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edited by
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Introduction

The issues of liturgy in the Late antique Balkans remained beyond the scope of the scholarship so far. However, when they are discussed in one form or another, they mainly concern the problems of Constantinopolitan liturgy. This is understandable, considering the written sources, on the one hand, and the importance of Constantinopolitan liturgy not only for the late antique Balkans, but also for the medieval Balkans. Ignoring the problem is unfounded, though, not only because of the existing different regional practices in the Balkans at that time, often associated with established local traditions (a complete unification of liturgical practices is still far from being talked about, especially before the second half of the 5th century), but also due to the influence that the region had on Constantinople, which did not bypass the liturgical practices in the capital. It seems that despite the strong influence of Antiochian liturgy, the liturgies found in the Balkan provinces of the empire, a significant part of which actually represent the hinterland of the imperial capital, also played a significant role in the construction of the Constantinopolitan liturgy itself. Therefore, underestimating the problems of liturgical practices of the Late antique Balkans not only limits the study of the Late antique liturgy in general, but also more specifically of Constantinopolitan liturgy, which later became the leading one in the empire not only during Late antiquity, but also in the Middle Ages. Undoubtedly, the roots of a considerable part of the specific liturgical practices in Constantinople, and subsequently in the Byzantine Empire, can be found precisely in the local liturgies of the Late antique Balkans. With the current issue of Studia academica Šumenensia, we hope not to fill this gap in scientific research, which is actually impossible, but rather to initiate the study of the issue of the liturgy of Late antique Balkans, which subsequently, through future similar studies, will allow more comprehensive research to be done and the current topic will be able to take its rightful place in science.

The structure of the presented issue of SAŠ is based on the specifics of the researched topics, but also on the chronology and nature of the sources. This allows the presented studies to be organized into four groups, which reveal separate aspects of the main theme, separated by geographical or chronological frameworks.

The first group includes the studies of Alenka Cedilnik, Turhan Kacar and Todor Enchev, which are based mainly on written sources. They study both private issues, i.e. those that can be found within a particular community, as well as more general ones. For example, Alenka Cedilnik's research focuses on the liturgical practices of the Anomoeans based on Photius' *Epitome* of Philostorgius' *Church History*. As the author shows, despite their desire to separate themselves from other Christians with the help of liturgical practices, it seems that they did not take decisive steps in this direction by introducing significant innovations. Turhan Kacar's research examines the question of the participation of the Balkan bishops in the ecclesiastical councils in the 4th century, which helps to illuminate some aspects of the regional solidarity shown between them, which also shaped ecclesiastical groupings in the ecclesiastical politics in this century. It also allows to reveal the diverse aspects of ecclesiastical behavior, secular politics, personal problems, and theological preferences in the region, which directly concerns the main theme of the issue. Todor Enchev, on the other hand, explores the problem of laity entering the altar spaces of house churches and touching the Holy Table based on early Christian sources from the 4th century, issues that are very closely related to liturgy and practical activities in the altar, but also to the layout of the altar space. The author reveals the persistence of these practices, which a Byzantine source from the twelfth century attests as current. Despite the attempts of the great canonist patriarch Theodore Valsamon to ban it, the laity preserved it with the argument that it was an ancient practice that should not be forbidden.

The following studies are mostly based on the results of the archaeological excavations, which can be used to study the main topic of the present issue of SAŠ. Hristo Preshlenov's research deals with the Early Christian liturgical space on the southwestern Black sea coast in terms of the Christian basilicas - their study and preservation, historical topography, separate liturgical architectural space, holy relics, graves *'ad Sanctos'*. The buildings are three-nave 'Hellenistic' basilicas with wooden roofs and an elongated (*Moesia Secunda*) to a shortened

(*Haemimontos*) nave, some of them adopted pre-Christian sacred spaces. The study shows that the planning of the liturgical space is in accordance with the ratios of the 'golden section', close to those applied in Constantinople, with the composition and plastic volumes based on symmetry, changing in accordance with the differentiation of the church's liturgical rite.

The next study by Ivo Topalilov, deals with one of the innovations introduced in the churches of Thrace after the middle of the 5th century, namely the chapel (*parekklesia*). The author associates it with the growing importance of the cult of relics and with the integration of the local liturgy with that of Constantinople as a consequence of the decision of the Fourth Ecumenical Council held in Chalcedon in 451, mentioned in canon 28. The construction of the chapel not only changed the plan of the complex from an architectural perspective, but also changed drastically in some aspects the liturgy. It was not only an ecclesiastical but also an imperial initiative, which was part of the *harmony* between state and church proclaimed by Arcadius and reached the religious life of the communities in Thrace.

Alexander Minchev's study is again based entirely on archaeological data. He investigates the problem of natural and artificial lighting in Christian churches in the Late Roman Empire (4th-6th centuries) using as an example the material found in Bulgaria. In addition to the presentation of various lamps, candlesticks, candelabra and polycandles, known from finds and frescoes and wall mosaics from the same era, he also discusses their symbolic meaning on the basis of texts in the New Testament and in some apocrypha, which reveal their significant role in the Christian religion and liturgy.

Snežana Filipova's article also deals with liturgical furniture based on the examples found in R. North Macedonia. Although the plan of the churches show Constantinopolitan and Syrian influences, some of them show unusual features, such as a kuklion, a rare placement of the pulpit in the altar space, two pulpits, external entrances to the apse or to the side aisles; presence of internal and external narthex; incorrect location of the entrances from the outer to the inner narthex; tribelon and pulpit accessible from the west side. They undoubtedly had an impact on the specifics of the liturgy during that period in the region.

The next group of artifacts already concerns issues of the late antique liturgy, the study of which was made on the basis of data obtained from specific geographical locations. Thus, Svetla Petrova's research reveals the role and significance of masonry benches in the

liturgy based on examples provided by several basilicas in Partikopolis and its area. They are placed in the *skevophylakion* and the annexes, in the vestibule, the south and north aisles of the basilica and denoted the gender of Christians present at the long rituals and liturgical activities and the care for the sick. In the *skevophylakion* and the waiting room they also served to place the gifts brought by the Christians. Similar benches are found both in Greece and Constantinople.

With the liturgical arrangement of the interior, and all the related liturgical fittings and fixtures therein deals Vassil Tenekedjiev, based on the results of the archaeological excavations, modern and old, of the Early Byzantine Church on Djanavara Hill near Varna (Odessos) (middle of the 5th – beginning of the 7th century). The study of the elements of the liturgical furniture shows that in the 6th century the interior of the church was fundamentally renovated, which had an impact on the liturgical arrangement of its interior. Moreover, in contrast to the prevailing thesis about a specific connection of the liturgical planning of the interior with the Middle East, it becomes clear that the liturgical interior arrangement is quite usual for the Diocese of Thrace and some of the features must be explained by influence from Constantinople.

Georgi Atanassov's study also deals with some features of liturgical practices in Basilica No. 3 in Late antique Zaldapa, which are accepted as part of Constantinopolitan liturgy. This presumption allows him to connect the specific architectural elements of the church building with the *First Entrance* and the *Entrance of the Mysteries*, as well as to offer an interpretation of some of the rooms related to liturgy and to reveal liturgical activities. The change in the liturgy after the middle of the 6th century also had an impact on the architectural features of the building.

Miša Rakocija's research focuses on another type of Christian building, namely the martyrium of the Basilica of the Martyrs in Niš. Based on old photographs and the discovered architectural elements, together with drawings from a slightly later Early Christian tomb nearby, on the wall of which a sketch drawing represents the interior of the martyrium, he reconstructs the interior of the building, the symbolism of the drawing in the tomb and its function in accordance with the proposed fictional reconstruction of the interior of the martyrium.

The focus of the joint research of Iva Dosseva & Stanislav Stanev are two marble tables that were part of the interior of the Episcopal

Basilica of Philippopolis. According to the authors, the one with the sigmoid shape originally functioned in a secular context and was secondarily used in the basilica as a functional element of its interior, while the other one was used according to its original purpose. It is assumed that both tables were not related to the altar and were used during the last period of the basilica.

Rania Michail's study allows us to trace the degree of influence and adoption of architectural features from a given region, in this case the island of Cyprus, which, like Thrace, is located along the pilgrimage routes to the Holy Land, but unlike it away from the important sea trade routes of the Mediterranean. It becomes clear that despite the intense influence from different regions of the *orbis christianus antiquus*, the architecture of the island presents some characteristics of its own that are not found elsewhere, such as the specific architectural form and the division of the baptisteries in the 5th century. It is also understood that the development of the architectural plan and spatial perception of the Cypriot baptisteries was directly related to the baptismal liturgical tradition of the island, which was first influenced by the Syrian-Antiochian tradition and then by the Jerusalem one, with those of the 6th century revealing the fusion and the continuation of local traditions in Byzantine architecture.

And the last one chronologically is the study of Dobriela Kotova, which reveals the original creative idea and its skillful literary realization of the composition of the 43rd sermon of Konstantin Preslavsky in his Didactic Gospel at the end of the 9th century. Created entirely in the spirit of the medieval literature and by all the rules of the rhetorical genre, the speech impresses with its emotional charge, with its ingenuity and creative ideas, with the deep pastoral concern of its author for his congregation. The Gospel itself is not only a phenomenon in the early church literature in Bulgaria, but it is also related to the history of the Byzantine New Testament catenas, their reformatting and new life in a Slavic environment.

Ivo Topalilov, Vania Popova
and Svetlana Nedelcheva

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Liturgical Fragments in Philostorgius' *Church History*

Alenka Cedilnik

Abstract: Based on Photius' *Epitome* of Philostorgius' *Church History*, this article sheds light on the liturgical practices of the Anomoeans. Special attention is paid to: 1) the doxology "Glory be to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit" or "Glory be to the Father in the Son and in the Holy Spirit", 2) the eucharist, 3) worship of sacred images, and 4) fasting.[1] Despite Philostorgius' emphasis that the Anomoeans wanted to separate themselves from other Christians also with the help of liturgical practices, based on selected examples, it seems that they did not introduce innovations for the most part.

Keywords: Philostorgius, Anomeans, doxology, eucharist, sacred images, fasting

Резюме: На основата на *Съкращението (Епитоме)* на Фотий на *Църковна история* на Филосторгий, тази статия хвърля светлина върху литургичните практики на аномеите. Специално внимание е отделено на: 1). доксологията "Слава на Отца чрез Сина в Светия Дух" или "Слава на Отца в Сина и в Светия Дух", 2) евхаристията, 3) поклонението на свещените образи и 4) постът. Въпреки че Филосторгий подчертава, че аномеите са искали да се отделят от останалите християни и с помощта на литургичните практики, въз основа на подбрани примери изглежда, че в по-голямата си част те не са направили нововъведения.

For most of the fourth century, the Christian Church was embroiled in the Arian controversy sparked by the Alexandrian presbyter Arius and his theology of the transcendent God. Because Arius gained not only many followers but also many opponents, the controversy quickly spread. To end the troubles, Constantine convened the first ecumenical council in Nicaea (325). Although most of the bishops gathered at the council signed the Nicene decrees, the questions raised by Arius still did

[1] Philost. *h.e.* 10.12.

not receive definitive answers. Therefore, the debate over the divinity of the Son, His relationship with the Father, and the Holy Trinity continued, and the number of theological positions grew. Those that were not convinced by the Nicene term *homoousios* sought new solutions. Among them, the teaching that the Son is *anomoios* (unlike) to the Father was the most extremely opposed to the Nicene formula. The founder of this doctrine was Aëtius, and so his followers were formerly called Aëtians,[2] and afterward—after Aëtius' pupil Eunomius—Eunomians or simply Anomoeans.

The result of the controversy was not only dogmatic differences, but also liturgical changes. Aëtius, and later his successors (especially Eunomius), tried to draw a clear line between the Anomoeans and all other Christians, not only the Nicenes (which was a matter of course) but also other pro-Arian groups.[3] To achieve this goal, they introduced special features into the liturgy. In Photius' *Epitome* of Philostorgius' *Church History* the historian, Eunomian himself, lists the specifics of the following elements: 1) the doxology "Glory be to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit" or "Glory be to the Father in the Son and in the Holy Spirit",[4] 2) the eucharist,[5] 3) worship of sacred images,[6] 4) baptism,[7] and 5) fasting.[8] This article focuses on four of these specifics (the doxology, the eucharist, worship of sacred images, and fasting).

The doxology

> He says that Flavian of Antioch, having gathered together a crowd of monks, was the first to cry; "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit!" For some of those before him had said, "Glory be to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit," this being the more popular acclamation, while others had said, "Glory be to the Father and to the Son in the Holy Spirit." (Philost. *h.e.* 3.13)[9]

[2] Socr. *h.e.* 2.35.14; Soz. *h.e.* 6.26.13.
[3] Philost. *h.e.* 3.19, 10.4; Socr. *h.e.* 2.35.13–14; Soz. *h.e.* 4.12.1–2.
[4] Philost. *h.e.* 3.13.
[5] Philost. *h.e.* 3.14.
[6] Philost. *h.e.* 7.3.
[7] Philost. *h.e.* 10.4. Anomoean baptism is discussed in detail by Vaggione 2000, 330–344.
[8] Philost. *h.e.* 10.12.
[9] Translated by Philip R. Amidon.

Before the passage quoted above, Philostorgius speaks of Athanasius' return to Alexandria in 346. One can therefore assume that the situation described above belongs to approximately the same time. The ecclesiastical historians Sozomen[10] and Theodoret[11] prove this chronology. They present the introduction of various forms of doxology in Antioch as part of the events that accompanied Athanasius' return in 346. Theodoret's report is the most detailed of the three.[12] When presenting a complication that divided the Christians of Antioch on how to recite the doxology, he includes the bishop of Antioch, Leontius, in his report. According to it,[13] the bishop disguised his true belief by uttering the controversial part of the formula in an undertone lest anyone could hear what he was saying.

Although none of the three ecclesiastical historians mention Aëtius directly in connection with searching for the most appropriate doxological formula, it would be impossible for him not to be included. When Leontius was elected bishop of Antioch in the spring of 344,[14] Aëtius was in Alexandria. On the news of the consecration of his former teacher and supporter,[15] however, he returned to Antioch. Soon afterward (probably in 346),[16] Leontius ordained him a deacon and allowed him to teach ecclesiastical doctrines in the church.[17] Thus Aëtius, who grew up in Antioch,[18] was again in the city and a deacon of the Antiochian Church when Flavian, the pro-Nicene lay ascetic[19] and later bishop of Antioch, introduced the new doxological formula. Socrates[20] writes that Aëtius, as a teacher, began to astonish people by the singularity of his doctrine. Due to its content, Aëtius was certainly not among those that accepted Flavian's innovation.[21] Flavian's

[10] Soz. *h.e.* 3.20.
[11] Thdt. *h.e.* 2.24.
[12] For a more detailed analysis of the passages, see Kopecek 1979, 96–105.
[13] Thdt. *h.e.* 2.24.3.
[14] At the third Synod of Antioch; Vaggione 2000, 26, n. 81.
[15] Philost. *h.e.* 3.15.
[16] Kopecek 1979, 96.
[17] Philost. *h.e.* 3.17; Soc. *h.e.* 2.35.5–6; Thdt. *h.e.* 2.24.6. See also Barnes 1993, 136; Hanson 2005, 599.
[18] Vaggione 2000, 14, n. 14.
[19] Thdt. *h.e.* 2.24.7.
[20] Socr. *h.e.* 2.35.6.
[21] Thomas A. Kopecek hypothesizes that Bishop Leontius invited Aëtius to come to Antioch precisely with the intention that Aëtius would help him reduce Flavian's influence; Kopecek 1979, 101.

doxology ("Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit") was based on the Nicene understanding of the Holy Trinity, whereas the already established formulas in Antioch ("Glory be to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit" and "Glory be to the Father and to the Son in the Holy Spirit") were closer to the pro-Arian position.[22]

According to Philosotorgius,[23] Bishop Leontius later deposed Flavian and Paulinus[24] for disagreeing with his doctrine. However, the historian says nothing about the fact that under the pressure of threats of two important lay ascetics, Flavian and Diodore,[25] Leontius first had to remove the deacon Aëtius. Otherwise, both ascetics, as explained by Theodoret,[26] threatened the bishop that they would leave the church community and go west to reveal the bishop's actions. Based on the sources, it is not possible to determine whether Flavian's opposition to Aëtius was related to the deacon's rejection of the new doxological formula. It can be imagined that Aëtius was not as cautious as Leontius in expressing his contrariety. Therefore, the dispute seems to have intensified with his arrival in Antioch. By his conduct, Bishop Leontius seems to have maintained a united communion of Christians of very different theological beliefs, as were Flavian and Aëtius. On the other hand, soon after his arrival Aëtius encountered open opposition by Flavian and his adherents.[27]

[22] Des Places et al. 2013, 280, n. 1. See also Stuiber 1959, 221–223; Simonetti 1975, 361.
[23] Philost. *h.e*. 3.18.
[24] Philostorgius' information (*h.e*. 3.18) that Flavian and Paulinus accompanied Eustathius when he was deposed as bishop of Antioch and sent into exile is most likely incorrect. Bruno Bleckmann and Markus Stein rightly point out that Flavian, who died in 404, could not have been born before 310. Eustathius, however, was sent into exile as early as 327. See Bleckmann & Stein 2015 (2), 248. As a representative of the Eustathians, Paulinus was consecrated bishop of Antioch in 362 by Lucifer of Cagliari. His consecration deepened the schism between the Eustathians and the Melitians. Flavian supported the Melitians. When he was appointed bishop of Antioch in 381, Paulinus was still bishop of the same city. Paulinus died in 388, and Flavian sixteen years later. The schism outlived them both. See Bleckmann & Stein 2015 (2), 248; Des Places *et al*. 2013, 280, n. 1; Hanson 2005, 704.
[25] Diodore was ordained bishop of Tarsus in 378. On the possibility that the new doxological formula introduced by Flavian and Diodore in Antioch is a translation from Syriac, cf. Stuiber 1959, 222–223. Regarding Flavian and Diodore see also Brennecke 1988, 233–234, 239; Brennecke *et al*. 2020, 941, 945.
[26] Thdt. *h.e*. 2.24.7–8, 2.27.8.
[27] Cf. Kopecek 1979, 96–102.

The eucharist

In Photius' *Epitome* of Philostorgius' *Church History*, the passage on the various doxological formulas in Antioch is followed by a report about a break in the Christian community caused by Aëtius:

> He says that even if those of Arius's school differed in their views from those favoring the consubstantialist doctrine, still they shared with them in prayers, hymns, deliberations, and almost everything else except for the sacred sacrifice. But when Aëtius came on the scene and initiated dissension in these matters as well, the members of his sect broke off all ties, friendships, and customs that had joined them to those of differing beliefs and set up a party that stood in the most marked opposition to them. (Philost. *h.e.* 3.14)[28]

It is not possible to deduce from the passage whether Aëtius was in Antioch when he and his followers broke off all contact with Christians that did not accept the Anomoean doctrine. Certainly, however, the events in Antioch related to the introduction of the new doxology influenced Aëtius' decision. The break was so radical that the Anomoeans did not sever all contact only with the pro-Nicenes, but with the pro-Arians as well.[29] They not only did not celebrate the Eucharist together with other pro-Arians, but they also no longer joined them in prayers, hymns, deliberations, and almost all other matters.

Based on the passage above, it is unclear if Aëtius—except for maintaining a doxological formula that was more in line with his teaching—introduced any other liturgical innovations at that time.[30] Nor is it known exactly when this happened. If the break was as radical as Philostorgius describes, Aëtius should have severed his ties with Leontius as well. This is because Leontius, as reported by Theodoret,[31] invited the two lay ascetics Flavian and Diodore, the introducers of the antiphonal singing of the psalms,[32] to perform psalm singing within Antioch's churches. Until then, they had promoted antiphonal singing among their followers outside the city walls. Bishop Leontius seems to have sought to find a compromise that would satisfy both parties: Flavian and Diodore on the one hand by accepting antiphonal singing

[28] Translated by Philip R. Amidon. Cf. also Philost. *h.e.* 3.19.
[29] See also Socr. *h.e.* 2.35.12–14; Soz. *h.e.* 4.12.1–2.
[30] The practice of baptism with single immersion was introduced by Eunomius; Vaggione 2000, 330–344; Neamțu 2002, 105–106.
[31] Thdt. *h.e.* 2.24.10.
[32] Thdt. *h.e.* 2.24.8–9.

in churches, and Aëtius on the other by appointing him to teach.[33] Because Aëtius remained in Antioch after his deposition and the bishop continued to support him,[34] it can be assumed that the split occurred later. Perhaps it was related to Leontius' decision to condemn Flavian and Paulinus.

In Photius' *Epitome*, the information about Flavian and Paulinus' degrading directly follows a brief description of Aëtius' activities after he avoided diaconal work, as Philostorgius explains.[35] He devoted some time[36] to teaching sacred doctrine, and he then left Antioch again and returned to Alexandria to oppose Bishop Athanasius and his efforts to enforce the consubstantialist doctrine. Following a sequence of information based on Philostorgius' text, it is not possible to determine whether Flavian and Paulinus were condemned when Aëtius was still in Antioch or when he had already returned to Alexandria. Because Philostorgius is the only one to report the event, the information he offers may not be entirely reliable.[37] However, he seems to have attached particular importance to it because Photius concludes Philostorgius' writing with the thought that Leontius did not neglect any of his sacred responsibilities toward the Antiochian Church. Seen through the eyes of the Eunomian historian, this would mean that Leontius did everything in accordance with Aëtius' understanding of orthodoxy. Considering Philostorgius' comments about Flavian, one can assume that he would not have written such words of praise about Leontius if he had not excluded Flavian from the community.

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[33] Kopecek 1979, 102.

[34] Leontius defended Aëtius when Basil of Ancyra and Eustathius of Sebaste later accused Aëtius before Caesar Gallus; Philost. *h.e.* 3.27.

[35] Philost. *h.e.* 3.17.

[36] Thomas A. Kopecek chronologically limits Aëtius' activities in this period as follows: he was a theological teacher in Antioch c. 346/347 and in Alexandria c. 348–351; Kopecek 1979, 111; see also Neamțu 2002, 74–75.

[37] The usual translation of the passage (Philost. *h.e.* 3.18) is that Flavian and Paulinus were deposed by Leontius; cf. Bleckmann & Stein 2015 (1), 245; Amidon 2007, 56; Des Places *et al.* 2013, 293. If the passage is translated in this way, the historian's information is almost certainly incorrect because Flavian and Paulinus were most probably still laymen at that time. This, in turn, would mean that Leontius could not have deposed them; Amidon 2007, 56, n. 62; Des Places *et al.* 2013, 293–294, n. 2; Bleckmann & Stein 2015 (2), 248. However, this is not the only possible translation. The verb καθαιρέω can also mean 'degrade' or 'condemn'. If the verb is translated in this way, the information offered by Philostorgius would be more probable because, according to Philosotrgius, it can be assumed that Leontius certainly acted against Flavian.

Worship of sacred images

In his *Epitome*, Photius included a rather extensive report on a statue from Paneas (Caesarea Philippi) depicting Christ and the woman he healed:

> Concerning the image of our Savior that the faith of the woman with a hemorrhage had erected in thanksgiving to her benefactor: he relates that this monument was put up by the fountain inside the city together with other statues in order to furnish a pleasant sight to visitors. Now an herb grew up by the feet of our Savior's image that was a remedy for all illnesses, especially consumption, and the reason for this was sought (for in the passage of time both the person portrayed and the reason for the monument had been forgotten; it stood in the open with nothing to cover it, and much of the body was buried in the dirt that kept falling upon it from higher ground especially in times of rain, the dirt covering the writing that explained each of the matters). An inquiry was therefore instituted, the buried part was dug out, and the writing was found that told the whole story. But of the plant there was nothing to be seen after all that time, neither there nor elsewhere. The statue they moved to the sacristy of the church and paid it due honor; they neither worshiped nor adored it at all (it would have been unlawful to adore bronze or any other material).[38] They rather showed their devotion to the One it represented by the sacred place in which they put it and the pleasure they took in visiting the place in order to see the sight it contained. (Philost. *h.e.* 7.3)[39]

The statue of Christ and the woman with a hemorrhage from Paneas is also described by Eusebius of Caesarea, who saw it himself.[40] As he explains, the statue depicts Christ's healing of a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years and whose healing is reported in the Gospels.[41] Eusebius is the first to connect the statue with the biblical story.[42] However, although he thinks it would not be proper to omit an account on the statue, he does not attach much value to it. He finds the

[38] Bruno Bleckmann, Doris Meyer, and Jean-Marc Prieur point out that the explanation in parentheses is most likely Photius'; Des Places *et al.* 2013, 374, n. 1.
[39] Translated by Philip R. Amidon. Cf. also *Passio Artemii* 57.17–27.
[40] Eus. *h.e.* 7.18. The statue of Christ from Paneas is also reported by Sozomen (*h.e.* 5.21.1–4), Theophanes (*chron.* [de Boor I 49,9–19]), and Malalas (10.12).
[41] Mark 5:25–34; Matt 9:20–22; Luke 8:43–48. See also Amidon 2007, 89, n. 10; Bleckmann & Stein 2015 (2), 346.
[42] On the possibility that the statue represented Asclepius, see Brennecke 1988, 141, n. 143; Des Places *et al.* 2013, 373, n. 2; Amidon 2007, 89–90, n. 10.

connection between the statue and the biblical story interesting, but he completely rejects the possibility that one of the persons depicted could represent Christ because—as he concludes his description—it is not appropriate to depict Christ.[43]

At the Second Council of Nicaea in 787, the iconophiles denounced bishop Eusebius of Caesarea as an Arian. The reason for their accusation was Eusebius' *Letter to Constantia*. In this letter, he rejected a request by Constantine's half-sister to send her an image of Christ, explaining that it is impossible to depict the Son of God. Although the authenticity of the letter and its authorship by the bishop of Caesarea is disputed, in the iconoclast controversy both parties, iconophiles and iconoclasts, sought support in it to prove their views. According to the writings of the bishops assembled at the iconoclast Council of Hiereia in 754, the iconoclasts used the letter in support of their own refusal to worship icons. Their appeal to Eusebius of Caesarea gave the iconophiles occasion for new accusations: they accused the iconoclasts of being Arians.[44]

In his *Epitome* of Philostorgius' *Church History*, Photius mentions Eusebius of Caesarea three times.[45] Philostorgius' opinion of the bishop is most clearly revealed in the passage in which the bishop is mentioned for the first time.[46] According to Photius, Philostorgius praises Eusebius in everything regarding his history but, as far as religion is concerned, he is, as Philostorgius thinks, mistaken. The historian does not state in detail what Eusebius' error is supposed to refer to, but he points out the bishop's belief that the deity is unknowable and incomprehensible. If Photius' account is correct, then Philostorgius' opinion is to some extent in line with the critiques of the *Letter to Constantia* attributed to Eusebius. In the letter, Eusebius rejected depicting Christ because "the divinity cannot be circumscribed." [47]

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[43] Bruno Bleckmann and Markus Stein point out the difference in Eusebius' and Philosotrgius' attitude toward depicting Christ. Whereas Eusebius connects it with the customs of the pagans, in Philostorgius' interpretation it is already purely Christian; Bleckmann & Stein 2015 (2), 348.

[44] Here I follow Gwynn 2007, 226–228.

[45] Philost. *h.e.* 1.2; 2.11; 8.14.

[46] Philost. *h.e.* 1.2.

[47] David M. Gwynn summarizes Eusebius' reasons for the rejection of Constantia's wish in the *Letter to Constantia* as follows: "The divine Christ of course cannot be depicted at all, for the divinity cannot be circumscribed. But Eusebius insists that even the incarnate Christ cannot appear in an image, for 'the flesh which He put on for our

Philostorgius, a follower of the Anomoean doctrine, advocated the opposite view because both Aëtius[48] and Eunomius[49] claimed that man could know and understand God.[50] Therefore, Philostorgius does not problematize depicting Christ. However, he finds it necessary to emphasize that man must not worship or adore the images of the Son of God, but that his attitude toward them must show devotion to the One they represent. Philostorgius' position—as summarized by Photios—is close to that of the iconophiles of the eighth and ninth centuries. Although he does not explain his attitude to images of Christ in detail, it can be deduced from Photius' writing that the ecclesiastical historian does not oppose depicting Christ or expressing respect toward His images. Photius, who is otherwise not in favor of Philostorgius, does not oppose him in this case. As also indicated by the length of the passage, which is one of the longer ones in the *Epitome*, the question was undoubtedly important for the patriarch, but not only for him.

The real significance that Philostorgius ascribed to the proper handling of Christ's depictions is revealed through the broader narrative frame into which the account of the statue in Paneas is inserted. The seventh book of Philostorgius' *Church History* deals with the period of Emperor Julian. From the beginning to the end of this book, various examples of hostile acts of pagans against Christians are listed.[51] The demolition of the statue of Christ in Paneas is listed in second place in the series of these hostile acts. As Photius summarizes Philostorgius' narrative, the act was committed by the pagans because

sake … was mingled with the glory of His divinity so that the mortal part was swallowed up by his Life.'" See Gwynn 2007, 227.

[48] Epiph. *haer*. 76.4.2.

[49] Socr. *h.e*. 4.7.13–14.

[50] Bleckmann & Stein 2015 (2), 36–37; Neamţu 2002, 99–100.

[51] Some highlights of pagan activities against the Christians and the consequences of these activities: the pagans killed Bishop George of Alexandria (Philost. *h.e*. 7.2), they demolished the statue of Christ in Paneas (7.3), and they mixed the bones of the prophet Elisha and of John the Baptist with the bones of animals (7.4); the persecution of the Christians prevented the movement in support of Aëtius and his Anomoeans (7.6); Julian banished Valentinian, the future emperor, because of his Christian faith (7.7); Julian mistreated the martyr Babylas' body (7.8); Julian decided to restore the Jewish temple in Jerusalem (7.9); many of those that persecuted Christians received the punishment they deserved (7.10); when the relics of Babylas had been transferred, the pagan oracles started producing false predictions (7.12); the lives of Christians that had converted to paganism ended terribly (7.13); Julian's measures against Christianity were ineffective (7.14); and the emperor himself was killed in a campaign against the Persians (7.15).

of their impiety.[52] However, even if Photius could have partly adapted the narrative to his views, the events presented in the seventh book leave no doubt that Philostorgius describes the hostile acts of the pagans against the Christians as perverted acts, whose perpetrators were rightly punished by God.[53]

Based on the presented fate of the statue of Christ from Paneas, it is obvious that Philostorgius not only opposed the destruction of the images of Christ and was against any disrespectful treatment of them, but above all he had no qualms about making images of Christ. Thus, although Photius was also one of those that compared the iconoclasts to the Arians,[54] his *Epitome* of Philostorgius' *Church History* proves how misleading such a comparison is.

Fasting

> Philostorgius says that the Wednesday and Friday fast is not limited just to abstinence from meat but that the canons prescribe that no food is to be touched until evening. He gives as an example one Eudoxius, a fellow sectarian but a presbyter in rank, although one who was deprived of his reproductive organs, saying of him, "He was so given to fasting that throughout the whole year it was not just [on?] the [days] that by precept commemorate the Lord's passion…. (Philost. *h.e.* 10.12)[55]

The passage depicts Philostorgius as a supporter of strict asceticism because he advocates more rigorous rules of fasting than those usually followed by his contemporaries.[56] In support of his position, he cites the case of the Eunomian presbyter Eudoxius,[57] regarding whom, due to the lacune in the text, we cannot know how his fasting habits were more ascetic than the habits of his contemporaries.

[52] Philost. *h.e.* 7.3.
[53] Philost. *h.e.* 7.10–15.
[54] Gwynn 2007, 244–250.
[55] Translated by Philip R. Amidon.
[56] Vaggione 2000, 186–187. Fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays had long been a well-established custom among Christians. Wednesday was the day of remembrance of Judas' betrayal of Christ, and Friday was the day when Christ died on the cross; Bleckmann & Stein 2015 (2), 520–521; Des Places *et al.* 2013, 506–507, n. 1; Arbesmann 1969, 509–510.
[57] When Philostorgius later (*h.e.* 12.11) writes about Eudoxius again, he presents him as the head of the Eunomian assembly in Constantinople.

One can nevertheless assume that with the given example Philostogius most likely at least wanted to highlight Eudoxius' strict abstinence from any food until the evening of a fasting day.[58] Moreover, it seems that Eudoxius was not strict only in the manner of fasting, but extended his fast to other days of the week and fasted from Monday to Friday, not solely on Wednesdays and Fridays.[59]

As can be summed up based on Philostorgius' contemporary Socrates and his *Church History*,[60] during their time there were no uniform rules regarding fasting before Easter in the Church. Not only was the duration of the fast not the same everywhere, but even the food that Christians could eat during Lent was different. According to Socrates: "Some wholly abstain from things that have life: others feed on fish only of all living creatures: many together with fish, eat fowl also … Some abstain from eggs, and all kinds of fruits: others partake of dry bread only; still others eat not even this: while others having fasted till the ninth hour, afterwards take any sort of food without distinction."[61]

The rules regarding fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays were similarly vague.[62] In such circumstances, Philostorgius rejects the easier of the two options he cites and, as the correct one, advocates the more difficult one. Philostorgius' ascetic discipline is in stark contrast to the image of Aëtius and Eunomius' as hangers-on enjoying a luxurious life painted by Theodoret of Cyrus.[63] His record must of course be treated with great caution. It would be difficult to imagine that Philostorgius would advocate such strict rules if Theodoret's accusations were true. At the same time, Philostorgius' call for austerity proves that not all Eunomians adhered to a stricter form of fasting. Otherwise, as a role model, he would not have singled out an individual, Eudoxius, but an

[58] For such an interpretation of the passage, see Bleckmann & Stein 2015 (1), 407–409, and (2), 520.

[59] Des Places *et al*. 2013, 506–507, n. 2; Bleckmann & Stein 2015 (2), 520–521. The complete ascetic was only a man that could fast throughout the week or—as was the case in the East, where they did not fast on Saturdays and Sundays—from Monday to Friday; Arbesmann 1969, 507–508.

[60] Socr. *h.e*. 5.22.32–40. Cf. also Eger. 28.4, 41.1, 44.1; Soz. *h.e*. 7.19. 7. On the various rules governing the Easter fast, cf. Arbersmann 1969, 512–517.

[61] Socr. *h.e*. 5.22.36–39. Translated by A. C. Zenos.

[62] *Didache* 8.1; *Constitutiones apostolorum* 5.13, 5.18–19, 7.23; *Canones apostolorum* 8.47.64 and 69; Arbesmann 1969, 506–524.

[63] Thdt. *h.e*. 2.27.9. See also Vaggione 2000, 185–187.

entire group of Eunomians. These, however, as might be inferred, mostly fasted by giving up only the consumption of meat.

Philostorgius' call for greater abstinence could be linked to the author's anticipation of an impending disaster. Before writing about fasting, Philostorgius reports on an unusual phenomenon in the sky, a sword-shaped gathering of stars,[64] which he understands as an expression of God's disapproval of Theodosius' banishment of Eunomius.[65] He mentions the phenomenon again in Book 11, where he presents it as an announcement of the catastrophic events of his time:[66]

> "In my time," he says, "the loss of human life was so great that never did any age know the like since time began," this being what the sword-star had signified, he claims. It was not just the army that was reduced, as of old in the previous wars, nor did the calamities occur in [only one] part of the earth. It was all the provinces that perished, all Europe that was brought to ruin, and no small part of Asia that was lost with it, along with much of Africa, especially the part subject to the Roman Empire. It was the barbarian sword that worked most of the ruin, but famine, plague, and hordes of savage beasts did their part, as well as horrible earthquakes that leveled cities and dwellings to their foundations and rendered the destruction quite inescapable. (Philost. *h.e.* 11.7)[67]

Moreover, this is not the end of all disasters. According to Philostorgius, chasms in the ground, water from the sky, droughts, storms, hail, snows, and cold were unambiguous signs of divine wrath.[68] In the context of these catastrophes, his call for strict fasting has a distinct warning purpose. It reflects the writer's belief about what people—including the Eunomians—should do because they were not doing it.

