes possible a more nuanced discussion regarding the separation between the sacred and the profane during a historical age when the city was gradually acquiring a Christian dimension.

Keywords: urbanism, Late Antiquity, Christianity, Paleo-Christian church

Резюме: Изследването се занимава с мястото, което заемат християнските култови сгради в урбанизацията на късноантичната провинция 'Малка Скития'. Опирайки се на данните от археологическите проучвания, основната цел е да се пресъздаде последователност от благоустройствени дейности през Късната античност и да очертае християнската топография в градските структури в една предопределена градска среда. Систематичният анализ на християнските култови сгради позволява преоценяване на градската среда и води до серия от заключения относно мястото и ролята на църквата в рамките на града като едно архитектурно цяло, но също така и да провокира по-специфична дискусия върху отделянето на свещеното от профанното във времето, когато градът получава християнски облик.

Les monuments de culte chrétiens s'avèrent un segment significatif de l'activité constructive dans les différentes villes et fortifications de la

Scythie, durant l'antiquité tardive ou plus précisément durant la période définie par W. Liebeschuetz[1] comme *Late Late Antiquity*. Pour l'essentiel, l'archéologie de la période retenue semble synonyme et pourrait être confondue avec l'archéologie chrétienne; cependant, les églises paléochrétiennes ne sont pas les découvertes archéologiques exclusives appartenant à cette période. Il convient de remarquer que les monuments de culte chrétiens tout autant que les murailles peuvent être retenus comme des unités architecturales emblématiques de la cité tardo-antique. Grâce à leur caractère complexe et durable, ils sont les mieux attestés sur le terrain, et le plus présents dans les publications archéologiques.

En s'appuyant sur un dossier archéologique sélectif, ce travail vise à reprendre le débat concernant la problématique de la place et du rôle symbolique que les édifices de culte chrétiens assument dans la géographie urbaine des cités de la région du Bas-Danube. Afin d'accomplir ces desiderata il faudra répondre à des questions connexes concernant l'existence ou bien l'absence d'une topographie séculaire propre aux structures urbaines de la Scythie, les modalités de la mise en valeur des *loca sancta* à l'intérieur du cadre urbain, aux aspects liés à l'interaction entre les sphères religieuse et profane dans l'espace citadin examiné.

Monuments chrétiens, territoire et cadre urbain

Un **premier aspect** à discuter porte sur la répartition des monuments chrétiens dans le territoire (fig. 1). À l'heure actuelle, 45 églises paléochrétiennes sont connues par voie archéologique,[2] reparties sur une vingtaine de sites dont les statuts urbains sont dissemblables (villes grecques, villes romaines, fortifications romaines tardives). Les structures urbaines ou bien les fortifications de moindre importance, qui peuvent faire songer éventuellement à un statut citadin, abritant des monuments de culte chrétien s'échelonnent sans règle apparente le long de la frontière danubienne de la Scythie, sur la rive ouest de la mer Noire, mais beaucoup moins à l'arrière-pays. Bon nombre d'entités urbaines du Haut-Empire perdurent à l'époque de l'Antiquité tardive, réalité qui prouve le maintien des lignes générales de l'occupation du territoire sur une longue durée et sur des périodes historiques successives.

[1] Liebeschuetz 2001, 1–25, 400–416.

[2] Au corpus dressé par Barnea 1977, 121–178 s'y ajoutent d'autres exemples de monuments paléochrétiens réunis dans un dossier mise au niveau par Achim 2008, n^os^ 65–81. Nous avons eu connaissance, par Mm F. Topoleanu et V. Yotov, de deux autres cas inédits.

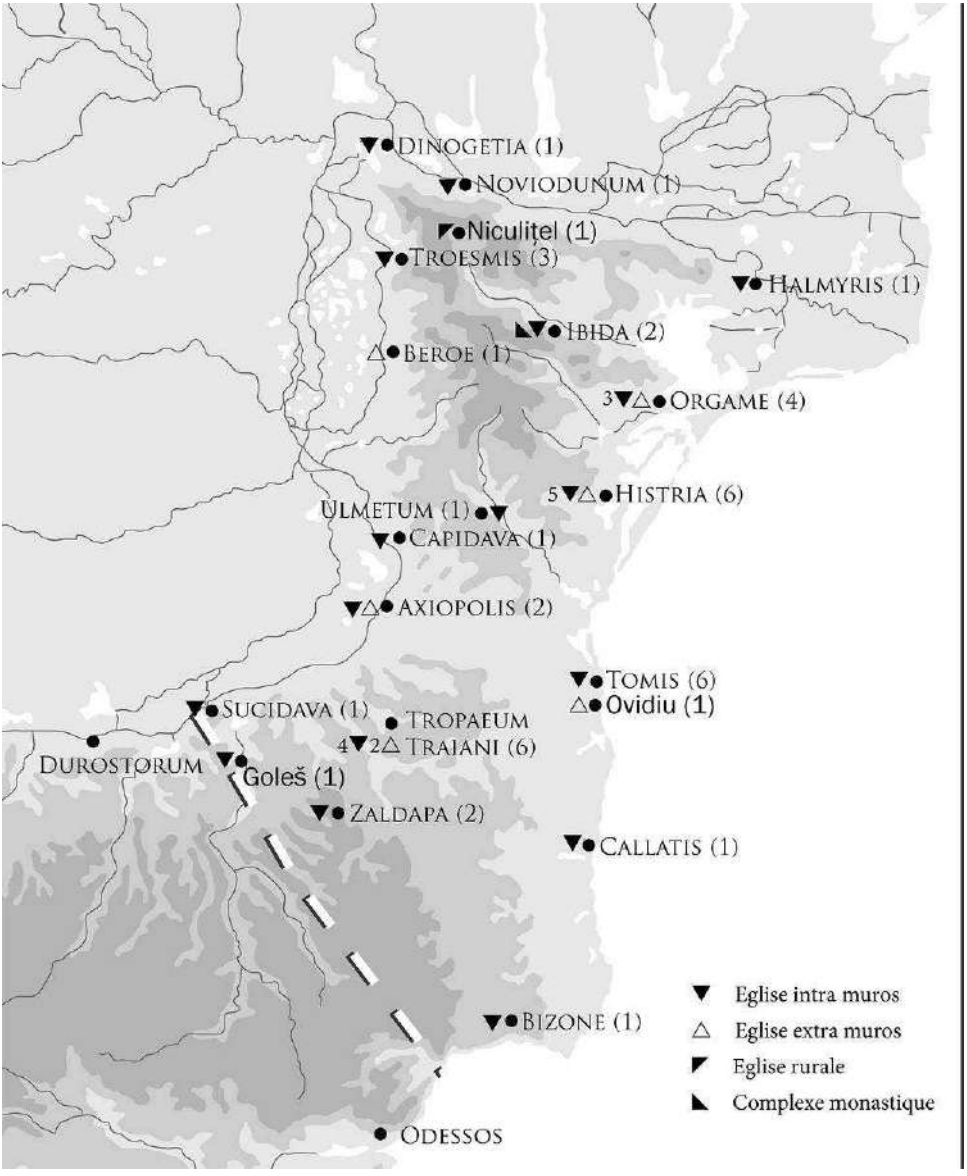


Fig. 1. Carte de la province de Scythie à l'époque romaine tardive avec la localisation des structures d'habitat et le nombre de monuments paléochrétiens par site (R. Cîrjan & I. Achim)

Un **second aspect** concerne la répartition des édifices de culte chrétien par rapport au cadre urbain et à l'intérieur de ce dernier. Si on prend en considération les remparts – confins matériels de l'espace urbain par rapport à son hinterland –, alors seulement deux catégories d'édifices

chrétiens peuvent être reconnus: *intra* et *extra muros* et cela indépendamment du statut urbain de l'agglomération qui les accueille. Parmi les 45 églises exhumées, 36 sont des édifices *intra muros*, sept autres sont *extra muros* ayant ou non une vocation funéraire établie. Au sein de cette dernière catégorie, l'église aux abords du *quadriburgium* d'Ovidiu est un monument sans affectation funéraire avérée.[3] Un complexe ecclésiastique composé lors de sa seconde phase de deux églises – en effet, une église double –, occupait un plateau à environ 3 km ouest des remparts de la ville d'Ibida, étant considéré par l'auteur de la fouille un complexe monastique,[4] le seul signalé en Scythie jusqu'à présent. Enfin, la basilique de Niculițel est l'un des rares monuments chrétiens de la Scythie installé en milieu rural, à une distance considérable du centre urbain dont il dépend. Le sanctuaire martyrial de Niculițel prend place sur un terrain riche en vestiges attribuables à l'époque romaine et romaine tardive.[5]

Statistiquement parlant, les églises s'avèrent beaucoup plus nombreuses dans les villes maritimes grecques; les monuments *intra* et *extra urbem* coexistent, à une seule exception près, celle de la métropole ecclésiastique, Tomis, où les églises dégagées sont situées, dans l'état actuel de la recherche, exclusivement *intra urbem*. Sur la frontière danubienne, la plupart des villes et des fortifications comportent une à deux églises, dont, exceptionnellement, une peut être installée *extra muros* comme à Cernavodă (antique Axiopolis, dép. de Constanța).[6] À l'arrière-pays, il faut remarquer le cas particulier d'Adamclisi (antique Tropaeum Traiani, dép. de Constanța), dans la mesure où la densité des monuments chrétiens est comparable à la situation constatée dans les cités portuaires grecques. Adamclisi est d'ailleurs l'unique exemple de ville dans laquelle deux églises sont situées à l'extérieur du cadre urbain; mais, parmi ces monuments chrétiens *extra urbem*, un seul remplit une fonction cimétériale.

Plus nuancée encore s'avère la situation topographique des églises à l'intérieur du périmètre ceinturé par les murailles. Face à la complexité et à la diversité du sujet, la présentation est subordonnée aux principales catégories urbaines, en commençant par les **villes grecques**.

Cités portuaires qui dominent le littoral de la mer Noire, dépositaires de ressources économiques importantes, les structures urbaines grecques sont, en même temps, héritières d'une longue tradition urbaine. En termes de morphologie de l'espace urbain, les structures citadines grecques conservent sur toute leur durée d'existence les traits fondamentaux de leur histoire, tout en

[3] Băjenaru 2010, 134–135, fig. 33.
[4] Achim 2008, n° 81.2.
[5] Baumann 2005, 116–119, 125, fig. 30.
[6] Netzhammer 2005, 105–112, fig. 36, 38, 40; Born 2012, 62–63, fig. 65.

s'adaptant, de manière audacieuse, aux priorités du modèle romain. Le patrimoine monumental des époques antérieures ne connaît pas une disparition brusque durant l'Antiquité tardive. Il subit, en revanche, les rigueurs d'une double dégradation symbolique, à la fois idéologique et fonctionnelle. Les mutations qui touchent au *decor ciuitatis* représentent une porosité inévitable qui se manifeste justement dans la pratique urbanistique, tout en conduisant vers de nouvelles formes d'expression monumentale propres à chaque centre urbain et aux conditions historique spécifiques que chaque ville devra surmonter.

Orgame/Argamum (Jurilovca, Capul Dolojman, dép. de Tulcea) ville grecque au nord de la Scythie, est sans l'ombre d'un doute la cité ayant la superficie urbaine la plus réduite sur l'ensemble de la province (à l'époque de l'empereur Justinien le périmètre urbain ne dépasse pas 5 hectares).[7] Néanmoins, aux V^e^–VI^e^ siècles, trois églises sont implantées à l'intérieur du cadre urbain, tandis qu'un quatrième monument chrétien, de dimensions assez modestes, fut érigé au VI^e^ siècle *extra muros*,[8] au sein de la nécropole tumulaire hellénistique et sur un terrain occupé par de structures préexistantes, en cours d'exploration.[9] Dans l'état actuel des nos connaissances, les arguments archéologiques concernant la réduction de la superficie urbaine sont assez faibles. Toutefois, les fouilles effectuées les dernières décennies ont montré qu'une rétraction du périmètre urbain est perceptible entre l'époque grecque et celle romaine tardive.[10] À la différence d'autres cas enregistrés en Scythie, les trois églises paléochrétiennes mises au jour à Orgame se dressent sans exception à l'est de la rue qui mène de la poterne située à l'angle sud-est de la ville à la porte occidentale, à proximité de la courtine orientale qui domine la falaise du Lac Razelm (fig. 2).[11] La configuration de l'aire située à l'ouest de la rue qui traverse la cité du nord au sud est malheureusement très peu connue pour pouvoir affirmer qu'aucun autre monument chrétien n'est implanté en cette région, sur un assez vaste périmètre urbain.

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[7] Mănucu & Adameșteanu 2005, 36–37, n. 154–155.

[8] Le monument a été installé à une distance moyenne de 1,5 km à l'ouest de la ville paléo-byzantine.

[9] Lungu 1995a; 1995b; 2003.

[10] L'hypothèse est soutenue par l'identification sur le terrain du tracé d'un tronçon de l'enceinte grecque – notamment la courtine méridionale – se trouvant à environ 18 m ouest par rapport à la courtine correspondante de la muraille d'époque romaine tardive: cf. Mănucu–Adameșteanu & Mărgineanu–Cârstoiu 2008/2009, 139.

[11] Il faudra retenir à l'appuie de cette affirmation le travail de Mărgineanu–Cârstoiu & Mănucu–Adameșteanu 1998, 233–258, en particulier 253–254, fig. 1 avec des précieuses observations concernant la topographie urbaine, la configuration de l'enceinte dans son secteur Est et la chronologie de ce dernier ensemble par rapport aux monuments chrétiens voisins.



Fig. 2. Photographie aérienne de la cité d'Orgame/Argamum avec l'indication des églises chrétiennes (Jurilovca, Capul Dolojman, dép. de Tulcea, Roumanie) (© Archive de l'Institut National du Patrimoine de Bucarest)

À Histria/Istros (comm. d'Istria, dép. de Constanța), étant donnée l'ampleur des recherches entreprises sur le terrain au fil des cents ans qui se sont écoulées depuis le début de fouilles, une série d'observations sur la topographie urbaine et sur l'anatomie de la ville romaine tardive est possible.[12] Ainsi, à la suite du sac des Goths, pendant le troisième quart du III^e^ siècle, la ville est rapidement dotée d'une nouvelle ligne défensive, dernière enceinte de la cité du point de vue chronologique. À ce même moment correspond une réduction significative de la superficie urbaine, qui s'accélère durant l'Antiquité tardive. Si à l'époque du Haut-Empire la cité occupe trente hectares, sous le règne de Constantin le Grand, elle ne recouvre plus que sept.[13] Le phénomène le plus dramatique produit à Histria après le milieu du III^e^ siècle est le changement de régime du terrain à la périphérie urbaine: une vaste superficie de la cité romaine du Haut-Empire reste en dehors du cadre urbain lors de la mise en œuvre de la dernière enceinte. Plusieurs phénomènes synchroniques se manifestent sans qu'ils soient néanmoins irréversibles:[14] l'abandon des certaines parcelles urbaines de l'ancienne cité romaine au profit de la nécropole, mais sans caractère funéraire permanent; l'avancement progressif de la nécropole vers l'est, en direction de la cité, touchant

[12] Achim 2012, 125–127, fig. 2, avec la bibliographie antérieure; Born 2012, 74–79, fig. 72–78 avec la bibliographie antérieure.
[13] Suceveanu 2007, 89–90 avec la bibliographie antérieure.
[14] Achim 2015a, 294–295.

même la zone à proximité des *valla* situés devant la muraille; la coexistence, justement sur ce même terrain ayant désormais perdu son caractère urbain, des îlots d'habitation dispersés attestés ici jusqu'au VI^e^ siècle.

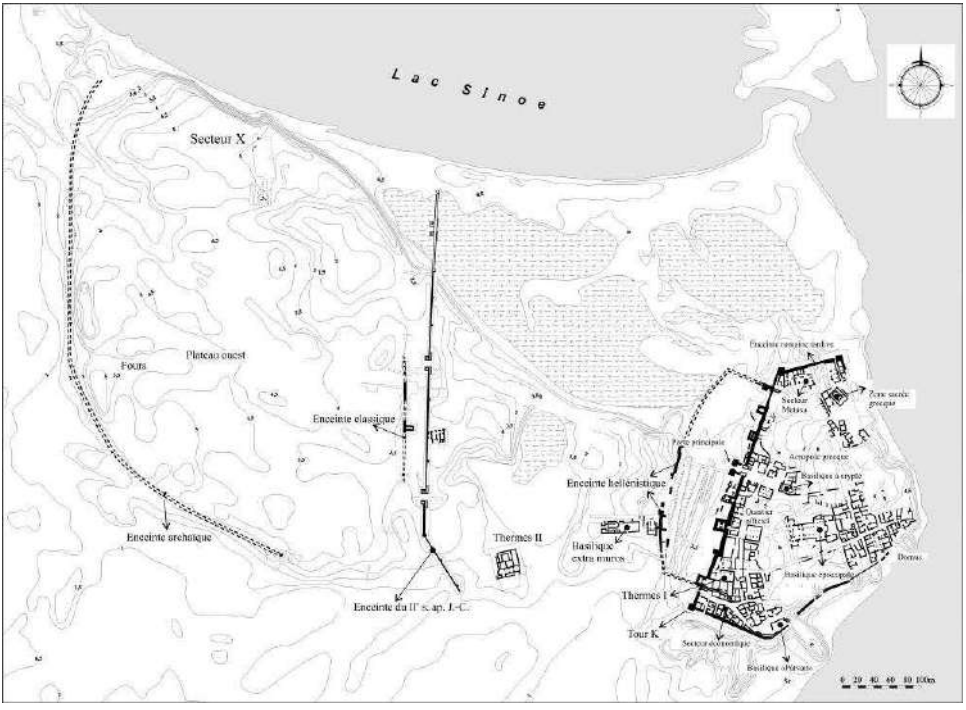


Fig. 3. Plan de la cité d'Histria à différentes époques, avec l'indication des secteurs et la localisation des monuments paléochrétiens (d'après Suceveanu 2007, pl. I)

À l'intérieur de la nouvelle ligne défensive, le terrain est occupé de manière parcimonieuse (fig. 3).[15] Les édifices chrétiens sont installés par quartier, à l'exception de l'aire nord-est, celle de l'ancienne zone sacrée d'époque grecque,[16] région qui a subi déjà vers la fin du I^er^ siècle av. J.-C.[17]

[15] Born 2012, 107–109.

[16] Avram *et al.* 2010/2011, 68–71, pl. 10; Born 2012, 93, fig. 95. En s'appuyant sur les données de fouilles, les auteurs accréditent l'existence d'un édifice chrétien érigé durant la première moitié du V^e^ siècle à l'est du Temple d'Aphrodite, entre ce dernier et l'enceinte romaine tardive. Une interprétation différente de cette salle à abside dénommée 'Basilica' est suggérée par Achim 2012, 127, n. 12. Pour une approche plus poussée concernant l'articulation de la maison tardo-antique, voir également l'ouvrage de Baldini Lippolis 2001, 19–27 qui fournit un bilan bibliographique accompagné par un vocabulaire terminologique et par des observations de méthode, très utiles dans la recherche des structures d'habitat privées de la région considérée.

[17] Alexandrescu *et al.* 2005, 152; Alexandrescu 2007, 211–219.

une désacralisation irréversible (à l'époque d'Auguste, un quartier modeste d'habitation fut davantage installé au sein de cet ancien pôle religieux de la cité).[18] Une superficie étendue au centre de la cité a été réservée à la cathédrale, mise en œuvre à la fin du V^e^–début du VI^e^ siècle, sur une parcelle urbaine où, depuis la fin du IV^e^ siècle, se dressait un autre édifice de culte chrétien. Dans le quartier voisin, à seulement 50 m au nord de la basilique épiscopale, ont voit se dresser au VI^e^ siècle la basilique à crypte, érigée sur un terrain sur lequel une fébrile activité constructrice se déroula aux époques précédentes. Deux basiliques successives ont trouvé leur place à l'angle sud-est de la ville, à proximité immédiate de la courtine, à partir, selon toute probabilité, de la fin du IV^e^ siècle. Enfin, le *suburbium* est, à son tour, équipé d'une basilique chrétienne vers la fin du V^e^ siècle. L'unique édifice chrétien *extra urbem* trouve sa place sur l'emplacement d'une nécropole antérieure dont la période de fonctionnement ne s'étend pas au-delà du premier quart du V^e^ siècle. Fort probablement à partir de sa troisième phase, la basilique *extra muros* assume une fonction cimétériale et, dès la seconde moitié du VI^e^ siècle, une nécropole attenante s'y installe à ses abords.

La ville de Tomis (Constanța, dép. de Constanța), métropole administrative et ecclésiastique de la Scythie, est incontestablement la ville ayant la plus ample superficie urbaine de la province, mesurant environ soixante hectares durant l'Antiquité tardive. Par rapport à la période du I^er^ siècle de l'ère chrétienne, le périmètre urbain de la capitale enregistre une diminution modérée (ca. 10 hectares) survenue au dernier quart du III^e^ siècle, suivie, durant la première moitié du VI^e^ siècle, d'un accroissement vers l'ouest.[19] Contrairement à la situation constatée à Orgame et à Histria, dans l'état actuel de la recherche, étonnamment aucune église *extra urbem* n'est connue à Tomis (fig. 4). Six édifices de culte chrétien ont été exhumés dans le périmètre *intra urbem*,[20] dans différents quartiers de la ville paléo-byzantine. Deux de ces monuments (la grande et la petite basilique) se trouvent à faible distance l'un de l'autre, dans une région périphérique à vocation artisanale, dans la partie ouest de la ville, à proximité de l'enceinte (fig. 4/1–2). Un édifice de proportions modestes occupait un terrain dans le secteur ouest de la ville, dans le port actuel et à proximité du port antique (fig. 4/6). Un monument de culte dont seul subsiste la crypte a été érigé à l'extrémité méridionale de la péninsule (aujourd'hui périmètre de la rue de la Révolution du 22 Décembre 1989 – fig. 4/4). Au centre de la ville antique, la basilique dégagée dans la cour du Lycée «Mihai Eminescu» a fait couler beaucoup d'encre grâce à sa crypte de grandes dimensions, dispositif liturgique bénéficiant d'un programme iconographique qui à suscité un vif

[18] Alexandrescu *et al.* 2005, 155–156.
[19] Zahariade 2006, 68, fig. 27.
[20] Born 2012, 49–61.

intérêt de la communauté scientifique ces dernières décennies (fig. 4/3). Enfin, une basilique de grande taille était implantée aux abords de la porte occidentale (ses vestiges sont à présent recouverts par l'Hôtel Ibis – (fig. 4/5).



Fig. 4. Photographie aérienne de la ville de Tomis (dép. de Constanța) avec l'indication du site des monuments paléochrétiens (réélaboration L. Cliante)

La seconde catégorie considérée est celle de **cités romaines**. Le premier cas à discuter est Tropaeum Traiani (Adamclisi, dép. de Constanța), ville située sur la route reliant, à l'époque tardo-antique, Marcianopolis à Noviodunum, passant par Zaldapa, Ulmetum et Ibida. La cité est érigée *a fundamentis* à l'époque de Licinius et Constantin le Grand, comme le précise par ailleurs l'inscription de dédicace[21] (datée entre 315 et 317) identifiée dans le périmètre de la porte orientale. La trame routière est organisée à cette période tardive selon un système à deux axes magistraux croisés (est–ouest, nord–sud) et à rues parallèles qui génèrent des redécoupages en lots géométriques.[22] Les remparts ceinturent et protègent une superficie urbaine de ca. 11,70 hectares[23] sur laquelle quatre églises sont disposées de manière symétrique (à l'exception de la cathédrale), le long de la *via principalis* (qui traverse la ville d'est en ouest) (fig. 5).[24] La fortification annexe (mesurant un hectare),[25] ajoutée au système défensif de la ville de toute vraisemblance au V^{e} siècle, pèche par l'absence de monuments représentatifs. Les basiliques A et D se trouvent

[21] Popescu 1976, 183–185, cat. n^{o} 170.
[22] Born 2012, 113, fig. 121.
[23] Zahariade 2006, 69–70.
[24] Born 2012, 115–130.
[25] Born 2012, 62, n. 383, fig. 121.

pratiquement face à face, chacune sur un terrain occupé par des structures préexistantes, immédiatement à l'est du carrefour *cardo* et *decumanus*. Vers l'extrémité ouest de la *via principalis*, mais à distance de cette dernière, on retrouve la cathédrale située à hauteur de la basilique citerne, C. À l'instar des églises A et D, la basilique C respectait soigneusement l'alignement de la rue indiquée. Une basilique suburbaine située à faible distance de la porte ouest de la ville se développe par étapes successives entre la fin du V^{e} siècle et tout au long du siècle suivant. Une église à vocation funéraire a déjà été signalée à la fin du XIX^{e} siècle sur l'une des collines qui domine la zone au nord de la cité, sur un terrain qui conserve inaltérée son affectation cimétériale depuis le Haut-Empire jusqu'à l'Antiquité tardive.



Fig. 5. Photographie aérienne de la ville de Tropaeum Traiani (Adamclisi, dép. de Constanța) avec l'indication du site des monuments paléochrétiens (cliché L. Cliante 2012)

Enfin, les **fortifications romaines tardives**, qu'il s'agisse de structures citadines remaniées ou bien des fondations *ex novo*, telles que Halmyris (Murighiol, dép. de Tulcea)[26] et Ulmetum (Pantelimon, dép. de Constanța), pèchent par leur superficie utile réduite (allant de 1,5 à 2,5 hectares) et par la modestie de leur équipement monumental. À l'intérieur des remparts, les édifices chrétiens sont implantés de manière aléatoire, dans la limite de l'espace disponible. Dans le cas de Halmyris,[27] la basilique occupe une position centrale, à l'ouest de *cardo maximus* (fig. 6). Au sud, l'édifice chrétien est flanqué par un bâtiment de taille imposante (*domus* II), susceptible d'être un bâtiment public. *Domus* I, située à proximité, toujours au carrefour du *cardo* et du *decumanus* est identifié au *praetorium*. Au contraire, au sein de la fortification d'Ulmetum,[28] la seule basilique connue jusqu'ici est contemporaine de la construction de la citadelle, sa première phase datant de la fin du IV^{e} siècle. L'église occupait un emplacement excentré, dans la région sud-est de la fortification, à proximité de l'enceinte (fig. 7).

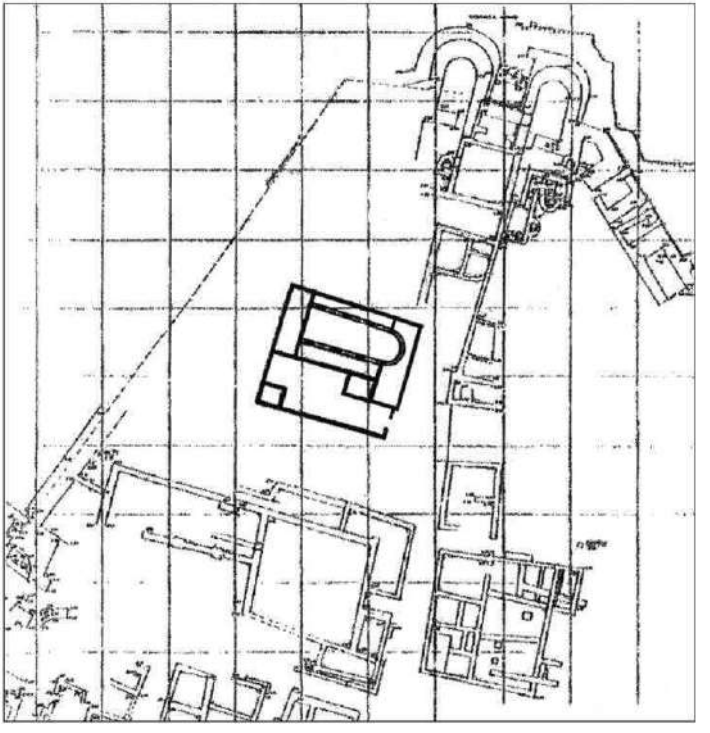


Fig. 6. Halmyris (Murighiol, dép. de Tulcea), Insula I et la basilique paléochrétienne (d'après Zahariade 2009, fig. 3)

[26] Zahariade 2006, 68–69.
[27] Achim 2015b, 133, n. 5–7, pl. 90, fig. 2.
[28] Achim 2015b, 137–138, n. 25, pl. 97, fig. 16.

L'image qui découle des réalités archéologiques présentées jusqu'ici permet d'affirmer que les structures urbaines de la région du Bas-Danube, pas plus que celles développées dans d'autres régions du monde romain, sont redevables à leur héritage culturel, aux raisons politiques et idéologiques qui contribuent à leur création, puis à leur évolution au fil du temps. Dans le contexte des changements politiques radicaux qui marquent le début de la domination romaine sur le Bas-Danube, puis dans le contexte sociopolitique de l'instauration de la Tétrarchie, on assiste à la romanisation irréversible d'une région périphérique de l'Empire, mutation profonde et complexe au quelle l'Antiquité tardive vient ajouter une dimension unique: la dimension chrétienne.



Fig. 7. Ulmetum (Pantelimon, dép. de Constanța). Photographie aérienne de la fortification tardo-antique avec l'indication du site de la basilique paléochrétienne (© http://img825.imageshack.us/img825/631/fotografieaerianaarheol.jpg)

Monuments chrétiens et l'anatomie des villes de Scythie

L'épigraphie chrétienne assez pauvre de la province de Scythie[29] ne permet point d'estimer les coûts de construction des monuments chrétiens

[29] Le corpus dressé par Popescu 1976, 35–292 réunit 276 d'épigraphes chrétiennes et non-chrétiennes provenant de la Dobroudja, tous types et supports confondus. Le dossier rassemblé par Barnea 1977, 29–112 est le plus important des recueils d'inscriptions grecques et latines à vocation chrétienne; il dénombre 81 inscriptions issues de ce même territoire.

sur l'ensemble de la province. Frappante s'avère, dans ce contexte, l'absence quasi-totale d'indices d'évergétisme monumental chrétien[30] sur toute la période de l'Antiquité tardive. Les membres des communautés chrétiennes sont particulièrement discrets, les commanditaires des édifices considérés sont, à quelques exceptions près, inconnus. Toutefois, un chapiteau imposte datant du V^e^ siècle, découvert fortuitement à Tomis, hors contexte archéologique, est inscrit d'un monogramme, Ἰωάννου,[31] qui pourrait tout à fait correspondre au nom d'un bienfaiteur privé ou d'un évêque commanditaire de cette période. Une stèle funéraire[32] provenant de Tomis, datée des IV^e^–V^e^ siècles, évoque un certain Jean, administrateur d'une église dédicacée toujours à un Jean, saint ou évêque de la ville. Une inscription fragmentaire sur une architrave provenant de Mangalia (ancienne Callatis, dép. de Constanța) qualifie l'empereur Justinien de φιλωκτίστης.[33] Cette épigraphe indique, de toute vraisemblance, la munificence impériale, l'implication de l'autorité centrale dans la construction d'un édifice chrétien dans ce centre épiscopal. D'autres possibles bienfaiteurs privés sont connus à Mangalia entre le V^e^ et le VI^e^ siècle, Eustathius[34] et Pétros,[35] dont les noms sont inscrits sur deux chapiteaux en marbre.

Le cadre architectural, en règle générale modeste, des églises de Scythie est pallié ponctuellement par des programmes décoratifs soignés, indiquant un coût assez élevé de la construction des certains monuments chrétiens grâce, par exemple, à la présence de pièces de sculpture architecturale réalisées en marbre d'importation[36] (carrières de Proconnèse[37] et de Thassos). L'utilisation des *spolia*[38] dans les maçonneries des églises de la Scythie est une pratique courante. Ce processus de spoliation dévoile d'un part, une motivation idéologique qui concerne la

[30] Sur ce phénomène en général on consultera Sotinel 2000, 102–103, n. 75–78 avec la bibliographie antérieure.
[31] Popescu 1976, 48, cat. n° 14; Barnea 1977, 196, n. 116–117, fig. 69/2; Born 2012, 30, n. 152, fig. 11; Buzoianu & Bărbulescu 2012, 88, n. 600.
[32] Popescu 1976, 67–69, cat. n° 32; Buzoianu & Bărbulescu 2012, 87, n. 592.
[33] Popescu 1976, 133–134, cat. n° 87.
[34] Popescu 1976, 134, cat. n° 88.
[35] Popescu 1976, 134–135, cat. n° 89. La pièce, aujourd'hui disparue, a été identifiée dans les décombres de l'église dite 'syrienne'.
[36] Voir sur le commerce des marbres entre le V^e^ et le VII^e^ siècle les remarques de Vanderheyde 2010, 273–274, n. 1–2, 4, fig. 1.
[37] Sodini *et al.* 1998, 303–304, n. 13.
[38] Born 2012, 79, n. 497. La question de la réutilisation du matériel de construction sur les chantiers des monuments chrétiens a également été mise en discussion ses derniers temps par David 2011, 29–38.

dégradation volontaire de l'équipement monumental des époques antérieures, et, d'autre part, indique la préoccupation, normale d'ailleurs, de diminuer le coût de construction et, en même temps, la quête des solutions pratiques dans la procuration du matériel de construction.

Les recherches archéologiques sur le terrain sont en mesure de démontrer qu'à l'intérieur du cadre défini par les remparts, les monuments constitutifs de la ville bénéficient, au fil du temps, d'un traitement différencié en fonction de leur importance et de leur valeur symbolique. Le patrimoine monumental de la ville classique subit une série de transformations irréversibles à l'époque romaine tardive. Les mutations qui se produisent sont en mesure d'estomper, parfois jusqu'à la disparition, les formes d'expression de la diversité religieuse caractéristique des périodes antérieures, en remplaçant cette divergence par un paysage religieux homogène, au sein duquel la seule variation admise est justement la valeur esthétique inégale des édifices chrétiens.

En termes de chronologie, il est possible d'observer, en s'appuyant sur les données fournies par l'archéologie, que les édifices de culte chrétien trouvent leur place dans la géographie des villes ou dans leur hinterland à partir de la seconde moitié du IV^{e} siècle, époque durant laquelle le nombre de monuments est encore particulièrement faible.[39] Malgré son manque d'envergure, la manifestation d'une édilité chrétienne pendant la seconde moitié du IV^{e} siècle correspond, en effet, à une période d'activité constructrice assez fébrile à l'échelle de la province, phénomène amorcé bien en amont, dès la fin du III^{e} siècle, mais qui se manifeste pleinement durant la dynastie constantinienne et après, jusqu'à la fin du IV^{e} siècle. Néanmoins, il faudra attendre la fin du V^{e} et la première moitié du VI^{e} siècle pour assister à un développement corolaire de la construction des églises chrétiennes en Scythie. Le corpus montre bien que la plupart des monuments dégagés jusqu'à présent remontent à cette époque. On note aussi le déclin de l'édilité chrétienne durant la seconde moitié du VI^{e} siècle, période caractérisée plutôt par le souci de maintenir en fonction des monuments érigés antérieurement.

En termes de scénographie urbaine, on peut observer que les églises s'insèrent de manière progressive, mais sans règle apparente, dans la structure matérielle de la ville. On voit les églises s'installer du centre vers la périphérie, souvent à proximité des murailles, parfois, mais pas nécessairement, sur un terrain libre de constructions mais, pour l'essentiel, sur des parcelles qui changent leur destination première. Se produit ainsi

[39] Les églises dont la datation remonte à cette période sont celles de Niculițel, Halmyris, Histria C et la basilique antérieure à la basilique dite 'Pârvan', Ulmetum.

un processus complexe et lente d'altération fonctionnelle des monuments traditionnels de la cité classique. Ce phénomène va de pair avec la cristallisation d'un paysage urbain renouvelé, plus adapté à une nouvelle sensibilité chrétienne qui s'affirme de manière idéologique à travers les églises. Une certaine pression peut être constatée dans le cadre urbain, comme à Histria, où deux églises s'implantent au VI^e^ siècle sur le terrain occupé par un bâtiment de culte chrétien précédant.[40] D'autres cas de réutilisation ou de transformation des monuments de la cité classique au profit d'un bâtiment de culte chrétien sont à signaler. Ainsi, à Adamclisi, la citerne qui se trouve à l'extrémité ouest de la *via principalis* est condamnée. Par la suite, son bassin central sert au VI^e^ siècle à l'implantation d'une église chrétienne (basilique C).[41] Dans la métropole, à Tomis, une basilique s'y installe à proximité de la porte occidentale de la ville sur les ruines de l'amphithéâtre,[42] situation particulière sur l'ensemble de la région nord-balkanique, signalée également à Reka Devnja (ancienne Marcianopolis, chef-lieu de la Mésie Seconde voisine).

Pour en revenir au bâtiment de culte chrétien même, les recherches sur le terrain sont en mesure de prouver qu'entre le moment de leur mise en œuvre et celui de l'abandon, la plupart des monuments chrétiens de Scythie ne conservent pas inaltérée la configuration architecturale initiale. Ces transformations relèvent sans conteste de la valeur fonctionnelle des édifices considérés et traduisent la réadaptation permanente du cadre architectural aux besoins de la communauté religieuse qu'il sert. En ce sens, l'église de Halmyris offre un bel exemple de transformation du programme d'architecture originel (fig. 8):[43] durant sa première phase, l'édifice est une simple salle à abside semi-circulaire qui lors d'un remaniement reçoit les collatéraux. La basilique connaît par la suite une nouvelle modification, par l'adjonction, sur son flanc méridional d'une vaste cour, étape durant laquelle l'abside saillante sera dissimulée dans un espace rectangulaire qui respecte soigneusement alignement du *cardo* vers lequel il ouvrait. Dans l'absence d'indices supplémentaires (épigraphiques ou autres), l'adjonction d'un espace ouvert, des dimensions assez grandes, semble avoir être dictée justement par les limites de l'espace disponible (un *narthex* se dresse en façade, à l'ouest) et vraisemblablement par le développement d'un itinéraire de pèlerinage en relation avec les dépouilles des martyrs Epictète et Astion.

[40] Achim 2012, 128–141, fig. 3–5, 9–10.
[41] Born 2012, 117–120, fig. 121, 127–133.
[42] Born 2012, 59–61, n. 368–372.
[43] Achim 2015b, 133–136, n. 5–17, pl. 91, fig. 3.

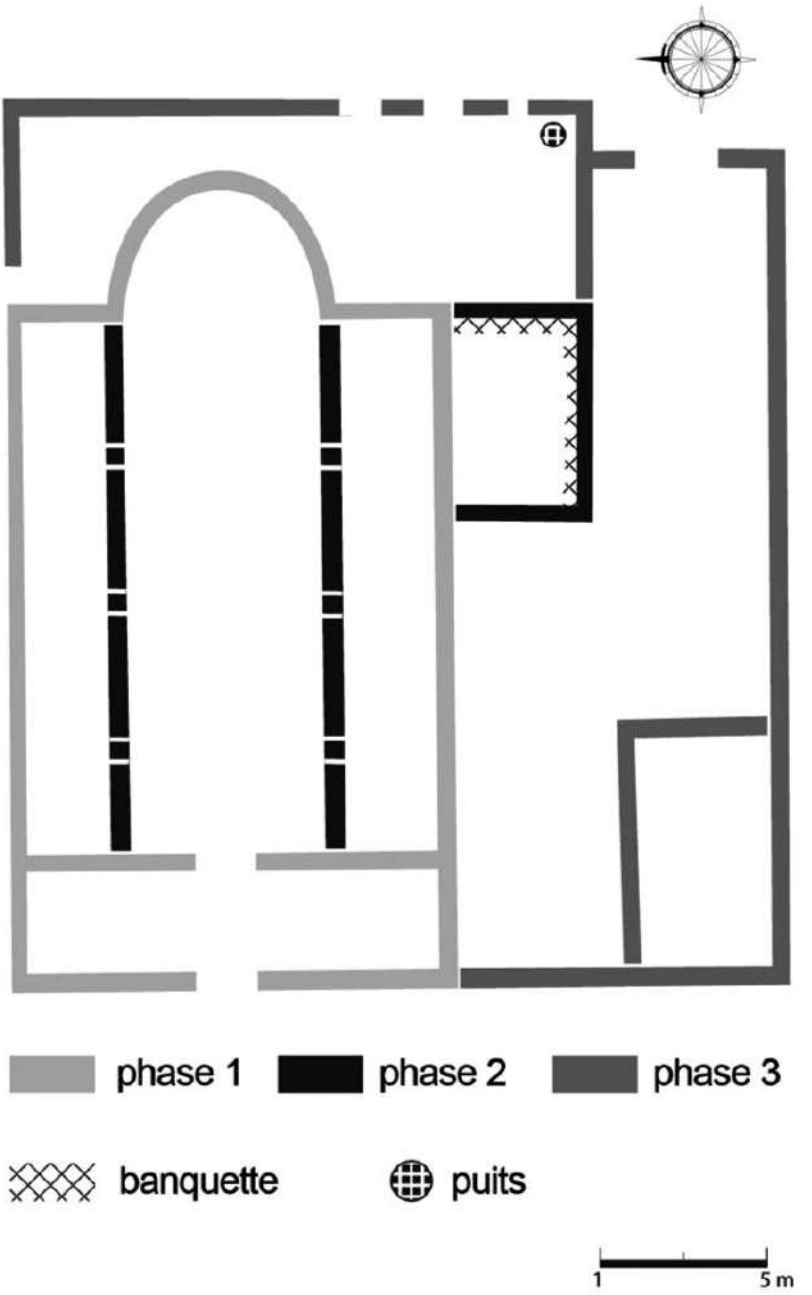


Fig. 8. Halmyris (Murighiol, dép. de Tulcea). Plan de la basilique illustrant ses trois phases (d'après Zahariade 2009, fig. 10, réélaboration R. Cîrjan)

Quelques remarques, enfin, sur l'environnement des églises. Il faut d'abord préciser que les monuments chrétiens considérés sont bâtis dans la

limite de l'espace disponible sur la superficie urbaine ou à l'extérieur du cadre délimité par l'enceinte. Les édifices sont connectés de manière fonctionnelle avec le réseau routier, fréquemment antérieur. Rarement un monument chrétien est volontairement isolé au sein d'une unité topographique, comme dans le cas de la basilique C à Tropaeum Traiani.[44] En effet, la basilique citerne était pratiquement englobée dans une enceinte qui accueille, en plus de l'église, une petite nécropole attenante. Cet enclos en maçonnerie qui protège l'église est accessible depuis la *via principalis* par un seul passage.

En fonction de l'importance du monument, un portique est situé à l'ouest si le monument est orienté ou sur ses flancs. Ces portiques assurent, en effet, la transition symbolique entre l'espace profane et l'espace religieux, par l'intermédiaire d'un élément architectural investit d'une valeur tout autant esthétique que liturgique. Telles situations sont constatées dans le cas de la cathédrale d'Histria (portique en façade,[45] à l'ouest, devant l'*atrium* – fig. 9) et dans celui de la basilique près de la porte ouest à Tomis (flanquée au nord d'une rue à portique[46] – fig. 10).

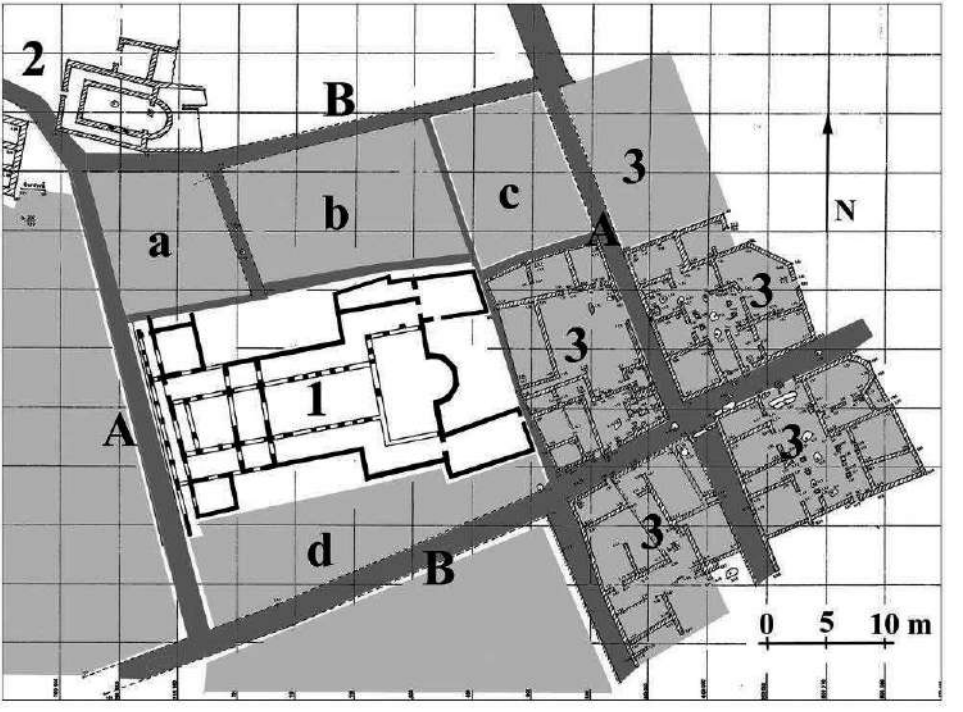


Fig. 9. Histria (Istia, dép. de Constanța), basilique épiscopale. Plan du monument et de son environnement immédiat (Suceveanu 2007, pl. 7).

[44] Barnea 1979, 21, fig. 3.
[45] Achim 2012, 137, fig. 10–11 avec la bibliographie antérieure.
[46] Rădulescu 1991, 30, fig. 7.



Fig. 10. Tomis (Constanța, dép. de Constanța), basilique au-dessus des ruines de l'amphithéâtre romain, vestiges du portique sur le flanc nord de l'édifice (© Archive photo du Musée d'Histoire Nationale et Archéologie de Constanța, cliché n° 98256)

Les églises de Tropaeum Traiani[47] et la cathédrale d'Histria comportent dans leur dessein d'architecture un *atrium* (voir le Tableau 1). Il s'agit donc d'un élément de plan coûteux, qui en plus de ses fonctions liturgiques, garantit un aspect monumental de la façade et représente concurremment un élément de contact entre l'espace profane et l'espace

[47] Barnea 1975, 57–67.

religieux. Le corpus illustre très bien le fait que, pour la plupart, les églises de la Scythie sont dotées en façade d'un élément marqueur assurant la séparation et la transition entre la rue et le lieu de culte (voir le Tableau 2). Une façade est rarement nue, les églises pourraient présenter, outre l'*atrium*, un *narthex*, une simple cour ou bien un portique et cela indépendamment de la typologie du monument (voir Tableaux 3 et 4). Les églises ne cherchent presque jamais le voisinage des espaces publics si ces derniers leur sont antérieurs. Toutefois, la basilique à crypte d'Histria offre un exemple intéressant de monument chrétien en relation d'interdépendance avec la place publique[48] située à l'ouest, espace ouvert paru au même moment que la basilique. Une situation particulière est enregistrée dans le cas de la basilique du quartier sud-est de la ville d'Histria. La basilique supérieure dite 'Pârvan'[49] présente au VI[e] siècle une fusion fonctionnelle avec la rue d qui longe le complexe d'églises superposées au nord. En effet, à hauteur de la façade occidentale de la basilique, la rue d est coupée de son environnement par un dispositif de clôture (grille ?) monté dans un seuil conservé *in situ* sur toute la largeur de la rue (fig. 11–12). La basilique et le bâtiment CR2 au nord de la rue d se trouvent ainsi isolés au sein d'unité urbanistique dont le rôle reste à expliquer.