Conclusion

Philostorgius does not provide much information about the liturgy, but what he writes on the subject is valuable. In addition to a brief outline of liturgical practice, he reveals the circumstances that

[64] Philost. *h.e.* 10.9.
[65] Philost. *h.e.* 10.6.
[66] Philost. *h.e.* 11.7.
[67] Translated by Philip R. Amidon.
[68] Philost. *h.e.* 11.7. On the influence of apocalyptic literature on Philstorgius' writing, see Bidez, *Philostorgius. Kirchengeschichte*, cxiii–cxxi; Amidon 2007, 140, n. 20.

accompanied the habits presented. If one compares his information with the writings of other authors on the same issues, it can be observed that Philosotrgius' emphases are different. Because he was an adherent of the Eunomian doctrine, he always included in his reporting the significance that the question presented had for this group of Christians. Thus, his writing on the eucharist and searching for the appropriate doxological formula illuminates Aëtius' activities in Antioch in 346/347 and his desire to separate his group of followers from other Christians. His account of the statue of Christ and the healed woman reveals the attitude of the Anomoeans toward the images of Christ, and his invitation to the stricter fast presents the ascetic tendencies of at least some of the members of the Anomoean group. The image of the Anomoeans depicted through liturgical practices as given by Philostorgius is quite different from what the authors that opposed the Anomoean doctrine write about them.

Although the Anomoeans sought to make a clear distinction from other Christians, even with the help of the liturgy, they do not seem to have changed liturgical practices for the most part. Philostorgius lists one example of their introducing a liturgical novelty: the baptism. The change was due to the specifics of their doctrine. As for the doxology, in which Aëtius also took his own path, it was not a novelty but a preservation of formulas that were already in use in Antioch. Other examples of liturgical practices included in Photius' *Epitome* of Philostorgius' work are also not presented by the author as novelties. According to Photius' record, they were all established practices. Anomoean liturgical practices discussed in the article are therefore not examples of innovations but of preserving existent habits. In the case of fasting, Philostorgius explicitly refers to the existing canons. Although he points out that at Aëtius' initiative the Anomoeans "broke off all ties, friendships, and customs that had joined them to those of differing beliefs,"[69] it can be concluded that in most cases (the important exception is baptism) given by Photius in his *Epitome* of Philostorgius' *Church History* the specifics of the liturgical practices of the Anomoeans were the result of preserving what was already established.

[69] Philost. *h.e.* 3.14.

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The Fourth Century Church Councils and The Participation of the Balkan Bishops

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Abstract: This paper attempts to document the participation of the Balkan bishops at the church councils in the fourth century. After a short account on the arrival of Christianity in the Balkans, it then surveys and questions how regional solidarity played a part in the ecclesiastical matters of the Balkan cities in the councils. It is argued that this documentation is going to reflect not only imperial interventions, theological concerns or regional solidarities but also the troubled personal histories of certain bishops who shaped the ecclesiastical groupings in the fourth century church policy. The Council of Serdica is studied more closely as it is the best-documented church meeting, in which Balkan bishops were actively involved. The identification of cities and bishops also demonstrates the expansion of Christianity and to comprehend diverse aspects of ecclesiastical behaviours, secular politics, personal concerns and theological preferences in the region.

Key words: Balkan bishops, church councils, Serdica, Constantinople, fourth-century

Резюме: Статията е посветена на опита да се документира участието на балканските епископи в църковните събори през IV в. След кратко представяне на появата на християнството на Балканите, в статията се изследва и поставя въпроса как регионалната солидарност е изиграла роля в решаването на църковните въпроси при проучването на съборите в градовете на Балканите. Твърди се, че тази документация отразява не само императорските намеси, богословските съображения или регионалната солидарност, но и проблемните лични истории на някои епископи, които са оформили църковните групировки в църковната политика през IV век. Съборът в Сердика е проучен по-подробно, тъй като е най-добре документираното църковно събрание, в което балканските епископи са участвали активно. Идентифицирането на градовете и епископите също така показва експанзията на християнството и позволява да се разкрият разнообразните аспекти на църковното поведение, светската политика, личните проблеми и богословските предпочитания в региона.

Introduction

Church councils became an important vehicle both in the formation of ecclesiastical doctrine and in the expansion of Christianity from the second century onwards. Those meetings were also platforms which brought different cultural backgrounds together and also reflected to some degree the connections and mobility in the Roman World. In this context the membership lists of the early church councils can contribute to expand our knowledge for the late antique origins or the representation of the early Christianity in the Balkans. Naturally before the age of Constantine the circulation of information and mobility of church figures were limited due to mostly practical reasons, nevertheless Eusebius offers patchy reflections on interregional connections of Christians in the Balkans. However, this vague picture changes throughout the fourth century with the rise of the imperial church. Therefore, the main purpose of this short paper is to document the participation of the Balkan bishops in the fourth century church councils from Nicaea to Constantinople in 381. In this effort a particular emphasis is put on the Council of Serdica, designed as an ecumenical gathering but turned into a large-scale fiasco, which is explained not only with the imperial interests in the East and in the West but also due to the individual histories of several bishops.

Origins of Christianity in the Balkans

The historical origins of the expansion of Christianity in southeast Europe may be traced back to the *Church History* of Eusebius. His earliest remarkable record of an ecclesiastical activity in the Balkans comes from Burgas or the ancient Debeltum. It was known as *Colonia Flavia Pacensis Deultum*, a Roman colony founded by the emperor Vespasian in the 1st century. According to Eusebius the Montanist version of the early Christianity was a serious matter of controversy in Debeltum and Anchialus, another nearby town in the late second century.[1]

Montanism was a prophetic movement founded by Phrygian in the second century Christianity. Eusebius tells us that the Priscillian branch of Montanism caused a controversy among the Christians of Thrace. Aelius Publius Julius, bishop of Debeltum and Sotas of Anchialus, attempted to remove the Montanists from their community, possibly another group of Christians stopped them. The limited and

[1] Eusebius, *HE*, 5.19; Trevett 1999, 51.

patchy evidence does not allow to make further speculation about the expansion channel of the New Porphecy into the region. Nevertheless, this regional controversy reflects both on the presence of different Christian groups in Thrace and on its ongoing connectivity with Asia Minor. Furthermore, it is not clear whether heretical Christian groups formed the stronger party than the representatives of the mainstream church. Eusebius preserves an excerpt of a letter written to Serapion of Antioch by Aelius Publius Julius of Debeltum. Although the letter does not tell us much, it may indicate a wide communication network of the earliest bishops in this region and it could also be seen as a reflection on the weakness of the anti-Montanist party, which may allow to suggest that earliest Christianity appeared in some parts of Thracian communities in the Montanist form.

At about the same time with the rise of the Montanist prophecy in western Asia Minor in the last quarter of the second century, another theological controversy had already reached Byzantium at the southeastern end of the Balkans. Theodotus, a leather merchant by profession, taught the principles of a heresy that Jesus was a mere man.[2] It is just another example of the fact that merchants did not only carry the goods but they also functioned as carriers of religion and ideas. A further record documented the presence of Christianity in the Balkans during the great persecution of Diocletian, just at the beginning of the fourth century, which gave rise to the fierce deaths of some Roman soldiers in various parts of the empire. The *Acts of Christian* martyrs preserve a report of the harsh application of the persecution among the Christians of Durostorium, a town close to the shores of the western Black Sea in Moesia Secunda. According to the records of the Christian martyrologies a veteran soldier and some other companions of his were arrested and killed because of their Christian beliefs after the fourth edict of Diocletian in 304.[3]

Constantine and Institutionalisation of Church Councils

Soon after the anti-Christian policies of Diocletian, Christianity became the favoured religion of the empire. The most spectacular event to show the imperial support was the organisation of the Council of Nicaea. At this meeting the presence of the Balkan bishops was very visible. There were several reasons for holding this council, like the

[2] Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 54.1–7; Kelly 1977, 116, 121.
[3] Musurillo 1972, 261–65.

matter of the date of the Easter, Arius and various disciplinary issues of early Christians. Churches of the ancient southeastern Europe were represented by twelve bishops from Europa, Dacia, Moesia, Macedonia, Achaea and Thessalia.[4] The relatively noticeable participation of Balkan bishops in the council was certainly due to imperial invitation and practical support of the state's official transportation means (*cursus publicus*) for travelling church leaders. Nevertheless, it is also worth emphasising that the number of participations from the Balkans was far less than those of the eastern provinces of the empire. The available reports about the council of Nicaea do not tell us what contribution the representatives of the Balkan cities at the council made apart from signing the official creed. As a consequence, it appears that this participation became a vehicle in the transmission of the Nicene orthodoxy into the region.

Ten years later Eusebius of Caesarea counted the Balkan bishops among the participating group at the relatively small church council of Jerusalem in 334 to discuss the accusations against Athanasius of Alexandria, a devout Nicene but a recalcitrant opponent to the reconciliation of policies of Constantine. Eusebius's record was not obviously mere rhetoric, because he provides us with the names of at least four Balkan representatives at the council of Tyre in the following year 335. These were bishops of Mursa, Singidunum, Heraclea and Thessalonica.[5] The same names naturally appear among the member of the council of Constantinople in the presence of Constantine in 336, a year before the death of the emperor with the inclusion of the bishops of Naissus and Serdica.[6] The Councils of Jerusalem, Tyre and Constantinople also dealt with the trial of Athanasius of Alexandria and readmission of Arius back into the church.[7] These three councils formed in fact the real background of the failed Council of Serdica, which was

[4] Phaedrus of Heraclea, Protogenes of Serdica, Mark of Tomis, Pistus of Marcianopolis, Alexander of Thessalonice, Pudens (Budis) of Stobi, Pistus of Athens, Strategius of Hephaestias (Lemnos), Cleonicus of Thebes (in Phtiotis). Kim 2020, 374–375, Appendix 1.

[5] Alexander of Thessalonice, Valens of Mursa, Ursacius of Singidunum, Theodore of Heraclea. Parvis 2006, 258.

[6] Cyriacus of Naissus, Protogenes of Serdica, Valens of Mursa, Ursacius of Singidunum, Theodore of Heraclea. Parvis 2006, 259.

[7] For these councils see Hefele 1876, 15–36; For the updated French version of this valuable collection see Hefele-Leclercq 1907; Barnes 1981, 235–241.

planned to become an empire-wide gathering but it eventually turned into an empire-wide remarkable failure.

The Council of Serdica: Connections and the Context of the Debacle

The Council of Serdica was originally designed as an ecumenical meeting with the initiation of the western emperor Constans and aimed at producing solutions for the symptoms of the Arian crisis, which continued to shake the eastern churches.[8] The attending bishops formed two large opposing groups; one was assembled in Serdica and the other in Philippopolis, modern Plovdiv.[9] The geographical distribution of the Balkan bishops demonstrates the expansion of Christianity towards the north before the middle of the fourth century, because the previous records on the presence of Christianity in the region are scanty. In the Serdican council, Dacia Ripensis, in the loop of the lower Danube, was represented at the council by two bishops, Calvus of Castramartus (the site is unknown) and Vitalis of Aquae (Negotin in Serbia). This shows that Christianity was already established in the region, because if a place had a bishop, it must also have a staff of lesser clergy and a considerable Christian community.

As southeastern Europe was a region that accommodated both Latin and Greek speaking Christians in antiquity, it is necessary to scrutinize the participating bishops more closely. Although a considerable majority of the western bishops at the council came from the Balkan provinces in Constans' share of the empire, a significant minority of the Balkan sees were under the administration of the eastern empire.[10] In total almost 50 bishops from the Balkans were present in Serdica. Only six of them were with the eastern party and more than fourty representatives of the Balkan cities preferred to stay within the western party. Although some bishops belonged to the

[8] There is a good number of studies on the Council of Serdica. L. Barnard writes the first major work on the council and argues that the council was the first step in the great schism of the medieval world. I argued otherwise. See Barnard, 1983; Kaçar 2014, 219–234.

[9] Barnes 1993, 71–81.

[10] Around fifty bishops from the Balkan provinces attended the council; for the various lists of the signatories see Athanasius, *Defence*, 50; Athanasius *Letter* 46 (*To the Church of Mareotis from Serdica*); Hilary, *Against Valens and Ursacius* 1.4.5; a reconstructed list of ninety-seven bishops of the western assembly in the additional note of the Athanasius' *Defence* by Archibald Robertson in *NPNF* 2nd series vol. 4, 147–48. See also Barnard 1983, 58–62.

eastern empire of Constantius II, yet they joined the western group. Therefore, it is plausible to claim that the political distribution of the Balkan bishops cannot simply be made according to the secular administrative status of their provinces. In this case personal animosities, political concerns or expectations were important factors in the choice of their side.

The questions on the role of the bishops in Serdica or Philippopolis, and on the way they chose their sides are relevant to see various aspects of personal preferences and political necessities and these questions may explain the connections and formation of political sides. Apparently, meagre sources do not make allowance for a dimensional analysis. Few examples may imply conclusive elicitation to see the formation of church parties in a broader light. Bassus of Diocletianopolis, a Thracian bishop, did not follow the place of his city in the administrative division of the empire. Although other bishops of his province acted with the eastern party, a group under the influence of the eastern emperor Constantius II, Bassus sided with the western group. Although it may be speculated that Bassus did not prefer to be subservient to the bishops of Philippopolis (Plovdiv) and Beroe (Stara Zagora), because his city, Diocletianopolis, was a new foundation of the emperor Diocletianus, its bishop was only the third in the provincial hierarchy. It is certain that Bassus was an unpopular figure with the easterners, because an ecclesiastical document claims that Bassus previously had been deported from Syria because of his criminal record.[11] Consequently, Bassus's choice was a political necessity.

Dionysius of Elis, a bishop from Achaia in southern Greece had also been excommunicated previously by the votes of several Balkan bishops of the eastern party and not surprisingly he was now among his judges in the western group.[12] There were also some other figures whose positions need an explanation. Gaudentius of Naissus (Niš in Serbia) and Protogenes of Serdica were members of the western party, yet just few years previously Protogenes himself, and the bishop of Naissus were in the opposite group, in the party of the Eusebians at a council in Constantinople in 336 when Athanasius and Marcellus were condemned.[13] Now Protogenes and Gaudentius were with a group which supported the cases of Marcellus and Athanasius. According to

[11] Hilary, *Against Valens and Ursacius* 1.2.20; Barnes 1993, 74; Barnard 1980, 1–25.
[12]Hilary, *Against Valens and Ursacius*, 1.2.20; Barnes 1993, 74.
[13] Hilary, *Against Valens and Ursacius* 1.2.3.

the eastern encyclical letter, Protogenes was not an ordinary member of that council, but he was one of the intellectual Christians who wrote against the theology of Marcellus. Between 336 and 343 the political conditions for Protogenes changed. At the time of the Council of Constantinople, Constantine was the sole ruler of the empire, which was not administratively divided. However, when the sons of Constantine took over and divided the empire, Serdica was just within the territory of the western emperor, who strongly supported the case of Athanasius and the interests of the western group of bishops. Consequently, it was a political necessity for Protogenes to change sides and to support the case of Athanasius. Otherwise, he would have faced the danger of being a potential suspect as a figure capable of causing discontent on the frontier and at the end there was also a threat of excommunication. Gaudentius of Naissus was a similar case. His immediate predecessor, Cyriacus was one of the judges of Marcellus of Ancyra, however Gaudentius also made a political choice and joined the western bishops.[14] Lucius of Hadrianopolis represents a contrary case. Although the city of Hadrianopolis belonged to the eastern part of the empire, its bishop joined the western party. Athanasius notes in the *History of Arians* that Lucius and his predecessor Eutropius had been deposed some years earlier by the machinations of Eusebius of Nicomedia (later bishop of Constantinople).[15] These examples show that the western group of bishops was not formed only based on theology or on cultural preferences but on a personal political necessity, and any sympathy with Greek or Latin theology played no part. As a result, the maintenance of bishops's political positions seems to have been more important. At a council, in which the volume of the votes mattered more, and bishops were ready to act inconsistently, obliquely and to disregard the infamy of their colleagues as long as they voted on behalf of their party.

From Serdica to Constantinople

After the debacle of Serdica sources, we can follow the activities of Balkan bishops at the councils both at the western and eastern sides of the empire up to the council of Constantinople. In this context it is important to note the activities and contributions of few leading Balkan

[14] Hilary, *Against Valens and Ursacius* 1.2.3.

[15] Athanasius, *History of the Arians*, 5.1. Athanasius notes the exile of Domnion, bishop of Sirmium in the same passage.

bishops particularly in the Councils of Ariminum in 359, Nice (mod. Havsa in Edirne province) in 360 and Constantinople in 360. The final event where the Balkan bishops played a key role was another church council, which was held under the surveillance of the emperor Valentinian around the end of the 360s, during the hot-days of the disputes over the status of the Holy Spirit.

The emperor Constantius II was very busy with the ecclesiastical matters throughout 350s, when he was present in the western part of the empire. He held several church councils and lavishly permitted bishops to use the public transport. Ammianus Marcellinus, a military official on service in the western empire at the time, complanined of this traffic while using the imperial relay stations (*mansiones et mutationes*). In order to bring different church parties under one roof towards the end of 350s, Constantius II decided to hold an ecumenical council. The place of the council was the city of Nicomedia, the previous capital of the empire under Diocletian. However, an earthquake destroyed not only the city but also the imperial plans for the council. The bishop of Nicomedia himself also perished under the rubble of a church building.[16] Constantius and his ecclesiastical advisers planned to divide the proposed council to ensure a larger attendance in each half of the empire. The western council was planned at Ariminum in Italy, its eastern counterpart was to be held in Seleucia (in Isauria) in 359. One of the main purposes of this council was to draw a new creed for the Christians of the empire.

The Council of Ariminum was attended by four hundred bishops if we trust the records of Athanasius of Alexanderia, a contemporary witness himself who became matter of controversy.[17] Athanasius accuses a group of bishops from Balkan cities, Ursacius, Valens, Germinius of Pannonia and Demophilus of Beroe and a certain Gaius. Athanasius notes with joy that these bishops were excommunicated by the majority of the Council of Ariminum as the followers of Arius, though this label had never been accepted by anti-Nicene bishops. The same group of bishops held another preparatory council in Nice in Thrace.[18] This city was not far from Adrianople and according to the Barrington Atlas the ancient site is close to modern Havsa town in the

[16] Sozomenus, *HE*, 4.16, identifies Nicomedia as the meeting place of a proposed united council, however, Socrates, *HE*, 2.39, assumes Nicomedia only as the meeting location of the eastern council. Philostorgius, *HE*, 4.10, supports the assumption of Socrates.
[17] Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 8.33.
[18] Socrates, *HE*, 2.37; Theodoret, *HE*, 2.16.

province of Edirne. It is well known that Ursacius, Valens, Demophilus were the active players of the Council of Constantinople which replaced the Nicene creed with a new creed in 360.

The church historian Theodoret preserves a circular letter written after a church council in Illyricum under the patronage of the emperor Valentinian.[19] This council is not recorded by Athanasius or other ecclesiastical historians of the fifth century, only Damasus of Rome mentions it briefly in his letter to Paulinus of Antioch. The limited evidence that the letter discloses also explains that the modern literature did not pay any serious attention to this council.[20] The main agenda of the council was to discuss and reject the theology that questioned the divinity of the Holy Spirit.[21] Neither the body of attendance nor the place of meeting is mentioned. Illyricum was originally a Roman province and it was converted into a *praefectura* with the reforms of Diocletian in the provincial administration and according to the Notitia Dignitatum it included Dalmatia, Pannonia, Noricum, Dacia, Savia.[22] This *praefectura* was divided into *Illyricum occidentale* and *Illyricum orientale* at the end of the fourth century after the death of Theodosius. The list of provinces is not very helpful to identify the participation. Although the record of Theodoret implies that the council was purposefully assembled to discuss the status of the Holy Spirit and to strengthen the ties with the eastern bishops, it was probably one of the regular provincial church councils, which had been mandated to be held twice a year in spring and autumn in each province according to the twentieth canon of the council of Antioch in 341.[23] Additionally, the counciliar letter was rich in terms of theological views on the agenda and it emphasised the pro-Nicene attitude of the emperor Valentinian. The letter also reflects the continuity of the live interest of the Balkan bishops to the eastern controversies. The letter does not preserve the names of the members of the council; however, it shows that the controversy on the nature of the Holy Spirit among the eastern Christians became a matter of trouble in the region.

[19] Theodoret, *HE*, 4.7–8.

[20] For a brief notice see Hefele 1876, 289-290; For the updated French version see Hefele-Leclercq 1907, 982–983.

[21] For the rise of this controversy see Hanson 1988, 748–772.

[22] Seeck 1987, 109; Jones 1986, 1455.

[23] For the canons of the Council of Antioch see Jonkers 1954, 54; Hefele 1876, 56–83, for the text of the canon particularly see p. 72.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the nature of the church councils before and after Constantine was sharply different. In the pre-Constantinian period, the mobility of Christians and the circulation of information regarding their own circumstances were naturally very limited and dependent only on personal connections. In the Christianising empire of the fourth century, church councils became formal, stately events and its members were financially supported by the government. As already noted, the frequent use of public transportation by bishops to attend church councils exhausted the system, which irritated the military bureaucracy, as referred by Ammianus. Government officials not only provided free transport, they also used armed forces to put episcopal decisions into practice. On the one hand, this large-scale support allowed both mobility and circulation of news and, on the other hand, conciliar proceedings were not personal matters any more but they gained an institutional aspect and administrative sanction. This brief documentation of the activities of the Balkan bishops in the fourth century may also demonstrate very clearly that episcopal representatives of the Balkan cities were not outside the ecclesiastical politics designed around the circle of the emperor. This documentation may still contribute to the understanding of the expansion of Christianity, which apparently needs to be supported by regional archaeological works or field surveys about any possible material trace of the early Christianity, and this area of scholarship is unfortunately beyond the research skills of this author. In this sense the documentation is a rewarding effort to comprehend forms of Christianity in the Balkans, like the Montanists and the Arians. Particularly, the distribution of Balkan bishops at the Council of Serdica can be taken as an example on the diverse aspects of ecclesiastical behaviour, secular politics, personal concerns and theological preferences.

The List of Balkan Bishops in the Western Group in Serdica

Pannonia: Eutherius of the Pannonia.
Moesia: Amantius of Viminiacum, Zosimus of Horreum Margi.
Dacia: Protogenes of Sardica, Gaudentius of Naissus.
Dacia Ripensis: Vitalis of Aquae, Calvus/Chalbis of Castra Martis, Valens of Oescus.
Noricum: Aprianus of Poetovio.

Savia: Marcus of Siscia.
Dardania: Macedonius of Ulpiana, Paregorius of Scupi.
Macedonia: Bassus of Diocletianopolis, Palladius of Dium, Evagrius/Eugenius of Heraclea Linea, Porphyrius of Philippi, Zosimus of Lignidus, Jonas of Particopolis, Aetius of Thessalonica, Gerontius of Beroea, Antigonus of Pallene.
Thessalia: Alexander of Larissa, Musaeus of Thebes, Hymenaeus of Hypata, Severus of Chalcis.
Achaia: Eutychius of Methone, Socrates of Asphoebia, Martyrius of Naupactus, Eucarpus of Opuntius, Athenodorus of Elataea, Irenaeus of Scirus, Julianus of Thebes Eptapilos, Alypius of Megara, Hermogenes of Sicyon, Plutarchus of Patrae, Trypho of Macaria, Dionysius of Elis, Alexander of Coronaea, Alexander of Cyparissa.
Epirus: Heliodorus of Nicopolis.
Thracia: Eutherius of Gannos, Lucius of Hadrianopolis.
Scythia Minor: Domitianus of Acaria Constantia.
Rhodope: Olympius of Aenus.

The Balkan Bishops of the Eastern Group in Philippopolis
Europa: Theodore of Heraclea.
Thracia: Eutychius of Philippopolis, Demophilus of Beroe.
Haemimontus: Timotheus of Anchialus.
Moesia: Ursacius of Singidunum.
The Pannonias: Valens of Mursa.

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Laity in the Altar Space: Evidences of the Early Christian, Early Byzantine and Medieval Sources (Preliminary note)

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Abstract: The article discusses several early Christian sources (4th century), which report the entry of the laity into the altar spaces of the house churches and their touching of the Holy Table. A Byzantine source (12th century) mentions the same practice in several temples of Constantinople, whereby, however, the laity entered the altar spaces during Mass. The author of this source is the great canonist Patriarch Theodore Valsamon, who tried to prohibit the practice, but the laity refused, claiming that this was an ancient practice that should not be banned. The questions that arise from these sources are very closely related to both the liturgy and practical actions in the altar and the layout of the altar space, for which special research is needed.

Key words: laity, entrances, presbytery, prohibition, rules, tradition.

Резюме: В статията се разглеждат няколко раннохристиянски извора (IV век), които съобщават за влизане на миряни в олтарните пространства на домашните църкви и докосване до Светата трапеза. Един византийски извор (XII век) споменава за същата практика в няколко константинополски храма, при които обаче миряните влизат в олтарните пространства по време на литургия. Авторът на този извор е големият канонист патриарх Теодор Валсамон, който се опитва да забрани практиката, но миряните отказват с аргумента, че това е древна практика, която не бива да се забранява. Въпросите, които възникват от тези извори са свързани много тясно както с литургиката и практическите действия в олтара, така и с оформлението на олтарното пространство, за което е необходимо специално изследване.

From an architectural point of view, the structure and evolution of temple architecture, and especially liturgical facilities, are related to liturgy and liturgical actions. Based on this principle, to understand the cause of the origin, evolution or disappearance of some architectural element of the altar space, the possibility of the entry of lay people into

the altar space must also be taken into account. In fact, this practice is mainly attested to in the Rules of the Church, which often forbids laymen to enter altar spaces. To my knowledge, there is currently no research in the field of Liturgy and Church Law dedicated to this topic. The fact is that if we exclude the well-witnessed and analyzed practice of the Emperor's entry into the altar space of the temple, there will not be enough material left to analyze. Yet there are underappreciated and neglected sources that unequivocally speak of such a phenomenon in the early Christian and Byzantine eras. In this study I will focus mainly on several early Christian and Byzantine sources, which I consider particularly important, both for liturgy and theology, as well as for temple architecture, without going into the topic of the possible influences on architecture of these entries, sittings and exits from the altar spaces.

The laity (λαϊκοί, from λαός – people) nowadays are being perceived as that part of Christians that differs from the clergy and is in contrast to the clergy. Unknown in the New Testament, the term is used by St. Clement of Alexandria (3rd century) while at that time the laity are being differentiated not only by the clergy, but also by ordinary believers. They formed elite of men with one marriage who could baptize and serve in the absence of the clergy. When monasticism appeared, monks began to perceive themselves as laymen. Some liturgical functions (especially those of readers) are assigned to the laity. In the 4th – 5th centuries, the differences between laymen and clergy became more acute. First, the monks **form** a special category, separate from that of the laity. Later, a special place in the temple was assigned to the laity and their entry into the altar space was forbidden. Moreover, they are forbidden to baptize and are not encouraged to preach. Gradually, all groups of Christians, except clergy and monks, were included in the category of laity.[1]

St. Gregory of Nazianzus (329-330–c.390), bishop of Constantinople between 379 and 381 AD, described that his dying mother St. Nona († c. 373) held herself with one hand to the Holy Table (Ιερά Τράπεζα), and her other hand was raised for prayer.[2] And in *Sermon* 8, in praise of his sister Gorgonia, he mentions that St. Gorgonia († about 370) became seriously ill and desperate to find earthly help, got up at night from her bed and put her head on the altar (τω

[1] Papadakis & Kazhdan 1991, 1196; Trempelas 1966, 70–74.
[2] Gregoriou tou Theologou, PG, 38:55A–56A.

Θυσιαστηρίω).[3] According to Fr. R. Taft, the noun 'θυσιαστήριον' can also be applied to the entire altar space in general, while 'Ιερά Τράπεζα' unambiguously means only the Holy Table. According to him, St. Gregory is the only author who mentions such a thing, and according to the context, in both cases it is a private domestic church (titulus). But what St. Gregory the Theologian describes, definitively contradicts the general rule.[4] Regarding the opinion of Fr. R. Taft that 'θυσιαστηρίω' can also be perceived as an altar space, we must bear in mind that Gorgonia could not lay her head on the altar space. The head can be laid on something specific, like the Holy Table. Again, according to Fr. R. Taft, most likely the mentioned cases happened in the architectural environment of the home church, and if entering the altar space is a normal practice, we should not forget that in comparison with the temples belonging to the church, the house churches were in use until the middle of the 6th century.[5] Speaking of the particular domestic church of St. Gregory, he does not tell us whether there is an altar barrier in it, and therefore, whether there is a separate altar space at all, as it has been a well-known fact in the official church architecture by that time. However, with or without a barrier, the mother of St. Gregory puts one hand on the Table while praying and his sister, lays her head on the Table. This means that at the time (4th century), the table is definitely already perceived as something sacred, which can contribute to the healing and salvation of the believer, but also means, on the other hand, that there is still no existing (unwritten) prohibition that lay people should not touch the Holy Table. The logical question arises whether there is a practice for laymen (men and women) to enter the other temples and freely touch the Holy Table. And if they can, can this happen during or outside the Holy Mass? Another logical question is: in addition to treatment and help from above, have they gone inside for other reasons?

It is extremely difficult to answer these questions because of one big problem that we face – the lack of descriptions and comments on the liturgy, which in Byzantium are being left to tradition and very few

[3] Gregoriou tou Theologou, PG, 35:809C. The expression we are interested in is the following: 'τω θυσιαστηρίω την κεφαλήν εαυτήν προσθείσα…', 'She laid her head on the altar…'. In the study of Taft (2004, 129-149) inaccurately indicated column 909C.
[4] Taft 2004, 129–149, part 3.
[5] Gounares 1999, 56. See Bowes 2002, 361-405 for the attitude of bishops towards the house churches (tituli).

authors have paid any attention to liturgical actions.[6] Commentaries on the liturgy or rubrics of the period of 4th-7th centuries are extremely short and few in number, but even after this period many of the characteristic or special actions by various services are not described, either as rubrics or as rules, even to this day. In the sources of Byzantine worship from the 9th-10th centuries, the rubrics are being described as extremely scarce and fragmentary, and most of them do not refer to the ceremonial side, but have a prayer or calendar content.[7] It was not until the 12th century that Byzantium began to make descriptions and comments on the liturgy.[8] From personal observations, I can say that such minor actions to the liturgy like laity entering the altar were even of less interest.

It seems to me that the question about the influence of the liturgical (and not only) practices from house churches on the monumental temple architecture that developed after 313 AD, is particularly important and should be given special attention, and however fragmentary our knowledge of this early period may be, we could point out at least some of the individual elements and practices that had a definite influence on the liturgy of the early Christian era, **all the more so** because the house churches coexist with the official temples, as mentioned above. The aforementioned practice of laymen entering the altar space should have existed, since there is evidence of such entry in the Holy Tradition. This legend is confirmed by Patriarch Theodore Valsamon himself (12th century),[9] who commented on the 69th canon of the 6th Ecumenical (Trul) Council. The rule says: '*No layman shall be permitted to enter the sacred altar; But according to some ancient tradition this should in no case be forbidden to the king when he asks to give gifts to the Creator.*' We shall not deal with the

[6] Gerstel 1999, 5.

[7] Krasnosel'tzeva 1892, 158.

[8] Codex British Library add. 34060, dated to the 12th century, but describing the order of the 11th-century Mass, cf. Taft 1980-1981, 49.

[9] Theodore Valsamon was one of the most prominent ecclesiastical figures of the 12th century. He was born in Constantinople and entered early the ranks of the clergy. As a deacon, he held the duties of chartophylax and nomophylax of the Great Church. Probably at the very beginning of the reign of Emperor Isaac II Angelus (1185-1195), who highly valued his abilities, Theodore Valsamon was elected Patriarch of Antioch, but was unable to occupy his chair at all due to the capture of Antioch by the Latins. Probably after 1195 he went to the monastery of Zipon, the location of which is not known to us. More about his biography and contributions as a church canonist see: Troianou 1999, 263–268.

second part of this rule because it reveals a peculiar practice. The beginning of the rule is very clear, but since Patriarch Theodore mentions extremely interesting facts in the commentary to the rule, I quote most of this comment: '*And how in the divine sanctuary of the Orthodox church of our Lord Jesus Christ on the island of Halki unhindered enters anyone who wishes, I do not know. And for the Latins I know that not only lay men, but also women enter the holy altar and even often sit at a time when priests are standing (…) Notice this rule, and do not allow lay people to enter the holy altar on this basis. I, by the way, have used great diligence to prevent the laity from entering the holy altar in the temple of my Most Holy Madame and the Virgin Odigitria, but I have not been able to succeed: they say that this is an ancient custom and should not be forbidden*'.[10]

From this commentary we understand that such practice exists if it is necessary to draw up such a rule, and that in the 12th century, in Constantinople at least in some temples the laity entered and remained in the altar spaces of the temples without hindrance, justifying themselves by the fact that this is an ancient custom 'αρχαίον είναι τούτο έθος', and claiming that it should not be prohibited 'μή οφείλειν κωλυθήναι'. Based on the opposition that Patriarch Theodore made between the practice in Constantinople and that of the Latins, we can be almost certain that the laity in Constantinople that enter the altar spaces are mostly men, because about the Latins he specifically emphasizes that not only laymen but also women enter the altar: '… ότι ού μόνον λαϊκοί άνδρες, αλλά καί γυναίκες είς το άγιον βήμα εισέρχονται…'.[11] We could hardly answer the question, whether at that time (12th century) the laity entered in other temples besides those mentioned. But if we bear in mind that the temple of Christ on the island of Halki is still outside the city, and the temple of the Virgin Mary Odigitria is one of the revered and important temples in Constantinople,[12] it is obvious that this practice is not typical for only

[10] Tsankov *et al*. 1913, 295. Here we have two excerpts in Greek from the two passages concerning the temples in Constantinople: 'Εγώ δέ πολλά σπουδάσας κωλύσαι την εις το άγιον βήμα του ναού της υπεραγίας Δεσποίνης μου και Θεοτόκου της Οδηγήτριας εισέλευσιν των λαϊκών, ούκ ίσχυσα, λεγόντων αρχαίον είναι τούτο έθος, και μή οφείλειν κωλυθήναι. […] Όπως ούν εις το θείον άδυτον του περιωνύμου ναού του Κυρίου ημών Ιησού Χριστού του εν τη Χάλκη, ακωλύτως εισέρχεται ο βουλόμενος, αγνοώ', Ralle & Potle 1852, 466–467.

[11] Tsankov *et al*. 1913, 295.

[12] In the 12th century, when Patriarch of Antioch Theodore Valsamon lived in Constantinople, the temple was actually a catholicon of a monastery. It is certain that

one temple, but for different in nature and location temples. We must also bear in mind that the second temple, besides being a catholicon of a monastery, is also a pilgrimage healing center that attracts many Christians with its holy spring.[13] On this basis, we can only guess what the prevalence of this practice is in the period 4th-7th century. Unfortunately, the Patriarch does not tell us why the laity enter the altar space but the fact that the Latins even stay and sit inside during mass speaks of some serious reason. It is also a fact that the laity quite consciously did not want to comply with the most prominent canonist of their time, and preferred adherence to tradition rather than to the authority of the sacred canons. The canonist does not tell us anything about the clergy of the specific temples, but the fact is that without their consent, this practice would not survive. With regard to church canons, we must bear in mind that they were created to prevent some practices, or violations, or to put it another way, the canons were created to bring problematic situations under control.[14] In this sense, the 69th canon of the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680-681) actually attempts to prohibit an early Christian practice that survived in time, but which the Council also failed to terminate, as evidenced by the comment of Patriarch Theodor Valsamon in the 12th century.

Here we must draw attention to the fact that in the early Christian era the number of elders, deacons, hypodeacons and deaconesses was quite large, and it is obvious that this space was abounds in clergy, and hence their movements, which definitely disturbs the visual and acoustic connection between the laity, on the one hand, and the clergy, on the other.[15] And when laity enter during Mass in the altar space of a city temple, they further hamper the situation inside. This presence, entry and exit and constant movements

in the 8th century the monastery already existed and in the 12th century, it was a convent of the Patriarchate of Antioch, where both metropolitans and monks from Syria stayed, which means that Patriarch Theodore knew the practice in the temple very well, certainly served in it, but failed to eradicate the old practice. We should not underestimate the fact that the laity actually entered the altar space not just of a parish temple, but of a monastery catholicon, which speaks of the firm adherence of Christians to the ancient tradition. More about the history of the Odigon Monastery see: Papadopoulou 1965, 350-351, and Kidonopoulos 1994, 77–78.

[13] Talbot 1997 [2000], 16–17.

[14] Taft 1998, 32.

[15] On the issue of the number of clergy in early Christian temples, see: Enchev 2016, 28–59, on the problem of acoustic and visual connection between the Christians in the temple, see: Enchev 2016, 32, 35, 67, 219.

require the search for certain solutions, including architectural ones, in order to 'hide' them from the eyes of the laity and the bishop and to achieve an atmosphere that must be consistent with, and conducive to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. However, specific architectural solutions and changes will be discussed in another study.

Tou en agiois patros emon Gregoriou tou Theologou archiepiskopou Konstantinoupoleos, *Epitafia*, PG, 38, col. 55A–56A.

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Studies of (early) Christian liturgical spaces along the Southwestern Black sea region

Hristo Preshlenov

Abstract: The study presents the research of the early Christian temples along the Bulgarian Black Sea coast – the formation of state institutions and civic associations, intended to organize the search, research and preservation of monuments after 1878, their historical topography, liturgical architectural space, Holy relics, tombs '*ad Sanctos*'. We study representative basilicas with different functional and liturgical options – episcopal (Odessos, Mesembria), parish (Mesembria), monastery (Mesembria), in fortified semi-urban settlements (Bizone, Scatrae) and in unfortified settlements (Karabizye). The buildings have been three-nave 'Hellenistic' basilicas with wooden roofs and an elongated (Moesia Secunda) to a shortened (Haemimontos) naos. Some of the temples assimilate pre-Christian sacred spaces. The planning of the liturgical space is in accordance with the ratios of the 'golden section', close to the one applied in Constantinople. The composition and size, based on symmetry, change in accordance with the differentiation of the church liturgical rite.

Key words: Early Christian archaeology, Bulgarian Black Sea coast, history of researches, historical topography, basilica

Резюме: Изследването представя проучването на раннохристиянските храмове по българското Черноморие - формирането на държавни институции и граждански сдружения, предназначени да организират издирването, проучването и опазването на паметниците след 1878 г., тяхната историческа топография, литургично архитектурно пространство, свети мощи, гробове '*ad Sanctos*'. Изследвани са представителни базилики с различни функционални и литургични варианти - епископски (Одесос, Месемврия), енорийски (Месемврия), манастирски (Месемврия), в укрепени полуградски селища (Бизоне, Скатре) и в неукрепени селища (Карабизие). Сградите са трикорабни 'елинистически' базилики с дървени покриви и удължен (*Moesia Secunda*) до скъсен (*Haemimontos*) наос. Някои от храмовете усвояват предхристиянски свещени пространства. Планирането на литургичното пространство е в съответствие със съотношенията на 'златното сечение', близки до прилаганите

в Константинопол. Композицията и обема, основани на симетрията, се променят в съответствие с диференциацията на църковния литургичен обред.

After the apostolic century, the church, in addition to a community of believers, begins to be understood as a building where lay people and clergy gather to commune with their God. It is a place whose holiness, achieved through the rite of initiation, has transformed it into a place for encounters with God and an earthly projection of the heavenly temple. The artistically composed sacred space is an architectural environment in which form, light, symbol and speech attract believers to the great sacrament of communion with God. Early Christian temples (historical topography, composition, architecture, artistic construction, liturgical equipment, Holy relics, tombs '*ad Sanctos*', and necropolises) are symbolic archaeological evidence of the process of Christianization.[1]

Topography

The Bulgarian Black Sea coast stretches from cape Sivriburun on the Bulgarian-Romanian border to the Rezovska River bordering Turkey. In a straight line the distance between them is 199 km and the actual length of the coastline is 378 km.[2] Its territory is a strategic region, comprising about 12% of the territory and 12% of the country's population. Administratively, the active contact (coastal) zone is subordinated to the districts of Dobrich, Varna and Burgas.[3]

As a result of the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine the Great, the southwestern Black Sea coast has been included in the Diocese of Thrace in the *prefecture of Illyricum*.[4] To the north of the Balkan Mountains, the territories of the towns (T(i)rissa/Acres on Cape Kaliakra and Dionysopolis (Balchik) have been given to the province of Scythia with the capital Tomi (Constanta), and those of Odessos (Varna) and Templum Iovis (Obzor) to the province of

[1] This article studies representatives of the early Christian church construction basilicas on the Southwestern Black Sea coast with different functional and liturgical options-episcopal (Odessos, Mesembria), parish (Mesembria), monastery (Mesembria), in fortified semi-urban settlements (Bizone, Scatre) and in unfortified settlements (Karabizye). About the process of Christianization of the region, see recently Oppermann 2010; Tenekedzhiev 2015; Preshlenov 2017, 181–202; Minchev 2021a, 67–106.

[2] Popov & Mishev 1974, 22.

[3] Kovachev 2000, 192–193, fig. 170.

[4] Velkov 1959, 55–56.

Moesia Secunda with the capital Marcianopolis (Devnya). The provincial border, following the river Batovska (ancient Ziras), ends on the beach near Kranea fortress not far from the village of Kranevo, Balchik municipality.[5] The valley of the river Batovska (ancient Zyras) is at the same time a natural geographical and administrative border of the Odessos and Dionysopolis territories since the 2nd century AD.[6] The towns to the south of Balkan Mountains - Mesembria (Nesebar), Anhialos (Pomorie), Debeltos (Debelt) and Sozopolis (Sozopol), have been included in the province of *Haemimontos* with a capital city Adrianople (Edirne).[7] The border between *Moesia Secunda* and *Haemimontos* runs along the ridge of the mountain south of the line connecting the late antique village of Herculente at Cape Kochan in the land of village Banya, Nesebar municipality and the road station Scatrae/Skatrina northwest of the village of Panitsovo, Nesebar municipality, which according to the list of 'Thracian fortifications along the *Pontos Euxeinos* and the river Istros' from the treatise of Procopius of Caesarea 'On the constructions' are in the province of *Moesia Secunda*.[8]

The new administrative system of the Eastern Roman Empire becomes a prototype also for the church organization – a fact established by rule 17th (... the order of church affairs to follow the civil distribution ...) of the 4th ecumenical council of Chalcedon of 451 AD.[9]

Previous Studies

After the Liberation in 1878, along with the construction of the structures of the modern Bulgarian state and society, the formation of state institutions and civic associations begins, intended to organize the search, research and preservation of archaeological monuments from prehistoric times, Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Efforts in this direction are greatly facilitated by the traditional interest of the Bulgarian society to the monuments of the past and national history, an interest that underlies the museum movement of the first half of the 20th century. During this period of initial empirical accumulation of information and acquisition of museum collections, early Christian churches, monasteries and tombs, frescoes and mosaics, sculptures

[5] Torbatov 2002, 19–21, fig. 1; Kuzev 1981, 287.
[6] Preshlenov 2002, 14, fig. 3.
[7] Soustal 1991, 62–63, karte 2.
[8] Preshlenov 2006, 263.
[9] Kochev 1995, 145–146; Atanasov 2007, 81.

and other signs of faith from settlements on the Black Sea coast are considered part of ancient civilization and do not lead to profiling as a structure and hierarchy of institutions, programs and specialists, engaged in their research and conservation.

The idea of creating an all-Bulgarian museum institution is first formulated in the Statute of the Bulgarian Literary Society from 1869. After the Liberation a Public Library is established in Sofia, whose museum collection, later established as a museum department, sets up in 1892 the National Museum in Sofia. In his speech at the official opening of its first exhibition on May 18, 1905, the Minister of National Education Prof. Iv. Shishmanov attributes to the role of the museum 'the study of the distant past of the Bulgarian land'. In the Public Education Act, adopted in 1909, the museum receives an archaeological profile, and on the basis of the Antiquities law of 1911, its director B. Filov is given the right to chair the newly established Service for Preservation and Maintenance of Antiquities. In the 1920s, the National Archaeological Museum becomes a center of Bulgarian archaeological research and establishes itself as a significant scientific and public institution (fig. 1).[10] In the structure of the museum for the collection, research, preservation and promotion of ancient and early Christian monuments in the country and on the Black Sea coast is engaged the Ancient Department, whose curators in the first half of the 20th century are V. Dobruski, B. Filov, Iv. Velkov, Hr. Danov, D. Krandzhilov and G. Mihailov.[11]



Fig. 1. National Archaeological Museum - Sofia (Nikolov 2005 b).

[10] Aladzhova 2005, 9–12; Nikolov 2005a, 7; Krasteva 2003, 229–230, 236–237, 240–241.
[11] Ilieva & Sotirov 2005, 38–41; Preshlenov 1995, 16, 17–20.

A special role in the study of antiquities in the early 20th century have also the well-established archaeological societies, which organize archaeological excavations and scientific excursions to search for antiquities, create museum collections and promote the results of their activities in scientific and popular publications.[12] Among them local societies in Varna and Burgas, as well as the Bulgarian Archaeological Society founded in Sofia, are related to the archeological monuments of early Christianity on the Black Sea coast.

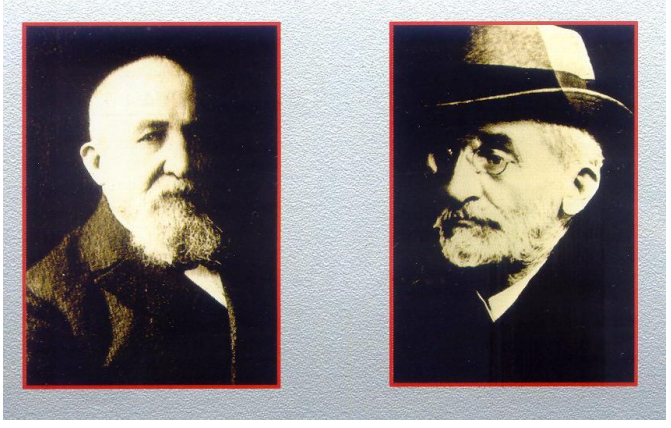


Fig. 2. Karel (1859-1944) and Hermengild (1858-1923) Škorpil (Kinov 1999).

In 1901, on the initiative of a group of Varna public figures, including the district governor Iv. Pavlov, the municipal mayor R. Mateev and K. Shkorpil, then a high school teacher in the city, the Varna Archaeological Society is established, whose commission under the chairmanship of the Metropolitan of Varna-Preslav Simeon aims 'to search, preserve and study the monuments of Varna county's past and its neighboring countries and to arise interest to them in the population'. In 1906 the District Museum is opened, inheriting the archeological collection at the Varna Boys' High School, which has been established in 1888 and renewed in 1894. The basis of the activity of Varna Society, with whose funds, provided on a public basis, the museum is supported, is the multifaceted research, the scientific and popularization activities of the brothers Hermenegild and Karel Shkorpil, who have laid the foundations of Bulgarian archaeological

[12] Krasteva 2003, 253–254.

science in the first half of the 20th century (fig. 2).[13] For his services with a ministerial order in 1924 Karel has been appointed guardian of the immovable cultural monuments on the Black Sea coast.[14]

In 1925, south of Stara Planina, with the efforts of the newly founded Regional Archaeological Society 'Debelt' and its chairman until 1947, Georgi Pop Ayanov, a museum archeological collection is arranged on the basis of the high school collections and those of the district school inspection.[15]

In 1901, the Bulgarian Archaeological Society is founded in Sofia, with the aim of 'searching for, preserving and studying the monuments of the past and arousing interest to them among the people'. In 1920, on the basis of the Bulgarian Archaeological Society, the Bulgarian Archaeological Institute is established as an independent scientific institution, whose first and long-term director until 1940 is B. Filov. In close cooperation with the National Archaeological Museum, he applies the adopted in 1921 Law on the Bulgarian Archaeological Institute.[16] According to the law, the institute uses annual subsidies to support the research and publishing activities of the National and Local museums.

The structural units, created in the first half of the 20th century, are an expression of the state cultural policy, considering museums as the main scientific centers, which have a leading role in the educational activities on the basis of their field and office research.[17]

In the second half of the 20th century the museum network in the country is completed by reorganizing the existing museum collections of the community centers and archaeological societies, which pass to the state budget and by organizing new museums. A government decree of 1958 establishes museums as 'scientific and cultural-educational institutes, main repositories of movable cultural monuments and disseminators of scientific knowledge'. The main units during this period in the national and regional museum systems are the general history museums with separate departments named 'Archaeology'. In 1967, research groups are formed in the museums of the municipalities and departments, whose excavations and research

[13] Stoyanov 1987, 3–4; Preshlenov 1995, 16–17.
[14] Stoyanov 1987, 3–4; Preshlenov 1995, 16–17; Preshlenov 2012a, 1171.
[15] Krasteva 2003, 254; Raichev 1981, 199; Lazarov 1971, 5.
[16] Ovcharov & Bogomirova 2001, 5–7; Aladzhova 2005, 12.
[17] Krasteva 2003, 260–261, 268.

fill the museum expositions and are the basis of a number of scientific and popular scientific publications.[18]

The specialists of the regional museums in Varna and Burgas and of the city museums in Balchik, Kavarna, Nesebar, Sozopol and Pomorie participate in the excavations and explore ancient and early Christian sites on the territory of the Black Sea coast.

In Kavarna, the museum collection, formed in 1956 at the community center 'Saglasie', grows into the City History Museum in 1971. In the recent years, the archaeological monuments from the late Antique period from Bizone, Acres, Thymum, Aphrodision and other settlements in the area have been arranged in a new contemporary museum exposition. There is another City History Museum on the Dobrudzha coast in Balchik. A significant part of its collections are the monuments of the ancient and early Byzantine period of Dionysopolis.[19]



Fig. 3. Archaeological Museum - Varna (photo: Mihail Lazarov).



Fig. 4. Ivan Galabov (1918-1978) (Karayotov 2000).

The Varna Regional Museum is declared as a state museum in 1945, and in 1952 the exposition of the Department of Archaeology is opened.[20] The early Christian fund of the museum is expanded by excavations of churches, monasteries, tombs and necropolises in Odessos and along the coast north of the Balkan Mountains. In its new exhibition, opened in 1983, special attention is paid to early Christian history and archaeology, which is visualized with temple reconstruc-

[18] Krasteva 2003, 274, 285, 289.
[19] Raichev 1981, 226.
[20] Stoyanov 1987, 4.

tions, church utensils and accessories, Christian symbols and tombstones (fig. 3).[21]

The museum collection of Burgas Archaeological Society is reorganized into a state museum in 1947. Its exposition is opened by Iv. Galabov in 1954 (fig. 4).[22] Its funds contain early Christian monuments from excavations and research, conducted on the territory of Burgas district.

Iv. Galabov is the initiator of the opening of a branch of Burgas Museum in Nesebar. The first archaeological exposition is opened in the town in 1956. In 1959 it receives the status of a city museum, in 1992 it is called the Department 'Old Nesebar', and now - Museum 'Old Nesebar'.[23] The funds and its completely renovated exposition in 1994 include finds from excavations of early Christian basilicas and tombs in Nesebar, Obzor and Panitsovo. As a branch of Burgas Regional Museum in 1961 another important coastal museum in the Burgas region is established - the museum in Sozopol. M. Tsaneva begins to expand its fund with monuments of Christian antiquity, discovered during excavations in Apollonia-Sozopolis.

The newest city historical museum south of Stara Planina is the one in Pomorie, whose exposition presents the monuments of late Antiquity from Anhialos in the reconstructed building of *Devicheska gimnazia* 'Girl's High School', which is a cultural monument.

At the end of 1948, through the merger of the Bulgarian Archaeological Institute and the National Archaeological Museum, a national scientific research center is established whose section 'Ancient Archaeology' deals with the excavations and studies of the monuments of classical antiquity, late Antiquity and early Christianity in the country and on the Black Sea coast (fig. 5). According to the Law on Reorganization of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences of 1947, the autonomous till then Archaeological Institute is given the national functions to organize archaeological research and to have a leading position in museum work and the promotion of archaeological heritage, which it performs under the guidance of prominent experts in antiquity, early Byzantine and Christian archaeology such as D.P. Dimitrov (1949–1970), D. Angelov (1970–1987) and V. Velkov (1987–1993) (fig. 6). Recognition for the institute is the change in its

[21] Doncheva *et al*. 1999.
[22] Drazheva 2000, 11–12.
[23] Kozhuharov 1996, 4.

name – since 2006 National Archaeological Institute with Museum at BAS.[24]



Fig. 5. Velizar Velkov and Lyuba Ognenova-Marinova in Nesebar 1960s (from the photo archive of Lyuba Ognenova-Marinova).

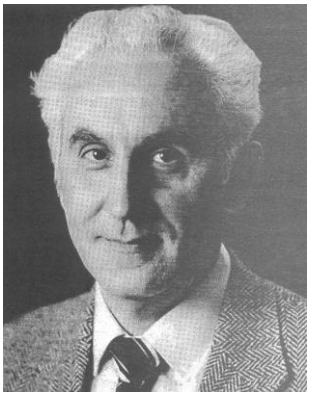


Fig. 6. Velizar Velkov (1928-1993) (Preshlenov 2012 c).

In the years 1878–2021 on the Bulgarian sea coast of Scythia, *Moesia Secunda* and *Haemimontos* are located and studied toponymically, topographically 46 early Christian churches with their decorative and architectural sculpture and liturgical equipment, situated in the fortified settlement of Timum, 'Dalboka' locality, Balgarevo village, municipality of Kavarna (2);[25] in the fortified zone and the surroundings of Aphrodision, 'Yurtluka' locality (1)[26] and in 'Kavanlaka' locality (1),[27] Topola village, Kavarna municipality; in the semi-urban fortified settlement Bizone on cape Chirakman, municipality Kavarna (1);[28] in Dionisopolis (early Byzantine fortification in the 'Horizont' suburb, Balchik (1);[29] in the fortified settlement

[24] Ovcharov 1995, 6; Nikolov 2004, 4–5; Aladzhova 2005, 14; Krasteva 2003, 276; Preshlenov 1995.
[25] NA BAN, f. 165 к, a. e. 543, sheet 8–9; a. e. 424, sheet 5; a. e. 588, sheet 51; Toncheva 1970, 91–92.
[26] NA BAN, f. 165 к, a. e. 543, sheet 10; a. e. 425, sheet 20; a. e. 588, sheet 54; Torbatov 2002, 253–254, 257.
[27] Ivanov 2008, 498-500; Doncheva *et al.* 2019; Minchev 2021a, 68–69.
[28] Mirchev *et al.* 1962, 25, fig. 3; Vasilev *et al.* 1977, 135–137; 1978, 137–138; Farkov 1982, 53–54.
[29] Minchev 2003, cat. no. 15; Torbatov 2002, 263, 268–270.

near Osenovo village, Aksakovo municipality (1);[30] in 'Harman eri' locality at the rock dormitory monastery 'Al-Adzha' in the Natural Park 'Golden Sands', region 'Primorski', Varna municipality (1);[31] in Odessos, 'Odessos'district, Varna, 'Han Krum' str. (1), 'Kozloduy' str. (1), 'Tzar Kaloyan' (1), 'San Stefano' str. (2), 'Tzaribrod' str. (1), 'Kliment' str. (1), 'Pop Bogomil' str. (*extra murus*) (1);[32] in 'Pirinch tepe' locality, 'Odessos' district, Varna municipality (1);[33] in the monastery at 'Dzhanavar tepe' locality, 'Asparuhovo' district, Varna municipality (1);[34] in the monastery (?) in 'Borovetz' locality, 'Borovetz' settlement, Asparuhovo district, Varna municipality (1);[35] in 'Peynerdzhik' locality (1)[36] and in the settlement in 'Soyuk bunar' locality (1),[37] Zvezditza village, Varna municipality; at a settlement (?) in 'Karantinata' locality, 'Asparuhovo' district, Varna municipality (1);[38] in the unfortified settlement (Karabizye?) in 'Kaylaka' locality, settlement 'Rakitnika', Asparuhovo district, Varna municipality (1);[39] at the settlement in 'Kechi gyoldzhu' locality (1)[40] and in the 'Kodzha Tarla' locality (1),[41] to 'Rakitnik' Protected Site, Asparuhovo district, Varna municipality; in the settlement at the Erite road station in the 'Boaza' locality at the mouth of Kamchiya River, 'Kamchiya' Resort Complex, Avren municipality (1);[42] in the land of Goren Bliznak village, Bliznatsi village, Avren municipality (1 ?);[43] in the fortified settlement at the

[30] Irechek 1974, 895; NA BAN, f. 165 к, a. e. 425, sheet 8, 10, 12–14; a. e. 543, sheet 25; Minchev 1986, 40–41; 2003, no. 12; [Schkorpil] 1914, 17.
[31] Schkorpil & Schkorpil 1921, 68-74; Kinov 1999; Minchev 1986, 40.
[32] Schkorpil 1915, 21–22; Mirchev 1951a, 117–119; 1951b, 121; Minchev 1986, 35–36; 2003, no. 35; 2006, 229, 231, 234–235, 238–245, figs. 1, 17, 22, 23; Lazarov & Angelov 2020; Minchev 2021a, 69–73; Minchev 2021b, 728–729, 731–732; Tenekedzhiev & Voikova-Manolova 2021; Tenekedzhiev in press a.
[33] Schkorpil 1910, 14–21.
[34] NA BAN, f. 165 к, a. e. 541, sheet 36–108; Schkorpil & Schkorpil 1921, 59–60; Minchev 2008, 500–503; Minchev & Tenekedzhiev 2015a, 281; Minchev 2021a, 74–77; Tenekedzhiev in press b.
[35] Minchev & Tenekedzhiev 2015b, 275–278; 2018, 404; Minchev & Tenekedjiev 2018, 130-151; Minchev 2021a, 77–78.
[36] Minchev 1986, 39.
[37] Schkorpil 1910, 9–10.
[38] Minchev 1986, 38; Toncheva 1951, 105.
[39] Mirchev 1953, 1–7.
[40] Toncheva 1951, 107–108.
[41] Tenekedzhiev 2016, 75–77, fig. 1, fig. 3; Minchev 2021a, 73–74.
[42] Schkorpil & Schkorpil 1892, 44; Pokrovski 1943, 252–255.
[43] Minchev 2003, 12, cat. no. 32.

mouth of the Fandakliyska River, Shkorpilovtsi village, Dolni chiflik municipality (1);[44] in the fortified settlement at cape 'St. Atanas', city of Byala, Byala municipality (1);[45] in the late Antique Templum Iovis, Obzor, Nesebar municipality (1);[46] in the fortified semi-urban settlement (Scatrae?) on the ridge 'Gradishteto', Panitsovo village, Nesebar municipality (1);[47] in Mesembria, Nesebar: (archi)episcopal/metropolitan 'St. Sofia' (1), the cathedral monastery basilica 'The Holy Mother of God Eleusa' (1), the northwestern parish basilica, the 'St. Apostles' (1), the basilica under the Middle Byzantine 'St. John the Baptist' (1), the basilica at the medieval church 'St. George the Old' (1), the monastery basilica 'Christ Acropolit' (1);[48] in Anhialos (1+);[49] in Debeltos (1+);[50] in 'Tsarkvishteto' locality of the fortified settlement at cape Foros, Kraymorie, Burgas (1);[51] in the fortified semi-urban settlement at cape Akra, Chernomoretz, Sozopol municipality (1);[52] in Sozopolis, Sozopol at the contemporary churches 'St. George' (1), 'St. Atanas' (1), 'St. Assumption of the Mother of God' (1), 'St. Constantine and Helena' (1), on 'St. Ivan' island in the monastery 'St. John the Baptist' (1), on 'St. Ivan' island (1) (fig. 7).[53]

[44] Schkorpil A a.e. 548, sheet 3–13; Mirchev 1967, 10-15; 1969, 11–15; Dimitrov 1978, 94–95; Minchev 2002, 130–150.
[45] Iotov & Minchev 2011, 243–245; 2014, 134, 148–169; Minchev 2021a, 78–80.
[46] Marvakov 2017, 397–399.
[47] Preshlenov 2006, 261–263; Prešlenov 2006, 944–946.
[48] Bojadžiev 1962, 321–346; Velkov 1946, 61–70; Ognenova-Marinova 1964, 4–5; 2005, 11-15; Marvakov *et al.* 2014, 233–234; Kozhuharov 2003, 371–382; Preshlenov 2012b, 514–528; Preshlenov in press a.
[49] Jord., *Get.* 100; Sim., *Hist.* 6, 3–5; Minchev 2003, nos. 6, 7.
[50] Preshlenov 2015.
[51] Nikolov 2015a, 338–339; 2015b, 122, 125–127; Minchev 2021a, 80–81.
[52] Hristov 2013, 224; 2018, 221, 236.
[53] Velkov 1964, 43, 46, 53, fig. 8; Drazheva 2003, 46–47, 52; Panayotova & Drazheva 2003, 224; Doseva 2010, 4, 5, n. 21, 6, n. 51, n. 59; Dimova 1992, 53–63; Popkonstantinov *et al.* 2015, 210–212; 2016, 737; Panayotova *et al.* 2010, 297–298; Minchev 2021a, 81–85.



Fig. 7. The Greek-Roman and early Byzantine Cities along the Bulgarian Black Sea coast (IGBulg I2; II; III/2).

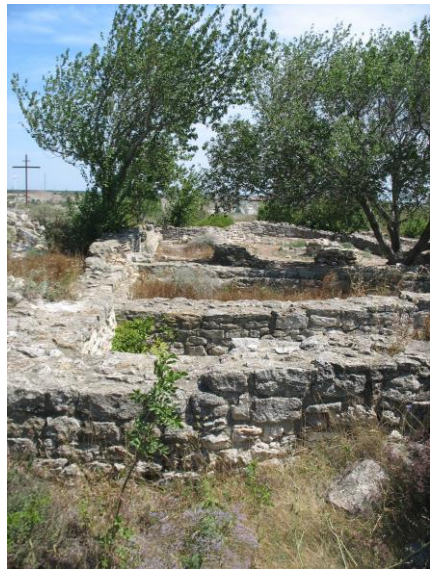


Fig. 8. Bizone. Early Christian Basilica (photo: Hristo Preshlenov).

A case study

A village basilica in Bizone

It is built in the central, narrowest and most elevated area of Cape Chirakman of the fortified semi-urban settlement (fig. 8). It is studied by the curators of Varna Archaeological Museum M. Mirchev, G. Toncheva and D. Dimitrov during the excavations in 1952/53 and 1955.[54] The building is a representative for the Hellenistic three-nave basilicas with an elongated *naos*, large apse, narrow side aisles, undivided *narthex* and *exonarthex* – features on the basis of which N. Chaneva-Dechevska dates it to the middle of the 5th century AD (fig. 9).[55] During the excavations, renewed in the 1970s, V. Vasilev, G. Kitov, G. Kuzmanov and I. Sotirov from the Archaeological Institute with Museum in Sofia and A. Salkin from the City Historical Museum in Kavarna complete the study of the basilica, revealing its *exonarthex* and its representative entrance.[56] Hypothetically, the organization of the construction, and in my opinion, its rebuilding *a fundamentis*, can be related to deacon Stephen. According to the content of an

[54] Mirchev *et al.* 1962, 25, fig. 3.

[55] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 171.

[56] Vasilev *et al.* 1977, 135–137; 1978, 137–138.

inscription found in the area, published by V. Beshevliev,[57] the deacon orders the construction of a church building from the donations of the healing martyrs Cosmas and Damian, especially revered during the reign of Justinian I.[58] This practice – of reconstruction or restoration is widely observed in the province of Scythia during Justinian's reign.[59] Two constructions of mud solder and mortar are also found by V. Vasilev's team in the basilica of Bizone. In 1977, fragments of a wall painting from the (re)constructed (by deacon Stephen) building are discovered.[60] The preserved ruins of the basilica are exposed on site after the planned and silhouette reconstruction of the temple by arch. Yu. Farkov.[61]

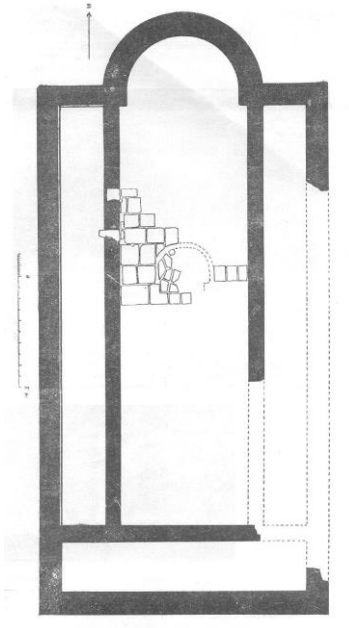


Fig. 9. Bizone. Early Christian Basilica – plan (Mirchev *et al.* 1962).

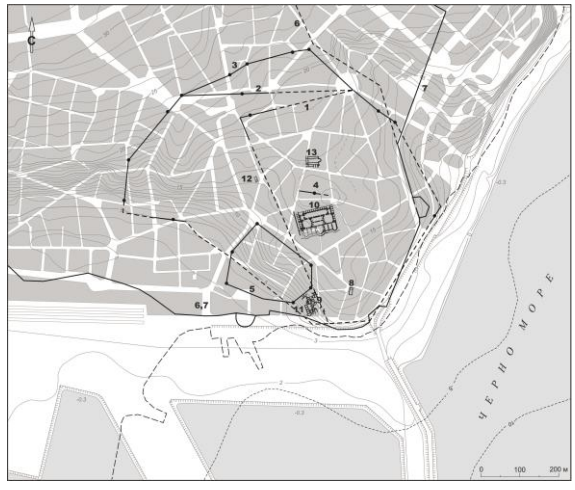


Fig. 10. Odessos-Varna. Location of buildings and terrains (Preshlenov 2018).

[57] Beševliev 1964, no. 84.
[58] Mazzoleni 2006, 113; Minchev 2006, 253.
[59] Barnea 1997, 43–44.
[60] Pillinger *et al.* 1999, 11.
[61] Farkov 1982, 53–54.



Fig. 11. Odessos. Early Christian Episcopal basilica. Mosaic in the aisle (Ovcharov & Vaklinova 1978).



Fig. 12. Odessos. Early Christian Episcopal basilica. Mosaic in the nave (photo: Mihail Lazarov).

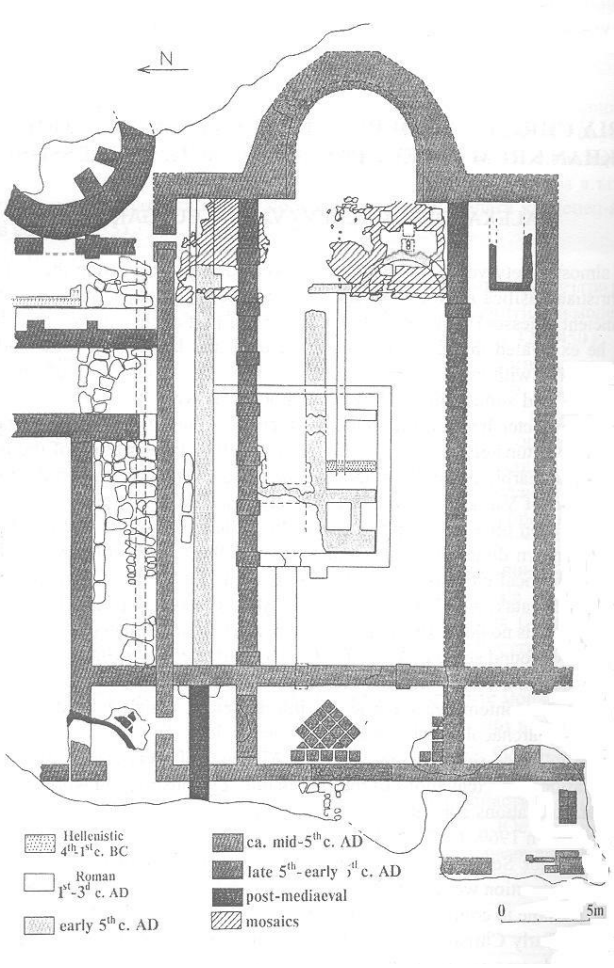


Fig. 13. Odessos. Early Christian Episcopal basilica – plan (Minchev 2006).

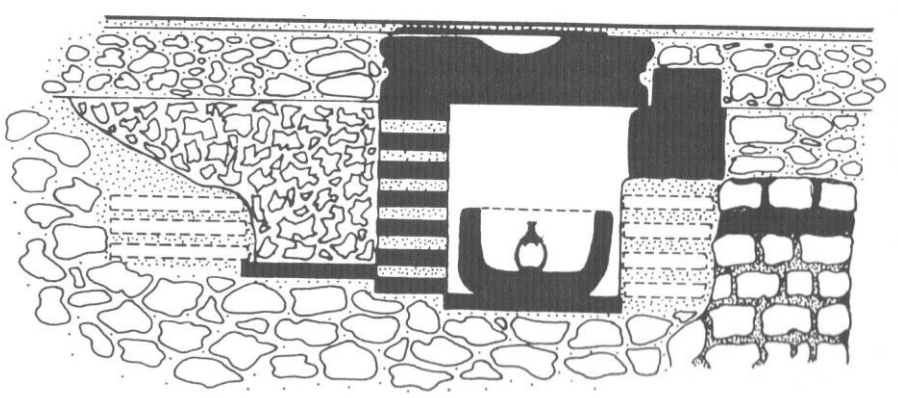


Fig. 14. Odessos. Early Christian Episcopal basilica. Double crypt – cross-section E-W (Minchev 2006).

The Episcopal Basilica in Odessos

It is located near the presumed center of the ancient city on 'Han Krum' Street in Varna between 'St. George' church and 'St. Kliment' school (fig. 10). In 1914, during excavations for a water supply system, according to K. Shkorpil, the foundations of a large temple have been found and capitals with crosses and part of its floor mosaics have been discovered.[62] During excavations in 1949, M. Mirchev discovers the mosaics in the northern nave of the church (fig. 11).[63] Subsequently, the church is studied intermittently by several collaborators of the Varna Museum again by M. Mirchev in 1961-1962, in 1969-1972 by D. Dimitrov, A. Kuzev and M. Lazarov and in 2002-2004 by A. Minchev. As a result of the excavations it is established that in the middle of the 5th century AD a large three-nave single-apse basilica with mosaic floor and wall paintings inherits the sacred space of a small one-apse early Christian church, built at the beginning of the same century (fig. 12). At the end of the 5th - beginning of the 6th century AD, the destroyed and abandoned Episcopal church is renovated in the same plan and spatial characteristics in which it has functioned until its destruction, most probably during the Avar invasion of 614 AD (fig. 13).[64] In 2002-2003 A. Minchev discovers a crypt under the mosaic floor, in which in the middle of the 5th century AD two reliquaries with parts of a young woman's skull, pieces of wood and cloth have been laid (fig. 14). A second, smaller masonry crypt is attached to the

[62] Schkorpil 1915, 21–22.
[63] Mirchev 1951a, 117–119.
[64] Minchev 2006, 229, 231, 234–235, fig.1; 2016, 431–443; 2021a, 69–73.

east,[65] and at the end of the 5th - beginning of the 6th century AD a reliquary with a part of a human bone has been built into the floor in front of the altar space of the rebuilt church.[66]

Town basilica in Karabizye

The excavations of M. Mirchev from Varna Archaeological Museum in 'Kayalaka' locality south of Cape Galata, about 7 km southeast of Varna,[67] are provoked by the systematic extraction in 1942–1950 of building stone, decorative architectural sculpture and relief slabs with inscriptions on the territory of a settlement. In 1972 V. Gerasimova-Tomova identified the settlement with the ancient and medieval Karabizia.[68] In the spring of 1950 in the northeastern zone of the settlement a three-nave one-apse Hellenistic basilica with a *narthex* and a masonry baptistery in it, is discovered (fig. 15).[69] Under its flooring are found the foundations of a sanctuary of a local Thracian deity – Heros Karabazmos, part of whose votive reliefs have been used as *spoliae* in the Christian church (fig. 16).[70] The unique ceramic font with fretwork decoration, found in the *nartex* at the entrance of the baptistery,[71] according to S. Ristov is used at the beginning of the 6th century AD for the Baptism of chidren (fig. 17).[72] During the excavations to the east of the basilica in 1951 and to the west in 1952, M. Mirchev studies buildings of the additional to the basilica construction with economic and residential functions.[73] According to him, the basilica has been built after the destruction of the pagan sanctuary, at the beginning of the 5th century AD at latest. To the same century belongs also the discovered in 1931 south of the village a masonry vaulted tomb, which shows parallels among the early Christian tombs in the neighboring Odessos.[74] The architecture of the basilica gives grounds to N. Chaneva-Dechevska to refer it to 4th century AD, an opinion which I support.[75]

[65] Minchev 2006, 238–245, figs. 17, 22, 23; Minchev 2021a, 71.
[66] Minchev 2003, no. 35.
[67] Mirchev 1953, 1–2.
[68] Gerasimova-Tomova 1972, 31.
[69] Mirchev 1953, 2–7, fig. 1.
[70] Mirchev 1953, 7–8, 21, no. 10–21, fig. 19–31; Toncheva 1968, 22–23, 25.
[71] Mirchev 1953, 9, fig. 1/6, 14–16.
[72] Ristow 2006, 668, Abb. 5.
[73] Mirchev 1953, 22–26.
[74] Mirchev 1953, 1, 21.
[75] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 176.