Fig. 11. Histria (Istia, dép. de Constanța), la basilique dite «Pârvan». Vue depuis l'ouest sur le seuil in situ conservé sur toute la largeur de la rue d, au nord du monument chrétien (photo M. V. Angelescu, V. Bottez).

[48] Achim 2014, 265–267, fig. 6.

[49] Achim 2012, 154, n. 41, fig. 4. Les auteurs de la fouille (Bottez 2014, 243–263, fig. 2–3) signalent un changement survenu dans le système de référence de la trame routière autour de la basilique 'Pârvan', à la différence de ce qui est indiqué dans l'article d'Achim où la rue d2 désigne, en effet, la rue d au nord du monument chrétien.



Fig. 12. Histria (Istia, dép. de Constanța), la basilique dite « Pârvan ». Vue depuis l'est sur l'édifice chrétien et sur la rue située au nord (photo M. V. Angelescu, V. Bottez).

Conclusions

Le bilan assez rapide que nous avons donné ici permet d'abord de remarquer une fois de plus les difficultés d'interprétation concernant les transformations des villes de la région du Danube inférieur, en particulier celles de la Scythie, à l'époque de l'Antiquité tardive surtout sous le poids du christianisme. Les informations archéologiques sont encore trop disproportionnées, souvent incomplètes. Sur son parcours entre le Haut-Empire et l'Antiquité tardive la ville est une structure soumise aux phénomènes de continuité, évolution continue ou bien de rupture. La cité subit des transformations irréversibles qui valident la perte irrévocable de son monumentalité initiale. Entre résistance et subsistance, la ville finit par s'adapter aux besoins immédiats de ses habitants, tout en respectant l'héritage du passé, signe de son identité. À partir du IV^{e} siècle, les églises s'insèrent graduellement dans le tissu urbain. Elles représentent la dernière séquence monumentale des cités et la dimension chrétienne prévaut sur tout autre aspect caractéristique de l'image de la ville. À cette époque

tardive, l'utilisation de la superficie urbaine est parcimonieuse. Maisons patriciennes, humbles habitations, quartiers économiques et artisanales se disputent l'espace *intra urbem*, tandis que le territoire est de plus en plus moins densément habité sous la menace des attaques barbares et de l'insécurité des frontières.

CCA – *Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România*, Bucarest, suivi par la campagne et l'année de la publication des resultats; disponible sur web à l'adresse http://www.cimec.ro/Arheologie.html.

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Tableau 1. Atrium : type et dimensions (y compris la cour centrale)

Site	Monument	Phase	Type	Longueur (en mètres)	Largeur (en mètres)	Cour
CALLATIS	Église, cathédrale présumée	2	triportique	-	-	9,95 x 7,60 m ; canalisation
HISTRIA	Église à transept (épiscopale)	1	triportique	17,40	9,80	8,20 x 6,30 m ; puits dans la cour
HISTRIA	Église à transept (épiscopale)	2	triportique	17,40	9,80	
TOMIS	Grande basilique	-	oui, inconnu	-	10,40	-
TOMIS	Grande basilique sur l'amphithéâtre romain	-	triportique ?	-	-	-
TRAIANI	Basilique dite «simple» (A)	-	triportique	16,85	12,70	10,00 x 6,20 m
TRAIANI	Basilique dite de «marbre», cathédrale (B)	3	triportique	18,00	10,45	8,00 x 7,00 m ; sud ?
TRAIANI	Basilique dite de «marbre», cathédrale (B)	4	triportique	18,00	10,45	8,00 x 7,00 m ; sud ?
TRAIANI	Basilique C dite «citerne»	-	pavage cour in situ	-	-	-
TRAIANI	Basilique à transept (D)	1	possible	-	-	-
TRAIANI	Basilique à transept (D)	2	triportique	18,30	9,40	8,00 x 6,00 m
TRAIANI	Église cimétériale	-	oui, inconnu	-	-	-
ZALDAPA	Basilique n° 1		oui ?	-	-	-

Tableau 2. Avant-nefs: type

Site	Monument	Phase	Avant-nefs
BIZONE	Basilique (des Ss. Côme et Damien ?)	-	exonarthex ?
HISTRIA	Basilique extra muros	2	cour occidentale, seul dallage in situ et égout
HISTRIA	Basilique extra muros	3	cour occidentale, seul dallage in situ et égout
Ovidiu	Eglise extra muros	1	galerie à l'ouest
TROESMIS	Basilique n° 1	-	portique occidental ?
TROESMIS	Basilique n° 3	-	portique occidental
TRAIAN	Basilique dite de «marbre», cathédrale (B)	2	vestibule occidental mesurant 3,00 m de largeur
ZALDAPA	Basilique n° 1	-	en équerre, ouest et nord

Tableau 3. Narthex indivis

Site	Monument	Eglise type	Phase	Narthex indivis
AXIOPOLIS	Basilique ? intra muros	*Incerta*	-	oui
BIZONE	Basilique (des Ss. Côme et Damien ?)	trois nefs	-	oui
HALMYRIS	Basilique épiscopale	une nef	1	oui
HALMYRIS	Basilique épiscopale	trois nefs	2	oui
HALMYRIS	Basilique épiscopale	trois nefs	3	oui
HISTRIA	Petite basilique sous l'église Episcopale (C)	trois nefs	-	oui ?
HISTRIA	Basilique à crypte, dite «Florescu»	trois nefs	-	oui
IBIDA	Complexe monastique, 2 églises/église A	une nef	2	oui, avec vasque en terre cuite
IBIDA	Complexe monastique, 2 églises/église A	une nef	3	oui, avec vasque en terre cuite
Niculițel	Basilique avec martyrion	trois nefs	1	oui, flanqué des deux tours latérales
NOVIODUNUM	Basilique intra muros	trois nefs	-	oui
ORGAME	Grande basilique	trois nefs	2	oui
ORGAME	Église à une nef	une nef	-	oui
ORGAME	Basilique n° III	trois nefs	1	oui
ORGAME	Basilique n° III	trois nefs	2	oui
Ovidiu	Église extra muros	une nef	2	oui
SUCIDAVA	Basilique	trois nefs	-	oui
TROESMIS	Basilique n° 1	trois nefs	-	oui
ULMETUM	Basilique intra muros	trois nefs	2	oui
ZALDAPA	Église n° 2	une nef ?	-	oui ?

Tableau 4. Narthex tripartite

Site	Monument	Eglise type	Phase	Narthex tripartite
HISTRIA	Église à transept (épiscopale)	transept, trois nefs	1	oui
HISTRIA	Église à transept (épiscopale)	transept, trois nefs	2	oui
TOMIS	Grande basilique	Trois nefs	-	oui
TOMIS	Grande basilique sur l'amphithéâtre romain	Trois nefs	-	oui
TROPAEUM TRAIANI	Basilique dite «simple» (A)	Trois nefs	-	oui
TROPAEUM TRAIANI	Basilique dite «de marbre», cathédrale (B)	Trois nefs	3	oui
TROPAEUM TRAIANI	Basilique dite «de marbre», cathédrale (B)	Trois nefs	4	oui
TROPAEUM TRAIANI	Basilique à transept (D)	transept, trois nefs	2	oui
TROPAEUM TRAIANI	Église extra muros près de la porte ouest	transept, trois nefs	2	oui ?
TROPAEUM TRAIANI	Église extra muros près de la porte ouest	Trois nefs	3	oui ?
ZALDAPA	Basilique n° 1	Trois nefs	-	oui

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Early Byzantine basilica with a tomb in Ostrovica village substructure near Niš (Serbia)

Miša Rakocija

Abstract: The present paper deals with an three-aisled Early Byzantine basilica of St. Archangel Gabriel and a Christian tomb located in the substruction within the north aisle. The access to the tomb is provided by dromos. The tomb is an Early Byzantine tomb with a semi-cylindrical vault and entirely built of brick and plastered with hydrostatic mortar with a niche on the western wall. Its construction is dated at late 4th or 5th century.

The basilica itself is dated to 5th or 6th century which means that it was built on the top of the earlier tomb. This is one of the cases where churches are built over a Holy tomb, a phenomenon accepted by the builders of that time within the Balkan area.

We should not exclude the possibility that churches with a tomb in their substructure, even this one in Ostrovica, might be regarded also as *mausolea* of some prominent personalities such as Parvul at Kamara church (Niš), as well as those personalities buried in the tomb of the three-conchal church or perhaps in the Basilica with the crypt, both in Caričin grad.

Key words: basilica, Early Byzantine tomb, mausolea, Ostrovica

Резюме: Настоящата статия се занимава с трикорабна ранновизантийска базилика, наименова на св. Архангел Гавраил и християнски гроб, намиращ се в нейните основи в рамките на северния кораб. Достъпът до него се е осъществявал посредством дромос. Гробът е ранновизантийски, с полуцилиндричен свод и ниша на западната стена, изцяло построен с тухли и обмазан с хидрофобен хоросан. Неговото изграждане се отнася към края на IV – V в.

Базиликата е изградена през V-VI в., което означава, че тя е била построена върху по-ранния гроб. Това е един от случаите при които базиликите са били построени върху т. нар. Свещен гроб, феномен, приет и на Балканите.

Не бива да се изключва и възможността базилики с гроб в тяхната субструкция, като е това с тази до с. Островица, да бъдат разглеждани и като мавзолеи на някои заслужени личности, като например гробът на Парвул в църквата в Камара (Ниш), включително и тази в триконхалната църква или базиликата с крипта в Царичин град.

The early Byzantine basilica whose substructure housed the recently discovered tomb is not familiar to the public and was not sufficiently

explored.[1] The local residents call this site the Church Grounds of the Council of St. Gabriel the Archangel. Still a revered cult place, it was secluded on the left bank of the Nišava River, just in front of the Ostrovica Village, at a location from which the Gorge of Sićevo can be clearly seen. [2]

Only the foundation walls (0. 80 m), made out of broken and cut stones which were connected with coarse-grained lime mortar, can be seen from the former early Christian church. They formed a rectangle (around 10.5 x 4 m), the interior being divided by a wall into two roughly equal chambers. It was the eastern half of the northern nave of the basilica. The segment of the arch of the apse is connected to the eastern side of the southern wall of the northern nave. The apse of the middle nave of the basilica is formed by projecting the point where the arch should have ended. The layout of the remaining walls that formed the basilica with three naves can be presumed by the areas where the debris was dispersed and the configuration of the construction site, so the suggested appearance needs to be assumed with the aid of architectural logic.

A semicircular wall was also connected to the eastern side of the northern nave (height of 1.3 m), in front of the entrance to the tomb, and it was made out of broken and cut stone with the occasional use of bricks. Its part lies on a wall (its visible height is 0.65 m) which was leaning against the southern doorstep of the entrance of the tomb. The lower portion of the wall was made in the same manner as the tomb, out of even horizontal rows of bricks which were made in the Byzantine size. The binding material in both walls was waterproof mortar (lime, sand and finely ground bricks), while the brick wall was coated with the same material. The lower brick wall belonged to a lateral wall which flanked the entrance to the tomb (dromos), which was common for this type of tombs (*hypogaeum*) (fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Northeastern part of the basilica with the entrance to the tomb and the apsidiola that encircled it (prothesis) (photograph by M. Rakocija)

[1] Rakocija 2007a, 140-141; 2013, 237-243.

[2] Gagulich 1980, 8; Rakocija 1998, 61-62; 2001, 62-63; 2007b, 13 ff.; 2011a, 32-34; 2011b, 79-82.

The arched shape of the upper wall, which was without a doubt built in a later period, irresistibly points to the fact that the eastern side of the wall of the northern nave of the basilica (the rectangular space with two rooms) was closed by an apse, where the access opening to the tomb was located, and which can be seen today, as well (fig. 2).

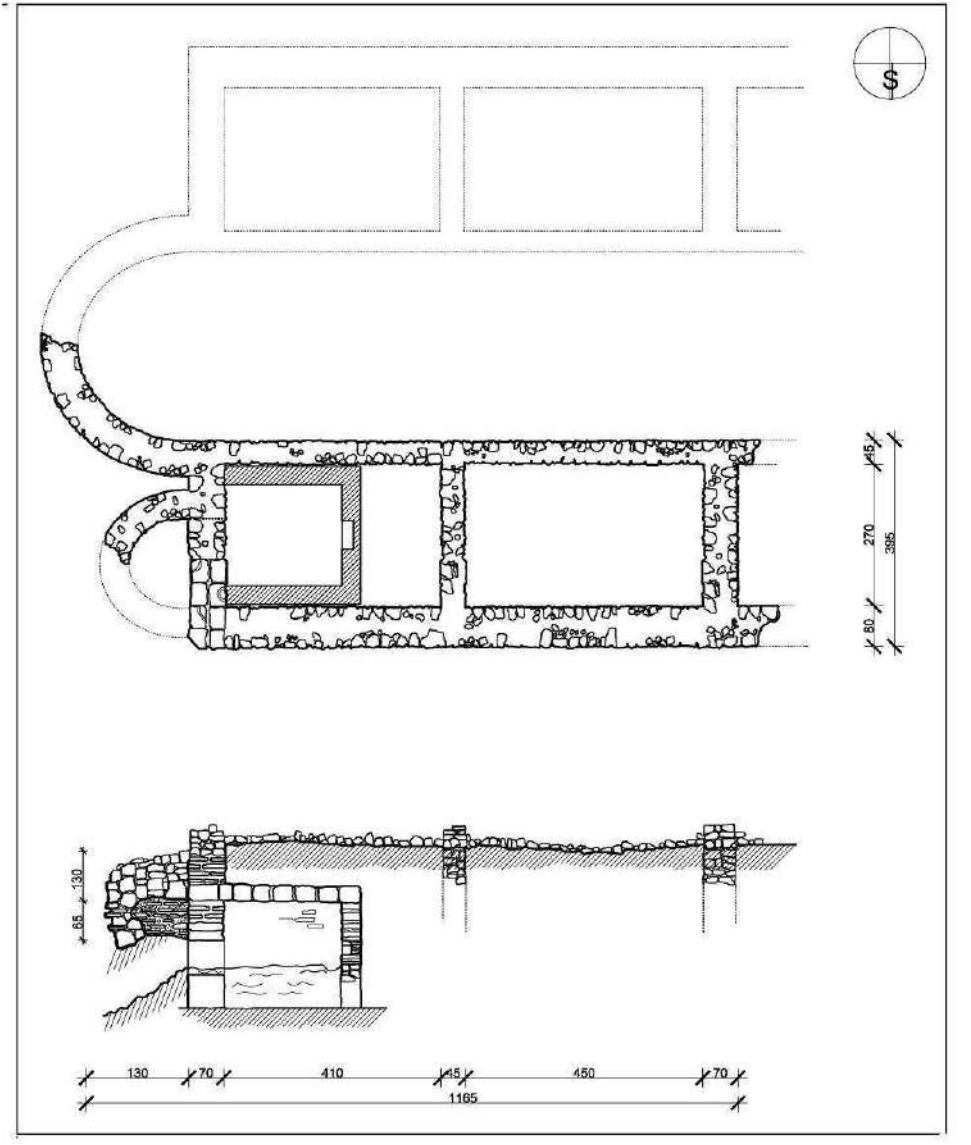


Fig.2. The basis and the longitudinal cross section of the basilica (architect J. Rakocija)

The part that was best preserved was the portion of the eastern wall of the northern nave, which is around a meter high. Unlike the others, this wall, which is mostly made out of bricks of the Byzantine type (24 x 32 x 4 cm), was constructed over the barrel-shaped vault of the tomb, exactly above its entrance, and it follows the eastern wall of the tomb, forming the northeastern corner of the northern nave of the basilica. There is a horizontal row of bricks which separated this wall from the vault of the tomb, and it was placed there to level the basis because of its arch. The wall was made with meticulously stacked bricks connected by waterproof mortar, the joints being somewhat larger than the width of the bricks (5 cm). In this manner the basilica encompassed the tomb, with which it was constructively connected, thus making it an integral part of its architecture (figs. 3, 4).



Fig. 3. The eastern wall of the northern nave of the basilica above the tomb (photograph by M. Rakocija)

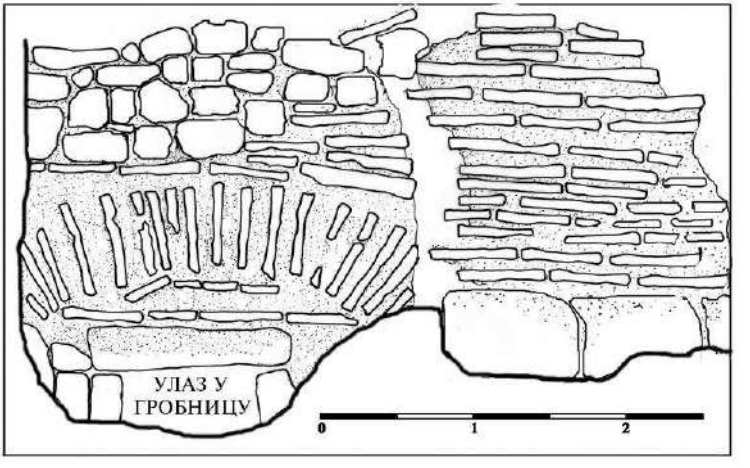


Fig. 4. The eastern wall of the northern nave of the basilica (sketch by architect J. Rakocija)

The tomb was constructed out of bricks in its entirety (33 x 25 x 4 cm) with waterproof mortar joints that were 5 cm thick. The rectangular entrance opening that was 0.75 m wide, and whose top was made out of radially stacked bricks, consisted of two stone pillars that supported a monolith architrave beam (fig. 5). The tomb, even though it is not easily accessible, is completely preserved and it belongs to the type of the early Byzantine tombs that had a barrel vault with a single niche on the western wall. Its interior was completely coated with finely polished waterproof plaster, underneath which bricks could be seen. The center of the western wall holds a rectangular niche that was built out of bricks.[3] The fact that its interior has only one niche on the western wall helps us place its origin at the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century, according to the suggested chronological systematization. [4]



Fig. 5. The entrance of the tomb (photograph by M. Rakocija)

The Church Grounds of St. Gabriel the Archangel housed a basilica with three naves, with a somewhat older early Christian tomb in the substructure of its eastern part. To be more precise, the eastern section of the northern nave was built over the authentic tomb that could be accessed from the apse area (prothesis), and a connection to the presbyterium should also be assumed, even though it is not clear in which way it was achieved (fig. 6).

[3] Boshkovich 1951, 236, fig.30
[4] Rakocija 2004, 154, fig. 10.



Fig. 6. The inside of the tomb (photograph by M. Rakocija)

The tomb was not located in the altar area itself. In the fifth and sixth century, if there were no tombs underneath the altar area, crypts would be placed there in order to imitate the original grave of the martyr, and it represented a *confession* – an underground chamber near the altar and the relics, where the Christians would confess their sins. It was usually an underground room beneath the church, placed close to the altar and the relics of the saint. This area was often connected to the church via a staircase, similar to the situation in the Church of St. Demetrius in Thessaloniki, or to certain other staircases e.g. the ones belonging to the basilica with the crypt in Caričin Grad[5] and the martyrium in the substructure of the church in Markela (Bulgaria), whose origin was dated to the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century.[6] In Ostrovica, the entrance to the tomb was encircled by an apsidiola, where access could be gained to the staircase leading to the interior of the tomb.

In the early Byzantine period in this area of the Balkans,[7] tombs that were of this architectural type were often found within the structure of the church; sometimes, as was the situation in Ostrovica, they were constructively connected as an integral part of its architectural whole.[8] The churches which had tombs in their substructure, discovered by I.

[5] Kondich & Popovich 1977, 74-80.
[6] Aladzhov & Drazheva 2006, 273-279.
[7] Rakocija 2004, 151.
[8] Bojanovski 1964, 115; Lilchich 1983, 95-108; Dimitrov 1976, 47-48; Petrovich 1966, 257.

Nikolajević,[9] are found in the basilica with three naves in the village of Bela Crkva at the Kiš[10] archaeological site within the Banjica necropolis in Peć, Kosovo and Metohija, where the tomb was located underneath the middle nave.[11] A tomb is also located in the substructure of the church in the necropolis of Targovište near Novi Pazar,[12] and the one in the Dvorine – Kolovrat archaeological site near Prijepolje. Moreover, these kinds of tombs are also located in Bogorodica Hvostanska,[13] on the Church Grounds of St. Stephen in Donja Crkvina in Svrljig,[14] on the Banjica[15] archaeological site in the Gorge of Svrljig, as well as the basilica with three naves in Remesiana (Bela Palanka) with brick tombs in the side naves,[16] of which there is no detailed data, and which all date from the fifth or sixth century (fig. 7).

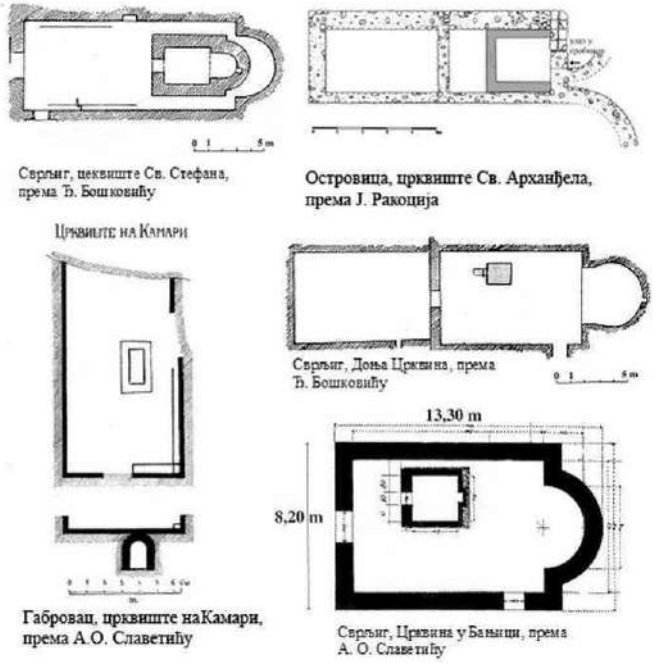


Fig. 7. Early Byzantine churches with a tomb in their substructure from the area around Niš

[9] Nikolajević 1978, 682.
[10] Kovačević 1966, 150-151.
[11] Zotović *et al.*, 1967, 121-125.
[12] Kovačević *et al.*, 1972, 144.
[13] Korach 1976, 34.
[14] Boshkovich 1951, 234-236.
[15] Orshich-Slavetich 1935, 173-174, fig. 6
[16] Zisi 1958, 353-354.

Considering a closer area, this arrangement was discovered in the church grounds in the Kamara archaeological site in front of the Gabrovac Village, in the vicinity of Niš. It is also placed on a notable hill,[17] and has a tomb in the naos area. As such, along with the known fact stating who was buried in it, it could be considered a church that was constructed above the tomb of the respectable citizen named Parvulus.[18] It happened in the fifth or sixth century, when the church was constructed and used, along with other churches that had a tomb in their substructure.

Because of that, we should not exclude the possibility that the churches with a tomb in the substructure, including this one in Ostrovica, were mausoleums of some famous people such as Parvulus from the church on the Kamara archaeological site, the person buried in the brick tomb of the triconch church in Caričin Grad,[19] or in the basilica with the crypt.

The basilica in Ostrovica should be dated to the fifth or sixth century, when other churches whose structure included a tomb that had been previously built (end of fourth or the fifth century) were constructed.[20] The church above the tomb, which was apparently a basilica with three naves, was built at a somewhat later period, which was a common occurrence for the early Byzantine period. The churches were frequently built above a holy grave, which was often, as was the case in Ostrovica, constructively connected to the temple. Known examples of churches with a tomb in the substructure, with the idea of the churches being directly connected to a holy grave, date from the fifth or sixth century,[21] which could also be applied to the Church Grounds of St. Gabriel the Archangel.

Since there is no mobile material, and we are relying on the material and the architectural shapes of the tomb, judging by the fact that its interior possesses only one niche on the western wall,[22] its construction could be dated to the end of the fourth or the fifth century, and a basilica was made above it in the fifth or sixth century, which was a result of a commonly accepted custom that obviously started becoming a rule for the churches in the area of Niš in the paleo-Byzantine period, while it was not unfamiliar to the contemporary builders in the wider area of the Balkans.

[17] Orshich-Slavetich 1935, 172, fig. 4; Rakocija 2007, 141-142, fig. 24.
[18] Vulich 1934, 48-49; Petrovich 1979.
[19] Spremo-Petrovich 1955, 176-178; Kondich & Popovich 1977, 135-139.
[20] Nikolajević 1978, 683.
[21] Nikolajević, 1978, 681-683.
[22] Rakocija 2004, 160-161.

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A Lead Seal of Constantine the Great from Serdica

Dochka Vladimirova-Aladzhova

Abstract: The subject of the current paper is a lead seal found during the excavation at the Western Gate of Serdica in 2014. The obverse of the seal is a round flat surface, one part of which has been destroyed. Three figures are located on a restricted field. The central figure is a bust *en face* with an elongated neck; to the left and to the right of the bust there is a head in profile, turned to the left and to the right respectively, with their backs to the central figure. The flanking images differ from each other in size and position to the central bust: the left image is larger and is situated higher in comparison with the right one. There are no traces of any inscription or single letters.

The reverse of the seal is convex, slightly conical. At a certain distance from the base, there is a groove with two openings at the ends. It was for the strings with which the various containers (bags or packing-cases) filled in with duty-paid and marked goods were tied up. The seal measures 16/17 mm and it weighs 14.59 g.

It has to be pointed out that the arrangement of the figures on the seal from Serdica with a central bust *en face* and two flanking heads in profile with their backs turned to the central figure, is a novelty in the iconography on the lead seals and tesserae. I believe that the images are of Emperor Constantine I and his sons Crispus and Constantine II. The former was Caesar of the West and the latter of the East. The two Caesars celebrated together their *quinquennalia* in 321. The first ceremony took place on January 1, 321, when Crispus and Constantine II jointly assumed their second consulates at Serdica, the provincial capital that in recent times Constantine had declared his 'new Rome'. In my opinion, the arrangement of the figures provides grounds to suggest that the seal was issued on the occasion of this anniversary. In any case, it cannot be dated back later than 326, the year Crispus was executed.

Key words: lead seal, Constantine I (The Great), Serdica

Резюме: Предмет на настоящото изследване е оловна пломба, открита при разкопките на западната крепостна стена на Сердика през 2014 г. Лицето ѝ представлява плоскост с кръгла форма (16/17мм и тегло 14,59г.), която е нарушена в едната си част. В ограниченото поле са разположени три фигури: в центъра бюст насреща с издължена шия; в ляво и дясно от него има по една глава в профил, обърнати съответно наляво и надясно, с гръб към централното изображение. Фланкиращите образи се различават по между си, като големина и ситуиране спрямо

основата на централния бюст – тази в ляво е с по-големи пропорции и е разположена по-високо, в сравнение с тази от дясно. Няма следи от надпис или отделни букви.

Обратната страна на пломбата представлява изпъкнала част, наподобяваща конусовидна форма. На известно разтояние от основата, технологично е оставен канал (с два отвора) през който минавали връвчиците, които затварят различни контейнери (торби, сандъци), в които е поставена обмитената и маркирана стока.

Аранжирането на фигурите при пломбата от Сердика с централен бюст насреща и две глави от двете му страни, в профил, загърбили централната фигура е новост в иконографията на оловните пломби и тесери. Застъпена е тезата, че са представени образите на император Константин I и неговите синове Крисп и Константин II, първият като цезар на Запада, а вторият на Изтока. През 321 г. цезарите съвместно празнуват своята *quinquennalia*, като аранжирането на фигурите позволяват да се предположи, че тази годишнина е повод за издаването на пломбата. При всички случаи, обаче тя не може да се отнесе по късно от 326г, когато е убит Крисп.

Archaeological excavations were carried out at the Western Gate of Serdica for four seasons between 2011 and 2014.[1] Among the small finds, there are several lead seals[2] defined as customs seals. They were used for sealing various containers filled with goods which had been checked and the duty for them paid. Various inscriptions or images are stamped on one side of each seal. We still know very little about these finds due to their great variety and the unreliable archaeological context. Although there is a certain number of publications on the subject,[3] the study is still at an empirical level and for this reason each new find is extremely important as it sheds more light on the subject.[4]

The subject of the current paper is a lead seal found during the 2014 archaeological season. It was found on a level yielding coins dated back to the 4th century. The obverse of the seal is a round flat surface, one part of which has been destroyed, with three figures located on its restricted field. The central figure is a bust *en face* with an elongated neck; to the left and to the right of the bust, there is a head in profile, turned to the left and to the right respectively, with their backs to the central figure. The flanking images differ from each other in size and position to the central bust: the

[1] Borisova-Katsarova & Aladzhov 2012, 322-325; 2013, 293-297; 2014, 366-369.

[2] In Bulgarian academic publications, these finds are usually referred to as *plomb, using the* French word while in the English speaking countries, they are known as seals.

[3] Mrozewicz 1981, 79-84; Gerasimova 1982, 141-152; 1994, 371-389; 1997, 140-155; Draganov 1991, 7-8; 1992, 45-48; Gerasimova-Tomova 1992, 69-72; Markov 2004, 157-159; 2010, 152-156.

[4] The Annual Reports on the Archaeological Research in Bulgaria state that although such artifacts were found during the archaeological excavation not only in Serdica but in sites situated on the *Danube Limes*, on the Black Sea Coast and inland, publications on the subject remain limited.

left image is larger and is situated higher in comparison with the right one. There are no traces of any inscription or single letters (fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Lead seal – Obvers (author)

The reverse of the seal is convex and slightly conical. At a certain distance from the base, there is a groove with an opening at each end, through which strings were threaded. They were used to tie up the seal on the various containers (bags or packing-cases) filled with duty-paid and marked goods (fig. 2). The seal measures 16/17 mm and it weighs 14.59 g.[5]



Fig. 2. Lead seal – Revers (author)

[5] Field inventory number 1287/2014.

The interesting characteristic of this artifact is the arrangement of the images, which have no parallels in the existing publications.[6] To clarify the matter, it has to be pointed out that the images on the seals follow the traditions and the novelties of the numismatic artifacts. Representation of images in profile facing each other is well known from the iconography of the Roman coinage, and an image *en face* was added in the early 3rd century. The compositions on the lead seals in the 4th century were enriched by representing three images including a bust of the emperor and his co-emperors, the latter represented next to and facing each other or their profiles facing the emperor's bust *en face* situated in the middle. These combinations of the images of the emperor and his co-emperors provide one of the starting points in the process of identifying the 4th century rulers on the seal. The possible groups of an emperor and two co-emperors during the 4th century include Constantine the Great and his sons, the Caesars Crispus and Constantine II (317–324); Constantine the Great and his sons Constantine II and Constantius II (326–333); Valentinian I, Valens and Gratian (367–375) and Theodosius I and his sons Arcadius and Honorius (393–395).

As the lack of individualized features and the absence of inscriptions make the identification of the images more difficult, it is necessary to seek additional information. The depiction of crowns was a standard starting point in the iconography of images since they symbolized the emperor's power in Rome, and was missing in the depiction of the earlier rules. This sign of power in the Roman Empire was established during the reign of Constantine the Great, and, in that period, the Caesars had the right to wear crowns as well. After the death of Constantine I, the crowns were symbols of power only for the Augusti. The images on the seal from Serdica are not depicted with any specific distinctive signs but their arrangement is specific – a bust *en face* in the center flanked by two smaller heads in profile, turned to the left and to the right respectively, i.e. with their backs to the central image. The side images differ from each other in size; the left image is larger and is situated higher in comparison with the right one and with the base of the central bust. All these details in the composition are new for the iconography of the lead seals and tesserae. The violation of the traditional standards in the scenography on these artifacts was probably imposed to emphasize a certain idea or event, a result of a particular political situation in the Empire. The artistic methods

[6] Such compositions are also missing form M. Still's PhD thesis, which studies more than 2000 lead seals, most of them found in present-day Bulgaria – see Still 1995.

were used to represent the hierarchical relation among the prototypes of the images, the Emperor and his successors, who are undoubtedly represented on the described seal.

Parallels with numismatic and sculptural artifacts with typical features similar to the seal from Serdica are used to identify and date it. This refers especially to the central image, which, as mentioned above, has very elongated neck. It is a typical feature of the emperor's image depicted on one of the issues of solidi of Constantine I minted in Nicomedia[7] as well as on issues of *Argenteus* silver coins minted in Thessalonica.[8] However, on all of these examples, the emperor's head is depicted in profile to the right. The rare representation of the image of Constantine the Great on coins *en face* is evidenced by a *solid* of the emperor minted in Ticinum in 316.[9] The closest parallel of the image on the seal – the elongated neck, the same hair style, the missing crown – is the head of the huge statue of Emperor Constantine in Rome.[10] Customs seals of Emperor Constantine the Great which differ from the Serdica seal have been published or kept in museums.[11]

If we accept the suggestion that the central image is that of Constantine I,[12] it seems logical that the two other images are his sons, the Caesars, involved in the ruling of the Empire. Constantine the Great had four sons: the eldest one was Crispus, from his first marriage to Minervina, and the others were Constantine II, Constantius II and Constans, from his marriage to Fausta. It is apparent that there were three Caesars, but it is important to establish the time span when there were only two. In 317 in Serdica, Emperor Constantine promoted Crispus and Constantine II to the rank of Caesars, of the West and of the East respectively. In 325 Constantius II was proclaimed a Caesar as well. In the following year 326, Crispus was executed on his father's orders[13] and in the year 333, Constans, Constantine's youngest son, was proclaimed Caesar. The short review on

[7] Bruun 1966, 612, 70.

[8] Bruun 1966, 518, pl. 152; see also the *Siliqua* minted in Heraclea which is cited in http://www.coinproject.com/coin_detail.php?coin=295575

[9] http://www.britishmuseum.org

[10] Hafner 1981, 156; Meischner 2001, Abb. 247-248

[11] Марков 2010, 152-156; Casey 2010, 150-156; see also http://www.vcoins.com/en/stores/gert_boersema/25/product/constantine_the_great_ad_307337_lead_imperial_seal/572883/Default.aspx

[12] For more details about the image of Constantine I - see Harrison 1967, 80-96; Wright 1987; Meischner 2001, 93-97; Hannestad 2007, 96-115.

[13] For further information on the subject see Guthrie 1966, 325-331; Pohlsander 1984, 79-106.

the event shows that Constantine had two Caesars only in the periods 317–324 and 326–333. I believe that the historical events that took place in the period 317–324 were accurately represented on the Serdica seal: the larger image with his head turned to the left (facing the west) and the smaller one with his head turned to the right (facing the east). Therefore, it can be argued that these images can be only the Caesars Crispus and Constantine II. It was a relatively successful period for Emperor Constantine's family, which was followed by dramatic events and cataclysms that affected the family relations. Probable events which might have prompted the issue of this seal could be those in the year 317 when Crispus and Constantine II were proclaimed Caesars or those in the year 321 when the Caesars celebrated together their fifth anniversary of state governing, their *quinquennalia*. The former took place on January 1, 321 in Serdica, the capital of the province.[14] After the winter, the celebrations continued in Sirmium, where the two Caesars celebrated their *quinquenalia* once again. My hypothesis is supported by series of silver coins, light and heavy *miliarensia,* issued in Sirmium on the occasion of the two Caesars' *quinquenalia*.[15]

The presented lead seal found in Serdica is an interesting artifact and the images on it reflect Constantine the Great's political doctrine in the 320s and 330s.

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Borisova-Katsarova, I. & Aladzhov, A. (2012) 'Zapadnata porta na Serdika', *Arheologicheski otkritiya i razkopki prez 2011 g.* (Sofia), 322-325.

(2013) 'Zapadnata porta na Serdika', *Arheologicheski otkritiya i razkopki prez 2012 g.* (Sofia), 293-297.

(2014) 'Arheologichesko prouchvane na obekt 'Zapadna porta na Serdika', *Arheologicheski otkritiya i razkopki prez 2013 g.* (Sofia), 366-369.

Bruun, P. (1966) *The Roman Imperial Coinage* Vol. 7. Constantine and Licinius A.D. 313–337 (London).

[14] Emperor Constantine moved his residence place from Sirmium to Serdica in 320. Undoubtedly the city flourished in this period as a number of activities of the state governing, those related to the customs inclusively, were reactivated.

[15] Bruun 1966, 14; NAC AG 2007; Auction 40, lot 853, 16 May 2007. On the obverse the Caesars Crispus and Constantine II are represented facing each other, and their names are inscribed. The difference in the size of the images has to be pointed out: the left image is larger and the right one is smaller a proportion recreated on the lead seal under study.

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Scènes de pêche sur les mosaïques de la péninsule balkanique: tradition romaine et iconographie paléochrétienne[1]

Photini Kokkini

Abstract: Depictions of men fishing is a common subject of Roman mosaics which has passed to Early Christian repertory. As far as the Balkan Peninsula is concerned, this theme is found mainly on Greek mosaics dated to the Roman (1st-4th century) and Early Christian period (5th-6th century). Only one fishing scene is known outside Greece and it is located in Byllis, Albania. In this article the author discusses precisely these mosaics. Her main objective is to understand specifically to what extent the Roman iconography has been adopted by the artists of the Early Christian period, which edifices and rooms have been decorated with these scenes in the period and finally how they have been interpreted in a pagan and Christian context. The author concludes that fishing scenes are found both in public (related to Bacchus and Hercules) and private buildings during the Roman period (2nd-4th c.), but only in public buildings (basilicas) during the Early Christian period (6th century). Moreover, the Roman iconographic types continue to the Early Christian period, especially the render of specific motifs. Finally, the scenes dated to the Roman period are thought to be related to specific deities, as symbolic (aphrodisiac or bringing the fertility), or as creating an illusionist and idyllic allure, whereas the scenes dated to the Early Christian period are though to be images related to the Christian Cosmos or to the Baptism, as episodes from the Bible, or neutral decorative depictions.

Key words: fishing scenes, Roman, Early Christian, mosaics, iconography, Balkan Peninsula, Nilotic

Резюме: Представянето на човек, ловящ риба е широко разпространено в римските мозайки и преминава в раннохристиянския репертоар. Доколкото се отнася

[1] J'aimerais remercier d'abord Mme la Professeur P. Assimakopoulou-Atzaka pour ses remarques et l'offre des photographies. J'aimerais aussi exprimer mes remerciements à Mme la Professeur A. Kankeleit, à Mme D. Massara, au Musée Archéologique de Thessalonique, aux Ephories des Antiquités de Lesvos et d'Ioannina pour l'offre des photographies et enfin à M. Panayotopoulou qui a corrigé mon texte.

за Балканския полуостров, тази тема се открива основно в мозайки в днешна Гърция от римския (I-IV в.) и раннохристиянския период (V-VI в.). Само още един пример е известен извън Гърция – в Билис (Албания). Тези примери са дискутирани в настоящата статия, като основната цел на автора е да разбере до каква степен римската иконография е била приета в раннохристиянските майстори, кои сгради и помещения са били украсени през определените периоди и как се интерпретират в езически и християнски контекст. Според авторът тези сцени се откриват както в обществени (във връзка с Бакхус и Херкулес) и частни жилищни сгради през римската епоха (II-IV в.), но единствено в обществени сгради (базилики) през ранно-християнския период (VI в.). За сцените от римския период се предполага, че се свързват с определени божества, като символични (афродизиак или за плодородие) или като създаващи илюзионистична и идилистична атмосфера, докато тези от раннохристиянския период се свързват по-скоро с Християнския космос или баптизма, като епизоди от Библията, или неутрални декоративни изображения.

La période de l'Antiquité Tardive est sans doute une période des changements, des transformations politiques, sociales et religieuses qui ont influencé les arts aussi. Des institutions et des habitudes ont été abandonnées, tandis que des autres ont acquis un nouveau contenu. Ces changements sont visibles dans l'iconographie des mosaïques déjà au IV^{e} s. La transition vers la nouvelle époque est conçue par les choix des commanditaires pour la décoration des édifices: des motifs ont été abandonnés, tandis que des autres ont survécu mais dans un autre contexte et avec un sens nouveau.[2] Le lieu prépondérant de ces transformations est la région de la Méditerranée orientale; la péninsule balkanique étant près des centres urbains de Constantinople et de Thessalonique a accepté leurs influences.[3]

Le sujet de la pêche est commun dans l'iconographie des mosaïques de l'époque romaine et de l'époque paléochrétienne et c'est un des sujets qui ont été transmis dans l'art paléochrétien. Jusqu'au présent les scènes de pêche figurées sur les mosaïques romaines ont été profondément étudiées par R. D. DePuma et C. Belz dont les œuvres focalisent aux scènes de l'Empire Romain et en particulier de l'Afrique du Nord respectivement. La présente étude ambitionne d'étudier les scènes de pêche trouvées dans la péninsule balkanique et datées à l'époque romaine (I^{er} - IV^{e} s.) et à l'époque paléochrétienne (V^{e} – VI^{e} s.). Les questions qui sont posées sont: a. dans quelle mesure l'iconographie romaine est adoptée par les artistes de l'époque paléochrétienne, b. dans quels bâtiments et chambres les scènes de pêche sont d'habitude représentées, c. quelles sont les interprétations données à ces images dans un contexte païen ou chrétien. La contribution de cet article n'est que la synthèse des remarques et des avis exprimés sur l'iconographie marine.

[2] Dunbabin 1999, 300; Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 2003, 80-101.
[3] Brown 1989, Introduction.

A. L'iconographie

Les scènes de pêche de l'époque romaine jusqu'au présent connues proviennent de la Grèce. On y trouve deux types iconographiques: a. un pêcheur qui pêche assis ou debout sur un rocher, au moment où les poissons nagent autour de lui, b. une barque dans laquelle se trouvent les pêcheurs et autour de laquelle nagent les poissons.

Dans le premier cas le pêcheur est représenté vêtu d'une *exomis*, le chiton court qui laisse l'une de deux épaules nue, sur les scènes de Cos (no 4, fig. 3) et de Thessalonique (no 5, fig. 4) ou d'un chiton court avec des manches courtes et une zone sur la mosaïque de Cos (no 2).[4] Les pêcheurs des scènes 2 et 5 portent des chapeaux, le *pilos* (no 2), un chapeau conique et le *pétasos* (no 5), un chapeau avec un grand bord pour la protection solaire. Le pêcheur de la scène 4 ne porte pas de chapeau, alors on peut voir sa tête chauve. Les traits du visage sont assez souvent visibles. Ainsi on peut constater grâce à leurs visages sans rides et imberbes que les pêcheurs de scènes 2 et 5 sont assez jeunes, tandis que le pêcheur barbu et chauve de la scène 4 est mûr. Les pêcheurs se présentent assis (no 5, fig. 4) ou debout sur un rocher (no 4, fig. 3). Ils utilisent la canne (nos 2, 5, fig. 4) et les tridents (no 4, fig. 3), afin d'attraper leur proie, et le panier (nos 2, 4, fig. 3) pour y mettre les poissons déjà pêchés. Le type iconographique du pêcheur vêtu avec des vêtements pareils, assis sur un rocher pêchant avec une canne est connu de l'iconographie classique.[5]



Fig. 1. a. Crète, Chersonèse, *in situ* (d'après Massara 2013, fig. 6)

[4] Les numéros se réfèrent au catalogue à la fin de cet article.
[5] Robertson 1992, 145, fig. 150.



Fig. 1. b. Crète, Chersonèse, *in situ* (d'après Massara 2013, fig. 13)

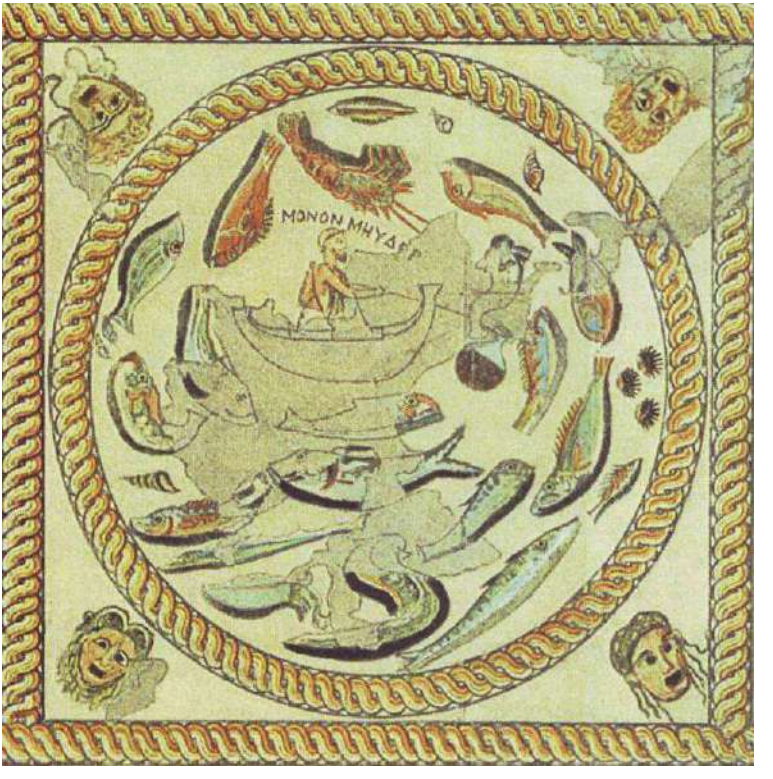


Fig. 2. Mélos, Tramythia, *in situ* (?), (d'après Bosanquet 1898, pl. 2.)



Fig. 3. Cos, région du port, Palais des Grands Maîtres (des Chevaliers), Rhodes, (d'après Kanleleit 1999, pl. XIV, 4 et http://www.kankeleit.de/fisch.html)

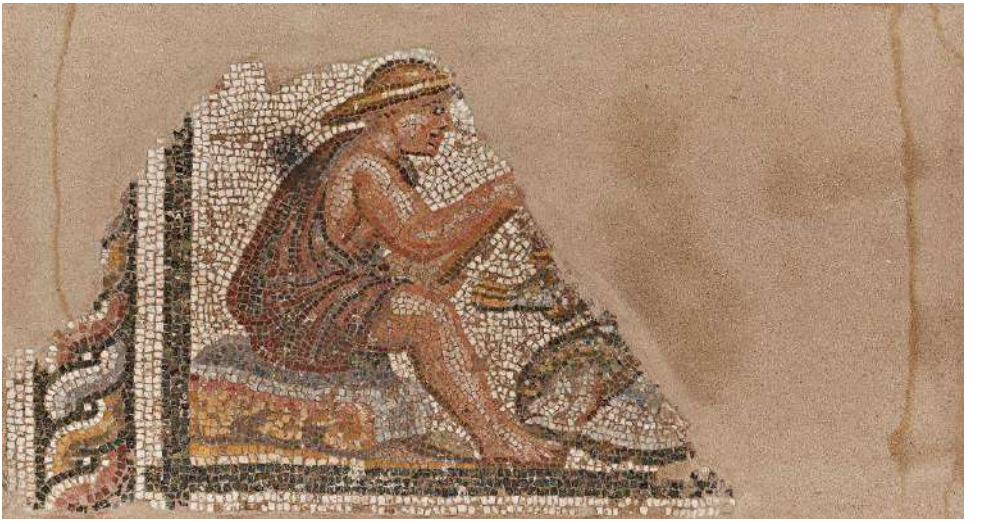


Fig. 4. Thessalonique, rue Sygrou 30, Musée Archéologique de Thessalonique (cliché © Ministère de Culture et Sports –Musée Archéologique de Thessalonique)



Fig. 5. Mytilène, terrain Chorafa, Nouveau Musée Archéologique de Mytilène (cliché © Ephorie des Antiquités de Lesvos)

Au deuxième type iconographique l'élément essentiel est la barque qui se trouve au centre de la scène (nos 3, 6). Sur la mosaïque de Mélos (no 3, fig. 2) la scène décore un tondo. Le pêcheur barbu, vêtu d'une *exomis* et portant un chapeau, est assis dans sa barque d'où il pêche avec une bouteille attachée à sa canne et remplie d'un liquide rouge, interprété comme vin.[6] Les poissons et les écailles couvrent l'espace tout autour de la barque. La mosaïque de Mytilène (no 6, fig. 5) décore un compartiment du tapis. Les

[6] Kokkini 2012, 60-62 où toutes les interprétations proposées. D'après Kankeleit cet objet pourrait être une cyrte (une nasse); ainsi elle propose que la scène pourrait être réelle: Kankeleit 1999, 73.

pêcheurs naviguent dans une mer pleine de poissons. L'un rame et l'autre essaie d'harponner par son trident un grand poulpe. Les deux hommes portent des chitons larges avec des manches. Le pêcheur qui tient le trident a fait un nœud avec le tissu superflu de son chiton qui l'empêche de travailler.

La mosaïque de Chersonèse de Crète (no 1, fig. 1a, b) intègre des différentes scènes de pêche: un pêcheur débout sur un rocher, un pêcheur debout avec un chapeau sur sa tête pêche avec une canne (fig. 1a), deux autres pêcheurs se trouvent dans une barque, l'un rame et l'autre essaie d'éloigner un poulpe. Des autres scènes complètent le monument: un homme nu tient sa lance contre un animal non conservé, un homme lutte contre un chien, au moment où un autre chien attaque l'homme en arrière, un autre homme affronte avec son arc un hippopotame (fig. 1b), un papyrus se trouve à côté d'eux et un crocodile apparaît du coin de cette scène. Le fond de ces scènes est plein de poissons et d'autres créatures marines qui nagent dans la mer. D'après Massara, les personnages ont des traits de nègre, ils sont alors des Pygmées, fait qui en combinaison avec les scènes de lutte contre des animaux et à la présence du papyrus, des crocodiles et des hippopotames l'a amenée à conclure que cette mosaïque combine deux sujets différents, des scènes nilotiques et un paysage marin.[7]

Dans la totalité des scènes ce qui est frappant est la dimension des poissons. Les poissons sont extrêmement grands, même plus grands que les figures humaines qui semblent 'perdues dans une mer pleine de poissons énormes'.[8] Des différentes explications ont été données pour cette disproportion. Elle est peut-être dûe au grand intérêt donné aux poissons et à l'essaie de l'artiste de les dessiner avec précision afin que le spectateur puisse les reconnaître facilement.[9] Effectivement on peut facilement reconnaître les espèces des poissons.[10] Il semble que le but de l'artiste est de représenter principalement les différentes espèces des poissons et en second lieu l'action de la pêche. Ainsi, Belz appelle ces scènes, des *catalogues*.[11] Une autre explication veut que les artistes copient les images des poissons par des manuscrits dont le sujet était l'ichtyologie et la pêche. Les proportions des poissons représentés dans ces œuvres seraient plus

[7] Massara 2013, 53-62, 67-68, figs. 2-14. Jusqu'en 2013 la mosaïque était connue d'une seule photographie. A cause de ce fait on ignorait les éléments nilotiques et on l'avait interprétée comme une scène de la vie quotidienne. Deux autres scènes nilotiques de Patras présentent des barques avec des hommes qui sont en train de ramer: Papapostolou 2009, figs. 26, 29-31, 33-34.
[8] DePuma 1969, 84.
[9] Kankeleit 1999, 77; 2003, 276.
[10] Kokkini 2012, 52-53.
[11] Belz 1978, 4.

grandes que celles des pêcheurs. Alors l'artiste envisageait le problème de la combinaison des images des différentes analogies dans la même scène.[12]

En ce qui concerne le rendement de la scène et de la perspective, on constate que la disproportion des poissons par rapport aux figures humaines, l'ordre par lequel sont posés les poissons dans la scène, l'absence du paysage (de la côte, du port, des maisons qui pourraient être autour de la scène) donnent aux images un caractère plat. La mer et les poissons constituent le fond sur lequel les figures humaines agissent.

Les mosaïstes ont essayé de présenter les traits des hommes avec du réalisme, mais sans exagération. Pourtant, les difficultés de leur travail n'intéressaient pas, comme c'était le cas dans la coroplastique hellénistique. C'est leur activité, c'est-à-dire la pêche, et les poissons qui intéressaient le public de ces images.

Sur les mosaïques de l'époque paléochrétienne on rencontre surtout un pêcheur qui pêche assis ou debout sur un rocher, pendant que les poissons nagent autour de lui. Ce type est rencontré à Nicopolis (no 7), à Amphipolis (no 8), à Byllis d'Albanie (no 9), à Kozani (no 11) et sur un fragment de mosaïque de la collection Stoclet.[13]

Á Nikopolis (no 7) les scènes de pêche décorent les bordures de deux salles différentes, les salles X et XI. Certains pêcheurs sont debout et pêchent avec un trident (fig. 6a), une canne ou un filet, des autres sont assis sur un rocher et pêchent avec une ligne (fig. 6b). D'après Spiro un des pêcheurs se trouve sur la poupe d'une barque.[14] Un homme, appelé ΟΦΕΛΛΥΡΑΣ, essaie de capturer un oiseau. La mer autour eux est attribuée par des lignes courtes qui indiquent les vagues. Des poissons, des autres créatures marines, des oiseaux aquatiques et des plantes se trouvent partout. Les plantes se trouvent près de pêcheurs. Elles sont très grandes, elles portent des feuilles et des fleurs stylisées.[15] Ces plantes sont similaires aux nélombos (Nelombus nucifera), à un type de lotus représenté très souvent dans les scènes nilotiques.[16] Versluys mentionne que dans les représentations tardives la plante n'est pas rendue en détail, fait qui se passe aussi dans le cas de Nikopolis.[17] L'artiste, qui la copierait par les cahiers des modèles, n'aurait pas connu la forme de la plante et c'est pourquoi elle n'est pas rendue ni avec précision ni en détail.

[12] Belz 1978, 25-26.
[13] Voir ci-dessous note 28.
[14] Spiro 1978, 451 et note 735.
[15] Spiro 1978, 455.
[16] Versluys 2002, 263-264; Boissel 2007, 154-159.
[17] Versluys 2002, 264.

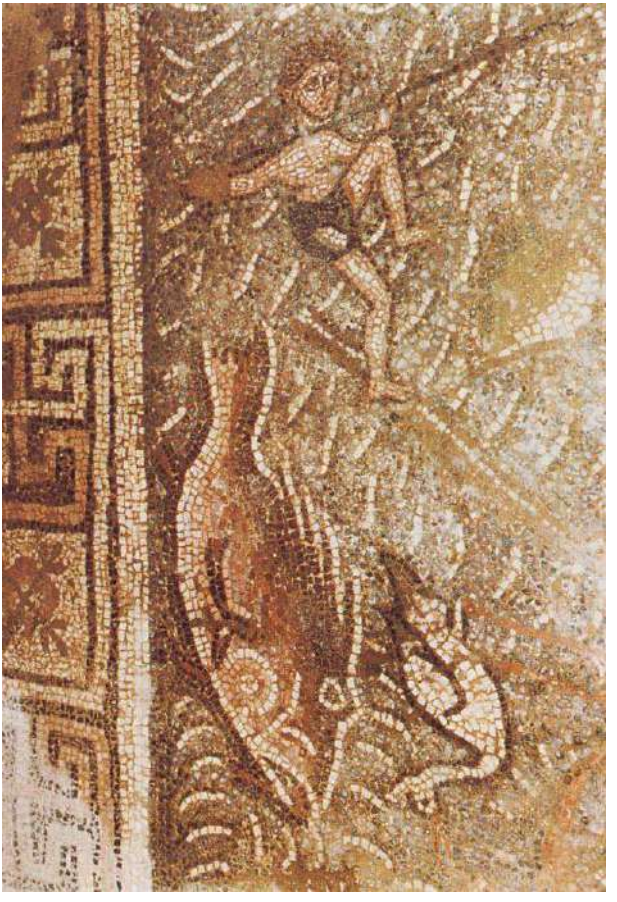


Fig. 6a. Nikopoli, Basilique de Doumetios, *in situ* (d'après Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 2003, fig. 133a)



Fig. 6b. Nikopoli, Basilique de Doumetios, *in situ* (d'après Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 2003, fig. 133b)



Fig. 7a. Doliana (nome d'Ioannina), *in situ* (cliché © Ephorie des Antiquités d'Ioannina)



Fig. 7b. Doliana (nome d'Ioannina), *in situ* (cliché © Ephorie des Antiquités d'Ioannina)

Sur la feuille d'une plante est assis un canard. Spiro croit qu'il s'agit d'un nid d'oiseau. Beaucoup de fois des oiseaux sont debout ou assis sur les feuilles de la plante.[18] Plus spécifiquement le motif de l'oiseau assis sur la feuille d'une plante nilotique se répète sur une mosaïque de sujet nilotique de Thèbes datée au VI^{e} s.[19] Plus ancienne est l'image de la mosaïque de l'église de la Multiplication des Pains et des Poissons à el-Tabgha (Palestine), datée au V^{e} s.[20] Le motif est beaucoup plus ancien; il est très souvent représenté sur les mosaïques nilotiques romaines depuis le I^{er} s. avant J.-C., mais aussi sur des mosaïques plus tardives, comme p.ex. à Zliten.[21] Balty, qui a étudié les scènes nilotiques du Proche Orient sur lesquelles le motif est très fréquent au V^{e} et VI^{e} s., le décrit comme «un oiseau couché au creux d'une fleur» et une autre fois comme «nélombo isolé avec nid d'oiseau».[22] D'après Boissel on voit des oiseaux assis sur les nélombos.[23] Nid ou pas, le seul qu'on pourrait dire est que le motif de l'oiseau qui se repose sur une feuille de lotus est très fréquent. Les motifs nilotiques adoptés dans une scène marine ont un caractère décoratif et comme il est mentionné par Balty ils ont perdu leur sens, celui «d'hommage au dieu Nilou de glorification du paysage égyptien».[24]

Les plantes nilotiques se trouvent assez souvent sur les mosaïques de l'Illyricum Oriental après le milieu du V^{e} s.[25] Des éléments nilotiques sont répétés sur le cadre de la mosaïque de la Grande Basilique Heraclea Lyncestis, mais aussi aux piliers du plafond de la basilique de Sainte Catherine au Sinaï.[26] D'après Maguire les motifs nilotiques (animaux et plantes) sont souvent utilisés pour représenter les eaux de la Création sur les mosaïques et dans les textes.[27]

La ressemblance entre ces scènes et celle de la collection Stoclet est si frappante que Kitzinger a exprimé l'hypothèse que les deux scènes sont des œuvres du même atelier. Là aussi, un homme qui court sur un rocher,

[18] Dunbabin 1999, 195, fig. 207.
[19] Theodorou-Mavrommatidi 1995, 514-519, fig. 3-8; Versluys 2002, 222, no 120; Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 2003, fig. 162a.
[20] Versluys 2002, 228-230, cat. no 127.
[21] Pour les mosaïques du Ier s. avant J.-C.: Tammisto 1997, 368, pl. 25-26. Pour Zliten: Versluys 2002, 191-192, cat. no 95.
[22] Balty 1983/1984, 829, 830 et le tableau de la page 831 où il est écrit 'nélombo (avec ou sans nid)'.
[23] Boissel 2007, 158.
[24] Balty 1983/1984, 834; 1995, 251.
[25] Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 1998, 153.
[26] Maguire 1987a, 28-29; Maguire 1987b, 222 et note 8.
[27] Maguire 1987a, 29 et notes 81-83.

dessiné au coin du cadre extérieur d'un compartiment, est en train d'attraper un oiseau; la mer est pleine de poissons. La scène de la collection Stoclet pourrait aussi être part d'une bordure de mosaïque dont le sujet serait la pêche, pareille à celle de Nikopolis. Dans les deux scènes la mer avec ses poissons constitue le fond sur lequel sont posées les figures humaines.[28]

Le compartiment de Byllis d'Albanie (no 9) comprend deux petites scènes, un pêcheur assis sur un rocher au bord de la mer pêchant avec sa ligne et levant son bras gauche avec la main ouverte vers le spectateur, et un pêcheur debout sur un rocher qui essaie de tirer le filet plein de poissons. Les deux hommes portent des chitons courts avec des manches longues. La mer, dont les vagues sont attribuées par de courtes lignes droites, pleine de poissons, constitue le fond de deux scènes à l'exception du pêcheur qui est assis au bord de la mer; c'est devant lui où commencent les premières vagues. Derrière lui un oiseau reste debout sur un rocher.

La scène de la basilique d'Aghia Paraskevi de Kozani (no 11), qui décore un des douze compartiments de la nef centrale, nous rappelle le pêcheur assis sur le rocher de Byllis (no 9). Le pêcheur est assis sur un rocher au bord de la mer (fig. 8). Il tient dans sa main droite une canne et dans sa main gauche un poisson. Il porte un chiton court avec des manches longues. Les vagues de la mer sont attribuées par des lignes onduleuses. Quatre grands poissons remplissent l'espace devant le pêcheur. Derrière lui s'est vu un petit arbre.



Fig. 8. Aghia Paraskevi de Kozani, *in situ* (d'après Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 2003, fig. 117)

[28] Collection Stoclet, Bruxelles: mosaïque de provenance de Grèce. Il s'agit probablement du cadre d'un panneau central. Au coin du cadre un homme demi nu court et en même temps il essaie d'attraper par les mains un oiseau. La mer devant et derrière lui est pleine des poissons; un crabe est visible aussi. VIe s. Peirce -Tyler 1934, 120, pl. 157; Kitzinger 1951, 99 note 71.

La scène d'Amphipolis (no 8) est posée dans un paysage différent de celui des autres mosaïques. C'est un paysage montagnard, où deux pêcheurs debout sont en train l'un d'harponner avec son trident les poissons et l'autre de tirer son filet.[29] Les deux hommes portent des chitons courts, l'un étant une *exomis*.

Une seule scène présente une barque dans un paysage presque exotique. Il s'agit de la scène de Doliana (no 10). Aux deux extrémités de la scène sont inclinées deux figures, les personnifications de la Mer d'une part, indiquée par l'inscription ΘΑΛΑ[ΣΣ]Α, et d'un dieu – fleuve de l'autre. Deux lettres (...ΗΣ) restent seulement d'une inscription qui peut-être indiquait le nom du fleuve.[30] Dans la mer il y a des poissons, des écailles et des oiseaux. Des plantes et un rocher indiquent le rivage. Le paysage semble nilotique. La partie inférieure de la scène est dominée par les eaux grises-bleues dans lesquelles nage une variété des poissons et des écailles; deux oiseaux se trouvent sur la côte, indiquée par des plantes et un rocher de couleur jaune et brune à la partie supérieure de la scène. Dans ce paysage calme et exotique deux pêcheurs sont en action (fig. 7a, b). On peut voir la proue d'une barque (le reste est détruit) dans laquelle un pêcheur se penche afin d'harponner avec son trident un poulpe (fig. 7a). Plus haut on voit la main et la tête d'un autre homme, qui porte un chapeau conique (*pilos*) et tient une canne (fig. 7b). D'après Karamperidi, la scène provient de la tradition des scènes des thiases marins et des paysages nilotiques. En plus, elle est liée à la réapparition des motifs anciens, entre eux des personnifications, à la fin du V^{e} s. Pourtant, la synthèse de Doliana est originale.[31]

Dans la plupart des scènes (nos 7, 9, 11) les animaux marins sont trop grands par rapport aux êtres humains des scènes, mais ils ne sont pas rendus en tel détail et telle précision que ceux des scènes romaines. En général les poissons et les autres animaux marins sont assez facilement reconnaissables (les poulpes, les crabes etc.), comme c'est le cas à Byllis (no 9).[32] On constate que la tradition romaine se continue dans l'époque paléochrétienne en ce qui concerne les dimensions, par contre le rendement détaillé n'est pas de priorité pour les artistes. Les seules exceptions sont les mosaïques de Nikopolis (no 7) et de la collection Stoclet où les poissons sont rendus avec précision. Les paysages contiennent des éléments nilotiques, surtout des plantes et des oiseaux (nos 7, 11), et des

[29] Spiro 1978, 597.
[30] Karamperidi 2007, 673.
[31] Karamperidi 2007, 673-674.
[32] Muçaj 1993, 589.

motifs qui proviennent des mosaïques nilotiques romaines. D'après Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, sur les mosaïques balkaniques les thèmes nilotiques sont utilisés comme des motifs décoratifs qui ornent des compartiments, répandus grâce aux cahiers des modèles, tandis que les grandes synthèses nilotiques qui couvrent des longues surfaces ne sont pas habituées.[33] En ce qui concerne la perspective des scènes, on constate que la mer avec ses créatures constitue le fond sur lequel les figures humaines sont placées. Il y a des cas où le rendement des pêcheurs et leur pose sont totalement irréels, comme il se passe à la mosaïque de Nikopolis où le pêcheur semble s'étendre sur la mer, même si il marche sur un objet qui pourrait être le vestige d'une barque (fig. 6a).[34] Les figures sont plates. Les pêcheurs sont des hommes imberbes à l'exception du pêcheur barbu d'Amphipolis (no 8). Aucune importance n'est donnée à leurs traits; les artistes ont simplement dessiné les éléments importants du visage (les yeux, les sourcils, le nez, la bouche), mais aucune ride ni d'autres traits, comme la calvitie, comme il se passe sur la mosaïque de Cos (no 4). Alors, ce n'est pas le réalisme qui compte sur ces images.

Il y a des motifs qui se répètent. L'image du pêcheur dans la barque qui essaie d'harponner avec son trident un poulpe en même temps que son collègue rame, se répète dans trois cas (nos 1, 6, 10). Le pêcheur qui pêche avec une canne assis sur un rocher se répète sur quatre mosaïques (nos 5, 7, 9, 11). Le pêcheur pêchant avec sa ligne ou tirant le filet debout sur un rocher (quelques fois le rocher n'est pas indiqué) se rencontre sur six mosaïques (nos 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9) et enfin l'homme qui est en train d'attraper par ses mains un oiseau est vu sur deux mosaïques (no 7, collection Stoclet). Á l'exception du dernier motif, on constate que les trois autres sont assez souvent représentés aux époques romaine et paléochrétienne.

Motifs	I^{er} - IV^{e} s.	V^{e} - VI^{e} s.
d'harponner avec son trident un poulpe tandis que son collègue rame.	1, 6	10
er pêche avec une canne.	5	7, 9, 11
sa ligne ou tire le filet.	1, 2, 4	7, 8, 9
		7, collection Stoclet

[33] Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 1998, 153; 2003, 145. N. Gioles supporte que les paysages nilotiques symbolisent la terre qui a cru au Jésus Christ et bien sûr le paradis auquel amène la conviction chrétienne: Gioles 1991, 31.
[34] Spiro 1978, 451.

Les personnifications des fleuves et de la mer sont des types iconographiques romains qui se présentent à l'époque paléochrétienne aussi (no 10). Les fleuves d'habitude représentés sur les mosaïques paléochrétiennes sont les quatre fleuves du paradis. Dans la péninsule balkanique ils sont représentés en buste (basilique du Thyrse à Tégée, Ohrid) et non au corps entier comme ici. D'après Karamperidi, le type du fleuve personnifié et représenté tout entier est rencontré surtout à l'Est; par contre la personnification de la Mer est assez rare, on la rencontre seulement trois fois en Jordanie.[35]

Toutes les scènes de pêche provenant des basiliques paléochrétiennes sont datées au VI^{e} s. Cela est en accord avec la mode pratiquée pendant le V^{e} et le VI^{e} s., quand les sujets figurés réapparaissent.[36] En général, les scènes figurées sont assez rares dans les provinces de l'Illyricum Oriental; par contre elles sont plus fréquentes dans les provinces d'Achaïe, de Crète et de Thessalie.[37] D'après Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, dans les régions du Nord les scènes figurées n'ont pas de rôle principal dans la synthèse; elles décorent des compartiments, comme tous les autres motifs (les animaux, les plantes etc.). C'est vrai que les scènes de pêche ne décorent pas les *emblemata* centraux. La seule exception est la mosaïque de Nikopolis, où les scènes de pêche sont inclues au bord de la scène centrale (no 7).[38] De l'autre côté, dans la région de la péninsule balkanique il n'y a pas de scènes des amours - pêcheurs représentées près de sujets chrétiens, comme il se passe dans la mosaïque de «l'Aula de Teodoro» à Aquilée.[39]

Pour conclure, DePuma mentionne que les scènes des poissons, qui quelques fois contiennent des représentations des pêcheurs, sont liées aux représentations païennes dont elles dérivent et n'ont aucune association symbolique, mais elles sont le résultat de l'observation des formes naturelles qui ont inspiré l'imitation dans l'art décorative.[40] Les scènes de la période paléo-chrétienne suivent la tradition iconographique, stylistique et technique païenne.[41]

B. Le contexte architectural et les interprétations des scènes de pêche

Il est généralement accepté que l'image est liée indissolublement à

[35] Karamperidi 2007, 673-674; 2008, 36; Hachlili 2009, 180.
[36] Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 1984a, 364.
[37] Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 1984a, 402-403.
[38] Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 1984a, 403-404.
[39] DePuma 1969, 96, cat. no 154, pl. CVII, CX-CXI.
[40] DePuma 1969, 96.
[41] DePuma 1969, 100.

l'espace qu'elle décore.[42] Alors, il est indispensable de parler de l'interprétation des scènes en relation avec les salles où elles se trouvent.

Les scènes de pêche datées du II^e^ jusqu'au IV^e^ s. décorent des bâtiments privés, c'est-à-dire des maisons, mais aussi des bâtiments publics. Les pièces des maisons qui sont décorées avec ces scènes sont diverses. Ainsi, on trouve une scène de pêche dans une cour (no 4), dans un *cubiculum* (no 5), dans un portique (no 6). Dans un autre cas une telle scène décore une fontaine qui probablement appartenait à un *atrium* (no 1). De l'autre côté des scènes de pêche décorent des salles des bâtiments religieux: une salle du portique du sanctuaire d'Hercule à Cos (no 2) et une salle d'un bâtiment peut-être lié au culte de Bacchus à Mélos (no 3). On constate que le seul cas où la scène de pêche se lie à un espace relatif à l'eau est celui de la fontaine (no 1), contrairement à ce qui se passe en Afrique du Nord où les scènes de pêche décorent assez souvent des fontaines, des *piscinae,* des bains; p.ex. des scènes de pêche décorent une fontaine à Utique.[43] On peut imaginer que les reflets de l'eau qui s'écoulait sur la scène marine de la mosaïque créeraient une image illusionniste; ainsi le spectateur pourrait croire qu'il voyait devant lui la mer et ses créatures. Tous les autres bâtiments et leurs pièces n'ont aucune relation à l'eau.[44] Pourtant les lieux d'où proviennent ces images sont tous près de la mer. Il s'agit des îles (Crète, Cos, Mélos, Mytilène-Lesvos) et d'une ville au bord de la mer (Thessalonique). La mer et la pêche sont parties de la vie quotidienne de leurs habitants.[45] On constate que les scènes de pêche datées à l'époque romaine ne sont pas liées spécifiquement à un type particulier d'édifice ou de salle. Toutefois elles sont liées à des lieux maritimes.

Les scènes de l'époque romaine sont d'abord interprétées comme des scènes de la vie réelle dans lesquelles sont représentés les techniques de pêche, l'habillement des pêcheurs, les espèces des poissons etc. Pourtant on peut supposer que à part de cela, ces scènes ont été choisies pour la décoration des pièces spécifiques des bâtiments à cause de leur symbolisme.

Ainsi, leur place dans des bâtiments privés peut être connectée à leur symbolisme d'abondance et de fécondité.[46] Les poissons représentés sur les mosaïques des maisons avaient comme rôle de fournir la bonne chance.[47] Ils

[42] Dunbabin 1999, 304.
[43] Dunbabin 1978, 126; Alexander *et al*. 1980, (plan 7), 27, no 28, pl. VIII-IX & XXV; 47, no 51 pl. XXII.
[44] Kankeleit 1999, 77.
[45] La même remarque fait Belz pour les mosaïques de l'Afrique du Nord: Belz 1978, 9.
[46] Belz 1978, 95, 97; Dunbabin 1978, 126; Kankeleit 2003, 273.
[47] Dunbabin 1978, 126.

étaient aussi crus excitants et aphrodisiaques.[48] Alors, la présence de ces scènes dans le *cubiculum* (no 5), le portique (no 6) et la cour (no 4) des maisons pourrait être justifiée par ces symbolismes. De l'autre côté elles pourraient être choisies parce qu'elles créent une allure rurale et idyllique.[49] L'hypothèse, que les scènes de pêche étaient choisies par des propriétaires qui employaient des pêcheurs, semble faible au moins en ce qui concerne les scènes grecques, car elles sont toutes petites et assez simples, ne rappelant en rien les scènes de pêche africaines.[50]

La scène de Cos (no 2) décore, comme on l'a déjà mentionné, une des pièces du portique appartenant au sanctuaire d'Hercule Διομεδόντειος. De Matteis, qui a étudié les mosaïques de ce sanctuaire, a proposé que la scène présente la pêche des poissons qui seraient offerts à Hercule. Le poisson qui était exclusivement offert à Hercule était appelé ἀποπυρὶς.[51] En plus, d'après elle, le pêcheur porte un vêtement cérémonial, fait qui donne à l'image un caractère sacré.

La scène de Mélos (no 3) a été interprétée de différentes manières surtout à cause du bâtiment qu'elle décore et de l'inscription MONON MH ΥΔΩΡ. Il s'agit d'un bâtiment lié aux mystères bacchiques, comme il est montré par les autres trouvailles (la statue d'un hiérophante, le protomé d'une femme auquel est gravée une inscription par les περιβώμιοι qui ont dédié cette statue).[52] Alors on croit que cette femme avait payé pour la construction ou la restauration de ce bâtiment des mystères bacchiques. C'était là où les mystes de Bacchus se rassemblaient. Plus précisément d'après Moormann il s'agit du restaurant de ce baccheion.[53] L'inscription a été interprétée des manières différentes.[54] D'après Moormann on peut l'interpréter 'ne buvez pas seulement de l'eau'. Dans ce cas l'inscription présente la relation du dieu à l'eau, connue aussi par d'autres sources.[55] Moormann croit que l'inscription révèle la manière par laquelle le myste pourrait rapprocher le dieu, qui est le pêcheur de la scène.[56] Cette manière n'est que le vin de la bouteille. D'après une autre interprétation l'inscription se réfère aux convictions liées à la vie heureuse de l'au-delà gagnée grâce à l'initiation aux mystères bacchiques. Cette vie heureuse

[48] Kankeleit 2003, 273.
[49] Kankeleit 2003, 277.
[50] Kankeleit 1999, 77 et note 49.
[51] De Matteis 2004, 192 note 771.
[52] Bosanquet 1898.
[53] Moormann 1991, 100.
[54] Kokkini 2012, 63.
[55] Kokkini 2012, 63, notes 289-294.
[56] Moormann 1991, 99.

pourrait être réalisée d'abord pendant la vie terrestre par la consommation du cadeau de Dionysos, du vin, et après le décès du myste par la consommation de l'eau de la Mémoire.[57]

Il est alors constaté que les scènes de pêche ne décorent pas seulement des espaces publics, mais aussi des espaces religieux païens. De cette façon elles peuvent être considérées comme des images qui portent des symbolismes liés à la religion païenne. C'est à cette même époque aussi que les écrivains chrétiens utilisent très fréquemment l'image du pêcheur comme métaphore dans leurs textes et homélies. Au début du III^e^ s. Clément d'Alexandrie écrit dans son Hymnus Christi Servatoris 23 que Jésus est le pêcheur des hommes qui les sauve de la mer de la méchanceté. Un siècle plus tard, vers 356, Cyrille dans sa Catéchèse 9 parle de Dieu qu'on peut reconnaître par ses créatures.[58] Ainsi, entre autres il décrit la mer par les adjectifs μεγάλη (grande) et εὐρύχωρος (immense) où vivent des reptiles, de beaux poissons, des cétacés.[59] Cette beauté évoque son Créateur qui est invisible mais on peut Le voir et L'adorer par les images. C'est à peu près le même que Saint Grégoire le Nazairien en 380 et Saint Basile écrivent.[60] Olszewski mentionne que pendant la messe, les fidèles voyaient et s'agenouillaient sur les images révélatrices de la Grandeur du Créateur.[61] Dans un autre extrait Cyrille conseille les fidèles de travailler, car celui qui travaille et produit, il gagnera le Salut. D'après Olszewski, ce modèle de vie enseigné par Cyrille est représenté dans les images des agriculteurs, des bergers, des pêcheurs, des commerçants.[62]

Un peu plus tard, au début du V^e^ s., Saint Nilus de Sinaï était contre la représentation des plantes et des animaux dans les églises, car d'après lui ceux-ci étaient dépourvus du sens chrétien; en même temps d'autres écrivains contaient la Création du monde qui d'après Maguire est liée à l'imagerie artistique des églises. Le chercheur présente les textes dont le sujet est la Création et la diversité de la nature. Il mentionne que sur les mosaïques aussi, les artistes présentent la diversité de la nature par les images des créatures vivantes.[63] Il ajoute qu'au IV^e^ et V^e^ s. les artistes préféraient la décoration géométrique, tandis qu'au VI^e^ s. ils aimaient les motifs de la nature (animaux, plantes, paysages), fait peut-être dû à la

[57] Kokkini 2012, 64.
[58] Olszewski 1995, 14.
[59] Cyr. H. *Catech*. 9.11; Olszewski 1995, 20-22 et note 83.
[60] Gr. Naz. *Or.* 28; Bas. *Hex.* 1.11; Maguire 1987a, 18-19, 31-32.
[61] Olszewski 1995, 27.
[62] Cyr. H. *Catech*. 9.13; Olszewski 1995, 25 et note 105.
[63] Maguire 1987a, 17-19.

littérature dédiée à la Création du Monde.[64] Étant donné que les scènes de pêche paléochrétiennes font parties de l'image d'un paysage marin plein de poissons, beaucoup de fois accompagnée sur la même mosaïque par des scènes de la nature terrestre, on s'aperçoit que les points de vue des écrivains de l'époque aident à l'explication de ces scènes. C'est aussi leur place dans le bâtiment et leur liaison avec les autres sujets représentés qui comptent.[65]

Les scènes de pêche datées au V^e^ – VI^e^ s. ne sont rencontrées que dans des basiliques chrétiennes; on ne sait pas la provenance de la scène de la collection Stoclet, mais il semble très probable que celle-ci décorait aussi une basilique. Elles décorent diverses espaces des bâtiments: l'exonarthex (no 9), la nef centrale (no 11) ou la nef secondaire (no 10), les transepts (no 7), une pièce auxiliaire (no 8).[66] La scène de pêche est ressortie pour être vue par la communauté dans un espace public pendant la cérémonie religieuse. Ce public est composé par les fidèles qui peuvent la voir en entrant dans l'église (no. 9), en assistant à la messe (nos 7, 10, 11) ou à une autre activité (no 8). Jusqu'au présent à la péninsule balkanique on n'a trouvé aucune scène de pêche ni dans l'abside ni dans le baptistère ; par contre ailleurs on a trouvé des scènes pareilles dans ces espaces, p.ex. la scène du filet plein de poissons dans l'abside de la Basilique de Reparatus à Orléansville.[67] Alors on peut constater que la scène de pêche n'est pas liée à une place particulière de l'église. Ainsi, chaque scène de pêche a été différemment interprétée selon ses propres caractéristiques et sa position dans l'église. D'après Grabar, le chevet symbolise le Paradis, tandis que la nef symbolise le monde sensible.[68]

Maguire signale que les images de nature peuvent toujours avoir un sens symbolique; par contre il est difficile d'apercevoir l'absence de ceci, car l'artiste n'indique pas toujours de signes, laissant l'interprétation de l'image au spectateur.[69] Ici on va essayer de regrouper les différentes interprétations qu'on a données aujourd'hui à l'image de pêche dans les mosaïques des églises paléochrétiennes de la péninsule balkanique.

Il est possible que des pêcheurs soient représentés dans un paysage marin faisant partie de ceci, comme il se passe au cas de la scène marine de

[64] Maguire 1987a, 5 et note 2, 83.
[65] Cvetković-Tomašević 1980, 304-305; Olszewski 1995.
[66] A. Karivieri mentionne que dans la Grèce du Nord les pêcheurs ne sont pas représentés sur la nef centrale, mais sur les nefs secondaires et les pièces auxiliaires des basiliques: Karivieri 2012, 221; pourtant la scène du pêcheur de la basilique d'Aghia Paraskevi de Kozani décore un compartiment de la nef centrale.
[67] DePuma 1969, 196, cat. no 157.
[68] Grabar 1962, 149.
[69] Maguire 1987a, 81-82.

la mosaïque de Nikopolis (no 7, fig. 6a, b). Kitzinger à l'aide de l'inscription de la mosaïque a interprété la bordure marine qui entoure le tableau des arbres et des oiseaux sur la mosaïque du transept nord, comme l'océan qui entoure la terre, et la scène marine qui entoure les chasseurs et les deux hommes du tableau central sur la mosaïque du transept sud, comme l'océan qui entoure le paradis terrestre; ainsi la mosaïque présente le monde, le cosmos chrétien.[70] Il ajoute que l'inscription de la mosaïque nord était probablement nécessaire, car le public n'aurait pas été habitué à cette représentation et au lieu d'elle on attendrait les personnifications de la terre et de l'océan.[71] L'auteur croit que la présentation de la mer qui encloue la terre dérive de la pensée grecque ancienne adoptée par les auteurs chrétiens. De plus, il exprime l'idée que l'artiste aurait été inspiré par la cartographie. En ce qui concerne le fidèle, il devrait passer d'abord par la mer afin de marcher sur la terre, alors l'image créerait une allusion.[72] C'est la signification cosmique que Kitzinger reconnaît.

Grabar accepte l'interprétation de Kitzinger en ce qui concerne la mosaïque de l'aile du transept nord, mais il n'est pas d'accord avec lui en ce qui concerne la mosaïque de l'aile sud. C'est l'élément du Ciel qui manque de l'interprétation de Kitzinger. D'après Grabar le panneau de l'aile sud pourrait représenter le ciel sensible, ayant d'abord reconnu les Dioscures dans les figures du panneau central.[73]

D'après Cvetković-Tomašević le cosmos est attribué par quatre domaines posés concentriquement, le royaume des cieux, le paradis, la terre et les eaux. Les eaux sont représentées pleines de créatures et quelques fois de pêcheurs et de navires.[74] Ce mode d'organisation est d'accord à l'idée de l'époque que le cosmos est sphérique, idée renversée par Cosmas Indicopleustès au VI^{e} s. qui a maintenu que le cosmos est cubique.[75] Ainsi, c'est à Nikopolis (no 7) qu'on trouve ce modèle de représentation, c'est-à-dire les quatre domaines du cosmos posés l'un autour de l'autre, tandis qu'à Amphipolis (no 8) on ne trouve que trois domaines, le royaume des cieux, le paradis et les eaux.[76]

[70] Kitzinger 1951, 95-96, 97-117.
[71] Kitzinger 1951, 102.
[72] Kitzinger 1951, 107.
[73] Grabar 1962, 144-148. De l'autre côté Pelekanidis en suivant Xyngopoulos croit que les deux hommes au centre du pavement de l'aile sud sont Saint Démétrios, à qui est consacrée la basilique A de Nikopolis, et Saint Georges: Pelekanidis 1974, 16-19.
[74] Cvetković-Tomašević 1980, 284-285, 294.
[75] Cvetković-Tomašević 1980, 290.
[76] Cvetković-Tomašević 1967, 61-62; 1980, 297 note 20; 1984, 482-483, fig. 1.

Maguire croit que le cadre de l'océan qui entoure la terre était la solution trouvée par les artistes du VI[e] s. afin de donner l'impression que la scène composée d'un petit nombre de motifs (à cause de l'espace limitée) était le monde terrestre entier. Il compare la scène de Nikopolis à la carte de Cosmas Indicopleustès et il constate que la mosaïque ne présente ni le paradis ni la terre outre l'océan. Il conclue que la mosaïque et l'inscription présentent la terre et l'océan proprement sans aucune signification allégorique, étant analogues aux textes de l'époque. Les motifs sont des signes de la terre et de l'océan et non des symboles (p.ex. des âmes) comme il se passe dans d'autres cas.[77] Ailleurs le même chercheur propose que la scène de la terre entourée par l'océan pourrait porter le message de la fertilité spécialement aux lieux arides.[78]

Hellenkemper Salies n'accepte pas l'influence de la cartographie à la synthèse de la mosaïque de Nikopolis. Par contre elle accepte la continuation de la tradition des *emblemata/pseudo-emblemata* et la connaissance ancienne du monde.[79] En plus elle rejette l'interprétation du paradis terrestre, car la notion du paradis était à cette période informe, la chasse (représentée au tableau central du transept nord) n'était pas liée au paradis et le paradis terrestre sur la carte de Cosmas Indicopleustès se trouve à l'Ouest, à l'opposition de l'Océan, qui entoure l'Ecoumène. Ainsi, elle conclue que l'Océan n'entoure pas le paradis terrestre. Elle rejette aussi l'interprétation de Grabar, d'après laquelle les deux hommes du tableau du transept sud sont les Dioscures, symboles du ciel qui est entouré par l'Océan. Par contre elle propose que les scènes de Nikopolis n'aient pas de contenu chrétien; on y voit simplement la terre et les hommes qui l'habitent.[80]

Gioles reconnaît aussi le caractère cosmologique de la mosaïque du transept nord de Nikopolis. Le rôle de cette mosaïque était la glorification du Créateur du monde et la démonstration de Son soin pour Ses créatures. En plus il suggère que l'idée d'après laquelle l'église est la micrographie du monde a aussi contribué à cette représentation cosmologique.[81]

DePuma, qui croit que la mosaïque de Nikopolis suit la tradition cosmographique de El Alia et de Palestrina, ajoute que les cadres marins comme celui de Nikopolis peut-être représentent 'la mer de glace' qui est mentionnée aux Révélations 4.6 et 15.2 et représentée dans des manuscrits.[82]

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[77] Maguire 1987a, 21-24.
[78] Maguire 1987b, 228.
[79] Hellenkemper Salies 1987, 302-303.
[80] Hellenkemper Salies 1987, 305-307.
[81] Gioles 1991, 35.
[82] DePuma 1969, 99 et notes 2 et 3.

En plus, cette scène est particulière à cause de la présence des éléments païens. Ceux-ci sont les noms des pêcheurs (Hermès, Ophéllyras) et la nudité des figures humaines (des pêcheurs, mais aussi des chasseurs). En ce qui concerne la nudité des figures, Gioles souligne que celle-ci n'est pas en accord avec le caractère chrétien du bâtiment.[83] Le prototype des scènes est sans doute païen, n'ayant pas de contenu théologique. Enfin, les pêcheurs dans ce cas ne font que partie du paysage marin, comme tous les autres créatures. Par contre à Tégée et à Heraclea Lyncestis l'océan qui entoure le monde terrestre est composé seulement des créatures marines, l'homme est exclu de ces images.[84]

D'après Jensen certaines images de pêche dérivent d'une source narrative ou ils se réfèrent à des histoires de la Bible.[85] Au cas de la scène de Byllis (no 9) on a reconnu une scène du Nouveau Testament. Plus spécifiquement Muçaj croit qu'il s'agit de la scène du Christ et des pêcheurs au bord du lac de Génésareth; les pêcheurs n'avaient rien pris pendant la nuit, mais sur la parole de Jésus ils ont jeté le filet et ils ont pris une telle quantité des poissons que le filet s'est déchiré. Après ça Jésus a dit à Simon qu'il sera pêcheur des hommes.[86] Le chercheur reconnaît les apôtres André et Pierre sur les figures des pêcheurs.[87] Juste à côté de cette image se trouve une scène pastorale, d'après Muçaj tirée de la vie réelle, dans laquelle est consistée d'idée du Bon Pasteur.[88]

Mais est-ce que les deux apôtres pourraient être représentés sur une mosaïque de pavement étant donné que à la période paléochrétienne les figures saintes sont extrêmement rares sur les pavements ? Le répertoire des pavements de l'Illyricum Oriental datés à cette période est dominé surtout par des représentations des animaux, des plantes, des personnifications (des mois, des fleuves etc.), du Bon Pasteur ou des scènes de la vie quotidienne.[89] En général les scènes narratives provenant de la Bible sont rarement figurées sur les mosaïques de pavement des églises. Il s'agit surtout des représentations des épisodes du Testament Ancien: l'épisode de Jonas sur une mosaïque d'Israël[90] et sur une autre d'Aquilée,[91] Adam sur

[83] Gioles 1991, 34.
[84] Tégée: Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 1987, 77-80, cat. no 21, pl. 96; Maguire 1987a, 24-28, fig. 15, 21. Heraclea: Cvetković-Tomasević 1967, 29-31, 45, figs. 22-37; Maguire 1987a, 36-38, fig.42.
[85] Jensen 2000, 46-47.
[86] Lc. 5.5-10.
[87] Muçaj 1993, 589-595; Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 1984a, 433-436.
[88] Muçaj 1993, 589-592.
[89] Dunbabin 1978, 191; 1999, 219; Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 1984a, 421; 2003, 84-97, 108-116.
[90] Ovadiah 1987, 18-20, no 17, pls. X-XI; Dunbabin 1999, 197.
[91] Kähler 1964; Dunbabin 1999, 71-72 et note 46.

trois mosaïques de Syrie,[92] l'arche de Noé sur une mosaïque de Cilicie.[93] Pourtant jusqu'au présent on n'a trouvé aucune représentation des figures de la Bible ou des figures saintes sur les mosaïques de la péninsule balkanique. Même dans les provinces du sud (la Thessalie, l'Achaïe, la Crète) où les scènes figurées sont plusieurs, on ne trouve que des scènes des animaux et des oiseaux, des personnifications des mois, des vignes, des scènes figurées païennes.[94] En ce qui concerne les apôtres on les trouve peu de fois représentés sur les mosaïques de la région; ils sont d'habitude représentés par des symboles, comme des alouettes (Akrini de Kozani) ou des agneaux (Pautalia – Kjustendil de Bulgarie) avec ou sans des auréoles.[95] Il semble que le répertoire figuré préféré dans la région balkanique ne comportait pas de figures des saints.

Une autre interprétation veut que le pêcheur symbolise le 'pêcheur' des âmes qui sont les poissons. C'est l'explication qu'on a donnée pour la scène de Kozani (no 11, fig. 8).[96] Mais qui est le pêcheur des âmes ? L'icône du pêcheur est très habituelle dans les textes des écrivains chrétiens. Mais chacun d'eux donne un contenu différent à cette métaphore. Ainsi, Origène écrit que l'apôtre Pierre est le pêcheur qui a capturé le converti étant le poisson.[97] Cyrille de Jérusalem présente dans son discours les convertis comme des poissons qui sont attrapés dans le filet de l'église. Ainsi, c'est l'église ou Jésus qui est représenté comme pêcheur; il les sauvera par la mort et ensuite la résurrection.[98] Clément d'Alexandrie présente la même métaphore: Jésus est le pêcheur qui sauve les âmes.[99] Dans ce cas les poissons, c'est-à-dire les âmes, sont sauvés quand ils sont tirés en dehors de la mer.[100] Les poissons/âmes gagnent la vie en mourant en dehors de la mer de ce monde.[101] Tout à fait différente est la métaphore de Tertullien qui écrit que Jésus est le poisson; ainsi les poissons, c'est-à-dire les âmes, sont sauvés en restant dans l'eau, dans la mer.[102] Tout dépend du sens donné à la

[92] Donceel-Voûte 1988, 104, 112, 480; Dunbabin 1999, 180; Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 2001; Caraher 2003, 151-152.
[93] Budde 1969, 40; Dunbabin 1999, 226 et note 14. Des autres exemples: Pelekanidis 1974, 19.
[94] Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 1984a, 370-377, 402-405.
[95] Alouettes: Pelekanidis 1960, 227-228, fig. 200b, 201a. Agneaux: Spassov *et al.* 1999, figs. 10-11.
[96] Kourkoutidou-Nikolaïdou & Michaïlidis 2002, 17.
[97] Or. *Comm. in Mt*. 13.10; Jensen 2000, 50 et note 58.
[98] Cyr. H. *Procatech*. 5; Jensen 2000, 50 et note 59.
[99] Clem. Al. *Paed*. 3.12.23-8; Jensen 2000, 50 et note 60.
[100] Drewer 1981, 534.
[101] Drewer 1981, 535.
[102] Tert. *De Bapt*. 1; Drewer 1981, 534; Jensen 2000, 48-49.

mer, mer de péché ou eau de la vie. Comme il est proposé par Drewer le poisson/âme se sauve de la mer/péché étant tiré par le pêcheur et en même temps grâce à la cérémonie du baptisme, lié aussi à l'eau. Le poisson meurt symboliquement dans les eaux du baptisme et en suite se renaît dans la foi chrétienne.[103]

Il semble qu'il est très difficile de reconnaître le symbolisme du pêcheur. Cette particularité de l'usage des images dans la littérature et l'art chrétien est signalée par Maguire.[104] Le chercheur constate que la même image peut être utilisée avec deux significations différentes. Ainsi, l'agneau symbolise Jésus Christ et en même temps ses acolytes.[105] Cependant dans le cas de Kozani ce qui est frappant est que les deux premières paires de compartiments présentent des scènes liées à l'eau: un taureau devant une fontaine, deux paons dont l'un boit d'un canthare, un âne qui boit de l'eau d'une source en même temps que son petit tète et enfin le pêcheur devant la mer. Les autres compartiments présentent des animaux. Le cadre de la mosaïque de la nef centrale est composé des compartiments portant des figures des poissons et des oiseaux. Alors, les compartiments de la nef sont divisés en deux groupes, l'un est constitué des images associées à l'eau et le second est constitué des images associées à la terre. Pourtant les motifs de la fontaine, de la source, des paons qui boivent du canthare, ont un sens symbolique, ils se réfèrent à la source de la vérité, à la Source de Vie, c'est-à-dire à la foi chrétienne.[106] Les paons et le canthare plein de vin symbolisaient l'immortalité et la vie au delà déjà dans l'art ancien. Dans le contexte chrétien le canthare plein d'eau symbolise la source de vie et les paons qui boivent de ceci sont les symboles des âmes. Le motif se réfère aussi au baptisme, à l'Eucharistie, à la résurrection par le vin qui remplit le canthare ou les raisins qui l'accompagnent.[107] Le motif de l'animal qui boit d'une source se répète dans la basilique à Hadrianoupolis de Paphlagonie, où est représenté un taureau et peut-être un cheval; il est cru que les animaux boivent de la Source de Vie.[108] Le motif de l'âne avec son petit se

[103] Drewer 1981, 534; Maguire 1987a, 40.
[104] Maguire 1987a, 9.
[105] Maguire 1987a, 11-12.
[106] Maguire 1987a, 38-40. Pour les textes qui se réfèrent à la Source de Vie: Underwood 1950, 47-48.
[107] Le motif des paons confrontés avec ou sans canthare dérive du symbolisme dionysien: Cvetković-Tomasević 1967, 41; Dunbabin 1978, 166-169; Anđelković *et al.* 2010, 233-243. Autres représentations du motif: Pataci & Altun 2014, 194. Autres exemples du motif provenant de la Grèce: Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 1987, 64, cat. no 12, pl. 61b, 62a; 201, cat. no 135, pl. 360; Pelekanidis 1974, 23 et note 46.
[108] Pataci & Altun 2014, 185-188, 194, figs. 5, 12, 13.

répète sur une mosaïque de Sparte, mais là il ne boit pas d'eau.[109] La Source de Vie peut être le baptisme.[110]

L'interprétation du «pêcheur des âmes» a été donnée aussi à la mosaïque du Cossar Oratory d'Aquilée datée au début du IV^{e} s., où on voit deux barques, un homme et la mer pleine de poissons. DePuma compare cette scène à celle de Mélos (no 3). Les pêcheurs sont interprétés comme les Apôtres.[111]

D'après Assimakopoulou-Atzaka les scènes de la vie quotidienne, entre elles celles de pêche, sont du contenu neutre.[112] Les scènes figurées sur les mosaïques de la région de Macédoine font partie du décor, de façon qu'elles ne soient pas accentuées. La chercheur donne comme exemple la scène de pêche de la mosaïque de Kozani (no 11) qui décore un des douze compartiments de la synthèse géométrique.[113] Les autres compartiments portent des scènes des animaux et des oiseaux dans un décor végétal; ces sujets présentent la vie dans la nature. Par contre Kourkoutidou-Nikolaïdou considère que la scène de pêche de Kozani est symbolique, elle présente le pêcheur des âmes, comme on a mentionné auparavant.[114]

La scène de Doliana (no 10, fig. 7a, b) diffère de toutes les autres. C'est la présence des personnifications de la mer et du fleuve qui la distingue. Les personnifications des éléments de la nature, qui sont des sujets tirés de l'iconographie romaine, dans le contexte chrétien de la basilique sont interprétées comme des motifs qui témoignent la reconnaissance de la part des fidèles de la connexion entre Dieu et la prospérité de la nature.[115] La scène qui se trouvait à côté de celle-ci est partiellement conservée; on y voit un canthare dont feuillit une corne d'abondance avec des feuilles d'acanthe. Les sujets de la mosaïque de la nef nord sont des scènes de chasse (un jeune homme qui attaque un lion, des combats des animaux), deux scènes d'un arbre dans les feuilles duquel volent des oiseaux (des paons aussi) et avec deux agneaux à gauche et à droite de lui, une scène de canthare dont feuillit une corne d'abondance et des feuilles d'acanthe. Les sujets sont typiques de la décoration des mosaïques des basiliques paléochrétiennes.