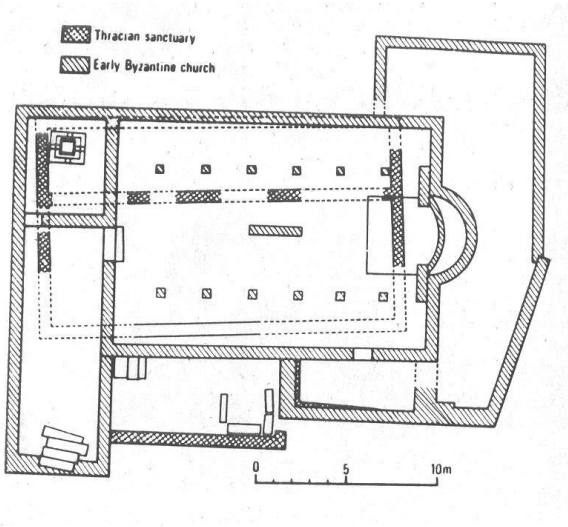


Fig. 15. Karabizye. Early Christian Basilica – plan (Mirchev 1953).

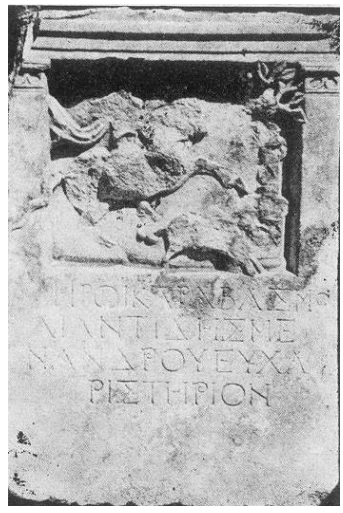


Fig. 16. Karabizye. Early Christian Basilica. Reused votive relief of Thracian Horseman (IGBulg I2).



Fig. 17. Karabizye. Early Christian Basilica. Ceramic Baptismal Font (Mirchev 1953).

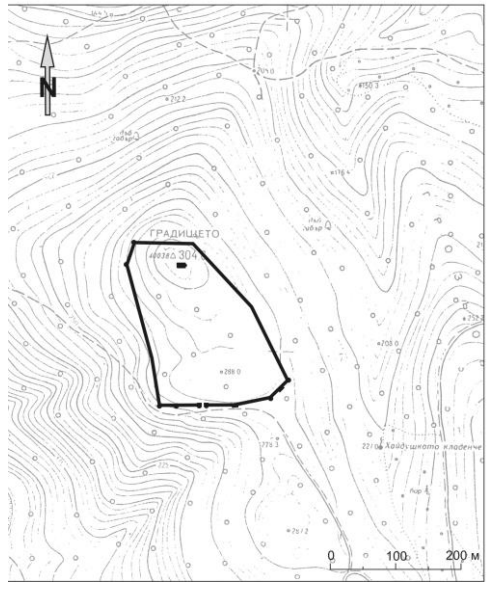


Fig. 18. Eastern Stara Planina. The early Byzantine fortified settlement on the ridge 'Gradishteto' - plan (Preshlenov 2015).

Basilica in a settlement fortification (Scatrae?) on 'Gradishteto' ridge in the Eastern Stara Planina

It is located on 'Gradishteto' ridge in Dyulino pass of the Kamchia & Emine part of the Eastern Stara Planina, about 2.5 km northwest of the village of Panitsovo, municipality of Nesebar (fig. 18).[76] During the preparation of the study 'Strategic buildings in the eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula' in the early 20th century, K. Shkorpil mentions the fortification under the name 'Choban Kale'.[77] In 1976 the fortified settlement is visited by members of the 'Mesambria-Hemus' expedition.[78] During field trips in the Emine part of Stara Planina in 1995–1999 together with D. Kozhuharov from the Nesebar Museum, we located in the highest area of the settlement a three-nave one-apse basilica with a three-part *narthex*, side complementary construction and well-preserved frescoes (geometric and floral motifs (fig. 19), human figures (fig. 20) from the end of the 4th - the beginning of the 5th century AD (fig. 21).[79] In the first half of the 4th century AD, in my opinion, the processes of Christianization in the settlement are a fact. An inscription in memory of the Thracian Flavius Zenis, a soldier in the *Legio XI Claudia* in Durostorum and a sergeant in the Marcianopol weapon workshops, bears both the ancient formula αγαθη τυχη and the Christ monogram.[80] It is possible that Zenis was converted to Christianity during his military service in Durostorum, where in the 4th century AD it has been widespread among soldiers. Eight of them accept martyrdom in the city during the persecution of Christians in 304 AD.[81] As a result of the archaeological excavations, which I conducted in the 90s of the 20th century on the territory of the basilica, I found that during the Avar-Slavic attacks at the end of the 6th - the 1st quarter of the 7th century AD, the basilica has been burned.

The Episcopal basilica 'St. Sofia' in Mesembria

It is built on the main urban square in the city of Nesebar, probably taking the place of its pagan correlate (?), Apollo. For now, this topographic continuity, suggested in the 80s of the 20th century

[76] Preshlenov 2001, 33; 2006, 263.
[77] Schkorpil, H. & Schkorpil 1892, 56; Schkorpil 1930, 212.
[78] Delev 1982, 393–394.
[79] Preshlenov 2006, 262, 264.
[80] Mihailov 1965, 150, 153.
[81] Atanasov 2007, 15–41.

by L. Ognenova-Marinova, is still awaiting its archaeological confirmation.[82] It is a functioning church in Mesembria at least until the 17th century; fragments of frescoes have been preserved from that time. In the 19th century, for unknown reasons, the temple has been abandoned.[83]

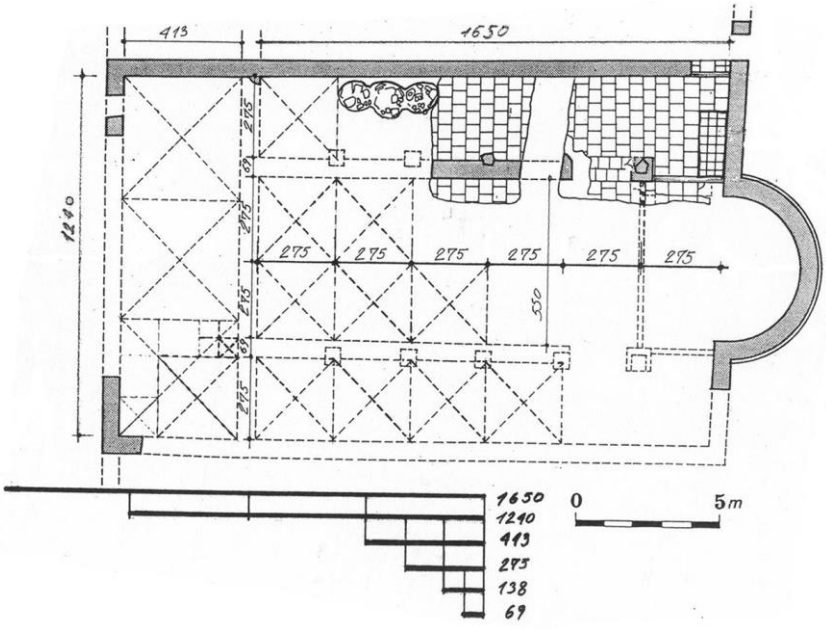


Fig. 19. The early Byzantine settlement on the ridge 'Gradishteto'. Early Christian Basilica - plan (Preshlenov 2006).



Fig. 20. The early Byzantine settlement on the ridge 'Gradishteto'. The frescoes on the northern wall of the early Christian Basilica (photo: Hristo Preshlenov).



Fig. 21. The early Byzantine fortification on the ridge 'Gradishteto'. The wallpainting from the early Christian Basilica (photo: Hristo Preshlenov).

[82] Ognenova-Marinova 1986, 50.
[83] Ognenova-Marinova 1986, 50.

From 1829-1830, when at the request of the Russian Emperor Nicholas I its ruins are presented in an album with lithographs by C. Sayger and A. Desarnod (fig. 22),[84] the architectural type and the construction of the building are the subject of many, sometimes contradictory developments, systematized in 2006 by S. Stanev.[85] K. Shkorpil, studying the building at the end of the 19th century, relates it to the group of the real Hellenistic basilicas.[86] A. Rashenov develops the thesis, and in 1922 and 1927-1928 together with S. Pokrovski he carries out a detailed architectural survey of the monument according to the method of Pokryshkin and proposes its three-dimensional reconstruction (fig. 23).[87]

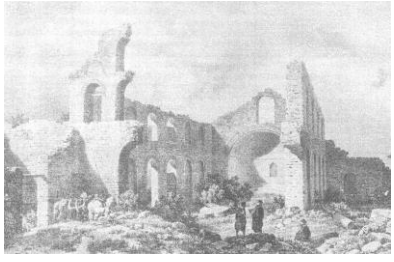


Fig. 22. Mesembria. The Episcopal basilica 'St. Sofia'. Lithography by A. Desarnod (1829) (Filov 2004).

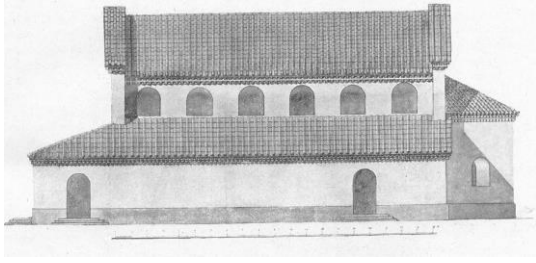


Fig. 23. Mesembria. The Episcopal basilica 'St. Sofia'. Façade South – reconstruction (Rashenov 2006).

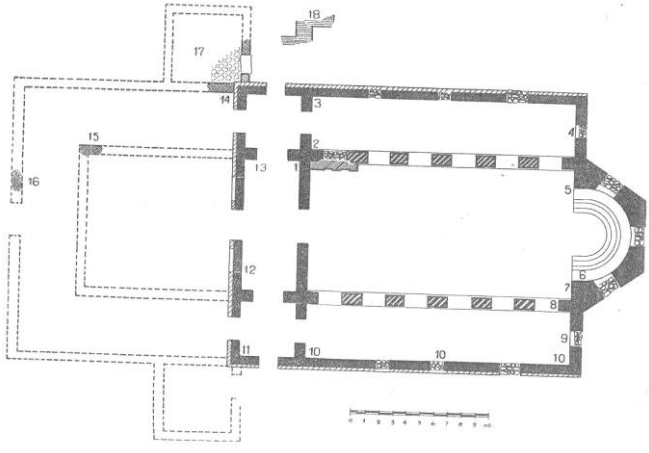


Fig. 24. Mesembria. The Episcopal basilica 'St. Sofia' – plan (Bojadžiev 1962).

[84] Filov 2004, 226, fig. 113.
[85] Stanev 2007, 51–54.
[86] Schkorpil & Schkorpil 1890, 28.
[87] Pokrovski 1949, 248; Rashenov 2006, 2–13, fig. 4, 5, 9, 10.

In connection with the preparation of a program for the preservation of archaeological monuments in Nesebar in 1946-1948, S. Pokrovski also clears the church from the accumulated layers of earth in and around it, in which he discovers parts of its decorative architectural sculpture and its original mosaic floor.[88] During drilling in 1957, west of the basilica, I. Galabov discovers the *narthex*, and in 1960, during excavations for a water pipeline northwest of it, he establishes the presence of an atrium.[89] After immediate observations of the basilica, architect S. Boyadzhiev in 1962 summarizes the results of these field studies. The one-apse church has a synthrone, a square *naos*, separated from the side aisles initially by colonnades, and after the reconstruction of the building with rectangular pillars, a *narthex* and a square atrium (fig. 24).[90] He puts its construction in 6th century AD in connection with the Christianization of large groups of settlers during the reign of Justinian I.[91] According to V. Velkov its name 'St. Sofia', which is preserved in the oral tradition of the local population, is also associated with the religious activity of the same ruler, seen in other churches of the same name in Constantinople, Serdica, Nicaea, etc.[92] He also suggests, that a marble cornice with a text from Psalm 101.2, originating from an earlier period of the church, probably from 4th-5th century AD (according to V. Beshevliev from 5th-6th century AD),[93] has been walled in as *spolia* after 7th century AD (fig. 25). From the archaeological data, S. Boyadzhiev also establishes two construction periods. According to him, the renovation of the church, burned and destroyed to a height of about 1.10 m, has been carried out in the 7th-8th century AD (after 618 AD, according to S. Stanev's reading of two graffiti from the second construction period of the church).[94] Its original plan from the first half or the beginning of the last quarter of the 5th century AD has been preserved as the conserved building has been rebuilt in height, the colonnades have been replaced with masonry pillars and the atrium has been abandoned.[95] The

[88] Pokrovski 1949, 253, 254.
[89] Venedikov [1958], 3; Bojadžiev 1962, 322.
[90] Bojadžiev 1962, 322–323.
[91] Bojadžiev 1962, 333–334.
[92] Velkov 1992, 20.
[93] Beševliev 1964, no. 166.
[94] Stanev & Zhdrakov 2009, 87–89, 95, 99.
[95] Bojadžiev 1962, 324–325, 327, 328, 330, 332, 334–335; Boyadzhiev 1996, 13.

relative chronology of the church is adopted by V. Velkov,[96] L. Ognenova-Marinova,[97] Zh. Chimbuleva[98] and N. Chaneva-Dechevska.[99] St. Boyadzhiev also recognizes two 'postérieure' construction phases; in the first the windows of the central nave are partially walled up; in the second the intercolumns between it and the side aisles are walled up.[100] The graves in them, studied by Iv. Galabov,[101] give grounds to St. Boyadzhiev to accept that after the partitioning of the openings between the pillars, only the central nave of the basilica is used for worship. This is a practice, adopted in Byzantian Asia Minor since 11th century.[102] Iv. Velkov has observed the same practice in the southern nave of the monastery basilica The Holy Mother of God Eleusa.



Fig. 25. Mesembria. The Episcopal basilica 'St. Sofia' – mortar-and-tile renovation (photo: Hristo Preshlenov).

[96] Velkov 1992, 20.
[97] Ognenova 1988, 571–573.
[98] Chimbuleva 1991, 76.
[99] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 228, 231.
[100] Bojadžiev 1962, 330; Rashenov 2006, Tabl. 1,2.
[101] Galabov 1959, 60; Gălăbov 1960, 324.
[102] Buchwald 2010, 52.

The analysis of Venetian sources from the 13th-14th and 16th centuries gives grounds for V. Gyuzelev to believe that till 1257 the bones of Theodore Stratilat, the skull of St. Sist, the hand of the Apostle Bartholomew, the hand and the jaw of the Apostle Andrew have been in 'St. Sofia' church. In this year they have been transferred to the church 'St. Nicholas' in the Venetian quarter of Constantinople, and ten years later in the Venetian church 'San Salvador'.[103] 'St. Sofia' is a functioning church during the late Byzantine period. In 1441 a stone tomb has been built in the sixth northern intercolumn, in which Mataisa Kantakuzina-Palaeologus has been buried under a marble cover.[104]

The western neighborhood basilicas in Mesembria

The northwestern church

In the first half of the 1960s, the team consisting of I. Venedikov, V. Velkov and L. Ognenova from the Archaeological Institute with a Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and J. Chimbuleva from the Nesebar Museum, during the research of the northwestern sector of the fortification system in the city of Nesebar, reveals the northern and part of the central nave of the basilica and a vaulted crypt at the northern shoulder of its apse. In 1985-1988 the building is thoroughly studied by L. Ognenova-Marinova and J. Chimbuleva. As a result of their research, it is found that the three-nave basilica has a three-part *narthex* and is lying on the northwestern corner of the opisthodome of the late classical temple of Zeus Hyperdexios (fig. 26).[105] The access to the basilica's *narthex* has been through the representative urban *porticos*, flanking the building from the south.[106] It has been built not earlier than 399 AD, when the destruction of pagan temples was officially permitted with an edict by Arcadius.[107] In the transformation of the basilica into a cross-domed church in the third quarter of the 7th century AD the crypt has been piously preserved.[108] The architectural survey and the height reconstruction of the cross-dome crypt, made of bricks with eight-step staircase with access to the east, is performed in 1966 by architect L. Marinov.

[103] Gyuzelev 1972, 11-12, 14.
[104] Konstantinidis 1945, 94, 151, Eik. 14; Dimova 2012, 52 [photo], 53.
[105] Kozhuharov 2003, 372; Ognenova-Marinova *et al.* 1986a, 80.
[106] Kozhuharov 1998.
[107] Markov 1995, 17.
[108] Kozhuvarov 2003, 372, 377.

Moreover, in the altar part of the basilica a reliquary and fragments of marble sarcophagus have been discovered (fig. 27).[109] These discoveries give me a reason to believe that the site of the crypt and the basilica has not been chosen by chance. According to the interpretations of three late Hellenistic reliefs of the Mesambrian strategists by L. Ognenova-Marinova and Iv. Marazov, traditionally the founders of the polis and the heroes – saviors and benefactors of the bourgeois community have been celebrated on the square in this urban area (fig. 28).[110] Topographical continuity, especially if the square is also a place of death of Mesembrian martyrs, should be accepted as a recognition and expression of the victory over death and paganism.[111]

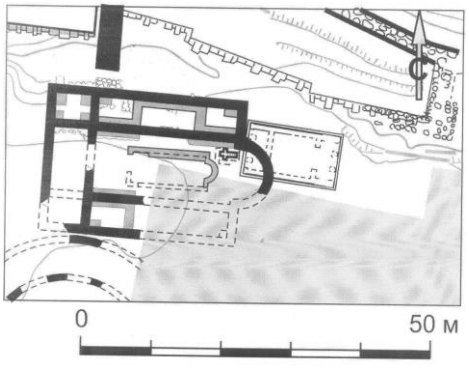


Fig. 26. Mesembria. Northwestern urban zone and the early Christian basilica – plan (Preshlenov 2018).

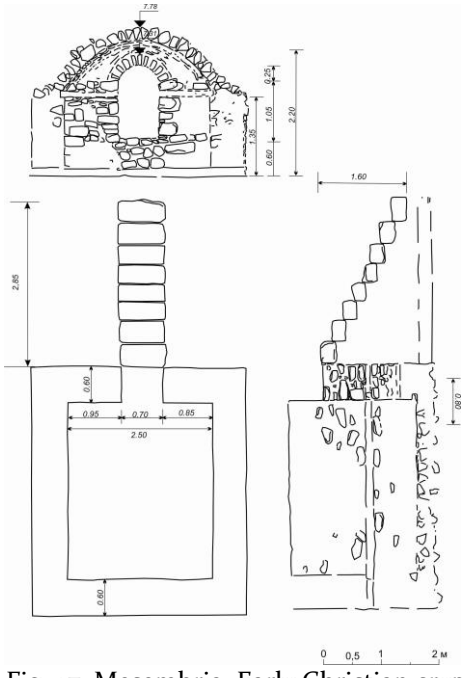


Fig. 27. Mesembria. Early Christian crypt in the northwestern urban basilica – plan (by L. Marinov).

Parts of the marble altar and facing slabs of the basilica have been reused during its reconstruction (in the third quarter of the 7th century AD) into a cross-domed church, in which, according to D.

[109] Chimbuleva 1991, 76; Kozhuharov 2003, fig. 1, 6.
[110] Ognenova-Marinova 2002, 53–54; Marazov 2004, 27.
[111] Valeva 2000, 59.

Kozhuharov,[112] after its destruction by the Bulgarians liturgical practice has not been resumed, but 'after 13th century' (in my opinion in the 10th-11th century)[113] a single-nave, one-apse medieval church has been built in its central nave. Marble columns and impost capitals from the basilica and the cross-domed church have been used in its construction. Chamber tombs (10th–11th century) are built to the south and west of the one-nave church with bricks and marble floor slabs from the basilica and the cross-domed church and a frieze block from the temple of Zeus, whose pronaos is partially inscribed in the apse of the basilica.[114]

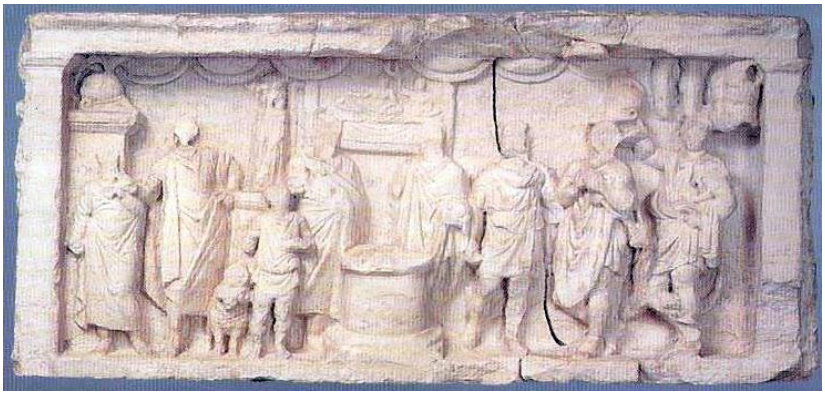


Fig. 28. Mesembria. Votive relief of the Mesambrian Strategoi (Archaeological Museum, Nessebar)(photo: Hristo Preshlenov).

St. Apostles

In 1963 L. Ognenova conducts rescue excavations caused by the digging for the construction of the new school in the town of Nesebar under the foundations of the demolished mosque between Mesambria and Mena streets.[115] A wall and a stylobate of a building from the 5th-6th century AD are discovered, which she identifies as St. Apostles basilica (fig. 29). According to M. Konstantinidis, who left (after the medieval Mesembrian Chronicle)[116] a second local lore work on the history of Mesembria, a mosque has been built on/next to the former

[112] Kozhuharova 2003, 372, 374.
[113] Preshlenov in press b.
[114] Kozhuharov 2003, 375, fig. 6, 8; Ognenova-Marinova *et al.* 1986b, 5–6; Preshlenov 2021, 36, fig. 5.
[115] Ognenova-Marinova 1964, 4.
[116] Gyuzelev 1975.

church and its minaret has been destroyed in 1964.[117] The comparative analysis of architect M. Harbova shows that in the Bulgarian territories the Islamic cult building in settlements with mixed population is built first, before the other Turkish buildings, in order to highlight the Ottoman presence and satisfy the cult needs of the infidel new population in the conquered Christian cities. The buildings do not always rise in the center of the settlement; they comply with the existing architectural environment and often existing churches are turned into mosques.[118] Free-standing in the square spaces, the mosques are imposed as the dominant accent in the city core, as the orientation to the south towards Mecca is essential.[119] The mosque in Mesembria is also built in the old open-air square of a Christian church, a sight to behold east of the 'vestibule' square at the western city gate.[120] In 1906 K. Shkorpil mentions the church under the name 'St. Constantine'.[121] Essential for the identification of its destruction is the local legend, which preserves the memory of the agreement by which in the spring of 1453 the city leaders hand over Mesembria to the Ottoman troops under the command of Beyrelbeg of Rumili Karadja Beg.[122] In his local history research M. Konstantinidis[123] records: '… The text of this agreement [on the surrender of Mesembria] is not known to us, because none of the historians of the Ottoman Empire has preserved it. However, according to the legend of the locals [in Nesebar], a clause in the agreement has provided not to destroy[124] or turn into mosques the beautiful churches in the city

[117] Konstantinidis 1945, 153, Eik. 2; Chimbuleva & Gyuzelev 2003, 18; Dimova 2012, 48.
[118] Comp. the average built-up area of the Hellenistic house of Artemidoros is about 120 m² (Ognenova-Marinova 2005, 17, fig. 16), and of the studied Hellenistic dwellings in Olbia, Chersonessos and Pantikapaion is between 80 and 400 m² for the non-order and about 550 m² for the order buildings (Kryzhitskii 1984, 205–206). The results of the first announced censuses of the housing stock and the demographic potential in Nesebar from 1830 are also indicative (327 houses/1850 people) and from 1878 (310 houses/1700 people) (Tonev 1995, 40–41, 50) on the peninsula, which has already lost up to 2/5 of its area).
[119] Харбова 1991, 74–75, 79, 80, 81.
[120] Konstantinidis 1945, 48, 153; Velkov 1969, 25; Venedikov *et al.* 1969, fig. 5; Preshlenov 2012b, 517; Bozhkova & Kiyashkina 2015, 295, fig. 1.
[121] NA BAN, f. 165 к, a. e. 457, sheet 10; a. e. 454, sheet 21.
[122] Gyuzelev 1981, 353; Gyuzelev 1970, 82–83.
[123] Konstantinidis 1945, 48.
[124] The verb κατεδαφίζω in both ancient Greek and modern Greek means 'destroy', literally 'level with the ground, destroy to the ground'from κατά and ἔδαφος 'under, base'.

except for one, 'The Holy Apostles Peter and Paul'.[125] The conversion of Christian sacred topos to Muslim leaves a traumatic memory in Philippopolis too, where in the early 15th century on the foundations of a Christian church (according to local legend 'St. Petka') Juma Mosque has been built,[126] and in Sredets (present-day Sofia), where at the beginning of the 16th century the small Fechi mosque has been built on the ruins of a Bulgarian medieval church (according to the local legend 'St. Dimitar').[127]



Fig. 29. Mesembria. The urban basilica 'St. Apostles' – South aisle (Dimova 2012).



Fig. 30. Mesembria. The urban basilica 'St. Apostles' – base from the South stylobate (photo: Hristo Preshlenov).

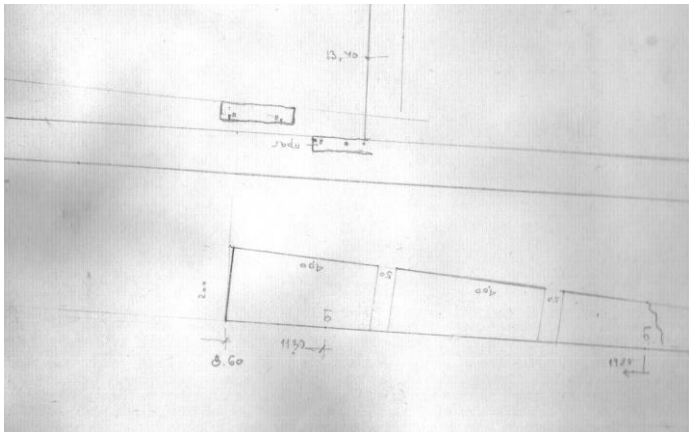


Fig. 31. Mesembria. The urban basilica 'St. Apostles' – South aisle (measurement: L. Marinov).

[125] Translated from modern Greek N. Sharankov (Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski').
[126] Kharbova 1991, 33.
[127] Kharbova 1991, 26.

In its original form 'St. Apostles' is a three-nave basilica with marble colonnades. Its construction module is probably about 0.313-0.314 m. It fits into the 'practical' size of the 'standard' Byzantine foot (0.3123 m), which in Byzantine construction practice varies from 0.308 to 0.320 m.[128] According to L. Ognenova, its marble (Prokonesian) columns have a diameter of about 0.54 m (bases 0.6 x 0.6 m).[129] In the unpublished report of the research in 1963, L. Ognenova points out that four of the bases are preserved *in situ* (second, third, fourth and fifth according to my compositional and metric reconstruction), and the locations of two others are recognized by her according to their negative prints (fig. 30).[130] In the personal archive of architect L. Marinov (field diary 2/1967) the overall distance from the preserved *in situ* bases from west to east to the western front surface of the first masonry brick pillar in the pre-altar space are 19.80 m from the second and 11.30 m from the fourth base (fig. 31). According to these measurements, the wheelbase (Ah) of the columns on the southern stylobate is 2.83 m (19.80 m-11.30 m = 8.50 m: 3 (wheelbase) = 2.83 m), corresponding to 9.07 'standard' feet. Given the assumed design/tracing of (at least the main longitudinal and transverse axes and elements of) the building in whole (relevant for the time) units, the probable design module is approx. 0.314 m (2.83 m: 9 feet = 0.314 m). In the reconstruction, the team of architect A. Mladenova indicated a wheelbase of 2.85 m,[131] which corresponds to a module of 0.316 m. According to arch. D. Sasalov[132] '... the distance between the axes of these bases is 8.46 m most probably corresponds to four intercolumns of 2.12 m each. This can be represented as 7 feet of 0.303 m'. The identical values of the measurement and the large-scale manual sketch of architect L. Marinov (practically identical to those in the project of architect A. Mladenova), as well as architect D. Sasalov's claim[133] (too) that '... the usual distance between the columns is between 3 and 4 m', are arguments for wider wheelbases of the basilica. The rhythm of the modular column wheelbases (Ax = 2.83 m) is preserved next to the western masonry brick pillar (11.30 m)(measurement of architect L. Marinov between the fourth (*in situ*)

[128] Kazhdan *et al.* 1991, 1708 (E. Shilbach); Bass *et al.* 2004, 154.
[129] Ognenova-Marinova 1964, 4–5.
[130] Ognenova-Marinova 1964, 4, fig. 22, fig. 23.
[131] Mladenov *et al.* (s. a.).
[132] Sasalov 2008, 237.
[133] Sasalov 2000, 93.

base and the western front surface of the masonry pillar): 2.83 m (= 1Ax) = 3.993Ax) and between the two masonry pillars built in mixed masonry (5.65 m = 2Ax). This circumstance allows synchronous construction of mixed vertical props or is part of an internal reconstruction. According to S. Dimova[134] during excavations north of the basilica, an Ionic impost capital with a cross, part of the arch or beam finishing the supporting structure,[135] is discovered.

I also arithmetically calculated the clear width of the southern nave 4.4 m (9.10-3.85-(0.90 + 0.10 (the graphically measured distance 9.10 m is from the southern face of the substructure of the outer wall of the southern nave) = 4.25 m + 0.15 m (to the bases of the columns) = 4.40 m, respectively 14.01 feet at a module of 0.314 m. With a hypothetical ratio of 1 : 2 between the width of the aisles and the central nave, found in the monastery basilica 'The Holy Mother of God Eleusa',[136] the inner width of the nave is 18.8 m/60 feet (module 0.313 m). The estimated (taken down from the plan of the basilica) internal length the naos is 36.3 m/116 feet (module 0.313 m). In such a reconstruction, the building falls into the group of basilicas with a rectangular naos (1:1.93), a ratio recommended by Vitruvius for the civil basilicas[137] and established by N. Chaneva-Dechevska in Thrace.[138]

The cathedral monastery basilica 'The Holy Mother of God Eleusa'

The basilica is located on the northeastern cliff slope of the Nesebar Peninsula. During his visit to Nesebar in 1906, K. Shkorpil makes a plan of the basilica, part of the apse and altar space, which are still visible on the ground (fig. 32).[139] Northwest of the church he describes buildings, preserved in the foundations, one with an apse, possibly a destroyed 'auxiliary' church, as those built in large monasteries such as 'St. John the Baptist' on the island St. Ivan.[140] The informants of K. Shkorpil by memories give the ruins of the church in the monastery the name 'St. Irina'. Doesn't this tradition date back to the time when, according to Patriarch Photius, a martyrdom of St.

[134] Dimova 2012, 48.
[135] See Petrova 2017, 235–238.
[136] Sasalov 1982, 15, 17, fig. 7, 9.
[137] Petrovskii 1936, 268, fig. 64.
[138] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 59.
[139] NA BAN, f. 165 к, a. e. 454, sheet 38, 43.
[140] Popkonstantinov *et al.* 2015, 210–211, 212–213, fig. 3.

Irina is built, which attracts many worshipers?[141] During the first regular archaeological excavations on the Nesebar Peninsula in 1920, I. Velkov establishes the plan of the basilica (according to some of his informants the name of the place is 'St. Marina', and according to others – 'Αια Λεουσα'[142] (sic!) – three-nave, three-apse with a shortened *naos*, dissected *narthex*, fresco decoration and three periods of structural and functional alterations carried out until the 15th century (fig. 33).

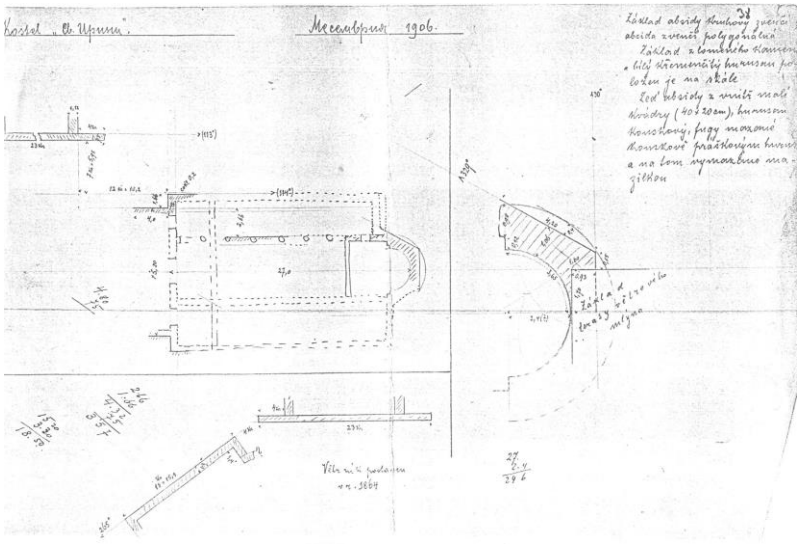


Fig. 32. Mesembria. The monastery basilica 'The Holy Mother of God Eleusa' – K. Škorpil's plan (1906) (NA BAN, f. 165 k).

As a result of his excavations and L. Ognenova-Marinova's research on the building ceramics from Nesebar, it has been established that from the original plan of the basilica (according to N. Chaneva-Dechevska it dates back to the second half of the 6th century AD)[143] the apses, part of the southern wall, the pillars between the south and the central nave and the walls at the entrance have been preserved, in the construction of which bricks with two-row seals from the 6th century AD have been used and such containing the name of Justinian the Great.[144]

[141] Aladjov *et al.* 2006, 273.
[142] NA BAN, f. 83 к, a. e. 65, sheet 55.
[143] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 233.
[144] Velkov 1930, 78; Velkov 1946, 67–68, fig. 1; Ognenova-Marinova 1969, 116–117.

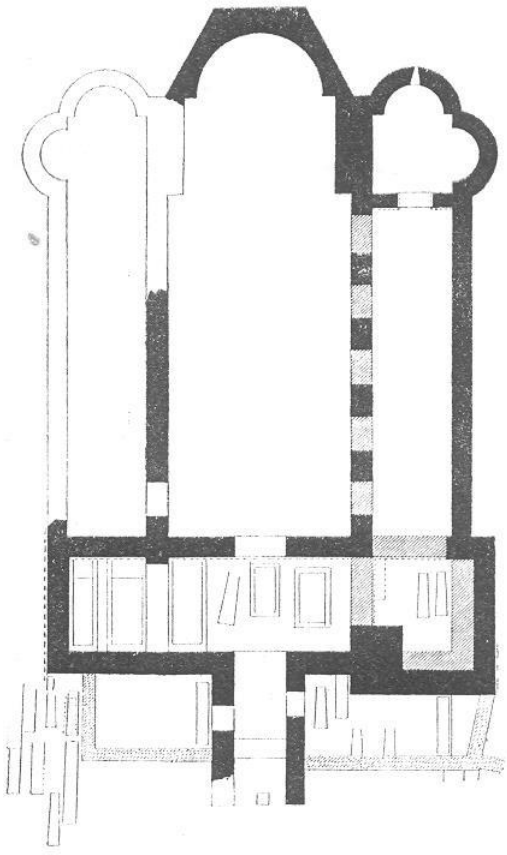


Fig. 33. Mesembria. The monastery basilica
'The Holy Mother of God Eleusa' – plan (Velkov 1946).