Conclusions

Afin de comprendre et interpréter une image sur une mosaïque il

[109] Assimakopoulou 1987, 106, cat. no 47, pl. 152a.
[110] Underwood 1950, 54.
[111] DePuma 1969, 97, cat. no. 156, pl. CXII, fig. 207.
[112] Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 2003, 94.
[113] Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 2003, 98, fig. 117.
[114] Kourkoutidou-Nikolaïdou & Michaïlidis 2002, 17.
[115] Sorensen 2012, 264-265.

faut entre autres prendre en compte deux facteurs, l'identité du patron qui l'avait commandée et les spectateurs, qui pourraient être des gens de diverses identités et de statuts sociaux.[116] Les sources littéraires de l'époque contemporaine de l'image et de son cadre architectural peuvent aussi éclaircir quelques côtés de son contenu. En étudiant les images de pêche de l'antiquité tardive, on a constaté que à cause du manque des inscriptions sur ces mosaïques on peut comprendre peu de choses pour les commanditaires des images; on s'appuie surtout sur le cadre architectural, sur les bâtiments privés ou publics, afin de présumer leur statut et leur ambition en choisissant une scène de pêche pour la décoration d'un édifice. En plus, on cherche des explications dans les textes. Les spectateurs sont aussi associés par les chercheurs aux bâtiments. En plus on ne doit pas oublier que l'époque de l'antiquité tardive est distinguée par la transition, la mobilité, la turbulence, l'intensité des idées et des esprits. Tout cela se manifeste inévitablement aux interprétations qu'on donne aujourd'hui à ces images.

On constate alors que les scènes de pêche de la péninsule balkanique sont datées aux II^{e}-IV^{e} s. et au VI^{e} s. Aucune scène n'est datée au V^{e} s. Cela semble confirmer la constatation générale que les scènes figurées sont introduites de nouveau dans le répertoire mosaïstique au VI^{e} s., tandis que avant c'était le répertoire géométrique qui dominait.[117]

L'iconographie marine romaine se prolonge dans l'art paléochrétien. Quelques fois les images comprennent des éléments nilotiques qui ont perdu leur sens initial, une seule fois les personnifications de la mer et d'un fleuve qui sont plutôt vus comme des éléments de la nature liés au Jésus Christ. D'après Maguire ces images de prospérité ont été emportées dans les bâtiments de culte, tandis que les images des dieux païens ont été rejetées. Ainsi l'idéal de 'la bonne vie' était maintenant contrôlé par l'église et non par les riches aristocrates.[118] L'intégration des éléments de l'iconographie païenne est un phénomène de la renaissance de l'époque justinienne (VI^{e} s.).[119]

Le style bien sûr se différencie dans le temps. Les figures des scènes paléochrétiennes autres fois sont représentées avec des analogies justes (no 8), autres fois elles sont bidimensionnelles et incorrectes (nos 9, 11); pourtant les poissons sont représentés en détail et assez souvent sont aisément reconnaissables. Les éléments du paysage sont rares dans les scènes tout au long de la période du II^{e} - VI^{e} s.; on voit un rocher (nos 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11), un

[116] La bibliographie pour le sujet des patrons et des spectateurs est trop riche. Un ouvrage récent est: Birk & Poulsen 2012.
[117] Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 1984b, 35-36.
[118] Maguire 2001, 249-250, 253.
[119] Kitzinger 1980, 91, 98; Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 2011a, 69-70.

arbre (no 11), des plantes nilotiques (nos 7), des oiseaux (nos 7, 9). Il s'agit des motifs isolés. Les seules scènes qui présentent des synthèses intégrales de paysage viennent de Crète (no 1) où on voit un paysage nilotique composé des plantes, des oiseaux et des animaux exotiques, d'Amphipolis (no 8), où les pêcheurs sont posés dans un paysage montagnard, et de Doliana (no 10) dont le paysage est constitué de l'eau, des oiseaux, des plantes.

Dans la période romaine on trouve les scènes de pêche dans les maisons, mais aussi dans deux espaces publics, deux bâtiments religieux (nos 2, 3) déjà au III^{e} s. Dans ces deux cas on lie les images de pêche aux rites d'Hercule et de Bacchus. Par contre dans la période paléochrétienne les scènes de pêche sont posées exclusivement dans les bâtiments religieux, les basiliques. Alors la scène du pêcheur n'est pas seulement une image du répertoire de la religion chrétienne, mais à la fin de l'Antiquité elle s'intègre au répertoire de l'imagerie des dieux païens.

Le sujet de la pêche est rarement choisi. Seulement six mosaïques datées à l'époque romaine sont décorées avec des scènes de pêche. Même si on comptait les scènes de pêche où les pêcheurs sont des amours (trois scènes sont connues de la région grecque), on constaterait que le sujet de la pêche n'est pas entre les sujets favorables du répertoire des mosaïques.[120] Mais aussi dans la période paléochrétienne le sujet ne connaît pas la grande diffusion du sujet du canthare entre deux paons ou deux cerfs. En plus, on constate que à la période romaine les scènes proviennent des régions qui se trouvent près de la mer; par contre à la période paléochrétienne le facteur géographique ne joue aucun rôle, on trouve des scènes aussi dans des régions qui sont assez loin de la mer (Doliana, Kozani).

En général, les interprétations données aux images des pêcheurs dépendent de leur position dans les bâtiments en liaison aux enseignements disposés par les textes et quelques fois aux autres trouvailles archéologiques. Les interprétations exprimées pour les scènes provenant du cadre païen sont:

a) des images décoratives qui donnent un sens illusionniste à l'espace (no 1), quand elles décorent des fontaines, des piscines etc.

b) des images de caractère apotropaïque ou de bonne chance et de fertilité, quand elles décorent des espaces privés, des pièces des maisons, une cour, un *cubiculum*, un portique (nos 4, 5, 6), car c'est la mer pleine de poissons nommée de ce symbolisme qui domine dans ces images et non l'acte de pêche;

[120] Les trois scènes des amours - pêcheurs sont de Cos (De Matteis 2004, 137-138, cat. no 64, tav. LXXVIII. 1-2, LXXIX), de Patras (impubliée, Kokkini 2012, vol. II p. 32) et de Mytilène (Kankeleit 1994, Kat. no 108); Kokkini 2012, 352 table 2.

c) des images qui dans le cadre des bâtiments religieux (nos 2, 3) sont liées aux rites d'Hercule et de Bacchus; la première présente le poisson offert à Hercule et l'autre est peut-être associée aux mystères bacchiques.

Les interprétations pour les images provenant des basiliques sont diverses, même si elles appartiennent aux bâtiments du même type:

a) des images qui font partie de la grande image de la Mer qui entoure la Terre (nos 7, 8). C'est le Cosmos Chrétien qui est représenté et les scènes de pêche n'ont pas de sens symbolique;

b) des images qui présentent des épisodes de la Bible (no 9) dont les protagonistes sont les apôtres ;

c) des images liées au baptisme: Jésus, représenté comme pêcheur, sauve les âmes, représentées comme des poissons, de la mer du péché (no 11);

d) des images du contenu neutre, car elles représentent la nature avec ses éléments, entre eux les hommes (nos 7, 11).

Cette diversité des interprétations est due aux différents programmes iconographiques des basiliques et en même temps à la variété des usages de la scène de pêche dans les textes. D'ailleurs on doit prendre en considération que l'imagerie chrétienne se forme pendant la période de l'antiquité tardive, elle n'est pas encore stabilisée. En plus, elle dépend du passé classique et païen, qui est la tradition à laquelle l'art paléochrétien se retourne à tirer des motifs iconographiques et des traits stylistiques.[121]

CATALOGUE

1. Chersonèse de Crète. **Fig. 1a, b.** Fontaine pyramidale. Une barque se trouve au centre de la scène. Un rameur est debout à l'arrière de la barque tandis qu'un homme est en train de tirer un poulpe. Au niveau bas de la scène un pêcheur tient dans sa main une canne avec une anguille. Des poissons, des autres animaux marins et des oiseaux nagent dans la mer, tandis que d'autres animaux comme un hippopotame, des crocodiles et des papyri confirment qu'il s'agit d'une scène nilotique. Fin du II^{e} – III^{e} s. In situ. Kankeleit 1994, Kat. no 85; Kokkini 2012, cat. Ψ4, p. 26; Massara 2013.

2. Cos. Salle du portique du Sanctuaire d'Hercule. Un pêcheur debout sur un rocher pêche avec une ligne. Il a déjà pêché un poisson. Dans la main gauche il tient un panier. Des autres poissons nagent autour du pêcheur. Première moitié du III^{e} s. In situ. Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 1973,

[121] Brown 1980, 22-23; Kitzinger 1980, 19-21, 91, 98.

235 no 31; Kankeleit 1999, 76-77; De Matteis 2004, 105-106, no 35, tav. XXXIX, 191-196; Kokkini 2012, cat. Ψ3, p. 25-26.

3. Mélos (Tramythia). **Fig. 2.** Salle d'un bâtiment religieux. Un pêcheur, qui était peut-être assis dans une barque au milieu de la scène, pêche avec une bouteille attachée à une canne. La bouteille qui se trouve dans l'eau est remplie d'un liquide rouge. Des poissons et des écailles nagent dans la mer tout autour du pêcheur. Une inscription se trouve au dessus du pêcheur: MONON MH ΥΔΩΡ. Première moitié du III^{e} s. In situ? De Puma 1969, Kat. no 107, pl. LXXXIII, fig. 157; Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 1973, 238 no 41, pl. 21a; Kankeleit 1994, Kat. no 106, Taf. 30, Text 65-68; Kokkini 2012, cat. Ψ5, p. 27.

4. Cos (région du port). **Fig. 3.** Maison, cour (?). Un pêcheur debout sur un rocher pêche avec deux tridents. Un panier se trouve sur le rocher entre ses pieds. Les poissons qui sont de grandes dimensions nagent dans la mer autour de lui. Deuxième moitié du III^{e} s. Palais des Grands Maîtres (Chevaliers), Rhodes. Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 1973, 234 no 30, pl. 17b; Kankeleit 1994, Kat. no 68; De Matteis 2004, 110-112, no 41, tav. XLIV, XLV, XLVI; Kokkini 2012, cat. Ψ2, p. 23-24.

5. Thessalonique (rue Sygrou 30). **Fig. 4.** Maison, *cubiculum*. Un pêcheur est assis sur un rocher. Il pêche avec une canne. Dans l'eau se trouvent deux grands poissons. Deuxième moitié ou dernier quart du III^{e} s. Musée Archéologique de Thessalonique. Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 1973, 223, no 12, pl. 7b; 2011b, 391; 2012, 94, fig. 10; Kankeleit 1994, Kat. no 210; Kokkini 2012, cat. Ψ1, p. 23-24.

6. Mytilène (terrain Chorafa). **Fig. 5.** Maison du Ménandre, portique occidental. Au centre de la scène est représentée une barque dans laquelle se trouvent deux hommes. L'un rame au moment où l'autre harponne avec son trident un grand poulpe. De grands poissons nagent autour eux. Troisième quart du III^{e} s. ou fin du IV^{e} s. Nouveau Musée Archéologique de Mytilène. Kankeleit 1999, 75-76, pl. XII, 1-5 ; 2003, 275, Abb. 6-10; Dunbabin 1999, 217, note 26; Kokkini 2012, cat. Ψ6, p. 28-29.

7. Nikopolis. **Fig. 6a, b.** Basilique A.

A. salle X, transept nord. Bord: dans une mer pleine des poissons, des autres créatures marines et des oiseaux, se trouvent trois pêcheurs qui pêchent l'un avec un trident, l'autre pêche avec une canne et le troisième qui est assis sur un rocher pêche avec une ligne de pêche.

B. Salle XI, transept sud. Bord: dans une mer pleine de poissons, des autres créatures marines et des oiseaux se trouvent quatre hommes. Le premier, appelé ΟΦΕΛΛΥΡΑΣ d'après l'inscription, est en train de capturer un oiseau, le deuxième, appelé ΕΡΜΗΣ, est assis sur un rocher et pêche avec une ligne de pêche, le troisième pêche avec un filet et le quatrième avec une canne.

Deuxième quart du VI^{e} s. In situ. Philadelpheus 1916; Kitzinger 1951, 93-94; DePuma 1969, cat. nos 172-173, pls. CXXIII, fig. 224-225; Spiro 1978, 430-461, pls. 499-502; Hellenkemper-Salies 1987; Gioles 1991, 33-40; Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 2003, 110-111, fig. 133a-b.

8. Amphipolis. Basilique A, salle IX, annexe sud (auditorium ou lieu de réception d'après Stikas 1970). Compartiment ouest: deux pêcheurs dans un paysage montagnard, le pêcheur jeune imberbe est en train d'attraper avec son harpon un poisson, le pêcheur barbu est prêt à capturer le poisson dans un filet qu'il tient dans ses mains. Première moitié du VI^{e} s. In situ. Stikas 1970, 51; Spiro 1978, 597, pls. 652, 659-660; Zekos 1989, 9.

9. Byllis (Albanie). Basilique B, exonarthex. Panneau droit: un pêcheur âgé et chauve assis sur un rocher attrape un poisson avec une ligne, un autre pêcheur debout sur un rocher tire un grand filet qui est rempli des poissons. La mer est pleine de poissons, des autres créatures marines et un oiseau. Première moitié du VI^{e} s. In situ. Muçaj 1993, 587-595; Muçaj & Raynaud 2005, 390-392, fig. 11.

10. Doliana (nome d'Ioannina). **Fig. 7a, b.** Basilique, nef sud. Tableau occidental: deux personnifications, celle de la mer et celle d'un fleuve se trouvent aux deux extrémités du tableau. Entre eux se trouve la proue d'une barque d'où un pêcheur se penche afin d'harponner avec son trident un poulpe. Plus haut on peut voir la tête et la main d'un autre pêcheur qui porte un chapeau et tient une canne de pêche. Milieu du VI^{e} s. In situ. Karamperidi 2007, 672-674; 2008, 30-37.

11. Aghia Paraskevi de Kozani. **Fig. 8.** Basilique, nef centrale. Un des douze compartiments: un pêcheur assis sur un rocher pêche avec une canne. Devant lui la mer est pleine de poissons. Troisième quart du VI^{e} s. In situ. Kourkoutidou-Nicolaïdou – Michaïlidis 2002, 17-19, fig. 32; Assimakopoulou-Atzaka 2003, 98, fig. 117.

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The Painted Roman Tomb on the Lower Danube. Aspects Regarding the Crossover from Paganism to Christianity in Funerary Symbolism

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Abstract: Painted tombs on the Lower Danube have been popular mostly in the 4th century AD, a time of change throughout the Roman world, visible in the iconography and symbolism of Roman funerary art. While the spiritual message changes, the means, funerary symbolism, never does, it adapts to its new context. Four major funerary themes can be identified on the frescoes discovered in Viminacium, Tomis, Durostorum and near Sirmium that have the main purpose of expressing the social status of the deceased: the funerary banquet, the rider motif, the pair of peacocks suggesting the Afterlife, and the procession of servants.

Key words: painted tomb, identity, banquet, rider, peacocks, servants

Резюме: Гробниците със стенописи на Долния Дунав са били популярни още през IV в., когато било време на промени в римския свят, видими и в римското гробно изкуство чрез неговата иконография и символика. И докато духовното послание се променя, неговото значение, погребалната символика – не, но се адаптира към новия контекст. Могат да се разграничат четири основни погребални теми, представени върху фрески, открити във Виминациум, Томи, Дуросторум и в близост до Сирмиум, чиято основна задача е да представи социалния статус на погребания: погребалното угощение, мотивът с конника, двойката пауни, подсказващи задгробния живот, и процесия на слуги.

The funerary monuments and tombs are maybe the most sensitive to social, religious and economic changes the Roman world would go through at a certain time in history, giving an accurate reflection of the transformation of a culture under inner or outer influences. The present somewhat concise study is meant to reflect the changes in funerary symbolism in a moment in history when paganism starts to give way to Christianity, when the Christian message of the Afterlife is transmitted to the living with the means of pagan funerary symbolism.

What stands at its core as central motivation is the idea that major changes that happen in the collective memory and mentality of any given community can be evidently seen in one of the most conservative and traditional aspects of human behaviour, funerary practice. Even today, regardless of our inner beliefs, we still follow traditions in dealing with funerals. In other words, in a practice so conventional, where rituals change with great difficulty, if there are such changes, then we are dealing with an important transformation.

This brings us to our quite simple but preliminary questions: What? When? Where? And how?

What is a painted tomb? When we think of visually embellished sepulchres our mind easily imagines usually either partially or completely buried masonry structures with walls that are painted, having a central decorative theme. Well, humanity has proven in its long history that this form of honouring the dead was recorded for millennia already and throughout vast spacial expanses, from the old dynastic Egypt to the Balkans, from Western Europe to the ever fascinating and exotic Orient. This is because symbolic funerary language is universal, not necessarily meaning having the same symbols and means of transmission but the same general purpose: to advertise the immortality of one's memory after their death, regardless of religious beliefs.

The painted tomb in the Roman world could seek its origins in the funerary manifestations originating from 6th – 5th centuries BC Etruria, where the so called 'Tomb of the leopards' or 'Tomb of the bulls' are some of the known examples of fine Etruscan craftsmanship, with beautiful paintings decorating the inner walls of the burial chambers hewn out of the bedrock in the Monterozzi necropolis at Tarquinia (plate I.1).[1] Moreover, certainly not unknown to them were the *apoikiai* built by the Greek colonists settled in the southern part of the Italian Peninsula and the island of Sicily, ever since the 8th century BC. It is within Magna Graecia that one of the best surviving monumental funerary Classical paintings were found at Paestum, in the so called 'Tomb of the Diver',[2] dating from around 470 BC. Shaped as an oversized coffin, the tomb had frescoes both on its walls (plate I.2.a) and on its cover slab (plate I.2.b), depicting on the former unique at the time *symposium* scenes and on the latter, the youth diving into the Afterlife scene, from which the tomb takes its name.[3]

Within such a vast time frame of artistic evolution we seek to answer our second question: *When*? Throughout Roman history one of the most

[1] Kleiner 2010, xxxii-xxxvi.
[2] Holloway 2006.
[3] Kleiner 2010, xxvi.

dramatic transfigurations of the known world was contained within the 4th century AD, a time when the Empire underwent drastic political, economic, social and religious changes. The latter are represented by a striking progression of Christianity, from persecution to tolerance, ultimately becoming the state religion and eventually the only cult allowed by law, winning over paganism in little over a century of direct confrontation. And as this radical transformation is happening, it is without a doubt being recorded intentionally or even unconsciously in funerary practice.[4]

In answering our third question: *where*? we have to explain what makes this part of the Roman world, the Lower Danube, so special. As the first three centuries of our era have proven so far, the provincial territory comprising of the lower sector of the Danube River and the Balkan Mountains is considered to be the place where the West met the East in the Roman world. Here we had the Latin initially military settlements on the *limes* in opposition with the Hellenistic cities on the Black Sea Coast, to which one could add the mobility of different people and ideas encouraged by the Roman state, so that anybody could make a living inside the Empire's borders.[5]

Returning to our subject, the Lower Danube and the Balkans have a very old tradition of this practice, sepulchres decorated in an impressive artistic sense have been developed by the ancient Thracians especially in the 5th and 4th centuries BC, when the local aristocracy cultivated a preference for funerary chambers complexly decorated with architectonic elements and paintings, all enclosed under the protection of earth tumuli of various sizes (plate II.1).[6] Nonetheless, in the first three centuries of Roman rule on the Lower Danube, inhumation tombs with painted inner walls were at least a rarity. Even so, their frequency expands in the 4th century AD, their numbers growing especially in the Mediterranean area east of Illyricum,[7] identifying both pagan and Christian tombs raised side by side in the same necropolises dating from the same time, without a proper demarcation between them. Such examples are attested in necropolises from Viminacium, Sirmium and Beska, Sopianae, Naissus, Serdica, Diocletianopolis, Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana, Thessaloniki, Marcianopolis, Ossenove, Durostorum and Tomis.[8]

[4] See an interesting study regarding the 'pagan-Christian conflict' and the burial customs of Rome and Italy in the 4th century AD, in Johnson 1997.

[5] In regard to the confluence between the militarized Danubian *limes* and the Hellenistic inland in the provincial territory of Moesia concerning Roman funerary art, see the author's thesis, Crețulescu 2010.

[6] See Valeva, Nankov *et al.* 2015.

[7] Korać 1993, 109.

[8] See the detailed studies of Valeva 1989 and Valeva 2001.

Finally, turning to our last question, *how,* its answer can be found in the act of choosing the right iconography to adorn the inside of the tomb. At first sight, one is tempted to consider this practice of decorating the inner walls of the sepulchre as a remnant of the very ancient Roman beliefs that considered the spirit of the deceased, after death, to reside inside the tomb, as in a regular house. Thus, the frescoes are directly dedicated to him, depicting scenes with instances the deceased would experience in the Afterlife, such as the eternal banquet with the gods, the perpetual hunt for exotic animals or an idyllic life of carelessness and tranquillity, where servants are at his disposal.[9] Nevertheless, in keeping the memory of the departed alive, the main role of the funerary monument was to reconfirm the deceased's social status after death.

In the first three centuries AD the luxury and opulence specific for funerary art were visible for the entire community or any other passer-by to be freely seen, by placing the monuments above the surface, along the main roads leading out of human settlements. Nonetheless, starting with the first decades of the 3rd century AD, confirming social status with the help of opulence goes underground. In their attempt to compensate the lack of space in urban necropolises, the Romans turn to digging a complex system of tunnels in the volcanic rock outside the Empire's capital, meant to harbour the remains of the people of Rome, pagans, Jews or Christians. Thus, the brick facades belonging to tombs from Isola Sacra necropolis in Ostia, characteristic for the 2nd century AD (plate II.2),[10] are reproduced in the catacombs of St. Sebastian in Rome, under Via Appia (plate II.3).[11] The inside of these sepulchral complexes was much more elaborate than the outside, harbouring *acrosolia* or niches in the walls and *formae* or pits dug into the floors for housing the remains of many individuals belonging either to the same family or to specific religious groups.

Returning to the Lower Danube provinces, archaeological research so far has shown that there are numerous types of tombs that bear interior painted decoration,[12] both made either of brickwork or masonry, known under the more general term of *hypogea*, naming just about any solid underground funerary architecture that is not covered by a tumulus.[13] Here

[9] See Cumont 1966.

[10] See Kleiner 2010, 210-212.

[11] Kleiner 2010, 212-213 – Rome, as proven by extensive archaeological data, has started going underground in regard to funerary practice quite early, due to its ever growing need of then insufficient space for burials and regardless of religious affiliation.

[12] Valeva 2001, 167-169.

[13] 'Hypogaion', in RE 1914, 340; 'Hypogaeum' in Brill's New Pauly 2006, Consulted online on 10 November 2016 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e519920.

we witness the continuity from the Hellenistic era into Roman times of a certain type of funerary manifestation, namely the rectangular tombs with barrel-vaulted roofs, also known as *hypogea of the Macedonian type*, one of the most preferred types of tombs by the early Christians in this region. Having its evolution fuelled by local funerary practices and Oriental influences, especially from colonists originating from Asia Minor, most from Syria and Bithynia, the hypogeum tombs are frequently encountered in Lower Danube settlements, well over the Balkans, with different local variations. The elaborate frescoes painted by artisans, who till this day remain anonymous, have also the purpose of reconfirming the social status of the deceased and its family inside their community, action which took place only when the tombs were opened to the public, during funerals. And this happened more than once, as these types of tombs were destined to house entire families, more than one individual being discovered archaeologically inside of them.[14]

In transmitting the deceased's message which he wanted to leave behind, his life's testament, the iconography and funerary symbolism are the central elements. Thus, choosing the funerary theme becomes essential in transmitting their thoughts. Even when Christianity becomes the only state religion, even when the message has changed, the means of transmission, the funerary symbols, remain the same, as their meaning is known to everyone. Thus, in the following pages, an attempt is being made to categorize the main chosen funerary themes that were recorded on the surviving wall paintings of Roman tombs on the lower Danubian sector.

One of the most encountered funerary themes on the lower Danube monuments was the funerary *banquet scene*, which did not enjoy the same popularity in the 4th and 5th centuries AD as it did in the first three hundred years before. Having a specifically complex symbolic nature by being a form of heroizing the deceased who has won the right to dine amongst the gods in the Afterlife, the banquet scene is known in all corners of the Empire, from Hadrian's Wall, the Rhenish and Danubian provinces to Asia Minor, Palmyra and Egypt, the number of representations and iconographical alternatives varying from region to region. Drawing on an essential stage of funerary practice and ritual *(*the *cenna funbebris*) and the cult of the Hero originating from the Greek world,[15] the iconographic theme of picturing the deceased reclining on the deathbed (*kliné*), accompanied by his veiled consort sitting on a chair beside him and by

[14] See the extraordinary case of the 4th century 'Tudorca' Tomb, from Ibida, housing no less than 39 individuals, among whom 10 were children, Aparaschivei, Iacob *et al.* 2012, 171-174.
[15] Stănescu 2003, 120

several servants in a miniature form (plate III.1), is determined in Hellenistic times. Under the Roman rule on the Lower Danube, the banquet scene framework forgoes the compositional rigors of the previous era, bringing into being a great variety of iconographic models, usually determined by the number of revellers participating (plate III.2).[16]

Drawing on the idea that the funerary banquet scene in Roman funerary art has a complex origin, in which the Etruscan tradition is harmoniously blended with that of the Hellenistic East,[17] we can safely say that on the Lower Danube the iconographic motif of conviviality has a direct continuity from the Hellenistic period,[18] recorded without interruptions in the Greek cities on the left bank of the Black Sea. Moreover, the banquet scene representations drastically diminish in number west of the Iskar River, appearing almost accidentally on a reduced number of funerary monuments from Upper Moesia.[19]

Returning to our subject of discussion, maybe one of the most illustrative examples is the Banquet tomb from Tomis (plate IV.1).[20] The brick and masonry hypogeum, being in a remarkable state of preservation, was erected somewhere in the middle of the 4th century AD. The dating has been made based on the five successive inhumations from within, four adults in wooden coffins, with an east-west orientation, among which only one woman had a funerary inventory made of jewellery typical for the second half of the 4th century AD, and a very young child, in crouched position, interred in an amphora by the left side of the tomb's entrance. Both the tomb's construction and frescoes must probably be contemporary with the first interment, mid-4th century, the tomb having a functionality of approximately 50 years,[21] destined, most likely, for one family.

The banquet scene represents the main focal point of the tomb, being positioned in the upper part of the north wall, in the circular arch (lunette), directly opposing the entrance wall. We see an idyllic image, suggested by the painted trees, acanthus leaves with pomegranates in the corners of the composition and by the luxuriant vegetation depicted in a geometric pattern on the vaulted roof of the tomb. Here, the banquet is taking place, having seven participants, all males. Five of them are sitting on a *stibadium* type couch (quite common in late antiquity, replacing the

[16] For the manifestation of this phenomenon in Lower Moesia see Alexandrescu-Vianu 1977.
[17] Dunbabin 2003, 109.
[18] Dunbabin 2003, 108.
[19] Crețulescu 2010, 154-166.
[20] Chera & Lungu 1988; Chera 1993; Barbet 1994.
[21] Barbet 1994, 25-31.

earlier *triclinium* type couch),[22] around a round table sporting a large platter in the centre with something resembling a cake,[23] each of the men having in their front a lyre shaped bread, while an extra sixth one is placed in the foreground, awaiting its owner (plate IV.2). The five men are not only dressed in the same manner, with long *tunicae manicatae*, with scarlet red *clavi* and *orbiculi*,[24] but they are also depicted having the same facial features, only the hairstyles present slight differences, thus pointing out the rather limited, if considerable, craftsmanship of the tomb painters.

On the right side of the scene, we have the servant, in standing position, dressed this time in a short tunic with black *clavi* and *orbiculi*, a towel on his left shoulder, and a *pathera* and *oenochoe* in his hands, indicating its role at the banquet to assist the revellers in washing their hands (plate V.1). On the left side of the scene we have the seventh man, dressed just as the five men reclining at the table, carrying in his hands a ewer and two very schematic triangular glasses intended for the two revellers without drinks in their hands, reaching for the bread. This character, as he was depicted standing and carrying elements for wine drinking for the table, he has been interpreted as a servant (plate V.2). Nonetheless, the fact that he is dressed in identical fashion with the five men at the table and not as the other servant on the right, leads us to believe that he is just another reveller, the owner of the extra sixth lyre-shaped bread depicted, which is not destined for the spirit of the deceased as it was believed before.

Moreover, the fact that the six men are dressed identically might suggest them having the same social status, higher that the servant's, implied by the red clothing decoration. The specific type of *manicata* tunic decorated with *clavi* and *orbiculi* depicted here becomes highly popular with the military by the end of the 3rd century AD,[25] becoming the regular dress of the period by the beginning of the 4th century, used by both high and low social ranks. Alix Barbet suggested that these characters might have been members of the same funerary *collegium*, due to the fact that they are all men and because of the high quality of the frescoes.[26] The same possibility is suggested also by the presence of the lyre-shaped breads, which could indicate also a religious allegiance, either a pagan or a Christian one.

Another example of a banquet scene being employed in the iconographical program of a late antique tomb is found in Plovdiv, dating

[22] Dunbabin 2003, 169-172.
[23] Dunbabin 2003, 168.
[24] Also known as a *tunica caenatoria*, in conformity with Barbet 1994, 33.
[25] Sumner 2009, 41-60.
[26] Barbet 1994, 36.

most probably from the Tetrarchic or early Constatinian period.[27] The tomb has been badly damaged and the central scene with the couple (probably) reclining on a couch is no longer visible. The banquet scene did not resume only within the panel hosting the deceased couple, on the west wall, but it extended throughout the whole tomb, including four separate panels each with a different servant holding food or drink.

A somewhat different variant of the banquet scene is depicted inside the tomb of Eustorgios from Thessaloniki,[28] where between the deceased couple, in the central position we have two male servants, judging by their clothes, holding a large ewer between them, reminiscent of the Pannonian type banquet motif used on earlier funerary monuments.[29]

Both the *Rider motif* and the banquet scene, in the first three centuries AD, have been the most popular iconographic models showing the deceased as an eternal never vanquished hero, employed mainly by the military personnel stationed on the limes (both on the Danube and on the Rhine). Mainly inspired by the cultic milieu, M. Oppermann places the origin of the cult of the Thracian Rider both in the Greek world, due to the existence of the cult of the Hero (ΗΡΩΣ) from where the iconography was adopted, and in the Thracian tradition of representing the warrior aristocracy, characteristic of the end of the Classical and the beginning of the Hellenistic period.[30] By analysing the iconography and the epigraphy of funerary monuments with the representation of the Rider, we come to the assumption that the Rider motif is nothing more than an iconographical convention of representing either the God or the hero,[31] having a double functionality, one votive and one sepulchral. Having a universal character and being used for a long period of time on the Lower Danube, it comes as no surprise to find the Rider motif in a Christian context, as the cult representations of St. Dimitrios or St. George.[32]

As stated before, the motif was employed mainly by the military personnel stationed on the *limes*, but also by a wide variety of civilian professions in urban centres with a Hellenistic sculptural tradition, like Odessos (plate III.3). Nonetheless, just like the banquet scene, the Rider motif loses its popularity in 4th century AD funerary art. Its symbolic significance during this time has more to do with the iconography of hunting, suggesting an idyllic, careless activity of the deceased in the

[27] Mavrodinov 1926; Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999, 42-46, no. 35, figs. 79-83
[28] Pelekanidis 1963, 8-12.
[29] See Bianchi 1975.
[30] Oppermann 2006, 314.
[31] Dimitrova 2002, 216.
[32] R.F. Hoddirott cited by Dimitrova 2002, 219.

Afterlife and the victory of life over death, by successfully hunting the exotic animal the rider defeats his own mortality. So it comes as no surprise when this symbol is used in Christian ideology, the final victory being won with the salvation of the deceased's soul. Such an example is the Christian tomb from Viminacium (G5517) (plate VI.1),[33] dating from the time of Constantine (due to the discovery of a coin from the time of Constantine inside the trapezoidally shaped tomb),[34] which abandons the characteristic symmetry to a linear, clockwise narrative. The west wall is the focal point of the iconographical program, carrying Christ's Monogram – usually occupied by the deceased's portrait (plate VI.2). The sequence starts with the north wall, bearing an earthly hunting scene, the rider being chased by a lion, which the hunter strikes with his spear (plate VI.4), followed by the paradise scene (east wall) suggested by the pair of peacocks framing a *kantharos* (plate VI.3), and finally, by the heavenly hunting scene (the south wall), with the rider now chasing in front of his dog (plate VI.5). The dynamic flow of the narrative is maintained also by the rider's position in the right half of the two scenes, as if leading the flow of the story into his wake. In this new Christian context, the Rider keeps its symbolic trait as being the vanquisher of death, a significance already known in the collective memory of the time, which finds itself adapted to a new spiritual message.

Another form of decorating the inner walls of the tombs was to imitate the interior domestic décor, another reminder of the very ancient tradition of understanding the sepulchre as a residence of the soul. One way to do this was to use motifs that imitate marble plates (as seen in the already described Banquet tomb from Tomis), pictorial frameworks and geometrical friezes[35] (as seen in Tomb no. 7[36] and Tomb no. 8[37] from Serdica (plate VII.2), the painted tomb form Durostorum[38] and the one from Beška[39]). Moreover, vegetation motifs, flowers, decorative plants, trees, garlands and birds,[40] and especially the grape vine, with its origins in

[33] Korać 2000, 33-68, 157-168 (English translation); Anđelković Grašar, Nicolić *et al.* 2012, 249-254; Anđelković 2012.

[34] The so called 'Viminacium type' tomb, having a trapezoidal cross-section, see Vasić 1907, 66–98.

[35] See also Valeva 2001, 170-171.

[36] Miyatev 1925, 55-67; Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999, 66-67, no. 49.

[37] Miyatev 1925, 68-85; Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999, 67-68, no. 50.

[38] Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999, 22-28, no. 13; Atanasov 2005; 2007.

[39] Popović 2011, 237-238.

[40] See, for example Tombs no. 5 (Miyatev 1925, 36-44; Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999, 64-65, no. 47), no. 6 (Miyatev 1925, 45-54; Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999, 65-66, no. 48), no. 7 and no. 8 from Serdica.

the cult of Dionysos, are meant to depict the image of an idyllic Afterlife, a sign of perpetual victory of live over death. Moreover, they carry the same meaning in the Christian context, as seen in Tomb no. 4 from Serdica (plate VII.1),[41] where the sign of Christ (the *Christogram*) is accompanied by vegetation decorative motifs and the grapevine, as a symbol of the victory of salvation after death and the blood of Christ.

One can also distinguish symbols that have evolved from their older versions into more elaborate stylistic and symbolically meaningful models, such as the pair of peacocks. Derived from the more ancient symbol of the soul of the deceased, the birds in general, the peacock symbol has a particular evolution. Brought in the Italian Peninsula by the Carthaginians, the peacock has been domestically raised since the 2nd century AD, becoming in a very short time the attribute animal of the goddess Junona, and consequently the image of the Empress for the first three centuries AD. Usually evoking the Elysium Fields,[42] together with other birds, the peacock is the image of the deceased's soul, which, by eating either fruit or drinking the water of life from a *kantharos*, earns immortality. The symbol appears on numerous funerary monuments in the first three centuries AD on the Lower and Middle Danube, as is the case of the funerary stela belonging to a veteran of the XIIIth legion, Caius Valerius Silvanus, from Apulum (plate III.4).[43] The peacock motif is accompanied here by two cupids holding garlands on which the bird sits, in the attic part of the stela, a characteristic of the stone workshops of Apulum. The peacock motif, the peacocks usually depicted in pairs, in association with the vegetation decorative elements and other birds, symbolising the eternal paradise, becomes popular in the funerary art of the 3rd and 4th centuries on the Balkans, becoming in time one of the most used decorative motifs of late antiquity,[44] in both pagan and Christian contexts.

We have already seen the motif represented in a Christian context on the east wall of the Christian tomb from Viminacium.[45] On the other hand, in another tomb discovered in the same necropolis, in Pécine, the so called Pagan tomb (G 2624) (plate VIII.1),[46] the immortality of the deceased is suggested by the presence of the pair of peacocks, each on the south and north walls respectively (plate VIII.4 and VIII.5). The central focus of the

[41] Miyatev 1925, 23-35; Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999, 62-64, no. 46.
[42] Anđelković, Rogić *et al.* 2011, 232-234.
[43] IDR III/5, 591.
[44] Anđelković, Rogić *et al.* 2011, 232-234.
[45] See *supra*.
[46] Korać 1993, 107-122; Korać, 2000, 69-124, 168-185 (English translation); Anđelković Grašar, Nicolić *et al.* 2012, 254-255; Anđelković 2012.

tomb, dated with the help of a coin of Constatius II discovered inside and analogies regarding the painting style around the middle of the 4th century AD, is the west wall depicting the portrait of the deceased woman, the so called 'Mona Lisa from Viminacium' (plate VIII.2) (named this way because of the impressive artistic manner of depiction, indicating, perhaps, that a foreign artisan was contracted for her portrait).[47] The depiction of the female in a great detail and exquisite style also suggests her social status - an unmarried young woman belonging to the local elite, facts which are confirmed by archaeological evidence, since during the excavation, inside the tomb were identified the remains of an old man of about 60 years of age and a young woman in her 30s with a degenerative disease of the hip bones, a probable cause for her not being married until her untimely demise.[48] On the opposite wall we have a male servant, in a short tunic with black *clavi* and *orbiculi*, in motion, carrying a platter with food (plate VIII.3). The peacocks on the lateral walls are represented facing the portrait of the young woman, both with a *kantharos* in front of them.

The idea of paradise symbolised by the pair of peacocks is maybe better presented in another tomb from Viminacium, discovered in the Pirivoj necropolis, to the north of the presumed mausoleum of Emperor Hostilianus,[49] the so called 'Tomb with cupids' (G 160) (plate IX.1),[50] dated by a stylistic analysis at the end of the 3rd – beginning of the 4th century AD. The west wall with the portrait of the deceased has not survived; nonetheless, the remaining walls recreate the air of paradise by combining various vegetation and bird motifs. The east wall has two cupids flanking a basket, both holding in their hands a garland (plate IX.2). The lateral walls, in almost perfect symmetry, have each four panels (plate IX.5). The closest ones to the west wall have each a servant, a woman holding a platter on the south wall (plate IX.3) and a man reaching out a cup towards the deceased, on the north wall (plate IX.4), indicating a simplified banquet scene. In the upper part we have on each side a panel with the grapevine motif, under which, two panels depicting birds, in the middle one, two partridges or doves, while the panels closest to the east wall have each a peacock facing the opposite way, towards the deceased.

This is not the only example of this kind, analogies being encountered all over the Balkans, not only at Viminacium but also in the aforementioned tombs from Tomis (plate V.3) and Durostorum, Plovdiv[51]

[47] Korać 1993, 122.
[48] Anđelković 2012, 4-5.
[49] Korać, Golubović *et al.* 2009, 98-99.
[50] Korać 2000, 124-140, 186-188 (English translation); Anđelković Grašar, Nicolić *et al.*, 2013.
[51] Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999, 46-48, no.36, 37.

or Serdica, in both pagan and Christian contexts.[52] We have to bear in mind that there are no rigid frameworks of representing the Eden the atmosphere being suggested by the presence of the peacock pair. Usually we find them two in number or, in rare occasions, just one by itself. Nonetheless, on the south wall of the painted monument from Beška, near Sirmium (plate X.3) we have three peacocks in the upper part of the composition. The left most birds are represented face to face, while the third peacock holds in its beak a bunch of grapes (the funerary symbolism of this decorative pattern of Dionysian origins has been widely employed for centuries in the Roman world), oriented towards the west wall bearing the standing portrait of the deceased couple (plate X.1). The three peacocks may be put in relations to the three Fates, also depicted in standing position on the east wall of the tomb (plate X.2), creating a relative symmetry within the iconographic program of the early 4th century tomb.

Also a new addition to the late antique funerary themes is the so called *procession of servants*. If in earlier times the main focus was on banquet scenes that depicted mainly the participants, the specific furniture and also the food and drink that were brought to the table, in late antiquity the focus shifts to the auxiliary personnel, the servants. Every one of them has a predefined and specific role in the pictorial composition[53], such as the cup bearer, the one responsible for the washing of the guests' hands and the one that brings food to the table (as seen in the already discussed tombs in Tomis, Plovdiv and Viminacium). [54]

Moreover, on the north wall of the Beška tomb we have the representation of a servant procession (plate X.4), oriented towards the three Fates, three men (again the trinity pattern) and a woman in the right most panel. All of them bear gifts meant for the deceased couple.[55] As opposed to the earlier practice, now the servants' clothing is depicted in more detail, further emphasizing the increase in importance of the auxiliary personnel in the late antique funerary ideology. The elaborate hairstyles of the servants compete in beauty and detail with the ones worn by their masters, while more and more examples survived of male servants wearing long hair and bangs after the Gothic fashion. Many servants are seen clothed in short

[52] Tomb no. 1 (Miyatev 1925, 5-14; Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999, 60-61, no. 43) – plate XII.1.b and Tomb no. 9 (Miyatev 1925, 86-106; Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999, 68-72, no. 51) – plate XII.3 in a Christian context and Tomb no. 5 (Miyatev 1925, 36-44; Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999, 64-65, no. 47) in a pagan context.
[53] Dunbabin 2003, 150-156.
[54] For an interesting and relevant study on the iconography on the waiting servants in Roman Dacia see Petruț & Mustață 2010.
[55] Popović 2011, 238.

white tunics with black *clavi* and *orbiculi* (Tomis, Viminacium, Beška), characteristic of the late 3rd – early 4th century AD imagery.[56]

Even so, the most representative funerary depiction of a procession of servants is the painted tomb in Durostorum (plate XI.1), discovered in 1942 in the southern ancient necropolis, and dated from the first half of the 4th century AD.[57] With the exception of the east entrance wall, all the other walls are divided into three main panels, each bearing a character. The main focus of the tomb is the west wall, where its central panel holds the portrait of the deceased couple in a standing position (plate XI.2). The two characters seem to crowd up the panel, the woman being depicted behind the man, with a hand upon his shoulder, as if she was added sometime during the completion of the frescoes and was not planned beforehand.

The other eight panels are each occupied by a servant, four women (plate XI.3) and four men (plate XI.4), comprising a procession of servants bearing clothing and toiletry items meant for the deceased couple. Each of these servants has a specific role, both among the sexes and among the gender group. The four women are placed closest to their masters, two on each side – two on the west wall, while the other two, on the south and north walls respectively. They are charged with carrying the toiletry items, bringing a water ewer, a towel, a mirror and a box with perfumed oils. On the other hand, the men are charged with carrying the clothing belonging to their master, clothing characteristic of an aristocrat, trousers and footwear, the cloak with a fibula attached to it, the tunic and the belt, a clear sign of its high status at the time.

Judging by the detailed elements of male clothing depicted here, the deceased has held while still alive a very important position within the local community, being most probably a military person, a member of the local aristocracy, honoured with a *codicillus* (depicted in his right hand) by the imperial authority (suggested by the clothing colours and their decoration, knowing that the time of Constantine was characterised by confirming the social status in what one was wearing).[58] Moreover, the servants are rendered in great detail, from their clothing to their hairstyles, as if in motion. One's eyes are drawn towards the young male servant, dressed in the Gothic fashion, with a short tunic with black *clavi* and *orbiculi*, long hair and bangs cut just above the eyes, a style characteristic of the mentioned times. The procession of servants from Durostorum, meant to highlight the tomb owner's high social status, has an interesting

[56] Dunbabin 2003, 150-156.
[57] Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999, 22-28, no. 13; Atanasov 2005; 2007.
[58] Atanasov 2007, 453-457.

analogy in the mosaic in the entrance hall of the private baths of the Roman villa del Casale from Piazza Armerina, in Sicilly. Here the servants which are very similar with the ones in modern day Silistra, have elaborate costumes, hairstyles, rendering an image of their master's wealth.

Nonetheless, a new religious ideology would not have its foundations only in the borrowed symbols, but it would employ its own original ones, as for example the *Chirstogram*, the monogram of Christ, described by both writers Eusebius of Caesareea[59] and Lactantius[60], which appeared on the sky before the confrontation between Constantine and Maxentius at Pons Milvius (325 AD). As a result, the sign was copied either on the shields or main flags (*labarum*) of Constantine's army, saying that under this sign victory will be theirs (ἐν τούτῳ νίκα - *In hoc signo vinces*). Regardless of the differences between the two historical accounts, the monogram of Christ was from this point on used by Constantine and later emperors to herald the coming of a new religion meant to unify the Empire. Thus, the symbol is recorded in funerary practice mainly in the 4th century AD as many examples attest, as we have seen in Serdica (plate VII.1) and Viminacium (plate VI.2). The painted tomb from the military camp in Ossenovo,[61] near Varna has a special importance, as it combines both Christian and Mithraic symbolism. But starting from the 5th century AD, the cross becomes a widely spread form of decorating tombs on the Balkans, as many examples from Stara Zagora (plate XII.5),[62] Chissar,[63] Serdica (plates XII.1.a, XII.1.b, XII.2, XII.3, XII.4)[64] and Nicopolis ad Nestum[65] show.

The painted tomb was one of the most evident forms of confirming the social status of an individual or a family in the community they were part of, their small numbers in comparison to the large majority of undecorated or poor graves, attested in late antique necropolises, reflected only the very small incidences when somebody could afford this luxury. Funerary scenes are meant to depict the image of the deceased he wished to be remembered by, representing his life testament, preferring to remain in the memory of the surviving members of his community as a perpetual youth, enjoying the pleasures of a careless afterlife. Thus the tomb becomes

[59] Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 1.28.
[60] Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 44.
[61] Pillinger, Minčev *et al.* 1989; Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999, 13-16, no. 4.
[62] Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999, 38-39, no. 28.
[63] Pillinger, Popova a *et al.* 1999, 48-50, no. 38.
[64] Tomb no. 1, Tomb no. 2 (Miyatev 1925, 15-19; Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999, 61-62, no. 44), Tomb no. 9, Tomb no. 1/1989 (Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999, 73-74, no. 57), Tomb of Honorius (Tomb no. 2/1989 - Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999, 74-75, no. 58), just to name a few.
[65] Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999, 92, no. 72.

a stone eulogy, the painted wall being the means of transmitting the deceased's message after death, a repetitive action with every funeral that meant opening the family tomb. That meant that everybody knew the unspoken language of the funerary symbols depicted, because not all inhabitants of the Roman world were also literate, thus images were more powerful than words. And as our examples presented here clearly show, there is a continuity of symbolic meaning used by the new religious ideology, because the language did not change, only the message did.

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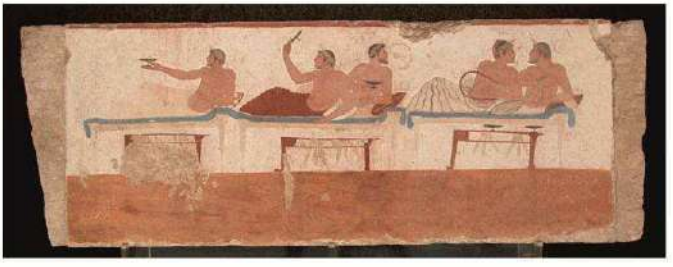
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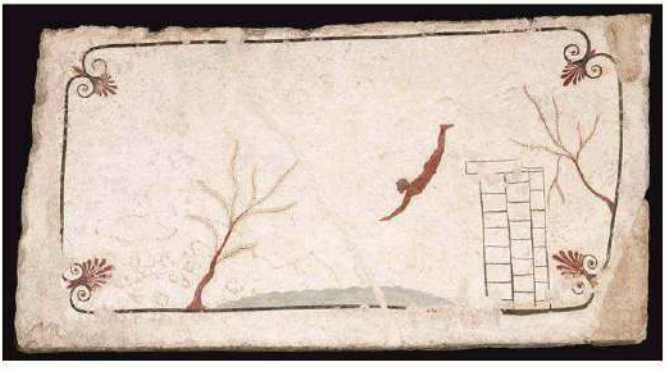
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1.



2.a.



2.b.

Plate I:

1. 'Tomb of the leopards', Tarquinia, 5th century BC (after Kleiner 2010)
2. a. 'Tomb of the Diver' – north wall – Paestum, 5th century BC (after Kleiner 2010)

b. 'Tomb of the Diver' – cover slab (after Kleiner 2010)







Plate II:

1. Thracian tomb from Kazanluk, 4th century BC, Wikipedia Commons (author Kmrakmra)
2. Tomb 78 from Isola Sacra necropolis, Ostia, the beginning of 2nd century AD (after Kleiner 2010)
3. Roman tombs from the catacombs of St. Sebastian, Via Appia, Rome, middle 2nd century AD (after Kleiner 2010)

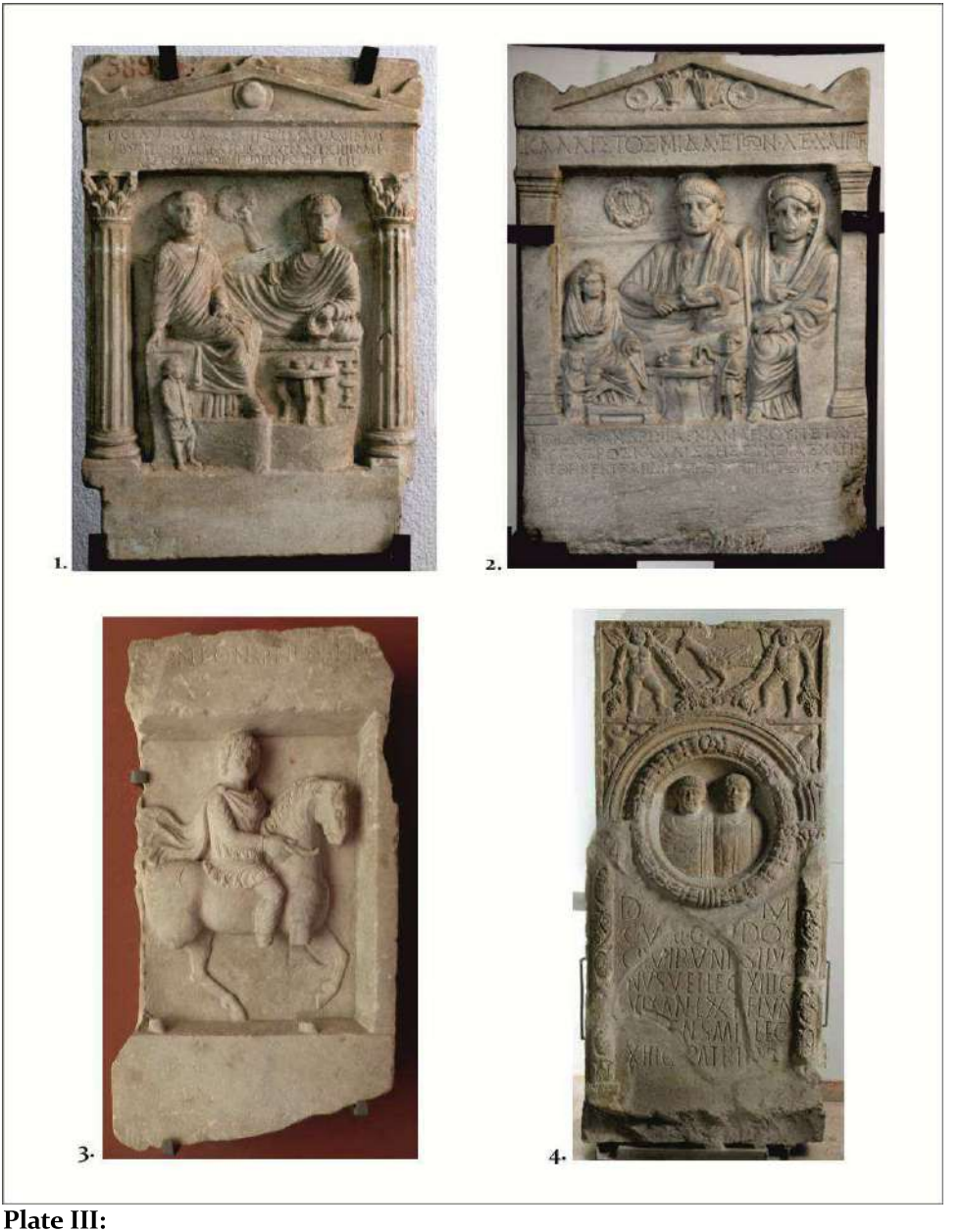


Plate III:

1. Funerary stela of Ti. Cl. Saturninus from Tomis, 1st century AD, IScM II, 172 (photo after lupa 21722)
2. Greek funerary stela from Tomis, 2nd century AD, IScM 187 (photo after lupa 21964)
3. Funerary monument from Odessos, middle 2nd century AD, Conrad 2004, 144, no. 67, Taf. 49,3 (personal photo)
4. Funerary stela of C. Val. Silvanus from Apulum, 2nd-3rd centuries AD, IDR III/5, 591 (photo after lupa 11639)



1.



2.

Plate IV:

1. Banquet tomb from Tomis, middle 4th century AD (photo courtesy of Răzvan Petcu)
2. Detail of the banquet scene on the north wall of the tomb (photo courtesy of Răzvan Petcu)







Plate V:

1. Servant, right side of the north wall of the Banquet tomb from Tomis (photo courtesy of Răzvan Petcu)
2. Reveller, left side of the north wall (photo courtesy of Răzvan Petcu)
3. Pair of peacocks, east wall (photo courtesy of Răzvan Petcu)

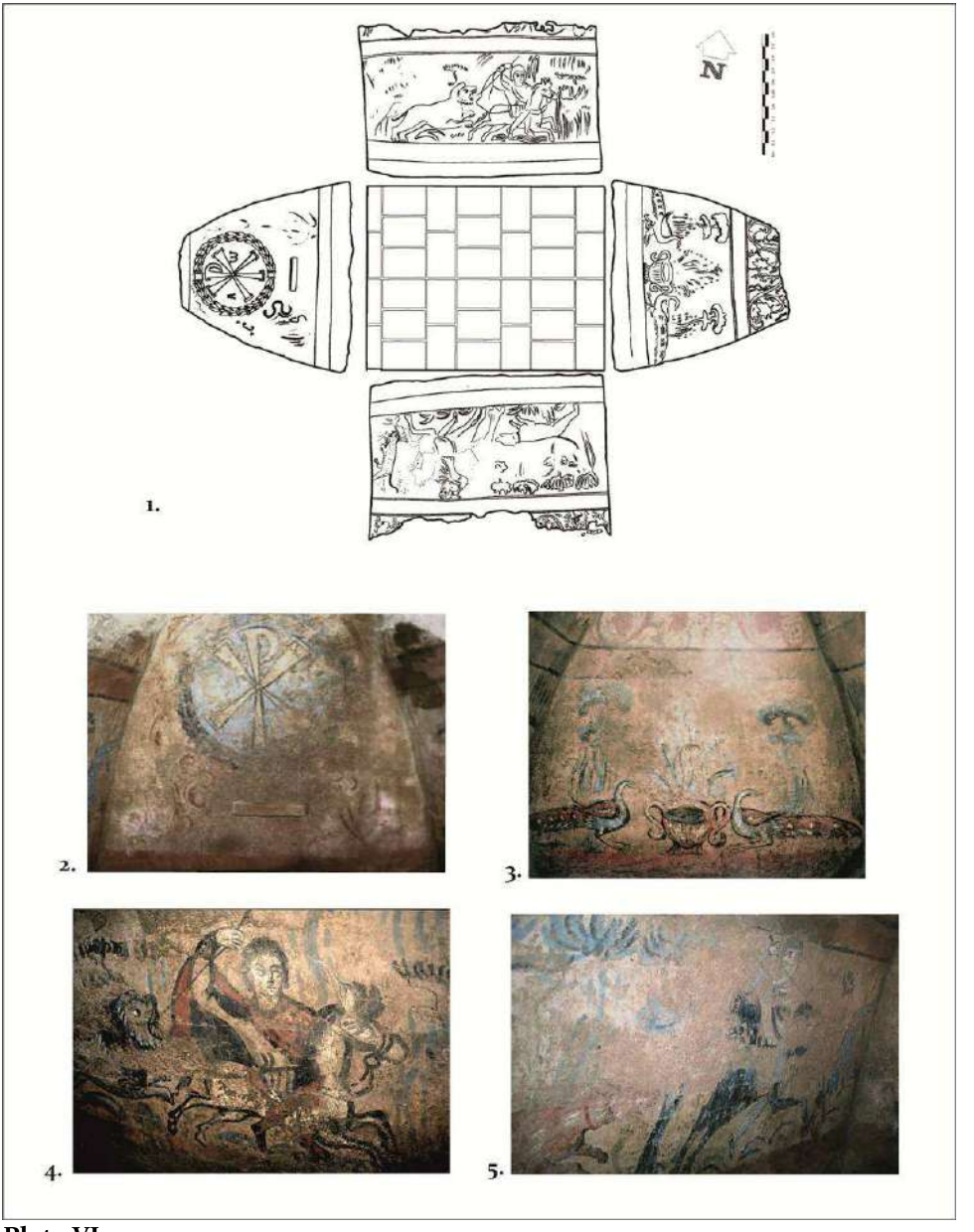


Plate VI:

1. Plan of the Christian tomb from Viminacium, time of Constantine (after Anđelković Grašar, Nicolić *et al.* 2012)
2. West wall of the Christian tomb (after Korać 2000)
3. East wall of the Christian tomb (after Korać 2000)
4. North wall of the Christian tomb (after Korać 2000)
5. South wall of the Christian tomb (after Korać 2000)

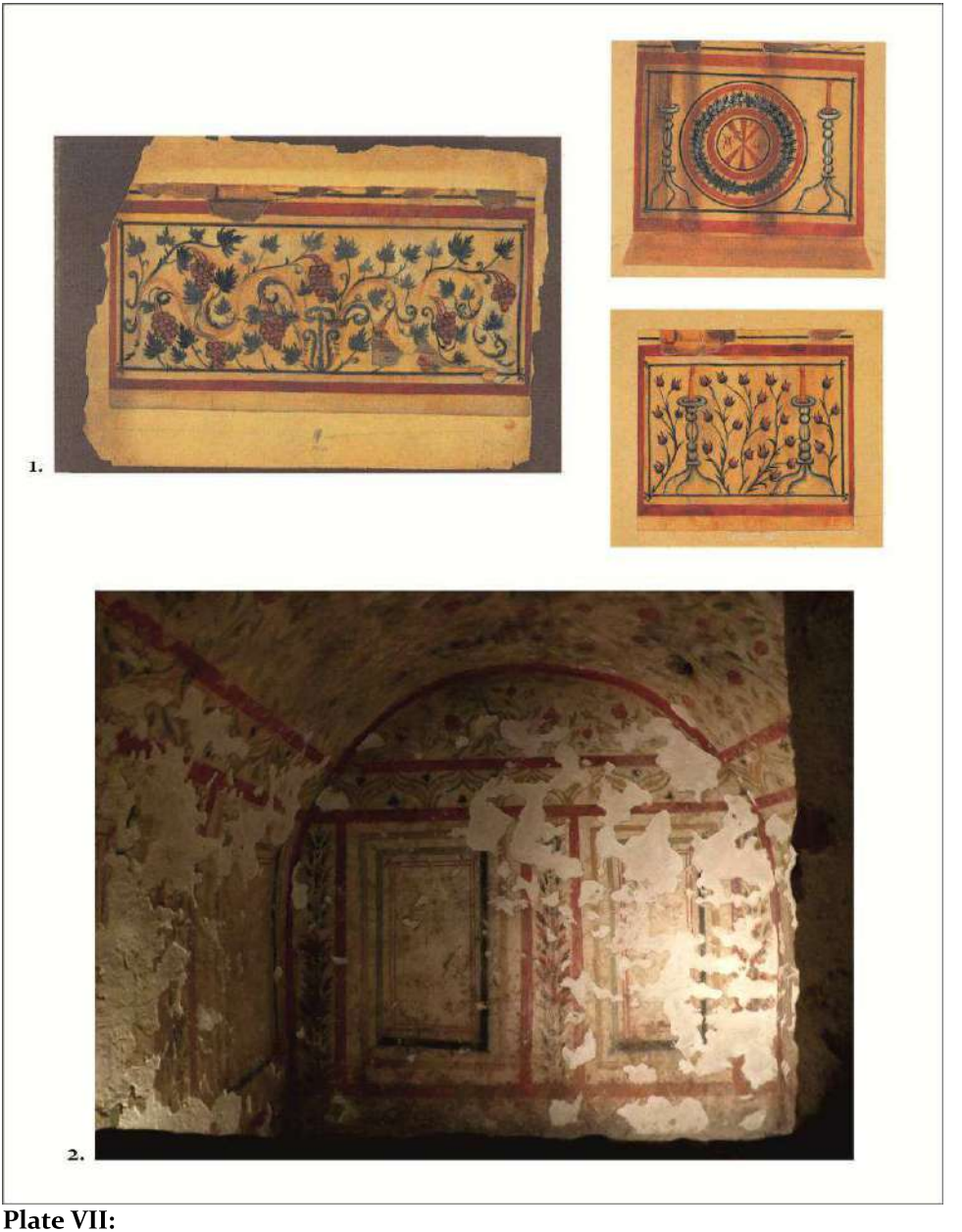


Plate VII:
1. Tomb no. 4 from Serdica (after Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999)
2. Tomb no. 8 from Serdica (personal photo)

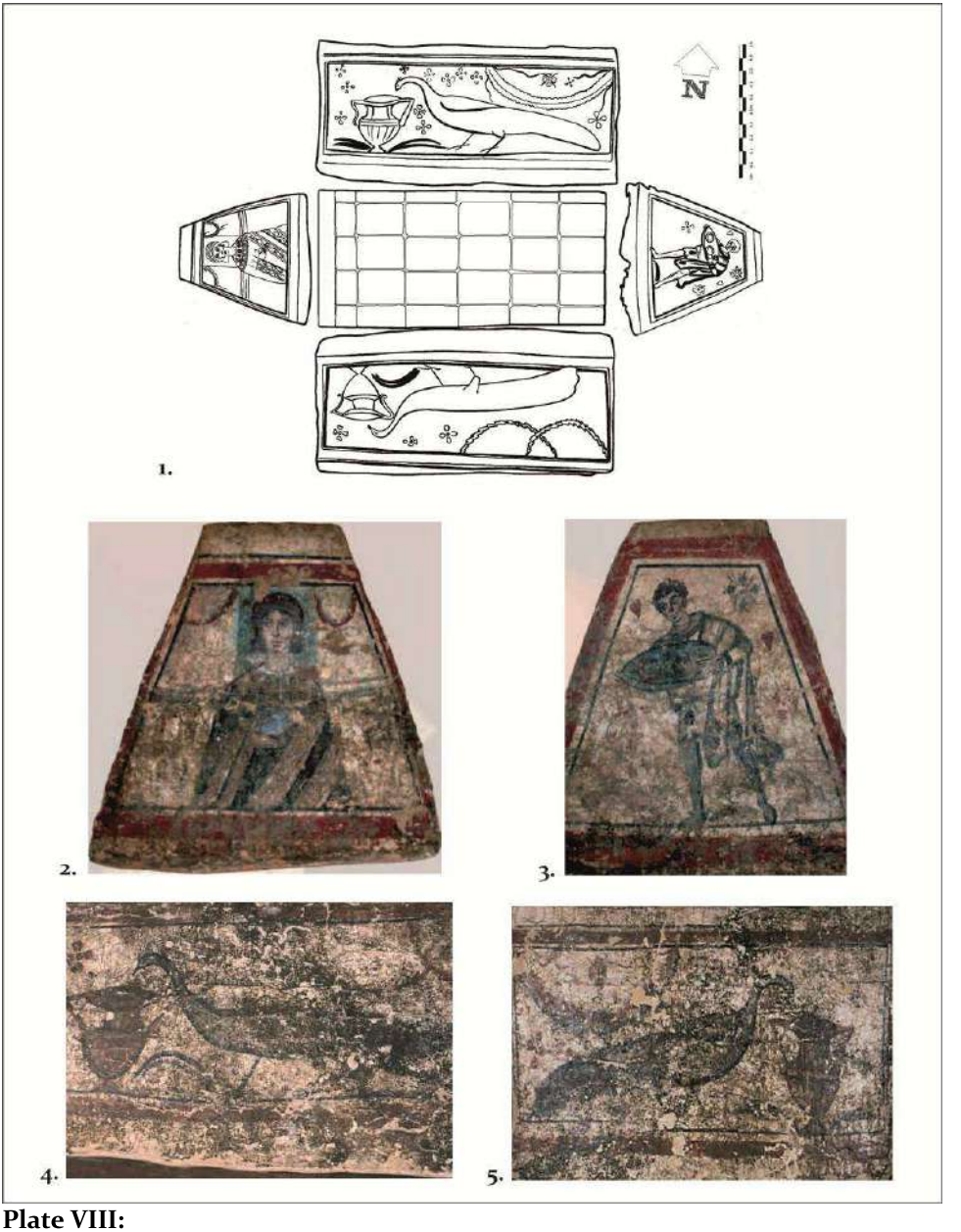


Plate VIII:

1. Plan of the Pagan tomb from Viminacium, mid-4th century AD (after Anđelković Grašar, Nicolić *et al.* 2012)
2. West wall of the Pagan tomb (after Korać 2000)
3. East wall of the Pagan tomb (after Korać 2000)
4. South wall of the Pagan tomb (after Korać 2000)
5. North wall of the Pagan tomb (after Korać 2000)

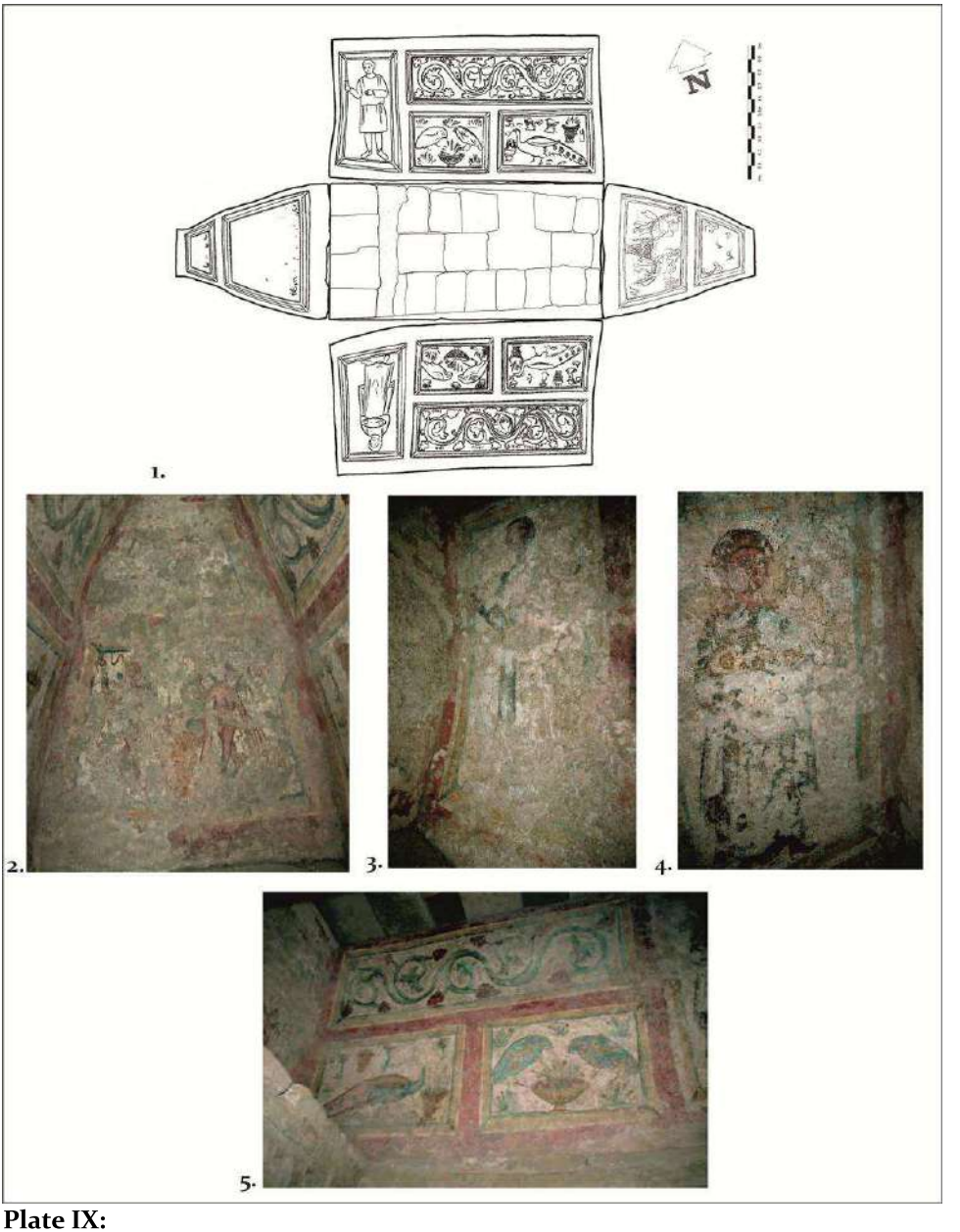


Plate IX:

1. Plan of the Tomb with cupids from Viminacium, 3rd/4th century AD (after Anđelković Grašar, Nicolić *et al.* 2012)
2. East wall (after Korać 2000)
3. Female servant on the south wall of the tomb (after Korać 2000)
4. Man with raised cup on the north wall of the tomb (after Korać 2000)
5. South wall of the Tomb with cupids (after Korać 2000)

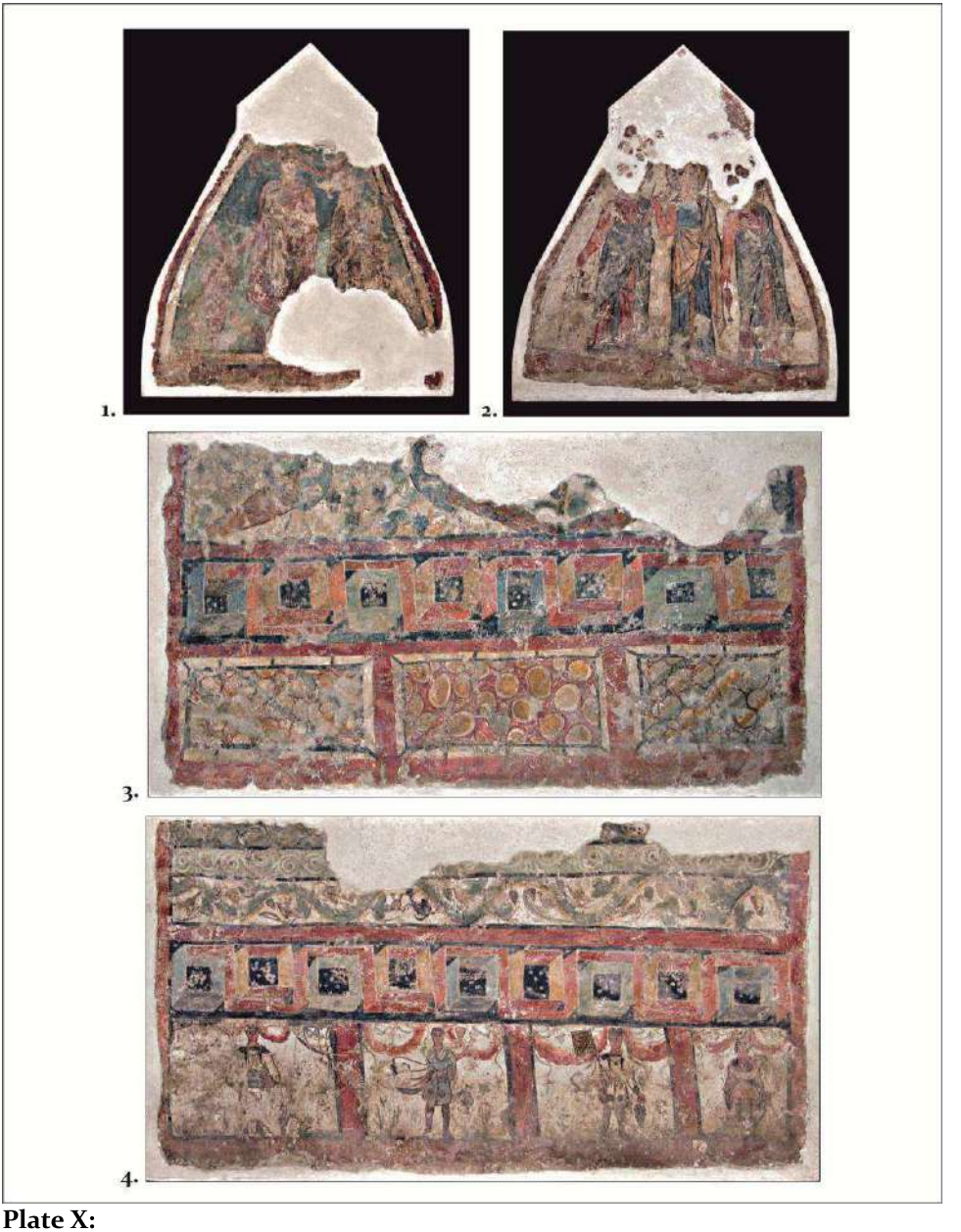


Plate X:

1. West wall of the painted tomb from Beška, early 4th century AD (after Popović 2011)
2. East wall of the tomb from Beška (after Popović 2011)
3. South wall of the tomb from Beška (after Popović 201)
4. North wall of the tomb from Beška (after Popović 2011)

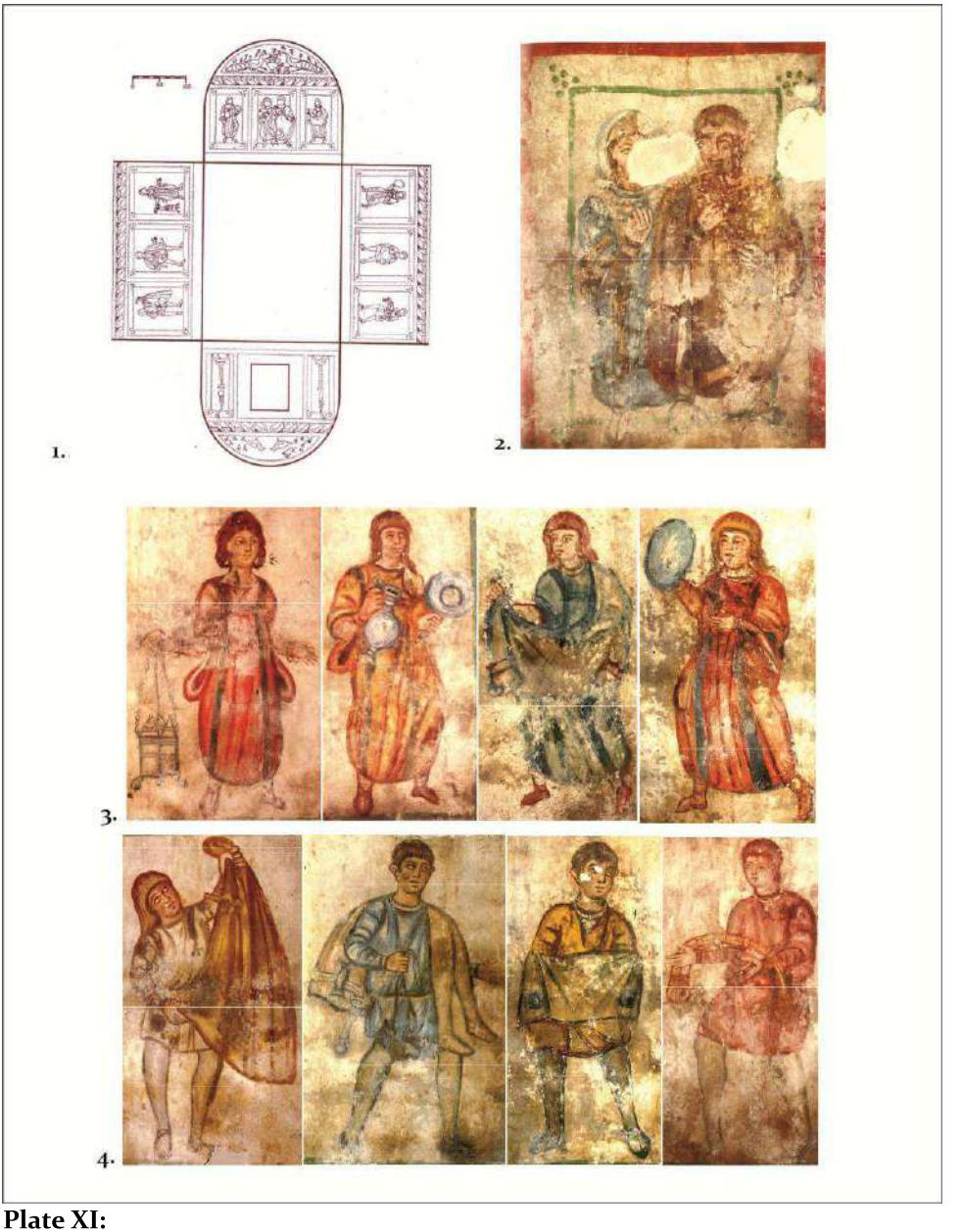


Plate XI:

1. Plan of the painted tomb from Durostorum, first half of the 4th century AD (after Atanasov 2005)
2. Deceased couple on the west wall of the tomb (after Atanasov 2005)
3. Women servants with toiletries (after Atanasov 2005)
4. Male servants with the master's clothes (after Atanasov 2005)

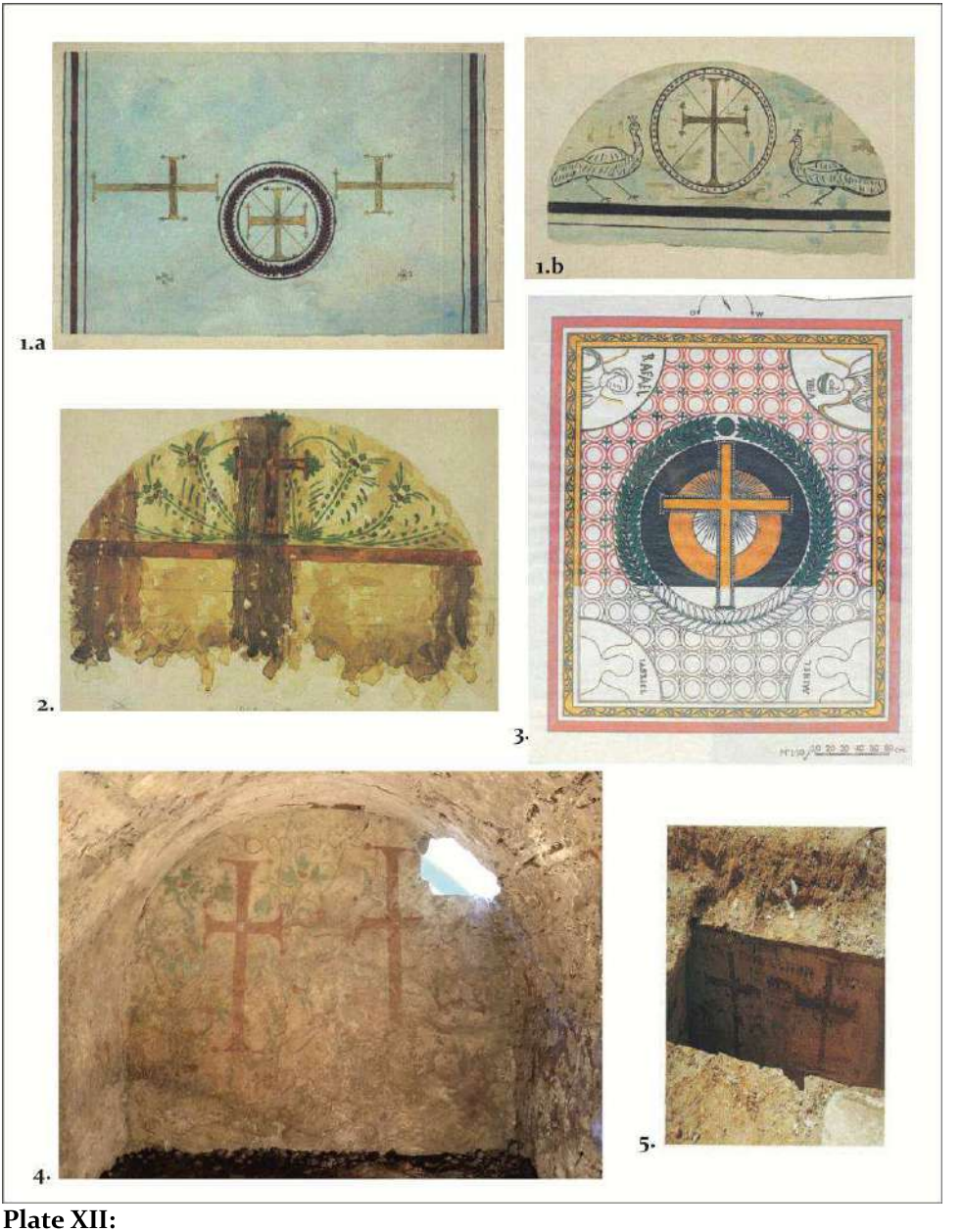


Plate XII:

1. a. Roof of Tomb no. 1, Serdica (after Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 19990
b. The pair of peacocks and the cross symbol, Tomb no. 1, Serdica (after Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999)
2. Tomb no. 2, Serdica (after Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999)
3. Tomb no. 9, Serdica (after Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999)
4. Tomb of Honorius, Serdica (personal photo)
5. Painted tomb from Stara Zagora with cross symbol (after Pillinger, Popova *et al.* 1999)

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Fons Vitae in Late Antique monuments in Bulgaria

Vania Popova

Abstract: The article deals with the genesis and the development of the symbol of the Fountain of Life (fons vitae). It is considered to be convergent, with a core at least in the Early Roman period in the image of a spring, well, vessel or fountain with pure water, more often in blue, blue-greenish or white. It represents some pagan deities or is protected by them. The meaning is of fertility, abundance, happy life on the Earth and in the happy Elysian fields.

After 313 officially a Jewish prototype is accepted: rivers flowing from one central well/river and following very often the image of the watering deer in psalm 42. This scene is used in basilicas, baptisteria and Episcopal residences. But additionally, through copying and combining separate elements from the ancient repertorium, new iconographies appeared with flanking animals and birds, with a pinecone as the end of the strobilion and plants and fruits growing from the vessel. The vessel with or without them is the main representation of the *fons vitae* in Bulgaria. In the Early Christian period it is used with the meaning of initiation, ablution, baptism, Death and Salvation in the baptisteria; with the meaning of Paradise, Christ and the pure Faith in the basilicas; of the Gathering of Waters in Episcopal residences; of the structure of the Christian cosmos, fertility and abundance in the houses of the Early Christians; and of the Salvation and the happy life in the Paradise in the tombs. The metaphors and symbols are placed on the most important place in the rooms and buildings and in the phase of an-iconical art the Fountain of Life was the only figural motif connected with liturgy. At the end of the 5th century this symbol losts its importance and was transferred to a usual element of the decoration.

The iconography and style of fins vitae on the Late Antique mosaics and tombs from Bulgaria once more confirms the existence of several artistic circles in the provinces of Thracia, Dacia Mediterranea and Macedonia, influenced by the Asia Minor, Syrian, Greek workshops and from the West Balkan ones, which were under the influence of Rome and North Italy.

Key words: Fountain of Life, symbolic meaning, genesis and development, Late Antique mosaics and wall paintings

Резюме: Статията е посветена на генезиса и развитието на символа „Изворът на Живота" (fons vitae). Ядрото на този конвергентен мотив може да се открие най-малкото в ранния римски период в образа на извор, кладенец, фонтан или съд, пълен с чиста течаща вода, най-често със син, син озелен или бял цвят. Изворът/съдът въплъщава или някое от римските божества, или се намира под неговата протекция. Символичното значение на

мотива е на плодородие, изобилие и щастлив живот на земята и вечен в Елисейските поля.

След 313 г. вече официално се възприема иконографията, вдъхновена от псалм 42, на елена, утоляващ жаждата си от течащ поток/река. Тази сцена се използва в базилики, баптистерии и епископски резиденции. Допълнително се появяват нови иконографии, създадени чрез копиране и комбиниране на отделни елементи от античния репертоар. Това са съдове, фланкирани от животни и птици и с тръба, завършваща с пиний-фонтан; в други случаи от съда прораства клонка с листа и плодове. Подобни съдове са най-често срещаните в късноантичните паметници от България и имат хилядолетна традиция в културата и всекидневната употреба. В раннохристиянския период тяхното значение е на инициация, ритуално омовение, Кръщение, Смърт, Възкресение и Спасение в баптистериите; на чистата православна вяра, Христос, Рая и пр. в базиликите; на Събирането на Водите (на двете основополагащи църкви и всички вярващи в една) и на победата над арианството в епископските резиденции; на представата за християнския космос, плодородието и благополучието в домовете на християните; и накрая в гробниците на Спасението и щастливия живот на праведниците в Рая. Символните изображения са поставяни в най-важните места на културните сгради и домовете. Във фазата на не-фигурално изкуство Фонтанът на живота е единственият изобразителен мотив, свързан с литургията. От края на V в. този символ загубва значението си и се превръща в обикновен елемент на декорацията.

Иконографията и стилът на fons vitae върху късноантичните мозайки и гробнични стенописи от България свидетелства допълнително за съществуването на няколко художествени кръга в провинция Тракия, Средиземноморска Дакия и Македония, които са под влиянието на малоазийските, сирийските и гръцките работилници и на западнобалканските, които са повлияни от Рим и Северна Италия.

There exist about 30 representations of the Fountain of Life (fons vitae) in the Late Antique mosaics and wall paintings in Bulgaria.[1] The goal of our

[1] Some of them are representative single images. Others, big enough in size, are grouped in one and the same panel or distributed in several following each other. Numerous small scattered representations only partly remind of the studied iconography and are sinking in the plenty of other images and ornaments. Generally Augusta Traiana or Beroe (now Stara Zagora) and Philippopolis (now Plovdiv) in Thracia supply us with the biggest number of representations of *fons vitae*. Naturally this circumstance (but not only) is reflecting on the appearing in them of numerous representation of the Fountain of Life. However it can be supposed as well that in the other Late Antique cities in Thracia, Macedonia and Dacia Mediterranea (on the territory of contemporary Bulgaria) the picture is not different. Such images are also found in Odessos/Odessus (now Varna), Kabile (now the village of Kabile), Serdica (now Sofia), in the environs of Nicopolis ad Nestum (today the village of Garmen) and in Parthicopolis (now Sandanski). In Pautalia (now Kyustendil) three different iconographies of the Fountain are laid in the mosaic of basilica No 7 (the basilica of Bitus). But the state of preservation of several other mosaics with vases in the city does not allow their sure determination as the Fountain of Life for sure. Two important paintings with the same symbol decorate the short walls of two tombs in Durostorum and Philippopolis.

study is to reveal the extremely wide use of the Fountain of Life not only in the Early Christian art in the period of the 3rd-6th century, but also in the pagan art. The scene is applied in various types of buildings in the floor mosaics and tomb wall paintings. The genesis and the variety of iconographies will be studied too and their adequate semantics according to the function of the building and the concrete room. The monuments in Bulgaria from the Late Antiquity and their comparison with the same scenes on the Balkans and elsewhere open a new opportunity to trace the genesis, the complex syncretism and the development of *fons vitae* in the Roman and Late Antique figural art.

In our short article it is not possible to deal with comprehensive argumentation, that's why the results of the research are represented by some basic theses and proofs. The main attention will be focused on the represented vessels and less on the plants and the fruits, growing out of them and the flanking animals and birds. We are aware that such an important and comprehensive topic is like an enormous mountain with deep golden mines, which should be studied further in their numerous spurs, including the ancient monuments from the whole ancient world.

Usually the iconography of the scene is related to Psalm 42 of the Old Testament, used first in the secret and then in the official Early Christianity of the 1st – 7th century (plate I).[2] However it should be added, that except the mentioned psalm, the idea of the fountain/river/well of God or of God himself as a Source of Life, giving pure flowing water to the thirsty believers for their spiritual Salvation and Redemption, is mentioned many times in the Scriptures (Isa. 12:3; 44:3; 55:1; John 4:10-14; 7:37-38; Ex. 17:6; Jer.2:13; Eze.47:1, 8-9; Joel 3:18; Mathew 5:6; Zec.14:8; Rev.7:14; 22:17; Ps. 36:6). It should be stressed too that the couple wine and water is present in the Christian scriptures and teaching in the New Testament all the time. The water in baptism is symbolizing among the many meanings the blood and death of Christ and the Eauharist with wine. God has made the miracle at Cana with the water converted to wine and in another case the reversal one, the wine into water. When Christ was pierced on the Cross water and blood dripped out from his wounds. The semantic chain including Christ--wine–blood–Death-Last sacrificial victim–Resurrection-Salvation is constantly present in a number of representations, equally important to that of Christ-water–ablution–initiation-Baptism. So the water and the wine as a pair of semantic oppositions are going all the time together in the Early Christian dogmatic notions, ritual practice and art.

[2] Underwood 1950; Velmans 1969; Buzov 1995; Michaelidis 1998; Kolarik 2016 a; 2016b with lit.

Frequently a spring/river/rivers/well or a vessel with water is depicted and a watering stag/deer or doe (or both of them). Later in literature the existence of other iconographies was revealed, in which the stag is replaced by pairs of lambs, goats, birds, lions, etc. or by their combination with other animals and birds with the Euharist chalice or vessels on the cancel screen in front of the Paradise.[3] From the middle of the 5th century onward the Fountain of Life probably has been connected with the cult of Mary The Life-Giving Source (Theotekos Pege) in the art first of Constantinople and after that in the Byzantine and the post-Byzantine world.[4] The influence of the iconography of *fons vitae* is studied also in the miniatures from the Medieval period.[5]

First of all it is necessary to trace the earlier genesis of the iconography of *fons vitae*, apart from the Old Testament and particularly in the Roman pagan art.

The sacred blue water

The initial appearance of the iconography should be looked for earlier, at least in the Roman period, which on its turn has inherited the notions of the Greek and Hellenistic period. The core of the Fountain of Life is the motif of the pure, flowing or streaming cold water, giving Life to all the flora and fauna, including the Mankind, in the presence of a deity or the deity itself is the Fountain. The water in the scene of *fons vitae* is coming out either from natural sources, springs and rivers or from artificially made basins and fountains, often replaced by vessels. In the monuments in Bulgaria till now these are only vessels.