In 2006-2007 A. Bozhkova, H. Preshlenov, P. Kiyashkina and M. Daskalov explore west of the monastery a necropolis, formed in the first half of the 7th century AD, including chambers, surrounded by stones and/or covered with stone slabs, pits surrounded by stones and ordinary pits.[145] During this period, tombs have been built in the *narthex*, three arched and two with flat cover, according to Iv. Velkov 'together with the basilica itself or very soon after'. During and after their robbery, the skeletons of the deceased have been scattered in the filled with soil and stones burial chambers.[146]

During the reconstruction (the third construction period) of the basilica most of the spaces between the pillars in the *naos* have been

[145] Bozhkova *et al.* 2007, 250; 2008, 307.
[146] NA BAN, f. 83 к, a. e. 65, sheet 32-35, 44; Velkov 1930, fig. 2; Preshlenov in press b.

walled up and the southern nave has been used for worship[147] due to changes in the liturgical architectural environment, which in the 9th and 10th centuries AD have been already a practice in Asia Minor.[148] Coins of the Komnenos and ceramic glazed vessels (13th–14th century) have been placed in tombs surrounded by/and covered with stone slabs in the central and northern nave.[149]

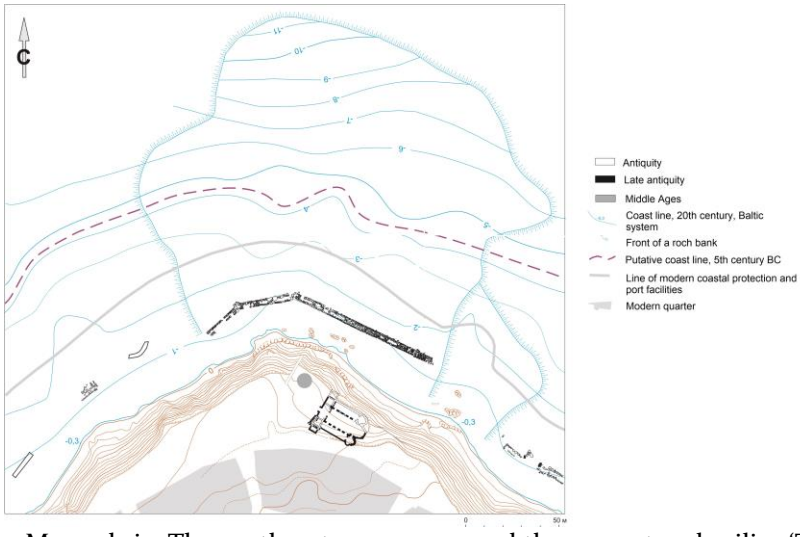


Fig. 34. Mesembria. The northeastern sea area and the monastery basilica 'The Holy Mother of God Eleusa' – topographical-bathymetric map (Preshlenov 2020).

As a result of the paleogeographic changes from the end of the 1st millennium and the 1st half of the 2nd millennium, caused in my opinion mainly by the fluctuations of the sea level, the outer part of the peninsula terrace has been destabilized and its landslide to the sea has collapsed the northern nave of 'The Holy Mother of God Eleusa'.[150] In 1920, Iv. Velkov explores in the northern nave chamber graves, surrounded by stones and covered with stone slabs, partially slipped into the sea as a result of the abrasion of the cliff slope of the peninsula.[151] For the reconstruction of the composition of the plan of the basilica the architectural research of D. Sasalov in 1976–1977 and 1983, accompanied by field researches on the territory of the

[147] Velkov 1946, 68; Welkow 1989.
[148] Buchwald 2010, 52.
[149] Velkov 1946, 68, 69, 70; NA BAN, f. 83 к, a. e. 65, sheet 35, 37, 42, 44-45.
[150] Preshlenov 2008, 54–55.
[151] NA BAN, f. 83 к, a. e. 65, sheet 36.

monument are essential (fig. 34).[152] After their completion, the basilica is organically inscribed in the contemporary urban environment of Nesebar (fig. 35).



Fig. 35. Mesembria. The monastery basilica 'The Holy Mother of God Eleusa' (Preshlenov 2020).

Interpretations

Mastered places of faith

Christian churches on the southwestern Black Sea coast have been built in places that are not accidental.[153] The targeted appropriation of sacred places, which have been shaped during the urban development of the Hellenic polises, is essentially an act of intellectual reflection of the traditional sacred topoi and at the same time materialization of the victorious new faith.[154] In these cases, the assimilation of the holy place as renewed for the needs of the new religion takes place through the rite of renewal. In Mesembria the early Christian basilica 'St. Sophia' is built on the city's main square, probably taking the place of its pagan correlate, Apollos.[155] It has had a

[152] Sasalov 1982, 12, 14–15.
[153] See Preshlenov in press a.
[154] Harbova 1999, 13, 14, 19.
[155] Preshlenov 2003, 163.

classic atrium, which has been probably added in the 6th century AD in connection with the Christianization of large groups of settlers during the government of Justinian I.[156] Their name, which is preserved in the oral tradition of the local population, also connects them with the religious activity of the same ruler, which is also found in other churches of the same name in Constantinople, Serdica, Nikea, etc.[157] A marble cornice of an earlier constructing period of the church, from the 4th–5th century AD (or from the 5th-6th century AD)[158] with a text from *Psalm 101.2* has been walled in as *spolia* during the renovation of the temple after 7th century AD. Then the burned and destroyed church has been rebuilt, keeping its original plan. Worship services in 'St. Sophia' are also made in the 17th century, fragments of frescoes have been preserved from this period. In the 19th century, for unknown reasons, the temple has been abandoned.[159]

The basilica at the western city gate of Mesembria dominates over the northern harbor on the square, where the polis founders and the heroes – saviors and benefactors of the community have been traditionally celebrated.[160] Its apse has been built on the northwestern corner of the *opisthodomos* of the late classical temple of Zeus Hyperdexios. This pagan temple may be reconstructed as a Doric temple *in antis*.[161] The building has been partially destroyed not earlier than 399 AD, when the edict of Arcadius officially has allowed the destruction of pagan temples.[162]

In the Thracian settlement of Karabizia on Cape Galata, about 7 km southeast of Odessos, at the beginning of the 5th century AD, an early Christian three-nave single-apse basilica has been built with a *narthex* and a masonry baptistery in it. During its construction, building materials and votive reliefs have been used with previously deleted images from the sanctuary of a local Thracian deity Heros Karabazmos, revered according to the available epigraphic and numismatic data from the 3rd century BC until the end of the 4th century AD. Its rectangular foundations with almost identical to the

[156] Bojadžiev 1962, 333–334.
[157] Velkov 1992, 20.
[158] Beševliev 1964, no. 166.
[159] Bojadžiev 1962, 324–325, 327, 328, 330, 332, 334–335.
[160] Ognenova-Marinova 2002, 53–54; Marazov 2004, 27.
[161] Preshlenov 2021, 37, 38, fig. 2, 7, 11.
[162] Markov 1995, 17.

basilica external dimensions and orientation are found under its flooring.[163]

Central topographical site in the settlement structure

The territory of the church is an integrating public center, which participates in the artistic construction of the city silhouette. The newly constructed cult buildings in the settlements clearly stand out among the existing architectural environment and/or dominate in the urban planning scheme and have problem-free visual and audio communication with the believer.

In Odessos and Mesembria, where church temples have been built in several residential areas, a central location has been given to the Episcopal basilicas. In Odessos, near the supposed city center in the middle of the 5th century AD, a large three-nave one-apse basilica with mosaic floor and wall paintings inherits the sacred space of a small one-apse early Christian temple built at the beginning of the same century. At the end of the 5th-beginning of the 6th century AD, the destroyed and abandoned Episcopal church has been renovated in the same plan and spatial volumes, in which it functions until its destruction, most probably during the Avar invasion of 614 AD.[164] In Mesembria such example is the mentioned Archbishop's Church 'St. Sofia'.

In the semi-urban fortified settlement of Bizone, an early Christian basilica has been built in the central, narrowest and most elevated area of Cape Chirakman.[165] Hypothetically, its construction can be attributed to deacon Stephen, who according to the content of an inscription found in the area, in the 6th century AD has dedicated a church building to the healing martyrs St. Cosmas and Damian, especially revered during the reign of Justinian I.[166]

The early Christian basilica near the village of Panitsovo, municipality of Nesebar, has been located in the highest zone of a Christianizing settlement in the Dyulino Pass of Eastern Stara Planina. The church has dominated in the urban planning scheme and has had trouble-free visual- and audio communication with the population

[163] Mirchev 1953, 4–8, 21; Toncheva 1968, 22–23, 25.
[164] Minchev 2006, 231, 234–235, fig.1.
[165] Mirchev *et al.* 1962, 25–26, fig. 3.
[166] Mazzoleni 2006, 113; Minchev 2006, 253.

until the end of the 6th – 1st quarter of the 7th century AD when it has been burned down.[167]

When the early Christian buildings have been placed in the urban environment, the framework of the sea horizon has also been sought as a natural framework of the visual perception of the church silhouette. Against this background, the basilicas built on high sea terraces and protruding at sea capes and peninsulas stand out, including those in Bizone, Karabizia, the parish and monastery basilica in Mesembria.

The design of the gathering points for the believers before the liturgy, takes into account the specifics of the existing buildings. In the late Antique settlement of Karabizia on Cape Galata the main entrance to the *narthex* and respectively to the basilica is located to the south. In addition, a few meters from the south shoulder of the apse there is another entrance in the south wall of the building. This location is imposed by the main street of the village, which runs along the south wall of the church.[168] For the same reasons, such entrances, but from the north, are made during the construction of the Episcopal basilica in Odessos in the middle of the 5th century AD. At the same time, the limited space of the earlier destroyed basilica from the beginning of the 5th century AD has been increased by the *decumanus*, flanking the church complex on the north.[169] The access to the *narthex* of the basilica at the western gate in Mesembria has been through the representative urban *porticos*, flanking the church building on the south.[170] Probably here are formed the processions to the built in the 5th–6th century AD basilica 'St. Apostles' (about 100 m to the east), whose ruins are discovered by L. Ognenova-Marinova in 1963 under the destroyed Ottoman mosque.[171]

Symmetry and rhythm

With the exception of the monastery church in Dzhanavara locality southwest of Odessos, the buildings are single/three-aisled with a wooden roof and a predominantly elongated *naos* in the coastal area of *Skythia* and *Moesia secunda*, to a shortened naos to the south

[167] Preshlnov 2006, 262, fig.2.
[168] Mirchev 1953, 4, 6, 7, 26.
[169] Minchev 2006, 231, 234, fig.1.
[170] Koshuharov 1998; Preshlenov 2012b, 517, fig. 24.
[171] Chimbuleva & Gyuzelev 2003, 18; Preshlenov in press b.

in *Haemimontos* with internal *naos* proportions – 1:1.55 (Bizone);[172] 1:1.33 (the Episcopal basilica in Odessos);[173] 1:1.45 (Karabizia);[174] 1:1.33 (Scatrae);[175] 1:1.09/1.10 (the northwestern basilica in Mesembria);[176] 1:1.93 (the basilica 'St. Apostles');[177] 1:1.01 (the Episcopal basilica in Mesembria);[178] 1:0.99[179] (the monastery basilica 'The Holy Mother of God Eleusa' in Mesembria). The planning of the space is in accordance with the 'golden section' of a building module, corresponding in practice to the standard Byzantine foot (0.3123 м).[180] The spatial organization with a predominant ratio of approx. 1:2 between the widths of the side and middle nave relies on symmetry as a forming compositional principle.

Image and symbol

After the apostolic age, the church, in addition to a community of believers, is also an architectural environment in which forms, colors, symbols and words unite the laity to the great sacrament of communion with God. Apart from the shape of most temples, directly influenced by the Hellenistic basilica composition, Hellenistic stylish techniques are preserved in the artistic construction of the church interior. In the basilica in the fortified settlement near Panitsovo this is stated in terms of wall paintings' composition, geometric and plant motifs, human figures, presented in the late 4th-early 5th century AD with a free hand in the spirit of ancient realism and illusionism in light, differently nuanced color.

The frescoes on the northern shoulder of the apse and the northern wall of the *naos* at a height of up to 1.15 m above the floor have been studied.[181] They are laid on a two-layer carefully executed plaster. The layer that fills the irregularities of the front surface of the wall has a rougher structure and the second one has a fine structure. The composition of the lower decorative register includes rectangular panels with circles, rhombuses and triangles inscribed in them and

[172] See Mirchev *et al.* 1962, 28–30, fig. 5.
[173] See Minchev 2006, fig. 3.
[174] See Mirchev 1953, 4–7, plan 1.
[175] Preshlenov 2006, fig. 10.
[176] Preshlenov in press b.
[177] See above.
[178] Preshlenov in press b.
[179] Preshlenov in press b.
[180] Sasalov 1982, 15, 17, fig. 7, 9; 2008, 237–238.
[181] Preshlenov 2006, 262, fig. 5, 11, 12, 16.

floral ornaments arranged around them, made with a free hand, as well as wavy, horizontal and oblique lines. Above the floor panels are bounded by a continuous ledge filled with white, red and white-black stripe. The circle of motifs and scenes is undoubtedly wider, because in the excavations in the southern nave near the apse frescoes have also been found. Frescoes are also preserved on a stone block, fallen at the northern stylobate. They depict a part of a schematically painted human figure, belonging to the second figural row of the upper decorative register. It shows close stylish and colorful resemblance to the images of servants in the Silistra tomb (end of the 4th century AD).[182] The decorative-linear planar schematization and geometrization of the forms and the space prevails. Microscopic and microchemical analyzes and tests find that the painters' palette includes red (red ocher), blue (azurite), white (calcite), black (charcoal) and green pigment (unidentified).[183] The frescoes are made in a fresco technique as the pigments of different saturation and shade are mixed with a lime binder (over crystallized calcium carbonate). Subsequently, they are covered in places with lime.

ad Sanctus

The church building embodies two functions – a house of prayer and a living temple – similar to the heavenly one, whose holiness is achieved through the rite of consecration. From the Holy Eucharist, performed on the graves of martyrs, a tradition arises, which reflects on the rite of consecration of temples. Apart from the tomb itself, it is a holy place that houses holy relics. According to the rules of the Fifth Ecumenical Council of Carthage in 393 AD and the Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787 AD, the laying on of holy relics is obligatory in the consecration of a temple.[184] Those in the East at the end of the 4th century AD enforce the practice of laying holy bones when consecrating a church and it also became mandatory on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast.

In the middle of the 5th century AD under the mosaic floor of the crypt in the Episcopal church in Odessos reliquaries have been placed in a limestone reliquary-container. A second, smaller masonry crypt is attached to the east.[185] At the end of the 5th-beginning of the

[182] Ovcharov & Vaklinova 1978, fig. 40, 41; Angelova 1976, fig. 7, 10, 13.
[183] Penkova 2003, 157, 158.
[184] Simeonova 2001, 54–56; Minchev 2006, 244.
[185] Minchev 2006, 238–245, figs. 17, 22, 23.

6th century AD another reliquary containing a particle of human bone has been built under the floor in front of the altar space of the rebuilt church.[186]

Until 1257 the bones of Theodor Stratilat, the skull of St. Sist, the Hand of the apostle Bartolomew, the Hand and the Jaw of the apostle Andrew have been preserved in the basilica 'St. Sophia' in Mesembria.[187] It is possible that they have been placed in the underground crypt in front of the archbishop's throne in the altar.

A cross-dome crypt made of bricks with eight-step staircase with access to the east, a reliquary and fragments of marble sarcophagus have been discovered in the altar of the basilica at the western city gate.[188] The crypt has remained when the basilica has been transformed into a cross-domed church in the third quarter of the 7th century AD. After leaving the church in the 9th century AD, the sacred site has remained undamaged till a medieval necropolis has been built around it in the 10th to 11th century AD and when in the 14th century a single-nave church has been built in the immediate vicinity.[189]

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After the apostolic age, the church, in addition to a community of believers, is also a building where lay people and clergy communicate with God. The artistically composed sacred spaces of the early Christian temples are an architectural environment in which forms, colors, symbols and words attract the believers.

Three-nave 'Hellenistic' basilicas with wooden roofs and an elongated (Moesia Secunda) to a shortened (Haemimontus) naos have been built. Their spatial organization is based on symmetry as a formative compositional principle. The planning of the space is in accordance with the ratios of the 'golden section' as the project module is close to the one applied in the capital Constantinople.

Some of the temples assimilate pre-Christian sacred spaces, materializing the victory of the new faith. The laying of holy relics on the altar turns them into functioning temples. The planned composition and the plastic volumes of the naoses change in accordance with the differentiation of the church liturgical rite. The

[186] Minchev 2003, no. 35.
[187] Gyuzelev 1972, 11–12, 14.
[188] Chimbuleva 1991, 76; Kozhuharov 2003, fig. 1, 6.
[189] Kozhuharov 2003, 372, 377; Preshlenov in press b.

buildings are rebuilt and renovated after natural disasters and military conflicts.

Inherited during the Middle Ages and the Bulgarian Revival as an architectural environment and memory, the preserved early Christian basilicas are organically included in the contemporary settlement environment of the Bulgarian Black Sea coast.

NA BAN f. 83 k – Nauchen archiv na Balgarskata academiya na naukite, 'Ivan Velkov'

NA BAN f. 165 k – Nauchen archiv na Balgarskata academiya na naukite, 'Karel Schkorpil'

IGBulg II (1958) *Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria repertae* 2 (Serdicae).

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The Constantinopolitan liturgy and *parekklesia* in Thrace in the second half of 5th century

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Abstract: The present article deals with of one of the issues that were introduced in the churches in Thrace as a result of the canon 28 from the Fourth Ecumenical council held in Chalcedon in 451 – that of the chapel (*parekklesia*) in order to integrate the local liturgy into that of the Constantinopolitan patriarch. As part of the process that it related with the increasing importance of the cult to the relics, the analysis reveals its implementation in various ways – the re-devotion of the entire basilica, the construction of chapel attached to the church building which changed the plan of the complex architecturally, and the devotion of the side aisle (aisles) to the cult of the Christian saints and therefore the possible devotion to the Trinity and the triumph of the Orthodoxy in the diocese with strong Arianic past that did not cease to exist since the time of Theodosius I and onward. In some cases, a crucial role in the process played the imperial authorities and in fact the Constantinopolitan church acted as the main spokesperson of the empire, and the *harmonia* between the state and church that was proclaimed by Arcadius reached the religious life of the communities in Thrace.

Key words: Liturgy, parekklesia, Thrace, Constantinopolis, influence

Резюме: Това изследване се занимава с една от новостите, въведени в църквите в Тракия в резултат на канон 28 от Четвъртия вселенски събор, проведен в Халкидон през 451 г., а именно - параклиса (*parekklesia*) с цел интегриране на местната литургия в тази на константинополския патриарх. Като част от процеса, свързан с нарастващото значение на култа към реликвите, анализът разкрива прилагането му по различни начини – повторното посвещение на цялата базилика, изграждането на параклис, прикрепен към сградата на църквата, който променя плана на комплекса архитектурно, посвещаването на страничния кораб (корабите) на култа към християнските светци и следователно възможното посвещаване на Троицата и по тази начин разкриващ триумфа на православието в епархията със силно арианско минало, която не е престанала да съществува до времето на Теодосий I и след това. В някои случаи решаваща роля са изиграли имперските власти и всъщност Константинополската църква действа като техен медиатор в отношенията с

населението, а *хармонията* между държавата и църквата, прокламирана от Аркадий, достигнала до религиозния живот на общностите в Тракия.

With the decision of the Canon 28 at the Fourth Ecumenical council in 451 in Chalcedon, the Christian churches within the diocese of Thrace with their Metropolitans, bishops and archbishops came under the jurisdiction of the Constantinopolitan patriarch (fig. 1).[1] By this action the Constantinopolitan church officially gained authority over local churches and clergy. Indeed, some earlier interactions might have happened as probably revealed by the case with Silvanus, the Metropolitan of Philippopolis from the early 5th century,[2] and even a Christian bishop from Thrace might have been appointed as the bishop of Constantinople.[3] By this decision the Church fathers gathered at the suburb of the imperial capital recognized *de jure* the aspirations of the Constantinople's patriarch and had also legislated the *status quo* in Thrace since the time of Theodosius I onward. Consequently, a full process of integration of these Churches into the liturgical and administrative life of the Constantinopolitan one has begun. As the local churches were mostly heterogeneous due to various reasons such as the existing local traditions, specifics of the Christian and city's history, ethnicity of the Christians, etc. this process lasted long and encompassed various aspects of the life of these communities. Certainly, among the most important ones was the introduction and adoption of the Constantinopolitan liturgy which itself at that period underwent a certain evolution due to the new role that was entrusted on the Constantinopolitan bishop, now patriarch and bishop of the 'Second Rome' in the Church life of the Eastern empire. It should be emphasized that it was not the entire metropolitan liturgy that was accepted and even in some case the influence was vice versa, from the

[1] Canon 28: Ut et Ponticae, et Asianae, et Thraciae dioeceseos metropolitani soli: praeterea et qui sunt in barbarico, episcopi praedictarum dioeceseon ordinentur a praedicto sanctissimo throno sanctissimae Constantinopolitanae Ecclesiae. Nimirum unoquoque metropolita earum ipsarum dioeceseon, una cum episcopis provinciae ordinante provinciae episcopos, ut divinis canonibus promulgatum est. Metropolitas vero earum dioeceseon, sicut dictum est, ordinari a Constantinopolitano archiepiscopo, electionibus convenientibus secundum morem factis, et ad eum perlatis (Schwarz 1936).

[2] Socrates *HE* 7.36, 37.

[3] The case with Demophilus is unclear but in many Bulgarian studies it is believed that the bishop's seat was originally in Augusta Traiana (Beroe) in Thrace rather than in Beroea in Macedonia and therefore diocese of *Thracia*.

province to the capital. Nonetheless, the importance of these processes also comprises a strong political commitment and an initiative by the imperial authorities[4] which played a distinctive role for the success of the process. This help was mainly logistic, for instance by supplying mosaicists from the Constantinopolis's circle and in some cases crucial by granting permission for undertaking of major urban reconstruction.

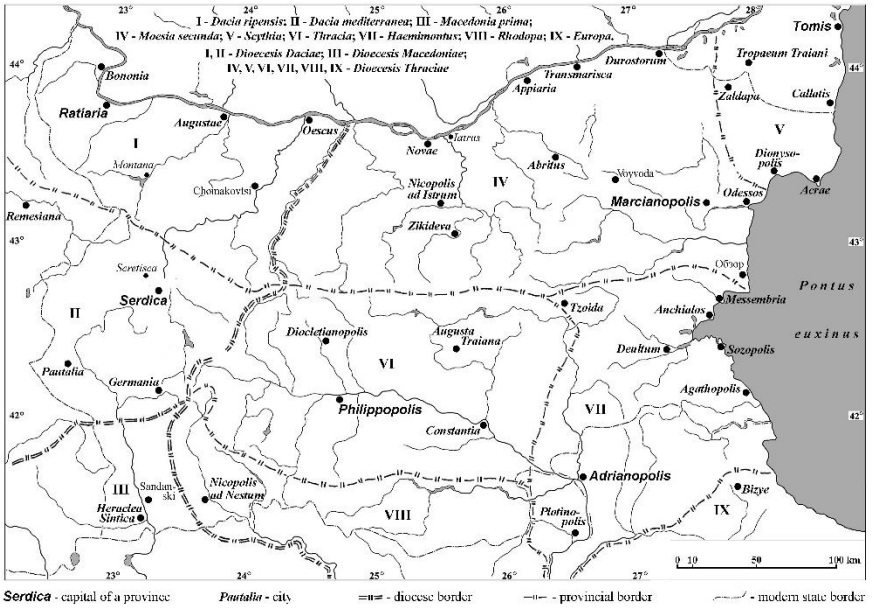


Fig.1. Map of the Late antique provinces in Thrace (Dintchev 2021, 37, fig. 2).

All the initiatives that were undertaken within the process reflected in various ways on the local churches, in both architecture and decoration. A good example for the latter is provided by the Metropolitan basilica in Philippopolis[5] with its specific iconography of the mosaic pavement in the side aisles which allows V. Popova to suggest that the entire southern aisle was devoted to Mary, The Life-Giving spring with the Child Christ and her cult.[6] This idea is very plausible, and if correct, it opens new horizons in the study of the link between the liturgy, architecture and the décor, in this case of the

[4] See for example the construction of the new *porta triumphalis* case in Thrace – Topalilov 2021b, 136–137; 2022b, 304–324.

[5] By Metropolitan basilica here is meant the basilica of the metropolitan bishop of Philippopolis and not the Constantinopolitan one.

[6] Popova 2016, 164, 166.

mosaic pavements, in the basilicas in the second half of 5th century, link, which I would like to explore a bit more in the next paragraphs.

Among the changes in the local liturgies that reflected in the architecture of the churches is the imposition of the polygonal outer apse of the basilicas with the inclusion of the crypt in the front of the apse. This seems to have been directly connected with the imperial metropolis since it is assumed that the polygonal apse was inspired by the Studious basilica in Constantinople[7] or most probably by its still undetected metropolitan prototype.

There are several examples of basilicas with polygonal outer apse in Thrace which provide arguments for a direct Constantinopolitan influence. The most significant case is the so-called 'Old Metropolia' basilica in Messambria which is said to have been built very close in time to that of Stoudios if not at almost the same time.[8] The importance of this case is based on the status of the Messambrian bishop who was under the direct subordination of the Constantinopolitan patriarch.[9] Unsurprisingly, the newly built Episcopal basilica in Messambria had the features of the Constantinopolitan prototype; it has been suggested that it derives from the Studious basilica,[10] which, however, is not certain. Since the basilica has been built in *ex novo* the Constantinopolitan liturgy was implemented in the architectural layout from the very beginning. Yet, this example differs significantly from the other Episcopal and important basilicas in Thrace that needed certain reconstruction and rearrangement of the interior in order to meet the requirements of the Metropolitan liturgy. The Episcopal basilica of Messambria was three-aisle, one apse with polygonal outer wall, and a narthex and atrium (fig. 2). On both sides of the atrium were attached separate rooms, the northern one decorated with mosaic pavement.[11] It is suggested that a *skeuphylakion* should have been built near by the basilica based on the assumption that it was not until the beginning of 10th century when both *prothesis* and *diakonikon* are attested separately rooms in Constantinople.[12] It should be noted, however, that this

[7] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 230.
[8] Stanev 2007, 66.
[9] Stanev 2007, 58.
[10] On the Studios basilica as the prototype of the Messambrian Episcopal basilica – see Mavrodinov 1955, 51–52; Boyadzhiev 1996, 12; Bojadžiev 1962, 325–326, 332.
[11] On the basilica – see most recently in Stanev 2007 and the bibliography cited there. On the mosaic – see Pillinger *et al*. 2016, 109–111.
[12] Stanev 2007, 70–71. On the separation in Constantinople – see Mathwes 1971, 107.

skeuphylakion has not been detected archaeologically or in another way yet and therefore the idea proposed remains purely hypothetical. Besides, there are two rooms attached to the atrium on the northern and southern part that fit with the idea of the *prothesis* and *diakonikon*. They seem to have had mosaic pavements of which only a small fragment is preserved in the northern room dated to the second half of 5th century.[13] The mosaic pavement decoration of these rooms makes unlikely their interpretation as places for staircases that led to the archaeologically unattested galleries; no such expensive decoration and even floor mosaic is needed for this type of transition rooms. For now, we can assume that both rooms might have functioned as *prothesis* and *diakonikon* and the presence of a *skeuthylakion* in Messambria cannot be considered. If so, this example is significant as it reveals that the Constantinopolitan influence might have not been fully implemented, even in this case where the local bishop was directly subordinated to the metropolitan patriarch, and that the local tradition prevailed.

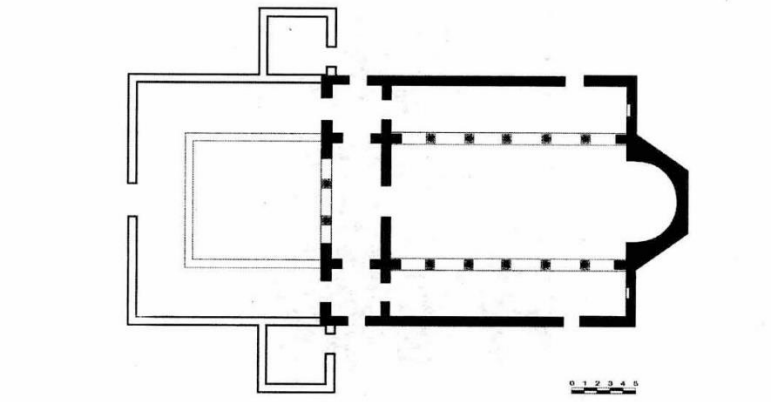


Fig. 2. The plan of the Messambrian Episcopal basilica (after Stanev 2007, 79, fig. 2).

Another good example of the direct Constantinopolitan influence on the architecture of the local Christian basilica in Thrace derives from the city of Diocletianopolis, located some 40 km north of the provincial capital of Philippopolis. The so-called 'basilica no. 3' which is located some 120 m southward of the city becomes an essential part of the complex that is constructed in late 4th – beginning of 5th century and that consists of a *porta triumphalis*, which is an arch-like

[13] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, 111.

gate, a small oval square for *adventus* ceremony and the beginning of the main street of the city leading to the Bishops' basilica (fig. 3).[14]

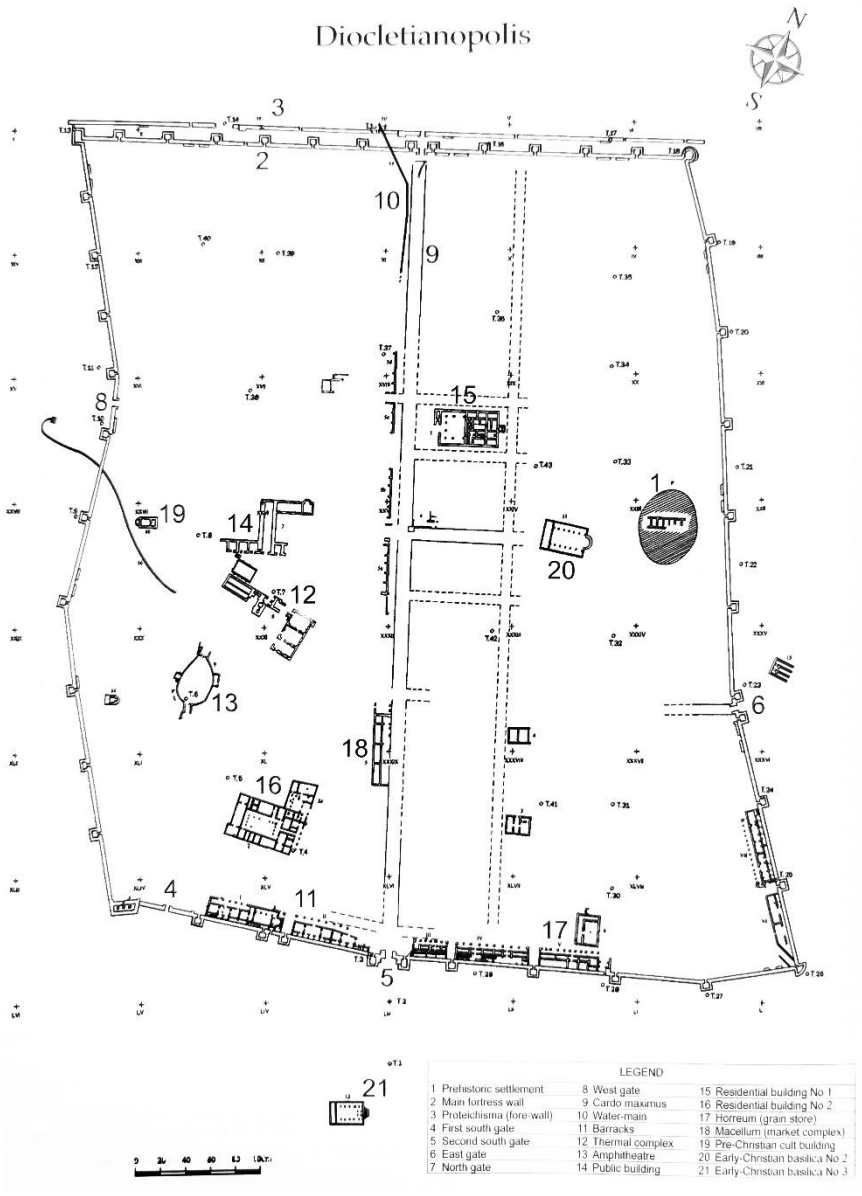


Fig. 3. General plan of Diocletianopolis (after Madzharov 2012, 446, fig. 1).

Unlike the Messambrian basilica it was not built *ex novo* but the basilica of the second half of 4th century was reconstructed after the

[14] On the complex – see Topalilov 2022a, 73–84.

Hun's invasions in the 40s of 5th century. The basilica received a new apse with a polygonal outer wall and it is certain that at that time it was dedicated to St Stephan whose relics were stored in a silver container kept in the altar.[15] The basilica's dedication to St Stephan is very significant and should be regarded in the light of the importance of this cult for the imperial ceremonial;[16] as the construction of the new *porta triumphalis* of which the basilica was an essential part required the intervention of the imperial authorities; the construction of the new gate was accompanied by the destruction of a substantial part of the curtain wall in this part of the fortress for which the approval of the imperial authorities was required.

Along with this basilica, there are four more known until now in the region that may reveal a direct Constantinopolitan influence in the region. Three of them are in Diocleatianopolis, such as the so-called basilicas no. 1 and no. 4b, and that at Verigovo,[17] and the fourth which is located 5 km eastward of the city[18] could be regarded as a smaller copy of the Studious basilica. Some more examples are known near Serdica,[19] near modern Gabrovo,[20] and the southern outskirts of the Balkan range,[21] but as a whole it seems that this innovation did not gain wide acceptance among the churches in Thrace in the second half of 5th century. Its distribution at this stage of research was limited to few urban centers and their vicinity only.[22] Given these examples and the possible direct link with Constantinople, one would wonder about the status of the Diocletianopolitan bishop at the second half of 5th century.

Another innovation in the architectural plan of the churches in Thrace that occurred at the same period and that was inspired by Constantinople is the use of the chapel (*parekklesia*). The archaeology reveals that it was not until the middle of the 5th century when the chapels appeared in Thrace although the examples known so far are not numerous. These evidences, however, although scanty, allow some preliminary observations concerning their geography and chronology. For instance, it seems that until the middle of 5th century their use was

[15] On the basilica – see Madzharov 1993, 130–132; Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 265–266.
[16] On the importance of the cult – see Kalavrezou 1997, 57–67.
[17] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 263–264; 268–270; 276.
[18] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 275.
[19] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 276
[20] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 208–210.
[21] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 303–309.
[22] A special study will be devoted to this problem by the author.

sporadic with only one example that may be dated to the first half of that century that has a definitely Eastern origin.[23] More examples, however, are dated to the middle – second half of 5th century all of which with one exception deriving from south Thrace. For example, the chapel that was attached to the naos of the future *katholikon* of the Christian monastery located southwest from Philippopolis is dated to the middle of the century.[24] To the second half/late 5th century is dated a group of basilicas with chapels. They all have a polygonal outer shaped apse and the chapel is attached either to the narthex or naos. One such basilica is the aforementioned one located 5 km eastward of Diocletainopolis,[25] but also the basilica discovered at the Balkan range whose construction is dated to the late 5th century with the chapel entered from the naos,[26] and that found near Serdica with two chapels attached on the northern and southern parts of the naos.[27] In the last case, both rooms should be interpreted as *parekklesiai* due to the crypts discovered in them revealing their undisputable mortuary function. Some more examples come from the area between Philippopolis and Hadrianopolis such as the basilica near modern Ljubenovo,[28] Hadrianopolis area, and that near modern Dragoinovo which in fact may be a *katholikon*,[29] as well as from Philippopolis itself. In the latter it is the construction of the new basilica in the eastern suburbs of the city whose architectural features and mosaic pavements were entirely based on the Constantinopolitan liturgical requirements.[30]

All these examples reveal that in the second half of 5th century a certain Constantinopolitan influence over the churches in Thrace may be observed with the introduction of some consistent patterns in church planning such as the polygonal apse,[31] and the attachment of a chapel (*parekklesia*) either to the naos, narthex or elsewhere. The main concentration of both layouts occurred in the region of Philippopolis and the late antique province of Thrace. In the next century if this

[23] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 102–103; 195–196.
[24] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 261–262.
[25] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 275.
[26] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 208-210.
[27] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 300–301.
[28] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 252
[29] Topalilov 2020b.
[30] Pillinger *et al*. 2016, 227–238.
[31] See Mathews 1971, 38–39.

practice remained as a whole, it was due to migrants of eastern and maybe western provinces of the empire.[32]

The introduction of a polygonal apse and *parekklesia* in the architecture of the churches in Thrace should be regarded as a substantial part of the process of the unification of the local liturgy under the Constantinopolitan and were of undisputable Constantinopolitan origin. What makes an impression in these cases is the fact that no chapel was attached to any of the so far significant basilicas located in the urban centers in Thrace, e.g., the Metropolitan, Episcopal or other known ones.

These innovations were of huge importance for the gradual establishment of a common liturgy in Thrace and in a sense they also had some political meaning. The case of the *parekklesia* is symptomatic for this. Indeed as revealed elsewhere, it is assumed that they had served as *diakonika* and the rite of *prothesis* was conducted in them, as attested by the inscription of the mosaic pavement that embellishes the room.[33] However, the *parekklesiai* in general preserved their mortuary function and therefore are associated with a martyrium of local saints or a martyr or even a burial chapel.[34] It could be added that the chapel might have also been devoted to a certain Christian saint solely or a figure and used just as a place for worshiping. In this case, the liturgy that was conducted was interpreted as being 'miniaturized' and even described as 'privatised'.[35] When the *parekklesia* has the function of a *diakonikon*, one would wonder if this was due to the Constantinopolitan tradition where the *diakonikon* (*skeuphylakion* ?) is placed outside the church building. The above discussion reveals the multi-functionality of the chapels which are identified as 'the second focus of the liturgical activity' in the church,[36] Certainly, the specific functions of the *parekklesia* defined its role and importance in the liturgy. For instance, if it is used as *diakonikon* where the rite of *prothesis* took place, one should assume that the clergy's procession with the Eucharistic bread and wine started from the chapel and moved to the altar in the nave. It is also suggested that 'the clergy processed into the church with the Eucharist to perform the liturgy and then retraced their steps to the side

[32] The cases known so far are presented in Chaneva-Dechevska 1999.
[33] See the discussion in Mulholand 2014, 79, 81–91; Krautheimer 1986, 94–95, 102, 469. On the mosaic pavements in Greece – see Caraher 2003.
[34] Babić 1969.
[35] Mathwes 1982, 127–137.
[36] Mulholand 2014, 79–108.

chapel at the conclusion of the ceremony',[37] If, however, the chapel was not used as a *diakonikon*, we should assume that in fact it was the final point of liturgical procession in the case of martyrium, or the sole place where the worship of the Christian saint was performed. In both cases, the lack of any archaeological evidence, holes on the floor for the altar and the cancel, is not crucial as the whole furniture in fact might have been wooden as the miniature chapels at the monastery of St. Catherine's, Mt. Sinai, of the middle of 6th century reveal[38] or of precious metals as the *Patria* suggests in a paragraph that will be discussed below.

The function of the *parekklesiai* may be marked as mentioned above by its decoration of which mostly the mosaic pavements have been preserved archaeologically. The examples reveal that the decorations of these places, either mosaics, or paintings, are an essential part of their interior, and in some cases it reveals the inclusion of the chapels into the liturgy. The *diakonikon* of basilica A in Nicopolis of Dometios is a good example for this with orientation of the mosaic patterns in the narthex leading to it from the *prothesis* instead toward the naos.[39] Although the date is ca. 40s of 6th century, it shows the final stage of the evolution of the innovations that entered the Christian churches in the Balkans in the second half of 5th century. These and other examples from Continental Greece mark the penetration of this innovation from Constantinople, where the chapels were used in the liturgy.[40] They also reveal the origin of the practice of which the decoration (the mosaic pavement, but not only) played crucial role as an embellishment of the *diakonika* and *parekklesiai*, but also as a means to guide the new liturgy. Arguments for this may be found in the Metropolitan basilica in Philippopolis and the basilica found in Heraklea that was built after the Constantinopolitan prototype between 450-480 and closely connected with the metropolis. The mosaic pavements with a specific iconography embellish some particular places such as the side aisles, the center of the narthex, the pre-altar area as well as a room in the atrium in the Philippopolitan basilica and in the side aisles, the room by the atrium and the entrance of the Heraklean basilica. It is considered now that they were produced by mosaic ateliers

[37] Mulholand 2014, 102.
[38] Mathews 1982, 130.
[39] On the basilica and the mosaic pavements – see Raynaud and Islami 2018, 187–200 and the bibliography cited there.
[40] Matthwes 1971, 135; Mulholand 2014, 93–94.

from Constantinople or inspired by the artistic trend of the metropolis. Based on the specifics in the iconography of the mosaic pavement decoration it seems that the *prothesis* and *diakonikon* were moved out of the naos to a separate room in the atrium.[41] In other places, however, where the Constantinopolitan influence was not that strong as the local ones for example from Thessalonica, the traditional location of the *prothesis* and *diakonikon* in the eastern part of the side aisles remained.[42] A good example comes also from the metropolis of Thrace Philippopolis in the so-called 'Small basilica' where we observe the absence of mosaic pavement in these specific areas.[43] As mentioned, the construction of the basilica is dated to the end of the third quarter of 5th century (most probably soon after 471 AD) and its architecture and mosaic decoration is influenced by the Constantinopolitan liturgy. A certain *parekklesia* was attached to the south side (fig. 4). A quick glance in the fifth century basilicas in Thrace which are enclosed in the modern Bulgarian lands allows us to distinguish a huge group of basilicas, if not the majority of all known so far, with the *diakonikon* inserted (or remained) within the church building. All these examples may point out that the division of *prothesis* and *diakonikon* in separate places in Constantinople that is dated to 10th century may be the result of the influence of the Balkans and more specifically of Thrace over the metropolis where the tradition lasted through the centuries.

The cases in Thrace, however, arise another question – the possible presence of mosaic pavement decoration in the *parekklesia*. Indeed, one may assume that the *parekklesiai* were not decorated with mosaic pavements as none of the archaeologically studied so far chapels has such decoration. And at first glance it may be so as the *parekklesia* does not seem to have been characteristic for the huge and important, well-decorated with mosaic pavements urban and episcopal basilicas. Up to now, I am not aware of any Episcopal basilica in Thrace with an architecturally defined *parekklesia* that was embellished with a mosaic pavement. However, the Metropolitan basilica in Philippopolis may suggest an embellishment with mosaic pavement of area that was used as a *parekklesia*. The idea advanced by Vanya Popova based on the specifics of the *fons vitae* which was inscribed within the central panel of the mosaic pavement of the southern aisle of the Metropolitan

[41] Topalilov 2021a, 312–314.

[42] See for example the case with basilica No 1. in Garmen – Popova 2011, 281–286.

[43] On the mosaic pavements of the so-called 'Small basilica' – see Pillinger *et al*. 2016, 227–238.

basilica in Philippopolis may reveal that this area was devoted to Mary, The Life-Giving spring with the Child Christ.[44]

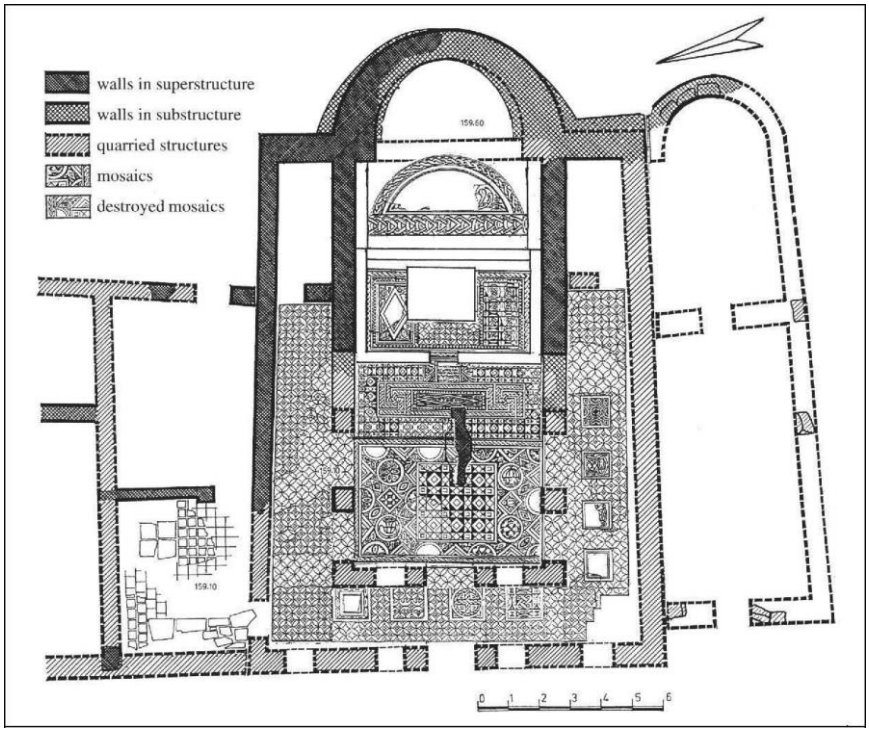


Fig. 4. General layout of the mosaic pavements of the so-called 'Small basilica' in Philippopolis (after Pillinger *et al.* 2016, Taf. 164, Abb. 422).

I do not know if the link between the domination of the crater with its vertical reminds of the chalice with Mary, The Life-Giving spring with the Child Christ, and therefore the scene should be linked with this cult, but what may be observed beyond doubt is the direct link between this aisle and the room at the atrium that was interpreted as *diakonikon* (*skeuphylakion*?).[45] A short description of the mosaic pavements is needed in this study.

As it is well established the Metropolitan basilica in Philippopolis is a three-aisle, with one semicircle apse, possibly exonarthex that was later turned into a narthex, and an atrium flanked by a colonnade with

[44] See Popova 2016, 163–165.

[45] Given the fact that it is assumed that until the 10th century there was no *diakonikon* as a separate place in Constantinople whose functions were maintained by the *skeuphylakion* (Stanev 2007, 71), this very room should be interpreted as such.

a couple of rooms behind on the northern and southern sides (fig. 5). The basilica seems to have been built in the middle of 4th century,[46] and received its first mosaic pavement in the last quarter of that century.[47] In the third quarter of 5th century the entire complex received another mosaic pavement that was used till the first half of 7th century, although repaired in some areas for various reasons.[48]

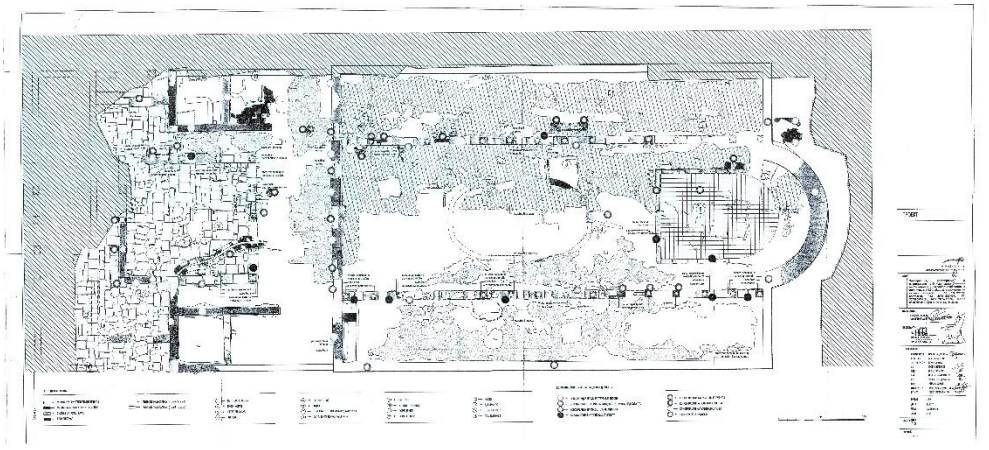


Fig. 5. General layout of the uncovered mosaic pavement in the Episcopal basilica in Philippopolis (after Tankova 2017, 324, fig. 1).

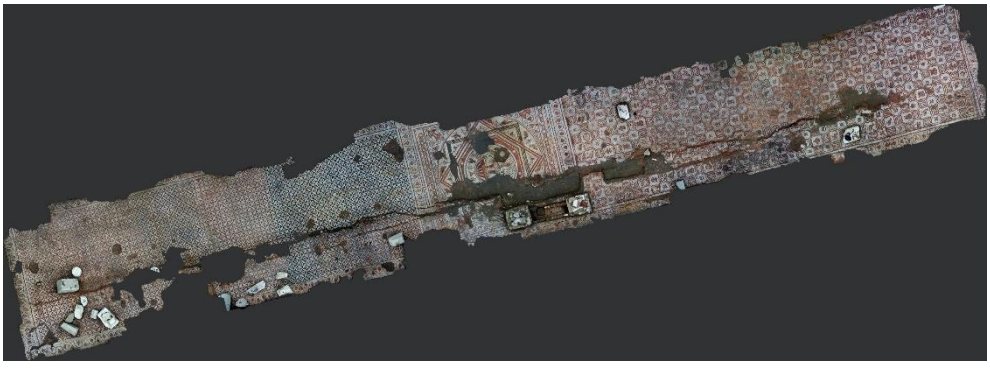


Fig. 6. The mosaic pavement of the northern side aisle (author: Elena Kantareva – Decheva).

[46] I would like to express my gratitude to Vanya Popova who suggested this date in a conversation on 31.03.2022.

[47] On the mosaic pavement – see most recently Pillinger *et al*. 2016, 201–203; Kantareva-Decheva 2018, 208–209; Kantareva-Decheva *et al*. 2021, 24–29; Popova 2022.

[48] See most recently in Topalilov 2020a, 260–262.

In this long period the importance of some areas of the complex have been underlined by their mosaic decorations, for example the side aisles. In both aisles they follow the same scheme: two elongated panels located on the east and west and a smaller square in the center which carries the focus of the decoration (fig. 6). The images of the central panels which represent the 'Fountain of Life' (*fons vitae*) with two peacocks resting on both sides of the fountain in the form of a kantharos are identical (fig. 7). Identical are also the side panels in the south aisles and the eastern part of the northern. A polychrome gridpattern of Heracles' knots[49] is filled with a kantharos, a wicker basket of fruits (probably pears or apples), birds, and stylized rosettes with four petals (fig. 8). The decoration of the western panel in the northern aisle is different as it is entirely geometric and similar to that of the western panel of the nave.[50]

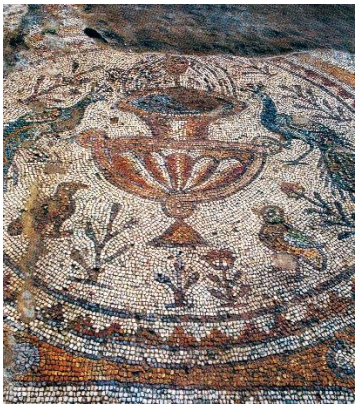


Fig. 7. The Fons vitae in the southern side aisle of the Episcopal basilica in Philippopolis (after Pillinger et al. 2016, taf. 258, Abb. 409).



Fig. 8. A detail from the western panel of the mosaic pavement in the south aisle of the Episcopal basilica in Philippopolis (after Pillinger et al. 2016, taf. 156, Abb. 405).

The orientation of the figures is toward east and reveals the path of the processions in the aisles. By this specific decoration the side aisles relate to a series of pavements that underline the middle of the exonarthex (now a kind of narthex), the side room of the atrium, and the altar's place. It is worthy to note that although the iconography in both aisles is almost identical and probably the figural panels were executed by

[49] Décor I: pl. 254f.
[50] Décor I: pl. 238e – variant.

Constantinopolitan mosaicists,[51] there is a slight chronological difference between them, the southern being the earlier.[52]

If we accept that the southern aisle functioned as a *parekklesia* this may explain the location of the *diakonikon* (*skeyphilakion*?) in the southern part of the atrium which place seems to be chosen for purely liturgical reasons. These organization obeys to the requirements of the so-called 'Entrance of sacraments' which was organic part of the liturgy[53] with the procession of the deacons carrying the gifts to the altar through the southern part of the narthex. The second reason may be provided by the contemporaneous Episcopal basilica in Messambria. It is suggested that the southern aisle just to the altar was the place of worship of relics of St Mary the Virgin (Σορός) following the Constantinopolitan church that was located at the Blachernae on the pilgrim's place of St Mary.[54] As the Constantinopolitan tradition is dated to the last quarter of 5th century at the earliest,[55] one would wonder if it was implemented on the southern aisle in the Messambrian basilica from the very beginning and therefore the tradition is a bit earlier, or the southern aisle was turned into the *parekklesia* in the last quarter of the 5th century. This could be also regarded in terms of the close connection between the Messambrian bishop and Constantinople. So, we may conclude that after the rite of *prothesis* took place in the *diakonikon*, the procession in the Metropolitan basilica in Philippopolis moved through the southern part of the narthex into the aisle and reached the *fons vitae* place where some liturgical activities were performed and concluded.

The basilica of Heraklea may also provide an example of the veneration of the relics in the side aisle. This is a three-aisles basilica, with one circle apse, narthex and an atrium surrounded by rooms on three sides (fig. 9). The measurements and *ratio* among the different parts of the complex and within them as well as the openness of the complex as a whole indicate a particular Constantinopolitan prototype that had also inspired the architecture of the Studios basilica. The

[51] Or at least these in the southern aisle and the first panel of the nave – see Popova 2016, 165, n. 41.

[52] I express my gratitude to Vanya Popova who shared this observation with me on 24 March 2022.

[53] Stanev 2007, 71.

[54] Stanev 2007, 72–73.

[55] Stanev 2007, 73.

mosaic pavements covered all parts of the complex[56] and as in Philippopolis the focus of the décor lies upon the side aisles, the entrance and the northern room of the atrium by imposing figural compositions.

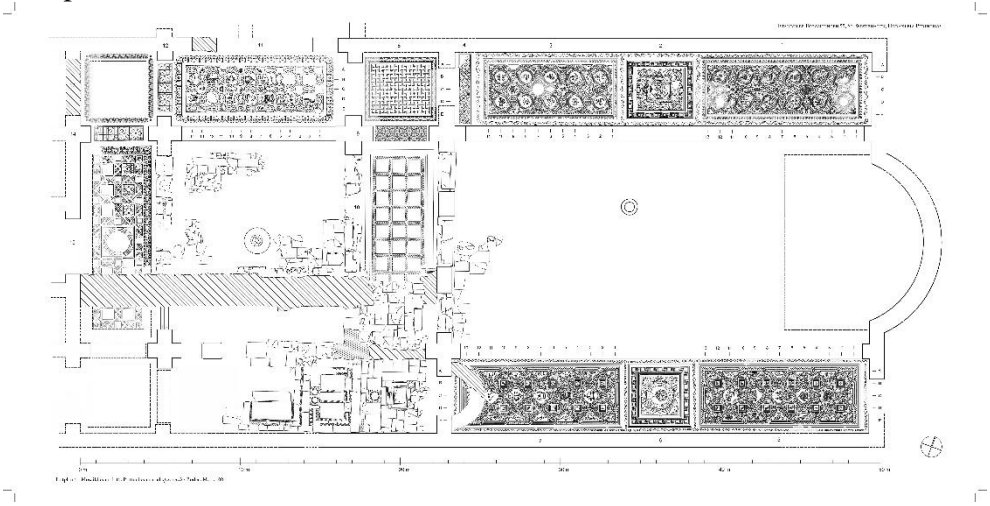


Fig. 9. General layout of the mosaic pavements of the Heraclean basilica (after Westphalen 2016, Faltplan 4).

The floors in both side aisles present the composition of two elongated panels on east and west and a central square panel with *fons vitae*. The side panels are filled with an orthogonal pattern of tangent crosses of interlaced *scutae*[57] in the northern aisle and a mixture of several geometric schemes[58] in the southern filled with figural motifs (kantharos, a basket of fruits), floral (a fruit tree, a bush with three pomegranates, a vine) and animals (a couple of ducks, a couple of parrots, various types of birds, but also fish), etc. The similarity as a whole of the decoration in the northern aisle of the Heraklean basilica and that in the Philippopolitan basilica's aisles is obvious. Unlike the Philippopolitan basilica, however, the scene with the *fons vitae* in Heraklea differs with the image of two birds resting on a chalice in the northern aisle and a peacock is presented in the southern aisle (figs. 10; fig. 11). The image of the peacock in the Heraklean basilica corresponds to the image in the narthex of the Philippopolitan basilica which had a different connotation and role in the liturgy. Unsurprisingly, the

[56] On the measurements and ratio and the similarity with the Studios basilica – see Westphalen 2016, 27–32; on the mosaic pavements – see Westphalen 2016, 86–110.
[57] Décor I: pl. 153a.
[58] Décor I: pl. 235, a; 236b.

diakonikon (*skeuphylakion*?) in the Heraklean basilica is located in the northern part of the atrium to create a direct access to the northern aisle through the huge entrances of the narthex. The path of the procession is indicated by the orientation of the figures that fill the geometric carpet - toward east. The northern entrance of the *diakonikon* shows the way the gifts entered the room.



Fig. 10. The medallion in the center of the northern side aisle in the Heraclean basilica (after Westphalen 2016, Abb. 176).



Fig. 11. The medallion in the center of the southern side aisle in the Heraclean basilica (after Westphalen 2016, Abb. 177).

The Heraklean example does confirm the organic link between the *diakonikon* and the specific side aisle but unlike in Messambria and initially in Philippopolis, it was not the southern, but the northern side aisle. The question that arises given the date of the Heraklean basilica and the close link with the Constantinopolitan church is whether this aisle is devoted to a Christian saint? It is very tempting to see in the *scutae* scheme a close parallel with the *scutae* scheme in the almost contemporary martyrium dedicated to 38 martyrs in Philippopolis[59] and therefore links the *parekklesia* with the cult to a certain martyr rather than a cult. This, however, is only a speculation and more arguments are needed. Whether the northern aisle functioned as a *parekklesia* is unclear, but it is very likely given the similarities in decoration between them, viz. the *fons vitae* central panel and the link of the southern aisle with a cult that was created in Constantinople as suggested.[60]

I would rather presume, however, that both aisles were devoted to different Christian saints with the Eucharist celebrated in the middle of the area, on the *fons vitae* panel. We may even go further suggesting

[59] On the mosaic pavement of the huge conch martyrium in Philippopolis – see most recently Pillinger *et al*. 2016, 257–263.
[60] Popova 2016, 164, 166.

that after the rite of *prothesis* took place at the *diakonikon*, the procession moved through the southern part of the narthex into the aisle and reached the *fons vitae* place where some liturgical activities were performed and concluded. Given all this, I would suggest that the side aisles of the Metropolitan basilica in Philippopolis may have functioned as a *parekklesia* or *oratoria*, with the Eucharist celebrated in the middle of the area, on the *fons vitae* panel. By this, the complex adopted the main new requirements from Constantinople in liturgy within the frame of an older organization whose initial message was different. What is clear now is that both aisles were turned into *parekklesiai* and therefore the basilica received two more saints to venerate with the initial one. This may not be the case in Heraklea given the image of the peacock only in the southern aisle.

The deliberate choice of the specific iconography of the mosaic pavements in the side aisles, as well as the involvement of the imperial and metropolitan church authorities in these cases in one way or another reveal that there should be also basilica's aisles in Constantinople that functioned as *parekklesiai* and *oratoria*. A hint for this may be found in *Patria* informing that the Patriarch Sergius (610-638) 'established all the oratories of Hagia Sophia in the *katēchoumena*, donating to them many gold and silver vessels and purple linens interwoven with gold and treasures in abundance'.[61] The passage has already been interpreted in the literature revealing the turning of the galleries into oratories,[62] but what is important for this study is the fact that even such places underwent those kind of changes. In the case of the Metropolitan basilica in Philippopolis and with the Messambrian Episcopal basilica one would wonder if this was a deliberate initiative linked with the Trinity and its devotion in the naos and side aisles which may be also linked with the Arianic past of the diocese and shows the triumph of the Orthodoxy? The testimony of *Patria* reveals the existence of this practice in Constantinople in the years of the emperor Heraclius, but it remains unclear when it gained acceptance in the capital and what was the origin of it. The above discussed cases in

[61] Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum: 280(208): Ὁμοίς καὶ τὰ εὐκτήρια πάντα τῆς ἁγίας Σοφίας τὰ ἐν τοῖς κατηχουμένοῖς ἔκτισεν δοὺς ἐκεῖ σκεύη χρυσᾶ καὶ ἀργυρᾶ πολλὰ καὶ πορφύρας διαχρύσους ἐκ βύσσου καὶ κειμήλια εἰς πλῆθος (ed. Theodorus Preger)(B. G. Teubner), 1907.
[62] Mathews 1982, 136.

Philippopolis and Heraklea may then give a hint to the use of this practice as early as the second half of 5th century in the metropolis.

The transformation of the side aisles of some of the major basilicas in Thrace into *parekklesiai* or *oratoria*, should not be surprising and even it might have been welcomed by the local community given the catastrophic events in the last quarter of 4th century and again in the 40s of 5th century that happened in the region. Among the effects of these events was the rapid increase of the importance of the cult of the relics and saints as a whole protecting the local communities and regions against the barbarians and anyone that threatened the *Pax Romana*. With the temporary isolation of the region from the rest of the empire being left on its own to deal with the barbarians, who gained some support from the local population against the imperial infrastructure, it was necessary for the empire to reestablish the loyalty of the locals. I see the introduction of some of the new cults to the churches in Thrace and especially to those that were linked with the Empire, as well as the imperial ideology and court ceremonial, as part of this process and the decision of the Church's fathers in 451 provided a good opportunity for the state to strengthen its position through the Church. Therefore, we can consider that this was among the most important issues for the imperial authorities in Thrace which determined the various ways of its implementation in the local churches. For this purpose, some of them have undergone re-devotion, and were reconstructed and modified accordingly as it happened to the so-called 'basilica no. 3' in Diocletianopolis. These examples, however, seem to be limited in number and are found in specific and important places for the Empire such as the complex of the city's *porta triumphalis* in Diocletianopolis[63] as well as in the Metropolitan and Episcopal basilicas. Along with the cult to St Stephan we should also add that to St John the Baptist,[64] probably Mary, the Life-Giving spring with the Child Christ whose cult arose in the time of Leo I, and to St Sophia that is linked to the God's wisdom and the second face of the Trinity that would attest the triumph of the orthodoxy. When the *parekklesiai* were attached to the building by which the veneration of local saints was made possible, we should not expect the re-devotion of the entire basilica, either private or common. So, in this process the

[63] See for this Topalilov 2022.

[64] On the importance of the cult to St John the Baptist for the imperial ceremonial – see Kalavrezou 1997, 67–72.

Constantinopolitan church acted as the main spokesperson of the empire, and the *harmonia* between the state and church that was proclaimed by Arcadius had reached the religious life of the communities in Thrace.

The cases when the *parekklesia* was used as the place where the rite of *prothesis* was conducted that was marked on the mosaic pavement by the inclusion of a certain inscription, or specific iconography including the *fons vitae* scene, underlining the beginning of the close interaction between liturgy, decoration and architecture that would reach its final stage in the middle Byzantine period. If this is so, one may wonder whether this gave an impetus to the devotion of the icons attested more intensively in 6th century with the imposing of the image of the saint on the wall of the side aisle at the place where the Eucharist was conducted, i.e. on the *fons vitae* panel.

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ΦΩΣ: Light and lightening in the Early Christian churches in Bulgaria (4th – 6th century)

Alexander Minchev

> 'I am the light of the world.
> He who follows me shall not walk in darkness
> but have the light of life (John 8: 12)' [1]

Abstract: Based on the available archaeological finds, the author of this article studies the manner in which natural and artificial light was used in the Early Christian churches (4th-6th centuries AD) in Bulgaria and in general in the Late Roman Empire. The symbolic meaning of light expressed in some texts of the New Testament and in some apocryphal writings, as well as its basic role in the Christian religion will also be discussed. Herein, various types of lighting devices of the same period found in the country will be described in short and discussed. Some of them belonged to Early Christian churches and have been found mostly in deposited assemblages, while others were discovered during the excavation of secular buildings. It should be noted that the same range of objects may have had the same function contemporaneously in public, secular buildings and in Christian temples. For a number of lighting devices: lamps, candlesticks, chandeliers, candelabra and polycandela - all found in Bulgaria - illustrations are provided as well as some images of similar objects depicted on frescoes and wall mosaics of the same chronological period in Bulgaria and abroad (figs. 1-17).

Keywords: lighting devices, Early Christian, churches, lamps, candlesticks, chandelier, candelabra, polycandela

Резюме: Въз основа на съществуващите археологически данни, в тази статия се проследява как се е осъществявало естественото и изкуствено

[1] The English translation of all Biblical texts cited in this article is according to The Orthodox Study Bible, prepared under the auspices of the Academic Community of St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology (Nashville/Dallas/Mexico City/Rio de Janeiro/Beijing: Thomas Nelson, 2008).

осветление в раннохристиянските църкви в България (IV-VI в.) и изобщо в Късната Римска империя. Разгледано е също символичното значение на светлината в раннохристиянската литература, което е отразено в текстове от Новия Завет и в някои апокрифи, както и нейната основна роля като символ в християнската религия. Накратко са описани по установени вече типове най-важните находки на осветителни тела от този период, открити в страната. Те са изработени от различни материали, като някои от тях са принадлежали на църкви и са намерени предимно в сборни находки, свързани с тях, а други произхождат от светски сгради. Въпреки това може да се приеме, че също такива предмети са били използвани и за осветление на християнските храмове. Много от тях са илюстрирани: лампи, свещници, канделабри и др. – всички от България, а са дадени и такива изображения по стенописи и стенни мозайки от същата епоха у нас и в чужбина (обр. 1-17).

Introduction

Light was very important in the space of the Early Christian church for several reasons. From the very beginning of Christianity, light played an essential role in its doctrine. Very soon after the 'new religion' appeared in the life of some groups of people in the Near East, light and flame began to be conceived as symbols and manifestation of the divine nature of God, as well as his presence among all people on earth and especially among his true believers. The connection to light and the appearance of Jesus Christ as light, is underlined in the New Testament by both His words and those of the Evangelists. This statement is often mentioned in other Early Christian writings and also in many apocryphal texts. In contrast to the pagan temples where light was not ubiquitous, and not so essential for the carrying out of rituals, and where only a burning fire on the altar was normally used, the Christian ones needed it constantly because of the continuous reading of the Holy scripts during the long service. The famous words of Jesus Christ: 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life' (John 8: 12) are well known and they established Him as symbol of light forever. This sentence was repeated again when He performed a miracle by healing the blind man: 'As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world' (John 9: 5). St. John stated the same in his Gospel: 'That was the true Light, which gives light to every man coming into the world' (John 1: 9). Perhaps this was the reason why, despite some theological differences that occur among certain Early Christian groups in the course of time, the connection of Jesus Christ with light was never denied or discussed in the communities of believers wherever they lived. On the contrary, it was a universal belief that they followed even if some of them professed other, more or less

different theological ideas. For instance, in the most significant apostolic apocryphal 'Acts of John', there appears a very interesting story. It is believed that the 'Acts' were written in about 2nd century AD by a disciple of St. John the Evangelist, but they were never approved by the leaders of the established (later, official) Christian Church. The story is about the meeting of Jesus with three of his disciples: John, Peter and James on the mountain where he went to pray in a cave. The text in the 'Acts' reads as follows: '…and we saw Him in light such as it is not possible for a man that useth corruptible (i.e. mortal) speech to describe what it was like' (Acts of John/Acta Iohannis, 1: 90). In the same apocryphal text, later on Jesus appeared in front of Apostle John as a cross of light and addressed him: 'And my Lord stood in the middle of the cave and lit it up…he showed me a cross of light … and said to me… This cross of light is sometimes called the word by Me, sometimes mind, sometimes Jesus, sometimes Christ' (Acts of John/Acta Iohannis, 1, 1983, 97-99).[2] At the same time, according to the Gospel of Mathew, when addressing his disciples, Jesus compared their presence to lighting lamps in the world because they were sharing the new religion with all the people living around: 'You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put in under a bowl. Instead, they put it on a stand and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven' (Mathew 5: 14).

This is the reason why, despite some theological differences that appeared in certain Early Christian communities in the early period of the Church, the shining light coming from artificial lighting sources in a church in the form of lamps, candles, etc., was perceived by the believers that attended the service as a physical reality of the light of God. All lighting devices were considered in a way as transmitters between this world and heaven. They were created on earth and supplied the useful light for the liturgy and for all other Christian services held in the church, but as bearers of it, they stood partly in the realm of Divine: i.e. they were on the boundary between the two worlds. That is why, in Early Christian times when the lamps were lit in the evening in a Christian temple, the glorious hymn "Phos Hylaron (Φῶς ἱλαρόν = Hail Gladdening Light) was always sang by the clergy – and it is still sung today in the Orthodox Church and some other ones. The

[2] All texts from the "Acts" are cited according to the Gnostic Society Library: http://gnosis.org/library/actjohn.htm, visited on November 12th 2021.

text of the hymn, which is known sometimes also as the 'Lamp-lighting Hymn' speaks for itself:

> 'O, gladsome light, o grace of our Creator's face,
> The eternal splendor wearing; celestial, holy blessed,
> Our Savior Jesus Christ, joyful in your appearing!
> As fades the day's last light we see the lamps of night!'[3]

Lamps and lighting devices

Under the term 'lamp', all lighting devices used in the churches were actually grouped together. During the day, the lighting in the interior of the Early Christian temples was available usually through the clerestory windows, which was not really enough because at that time they were usually constructed in a narrow style, situated high on the side walls of the buildings, and a few on the apse. It can be seen in the surviving buildings of the 4th - 6th century AD in Bulgaria like the so called Old Metropolis church in Nesebar (ancient Mesambria/ Mesemvria (fig. 1);[4] in the basilica St Sofia at Sofia, of 4th-6th century AD;[5] in the 'Red church' near Perushtica (late 4th-6th centuries AD),[6] etc. Besides, the window glass that was used then was mostly of poor quality, turbid, and actually it decreased to some extend the access of daily light inside the churches. Some more natural light during the daytime came through the door/doors of the church, which traditionally were always open, but this was not enough too to supply all the light needed inside it. That is why, in order to make the liturgy easier to be performed by the clergy and at the same time more comfortable for the believers that gathered there for the holy service, the lighting in the interior of the sacred buildings needed to be improved. This problem was solved more or less sufficiently by using various sources of artificial light. These were the following: hanging and portable lamps, candles fixed in candlesticks, chandeliers and candelabra, and maybe occasionally flaming torches if needed. In the richly furnished churches mainly, there were metal polycandela also available. In this way, much better lighting was successfully achieved in the church interior. These additional lights assisted the reading of Holy books by the deacons and priests, especially during the long evening

[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phos_Hilaron, visited on November 12th 2021.
[4] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 228–231, figs. 50-51.
[5] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 290–293, fig. 91.
[6] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 258–260, fig. 70.

liturgies, which since the 6th century AD under Justinian (527-565), continued all night long. Better lighting also helped the faithful public watch and pay attention to all the clergy involved in the holy service, as well as enjoy the interior of the holy temples, which were often richly and even lavishly decorated. Along with the preaching, the pleasant, soft singing and the fine fragrances dispersed by the numerous censers, which were widely used inside the building, and the warm light coming from many sources helped the attendants to absorb with pleasure (and to be absorbed) by the Holy Wisdom of Christian religion.



Fig. 1. The Old Metropolis church at Nesebar/Mesambria, 5th-6th centuries AD (after Pace 2001, 49).

Surrounded by this rich combination, they were able to enjoy it with all their senses. The arrangement and number of lights inside the Early Christian churches varied according to the windows on the walls and actual space of the building. It is sure that sometimes it depended also on the financial resources of the local church and congregation, but there were rules that were followed. Just as it is in modern churches, the visual line of every Early Christian basilica or church of another type followed its long axis in order to emphasize the religious acts which took place in the building and altar by catching the morning light. Most, if not all sacred temples were orientated in such a way that at a certain

time in the year, the morning sun rays would fall right on the altar, and the windows in the apse wall were designed in the same way: to send light onto it when possible. As a rule, the light was always focused on the centre of the apse, where the altar table and the synthronon behind it (when it was available) were situated. The presbytery was the place where the priest or priests and other members of the clergy held the religious service. Occasionally, on certain church feasts or by other special events an important personality, the bishop (and in the capital city – the patriarch or the emperor himself) would be enthroned there in the center of the synthronon. This was the reason why essentially, most of the artificial light sources/lighting devices were situated in the presbytery and that is why it, and especially the altar table was to be emphasized. This was the most lightened zone of every church where many suspended- and movable lamps, candlesticks with candles, candelabra, etc. were situated, making a glittering effect. Of course, other were distributed also in the nave, in the side aisles and at various other places inside the building space and at the entrance of the shrine. This can be seen on a wall mosaic in the 6th century AD basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome[7] as well as on other Early Byzantine mosaics of approximately the same time.[8] Except between the windows on side walls, in some churches lamps were suspended also behind the windows. This was done maybe in order to attract the attention of the believers and lead them in the evening to gather there for the nighttime service.[9] The abundance of light was appreciated in every church and the clergy in each one tried to supply it with as many lighting devices as possible. For instance, in the surviving inventory of church plate and furnishing of an Early Christian church in Egypt, there were listed forty-two lighting devices: 10 crown lights (i.e. polycandela); 20 bronze lights (i.e., hanging and stationary lamps made of this alloy) and 12 bronze candlesticks.[10]

Unfortunately, there are no similar inventory lists, concerning every Early Christian church in Bulgaria that have survived. Therefore, we have to guess what lighting devices were actually in use here during 4th-6th centuries AD.