The water inside the source or the vessel is shown sometimes in blue, but more often with several nuances of the same colour either blue-greenish or white, and with rendering the waves in a different manner (curly or parallel, horizontal, diagonal lines, etc. (plate II, figs. 1- 6; plate V, figs. 1, 3 and 4; plate IX, fig. 1). This iconography reflects the idea of the flowing, cool and pure sacred living water. The cases of unclear content are rare and usually it is shown definitely – water or wine. In the residence under the modern Post office in Stara Zagora[6] the difference is underlined too all the time. In the aula, the reception hall, three of the cantharoses are full of blue water and the fourth one with wine (plate VIII, fig. 1). In the back rooms on north and around the atrium we can observe again a vessel with water and another one with several flowers with a cross-like (target)

[3] Velmans 1969, 24-63.
[4] Velmans 1968.
[5] Underwood 1950.
[6] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, N 31, Abb, 235.

motif, most probably symbolizing the wine.[7] The same differentiation between the vessel with water and the one with wine is shown too in the mosaic of basilica No 1b in Kabile through the red or white colour inside it.[8]

Later in time at the end of the 5th and the 6th century, the 'waves' of the water in the Late Antique mosaics have disappeared, leaving only the plain blue colour or have become too schematic like in the martyrium in Philippopolis,[9] demonstrating with the other iconographic novelties the change of its symbolic importance. We can suppose that when the context is not clear, the symbolic meaning of the *fons vitae* is weakened, changed or disappeared. For instance many colours in the rainbow style fill the exterior and the interior of the vessels, among them only one thin line in white, in the third residence's period with the image of Eirene in Plovdiv (plate II, figs. 4-6; plate V, fig. 2).[10] The relation to the Fountain of Life is demonstrated very obviously only in few representations of the same period by a pinecone in the centre with small falling down streams (plate II, fig. 5). According to one supposal, the vessels probably embody rather the clay or metal containers for the souls of the faithful Christians in the spirit of the Old and the New Testament.[11] Another even more suitable interpretation is the so-called 'Gathering of the Waters in the Paradise', symbol of the gathering of the two basic Churches and of all people in one Church.[12] It should be added also that the vessels in Plovdiv are placed in the corridors leading to the new the reception hall with aula of the bishop's residence. Most likely the great number of such images symbolized the multiple newly baptized people after the defeat of Arianism at the Council of 381 in Constantinople, the victory of the Orthodox Church and the Orthodox believers entering the residence to be accepted by the bishop.[13]

Few representations from the mosaics in Bulgaria nowadays have many different colours, for instance creamy, or the water is not shown. Such is the cantharos (plate VIII, fig. 4) from the room with Eirene, with two dolphins instead of the handles, continuing a very old ancient

[7] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, Taff. 99, Abb. 270.
[8] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, Taff. 65, Abb. 186, 197.
[9] Topalilov 2016a, 227-234.
[10] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, No 40, 186-192.
[11] Limao 2011.
[12] Maguire 1987, 41-55.
[13] It was especially important for this context to be demonstrated all the time in Philippopolis, the capital of the Arians in Thrace in the previous several decades after the council in Serdica in 343, when the Orthodox bishops held their council in the same city, while the Arianic left it and held their own Council in Philippopolis.

iconographic tradition and demonstrating a very decorative treatment, typical for the Late Antiquity. In this case the vase in our opinion does not represent the Fountain of Life, because the water is not shown at all and the additional attributes, typical for *fons vitae*, do not appear here. The criteria of the blue or green, more rarely white colour of the water and the presence of definite additional elements and representations, which can be interpreted in the context of *fons vitae* (the pinecone, the flanking animals and birds, etc.), are to be used in the interpretation.

Usually streams, one or several, are shown falling down in different ways from the spout of the strobilion, decorated with the images of real animals or mythological creatures, birds or fishes, dolphins and pinecocks. This is generally a very long ancient tradition of the construction and the decoration of the fountains, which continued up to the end of Antiquity, for instance in the fountain in the atrium of the Episcopal basilica in Parthicopolis, Stobi, Heraclea Lyncestis, etc. (plate III. figs. 1-3).[14] Many real fountains are found in Bulgaria, especially in Philippopolis and Augusta Traiana. They were not actual Fountains of Life, but real fountains for refreshing in the interior or in the atriums of the houses and residences. The curious fact is that their actual construction and decoration (*realia*) are reflected in a lot of representations of *fons vitae*. For instance in the room with Eirene[15] a real fountain with a dolphin atop may be supposed on the ground of the reconstructed one in Aquincum (plate III, figs. 5 and 6). The dolphins are sculpted in the fountain in Heracleia Lyncestic (plate III, fig. 3) and depicted in many mosaic fountain representations. Another example of the construction and decoration of a real fountain is illustrated in the mosaic panel with the empress Theodora in San Vitale with a strobilion finishing with an eagle (plate III, fig. 7).

The 'sacro fonte' and the pagan deities

In the Greek, Hellenistic and Roman culture the springs/the rivers/the *fons* always have a cult connotation. A deity is living there or they are protected by gods or semi-gods. The sentence of the author from the 4th century Servius Marius Honoratius (Serv. ad Aen. 7.84) illustrates this belief, saying that 'There is no spring which is not sacred' (Nullusenim fons non sacer). The Latin comment relates to the expression 'sacro fonte' of the Aeneid of Vergilius (Aen, 7.83-84), which on its turn demonstrates the early roots of the belief. In paganism numerous river gods and nymphs dwell the rivers and the springs in the plains, forests and caves as their

[14] Mihajlovski & Rospendowski 2011, 405-420.
[15] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, Taff. 131, Abb. 342.

protectors and personifications and are always shown with a vessel in their hands or next to them, pouring out water (plate IV, fig. 1).

Another example of identification of the fountain with a deity, his/her sacred protection over the spring or the fountain in the religious rituals is the Roman god Fons/Fontus giving his name to the fountains. He is celebrated on the 13th of October in Fontinalia and is the son of Janus and of the goddess of water Juturna, who was also worshipped in Italy.[16] The temple of Isis in Campo Martius in Rome, next to the Pantheon, had a fountain in the form of a pinecone, built according to the inscription by Publius Cincius Slavius in the 1st century AD.[17] The water was falling down from the holes in the scales of the pinecone.[18] The pinecone symbolizes the immortality and Afterlife in paganism and Christianity. The pinecone is dominating in the Late Antique mosaics in Bulgaria with *fons vitae*, especially in Philippopolis and Augusta Traiana.

The latest pagan example of a real fountain in Bulgaria from Late Antiquity from Augusta Traiana/Beroe shows four mosaic craters (only two of them preserved) around the real existing octogon piscine and a panel next to it with two maenads and a satyr. These mosaics are related to the time of Julian the Apostate (plate II, fig. 3).[19] Most probably they are part of the Dionysos thiasos with the still not unearthed image of the deity.

All these examples show that the pagan beliefs contain the core of the Fountain of Life, namely the pure flowing water associated with or under the protection of a deity, and that they have been gradually transformed in the Early Christian period because of their typological similarity. The Fountain of Life was a convergent notion and figural motif during the Roman, Late Roman and Early Byzantine period.

The sacred and the profane vessels

Actually the represented vessels in the Fountain of Life from Thracia, Dacia Mediterranea and Macedonia have a very long usage both in

[16] LIMC V.

[17] This *fons* has been moved first to the hall of St. Peter's basilica and covered with baldachin. Finally in the 17th century it was placed in the Pinecone court (Cortile della Pigna) in the Vatican City.

[18] Strzygowski 1903, 185–206. The symbolism of the pinecone is similar in many religions and was obviously absorbed by the Christians like many other representations of the Greco-Roman and Oriental religions and arts. In Christianity the idea of the eternal life is enriched by the idea of the pinecone being the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden. That's why the Pope's staff is also carved as a pinecone.

[19] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, No 34, 152-159.

the cult practice and in everyday life in the Greek, Hellenistic and Roman cultures. Most often these are perrihanteria and luteria,[20] craters and cups/chalices. Judging by the representations from Bulgarian and other monuments, the cantharos, intended initially for drinking wine, received a new content, namely water, denoted by the blue water. In the cult sphere, at the entrance of temples and shrines and in front of the altars of the gods-protectors in the palaestra, a ritual ablution by washing or cropping with water should be made from such vessels. In everyday life the Roman houses, villas and gardens had one or several fountains and vessels for refreshing and bathing (plate IV, fig. 1). The forms in the cult sphere and in everyday life may be the same and their role depends on the function of the buildings and of the concrete room.

The luterion. This form has been used both for cult rituals, including initiation and baptism, and in everyday life. The marble large-size basin from the Temple of Cybele in Dionysopolis is considered to be luterion.[21] However it reminds somehow a cantharos because of the vertical handles clinging closely to the walls instead of being with the S-like form. The luterion was still very popular in the Roman world in the 4th century, but later it remained in usage predominantly in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Eastern part of the Balkans.[22]

The Watering Doves of Sosos from Pergamon (plate IV, figs. 2 and 3). This masterpiece has strongly influenced the development of the iconography of *fons vitae*, together with a second similar scene with parrots and a cat.[23] Both initially genre scenes have become extremely popular because of their naturalism, vividness and illusionism in depicting the vessel, the birds and the animals (their appearance, poses, feathers) and even their reflections in the water. In the original of Sosos the vessel is namely luterion, but in Late Antiquity it could vary. This was the prototype not only for numerous mosaics and wall paintings, but even for the sculptural decoration of fountains. The ancient engineers have given a new

[20] Huelsen 1904; Patristic lexicon, 812; Durand & Lissarrague 1980, 89-100; Pimpl 1997; Krauskopf 2005, 178-182; Cevizoğlu 2008, 283-308; Greek-English lexicon, 1061.
[21] Lazarenko *et al*. 2013, 31, figs. 1.21, 26, 28.
[22] In some cases the luterion is placed directly on the earth, in others on a tripod or on a high support with different forms, often columns. These variants in representative formulas have been inherited as numerous *realia* in the Late Antique art. Further in the Late Antiquity and the Byzantine period the scenes of Nativity of Alexander the Great and of Christ also expose that the luterion keeps the tradition of a sacred vessel for sacred rituals or personages.
[23] For the most complete study and literature - see in Hornik 2015.

life to the scene by installing sculptures of funny birds, which could whistle, sing and move under the hydraulic pressure (plate IV, fig. 4). Gradually, the original of Sosos is enriched in the mosaics and wall paintings by other animals and additional birds, now not only watering, but also flying, landing, tearing and pecking the leaves and the fruits. The new moments in the iconography are borrowed from the flora and fauna in the pattern books, also from the garland and floral style in the wall paintings and mosaics from the 3rd till the middle of the 4th century.

Generally the luterion is not widely spread on the mosaics in Bulgaria. The result of contamination of the original with the later motifs can be followed in the apse mosaic of the martyrium under St. Sofia from the Valenitian period (plate IV, fig. 5).[24] Following the repertoire of the sepulchral and martyrial art, it shows the picture of the Paradise with two cypress trees and vine scrolls, where the birds are sitting at the rims of the luterion and of two baskets. But the luterion's leg is wrongly depicted as a tripod. In its centre a palm branch is shown as a symbol of the martyrdom. Probably the central badly preserved image of the upper mosaic, belonging already to the first basilica under St. Sofia, built over the martyrium in the first half of the 5th century, is also luterion.[25] The rare iconography of all the panels of the martyrium's mosaic is probably inspired by the mausoleums of the Constantine period, but also by some still unknown program monument, probably in the Eastern Mediterranean. A small luterion-fountain is represented at the right side of the cancel in the basilica of Bitus in Pautalia (plate IX, fig.4).[26] Another vessel of the same kind, unfortunately not preserved, should flank the cancel from its left side.

The crater. It is often depicted in the Late Antique mosaics and wall paintings. The earliest representation in Bulgaria is the crater in the mosaic of the Roman thermen in Augusta Traiana (plate V, fig. 1), connected with the hygiene. It is not the Fountain of Life, but the form that has been exploited in many other monuments, in Bulgaria for instance in the *domus* on Stoletov street in Augusta Traiana (plate VII, figs. 1-2).[27] The craters can be recognized too in the corridors and in the aula/reception hall from the later periods of Eirene building, in the Small basilica in Plovdiv (plate II, figs. 2, 4-6; plate V, fig. 2)[28] and in the later (upper) mosaics in the south aisle of the Episcopal

[24] Popova 2015; 2016.
[25] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, Abb. 589-590.
[26] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, No 92, Abb. 872.
[27] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, No 28.
[28] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, No 43.

basilica (plate V, fig. 3).[29] Two long mosaic panels with marvelous craters and wine trellises with grapes are flanking the marble cancel on the north and south in basilica No 2 in Garmen (plate IX, fig. 1).[30] The refined mosaic style and the usage of smalt tesserae in a very rich palette reveal a very close similarity to the wall mosaics from the end of the 4th – the beginning of the 5th century in Thessaloniki, having in mind that there were also wall mosaics in basilica No 2 of Garmen. What impresses is that the two vessels from Garmen are the only figural images and an exclusion in a monument in the puristic style,[31] which deals normally only with ornamental and geometric motifs. Four conclusions can be drawn from this fact: that the puristic style and the other similar geometric mosaic compositions avoid the images on purpose; that when necessary, the representations can be immediately introduced again, although only the most important from symbolic and ritual point of view parts; that in the mosaics of the puristic style the Fountain of Life plays the basic role of a symbol of Christianity, because it is the only figural image; and finally, that probably a mosaic workshop from Thessaloniki has laid the mosaic in the basilica No 2 in the neighbor of Nicopolis ad Nestum.[32] In the basilica No 1 from the same place, two mosaic panels are forming a pseudo-transept composition, with a central crater with the Fountain of Life and four more vessels at the corners of the panel (plate IX, fig.3).[33] Two more craters are flanking the railing of the Paradise with a central cantharos in Odessos (plate IX, fig. 2) and craters have been among the other motifs of the basilica in Djemdem tepe in Plovdiv.[34]

The crater in the Episcopal basilica of Philippopolis. This is one of the biggest basilicas on the Balkans about 86 m long and about 38 m wide, each aisle itself is like a separate basilica. It is possible for that reason that each aisle was devoted to different saints, Christ or Church Holidays. The iconography of the Fountain, placed in the centre of the south aisle, is different from the one of Psalm 42. The huge and very high crater–fountain without any animal around, only birds, is placed in a complex composition: in a medallion, on its turn inscribed in an octagon and in eight-pointed star, formed by two squares, oriented differently. Another kind of crater is inserted in the four corners of the star, too (plate V, fig. 3).[35]

[29] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, No 41.
[30] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, No 73.
[31] Popova 2016, 67-70, with lit.; for the date of the puristic style see Popova 2012, 279.
[32] Taddei 2012.
[33] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, No 74, Abb. 651.
[34] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, No 2, Abb. 20-21; No 45, Abb. 20-21.
[35] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, No 41, Abb. 401, 408, 412; No 45, Abb. 464-465.

Unusual is the half-circled 'interrupted' trajectory of the streams, designed initially most likely with a pair of compasses. The palette of the scattered flowers and of the several kinds of birds in various poses is refined. So the iconography and treatment of the Fountain of Life demonstrates its special meaning and importance. There exists a suggestion that the south aisle is a martyrium.[36] In our opinion there is no doubt that the place of the Fountain of Life is connected with the liturgy. This representation was one of the stops in it before entering the naos from the south aisle.

The dimensions of the crater and its dominating vertical remind of the high basin/chalice/cup with Mary, The Life-Giving Spring with the Child Christ on the Medieval and post-Byzantine wall paintings and icons (plate V, fig. 5). We can suppose that the iconography of craters in *fons vitae*, such as in the hypogeum on Via Livenza with two basins (plate V, fig. 4) and the huge and tall crater of Philippopolis, are in the genesis of the representations of Mary The Life-Giving Spring. This cult has arisen first outside the Golden Gate of Constantinople in the time of Leo I (the Thracian).[37] As a soldier, the future emperor has heard a voice from above telling him that the water is miraculous. As a result of the first miracle a blind bagger got back his sight. After his enthroning, Leo has built on this place a church to Theotekos Pege. This very specific cult has spread from the metropolia to the other cities, most probably to Philippopolis too, situated not far from Constantinople and officially under its church jurisdiction from the second half of the 5th century. At that time the Mother of God could not be depicted on the floor, because it was forbidden the sacred images to be under the believers' feet and could be placed only on the walls and vaults. We can suppose the crater being at that time the symbol of the cult of Mary.

In our opinion the second (upper) mosaics with *fons vitae* in the south aisle of the Episcopal basilica of Philippopolis have *terminus post quem* 447, the year of the Huns invasions on the Balkans and the recovering period of the city after them. The 50s-60s of the 5th century as a date for the upper mosaics are supported, on the other hand, by the date of the panel with the numerous birds in the naos. It is made by a metropolitan mosaic workshop, identical or very near from iconographic and stylistic point of view to the mosaics in the court of the baths next to Qalaat Seman.[38] It is supposed that the mosaics in the baths are laid by an atelier from Constantinople about the same period, although such a mosaic

[36] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, 19.
[37] Müller-Wiener, 1977, 416.
[38] Raynauld 2012.

has not been found in the capital till now.[39] The panel with the birds in the naos of the Episcopal basilica of Philippopolis is new evidence supporting the eventual metropolitan origin or revealing the strong influence of that circle on the local Thracian mosaic workshops having in mind that this was only one among the several ateliers working in the basilica.[40] The discovered at the end of October 2016 new mosaic panels at the entrance from the nartex to the naos show two more vessels with blue water and other birds around a central medallion with a peacock, very similar to the mosaics of the basilica in Heracleia/Perinthos.[41]

[39] The Episcopal basilica in Philippopolis was one of the most important in Thrace outside Constantinople and therefore a special attention has been paid to its architecture and decoration during the whole period of its existence by inviting metropolitan architects and mosaicists. With Philippopolis (and with many other cities in the Eastern Mediterranean as well) we often come across such a situation when the supposed metropolitan origin of the atelier (or its influence) is not supported by the existence of such a monument in the capital itself. The number of mosaics there is still small because the modern and medieval buildings are lying over the ancient monuments. However in the case of Philippopolis we have at our disposal many indirect arguments for such constant artistic influences and even of the work of itinerant atelier from Constantinople, especially from the Theodosian dynasty on (Pillinger *et al*. 2016, No 40 (Eirene residence), No 43 (the baptysterium of the Small basilica) and No 51 (the complex on Pushkin str.).

[40] Topalilov 2016; 2016 a; 2016b, where the author supposes the work of local ateliers.

[41] See Westphalen 2016, 108-110, Abb. 165-166, 177, 181, 201, 226, 229-230, 237. The author has marked the similarity between the mosaics in Heracleia and the Episcopal basilica in Plovdiv. The new recently excavated compositions in the latter monument allow further comparison and reveal the similarity in the following motifs: a full face peacock and two ones in profile drinking from a vessel; the four-pointed star in which the central motif is inserted; the scheme with the knots of Heracles, baskets, cages, birds etc.; the main and bigger figural motifs forming the long axis of the rooms. All this means that a workshop from the same metropolitan circle or strongly influenced by Constantinople (atelier I) has laid the upper mosaics in the south aisle of the Episcopal basilica in Philippopolis, the aisles in Heracleia and the mosaic on Pushkin str. (the scheme being one and the same). Another workshop, with the same qualities (atelier II), has laid the panel with the birds in the naos in Plovdiv, very similar to the court mosaics of Qalaat Seman. Atelier I and II differ by style and generally by their repertoire, although there can be found identical motifs, for instance the cages, which is normal for the workshops from one and the same circle or under its influence (Constantinople) and from one and the same time. Thus the mentioned three mosaics (the Episcopal basilica in Plovdiv, the second one in Heracleia and the third one in Qalaat Seman) represent two mosaic ateliers from 50s – 60s of the 5th century, giving a good idea of the still missing metropolitan mosaic production in that period.

The exquisite iconography, the high artistic level and the style of the Fountain of Life in the south aisle and the nartex compositions in Philippopolis strengthens our conviction of the atelier's provenance. It has laid the greater part of the mosaics during the second period of the Episcopal basilica, probably reflecting the newly created in the capital cult of Mary the Life-Giving Spring immediately after the middle of the 5th century. Possibly the mosaic panel with the Fountain of Life was one of the stops in the liturgy in her Glorification and the aisle was devoted to her.

The crater and the cantharos in the Roman and Late Antique sepulchral and secular art. Except in basilicas, the crater with water can be met in the Roman, Late Roman and Early Christian tomb wall paintings and mosaics. In the Greek art the crater serves for mixing water with wine, following the Greek way of drinking. In all the Late Antique and Early Christian tombs in Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Asia Minor, Egypt, Palestine, etc., the crater is full of blue water (plate VI, fig. 2), usually on one of the short walls and against scattered flowers.[42] This fact reveals that in the mentioned monuments, including the ones in Bulgaria, other semantic variants of the Fountain of Life are represented, different from the representation of the watering stag/deer and from the high crater in the Episcopal basilica of Philippopolis. It is related to the diversity of Late Antique beliefs (pagan, Jewish and Early Christian) in various kinds of immortality, Afterlife and Salvation. In the sepulchral monuments of the 3rd – 4th century the accent has fallen on the fate of the deceased. He is introduced to the Happy Elysian Fields /the Eden/the Paradise, with its meadows, flowers and Fountain of Life, that's why this kind of tomb is called 'Paradisiacal'.[43] The Greek Underworld has been transferred to the Eden/Late Antique Paradise, which is now located either at the margins of the earth or finally moved to the Heavens.[44] The iconographic difference between a pagan and an Early Christian monument in the 4th century can be found in the presence or lacking of Chi-Ro and of scenes from the New Testament (plate VI, figs. 1 and 4). All the other structural and figural elements are identical and bound with a definite place in the composition. Each wall and part of the painting schemes correspond to a definite place in the universe.[45] In some tomb paintings and tomb mosaics the

[42]See for instance Atanasov 2006; Spasić-Đurić 2002, 192, Sl. 146; Firatly 1974; Hembrey 2008; Kourkoutidou-Nicolaidou 1997. The example of the tomb of the Good Shepherd in Thessaloniki differs, because it is on the long wall showing the railing in front of the paradise with a luterion and two peacocks, see Μάρκη 2006, Σχέδ. 101, Πίν. 12γ.

[43] Russeau 2010.

[44] Carile 2012, 40-47.

[45] Manetta 2011.

famous birds of Sosos could drink not only from luterion, but as well as from crater and cantharos with the same symbolic meaning (plate VI, figs. 1-5). Particularly in the 4th century there can be observed a revival of the luterion depictions in the tomb wall paintings, martyrial mosaics and even in the incised scenes of baptism on tomb steles. But the crater and the cantharos are dominating in all the studied period of 4th-6th century. To the end of the 5th century the inherited pagan symbols in the Fountain of Life are replaced by crosses, few ornamental motifs and flanking birds and by inscriptions, citing definite psalms.[46] In the 5th and the 6th century *fons vitae* disappears from the decoration of the tombs and remains only in the most representative mausoleums of the supreme elite (for instance in the wall mosaics of Galla Placidia), nevertheless still frequent on the floors, the walls, etc. in the other Early Christian buildings.

In the 4th century the Fountain of Life is present in the residences and the private houses as well. In them the first place is taken by the symbol of fertility, abundance and Good luck of the inhabitants and the family; of birth, growing, ripening and richness of the flora and fauna on the Earth. The abundance can be symbolized in several ways (plate VII, fig. 1; plate VIII, fig. 2): by the seasons in the images of a couple of animals, hunting and hunted (herbivorous and carnivorous), or by the representations of xenia (the different vegetables and fruits of each of the four seasons, also of birds and animals to be cooked for the guests).[47] On the second place, the *fons vitae* is an essential part of the cosmogonic structure, showing the sphere of water next to that of the Earth. But not the Earth is surrounded by the Ocean as it is usual in the basilicas: on the contrary, because of the existence of a real fountain, the compositions develop around it.

Similar scenes with vessels and with growing out of them plants (with or without fruits or with or without flowers) can be observed in the numerous sepulchral and profane monuments of the Mediterranean. For instance the vases with blue water and different flowers from the villa in Filipovtsi[48] are obviously symbolizing the Fountain of Life. At the same time they are very similar, but not identical to the mighty branchy Tree of Life, depicted growing out of a vase, the blue water is missing. Such is the Tree of Life with the plant with grapes and birds in the nartex in front of the naos of the Episcopal basilica (No4) in Parthicopolis.[49] The similarity shows a mutual influence of both cited iconographies (the Fountain of Life and the Tree of Life) in Late Antiquity, however the difference between them is in the lack of water.

[46] Zavadskaya 2013, 61-66.
[47] Hornik 2015.
[48] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, No 69, Abb. 607-608, 610-612.
[49] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, No 77, Abb. 669, 705.

The crater and the Fountain of Life in the domus on Stoletov street in Augusta Traiana. Namely in this connection it is necessary to stop our attention on the mosaic of the cited *domus*, situated not far from the supposed agora of Augusta Traiana/Beroe (plate VII, fig. 1).[50] The coins found during the excavations belong to the Late Antiquity and the Medieval period, dominating are the ones from the end of the 3rd up to the period of Constantine I, when the city was flourishing. The excavator suggests that the mosaic belongs to this period for many reasons and we support this date, although recently in literature a date in the 5th century is proposed.[51]

The mosaic composition is divided into several different panels in size and form, well distinguished and articulated, which is typical for the 3rd - 4th centuries. The Fountain of Life occupies the most important part of the composition, the main panel and symbolizes the Heaven with the Eden/Paradise (plate VII, fig. 2). The composition is turned to the entrance and encircled by the general border and by the panels with pairs of animals from three sides, symbols of the seasons; also by the panels with fruits and vegetables (xenia) of the Eastern type,[52] usually not met in Bulgarian monuments, from two marginal sides, symbolizing the fertility and abundance of the terrestrial sphere. The water sphere around the octogon is represented by two nereids and different marine creatures. Generally this is the concept of the Earth and the Ocean,[53] but it is a problem if it shows the pagan picture or the creations of the Christian God from the Fifth Day.

Such a composition with the different spheres can be found in the mosaic of Lod as well, also dated circa the beginning of the 4th century.[54] At the same time the mosaic from Stara Zagora is similar to some Asia Minor

[50] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, No 28, Abb. 73-79; Popova - Moroz 1987, 6 ff.

[51] Nikolov 1959; 1965; Popova 2016 a, 173 f.; Pillinger *et al*. 2016, N 28, 130.

[52] Popova-Moroz 1987, 10, 44-45; Janik *et al*. 2007, 1515-1518, fig. 3-5.

[53] Maguire 1987.

[54] Ovadiah & Mucznik 1998, 1-16; Shanks 2016. There each sphere is even more detailed. Among the four main scenes one can find the cantharos with wine with trellises and birds and the Fountain of Life, shown as a crater and two jumping panthers instead of handles. The third central mythological scene probably shows the Peaceful kingdom according to the vision of Isaiah with real and fantastic creatures. And the last panel reveals three vessels, two golden amphorae and a silver cantharos on an embellished tripod. Their interpretation is also problematic, since water and wine are many times mentioned in the Talmud and the Bible and connected with a lot of rituals in both Jewish and Christian religions. A part of a mosaic donator inscription of a bishop with two, this time probably silver flanking vessels from the Episcopal basilica of Philippopolis (unpublished, found in 2015), confirms the possible cult interpretation of the mosaic in Lod, with the same vessels for wine and oil.

mosaics, for instance to one from Sardes (sector Pactolus north, bath and mosaic suite, room D). This monument is dated later than the mosaic from Augusta Traiana/Beroe, at the beginning of the 5th century for many historical, compositional and stylistic reasons (plate VII, fig. 6).[55] From iconographic point of view the couples of animals from Sardes are very near to the ones in Augusta Traiana. However this fact can be explained only by the usage of pattern books and not by the same style and time. In Sardes the real fountain-octogon of Augusta Traiana/Beroe is replaced by the depicted mosaic circle with dolphins and tridents. The nereids of Augusta Traiana/Beroe with their nudity, clumsy proportions, rude outlining of the figures and the typical welcoming and good-wishing pagan inscriptions have also disappeared in Sardes because of the far gone time and the dominating of Christianity in the 5th century. If we compare the style of the deer in Augusta Traiana/Beroe and that one in Stobi or Lychnidus from the 5th – 6th century (plate VII, fig. 5), the difference can be easily found too. Thus the iconography and style date the mosaic of the *domus* to the pre-classical phase of Constantine I, namely to the end of the Tetrarchy.

Different fillings are placed in the geometric units of the scheme in the *domus* of Augusta Traiana/Beroe, some purely decorative and banal, but the other symbolical. There are several important elements among them, which are definitely Christian. A small cantharos with S-like handles and full of wine is represented against golden background and reminds rather a skyphos in the proportions (plate VII, fig. 4). A similar vase is represented in the earliest western part of the martyrial mosaic from the middle of the 4th century under St. Sofia in Serdica.[56] Several crosses of rare form are shown too in Augusta Traiana/Beroe (plate VII, fig. 3). Namely they and the eucharistic cantharos do not allow relating the composition to any pagan mysterious cults (Dionysos, Sabasius, Kybela, Mithra). The combination of pagan motifs (the nereids, etc.) and Christian symbols is natural for that period of the 4th century (for instance for the hypogeum in Via Livenza, the mausoleum of Santa Constanza, the tomb painting of Eustorgius in Thessaloniki, etc.), but not for its end and the 5th century. In our view, it can't be accepted that the Christian symbols are secret and from the period before 313 because they are shown very obviously, not hidden and the crosses are even repeated several times. Also the dominating mosaic panel with the large-scale Fountain of Life is the most obvious demonstration of the Christian belief of the owner.

[55] Scheibelreiter-Gail 2011, Taf. 545. The main part of the Lod's repertoire is on the one hand very near to the mosaic in Bulgaria in the 4th century in general but, on the other hand, it demonstrates the obvious presence of an African workshop.
[56] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, Taf. 237.

The observations show that such a complex cosmogonic composition is without parallels in the mosaics in Bulgaria, but it can be seen in Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine, pointing at least to some solid connections with the mosaic art of the oversea lands. Judging by the size of the *domus* and the shops at the one end of it, the owner (during the first period of his existence) was a wealthy merchant. He may be also a settler in Augusta Traiana, since the city has revealed until nowadays three examples of artistic preferences for Asia Minor and Syrian compositions. [57]

The cantharos. Together with the crater, the cantharos is one of the most frequently used vessels in the Fountain of Life in Bulgarian monuments and elsewhere. There are many examples of found real and depicted cantharoses from Roman times. In the Late Antique representations one can find some changes of its form, construction and decoration. It is considered that the concrete forms of the Late Antique vessels have lost their direct function, and although there existed several variants of the form, it has become rather a poly-semantic sign, than a representation of a concrete vessel.[58] This tendency was really dominant, that is why in many cases we can speak generally of a vase and not of a concrete form. Nevertheless the Bulgarian examples reveal the existence of a second trend too, namely the demonstration of the previous diversity and strict form of the vessel (plate II, figs. 3 and 6; plate VI, fig. 2; plate VIII, fig. 3). The phenomenon expresses and depends equally on the level of the workshop (high-leveled metropolitan and cosmopolitan or banal local one) and on the concrete period (for instance the typical Revivals in art during the period of Justinian, concerning the *realia* too).

[57] Popova 2016, 119-121.

[58] The crater, irrespective of its variations, is a big vessel with a heavy and wide lower part because it should contain a significant quantity of liquid (plate V, fig. 1). Its upper part is also wide, the handles, if they exist, may possess different form and are attached at the side ends of the lower part. In contrast, the cantharos' proportions are more elegant because this was a smaller vessel, a cup for drinking wine, the lower part not so wide and almost equal to the upper part, with more closed mouth and S-like handles. This difference between the crater and the cantharos is not always revealed and in some cases they cannot be distinguished, because the first one has acquired the S-like handles. The lower part, instead of being smooth, is with gadroons like a cantharos or a phiala since the Late Classic and Hellenistic periods. In the second half of the 4th – the beginning of the 5th century in the Christian and secular mosaics in Bulgaria, Rumania, etc. the leg and the handles of both forms of vessels have lost their constructive function and have become more decorative and even fantastic (pl. VIII, fig. 6; pl. IX, fig.2). For the tendency of the vessel as sign see Limao 2011.

The cantharos in the bishop residences. This vessel is represented in the hall with the image of Eirene in Philippopolis (plate VIII, fig. 3), dated *circa* 381-382. The *fons vitae* is the second figural image there, equally important with that of Eirene. While the function of the building as a bishop residence in the later periods III and IV is doubtless, in the period II it is interpreted in literature either as a triclinium of a person from the local elite, or even as a house church and finally as a bishop residence.[59] Namely both the cantharos and the image of Eirene have a direct attitude to the problem of identifying the building with this period. The blue water, although not occupying the whole surface inside the mouth, relates the cantharos to the Fountain of Life. Eirene is not the usual personification of spring, because there lack the flowers, the attributes of this personification. Instead, the very special allegory of the Church as Peace, known in the Early Christianity, is represented in the image of woman.[60] The bishop has transformed a typical Roman peristyle house situated very near to the basilica, for his residence. He has ordered also the mosaic for the reception hall, answering to the demands at that moment and choosing the most appropriate images – that of Eirene, the Orthodox church, and the Fountain of Life, one of the most important symbols of faith at the end of the century.

The cantharos is depicted also in the pavement of the reception hall of the bishop residence No 1 (between basilica No 1 and No 2) in Parthicopolis (plate VIII, fig. 1).[61] The pseudo-emblem in the centre is

[59] Bospachieva & Kolarova 2012, 198-232 with bibl.; Pillinger *et al.* 2016, N 40, 193-197.

[60] Maguire 1987, Eirene. The other strong political and dogmatic connotations reflect the actual situation both in Constantinople and Philippopolis from the 40s of the 4th century till almost the middle of the 5th century. Theodosius I held the Council of 381 in the capital namely in the basilica of St. Eirene and this is the next contextual meaning of Eirene in Philippopolis, denoting either that the bishop of the city has attended at that Council or that he has been sent after it to realize its decisions in situ. They helped the heresies to stop and especially the Arianism for the first time since the Council of Nicea in 350. For Philippopolis it was extremely important, because up to 381 the city was the stronghold of Arianism in Thrace and in the Eastern Mediterranean. Likewise, for the first time the newly appointed bishop was not Arian, but Orthodox, and he had most probably the task of building a new basilica for re-baptising of the numerous Arianic population of the city. For the purpose a tremendous basilica has been built.

[61] There have been discovered two bishop residences in Parthicopolis, because in the second half to the end of the 4th century a new Episcopal basilica (No 4) was built in the city with a new residence, see Popova 2007, 409, 416-418.

decorated with *fons vitae* in opus vermiculatum and opus tesselatum on the background of a more rude but effective decorative technique. There are other examples, for instance in Lychnidus (Ohrid) in Macedonia, where the *fons vitae* is twice used, first in the mosaic decoration of the baptisterium of the Episcopal basilica and secondly in the bishop residence.[62] Here a fountain is also laid in mosaic next to the real functioning one. In the residence of Philippopolis a real fountain with a dolphin at the top has been built additionally soon after the period of Eirene, adhering to the same formula real-depicted fountain.

The cantharos as a Fountain of Life, equal in its significance to Eirene, and the parallels from Parthicopolis, Lychnidos and many other sites support the interpretation of the building with Eirene mosaic as a bishop residence already around 381-382. The functioning real fountain with a dolphin at the top, the mosaic cantharos - *fons vitae*, laid together with Eirene, a lot of craters - *fons vitae* in the corridors and in the late rooms and the aula – all these look like a cascade of waters, showing the mounting role and even dominance of the symbol, especially in the later periods in the first half of the 5th century. Most probably the unusual presence of the multiple Fountains of Life are reflecting 'The Gathering of the Waters', in the local context symbolizing the gathering and uniting of all the population of Philippopolis and its territory in *Thracia* in the renewed Orthodox church as a renewal and in order to assure well being of the society in all aspects of everyday life and of life of the Church.[63] The program with the figural images therefore was tightly connected with the state of the Church and the policy of Theodosius I and his successors against the heresies.

The combination of multiple vessels in the Early Christian basilicas. The mosaic in the naos of the Episcopal basilica in Odessos from the end of the 4th - beginning of the 5th century represents a new formula of the Fountain of Life. It consists of two craters and a cantharos placed at the top of an imaginary cancel screen (plate IX, fig.2). They are shown in front of the real bema, followed by the raised steps with the apse. Two flanking peacocks attend the central vase. The picture of the Paradise with its meadows and roses is behind the cantharos and the peacocks. One more crater with the same iconography is preserved in the north aisle. However, it is possible that

[62]Kolarik 2016; 2016a. The tradition of such real fountains, ending with sculptural figures (mythological and from the fauna) goes on in the Early Byzantine period, used in the atriums of the churches and in the gardens of the palaces and monasteries, see Maguire 2000, 257.
[63] Maguire 1987, 51.

here more figural images have been represented, including vessels, lost during the centuries. The double play of the real bema with the apse, symbolizing the Paradise, and of the depicted one in the mosaic serves for establishing and strengthening the notion of Afterlife and Salvation.

Two mosaics with a central cantharos and four more at the corners of a panel in basilica No 1 in Garmen from the 5th century reveal again their close proximity to the cancel (plate IX, fig. 3).[64] However this time the vessels are placed not around the cancel in the naos, but in the compositions, forming pseudo-transepts in the back aisles. It seems that they still are connected with the symbol of *fons vitae* and the rituals, because the support of a *mensa sacra* is unearthed in the north pseudo-transept.[65] The mosaic from the basilica in Mikrevo near Sandanski (plate VIII, fig. 6)[66] also has a panel, this time in the bema, with four not absolutely identical vessels at the corners of the panel's frames. The blue water has already disappeared and the vessels' dimensions diminished, so this is rather a traditional decorative representation and not concretely the Fountain of Life. Nevertheless the genesis of such later compositions and the place of the vessels descend from the ones with *fons vitae*. In the basilica of Bitus in Pautalia[67] three different forms from three successive periods (the 5th - the 6th century) can be traced, creating a concentration of the symbols (plate IX, figs. 4 and 5), although less in number than in the Episcopal residence of Philippopolis. In the centre of the mosaic composition in the apse another iconography of the Fountain of Life may be supposed, namely the one with the four rivers of the Paradise. These late mosaics from the 6th century, with the 12 lambs and the Latin inscription from the 5th century could be inspired by the West (for Bulgaria) prototypes, which means direct influence from Italy or more possible from the West Balkans.[68]

Comparing the development of the composition with different vessels during the studied period 4th-6th century, we can fix the place of the Fountain of life, represented by a single or multiple representations of different vessels. First at the end of the 4th century the big forms have been placed immediately at the boundary of the cancel in the naos; then in the 5th century they have become smaller and have been shifted either at some distance from the cancel in the naos, or to the back aisles. The number of vessels could have a special meaning in the case of three ones in Odessos

[64] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, No 74, Abb. 651, 665.
[65] Popova 2012, 285, 289.
[66] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, N 82, Abb. 778.
[67] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, No 92, Abb. 857, 859, 871.The third vessel should be called rather a vase, because it differs from all real forms.
[68] Popova 2008, 344.

(the Trinity?), although here it has been looked for a symmetrical composition. In the other cases the place and the sequence of the vessel forms seems free from this kind of dogmatic symbolism. In the aniconical mosaics from Theodosius I till the first decades of the 5th century the Fountain of Life was the only figural image at the background of geometric-ornamental compositions and therefore extremely important. After introducing again of the figural repertoire the *fons vitae* entered the process of 'sinking' among the other images. When the vessels are multiple, like in the case of Odessos, there is a gradation within them (the cantharos against the two craters); in the other cases the combination of one and the same form with different dimensions is preferred: the big central one and the smaller ones at the corners. At the end of the 5th century they became quite smaller and equal to the other figural images (plate VIII, fig. 6).[69] Although full of blue water, they are equal by size and importance to the other also small-sized figural images, among them animals, birds, flowers, cages, etc. in many basilica and residential mosaics in Bulgaria. This fact reveals that such small representations of *fons vitae* have already lost their previous great symbolic meaning and importance in the liturgy and adequately in the church mosaic pavements. This was probably the time when the monumental and rich Fountain of Life was used predominantly in the baptisteriums[70] and in other specific cases like worshiping the actual cult of The Mother of God, The Life-Giving Spring (the case of the south aisle of the Episcopal basilica in Plovdiv).

The symbol of Fountain of Life conquers from the 4th to the end of the 5th century almost all the basic or the already similar forms of vessels, which shows how important it was from semantic and ritual point of view

[69] Many other examples can be added: Pillinger *et al.* 2016, Abb. 283, 314, 477, 590, 746, 749. The cited four monuments demonstrate one and same position of the vessels immediately next to the cancel and most probably reflect a significant part of the liturgy, in which the psalm 42 or a similar one is pronounced. It should be noticed that the iconography is not absolutely identical to the usual one illustrating the psalm, since the stag is absent and the vessels dominate. In the first three monuments the new iconography and especially the rather fantastic leg and handle construction of the vessels is due to the taste in the Theodosian period with its subtle style and mannerism. None of the early cantharoses is inside the cancel. Only a cantharos (plate VIII, fig. 1) from the martyrium under St. Sofia in Serdica is shown inside the cancel and among the other Early Christian symbols earlier. At the same time this example is from the present point of view one of the earliest Christian monuments and mosaics in Bulgaria and shows that after 313, probably at the time of Constantius II the placing in the cancel still was possible, while at the time of Theodosius I other rules were followed.

[70] Jensen 2011, Chapter IV and V.

in private pagan and Early Christian dwellings, residences, tombs and in the official basilicas and martyria.

The birds and the animals flanking the vessels

Because of the transfer from sculpture to flat arts (mosaics and wall paintings), the full face pose of the fauna representatives is rare and the profile one becomes the dominant. The second characteristic is that the animals and the birds are usually in pairs, symmetrically flanking the vessel, as a sign of sanctity and solemnity. In this formula they are as if worshipping the sacred vessel. When a plant is represented growing from the vessel, it not only enriches the composition, but additionally burdens its symbolic meaning of fertility, abundance, of Christ, of the Afterlife in the Paradise, etc. Several combinations of creatures depicted in heraldic compositions or in the manner of all-over design are represented in the iconography of *fons vitae*: two stags/deer and two ducks; or two peacocks and doves, in the East after the Jewish tradition two lions (or panthers as in Lod). It should be underlined, that more often the aquatic birds are preferred because of their clear connection with the theme of water. The reason to use this variety of different birds and animals is to show them as representatives of the different terrestrial, aquatic and heavenly spheres, demonstrating the horizontal and the vertical structure of the Universe. Apart from that, the birds are considered to be the thirsty souls of the believers in the Eden/ Paradise.

Very frequently peacocks flanking different vessels are placed under the lunette on the short walls in the tombs and in the most important parts of the floor mosaics (plate VI, figs. 1, 2 and 4; plate IX, fig.2).[71] Exquisite sculptural peacocks have decorated the mausoleum of Hadrian, repeated after that in many other monuments in sculpture, wall paintings and mosaics, both pagan and Early Christian as symbol of immortality and Afterlife. Except in official buildings, it was preferred for its semantic in the Late Antique tombs and shown in repeated formulas flanking a vessel in the Garden of Eden/Paradise (plate VI, figs. 1, 2 and 4).

Some of the growing plants are more general, others are specific for a concrete geographic area (like in the *domus* of Augsuta Traiana/Beroe) or

[71] The recently found new mosaic parts at the entrance of the naos of the Episcopal basilica in Philippopolis also possess a splendid peacock, flanked by other birds and two cantharoses. The famous peacocks in the Vatican Pinecone court are copies of the bronze birds, decorating initially the mausoleum of Hadrian in Tivoli, the originals kept in Braccio Nova. The beauty of the flat outspread or trailed feathers of these birds was also very suitable for the new artistic language of Late Antiquity.

borrowed from the pattern books. The most often used plants on the Balkans are the ivy leaves and the wine scrolls with grapes, inhabited by birds.

The different animals, birds and plants follow one and the same pattern, in which combinations are possible, but without changing the meaning. In Late Antiquity they are inherited and transformed from the old pagan mythological beliefs. When the figural motifs disappeared during the non-figural phase of development and the ornamental-geometric compositions became the only decoration, the exceptions could happen only in the place of donator inscriptions or immediately around the cancel (the Episcopal basilicas in Odessos, Philippopolis and basilica N 2 in Garmen). The puristic style of the Theodosius I and the renewal of figures later have helped the final abandoning of the previous illusionistic system of rendering and treatment of the pseudo-emblem and of the creation of a new kind of carpet compositions. Now the figural motifs are shown either in separate panels or geometric units, or in a composition without frames among them, or in all-over design, thus representing the cosmos as unity.

The composition of the baptisterium mosaic of the so-called Small basilica in Philippopolis and its date. This monument is the best illustration of the process of disintegration of the pseudo-emblem and the development of the new artistic language since the Roman imperial time and onward. Instead of united scene/emblem/pseudo-emblem, we see separate entirely asymmetric and frozen images, each in its own panel (plate I, figs. 2 and 3). There does not exist only one compulsory point of observation: from one side the representations are turned to the catehumens, entering the basin, and from the opposite side to the already baptized persons, the faithful, going out of it. It is worth noting that the birds are treated not so skillfully in comparison to the stag in the outlines, the poses and the details (plate XI, figs. 2 and 3). At the same time the animal has a muffle approximating the representations of the 6th century (plate XI, fig. 4),[72] but not so rude and quadratic, still graceful, tender and with reminiscences of volume and refined decorative beauty.

The mosaics of the baptisterium in Plovdiv are related to the second building period at the end of the 5th and the 6th century.[73] However, from iconographic and stylistic point of view and on the base of the tesserae colours, the birds in a specific palette are very similar, almost identical to the panel with the birds in the naos of the Episcopal basilica. Also the treatment of the stag and the doe (?) does not look like the one from the Justinianic

[72] Tutkovski 2012.

[73] Bospachieva & Kolarova 2014, 245-251.

period, compared for instance with the lambs in the basilica of Bitus and the mosaic in the consistorium of the Episcopal basilica in Salona (plate I, fig. 5). Therefore it is quite possible to re-date the mosaics of the baptisterium to the 50s – 60s of the 5th century, when the basin was built and probably the workshop of the panel with birds in the Episcopal basilica (or a similar one) laid the mosaic panels of the baptisterium. The panel with the deer and the illusion of its drinking from the basin reveals again the metropolitan provenance of the atelier, although except the main mosaicist, the other members of his team were not on the same artistic level of accomplishment.

In the sixth century a new iconography appeared, more correctly a variant of the already known Four Rivers of the Paradise, like in Plaoshnik (plate XI, fig. 4). The waters look like four vertical fountains with spouts, pouring down with mighty streams and because of that the animals do not water with the head bent to the earth, but uplifted together with the front legs. The muffle and the proportions are very heavy, the image is too coarse. This iconography is not present up to the moment in Bulgaria, but can be observed in the West, Asia Minor and probably will be found in Constantinople. Naturally, we can expect its appearance in the West part of Bulgaria, which has been always under the artistic and theological influence of the West.[74] Nevertheless this absence has a general historical explanation. At the present state of our knowledge there are very few monuments built and laid in the second half of the 6th century in the Eastern part of the Balkans. Attention there has been paid to the fortification activity and to the large-scale repairs, because these areas have been constantly threatened by the barbarian attacks and were the first to be captured and ruined. Among the other reasons should be mentioned also the devastating earthquakes in the same period. All the mentioned circumstances may explain the lack of mosaics in Bulgaria from the second part of the 6th century in general and particularly of the scene with stags drinking from the four rivers of Paradise.