At the beginning, we have to look over finds inside such buildings and the deposited assemblages discovered in Bulgaria that

[7] Nestori & Bisconti 2000, 18, pl. II B.
[8] Motsianos 2010, 279, fig. 4a.
[9] Motsianos 2010, 279, fig. 4b.
[10] Caseau 2007, 559 and bibl.

contained church plate and utensils. It is a pity that they are not so many but nevertheless they are rather helpful. The famous but still not entirely and sufficiently published assemblage of various bronze church vessels and utensils from the 6th century AD found in Silistra (ancient Durostorum), which was a big Early Christian center in the 4th-6th centuries AD, contained only two bronze lampstands with lamps (or respectively – two lamps and two candlesticks).[11] In an Early Byzantine mixed assemblage of bronze vessels and various other objects, found by chance in Stara Zagora (ancient Augusta Trajana/Vereia) a long time ago, there were two bronze lighting items: a large lamp and also a large chandelier, which most probably did belong to the furnishing of an Early Christian church in the city.[12] These and a few more objects that will be discussed later seem to be most of the finds connected to the topic available for the time being in Bulgaria. As we see, only a small number of more expensive lighting devices have been discovered in Early Christian churches, while the other similar finds are mostly ceramic lamps, which are often found in fragments. However, there are many more objects connected to lighting, which were found during excavation of houses and other ordinary or public buildings of the 4th-6th centuries AD. We may assume that in the Late Antique/Early Byzantine period, the same types of lighting devices that were used in various secular buildings, also functioned in the churches. Therefore, given that fact we can take into account in our discussion some secular archaeological finds in our country. Not so long ago, M. Xantopoulou has established the typology of the 4th-6th centuries AD of Early Christian lighting devices throughout the Early Byzantine Empire, which has not been changed since.[13] This division is based on the available archaeological material discovered in various countries and partially on contemporary to the epoch artistic images. I will follow it according to the finds in Bulgaria.

Here is the short list of types of the lighting devices found in the country by now and presented in the following text:

A. Lamps
1. Hanging lamps (candela)
2. Stationary lamps

[11] Minchev 2015, 254–259, figs. 2-3 a-b.
[12] Pace 2001, 122–123, Nos. 17.1-17.2.
[13] Xantopoulou 2010, 1-58.

B. Candlesticks and chandeliers
C. Big candelabra
D. Polycandela

There is no doubt that hanging lamps were the most used lighting devices in the Early Christian churches, and they were usually made of glass. This has been supported by a number of glass fragments of similar items discovered in many of these buildings. It should be underlined that it is not the case in Bulgaria only but also in other countries, which in the 4th-6th centuries AD belonged to the Late Antique/Early Byzantine Empire.[14] Glass lamps of that type were concentrated in the altar area and other were suspended on the walls, some of them in front of icons, etc. A specially designed large hanging glass lamp (height 14 cm,) with a globular body, wide flaring mouth and three small handles for suspension was discovered in a tomb of the Late Antique necropolis of Odessos (Varna). It was dated to the 5th-6th centuries AD[15] and judging by its very rare form, we may suppose that this glass lamp was locally made. This fine lighting device was used as a grave lamp but we must admit that the same type of *candela* were in use in the contemporary city churches and in some of the rural ones as well. Many more items of other types of hanging glass lamps, which have small handles attached to the body for suspension, have been found in significant numbers in Bulgaria (i.e. in Moesia Secunda and Thracia), as well as in the neighboring Balkan provinces of the empire.[16] They are of either hemispherical or semi-conical form, and there were also stemmed glasses used as well but not a single piece has survived intact in a church context in the country.[17] Their suspension elements are usually rather modest: they are composed of thick bronze wire or plain, long strands with hooks at their lower ends for fixing the lamps,[18] as seen on some images on wall mosaics of the 4th-6th centuries in the Balkans and beyond – such as in the Rotunda of St George at Thessaloniki (fig. 2).[19] By excavation of the so-called "Catacombs" – a

[14] Petcu *et al*. 2014, 353–368, figs. 2-6/1; Nikolić 2019, 84-96, figs. 3-12: Uboldi 1995, 104–111, figs. 1-3, etc.
[15] Minchev 1992, 79, pl. 8, fig. 20.
[16] Nikolić 2019, 84–94, figs. 3–12.
[17] See for instance: Gomolka-Fuchs 2007, 299–301, pl. 53, Nos. 2923-2925 and bibl.
[18] Ivanova 1937, 254, figs. 211-212; Toncheva 1965, 77, fig. 9; Radoslavova & Dzanev 2007, 375, fig. 3, etc.
[19] Mastora & Motsianos 2011, 131, fig. 4. I-II; see also 132–133, figs. 5-7 for some other types of hanging glass lamps; Chrzanovsky 2006, 362, figs. 1-2

large underground living- religious- and funerary space, which has functioned in 5th-6th centuries AD, there was found an intact lamp suspender made of solid bronze plates and wire hooks along with fragments of an imported (Syrian?) lamp made of purple colored glass.[20] The site is located in vicinity of Varna and very close to the Medieval rock-cut Aladzha Monastery. A nice example of bronze suspending chain decorated with a cross on top was found a long time ago at Verigovo, Plovdiv Region, which was dated to the 6th century AD (fig. 3).[21] Besides, in the Late Antique/Early Byzantine period (4th-6th centuries AD) usual hemispherical glass cups of various size, stemmed glasses and high conical vessels/ goblets equipped with floating wicks also functioned as lamps in churches. Intact pieces of these forms have been found in Bulgaria as well as a great number of fragments. They came to light at different sites (usually in tombs) and are dated to the 4th-6th centuries AD.[22]



Fig. 2. Hanging lamp depicted on a wall mosaic in the rotunda of St. George in Thessaloniki, 4th-6th centuries AD (after Mastora & Motsianos 2011, 131-132, figs. 4.I-II).



Fig. 3. Bronze suspending chain with cross of a lamp from Verigovo, 6th century AD (after Vagalinski *et al.* 2016, No 31).

Occasionally, the hemispherical or cylindrical glass cups were placed in elaborate bronze holders, which were acquired only by rich

[20] Minchev 1992, 74–75, pl. 5, fig. 4; Atanasov & Ceshmedzhiev, 1990, 135–136, fig. 8 a-b.

[21] Vagalinski *et al*. 2016, 139–140, No 31.

[22] Minchev 1992, 74–75, pls. 5-6, figs. 1; 5-6.

church communities or received by a church as a donation. A fine bronze lamp holder of hemispherical shape was found at Christianovo, Stara Zagora Region dated to the 5th-6th centuries AD (fig. 4).[23] The lamp holder is crafted of thin metal sheet of cooper alloy in open work cut-out or pierced in an elaborate design. It is one of a kind find in the country so far, but more or less similarly designed bronze holders were found in the Christian Coptic environment of the same period. Some of them have dedicatory inscriptions of the donors - and there are similar finds of lamp holders discovered in Greece too.[24] Despite that the lamp holder from Chrstianovo was found by chance (i.e. in an unclear archaeological context), its elaborate work suggests that it came from a ruined Early Christian church located at the site. We may admit that similar ones may well have had the same function also in other Christian temples in the country. A peculiar type of hanging lamp was discovered in a 6th century AD house at the Late Antique fortified town of Peristera (now Peshtera in South Bulgaria). It is made in the form of a shallow ceramic cup having an extending wick-holder in the center. It was fixed to a bronze suspender made of three bronze chains (fig. 5). This lamp and especially the design of its cup and wick holder shows a strong Near Eastern influence (maybe Jewish) although it was probably produced somewhere in Late Antique Thrace.[25]



Fig. 4. Bronze lamp holder made in open work from Christianovo, region of Stara Zagora, 5th-6th centuries AD (photo courtesy: N. Markov).

[23] Minchev 2021, 71, fig. 1 a-c.
[24] Xantopoulou 2010, I, 40–42, cat Nos. KA. 1.001-KA 1.002 and the discussion there.
[25] Minchev 2021, 73, fig. 2 a-c.



Fig. 5. Ceramic- and bronze hanging lamp found in Peshtera (ancient Peristera), 5th-6th centuries AD (photo courtesy: G. Shopov, Museum of History in Peshtera).

We will not discuss the portable terracotta lamps that no doubt were widely used in Early Christian churches. Many of them must have had Christian images or symbols on their discs[26] but not necessarily. It should be noted though, that finds of lamps in Early Christian churches and related buildings are not abundant (which is strange) and they are mostly of ordinary forms and simple decoration. On the other hand, there are a few bronze lamps, which have been definitely connected to Christian temples of the 4th - 6th centuries AD and deserve special attention.

The most impressive bronze lamp found so far in Bulgaria was part of the large assemblage of various ancient bronze vessels and utensils found in Stara Zagora in South Bulgaria (ancient Augusta Trajana/Vereia) in 1907 that was mentioned already. It is a big (31 x 15 cm) and highly elaborate art piece with a cross-shaped handle and decoration of a helmeted head on the disc (fig. 6). The latter was

[26] Minchev & Valkanova 2007, 64–75, figs. 1-7 and bibl.

interpreted as a possible image of Constantine the Great,[27] which is possible but I must point out that similar images of other Late Roman emperors with helmets appear often on coins of mid-late 4th century AD. This very fine bronze lamp was dated to the 4th-5th century AD and it has been supposed that it was used in a church.[28] It was produced probably in Constantinople.



Fig. 6. Big bronze church lamp from an assemblage found in Stara Zagora (ancient Augusta Trajana/Vereia), 4th-5th centuries AD (after Pace 2001, 122, No 17.1).



Fig. 7. Bronze lamp from a church assemblage found in Silistra (ancient Durostorum), 6th century AD (photo courtesy: Georgi Atanasov).

Two bronze lamps, typical for the Early Christian period belonged to the already-mentioned assemblage ('treasure') of church vessels and utensils found at Silistra.[29] One of the lamps (now lost) had a cross-shaped handle and the handle of the other one is shaped as griffin's head (fig. 7).[30] To the same group of objects belong two bronze stands, which supposedly served to the lamps (figs. 8-9).[31] However, it should not be excluded that at certain time, the lamps may have functioned as stationary ones, and the stands were used actually as candlesticks. Very similar candlesticks (in general, with variations) have been found all around the Early Byzantine empire, which were dated as whole to the 4th – 6th centuries AD.[32] In Bulgaria and beyond, there were found (in secular buildings and in other deposited Late Antique

[27] Dimitrov 1937-1939, 175–183, figs. 1-3.
[28] Pace 2001, 122, No 17.1.
[29] Atanasov 2007, 118–119, pl. 4/ 1-3.
[30] Minchev 2015, 254–257, fig. 3, pl. II, 1.
[31] Minchev 2015, 254–258, figs. 2-3a-b; pls. II-III.
[32] Xantopoulou 2010, II, 241-261, Nos. CD 5.001-CD 7.028 and bibl.

assemblages) several more lampstands along with their lamps, which may have functioned in both ways too.[33]



Fig. 8. Bronze lampstand or candlestick from a church assemblage found in Silistra (ancient Durostorum), 6th century AD (photo courtesy: Georgi Atanasov).



Fig. 9. Bronze lampstand or candlestick from a church assemblage found in Silistra (ancient Durostorum), 6th century AD (photo courtesy: Georgi Atanasov).



Fig. 10. Bronze church chandelier from an assemblage found in Stara Zagora (ancient Augusta Trajana/Vereia), 6th-5th century AD (after Pace 2001, 122-123, No 17.2).

A different type of bronze candlestick (or chandelier) presents another find from the assemblage found in Stara Zagora. It is shaped as a column with a capital (height 41.2 cm) and was dated to around 6th century AD (fig. 10).[34] Along with it and the lamp with the helmeted head, in the same assemblage there were found four bronze church bells, one of them with a dedicatory inscription of a certain Presbyteros Sergios.[35] It has been concluded that all these afore mentioned objects are utensils, which belonged to one or more Early Christian churches located in the large ancient city of Augusta Trajana/Vereia.

[33] Minchev 2015, 247–274, figs. 1-5, pls. I-V and bibl.
[34] Pace 2001, 122–123, No 17.2.
[35] Pace 2001, 123, No 17.3.

A pair of similar but even more sophisticated chandeliers was found by chance in the Late Antique fortified town Golemanovo Kale near Sadovets, Ruse Region (in North Bulgaria). They are made of silver (height of c. 35 cm) also in the form of columns with capitals on top but they have four small legs on the base. The chandeliers were discovered badly damaged (each in several fragments) but have now been restored. These precious pieces bear stamps of Justinian and therefore were products of an imperial workshop in Constantinople in the 6th century AD. These chandeliers are the only pieces in Bulgaria so far, and they must have been part of the church plate that once belonged to one of the several basilicas excavated at Sadovec.[36]

More simply formed candlesticks were discovered at the Late Antique port town located on Cape Sveti Atanas near Byala, Varna Region. About ten years ago, an Early Christian basilica was excavated there along with an ecclesiastic complex around it, which included several buildings.[37] In very close vicinity to the church and around the house of the priest situated next to it, three candlesticks were discovered.[38] They have an average height of about 20 cm, and all of them are partially damaged. One of the candlesticks is made of ceramic and the other two are of marble. According to the archaeological context they were found in, all three have to be dated to the 6th century AD. The ceramic candlestick has a cylindrical body with a low conical base and wide, flaring circular upper part with a depression for fixing the candle in the center (fig. 11). It is of local production, as are maybe the other two marble candlesticks from Byala, which however, show different forms. The first one is shaped as a simple marble cylinder with a drilled hole for the candle on top (fig. 12), while the second one is made of limestone and sculptured as a little column decorated with grooves, and an imitation of a capital on top, which also has a hole for the candle there (fig. 13). Of course, there is no certain evidence that they all belonged to the utensils, used in the Early Christian basilica at Cape Sveti Atanas but it is quite possible. The reason to believe it is because part of the sacred building was destroyed in the 20th century by construction works and the debris left were scattered around it. In

[36] Vasilev 2006, 255–278, figs. 1-13 and bibl.
[37] Yotov & Minchev 2013, 51–73, figs. 50-73.
[38] They are not yet published and I am indebted to my colleague Dr. Valeri Yotov for the photos and the permission to describe them in short here. See also Sorochan 2005, 256-258, fig. 79.

any case, it is difficult to believe that the finding of three candlesticks in the area around the church is just a coincidence.



Fig. 11. Ceramic candlestick found near the Early Christian basilica at Cape Sveti Atanas near Byala, 6th century AD (photo: R. Kostadinova).



Fig. 12. Marble candlestick found near the Early Christian basilica at Cape Sveti Atanas near Byala, 6th century AD (photo: R. Kostadinova).



Fig. 13. Limestone candlestick found near the Early Christian basilica at Cape Sveti Atanas near Byala, 6th century AD (photo: R. Kostadinova).

Another one - and very rare - type lighting device represents an elaborate marble candlestick sculptured as a human head with a 'Gothic' arrangement of the hair and a drilled hole for fixing the candle on top (fig. 14). It was found in Varna (ancient Odessos) and was dated to the 4th-5th centuries AD.[39] The candlestick was produced most probably in a local marble workshop. It is a good evidence about the diversity of similar objects that were available in the 4th-6th centuries AD in the provinces of the empire, which are in the lands of Bulgaria nowadays.

The available data about the high candelabra that have enlightened the Early Christian churches in the country and maybe some houses of the Late Antique elite are much less in number. The best sources, which enable us to see how they looked, come from wall paintings in Early Christian tombs. Two candelabra are depicted on the entrance wall of the famous late 4th century AD painted tomb at Silistra (Durostorum). They have a tall body with modelled decoration and flaming candles on top (fig. 15).[40] This must have been a popular form

[39] Pace 2001, 16, No 15,

[40] Atanasov 2006, 384, fig 2, pl. XV, 9.

of candelabra in the Balkans because almost the same lighting devices can be seen on the side walls of Tomb No 4 of the Early Christian necropolis in Serdica/Sofia, which was dated around the 5th century AD (fig. 16).[41] Given that they have decorated vaulted tombs, we may assume that similar candelabra were in use in contemporary to them Christian churches too.[42]



Fig. 14. Marble candlestick in the shape of a human head found in Varna (ancient Odessos), 4th-5th centuries AD (photo: R. Kostadinova).

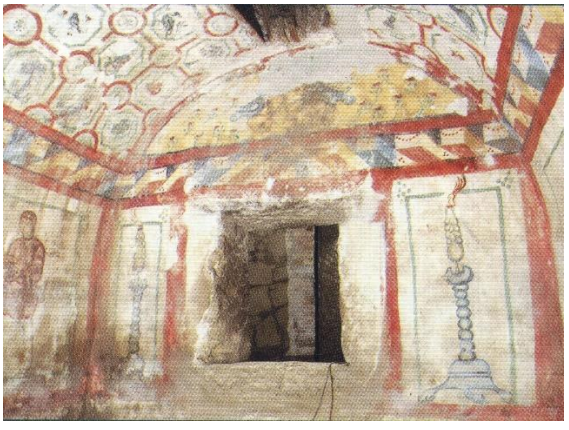


Fig. 15. Two candelabra with flaming candles on top depicted on the wall of the painted tomb in Silistra (ancient Durostorum), late 4th century AD (after Atanasov 2006, 384, pl. XV, fig. 9).

The only real candelabrum I am aware of in Bulgaria is a fragment found by the excavation of the Episcopal basilica complex in Sandanski (ancient Particopolis). Its upper section (20 cm long) is made of bronze and has a cylindrical body with a flaring circular upper part and a high prong on top.[43] Apart from the form of the body, this section of the candelabrum is very similar to the ones (a pair) depicted on the wall in the late 4th century AD painted tomb discovered in Silistra (ancient Durostorum). It is almost the same as another one similar lighting device depicted on a wall mosaic in St George rotunda in Thessaloniki, Greece.[44]

[41] Vagalinski *et al*. 2016, 119, No 14 and bibl.
[42] Mastora & Motsianos 2011, 129, fig. 1 and bibl.
[43] Petkov 2012, 307–308, fig. 3.
[44] Mastora & Motsianos 2011, 130, fig. 2.

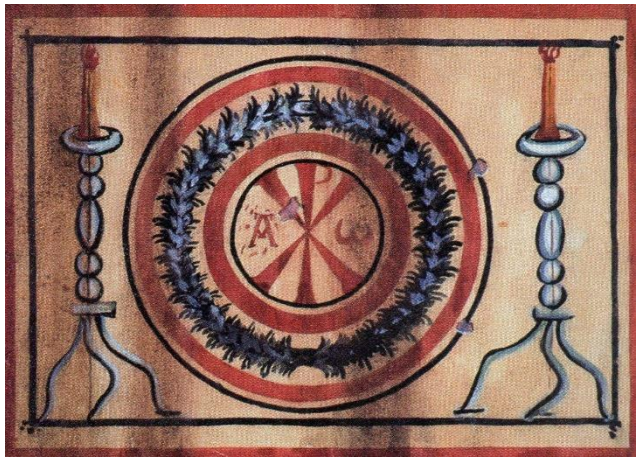


Fig. 16. Two candelabra with flaming candles on top depicted on the wall of painted tomb No 4 in Sofia, (ancient Serdica), 5th century AD (after Vagalinski *et al.* 2016, 122, No 22).

There is also very scarce data available about the polycandela used in the Late Antique period in Bulgaria. This elaborate lighting device, made usually of copper alloy in open work added obviously an impressive light to the interior of the Early Christian churches and some of them were very expensive pieces.[45] The only more or less intact polycandelon was found in a rather poor condition during the excavation of the large Episcopal complex in Sandanski (ancient Parthikopolis). It was discovered in the martyrium situated west of the basilica. This polycandelon is made of iron and consist of a large solid circle, to which over twenty circular holders for glass lamps were attached.[46] Given the fact that the whole complex was destroyed by an earthquake and the subsequent fire in the second half of the 6th century AD, this rare in shape lighting device must be dated to the first half of the same century or sometime earlier. This date goes also for the afore described large candelabrum from same site.

Two fragmented long and solid bronze chains with attached crosses were discovered in an Early Christian basilica (No 2) at Golemanovo Kale near Sadovets (fig. 17). They were dated to the 6th century AD and there is no doubt that these chains are parts of a suspension system, which was holding a large bronze polycandelon.

[45] Xantopoulou 2010, 46–56, figs. 80-95.

[46] Petkov 2015, 377, fig. 3. The polycandelon and the candelabrum fragment are not published in details yet.

Indeed, their size (26 cm long chains and 10.2 cm for the crosses) support this suggestion.[47] The other finds of polycandela, which I have seen are a few unpublished little fragments made of bronze, kept in the store rooms of the Regional Museum of History in Shumen, and of the National Museum of History in Sofia. There is possibly another one very small bronze fragment, which was discovered in the excavation at Cape Sveti Atanas near Byala and may be part of a polycandelon (?). All of them are too small to enable a reconstruction of the original design of the lighting devices that they represent, except that they were made in open work.



Fig. 17. Two fragmented bronze chains decorated by crosses from the hanging system of a polycandelon found at Sadovets, Region of Ruse, 6th century AD (after Vagalinski *et al.* 2016, 119, No 14).

Nevertheless, these finds are evidence that polycandela made of bronze and iron once furnished some Early Christian churches in Bulgaria and were enlightening their interior or that of other ecclesiastical spaces) in the country. Besides, we have to assume that in the 4th-6th centuries AD similar lighting devices may have enlightened certain secular buildings in the region as well.

[47] Vagalinski *et al*. 2016, 122–123, No 22 and bibl.

Conclusion

This short survey on the illumination of the Early Christian churches in Bulgaria presents a full range of lighting devices of the 4th-6th centuries AD discovered in the country. It is just an attempt in this direction. It is also a basis for further research on this specific topic, which concerns certain aspects of the religious life in this part of the Early Byzantine Empire and in the Balkans in general. I am sure that in some other Bulgarian museums one can find more fragments of similar to the described lighting devices, or even partially preserved ones, which have not yet attracted the attention of the curators. I do hope that this article may provoke their publication in the future, which will add new data to our knowledge in this field.

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Liturgical furniture of the Early Christian basilicas in R.N. Macedonia

Snežana Filipova

Abstract: The plans of the dominant basilical and the rare central type of Early Christian churches in today's R.N. Macedonia show Constantinopolitan and Syrian influences. Some have unusual features, like kuklion, rare position of an ambo in the altar space, two ambos, outer entrances to the apse, or to the aisles; the presence of an inner and an outer narthex; misalignment of the entrances from outer to inner narthex; a tribelon, and an ambo accessible from the western side. The existence of bema, side and apsidal entrances may be an indication of an early date related to the civic basilicas. The standard early Christian Basilica, allowed a single movement along the axis from the entrance to the altar.

The kyklion is related in function to the apsidal crypt. It is found primarily in the provinces of Macedonia and Epirus.

Side entrances may be related to the baptisteries or the nearby martirium, crypt, memorial or cemetery church with important relics wherefrom rites and services continued in the Episcopal or main basilica in the city. The clergy had a different way of communicating within the churches, entering and exiting them, depending on the position of the *deaconicon* and *proskomidia* and on the place of the existing crypts or tombs within or prior to the entrance to the church.

The altar screens of the larger churches have the Π shape entrance to the presbytery and the *solea* is either rectangular, or square, in most cases it is short or slightly elongated and in all the cases it is central.

The rotation of the decoration becomes evident within a single church. Once typical for one type of sculptural element or capitals, a certain type of decoration now is transferred to other elements and capitals, and from sculpture into mosaics and frescoes and vice versa.

Keywords: kyklion, ambo, chancel, solea, altar screen

Резюме: Плановете на преобладаващите базилики и редкия централен тип раннохристиянски църкви в днешна Р. Северна Македония показват константинополски и сирийски влияния. Някои от тях имат необичайни характеристики, като куклион, рядко срещано разположение на амвона в олтарното пространство, два амвона, външни входове към апсидата или към страничните кораби; наличие на вътрешен и външен нартекс; неправилно

разположение на входовете от външния към вътрешния нартекс; трибелон и амвон, достъпен от западната страна. Наличието на бема, странични и апсидни входове може да е индикация за ранна дата, свързана с гражданските базилики. Стандартната раннохристиянска базилика е позволявала еднократно движение по оста от входа до олтара.

Килионът е свързан по функция с криптата в апсидата. Среща се предимно в провинциите Македония и Епир.

Страничните входове могат да бъдат свързани с баптистериите или с близкия мартириум, крипта, мемориална или гробищна църква с важни реликви, откъдето обредите и службите продължават в епископската или главната базилика в града. Духовниците са имали различен начин на общуване в църквите, влизайки и излизайки от тях, в зависимост от позицията на дяконикона и проскомидията и от мястото на съществуващите крипти или гробници в или преди входа на църквата.

Олтарните огради на по-големите църкви имат П-образна форма на входа към презвитериума, а солеят е правоъгълен или квадратен, в повечето случаи е къс или леко издължен, но във всички случаи е централен.

Ротацията на украсата става очевидна в рамките на една църква. Някога характерна за един вид скулптурен елемент или капител, определен тип украса сега се прехвърля върху други елементи и капители, а от скулптурата - върху мозайките и фреските и обратно.

Recently, liturgiologists suggest shifting away from the Greco-Roman and/or Jewish liturgies as possible origins for early Christian liturgy, and instead looking to the broadly defined Greco-Roman banquet.[1]

According to Brandt, in total, twelve different liturgical components have been identified, seven as regular components, four as occasional components, and one as a partly regular and partly occasional component. Based on the Greco-Roman banquet setting in which early Christian gatherings took place, four liturgical components took place during the meal part of the banquet, and eight during the symposium part of the banquet.[2] The progress of archaeological research reveals a wide variety of liturgical devices. Within the 'liturgical provinces' but also within the real church dioceses there is no similar architectural design of liturgy, nor unity of specific forms and devices as Kruskova notes.[3]

The 'furniture' of a Roman church was standardized around the eighth century, from a unified mix of the characteristics of martyr basilicas and urban churches. Francesco Tolotti stressed that it is

[1] Messmer 2019, 264–279.

[2] Brandt 2014, 21–52.

[3] Khrushkova 2019, 263-282, 281–282.

typical for the earliest churches, especially the most important and monumental churches built under Constantine, to be composed of two poles: a basilica with a longitudinal nave flanked by two or four aisles providing the space for the celebration of the Eucharist; and another building which functions as the architectural backdrop for an important site (a shrine with a venerated tomb or place, or an important mausoleum, or a baptistery with the sacred font).[4]

It seems that on the territory of present R. N. Macedonia there are only a few buildings discovered that belong to the second type, the polyconchal church at Plaošnik, with the basilica under the St. Clement medieval church with southern atrium turned towards the polyconchos; the baptistery of the Episcopal Basilica in Bargala (according to Blaga Aleksova), and the rotunda at Konjuh with the large basilica nearby. The number of the first category longitudinal basilicas is several hundreds.

The plans of the basilical and central type of churches show Constantinopolitan and Syrian influences, the Constantinopolitan influence dominates, along with the Syrian and Palestine features that have been incorporated, especially when mosaic art (Lychnidos), two ambos' (Konjuh), and polygonal three-sided central apses, or Church of Nativity in Bethlehem model are concerned. These were characteristics mostly of the time of Justinian I, when central sacral buildings of three-foil (built under the Old St. Clement and St. Naum), tetra-foil and rotunda plan were erected everywhere within the Empire.[5]

Some of the early Christian church buildings possess unusual or rare features, or elements:

1. Kuklion (Stobi, Konjuh), that served probably for the believers to look at the relics in the crypt not interrupting the mass, or to sing prayers to martyrs as was practiced in Syria in monastic churches;
2. rare position of an ambo in the altar space (Konjuh, new basilica), two ambos at the same church, (Konjuh, new basilica);

[4] Tolotti 1986, 471–512. Cited by Brandt 2014, 27, n. 13.

[5] Filipova, 2010, 127–148, 134. The 11th century church of Holy Virgin in Veljusa is also a tetraconch inscribed in a square, and might have been inspired by earlier building, since there is a lot of architectural sculpture and parapet slabs discovered dispersed around the Medieval church.

3. outer entrances to the apse, to the compartments of the eastern space, and to the aisles;
4. the presence of an inner and an outer narthex that can be explained with the necessity to conceal the sacred mysteries from outside;
5. misalignment of the entrances from outer to inner narthex;
6. exonarthex with tribelon;
7. ambo accessible from the western side (Bargala, Episcopal Basilica).

According to Ema Loosley, only one church per village possessed a bema and it was never employed in a monastic context. The bema church was always the oldest church in its village, indicating that status was attached to the age of the church.[6] In our case, these are the Episcopal Basilica in Stobi, and the Episcopal Basilica in Bargala.

Tribelon

The *tribelon* at the western entrance can be found at the Episcopal Basilica in Bargala, the small basilica (A) in Heraclea, Scupi, the large basilica with atrium, the rotunda in Konjuh, Suvodol basilica, Davina Kula Basilica and the one from the village of Konjusnica, both near Skopje, Lukovica-Begov Dab, and Ramenska Tumba near Bitola. Most of these churches are 6th century objects. The *tribelon* continued to be used in the course of the Middle Ages (St. Nahum church, Ohrid, St. George, Kozjak village, Holy Virgin, Velušina etc.).

Brandt cites Guidobaldi who describes it as a transparent diaphragm between the sacred rites and the catechumens who were not admitted to the rite.[7] Brandt himself thinks: 'There are usually five arches, but sometimes there may be only three (trifora), ..; this kind of entrance replaces almost the entire front wall of a hall or basilica. ...they may be related to orientation, because they are generally found in those fourth-century churches which have their entrance more or less to east'.[8]

This is also good explanation for our Episcopal basilicas that are proved to be (Stobi) and believed to be (Bargala) built in the 4th

[6] Loosley 2015, 510.
[7] Brandt 2014, 45, n. 69.
[8] Brandt 2014, 40.

century. They both have an entrance from the east, and are the oldest churches in the city. In the case of Bargala, the entrance to the west was accented with the stairs that lead to the exonartex and the dominant raised position of the church.

Entrances from the outer apsidal eastern wall

San Lorenzo church in Rome is reminiscent of the earlier civic basilicas with their many openings allowing many people to enter and exit at the same time in different directions. These basilicas differ from a standard early Christian Basilica, which allowed a single movement along the axis from the only entrance on one short side to the altar on the other short side.[9]

In Stobi, the side entrance from the apse to the south aisle is accented with the position of the church raised above the Roman theatre and the Via Sacra that from here lead to the other 4 churches in the city. Also the Basilica II from Davina Kula, Čučer, near Skopje, shows two entrances in the lateral pastoforia of the altar from the outer eastern wall. The large basilica in Heraclea has one entrance-exit from the northern nave.

A variation of this shows the small church from Konjsko, Golem Grad, Prespa Lake, where there are two entrances to the lateral rooms-annexes on the south and north of the single round apse, from the eastern side and no other entrance or connection with the naos or altar.

Some of the above entrances may be explained with the existing baptisteries within the building or connected to it (Bargala), or nearby martirium or memorial church (Konjuh, Plaošnik) or cemetery church (three basilicas near Stobi, basilica in Orman near Skopje etc.) with important relics wherefrom rites and services continued in the Episcopal or main basilica in the city. In the vicinity of the Episcopal Basilica in Bargala, attached to the wall of the Episcopal residence a vaulted room with a reliquary was found. It may have been the starting point for the Liturgy of the Dead. This reliquary may have contained the remnants of the martyr Musonius.

[9] Brandt 2014, 36.



fig. 1. Reliquary room, Bargala, attached to the wall of the Episcopal residence (Beldedovski 2003, fig.3).

Lateral (square) rooms

Churches with lateral square rooms flanking the central altar apse and with annexes to the narthex (or were these rooms actually *diaconikon* and *prothesis*?) at Orman, near Skopje have an entrance to the nave from the north mid side of the single nave.[10] The rotonda in Konjuh and many other churches have similar disposition of these annexes within the nartex. In the case of St. Nicholas in Oktisi the nartex is doubled and there are 4 annexes.

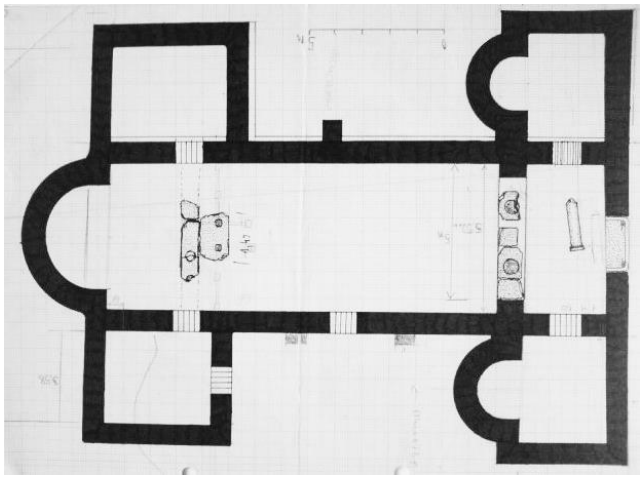


fig. 2. The basilica in Orman near Skopje (Lilchik 2002, 642).

[10] Filipova 2013, 425–430, 428.

So, the clergy had a different way of communicating within the churches and entering and exiting them during the services, depending on the position of the *deaconicon* and *proskomidia*, as well as on the place of the crypts or tombs of important ecclesiastical persons buried within or prior to the entrance to the church.

The existence of side chambers or annexes, in the western part of the churches or rarely attached to the church from the south or north, has rarely been explained. Usually, it is due to no furniture or openings or piscine, tables, floor decoration etc. that will indicate the purpose. Only the cemeterial basilica at Orman, Konjušnica near Skopje has apsidal endings discovered at the eastern side of the western annexes to the narthex. Yet, also such rooms exist at the western part of the rotunda in Konjuh, where also there is an eastern altar space. Square western annexes, or divisions of the narthex with one apse (Studenčišta) or no apse are found frequently (Radolište; Basilica II, Davina Kula, Orman; St. Erasmus, Ohrid, the basilica under St. Sophia, Ohrid; Suvodol).[11]

Double narthexes, narthex with exonarthex

Even though it is not so frequent, this feature enables an accented entrance visible from outside for the onlookers, catechumens, and immediate division of the entering believers to the narthex compartments related to a space functioning as baptistery (or confession). It can also be the main entrance of the clergy related to the procession they lead, while the believers enter from the other side entrances. Examples are found in Bargala, Suvodol, North basilica, Stobi etc.

Kuklion (double apse, corridor ambulatory)[12]

The *kyklion* is related in function to the apsidal crypt.[13] It is found primarily in the provinces of Macedonia and Epirus. Hoddinott uses the term double apse. He gives a possible explanation for its purpose. An unusual feature, however, was the existence of what appears to be a second, internal and concentric apse. Additional rooms were placed both north and south of the narthex.

[11] Lilchik 2002, 645.

[12] An unusual subterranean corridor underneath the sanctuary, probably connected with the cult of the martyrs - https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cemetery_Basilica_(Thessaloniki).

[13] Snively 1995, 1179–1184.

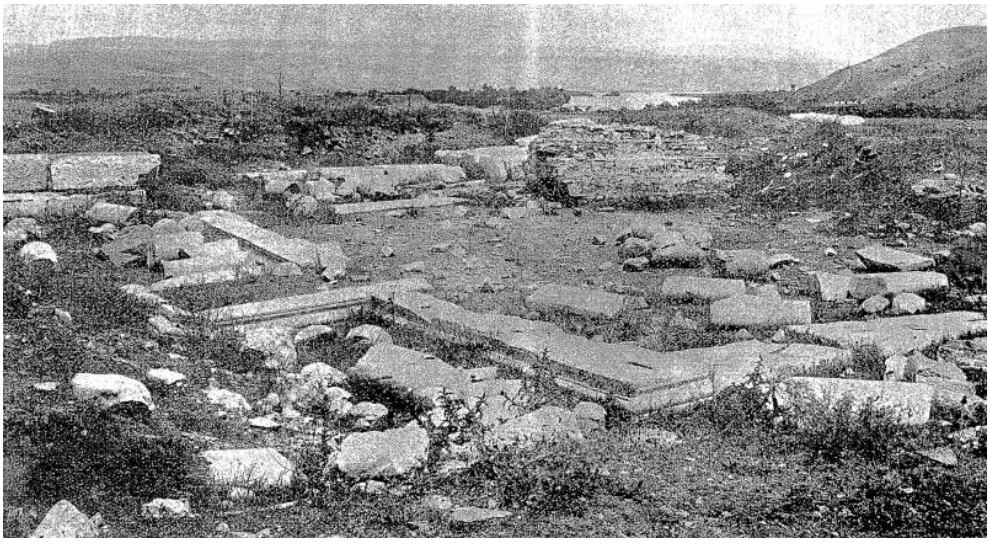


Fig. 3. Episcopal Basilica, Stobi, in 1924 (Saria 1925, fig. 1).