The copying and the combinations in the mosaics and wall paintings

While the theory of copying in the Roman and Late Antique time is applied on a large scale predominantly in the field of sculpture[75] and less to wall paintings, the Roman and Late Antique mosaics, with few exceptions, remain aside from this basic direction of research. The scene with *fons vitae* in the mosaics in Bulgaria can reveal the same process of copying,

[74] Popova 2008, 344; 2016, 199-121.
[75] Ridgway 1984; Kousser 2009 with further literature.

transformations and combinations of different earlier prototypes, especially from the 3rd to the 6th century. The scenes, the separate figural motifs and other geometric-ornamental elements of the Fountain of Life show a great diversity. It was possible to be achieved because of two main characteristics of Roman, Late Roman and Early Byzantine culture and art, namely the copying and the combination.[76]

During our research we have marked many times the copying of the Drinking Doves, of the peacocks, the watering stag, etc. The forms of the vessels are gradually contaminated towards the end of the studied period and have become signs of definite beliefs, but not real forms with real function.[77] It was realized very obviously in the mutual influence of forms, names and decoration of the real and the depicted vessel forms. The same phenomenon of mixture, hybrids, contamination and syncretism can be observed in the animals, birds and flowers accompanying the vases.

The repertoire and the composition of the Lateran baptisterium decoration as a canon. The only known up to now early figural source for the main iconography of the Fountain of Life is the wall painting in the synagogue in Dura Europos (plate X, fig. 1). No animal, vessel or bird is represented there. Although with another meaning of Moses with the 12 tribes in the dessert, the central well/river and the streams going out of it were the Jewish iconographical source used from the middle of the 3rd century on for the Early Christian Fountain of Life. It is repeated and developed in the secret and after that in the official Early Christian art in the wall paintings of the Roman catacombs and in the wall and floor mosaics of basilicas and mausoleums.[78]

The Lateran baptisterium[79] has paid a tremendous role for the plans, the rituals and the decoration of the Early Christian and Early Byzantine

[76] The most obvious is the example of the development of the portrait and the images of deities in the round sculpture, from verism and materialism to spiritual abstract signs and finally to the total disappearing of the sculpture, with the exception of few artistic centres in the 5th and the 6th century.

[77]The fluted phiala appeared instead of the luterion in the atrium of the Early Christian basilicas and both the vessel and the room used to be called already phiala. The same vessels are used for ablution also in the synagogues of the diaspora.

[78] In them the 'landscape' of Paradise in the vertical structure of the cosmos is shown, with its central river and the four rivers flowing from it (Tigris, Eufratis, Filon and Geon); or the omphalos with the Agnus Dei stepped over it; or Christ with the apostles in the scene of Traditio legis.

[79] Brandt 2001; Thayer 2012.

baptisteriums and the repertoire in the basilicas and the Early Christian applied arts.[80] Naturally, the decoration of the Lateran baptisterium has placed the theme of baptism and the Fountain of Life on the first place, repeated again and again in many other mosaics (plate X, figs. 3 and 5). Unfortunately the initial decoration of Lateran, the basilica and the baptysterium, is not preserved, but the description in Liber Pontificales, the numerous Late Antique mosaics and Medieval book illuminations give some idea of it and show its great impact on the Early and Mediaeval Christian art. The decoration was mainly sculptural and architectonic, marking one of the final stages of applying sculpture in Late Antique art. However, the Lateran baptisterium was unique, unbelievably richly decorated thanks to the donation of a great amount of gold and silver by Constantine I. There were sculptural representations of Ioannes baptizing Christ; of seven deer, whose muffles were playing the role of spouts, with the water pouring down from them to the baptismal basin (plate X, fig. 2). Also doves, peacocks, Chi-Ro, etc. have been represented, all made of precious metals, in the utensils in the interior both in the baptisterium and the basilica. In Rome again another monument has been made with sculptural decoration from the second half of the 6th century, namely the Fountain of Pope Symmachus, intended for ablution (plate XI, fig. 1).[81] Its decoration, although strongly reduced in comparison to Lateran, repeats to some extend the repertoire of the Vatican baptisterium. Generally, to the end of the 4th century the previous role of round sculpture has faded away and was replaced by reliefs in the architectonic sculpture and by mosaics and wall paintings. But in the real fountains in Byzantium the sculpture decoration followed the example of Lateran, although with modifications.

In contrast to the Lateran baptisterium, the decoration in the provincial monuments was in flat arts (mosaics and wall paintings). In them the mosaic tesserae are often smalt, the glass is in different colours or covered with a special technique with golden powder. But the repertoire,

[80] It was the first official baptisterium in Rome after the Edict of Toleration in 313. Its initial plan was approved by Constantine and built in 315 with a round plan, changed to octagonal at the end of the century. The round plan with round colonnade inside and the decoration of the interior most probably have been repeated in the plan and the initial decoration of the Sepulchre in Jerusalem, erected initially by the Constantinian dynasty in the second quarter – the middle of the 4th century. The pair Lateran - the Sepulchre has become canonical first of all for the plan and the baptisterium decoration, also for the liturgical and other items in Late Antiquity and even for the book illumination in the Medieval period (plate X, figs. 4 and 6).

[81] Lanciani 1982.

with the exception of the baptismal scene with Ioannes and Christ (which can be seen in the wall decoration of the baptisteriums of Ravenna), was the same as in Lateran, fixing the place of each deer and bird around the basin, although in profile. This was the Lateran sculptural formula of position and almost heraldic flanking of the Holy piscine, which received immediately a mosaic 'translation' to be repeated time after time in the Early Christian monuments. In this way the sculptural golden and silver deer, the peacocks and the doves of Lateran have their mosaic parity on the floors, repeated exactly or by variations with additional decoration. Such are the famous baptisteriums of Stobi, Heraclea Lyncestic and Lichnydus in Macedonia.[82] The main theme of these provincial monuments, as expected, is the Fountain of Life, combining *realia* (the basins, the real cantharoses, the phialae) with depicted vessels with strobilion and streams, deer and birds, etc. On the wall paintings in Stobi the four Evangelists are shown and scenes from the New Testament. The same compositions are introduced in the basilicas and the bishop residences of the mentioned Macedonian cities.

The direct Western influence is to be seen in many places of Macedonia. In our opinion the impact of the Lateran basilica and its baptisterium was also decisive for Parthicopolis after the establishing by the Pope of vicariate in Thessaloniki in the last quarter of the 4th century.[83] Namely this historical circumstance has reflected in series of church buildings in Thessaloniki, Parthicopolis and the other cities of Macedonia, following the plans, the decoration and the metropolitan style. Immediately after that or in the next decade in Parthicopolis decisive changes have been performed: the old and modest Episcopal basilica (No 1) from the Constantinian period was replaced by the newly built splendid Episcopal basilica (N 4).[84] It has unusual for these lands free standing (independent) baptisterium, richly decorated with architectonic decoration, floor and wall mosaics and wall paintings. Unfortunately, only fragments of its mosaic decoration are discovered.

The scenes of the *fons vitae* are placed in the most important from theological, symbolical and ritual aspect parts, being included in the picture on the floor, representing the Earth and the Ocean, the Creations of God according to Genesis. What happens in the Heavens has a counterpart on the Earth and in the Ocean through the symbols like the Fountain of Life. For that reason the symbols are both on the pavement and on the walls, the Divine connection between the Heavenly and the

[82] Early Christian Wall Paintings 2012.
[83] Tsukhlev 1910, 84-87; Petrova & Petkov 2015, 411.
[84] Pillinger 2006; Popova 2007, 408 ff, 416 ff.

Terrestrial world. Every symbol is a part of the harmonious picture on Earth. But it changes in the manner a carpet decorated with equal ornaments all of a sudden introduces figural images. This change grasps all the attention and trespasses with its symbolism the metaphorical uniformity and literality of the Earth. It introduces the sacred/ the Holy in the newly created space.[85] They outline the world directions in the reception halls of the houses and residences; the direct movement to and from in the corridors (however with meander-like off-sets for the depicted vessels in Eirene residence); also the place of a symbol for a long and calm pious contemplation in front of the honourable chair of the bishop, etc. In the basilicas, baptisteriums and martyria these are the graphic, colourful and decorative signs for the sacred like an echo of the Heavens on the earth/the floor. The Fountain of Life connects the Earth with the Heaven and the deity/God with man.

Conclusions

The Early Christian theme of the Fountain of Life has its predecessors in the mythology, religion and art of the Ancient world, because it was a convergent one. Very close notions to the Early Christianity can be specified in the Roman period, particularly in the Jewish tradition. They determine the appearance of the first iconographies of the scene in the 3rd century in the cult and secular sphere: in the synagogues, water installations, catacomb and tomb paintings and sarcophagi, residences and houses. The symbolic meaning of the scene in them is of fertility, abundance and Good luck, of the structure of the Universe, in which *fons vitae* is a sign for the god/gods, the Eden/Paradise and immortality/eternal life/Afterlife and of the Sacred/the Holy. The examples of *fons vitae* in Macedonia, Thracia and Dacia Mediterranea confirm the idea that the transition from paganism to Early Christianity was not abrupt, but supple. Very obvious the phenomenon can be traced in the decoration of the late pagan and Early Christian tombs.

[85] In such a way important accents and stops are denoted, subordinating the different parts of the space and changing the rhythm of movement. That's why the great role of the Fountain of Life cannot be just an exaggeration, but a real fact. The acceptance of the mosaics, full of play and glittering of the alternative colours, decorative tension and vibrations creates a new model of space, supported by as if endless non-material outer casing of the walls and the vaults. Particularly the new kind of space of the floor consists of flat mosaic surfaces and lacks the three-dimensional treatment of the sculpture. The continuous flat mosaic strips and bands form invisible boundaries around the entrance, alongside the architectural axis and around the cancel and the piscine.

After 313 and especially with the first Christian basilicas and baptisteriums in Rome and Jerusalem, built by the Constantinian dynasty, the iconography and the repertoire of the Fountain of Life is established in Italy and the Eastern Mediterranean in all kinds of Early Christian buildings: in basilicas, baptisteriums, martyria and Episcopal residences. The early examples in Bulgaria, related to the 4th century, show this transitional period in various spheres. The four rivers of Paradise, flowing out from the Fountain, are missing among them. Only vessels are included in full iconography or in a reduced one (without animals, birds and plants), but always with water. The meaning signifies already the Holy, the basic Early Christian dogmas and rituals, the structure of the Christian Universe, the Afterlife in the Paradise and the Salvation. Much rare is the symbolism of the 'Gathering of the Waters' and the supposed cult of the Mother of God, the Life-Giving Spring. According to H. Maguire, one and the same iconography may denote different meanings depending on the building and the room and on the opposite – different iconographies may symbolize one and the same notion. This observation can be confirmed by the monuments in Bulgaria. The climax of the importance of the Fountain of Life in the official sphere, demonstrated by the monuments from Bulgaria, is in the second half of the 4th century and till the end of the 5th century. But in the second half of the latter the scene plays a significant role mainly in the baptisteriums of Thracia and Macedonia because of the administrative church affiliation and the artistic connections with Rome and Constantinople. After that the scene loses its previous place and influence in the decoration, most probably as a sequence of the liturgical changes. In the sepulchral sphere the process happens earlier, even at the end of the 4th century, when the Fountain of Life is replaced by the cross.

The floor mosaics with the Fountain of Life from the Late Antique provinces of Bulgaria are revealing the terrestrial and oceanic part of the universe's structure and of the concurrent presence of this symbol both down and up in the Heavens, represented adequately by the decoration of the floor, the walls, the vaults and the cupola. Well preserved monuments, such as the mausoleum of Santa Constanza in Rome, the baptisterium of S. Giovanni in Fonto in Napoli, the baptisteriums of the Orthodox and of the Arians, the mausoleum of Galla Placidia and S. Vitale in Ravenna show this mechanism fully. The decoration of the floor is the most modest part, without scenes from the Old and the New Testament, in comparison to the walls etc., because it corresponds to the Earth and Ocean. Nevertheless the Fountain of Life is one of the most elaborate, sometimes even the only figural decoration on the floors in Bulgaria. This fact again supports the observation of its extreme significance in the period after 313 and till the end of the 5th century.

The mechanism of copying and combination of different elements from the tremendous repertoire of Late Antique art provides for the diversity of iconographic decisions of the studied subject. The depicted fountains and their construction and decoration have real prototypes, often copied. More fantastic are the installation on two or more levels. Another very important peculiarity was the combination of a real fountain/piscine or a real vessel with the representations of vessels for water and vice versa. This is because of the stronger symbolic meaning of the images in Late Antiquity, often not only underlined, but doubled: once as a real construction or vessel with religious semantics and the second time supported and strengthen by the image of the same vision.

We can distinguish several artistic areas in the provinces here in Late Antiquity in connection with *fons vitae*.[86] The first one in Thrace and the Black Sea littoral tends to Greece, Asia Minor and Syria and from the middle of the 4th century onward to the circle of Constantinople (Odessos, Kabile, Augusta Traiana/Beroe and Philippopolis). There existed also local artistic circles in Thracia, especially in the two latter cities, which invited for direct work or borrowing indirectly the schemes and repertorium from the Asia Minor and Syrian mosaic centers. Moreover, Philippopolis, Nicopolis ad Nestum and Parthicopolis are very influenced by Thessalonica and to a great extent by Rome. And finally, Pautalia reveals in the field of the Fountain of Life, the mosaic program in general and the Latin language its belonging to the west Balkan circle, which was transferring the indirect influence of Rome and North Italy.

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Plate I



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Plate I. Psalm 42 on mosaics

1. Carthage, mosaic of a baptisterium, British museum.
2. Cyprus, Nea Paphos, basilica of Chrysopolitissa, deer under the psalm inscription
3. Philippopolis, baptisterium of the Small basilica, general view
4. Philippopolis, The Small basilica, panel I with the deer
5. Salona, mosaic in the consistorium next to the baptisterium

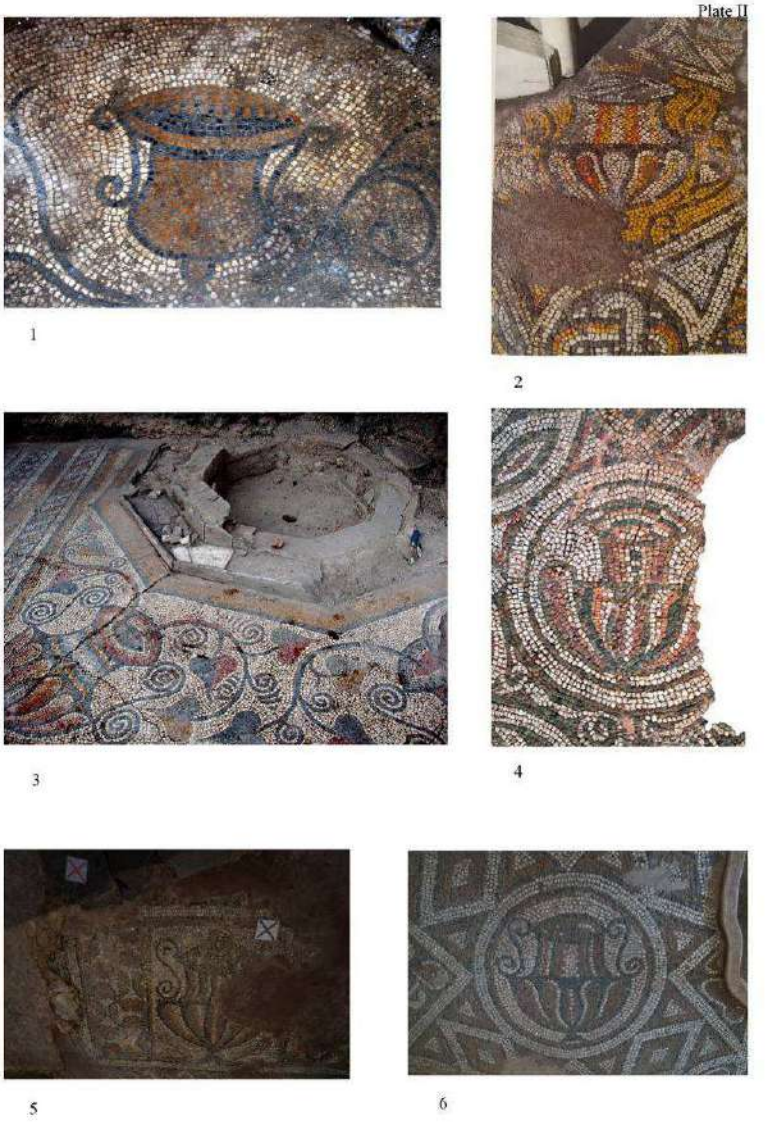


Plate II. Craters.

1. Augusta Traiana/Beroe, Crater in the hall with apse of the city thermen
2. Augusta Traiana/Beroe, Crater in the northeastern part of the residence under the Modern Post office
3. Augusta Traiana/Beroe, Craters around a real fountain in the mosaic with Dionysian thiasos
4. Philippopolis, Crater in the small basilica
5. Crater with pinecone in the corridor of the Episcopal residence Eirene in Philippopolis
6. Crater in room 9 of the Episcopal residence Eirene in Philippopolis

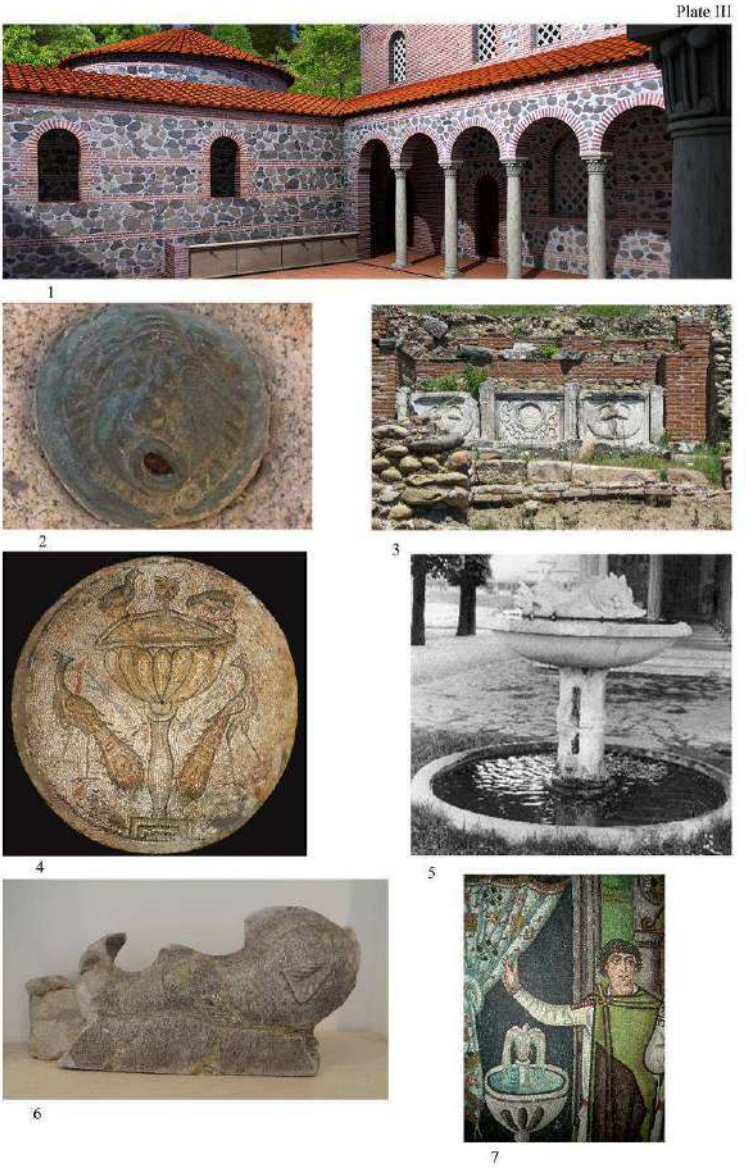


Plate III. Real fountains and real details

1. Parthicopolis, the atrium with the fountain of the Episcopal basilica (No 4)
2. Parthicopolis, basilica No 4, the fountain in the atrium, one of the spouts with the bronze head of lion
3. Heracleia Lyncestis, The fountain decorated with marble reliefs with dolphins
4. Mosaic from Syria with luterion, birds and lion's head as spout
5. Aquincum, Reconstructed Roman fountain ending with a dolphin
6. Philippopolis, the Episcopal residence Eirene. The marble dolphin from a fountain
7. Ravenna, San Vitale. Mosaic panel with empress Theodora, fountain

Plate IV



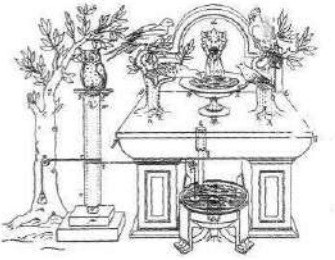
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Plate IV. Luterion.

1. Pompeii, Wall paintings with the personifications of a river god and two nymphs holding luteria-fountains
2. Museo nazionale Napoli,The watering doves of Sosos on luterion
3. Museo nazionale Napoli, The watering birds and a cat on luterion
4. Modern reconstruction of ancient artificial birds acting under the hydraulic pressure
5. Serdica, martyrium under St. Sofia. The apse mosaic with the Fountaine of Life in Paradise

Plate V



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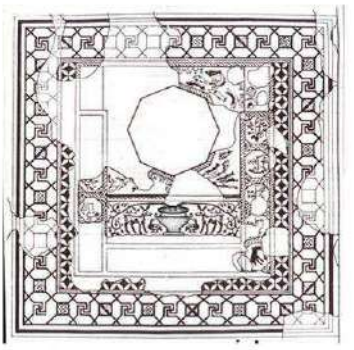
Plate V. Crater

1. Mosaic from Syria with inscription mentioning crater
2. Crater in the corridors along the atrium of the Episcopal residence Eirene in Philippopolis
3. Crater-*fons vitae* in the south aisle of the Episcopal basilica in Philippopolis
4. Crater-*fons vitae* in the wall paintings of the complex under Via Livenza, Rome
5. Greek icon with the Mother of God the Life-Giving Spring



Plate VI. Tombs paintings with the Fountain of Life.

1. The Fountaine of Life on a painted tomb from Philippopolis
2. Paradise with flowers and the Fountaine of life on the painted tomb from Durostorum/Silistra
3. The Fountain of Life in the image of the drinking doves on a painted tomb from Constanza
4. The Fountaine of Life with drinking birds on a tomb mosaic from Tunis, Museum Bardo
5. Paradise with flowers and the Fountain of Life on the painted tomb in Iznik (Turkey)



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Plate VII. The *Domus* on Stoletov street in Augusta Traiana/Beroe

1. Reconstruction of the mosaic composition (after St. Goshev)
2. The panel with the Fountaine of Life
3. The filling with cross
4. The filling with cantharos with wine
5. Lychnidus/Ohrid, mosaic with the Fountaine of Life
6. Sardes, sector Pactolus north, Bad and Mosaik suite, room D (after V. Scheibelreiter-Gail 2011)



Plate VIII. Cantharos

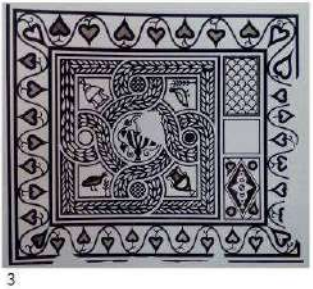
1. . Cantharos-*fons vitae* with vine grapes and ivy leaves. Panel of the cancel of the martyrium under St. Sofia in Serdica (Drawing)
2. Four cantharoses, 3 of them *fons vitae* in the composition with the four seasons in the residence under the Modern Post office in Augusta Traiana/Beroe
3. Cantharos-*fons vitae* in the hall with the image of Eirene in the Episcopal residence in Philippopolis
4. Vase with two dolphin handles in the hall with Eirene of the Episcopal residence in Philippopolis
5. Mosaic cantharos-fons vitae in the main room of the Episcopal residence No 1 in Parthicopolis
6. Mosaic composition in the cancel of the basilica in Mikrevo. Reconstruction of P. Popov



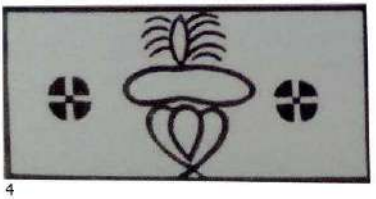
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Plate IX. *Fons vitae* around the cancel

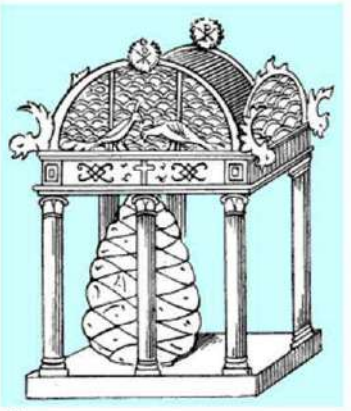
1. Basilica No 2 in Garmen. The mosaic panel with the Fountain of Life from the south side of the cancel
2. Paradise with the Fountain of Life in the Episcopal basilica of Odessos
3. Basilica No 1 in Garmen, north pseudo-transept, *fons vitae*
4. Luterion-vons vitae around the south side of the cancel of the basilica of Bitus in Pautalia
5. Luterion in the naos of basilica of Bitus in Pautalia



Plate X. The Lateran baptisterium and its influence 1.

1. Wall painting from Dura Europos synagogue. Moses and the well in the desert and the twelve Jewish tribes
2. The Lateran baptisterium, interior (reconstruction of O. Brandt)
3. Junca, Tunisia. Mosaic with the Fountain of Life in the basilica
4. Coptic manuscript with the Fountain of Life
5. Stobi, baptisterium (reconstruction of the mosaics of W. Dinsmoor)
6. The Fountain of Life in the manuscri of Godescalc. Paris, National Library, folio 3v 783-3

Plate XI



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Plate XI. The Laeran baptisterium and its influence 2

1. The fountain of Symmachus. Drawing from the 17th century
2. The baptisterium of the Small basilica in Philippopolis. The mosaic panel with two birds
3. The bapptisterium of the Small basilica in Philippopolis. The deer, detail
4. The baptisterium in Plaoshnik with the Fountain of Life

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The Aureole and the Mandorla: Aspects of the Symbol of the Sacral from Ancient Cultures to Christianity [1]

Rostislava Todorova

Abstract: The present paper aims to discuss the conception of the sacred space in which God dwells and its visual representation in Christian iconography. It deals with the problem of the origins of the mandorla symbol that appears on the intersection of the metaphysical and the material space. The idea of the protective luminous cloud in which gods live and act among people is one of the most stable concepts in the ancient art. Enriched by the mystical meaning of the Pythagorean *vesica piscis* it forms the visual symbol of mandorla as a visual representation of the divine space in which God dwells. On this ground, Christian art has developed two basic types of mandorla as a means for expression of the Glory of God in its splendour and spatial character. Here we are not going through the whole process of developing of the Christian mandorla and its variations according the theological alterations of the time. Pointing at a few extant patterns from the Balkan Peninsula and its neighboring areas from the first centuries of Early Christian and Byzantine art, we are aiming to illustrate only the long-lasting ancient notion of representing the sacred space of gods, the dwelling place of the divine by the *vesica piscis* symbol and its successors.

Key words: Christian iconography, Early Christian art, Byzantine art, Mandorla, *vesica piscis*

Резюме: Настоящото изследване дискутира представата за свещеното пространство, в което обитава Бог и неговата визуална репрезентация в християнската иконография. То е фокусирано върху проблема за произхода и значението на символа на мандорлата, който се употребява при изобразяването на пресечната точка на метафизичното с материалното пространство. Идеята за протективния бляскав облак, в който боговете съществуват и се проявяват между хората, е една от най-стабилните концепции в религиозните представи на древния свят. Обогатена от мистичното значение на питагорейската *vesica piscis*, тя формира визуалния символ на ауреолата като визуална репрезентация на свещеното пространство, в което обитава Бог. Въз основа на това,

[1] I would like to express my sincerest thanks and appreciation to Dr. Vania Popova-Moroz for her ideas, inspiration and bibliography that helped me to accomplish this paper.

християнското изкуство формира два основни типа мандорла, като средство за изразяване на Божията Слава в нейният светлинен и пространствен аспект. Без да проследяваме подробно целия процес на развитие на християнския символ на мандорлата, с всички негови вариации в унисон с теологическите дебати на отделните епохи, ще се концентрираме само върху няколко запазени на Балканите образци от първите векове на раннохристиянското и византийското изкуство, за да илюстрираме само дълготрайността на древната представа за сакралното пространство на боговете, за обиталището на божественото, изразена чрез древната символ на *vesica piscis* и нейните наследници.

Introduction

The present paper does not focus on a specific iconographic scheme, but aims to discuss the conception of the sacred space in which God dwells and its visual representation in Christian iconography. Therefore, it deals with the problem of the origin of the mandorla symbol – that strange artistic device which appears as a border zone between the divine and the mundane, between the sacred and the material world, as a mediator between touching and contemplating.

Symbols have been accompanying humankind in its entire history. They are one of the most 'precise and crystallized means of expression, corresponding in essence to the inner life',[2] and closely related to human religious beliefs. In other words, the symbol could be described as a token that stands for something else, and specifically in the encounter with the divine. Therefore, symbolism in the general meaning of the term has always been understood as a particular kind of religious thought.[3] Mircea Eliade points out that 'the symbol, the myth and the image are of the very substance of the spiritual life, that they may become disguised, mutilated or degraded, but are never extirpated'.[4]

Symbols have a universal and a particular meaning at the same time. Universal, since it transcends history and particular, because it relates to a precise period of history.[5] Belonging to a particular time does not obscure the meaning of the symbol because it remains in touch with its archetype and its precise significance never loses its connection with the core meaning of the proto-symbol. It is this uninterrupted connection between the universal and the particular meaning of symbols that makes them lasting and allows their transition through the ages and from one spiritual context to another. It makes them live, migrate and receive new explanations and verbalizations, suitable for the vocabulary of the new religions.[6]

[2] Cirlot 1971, xxix.
[3] Struck 2005, 8906-8907.
[4] Eliade 1991, 11.
[5] Cirlot 1971, xvi.
[6] Goodenough 1956a, 35-36.

The pagan *vesica piscis*

One of the most intriguing symbols with an ancient pagan origin, which has taken an important place in Christian art from its very beginning, is the mandorla symbol (fig. 1). It is one of the general symbols of Christianity along with the nimbus, the sign of the fish, the cross, the lamb, the lion and the anchor.[7] Its oblong-pointed form resulted in creating the term 'mandorla', which derives from the Italian word for 'almond'.[8] The mandorla enters in the Christian imagery as a visual representation of the Glory of God,[9] although some scholars have their reasons for considering it as a symbol with much more feminine meaning.[10]

The Christian mandorla has a multilayered meaning and its different interpretations are caused by the difficulties in the explanation of the essence of what the Glory of God really is.[11] This complexity of the

[7] Clement 1895, 2-8.
[8] Ferguson 1973, 148; Böck 1997, 1-17.
[9] Harrison 1979, 477-483.
[10] Hagstrom 1998, 25-29.
[11] The mandorla has appeared in the Early Christian art because of the urgent necessity of finding a visual device for representation of the abstract phenomenon of the Glory of God described in the Scriptures with the Hebrew word 'kabowd' (translated by *gloria* in the Vulgate and δόξα in the Septuagint). All of these terms represent the supreme and unachievable sacred event of the God's theophany – a direct manifestation of the Divine Dynamics of God. The Greek translation of 'kabowd' with δόξα is a frequently discussed matter, because the Hebrew word literally denotes some physical characteristics such as heaviness, solidity and weightiness. Its second, more abstract meaning is connected with the notion of glory, honor, richness and affluence. It is very important here to underline this binary essence of the word 'kabowd': 'The Targumists will divide the two elements of *kabod* into two new words: *shekinah* (from *shakan*, 'to dwell') will refer to the abiding presence of God's majesty, while *yekara* will be reserved for the sensory splendour of light' (Balthazar 1991, 53). The differentiation of 'shekinah' and '*yekara*' as the two main elements of meaning of the term 'kabowd' is crucial for the proper investigation of the mandorla symbol. 'Shekhinah' refers to the abiding presence of God's majesty – see Werblowsky & Wigoder 1997, 629-630, while 'yekara' refers to the manifestation of God's Glory through light, luminosity, shiningness, radiance, beams and fire. Despite of all different interpretations of 'shekinah' in the Hebrew texts, it had been viewed as a spatial-temporal event, when God 'sanctifies a place, an object, an individual, or a whole people – a revelation of the holy in the midst of profane' (Uterman *et al.* 2007, 440-444). It can be presumed, that 'shekinah' blazed its way into Byzantine iconography through the exegetical tradition of authors as Philo of Alexandria or St. Gregory of Nissa and Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagite, while 'yekara' was dominant for the Hesychastic tradition. As it has been mentioned above, this binary meaning of 'kabowd' did not transit separately into the Greek δόξα and into the Latin *gloria*. Therefore, both notions of the luminosity and spatial presence of God's Glory mixed in verbs have been divided in Christian iconography by the usage of two different types of mandorla – oval and round.

mandorla symbol gives birth to several hypotheses about its origin.[12] One of them finds its roots in the Pythagorean idea of *vesica piscis*.[13] It could be assumed that this geometrical vertically pointed oval form was adopted in Christian art as a visual representation of the Divine Glory of God because of the philosophical background of the symbol[14], in the same manner as the adoption of many other notions from pagan Platonism and Neo-Platonism, for example, were made by Christianity.

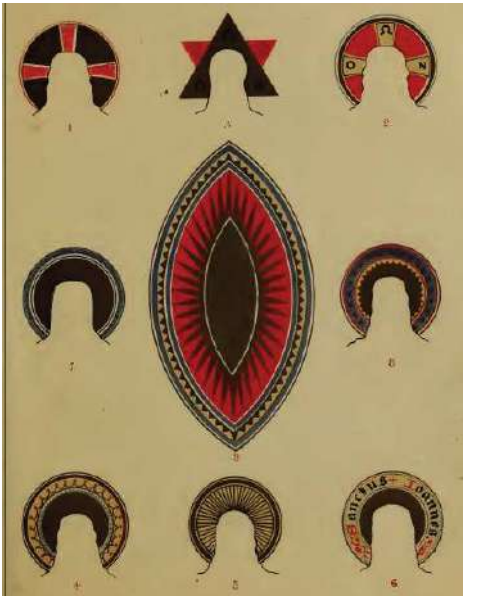


Fig. 1. Mandorla and different types of halos (after Audsley & Audsley 1865, 11, pl. II)

[12] Todorova 2011, 49-53.

[13] Literally, *vesica piscis* means 'bladder of a fish' (Inman 1979, 90). If the intersection of two equal circles is made in the way that both have a common radius and the center of the one lies on the circumference of the other, the result is an almond-shaped geometrical figure (Cooper 1992, 205). It relates to the geometry of the triangle and the Golden Section, and signifies the mediation of opposites (Fletcher 2004, 95). Hereof, the symbol functioned as one of the secret passwords used among the adherents of the Pythagorean sects as a designating sign and as a guarantee for an authentic appurtenance to the cult. These secret passwords usually were enigmatic verbal or visual formulas that verified the membership in a particular cult (Struck 2005, 8907). One of them was the apple – Pythagoreans had the custom to bring an apple as a gift to the strangers and those who understood its symbolism would slice the apple. Sliced across, the apple core depicts a pentagram in the center of a circle, yet sliced lengthwise it forms two intersected circles in the middle of which a *vesica piscis* appears. The *vesica piscis* can be seen in the first geometric construction in Euclid's *Elements* (Proposition I, Book I – the equilateral triangle) – see Alsina & Nelsen 2011, 137; Norwood 1912, 667; Walker 1988, 16; Cooper 1992, 103-104; Netz 2005, 77-98.

[14] Pearson 2002, 80-82.

The visual resemblance of the Christian symbol of mandorla with the pagan symbol of *vesica piscis* is noticeable, although the feminine meaning of the predecessor has raised some problems with the Christian interpretation of the symbol. It has been generally believed that in the context of the pagan imagery the vertical *vesica piscis* denotes fertility and divine femininity, while the horizontal one symbolizes the unity of being.[15] Pythagoreans had used it as a perfect sign of the harmony and the entireness of being with its inherent diversity. For them *vesica piscis* symbolized the all ten couples of opposites formulated by Pythagoras and especially the entire Cosmos as a unity between material and sacred world. An interesting connection can be seen between the *vesica piscis* symbol and the attitude of Pythagoreans towards the fish – it is clear from Plutarch that they had a taboo against catching fish.[16] This esoteric symbol had rapidly became very popular in the ancient art and its egg-like shape had been used for depicting the Cosmos and the birth of life,[17] the feminine archetype of being,[18] the earth-mother.[19] The popularity and wide-spread presence of the symbol can be explained with the variety of meanings based on the 'common ground' shared by the two circles, used in different ancient religions and beliefs.

The concept of *vesica piscis* with all its variety of meanings had easily transited among the ancient religions and cultures. Because of the common oval shape, it was always connected with the sacred meaning of the egg, the almond and the fish.

The oval shape is used as a depiction of the Cosmic Egg, which in many religions symbolizes the principle of life, the hidden origin and the mystery of being, the womb, the cosmic time and space, the perfect state of the unified opposites. In the Egyptian, Chinese, Hindu and Greek symbolism the Cosmic Egg was seen as an origin of the Universe suddenly burst asunder. The sun was considered as a golden egg in Egypt, and the whole sky was believed to be created in the form of an egg of shining metal in Zoroastrianism. Brahmanism teaches for the golden egg of creation, whose two halves formed both worlds - earthy and heavenly.[20] Indian and Druidic symbolic traditions contain the notion of the Egg of the World, and the vault of space was known as an Egg consisting of seven enfolding layers – betokening the seven heavens of Greek cosmogony.[21]

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[15] De Vries 1974, 311.
[16] Goodenough 1956b, 18.
[17] Inman 1979, 47, 90-93.
[18] Hagstrom 1998, 26.
[19] Weir 1978, 29, the Virgin Goddess – see Iwersen 2005, 9601-9606.
[20] Cooper 1992, 60.
[21] Cirlot 1971, 94.



Fig. 2. Alkmene on the Pyre, Greek red-figured wine bowl, Python, c. 350-340 BC, Paestum (Photo credit The British Museum, London)

The symbol of the almond was associated with virginity, yoni,[22] the conjugal happiness, and the reproduction. In many religions, the almond seed signified the divine virgin birth in particular. A good example in this regard can be found in the story of the virgin nymph Nana who miraculously conceived Attis by putting a ripe almond in her bosom. It is interesting, that here in the Phrygian cosmogony the almond figured as the father of all things.[23] In Chinese tradition, it was connected with the feminine beauty, fortitude in sorrow, watchfulness.[24]



Fig. 3. Alkmene and the Hyades, Greek red-figured amphorae, c. 360-340 BC, (Photo credit The British Museum, London)

[22] Apffel-Marglin 2005, 9905-9909.
[23] Frazer 2009, 347.
[24] Cooper 1992, 10.

The symbol of the fish incorporates a huge variety of meanings, however two of them are considered as fundamental: phallic or sexual, and purely spiritual.[25] The fish was associated with all aspects of the Mother Goddess, also it was understood as a token of fecundity, procreation, renewing of life. In Buddhist tradition, the fish is a symbolic footprint of Buddha and denotes the emancipation from all desires and attachments. Buddha himself is described as a Fisher of Men. In Egyptian tradition, the fish symbolized the immortality, the phallus of Osiris, whereas two fishes together represented the creative principle and fertility.[26] In Mesopotamian religious traditions, the fish was seen as a fertility and life symbol.[27] The ancient Greeks had the symbol of the fish as an attribute of Aphrodite, thus depicting love and fecundity. It was also connected with the figures of Poseidon and Adonis. In Hinduism, the fish depicts wealth and fertility and has been understood as an attribute of the divinities of love.[28] The fish symbolism was used in the Roman Empire too, as a device with magical powers or as a holy food of a mystical cult.[29]



Fig. 4. Alkmene on the Pyre, Greek red-figured mixing bowl, Darius, c. 340-330 BC, Italy (Photo credit The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

[25] Frazer 2009, 106-107.
[26] Goodenough 1956b, 14.
[27] Van Buren 1948, 101-121.
[28] Cooper 1992, 68-69.
[29] Dölger 1928, 387-410.

The image of the fish has been an important part of the symbolic system of Hebrew-Christian tradition.[30] In Judaism, fishes are the faithful of Israel in their true element, the waters of the Torah.[31] The fish is the food of the blessed in paradise and the notion about the advent of the Messiah is represented as the great fish on which the righteous will feast.[32] The corollary of the fish as a blessing has its transition in Early Christian Church as a symbol of the Savior.[33] First direct usage of this token among the early Christians can be seen in the fish shape Ιχθύς – the hidden pictogram of Christianity, used during the persecutions in the first centuries AD.[34] In general, the symbol of the fish in Christianity denotes Baptism, immortality and resurrection. The sacramental fish with wine and a basket of bread represents the Eucharist and the Last Supper in the Christian art. The Early Church Fathers used the analogy with fishes and fishers for the faithful and the apostles.[35]

Gradually, however, the popularity of the fish symbol faded at the expense of such symbols as the cross, the dove and the sheep, and after the fourth century its occurrence in Christian iconography became only ornamental.[36] The end of the persecutions and the important change in the official status of Christianity after the Edict of Milan imposed a rapid formation of a new set of visual symbols suitable to depict the new religious content. The allegoric way of expression yielded precedence to the realistic images in Christian art and the adopted in it pagan symbols have received a new significance and usage.

The Christian Mandorla

Because of its symbolic background,[37] and especially because of its form as an intersection zone at which opposing forces or worlds simultaneously divide and meet,[38] the ancient *vesica piscis* symbol has survived as a widely used visual token. In a Christian context, it becomes a representation of the supreme and unachievable sacred event of the Glory of God – the most direct manifestation of the Divine Dynamics of God.[39]

[30] Goodenough 1956b, 3-11.
[31] Goodenough 1956b, 32-35.
[32] Goodenough 1956b, 35-41.
[33] Dunnigan 2005, 3123.
[34] Didron 1965, 344-360; Jensen 2000, 46-51.
[35] Cooper 1992, 68.
[36] Edmondson 2010, 58-59.
[37] De Vries 1974, 311.
[38] Baidock 1990, 38.
[39] Loerke 1981, 15-16.

From Christian point of view, the *vesica piscis* represents together terrestrial and celestial,[40] humanity and divinity, which are inseparably bound together after the Christ Resurrection.

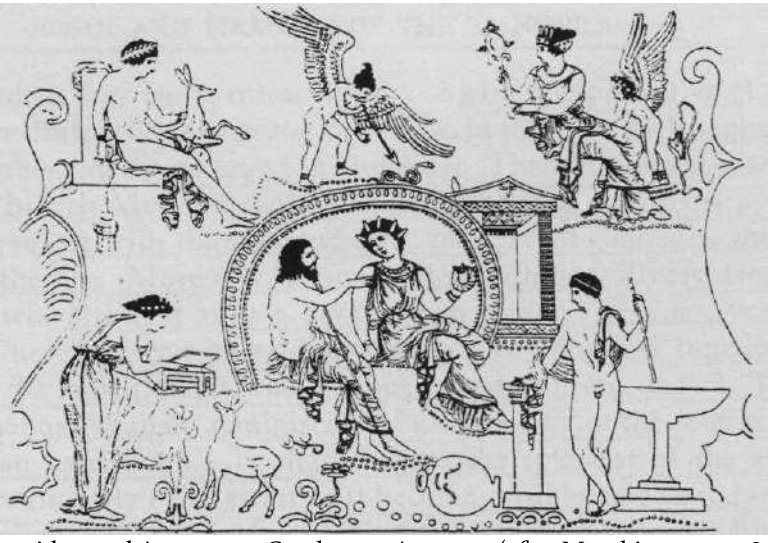


Fig. 5. Poseidon and Amymone, Greek vase, Armento (after Macchioro 1912, 284, fig. 11)

However, the pagan term *vesica piscis* completely disappeared – the adoption of the symbol by the new religion changed its verbal explanation in a typical for the migration process of the symbols way.[41] The first reason for this fact is that the accent of meaning of this ancient symbol as a token of the unity was adapted to a token of the Divinity of Christ. Thus, the Christian mandorla began to relate more closely with the way of expression of the divinity of the ancient gods and the halo as a visual sign of it. The nimbus as a luminous figure around the head of a god or a holy person can be seen in many ancient religions and in addition, sometimes it expresses the idea of an internal supernatural force and hence partakes of the full range of the light symbolism from both the Western and the Eastern traditions. A particular use of an aureole, circumscribing the whole figure can be seen in the Iranian imagery in which the glory 'khvarenah' that belongs to the gods can be given to important humans by the special grace of Ahura Mazda. The aureole could be interpreted as a successor of the Zoroastrian idea of the 'glory' as a manifestation of gods. In the religious doctrine of Zoroastrianism the words "*hvarna*" or "*farnah*" render the material manifestation of the divine blessing and divine inspiration of the

[40] Cirlot 1971, 203-204.
[41] Goodenough 1956a, 36-38.

supreme god Ahura Mazda.[42] The 'glory of god' symbolized by sunrays, lightning, and flames in an oval form around the body, leads humans up to the spiritual insight 'chishta'.[43] This heavenly glory sometimes belongs also to sacred animals such as the cock that helps Zoroastrian gods to keep the spirit of the people awake. Therefore, Sassanian art usually depicts the cock with a halo around its head and circumscribed in a circular or oval aureole.[44] The usage of almond-shaped aureoles of flames around the bodies of the gods is typical also for Buddhists tradition[45] and Islamic representations of persons inside an aureole of flames or in a pearl.[46]

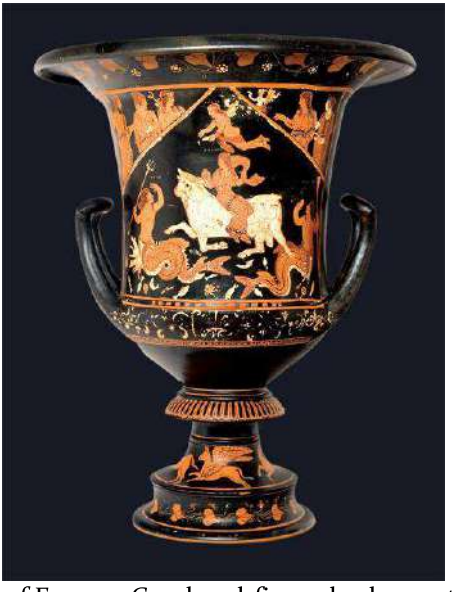


Fig. 6. The abduction of Europe, Greek red-figured calyx-crater, Asteas, c. 340 BC, Paestum (Photo credit The National Archeological Museum, Paestum)

The same artistic device appeared in the manner of representing the Pantheon of gods and their activities in the ancient Hellenistic art.[47] The Zoroastrian notion of the light luminous clouds, that enveloped bodies of gods as a visual sign of their divinity were transferred into Hellenistic art. Greek gods lived and acted among people, but they derived from the cosmic powers

[42] Ramsden 1941, 123-131.
[43] Santillana & Dechend 1977, 40-41.
[44] Babae & Mehrafarin 2014, 2754-2755.
[45] See more in Soper 1949a, 252-283; 1949b, 314-330; 1950, 63-85.
[46] Here the pearl presents the Paradise, where the blessed ones will go after their death – see also Magalis 2005, 6624.
[47] Brendel 1944, 19-20.

and remained bound by the cosmic necessity Ανάγκη,[48] as Virgil described it in the *Aeneid*.[49] It is important here to be underlined that this 'cloud of divinity' in the ancient Greek images had light character, but in certain cases, it had protective functions too – the gods used it for self-protection and for protection of their favorite humans.[50] Good example in this regard is the scene with Alkmene on the pyre (figs. 2, 3 and 4), when Zeus sent Hermes to tell the clouds to bring the rain that put out the fire and formed a rainbow around Alkmene.[51] Poseidon (fig. 5) hides himself and Amymone into a cloud[52] and Zeus used it during the abduction of Europe (fig. 6).[53]

Secondly, the alteration of the term can be seen as a direct attempt for fading the feminine and vaginal meanings of the symbol,[54] because of their unsuitability with Christian dogmatics and the Christian way of understanding God and the Holy Trinity. Precisely this was the reason which forced Didron to write his sentence about the term *vesica piscis*: 'a term so gross deserves to be expunged from every refined system of terminology... invented and employed even to abuse...'.[55] Didron actually gave voice to a thought presumably shared by others since reputable art historians wrote little about this widely used shape in Christian iconography. Most likely, this was the real reason for the term 'mandorla' to have come into use – to describe in more Christian religious terms this visual device as a window into the sacred world or as an aureole of the Glory that surrounds the figure of Christ, the Virgin Mary and rarely some major saints.[56]

Actually, the notion of the divine femininity has partially survived in Hebrew-Christian tradition. 'Shekinah' - one of the elements of the Jewish concept of the Glory of God 'kabowd' has been interpreted as a manifestation of the Wisdom of God in a feminine context.[57] Despite of its absence in East Orthodox Christian tradition, Western Roman Catholic imagery has preserved some traces of the archetypal feminine meaning of the ancient *vesica piscis*.[58] Mandorla with a precise oval-pointed form has been widely used in the Western

[48] About Ανάγκη see more in Rosher 1884, 334; Ziegler & Sontheimer 1964, 332.
[49] Loerke 1981, 15-16; 18.
[50] Brendel 1944, 17-19.
[51] Murray 1890, 225-230; Schmidt 2003, 56-71; Faraone 1997, 40-52.
[52] Macchioro 1912, 282-287.
[53] See more in Pease 1942, 1-36; Cook 1940, 510-520; Lee 2001, 16-21; Jentoft-Nilsen & Trendall 1991, 45-47.
[54] Pearson 2002, 80.
[55] Didron claimed that English 'antiquaries' invented the term *vesica piscis* - see Didron 1965, 108.
[56] Pearson 2002, 80.
[57] Sholem 1997, 140-196.
[58] Hagstrom 1998, 26; Pearson 2002, 83.

Medieval art, especially between the twelfth and fifteenth century AD.[59] The radiant splendor of the 'shekinah' as a feminine aspect of the notion of God has been connected with the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin.[60] The almond has been perceived as a symbol of virginity, fruitfulness and self-production. Then, the almond shape of the mandorla has been connected with 'the mystical Vesica Piscis surrounding the Virgin Mary in some representations in art'[61] and with the 'the feminine element in creation'.[62] According to a twelfth-century text, attributed to the abbey of St. Victor, the oblong shape of the mandorla derives from the symbolism of the almond, which is identified with Christ.[63]

The mystical almond shape permits a multivalent reading of it as a depiction of the heavenly space around Christ in Glory, but also as a sign of His incarnation.[64] Although the Christian elaboration of the symbol is very accurate, the old meaning of the *vesica piscis* as a meeting point of the opposites and as a sign of the new (spiritual) life has not completely faded away. The mandorla indicates the Glory of God around the Holy Virgin and the infant Christ and points the Theotokos as a 'Gate to the life'. Similar meaning some scholars have seen in the iconography of the Anastasis. Here the mandorla highlights the paradox of life coming out of death, so the death itself can be called mother, bringing forth new life: 'The ancient *vesica piscis*, the birth canal or gate of life, is a door from one whole world to another'.[65]

Sometimes the mandorla has been interpreted as a literal expression of the Incarnation of Christ in the womb of the Virgin Mary – when a circle or an ovoid shape surrounds Jesus Christ as an infant inside the body of the Holy Virgin.[66] Although these types of images depicting the

[59] Pearson 2002, 89-91.
[60] Hernandez 2014, 59-76.
[61] Goldsmith 2007, 156.
[62] Naumburg 1955, 440-441.
[63] Cirlot 1971, 21.
[64] Pearson 2002, 113.
[65] Hagstrom 1998, 27.
[66] This type of representation of the Holy Virgin, with the hands outstretched in an *orans* pose and with an image of Christ in front of her chests (Kondakov 1915, 54-123) is usually termed 'Blachernitissa' (Underwood 1967, 40-41), 'Platytera' (Ševčenko 1991, 2170-2171), or 'Episkepsis' (Carr 1991, 43-46). The image of the Virgin has a manifold meaning and the isolation of the significance of a particular image is often a difficult process (Ousterhout 1995, 93), therefore, it is important here to be underlined that the understanding of the oval geometric form circumscribing the infant Christ inside the body of the Most Holy Theotokos as a mandorla is discussible. Some scholars consider this oval or more frequently round device as a medallion. In both cases – when the medallion is hovering in front of the body of the Virgin or when the Holy Virgin holds it (Mathews 1982, 208) – the iconographic schema alludes to the Virgin's physical purity – see Lidov 1998, 381-405. Thus, this representation gives a visual expression of the belief in a virgin mother, however not in a literal but in dogmatic and hierarchical way (Pentcheva 2006, 145-164). See also Grabar 1968a, 128.

Virgin Mary as a real 'tabernacle' of God occur in both – Eastern Orthodox and Western Roman Catholic iconography, the old feminine and vaginal notion of mandorla is not familiar in the Orthodox image tradition. The Virgin Marry appears here as a 'vehicle of salvation'[67] and the mandorla has been used dominantly as a visual sign of the Glory of God, therefore it appears only when the Prime source of the energies, the Source of the Thaboric light, the Master of every creation is depicted. This is the reason why in those rare cases, when the mandorla is drawn around the Most Holy Theotokos alone[68] or around saints,[69] it misses the rays of the Uncreated light, because the glorified human being is illuminated for his/her spiritual feats from the God's Grace, but is not able to be a source of that Grace.

There are more theories about the origin of the mandorla symbol, which are popular among scholars. One of them associates the Christian mandorla with the representation of the rising Sun,[70] or with the images of Victory supporting a shield upon the Roman sarcophagi, so popular in the antique art.[71] Despite of the visual resemblance, the mandorla of Christ cannot be interpreted by this derivation. In Roman art, *imago clipeata* is always a bust portrait, and therefore it is clear that it has the role of an image of an image[72] and what is more, the medallion and the mandorla have different meanings in Christian art.



Fig. 7. The Parabiago patera, silver plate, 361-363 AD, Archeological Museum, Milan (Photo credit Giovanni Dall'Orto)

[67] Carr 1991, 56.
[68] This iconography scheme is frequently used in the iconographic tradition of Mount Athos, because of the dedication of the place to the Most Holy Theotokos.
[69] In very rare occasions, the mandorla circumscribes the figure of a saint, for example in the scene with the assumption of St. Nikolas the Miracle Worker in the icons of the saint with scenes from his life.
[70] Grabar 1968a, 117; Miziołek 1990, 42-60.
[71] Elderkin 1938, 227-236; Brendel 1968, 75-94; Grabar 1968b, 607-613; Zanker & Ewald 2004, 8.
[72] Mathews & Sandjian 1991, 146.

Another theory explains the mandorla as a step forward to more abstract illustration of God's Dynamics instead of the earlier manner for depicting them through *Dextera Dei* in the midst of clouds. Thus, in contrast to the cloud, the mandorla visualizes the uncreated light of God's presence[73] and divine actions as God's speech for example.[74] However, it happens only in a few iconographical patterns and it is difficult to be accepted as a general idea.

A visual resemblance exists also between the Christian mandorla and the Roman representation of Aion – a personification of time. Although the early iconography of Aion had not survived,[75] in general he is represented carrying a hoop with the zodiac,[76] because he eternally turns the wheel of time and the seasons are passing through it.[77] Sometimes, Aion is depicted standing inside the oval zodiac ring (fig. 7), together with other temporal references,[78] or amidst the Chronoi – personifications of the transient and the fleeting times, past, present and future.[79] An interesting relation with the Christian tradition can be seen in the cult of Aion in the fourth century AD in Egypt, where Aion had taken on the new role of god of the mysteries, sprung from a virgin birth.[80]



Fig. 8. King Kanishka's gold coin, c. 110-126 or 126-146 AD,
(Photo credit by Wikimedia Commons)

In addition, the zodiac circle is one of the typical features of the complex iconography of Mithras. In some cases, the zodiac signs designate the

[73] Loerke 1981, 16.
[74] Andreopoulos 2005, 174-177; Weitzmann 1969, 418.
[75] Cohen 2014, 15-19.
[76] Cline 2011, 33-34.
[77] Levi 1944, 269-314; Dunbabin 1999, 122-123, 168-169.
[78] Shelton 1979, 185-186.
[79] Dunbabin 2003, 69-70.
[80] Cameron 1999, 4.

Mithreum as a replica of the cosmos or the everlasting cyclic time, comparable with the wheel of time associated with Aion[81] and Phanes. The image of Phanes is one of the elements of the syncretistic late antique image of the leontocephaline. In the Orphic cosmogony Phanes is the incorporeal god protogonos, born from the cosmic egg and a generator of life. Usually, he was depicted nude, winged and standing within a zodiac ring with an oval form.[82]

Some scholars see a relation between the representation of Buddha in glory and the symbol of Christian mandorla. The first datable representation of Buddha with halo and mandorla around the body on the gold coin of King Kanishka (fig. 8) has been interpreted as the origin of the Christian symbol.[83] The mandorla is explained as a takeover from the Buddhist art[84] where the oval, circular or oval-flamed aureole serves as a sign of divine radiance, circle of light or zone of glory.[85] Such a statement understates the role and the importance of the Graeco-Roman influence on the Buddhist art, in which the Hellenistic Greek and Iranian elements[86] are the main ingredients.[87]

The mandorla in Early Christian and Byzantine art

In general, Christian interpretation of the ancient oval-pointed form favored more theological references. The mandorla has been used to indicate theophanies or visionary experiences like those of the prophets or to solve the problem with the proper depiction of God in Heaven – the aureole of light isolates the supernatural from the rest of the image.[88]

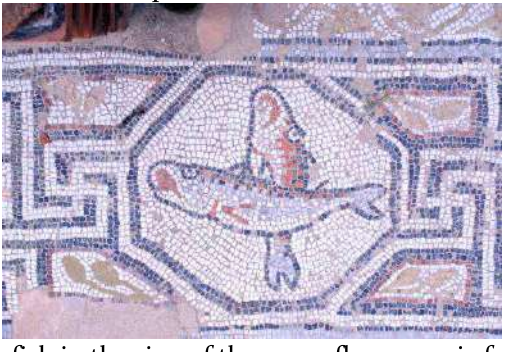


Fig. 9. Two fish in the sign of the cross, floor mosaic from the Big Basilica at Heraclea Lyncestis, FYROM, the sixth century AD (Photo credit Michael Fuller)

[81] Cohen 2014, 29-32; Reinhardt 2009, 418.
[82] Cohen 2014, 19-25.
[83] Chang 2012, 819-820.
[84] Mathews & Sandjian 1991, 146.
[85] Mathews 1982, 208-209.
[86] Henry Frankfort sees the origin of the mandorla in the cult of the Assyrian sun-god – see Frankfort 1965, 208.
[87] Kilerich 1988, 146-149; Soper 1949a, 271.
[88] Grabar 1968a, 116.

Its first usage in Early Christian art was connected with the understanding of the sign of the fish as a hidden pictogram of Christianity and of the Greek word Ιχθύς as an acrostic of our Lord Jesus Christ.[89] The simple drawing of two joining arcs from the first centuries of the persecution of Christians was developed into realistic depiction of fishes. The fish image symbolizes important Christian ideas and believes, as the sign of the Cross for example (fig. 9), or the souls of the Christians.[90]

The earlier classical figural tradition also had passed into Early Christian art. Some mythological representations received a new connotation and found their place in the new imagery. One of them is the representation of Dionysos associated with Christ because of his soterial powers. Another stable classical tradition had survived in the representation of the personifications of the time Aion, the seasons and the cosmos. The cult of Mithras and its iconography also made a deep impact on Early Christian art.[91] Some of the Mithraic images show direct visual likeness with Christian iconographic models. The most recent example has been found in an unpublished stone relief of Mithras with a bull, discovered in the end of 2014 in the Bulgarian village German (fig. 10). Here the resemblance with the Christian mandorla and the iconographical scheme of Christ Tetramorphos is remarkable.

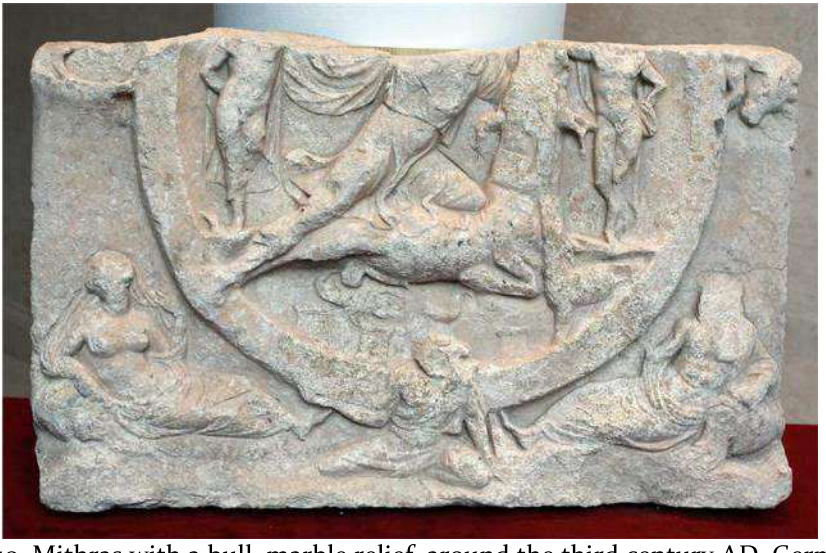


Fig. 10. Mithras with a bull, marble relief, around the third century AD, German, Bulgaria (Photo credit Rumyana Toneva)

[89] Edmondson 2010, 57-58.
[90] Kolarik 2005, 1255-1267; Drewer 1981, 533.
[91] Brilliant 1979, 127-129; Reinhardt 2009, 411-454; Ramsden 1941, 124-126.

However, it is important to note that Christian art has begun to use the mandorla very early. A symbolic depiction of the paradise garden on a roman sarcophagus contains a round mandorla with a human half-figure depiction set on a pedestal,[92] which could be read as a representation of Christ. Among the earliest Christian images with visualized Glory of God are the depiction of Jesus Christ in majesty from the catacomb of Domitilla[93] and the apse mosaic of the Santa Prudenziana Church[94] both from the second half of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century AD. However, in both cases mandorla is used only as a sign of divinity and does not have a specific role related to the context of the plot. The first extant cases when the mandorla could be recognized as an independent artistic device are two small-scaled mosaic panels in Santa Maria Maggiore Church.[95] In both cases, the mandorla represents the Glory of God as a phenomenon mentioned in the corresponding texts of the Old Testament, but with different properties. The mandorla in the scene with Moses has strong protective character[96] and its resemblance with the protective function of the divine cloud, enveloping the bodies of the ancient Greek gods cannot be missed. Moses and his companions go inside the mandorla held by the *Dextera Dei* and cannot be touched by the stones thrown on them.



Fig. 11. Christ in majesty, apse mosaic, Hosios David, late fifth or early sixth century AD, Thessaloniki (Photo credit by Wikimedia Commons)

[92] Velmans 1969, 31.
[93] Mathews 1993, 14, 118, 122.
[94] Makseliene 1998, 12.
[95] Loerke 1981, 19-20; Spain 1968, 169-207; 1979, 518-540.
[96] Todorova 2011, 54.

A century later, Christian art has already developed two basic types of mandorla – oval and round, and has settled its place in the major iconographic schemes. For example, the enthroned Christ in mandorla is the main element of the Ascension iconography, introduced in the sixth century.[97] From the same time, the Transfiguration iconography also includes the mandorla around the figure of Christ.[98] The oval type of mandorla has more spatial characteristics and expresses the full significance of the Hebrew word 'kabowd', whose root meaning is 'weight, heaviness, richness', it unfolds the spatial manifestation of God's presence and 'shekinah' as a dwelling place of God.[99] The round one is more common to the second meaning of 'kabowd' as 'glory, honor, and eminence'. It represents the Divine Light as a visual sign of God's Energies and relates with the splendor notion of 'yekara', but has never lost its spatial properties either.[100]



Fig. 12. Theotokos in mandorla, mosaic, late fifth or early sixth century AD, Church of Panagia Kanakaria, Lythrangomi, Cyprus (Photo credit by Antika.it)

One of the earliest extant patterns of mandorla on the Balkans is the apse mosaic in the Church of Hosios David, the catholicon of the Latomou monastery in Thessaloniki, dated probably form the fifth or sixth century AD

[97] De Wald 1915, 277-319.
[98] Andreopoulos 2005, 108-111.
[99] Lobel 1999, 103-125.
[100] Todorova 2013, 287-288.

(fig. 11). Here Christ is depicted as Tetramorphos, sitting on a rainbow and the spatial character of the mandorla is underlined by grisaille, thus isolating the divine space in which God is dwelling from the rest of the image.[101]

From almost the same time, an apse mosaic with the Virgin and Christ in mandorla has survived in Cyprus (fig. 12). Most probably, the scene has Constantinopolitan origins and there were angels around the figure of the Virgin. What is important here is that the form of the mandorla has a *vesica piscis* shape, its borders are sharp and there are no light beams inside, which strengthen the spatial impression of the mandorla.[102]

Here we are not going through the whole process of developing Christian mandorla and its variations according the theological alterations of the time. Pointing on a few extant patterns from the Balkan Peninsula and its neighboring areas from the first centuries of Early Christian and Byzantine art, we are aiming to illustrate only the long-lasting ancient notion of representing the sacred space of gods, the dwelling place of the divine by the *vesica piscis* symbol and its successors.

Conclusions

Some scholars believe that there is no single uniform significance to any object or shape in the medieval art.[103] Artists have always borrowed ideas and patterns from each other and applied them in various ways, even beyond the borders of their traditional symbolism. Numerous authors comment that elements of the pagan imagery appear in churches in remote areas. These syncretic forms can be observed in almost every European country in places along the pilgrims' routes or in shrines, whose origin is a mixture of pagan and Christian traditions.[104] Thus, the shape of the mandorla symbol may incorporate a number of referents simultaneously, including such with the pagan feminine meaning and spatial protective properties.

Against this background, we can conclude that the ancient *vesica piscis* as a denotation of the divine femininity, the beginning of the new life and the unity, is one of the most stable visual symbols in the history of human culture and beliefs. It derives from the nature and is a perfect sign of its harmony and the entireness of the being, with all its inherent opposites. What is more, the *vesica piscis* evolves from the constant human need of discovering the origins and meaning of life and existence. Thus, it has been firmly connected with the most stable archetypes – the proto-symbols of being, which gave it power for a long migration during the centuries, in

[101] Snyder 1967, 143-152; James 2011, 255-266; Spieser 2011, 1-12; Nasrallah 2010, 361-396.
[102] Sacopoulo 1975; Megaw & Hawkins 1977, 49, 76-77, 94.
[103] Camille 1998, 47.
[104] Pearson 2002, 85.

different cultural and religious traditions. The meaning of *vesica piscis* has never faded as a sign of the unity of being. In this cosmic unity take part such notions as fertility, gate to the life, feminine beginning of being, hidden geometry of nature, but also the divine glory, the reconciling of the opposites, the union of terrestrial and celestial. Its shape and semantics remains polysemic and creates different types of iconographical patterns, adding new features to the general Christian notion of divinity.

The mathematically deduced symbol of *vesica piscis* could be read as a visual emanation of the most important goal of the Pythagoreans – to find a rational grounding for the mystery experience and thus to take part in it.[105] Describing in such a literal way the clash of the opposites – terrestrial and celestial – they create a symbol that thereupon has found its usage in all religious images presenting the dichotomy of being.

The space inside the mandorla where God dwells relates with the notion of the ritual space and some kind of perrirhanteria. It is a circle drawn around the divine that protects it, but in the same time allows the sacred to be visible for human eyes[106] – a constant notion in almost every religion. It is a zone of sanctification and preservation – an instrument of manifestation of the supernatural essence of God, but in the same time a necessary barrier that prevents Him to be touched – that correlates with the mythological stories about Psyche and Eros, and Semele and Zeus, and with the words Our Lord Jesus Christ to St. Marry Magdalene 'Noli me tangere' /John 20:17/.

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The Architectural Elements of the Profane Structures and the Motif of 'Railing of Paradise' in the Early Christian Tombs in Sirmium

Ivana Popović

Abstract: The ‘railing of Paradise' represents the boundary between two worlds, the earthy and the heavently one. There are three versions of the iconographic representation of this motif on the frescoes in the tombs from Sirmium. On the wall paintings in the tomb No. 1 in Čalma, near Sirmium, there are cancelli with herms and balusters, whereas the railng in the western wall of the tomb in Mike Antića Street is covered with the motif of fish scale that was used to represent the architectural element. There are similar artistic solutions on the wall painting of the profane buildings from the earlier periods, and in the context of Christianity, their meaning has been transformed, so the garden fence symbolizes the 'railing of Paradise' and what is behind that is not an imperial park, but a heavenly landscape.

Key words: Sirmium, tombs, frescoes, Early Christianity, 'railing of Paradise'

Резюме: Мотивът „Ограда на Рая” представя границата между два свята, земният и небесният. Съществуват три иконографски варианта на представяне на този мотив върху фрески на гробници от Сирмиум. Върху стенописите в гробница № 1 в Чалма, в близост до Сирмиум, са представени cancelli с херми и перила, докато преградата на западната стена на гробницата на ул. Мика Антика е изпълнена с мотива „рибени люспи”, представящи архитектурен елемент. Подобни са и изображенията в светските сгради от по-ранните периоди, и както изглежда в контекста на Християнството тяхното значение е било трансформирано, така, че оградата на градина символизира „оградата на Рая” и това, което е зад него не е императорски парк, а небесен пейзаж.

Sirmium, administrative, commercial and cultural center of Pannonia, was founded on an exceptionally important strategical point (fig. 1), so already in the 80s it became a colony and later, in the time of Constantine the Great, the town became one of four official residences of the Roman empire. The remains of antique Sirmium, Roman colony and Pannonian

metropolis, the town where many Roman emperors were born, lived and died, are situated under the present-day Sremska Mitrovica, a small lowland town on the left bank of the Sava river, about 70 km to the west of Belgrade. The Sirmium history lasts for six full centuries, from the Roman conquest of Pannonia in the second half of the 1st century BC to the Avarian destruction at the end of the 6th century.[1]



Fig. 1. The location of Sirmium

[1] Popović 1993, 15-53; Mirković 1971, 5-94.

In the beginning of the the 4th century an important community of the first Christians was developing in Sirmium. By the number of martyrs who suffered for their belief in Christ Sirmium has a distinguished place. Every square foot of the city was drenched with the blood of the believers, who, not even under the cruelest torture, did not want to renounce their Teacher. The Christians were usually accused because they did not respect the established norms of conduct. The high state officials carried out the investigation and the trial, and the legal proceedings were carefully registered. One of the authentic legal notes from that epoch is that one about the legal proceedings against Iraeneus, the first historically verified episcope of Sirmium. Iraeneus suffered in the following way: He was beheaded on Easter, April 6th, 304, on the bridge known as *pons Basentis*. He was listed into the universal calendar of martyrs, made at the end of Antiquity on the basis of the local sources.Three days after Iraeneus' martyrdom, on April 9th of the same year, his deacon Demetrius also died as a martyr. There is an opinion, without any strong foundation, that his body was moved to Thessalonike, and that this was the origin of the cult of the great Greek martyr Demetrius. Beside Iraeneus and Demetrius, approximately at the same time, also other martyrs were executed, such as Synerotes, Anastasia, Hermagoras or Hermogenes. Their names, known from the court records, show that the Christian core in Sirmium consisted of Greeks.[2] Several cult structures, dedicated to these martyrs are registered and partially investigeted,[3] but the number of the tombs of the Early Christians is relatively small, mostly because the necropoles have not been suficiently explored, as a result of the limitations imposed by urban archaeology. The fresco decoration with the Christian symbolism is registered only in two tombs. One is from the north-west periphery of the east necropolis of this city, discovered by accident in 2002, during the construction-works in the Mike Antića Street in Sremska Mitrovica, some hundred meters north-west from the basilica of St. Iraeneus. The other belongs to the small necropolis near the village Čalma, located some 10 km north-west from Sirmium. But, the fresco decoration of these two tombs is very interesting, showing the several versions of the iconographic representation of the motif of 'railing of Paradise'.

The 'railing of Paradise', represents the barrier between two worlds, the earthly and the heavenly one. The Paradise was depicted with flowers, vines, grapes, palm leaves, birds, fountains, and other motifs, alluding to the 'garden of Eden'. Beside this solution, the existence of this place can be

[2] Popović 1993, 25-26.
[3] Popović 2013 a, 104-108 (with earliar literature).

suggested by the use of the different biblichal motifs in the fresco decoration of tombs. In the tombs from Sirmium several versions for the representation of the motif of 'railing of Paradise' are registered. The goal of the proposed typology of the representation of the motif of 'railing of Paradise' on the frescoes in the tombs in Sirmium is to demonstrate that all these versions, known from the the tombs in this town and also in the cited tombs and churches in Italy, the Balkans and Pannonia, have originated from the motifs used in pagan art for depicting the parts of different profane architectural structures. The new studies, published between 2012 and 2014,[4] concerning the meaning of the *cancelli* around the garden on the fresco in the south aula of the Basilica Teodoriana in Aquileia, represents a very good support for these observations.

1). The *cancelli* with herms

This type of the 'railing of Paradise' consists of segments formed by cross-bars; these segments are separated by herms with representations of young men.

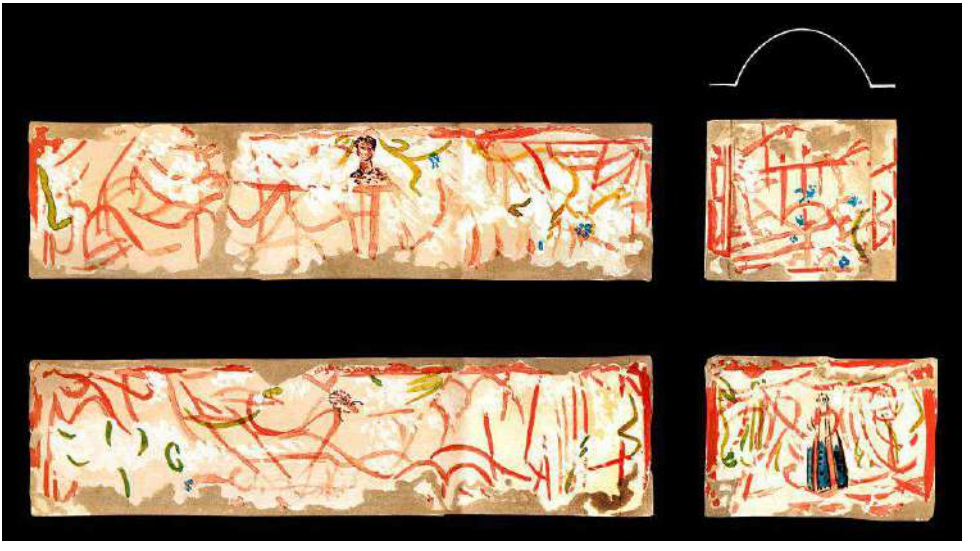


Fig. 2. Tomb No I, Čalma, drawing of frescoes (after Milošević 1973, color plate, with the additon of the latter recognazed bust on the north wall)

In the fresco decoraion of the tomb No I in Čalma dominates the linear ornaments mainly of red and, to a lesser extent, green color (fig. 2). On the south wall a bust of a youth was recognized (fig. 3), and on the east

[4] See note 23.

one, a human figure in a long cloak[5]. On the north wall later was noticed another male bust[6] (fig. 4). In the first publication of these frescoes both busts were explained as the representations of deceased persons, and the female figure in the long dress was treated as a servant, the gifts-bearer.[7] But, observing the entire iconographic scheme of wall-paintings of tomb No I from Čalma, we tend to interpret the depicted composition in another way. The female figure, represented on the east wall, is dressed in a festive blue dress (*dalmatica*) with *clavi*, marked with red color. She has brought her right hand up to the cheek and she is holding the left one on her stomach. We think that the depicted figure represents the deceased woman, who is in front of the railing, waiting for the entrance into the Paradise. On the representations on the south and north wall of the tomb red-color lines dominate, some lines are painted in green color, and the irregularly scattered flowers are noticeable. On the south wall can be seen the bust of a youth, placed on a vertical column, ending with a horizontal line, under which there is a row of vertical lines, so it gives the impression that the bust is placed on a column of the railing. On both sides of the head of the herma, the green garlands are hanging. The same composition, although not so well preserved and hardly noticeable, exists also on the north wall. We tend to recognize in the scenes represented on the south and north wall of the tomb the representation of the railing, composed of more segments, *cancelli*, between which the herms are standing. This would, consequently, be the presentation of the 'railing of Paradise', symbolically represented by blue flowers, garlands and bands, executed in green color. The schematism and the damaged condition of the composition, as also the linear style in its artistic expression, make the detailed reconstruction of the look of 'railing of Paradise' impossible. According to the preserved parts of the wall-painting, it seems that this is the representation of *cancelli* consisting of bars made of metal or wood, and at certain points separated by herms. The construction of cancelli is not entirely clear, because they are depicted with vertical and irregular slant and curved lines, without any details, in abstract style.[8] In similar manner, with red lines crossed in such way that they form an oblique cross, the detail of the 'railing of Paradise' is painted on the north wall of the nartex of the church, resulting from the restauration of the thermal basilica in Varaždinske Toplice (*Aquae Iasae*).[9] Next to the representation of

[5] Milošević 1973, 85-87, Pl. I, with a color-drawing of the compositions on all walls.
[6] Đurić 1985, 133.
[7] Đurić 1985, 169-170.
[8] Popović 2011, 241-243; 2012, 77-80.
[9] Migotti 2011, 96-97.

cancelli with herms on the north and south wall of the tomb in Čalma, the railing is painted on its west apsidal wall above which there is an arch, like a baldachin. Although linear in its artistic expression, this solution reminds of architectural stage settings, represented on frescoes executed in the illusionist style of painting, which was again in fashion during the Constantine's period. On the territory of Pannonia, in the peristyle of a villa at the site Baláca near Lake Balaton, already during the second half of the 2nd century a garden was depicted, in front of which there is a railing, composed of segments with crossed bars.[10] Consequently, also in the Early-Christian art in Pannonian we can follow the process during which the garden, as *locus amoenus*, became an artistic interpretation of the Paradise region. The 'railing of Paradise' was represented in a simple manner, with crossed lines, as in the tombs II and XX in Pécs, or, as in the tomb I in Čalma, in the form of cancelli with herms, used in the pagan times for putting fence around the public, solemn and honorary spaces.



Fig. 3. 'Railing of Paradise', fresco, tomb No I, Čalma, part of south wall (documentation of Museum of Srem, Sremska Mitrovica)

[10] Baldassarre *et al*. 2002, 336, fig. on p. 335.

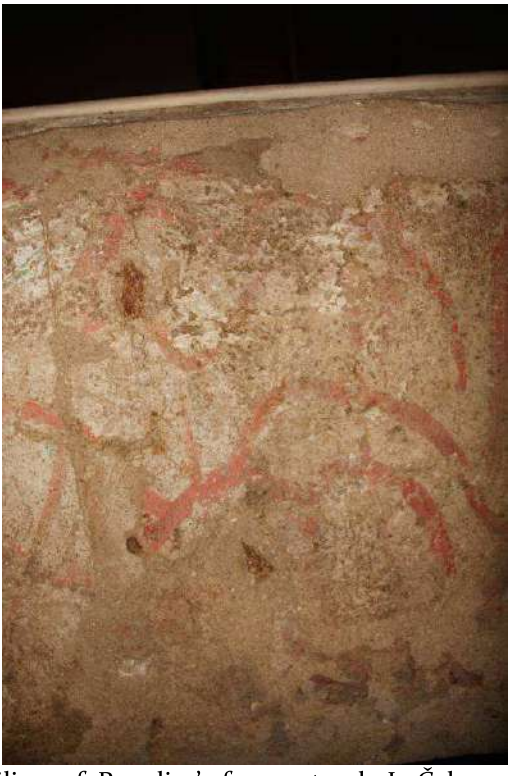


Fig. 4. 'Railing of Paradise', fresco, tomb I, Čalma, part of north wall (documentation of Museum of Srem, Sremska Mitrovica)

The proposed solution of pictorial compositions on the walls of tomb No I from Čalma gains in importance even more if we take into consideration that the figural motifs, represented on the bronze paneling of the wooden reliquary,[11] whose parts, discovered in the tomb, were later explained as parts of two biblical scenes, known as *Abraham's Sacrifice* and *Multiplying of Breads and Fishes*.[12] This confirmed the Christian character of the burial performed in the tomb, although its wall-paintings point to the Christian symbolics only with the motif of 'railing of Paradise'. In the tombs also bronze coins were found, of which the newest one is that of Constans, minted in Thessalonike between 337 and 341,[13] which designates *terminus post quem* for the burial, and also for defining the time when the wall-paintings of the tomb in Čalma were executed.

[11] Milošević 1973, 87, figs. 2, 3, 1-2, Pl. II, III.
[12] The explanation of scenes on the bronze paneling gave I. Nikolajević in the unpublished work 'Grave I from Čalma near Sremska Mitrovica', planned to be printed in volume V of the edition Sirmium. The same author has published the abridged version of her analysis in the synthetic work on Early-Christian graves in Moesia, cf. Nikolajević 1980, 305; Popović 2013 b, 149, Cat. 82.
[13] Milošević 1973, 92.

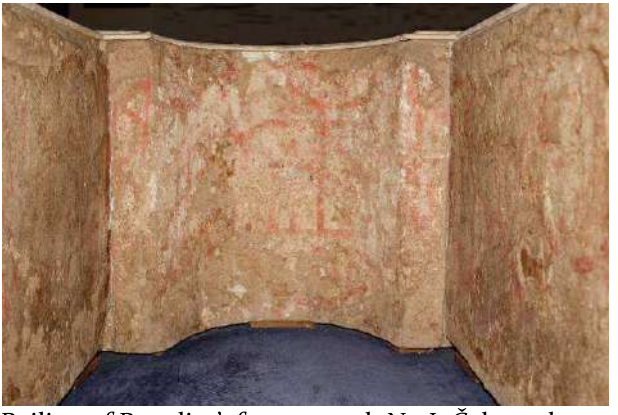


Fig. 5. 'Railing of Paradise', fresco, tomb No I, Čalma, the apse-shaped west wall (documentation of Museum of Srem, Sremska Mitrovica)

2). The balustre

This type of the 'railing of Paradise' is vaulted with baldachin.

On the apsidal west wall of the tomb in Čalama the irregular red lines form a construction looking as a railing with baldachin. The irregularly scattered blue flowers and a band of green color point that this is a landscape, i.e. a field with the railing around (fig.5). If on the walls of the same tomb the 'railing of Paradise' is represented as a railing with herms, on the longitudinal walls, and as a railing vaulted with baldachin on the transversal wall, this would be a confirmation of the thesis, already set forth, that the artistic solution of the 'railing of Paradise' originated from the traditions of representing the railings of imperial gardens, which were, in painting of Constantine's epoch, represented after the models from Hellenistic-Early Roman Period.



Fig. 6. 'Railing of Paradise', fresco, tomb in Mike Antića Street, the west wall (documentation of Museum of Srem, Sremska Mitrovica)

3). The wall depicted with the fish scale motifs with vegetal fillings

This type of the 'railing of Paradise' is painted using the fish scale motifs.

On the west wall of the tomb in Mike Antića Street, the ornamental field is bordered by an edge in red color, which is following the edges of the wall (fig. 6). The interior of this field is painted with the motif of fish scales, also marked with red color. The motif is represented in five horizontal rows, in which it is in alternation painted with red and ocher color, and because of the shape of the ornamental field, the number of scales is not equal. In the first row there is one bigger, and, in the corners, two smaller white fields in the shape of scales, in the second there are three ocher fields, in the third four white, in the fourth four ocher, and in the fifth four white fields. In the fields vegetal ornaments are represented, executed in green color. In the white fields a tree is painted, sometimes very schematic, and in the ocher fields a flower is represented with a round petal and a short stem, which is, in some cases, missing. In the first field of the second row instead of the flower an ivy-leaf is represented. In the middle of the third and fourth ornamental representation the wall of the tomb is damaged, so part of the representation is missing. The tomb is dated in the middle of 4th century.[14]

The plant motifs inside the field of fish scales, the ivy-leaf and the tree, very probably the tree of life, clearly show that, in this case, the picture painted on the wall, represented by fish scale motifs, is a depiction of the 'railing of Paradise', taken over from the repertoire of pagan art.

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On the lateral walls of the tomb in Čalma the 'railing of Paradise' is repersented by the simplified version of the *cancelli* with herms, the railing is used, according to the works of visual arts, but also to the facts from the written sources, to put a fence around the top of podium of imperial box in the theatre or hippodrome, but also around any other public space in which events of official or spiritual nature took place.[15] The archaeological finds from the villa 'Armira'[16] and Dolna Kremena[17] in modern Bulgaria show that the marble *cancelli* with herms were placed between the

[14] Popović 2011, 228-234; Popović 2013 b, 152, fig. 54.
[15] Popović 2012, 65-71 (with the examples from the visual arts).
[16] Mladenova 1965, 20-23; 1969, 528; 1975; 1991; Dinchev 1997, 58-61; Kabakchieva 2011, 229, Abb. 3-4.
[17] Mashov 1988, fig. 2.

columns of the colonnade in the peristyle of the villa and the bronze railing with herms of Aesculapius and Luna, discovered in Mediana near Niš (Naissus), probably marked the entrace of the shrine, to which in the time of emperor Julian the apse of the triclinium in the villa was turned.[18] Similar marble railings also were placed around the imperial gardens. Judging by the iconographic solutions, the frescoes with these themes appeared during the 4th century, relying on the traditions of the 1st century paintings, in other words, on images of the imperial gardens surrounded by marble walls, such as the picture of Livia's garden at her villa in *Prima Porta*, near Rome.[19] The parks shown on these frescoes were depicted as places full of trees and plants with fruits, in which there were fountains and peacocks roaming around, while birds flew down and perched on the wall. These iconographic solutions show that the parks were delightful places (*loci amoeni*), which would, in the 4th century frescoes, acquire the symbolic meaning of Paradise, and the walls of the gardens would become the boundary between the real world and the landscape of Paradise.[20]

But, the evolution of pictures of enclosed gardens into the symbolical representation of Paradise was not so fast and rectilinear, both at the levels of iconography and of meaning. So, the 'railings of Paradise', assembled of *cancelli* formed of crossed wooden bars, or, more probably, of metal bars, behind which the plants can be discerned, are represented on frescoes in the Oceanus-crypt in catacombs of St Callixte, in catacombs of St Domitilla and of St Peter and Marcellinus (Pietro e Marcellino) in Rome,[21] but also on the walls of tombs II (Tomb with a jug) and XX in Pécs.[22] But, on the fresco painted in *arcosolium* of catacombs of St Cyriaca in Rome, in front of the railing with herms, behind which there are plants, two animals are represented, probably a calf and a sheep. One of these animals is grazing grass in the meadow that is on the green pasture ground, which, in accordance with the biblical picture of the perfect place (Psalm 23, 1-2), symbolizes the Paradise scenery. On the other hand, on frescoes from the socle of the south wall of the south aula of Basilica Teodoriana in Aquileia, erected between 314 and 319, in front of the garden railing there were winged *genius* and birds. This is, also, the railing placed in front of Paradise, symbolized by peacocks, plants and a fountain, elements which are characteristic of representations of imperial gardens. The picture of enclosed Paradise scenery on the wall of the south aula of the basilica in

[18] Vasić 2004, 79-109.
[19] Baldassarre *et al*. 2002, 151, fig. on pp. 152-153.
[20] Popović 2012, 71-75.
[21] Willpert 1903, Taf. 134, 2; 121; 143; 218, 2.
[22] Fülep 1984, 45, T. XXI, 1-2; Hudák & Nagy 2009, 34, pictures 12-14; 37, picture 15.

Aquileia is entirely in accordance with the floor decoration of the same room, i.e. of the mosaic representations of sleeping Jonah and of Good Shepherd.[23] 'Railing of Paradise', consisting of two cancelli with crossed bars, between which there is an entrance – 'gates of Paradise', with a fountain in the background, is also represented on the north wall of tomb no 89 in the east necropolis of Thessalonike. Behind, there is a field strewn with flowers that symbolize Paradise garden, and on the railing, next to the 'gates of Paradise', two peacocks are standing. The tomb is dated in the fourth decade of the 4th century.[24] For the analysis of 'railing of Paradise' with herms between *cancelli* especially interesting is the representation from the north wall of tomb no 90 in the west necropolis of Thessalonike, dated into the period after 327. Between cancelli with crossed bars of this railing there are not herms, but columns with bigger cones on the top, behind it there is a field with flowers, and above are the birds pecking grapes.[25] Consequently, although the iconographic solutions of the railing and the garden on frescoes from the room in Via Genova, from catacombs of St Cyriaca, from the tombs no. 89 and 90 in Thessalonike and from the basilica in Aquileia are closely related, their symbolics are different, considering that, unlike the others mentioned above, the pictures from Via Genova do not belong to the Christian context. But, all these frescoes show that numerous motifs, represented on the wall-paintings from the earlier periods, in Late Antiquity continued to be used in a different sense, of course, with some iconographic modifications. This is also proven by the fresco on the socle of the south wall of the south aula of the basilica in Aquileia, on which the railing of Paradise Garden is depicted, in front of which there is a winged genius. It can be supposed that on the paintings of railings of some parks there were also painted sculptures or herms,[26] so that the basically pagan model of cancelli with herms, at first designed for enclosing the public, official or festive spaces, started to be used in the Christian context of the picture of 'railing of Paradise', as in the case of the railing depicted on the fresco from the areal of the so-called Domus Pietri in the catacombs of St Sebastiano in Rome.[27] The above mentioned 'railing of Paradise' represented in the arcosolium of the catacombs of St Cyriaca in Rome[28] also belongs to the same type. Anyway, the Paradise Garden itself,

[23] Salvadori 2006, 171-184; Novello *et al.*, 2012 101-105; 2013, 143-151; Novello 2013, Cat. 113; Salvadori *et al.*, 2014, 159-161, T. LVI, LVII.
[24] Μαρκής 2006, 159, Σχέδ. 101, Πίν. 12γ.
[25] Μαρκής 2006, 159-160, Σχέδ. 102, Πίν. 12δ.
[26] Gerke 1952, 130; Fülep 1984, 45.
[27] Gerke 1954, 169.
[28] Marucchi & Sägmüller 1912, Abb. 34.

enclosed by such railings, can be treated as a sort of exclusive space, designated for the chosen ones, i.e. for those who lived in chastity. Consequently, the developped representation of the 'railing of Paradise' on the south and north walls of the tombs from Jagodin Mala in Niš[29] and its linear version from Čalma near Sirmium was made after the already widely accepted pattern of painting this motif, used on frescoes in the catacombs in Rome and in the south aula of the basilica in Aquileia.

The examples from the frescoes in the tombs in Sirmium show that apart from the form of *cancelli* with herms, the 'railing of Paradise' can be represented as a balustre, the motif is also used for the garden's and parks' decoration, as it was shown on the fresco in the 'villa grande' under the basilica of St. Sebastiano in Rome.[30] But on some occasions this barrier between two worlds is depicted as one wall, covered with the motif of fish scale. In wall painting, the fish scale motif was most commonly used to designate architectural elements, such as the skirting in a profane building from Late Antiquity in present-day Sofia (Serdica),[31] or parapet panels on the frescoes of some tombs in Thessalonike.[32] But, in the context of the other motifs and the place in iconographic solutions of tomb fresco decoration, the wall painted this way can be treated as one 'railing of Paradise'. This opinion can be confirmed by the use of the vegetal fillings in the fish scales, which does not represent a common decorative scheme in the antique wall painting. The flowers, ivy-leafs and threes of life in the scales fields symbolize the Paradise region behind it, demonstrating that this wall is not a part of some profane structure, ordinary depicted by the fish scales without the vegetal fillings. But, the wall painted on the fresco in the west wall of the tomb in Mike Antića Street had a different meaning, which testifies to the phenomenon of *interpretatio christiana* from the earlier known symbols, motifs and themes. This conclusion is confirmed by the scenes of Jonah cycle on the lateral walls of the tomb.

Altough the 'railing of Paradise' on the frescoes in the tombs in Sirmium is represented in different ways, all this versions originate from the motifs used in the earlier periods, depicting some parts of the architectural structures, railings around the public spaces, walls, skirtings and parapet panels. But, in the Christian art the meaning of these motifs has been changed, as the meaning of the picture of the imperial gardens, as well. But, while in the Christian art the representation of the 'railing of

[29] Mirkovich 1956, 68-71, sl. 10-13; Popović 2012, 65-66, 75, figs. 18-19; 2013 b, 151, fig. 73; Jeremić 2014, 44-46, figs. 28-29.
[30] Taccalite 2014, 532-533, T. CLXVIII, Abb. 3-4.
[31] Pillinger *et al.*, 1999, 80, No. 65, Abb. 173, 174.
[32] Μάρκης 2006, 135, 186, Σχέδ. 141-142, Πιν. 24.

Paradise' is analogue with the image of the *cancelli* with or without herms, used in the construction of some profane structures, in the same context the ideal picture of the imperial parks was replaced by the shematization, i.e. the representatation of plants, birds and grapes behind or over the railing. The schematized representation of the 'railing of Paradise' in Čalma can be observed as an attempt of painting the motifs which the artists just took over from the artistic centres of North Italy, which were geographically not far away from Sirmium and the other centres in Pannonia, as Varaždinske Toplice (*Aquae Iasae*) and Pécs (*Sopianae*), where frescoes of similar style are registered. On the other hand, the artistic solution for the motif of the 'railing of Paradise' in the tomb in Mike Antića Street symbolically denotes the parapet panel, as the realistically represented panels in the tombs in Thessalonike. The thesis that Sirmium was a town between East and West is confirmed by these observations.

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