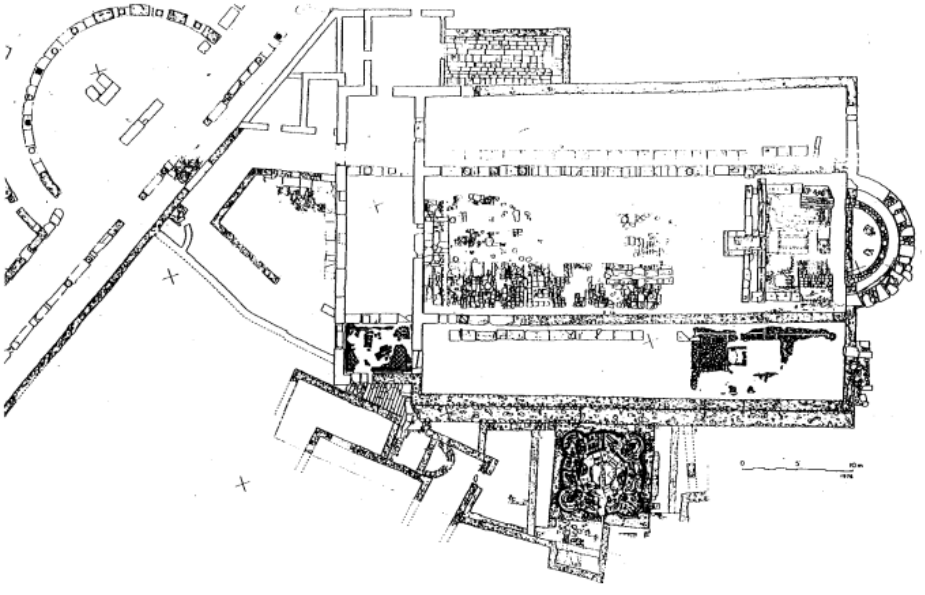


Fig. 4. The plan of the Basilica (Aleksova 1997, fig. 2).

The church was built above and near existing graves. In this case the 'double apse' may have possessed some special significance connected with the church's martirium crypt.[14]

The Episcopal Basilica in Stobi

Stobi' s main church in the fifth century was the large Episcopal Basilica (53 x 29 m) with a city square used as atrium. It is a three aisled Hellenistic type of basilica, with a semicircular, protruding apse, a narthex, galleries above the aisles and probably also over the narthex. West of the narthex was an atrium, with a triangular shape. The narthex, in which two pairs of columns projected the nave colonnades, had a northern doorway opening on to a small square room. Adjoining it, another long, narrow room flanked the north aisle, to which it was connected by a doorway. The stylobates of the nave had two registers, one carrying the columns of the nave and a second, immediately behind and higher, carrying a mullioned screen. An access between the nave and aisles was provided at the western ends.

Egger reported that the floor of the apse was 1.75 m below that of the bema, which was raised 0.24 meters above the nave.

The Stobi Episcopal Basilica crypt may have drawn its inspiration, according to Hoddinott, from St. Demetrius church in Thessalonica.



Fig. 5a. The apse of the Episcopal Basilica in Stobi with *kyklion* (photo: Snežana Filipova).

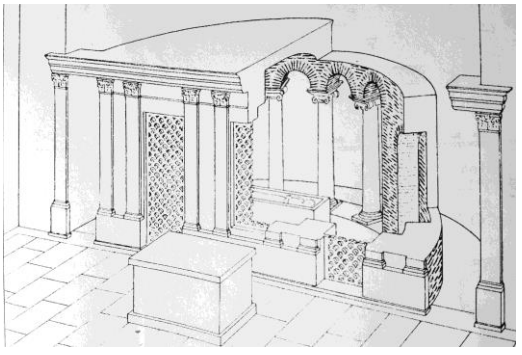


Fig. 5b. Reconstruction of the crypt-confession of Episcopal Basilica in Stobi, 5th C. (Orlandos 1952/1954, 461, fig. 423).

[14] Hoddinott 1963, 163–164.

The bema of the Episcopal Basilica in Stobi seems to follow the model of 'Acheiropoietos' church in Thessalonica. Beginning at the western ends of two opposing banks of presbytery seats, situated close to the chord of the apse, stylobates carried a chancel screen into the eastern end of the nave. The frontal stylobates were molded after the fashion of an Attic base, while for those at the sides old seats taken from the theatre were used.

The Episcopal Basilica had an elaborated eastern end with a two story apsidal space. The inner apse wall was built as part of the church's third main phase, *circa* 450-475 CE. The second level of the apse has not been preserved, but has been hypothetically reconstructed as a stepped, semicircular *synthronos* 1.25 m above the presbyterium floor. In the presbyterium there was a small altar and two lateral *synthronoi*. A corridor was left between the *synthronoi* and the north and south stylobates allowing access to the apse. In the centre of this wall was a colonnade of three pillars, the bases of which were found *in situ*. On the inside, one on either side of the colonnade, were two small niches. In the centre of the chord of this inner 'apse' was a west wall, containing a somewhat wider, central niche and separated from the western ends of the inner 'apse' by two openings that as Eger guessed, led to a reliquary crypt beneath the altar.[15] This corridor could also be accessed from the north and south aisles by gaps in the stylobates. Snively supposed that access between the different floor levels in the presbyterium and the apse could have been facilitated by two short staircases.[16]

A chancel screen with short, central *solea* delineated the presbyterium in the west, but did not run the entire width of the nave, instead it allowed for access to the corridor running behind the *synthronoi*.

In 1977 a vaulted crypt was discovered in the south aisle with the body of a male in his 30es. He was very simply dressed, wearing leather slippers. Wiseman thought he could be Bishop Philip himself or someone who had extraordinary high position in the Christian community of Stobi.[17] It is very possible that during the liturgy of the dead, special respect was paid to this person.

[15] Egger 1929, 42; Hoddinott 1963, 169.
[16] Snively 1981, 19.
[17] Wiseman 1981, 137.

The Cemetery basilica in Stobi

Another basilica with *kyklion* is the cemetery basilica in Stobi. In 1918 a basilica was excavated in the western outskirts of Stobi. Consisting of a nave and two aisles, a semicircular, protruding apse, a narthex and an exonarthex (or an atrium), it is 29 m long, including the apse and narthex, and 17 m wide.

The 1936 plan indicates the nave and aisles were separated by colonnades of five irregularly spaced columns. The presbyterium extended from the apse to the eastern most columns. White marble blocks found *in situ* form the base of a chancel screen running across the width of the nave and forming a short *solea* in the center. It included an altar centered in front of the apse and two lateral *synthronoi* in the northeast and southeast corners. There were two *synthronoi* located in the northeast and southeast corners of the presbyterium. In front of the internal apse wall, and centered between the colonnades, the marble base of the altar has been found.[18] Apart from the chancel screen, there are no additional division screens found. Some time after 450-475, the north wall of the church was built, a second concentric inner wall was inserted into the apse, and the northeast entrance was enclosed by an open porch.

The Cemetery Basilica was built above and designed to preserve preexisting burials. This feature is also found in the Palikura Basilica and the *Extra Muros* Basilica in Stobi. Erecting and carefully constructing a liturgically functional church at a contemporaneous cemetery may indicate a community-led desire for some kind of Christian commemoration of some individuals, not necesserally known saints or martyrs or officially approved.[19]

Bargala, the Episcopal basilica

The Episcopal Basilica in Bargala has been discovered with the start of the excavations in 1966 at the site initiated by Blaga Aleksova.[20] It is built on a raised plateau that dominates the northwestern part of the city. The basilica has three aisles with a semicircular apse on the east side, a narthex and an open exonarthex with a *tribelon*. It is 17.40 m wide and 30.20 m long. Previous research has pointed out two, three, or four building phases that took place from

[18] Snively 1979, 191–192.
[19] Brunasso 2018, 46.
[20] Aleksova & Mango 1971, 265–266.

the second half of the 4th until the 6th century. It has two main phases of construction, second half of the 5th century and second quarter of the 6th century. One of the Ionic capitals from the *tribelon* bears the inscription 'Christ, help Thy slave, the bishop Hermias.'



fig. 6. Bargala area (aerial photo: Hristijan Talevski).

The altar screen has a protruding entrance following the Π shape of the bema. It was fresco painted from the inner western side.[21] As Aleksova informs, when the baptistery was discovered in 1968, in the third room towards west, a stone table, *mensae martyrum*, was found.[22] In the room where the older baptistery piscine was discovered, among the pile of bricks a ceramic plate was found with representation of a lamp hanging under an arch or *ciborium*, with a cross on the upper side. Under the lamp there was a text inscribed that tells us a prayer, God help Musonius. Aleksova thought that was the name of the martyr who was buried at the very place, above which later a baptistery was erected and afterwards a basilica.[23] The exact

[21] Aleksova 1997, 159–161.
[22] Aleksova 1997, 163.
[23] Aleksova 1997, 163.

arch with the same simple decoration was found in the presbytery of the church. A brick with an orans figure was found incorporated in the floor of the south aisle of the Northern Basilica in Stobi. So, not only the remnants of the martyrs but their name and image represented in the floor of the basilicas helped the congregation in their way to Heaven.



Fig. 7. Bargala City basilica (photo: Miško Tutkovski).

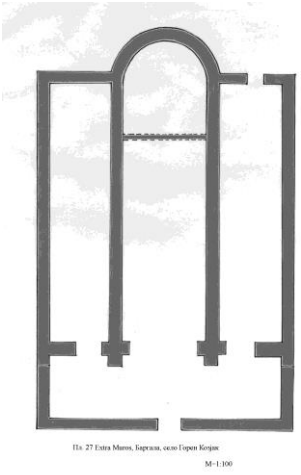


Fig. 8a. The plan of the *Extra muros* basilica in Bargala (photo archive of Trajče Nacev).



Fig. 8b. The *Extra muros* basilica in Bargala (photo archive of Trajče Nacev).



Fig.9. Ceramic tile dedicated to Musonius found in the baptistery western room (Aleksova 1997, 163).



Fig. 10. Brick from the south aisle of the Northern Basilica in Stobi with an orans figure (Aleksova 1997, 332, fig. 31).

The baptistery which looks like a separate aisle or building, with a longitudinal base and a trapezoidal apse on the east side, is positioned on the north with entrances that connect it with the north aisle. It has two construction phases and two baptismal fonts. Recently Tutkovski expressed the opinion that the basilica was older, but it was not founded at all.[24]

Aleksova and Mango stated that the north aisle was reserved for women, but probably in the last phase it was intended – sometimes – for some particular service, maybe baptism. The nave was directly connected to the baptistery and the inner narthex. Through the latter, the aisle was then connected to the first of the two rooms that preceded from the west the sacred pool. This room, accessible from the outside towards the north facade was linked to the narthex on

[24] Tutkovski 2020, 177–194, 179.

south, to the vestibule of the baptistery on the east side and to a room for the offerings of congregation to the west wall. So, the catechumens could enter there from outside, and after the baptism, would enter the church by the north aisle. Thus, the north aisle was probably for women, or for the catechumens; or the catechumens were accommodated on the galleries, suggests Pierano.[25]

The bema shows two building stages: the first one was less extended to west than the second one and detached from the colonnades, which, later became the presbytery barriers. A small passage retrieved in the last side of south colonnade can be related to the first phase: from there the faithful situated in the south aisle can get Eucharist. In the second phase, the *synthronon* has been remodeled, the seats on either side of the altar table were removed since the new semicircular *synthronon* provided ample space for the clergy. The suppression of the Π - shaped platform and the construction of a continuous step on the chord of the apse necessitated the displacement of the altar table farther to the west, and this in turn required a slight expansion of the bema area.[26] The side barriers of the bema correspond to intercolumnar ones, and the communion could be directly administered through the side devices. The open-work transennae (made with ajour technique) were placed in the bema enclosure.

It seems that the division created by side barriers could have some consequence on the decoration. Aleksova and Mango say the lower parts of the walls were decorated with frescos simulating marble panels; while the nave had been ornamented with white marble *synthronon*, slabs, ambo and pavements of the bema.

The out-of-axis placement of the ambo in the Episcopal Basilica in Bargala, according to Sodini, is probably intended to facilitate the procession entry into the bema, but also because the lections and sermons were addressed more to men than women.[27] The pulpit of Bargala is the only accessible from west side, a feature that has no parallels in Macedonia.

[25] Pierano 2012, 65–84, 79.
[26] Aleksova & Mango 1971, 270.
[27] Sodini 1984, 453.

The city basilica in Bargala

The last building discovered in Bargala in 2009, is the Early Christian pseudo basilica located in the center of the city. The small city church in Bargala is one of the pseudo basilicas with shortened naos (its length is almost the same with the width 6.20:5.70 m), where four entrances were discovered, one from the west, two from the east and one from the south. This type of naos is very rare in the Balkans and the examples come from Bulgaria (Melnik, St. Nicholas, Episcopal Basilica, Sandanski, the old Metropolia in Neseber, the basilica in Sliven).[28]

The Basilica with a dome appears in the 6th century and expansion of central plan churches with domes follows. Such an example is the pseudo basilica from Bargala and the rotunda in Konjuh, and probably the policonchal church at Plaošnik.

The altar screen with the columns, and the simple four leg altar table have been preserved with the stylobate almost intact. It has not been published yet and in the proposed reconstruction of the church there is only a 'Π' form entrance and plates with no decoration and with no high columns. During my visit in 2014, I have seen several plates with the same decoration as those used in the Episcopal basilica, and supposed they were reused in the city church after the Episcopal basilica stopped to function. At the photo during the discovery, a fragmented plate with a peacock tail is visible. The columns between the plates were made of one piece, so there were no more capitals used for the screen but high columns with indication of a capital at the top. Even the floral decoration with volutes from the capital goes down on the upper part of what used to be the top of the column at one of the fragmented pieces. Another column, possibly the one from the entrance to the altar has several inscribed rings that indicate curtains have been used. So this altar screen had partially covered openings during some parts of the liturgy.

The eastern part of the *Extra muros* basilica in Bargala has been discovered in 1984, and again in 2003 some diggings were made, while in 2007 almost the whole object has been revealed. It has a presbytery 6.50 m long. It is a three nave basilica that had a necropolis on its western side, and later a narthex was added. No traces of the stylobate of the altar screen were found, and the initial stylobates between the nave and the aisles have been partially preserved. In the nave

[28] Natsev & Frkov 2009, 157-172.

fragments of the screen column and two fragmented slabs and ajour transenae were found, dislocated. What Beldedovski thought is an altar screen is actually a parapet slab, and they are decorated with fish scales filed with crosses and three petalled palmettes or only palmettes. The framing ribbon is the same used at the slabs of the Episcopal basilica in Bargala. The ajour *transennae*, are decorated with crosses put into medallions made by intertwined ribbons (reconstructed dimensions 1.02 x 0.81 m).[29] They resemble the Constantinopolitan ajour *transennae* from Ravena's San Vitale. It is interesting to see there is an 1 m wide entrance to the southern aisle from the east, with a stair that facilitates it.



Fig. 11. The pseudo basilica in Bargala (photo archive of Trajče Nacev).



Fig. 12. The altar of the pseudo basilica in Bargala (photo archive of Trajče Nacev).

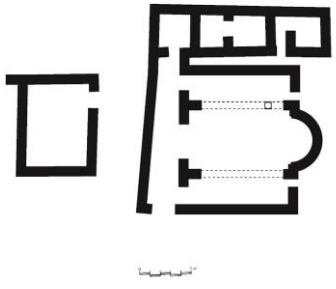


Fig. 13. The plan of the pseudo basilica in Bargala (drown: Ljibica Kljonkova).

[29] Beldedovski 2009, 193–202.



Fig. 14a. An altar column of the pseudo basilica in Bargala (photo: Snežana Filipova).



Fig. 14b. An altar column of the pseudo basilica in Bargala (photo: Snežana Filipova).



Fig. 15. *Extra muros* basilica in Heraclea (aerial view, archive of NI Institut and Museum Bitola).

Heraclea, the Large Basilica

The excavations which started shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War uncovered parts of two churches within the walls of the citadel. The larger was a single-apse elongated three aisled

basilica built in the 5th century, with a nave and two aisles that had been built over the foundations of an earlier basilica built in the 4th or early 5th century, and this one was constructed over the Roman forum. It was of considerable size: 47.20 m long and 23 m wide. The apse was supported by three buttresses from outside. It has a porch, and a narthex. The nave is more than 9 m. In the apse marble seats from the theatre were built in as *spolia*. The excavations continued from 1959-1974. A chapel with the extension of the porch and not defined purpose has been attached to the north of the narthex.

Stylobates carrying colonnades had separated the nave from the aisles, damaged to a large extend. Thus the position of the columns was impossible to be determined. Steps descended from a doorway at the east end of the north aisle into a room which inscribed the apse on its northern side and from which a stylobate carrying the marble bases of columns ran in a southerly direction in front of the apse, presumably to a similar room inscribing the south side of the apse.

The small basilica A is considerably smaller than the large one and is positioned on the south east of it. It is three aisled, with narthex and a porch opened to the apse of the Large basilica. It is dated in the end of the 5th century by Medić and the first half of the 6th century by Lilčić, and built over an older building. The stylobates of the chancel screen and its central opening were uncovered and the floor, which was composed of small black and grey marble slabs arranged in simple geometrical patterns, had also survived. Here were also found sculptured chancel slabs, pillars and capitals of various dates that were reconstructed and placed in situ. According to the size, it may have been an oratorium-chapel for the bishops of Heraclea. In the porch and inside the basilica two marble fragments were found that Medić states belonged to sigma *mensae martirium*.[30] These fragments together with an old structure of an *oratorium* in the first phase of construction makes it an old martirium. Later on the western room attached to it became a baptistery and the eastern part was intended for a martirium.[31]

[30] Čanak Medić 1965, 35–65.
[31] Aleksova 1997, 241.

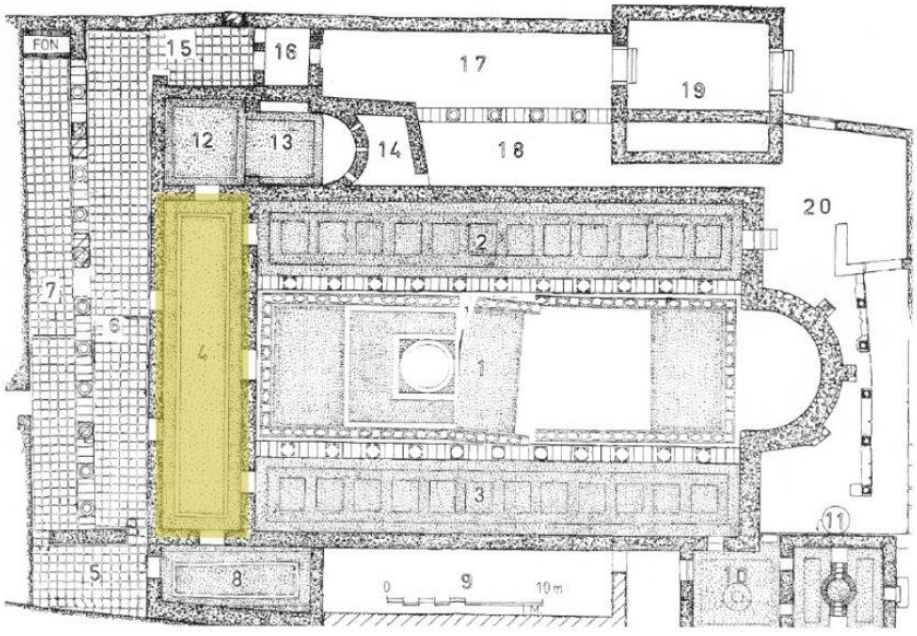


Fig. 16. The plan of the large basilica in Heraclea (https://marh.mk/herakleja-linkestis/)(last consulted on 2.1.2024).

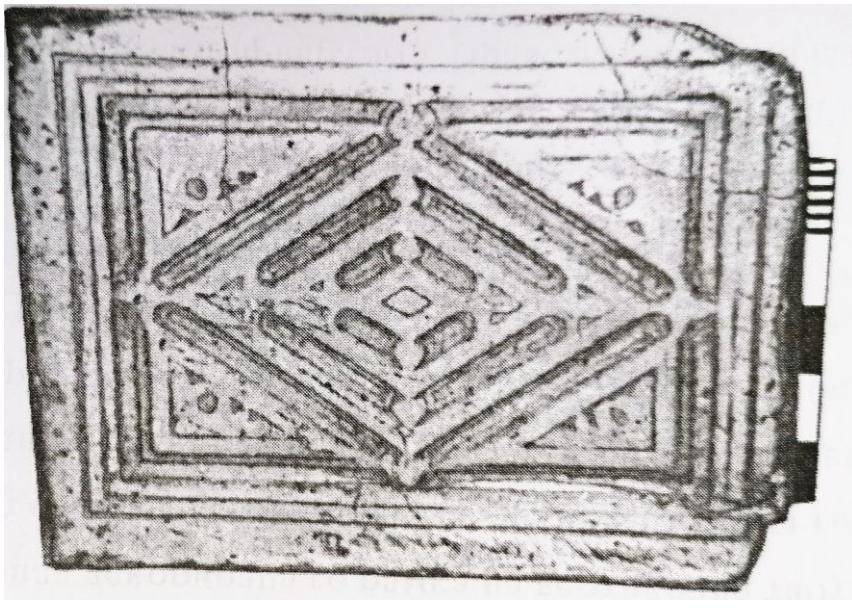
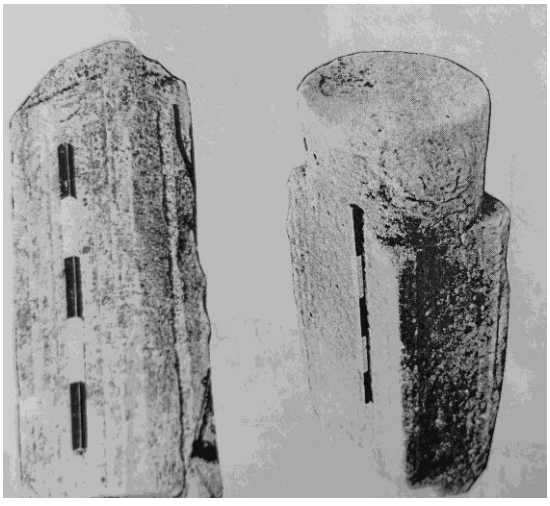


Fig. 17. A plate found in Heraclea area (Lilchik 2002, 746, fig. 31).



Figs. 18. Columns scattered in Heraclea area (Lilchik 2002, 744, fig. 28-30).

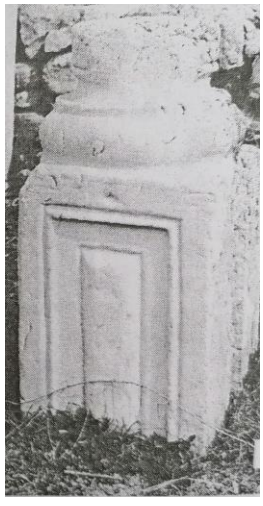
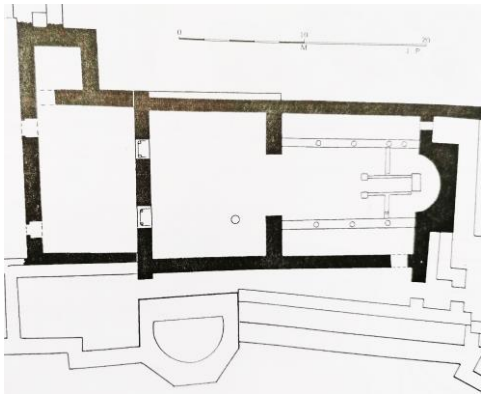


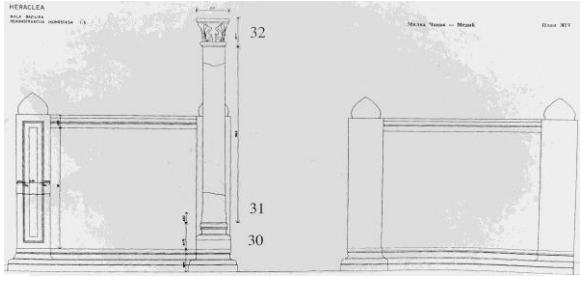
Fig. 19. Columns scattered in Heraclea area (Lilchik 2002, 746, fig. 31).



a



b



c

Fig. 20 a,b,c. The small basilica A, Heraclea (photo: Snežana Filipova, drawing of the plan: J. Rospendovski; drawing of the altar screen: Medić 1965, Plan XIV).

Konjuh village churches (county of Kratovo)

The Rotunda stood in the south of the city. The church belongs to the centrally planned building incorporated within a trapesoidal structure. The central space is surrounded by a vaulted ambulatory terminated in eastern lateral compartments, separated from it on both sides by narrowed passages, which suggested their presbyterial character. From the narthex encompassed by lateral chambers, the church was entered via a tribelon entrance. There were two more entrances near the eastern ends of the north and south walls. It had a central dome held by a mighty menoa found in the city.

Local villagers excavated it in 1919, and in 1938 Svetozar Radojčić documented the blind corridor in the apse. He derived a line of similarities with the churches in Kisamos, Mir'ayé and Fal'ul in Syria,[32] and the presbytery of H. Tytos at Gortyna in Crete.[33] One of Radojčić's photos documents a wall that closed the west side of the apse with a staircase in the middle, while the entrance to an annular blind corridor is visible at the south end. The corridor in the rotunda was blind, closed at the north end. Similarities in the apsidal arrangements of the two churches in Konjuh include the small rectangular spaces at the ends of the corridor, the latter feature formed in both churches because the construction in the apse extends to the west beyond the ends of the apsidal wall. The *solea* is located almost centrally under the dome, indicating that the person beneath is a representative of the Pantocrator. Djidrova thinks there are no Syrian influences in the architecture of the church, but Constantinopolitan ones.[34]

The martyrial character of the Konjuh rotunda is suggested due to the inscription *domatrirs* engraved on a capital put above one of the two columns of the *tribelon* entrance, an abbreviation that may stand for domus martyris.[35]

[32] Radojčić 1953, 148–167, fig. 12, and for the Syrian analogies figs. 24A, 25, 26. He stated its martyrial character (Radojčić 1953, 155), accepted also by Krautheimer 1979, 288. Later Snively 2002, 305, expresses the insufficient evidence it was a martirium.

[33] Krautheimer 1979, 288, 268, fig. 214.

[34] Djidrova 2007, 149–178. She thinks this is because of the entrance from the east. 'The previous existence of entrances near the eastern ends of the north and south walls argument against any suggestion of assumed Syriac origin of the original plan, and ascribe it rather to the Constantinopolitan group of churches accessible from the east' (Djidrova 2007, 153).

[35] Radojčić 1957, 160; Filipova 2005.

The Large (Episcopal?) Basilica, Konjuh

After a pilot project in 1998, systematic excavations began in 2000 and are continuing, revealing a large basilica, possibly Episcopal one, and a nearby residential complex. It is three-aisle basilica, c. 33 m in length from apse through narthex plus rooms west of the narthex. The total width of nave and aisles is almost 15 m. It is an unusual building due to several characteristics: the annular corridor that communicated with a tomb or crypt under the apse; the long presbyterium taking up nearly a third of the length of the nave; two ambos, a small one in the presbyterium and a larger one at the south side of the nave; the horseshoe-shaped enclosure on the south side of the nave, just west of the ambo; and the colonnades, which included a pier beside the presbyterium and a c. 1.50 m high barrier between lateral aisles and a nave. These features, as Snively suggests, indicate that more was happening ecclesiastically in the southeast corner of Dardania in the 6th century than previously imagined.

The presbyterium of the basilica at Konjuh is quite large and stands out among the churches in Dardania. The overall width is almost 15 m, the side aisles are narrow and the presbyterium is 7 m. The length of the nave is ca. 24 m, of which the presbyterium occupies about a third. Approximately 4 m west of the *anta* on either side of the church stands the base of a built pier, ca. 2 m further west a column base marks the beginning of a colonnade. A gap 0.70 m wide between the west end of the lateral *synthrona* and the chancel screen base on both north and south sides enable access to the presbyterium from the side aisles, up to the east of the piers.

In the first phase of the church, a stone and mortar construction was built, creating a ca. 0.70 m wide corridor, a *kyklion*, between the apse wall and the inner construction. This construction extends ca. 0.70 m to the west beyond the ends of the apsidal wall. At the middle of the west face of the construction, two large stone blocks and probably a third one form steps that give access from the presbyterium into the construction in the apse. A tomb or a crypt of rectangular shape (2.10 x 0.80 x 0.90 m high), is located within the construction in the apse toward its east side, opening into the corridor. A slab or slabs covered the crypt. Lateral *synthrona* or clergy benches constructed of stone blocks demarcate the north and south sides of the presbyterium, they belonged to a second phase or a renovation when the corridor had ceased to function. In both Konjuh buildings, steps centered at the front of the construction in the apse

led up into the apsidal space to the throne of the presiding clergyman.[36]

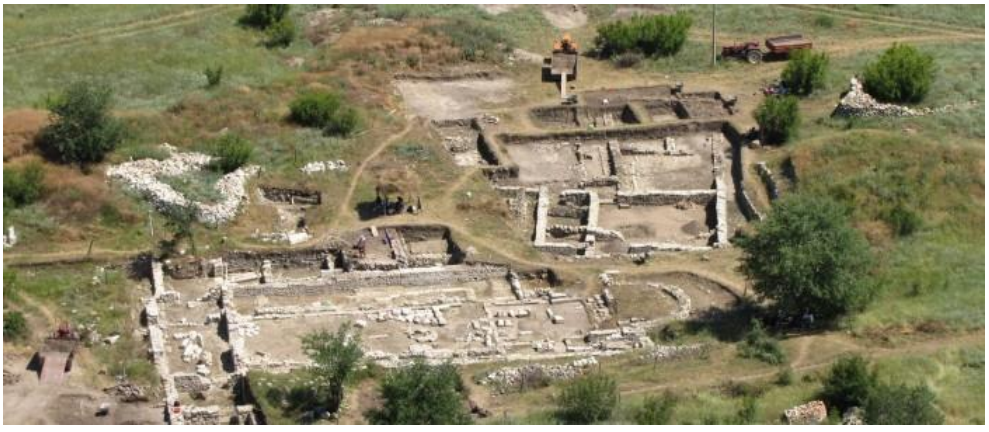


Fig. 21a. Konjuh, the Large Basilica (https://cdn.kumanovonews.mk/content/mali_novi/vesti/kultura/2013/golemo-gradiste.jpg)(last consulted on 2.1.2024).



Fig. 21b. Konjuh, the Large Basilica (Snively no year, fig. 12).

[36] Snively 2009, Golemo Gradište at Konjuh: The Basilica, 2009, in: https://www.doaks.org/research/byzantine/project-grants/snively-2009-2010 (retrieved on 10.11.2021).

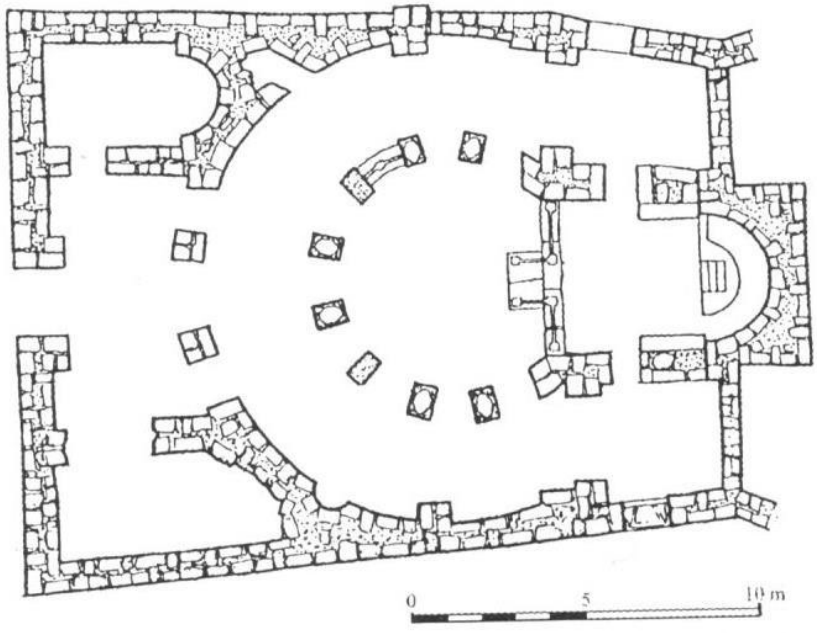


Fig. 22a. The rotunda in Konjuh (https://mk.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/ (last consulted on 2.1.2024).



Fig. 22b. The rotunda in Konjuh (photo archive: Snežana Filipova).

Some of the decorated architectural fragments are of marble, but the relief panels of the ambo are cut from local stone. As for the altar slabs, there are very few preserved with simple crosses under an arch. There were more. In the early 1970s, Ivan Mikulčić studied the topography of the site at Konjuh. He mentioned the remains of a large basilica in the central part of the northern terrace, but pointed out that the villagers had dug out and removed the greater part of the architectural fragments, in particular a number of screen slabs decorated with crosses.

Semicircular arches from the presbyteria

There are several arches above the entrance to the presbyterium preserved, from Bargala, Krivi Dol and Lukovica-Makedonska Kamenica. Lukovica arch shows six petalled rosette, crosses, and begins with small imitation of columns.

Bargala examples are decorated with geometrical motives, chevron, and above it small rectangular that follow the line of the arch. This decoration reminds of the Roman cornices. The most interesting arch is the Krivi Dol one with small columns with side flutes, at both ends, and cantharoses from which vine leaves sprout, and a fragmented figure dressed in a short tunica above one of the columns.[37]

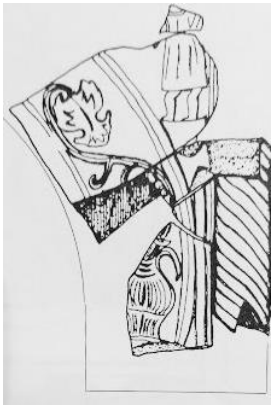


Fig. 23a. A fragment of the arch from the presbytery of the basilica at Krivi Dol, Štip (Lilchik 2002, 1004, fig. 22).

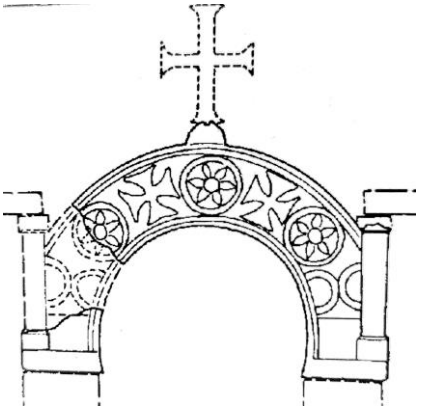


Fig. 23b. The arch from the presbytery of the basilica in Lukovica, Begov Dab (Mikulčić 1977, T I-IV).

[37] Lilchik 2002, 1004, fig. 22–24.

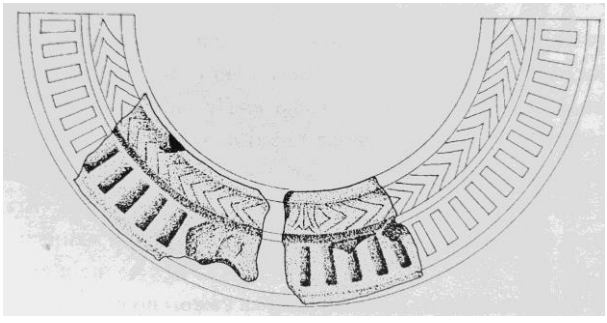


Fig. 23c. A fragment of the arch from the presbytery of the Episcopal Basilica in Bargala (Filipova 1997, T. CX, fig. 1).

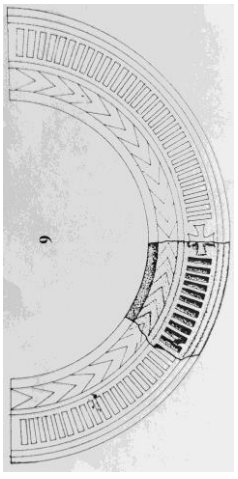


Fig. 23d. A fragment of the arch above the entrance to the *solea* of the Episcopal Basilica in Bargala (Aleksova 1989, 239, fig. 42).



Fig. 23f. Fragments from the arches of the Episcopal Basilica in Bargala (photo archive of Snežana Filipova).

The partition inside the Episcopal Basilica in Bargala was made by using plates placed between the two rows of seven columns, each one dividing the nave from the aisles. The slabs are decorated only by Latin crosses combined with a Ro letter. Every pair of slabs was

connected by a square post embedded on a massive stone support substituting the stylobate. It is not clear if they were intended to allow the passage of clergy or faithful during celebrations, and there are also some visible interruptions corresponding to lacunas in the floor. The presence of passages in the east end of basilicas is related to a particular kind of bema, assuming the 'Π' shape. Here the two doors are situated on the sides of bema chancel, each one corresponding to the openings in the intercolumnar barriers and is also found at the Episcopal Basilica in Stobi.

The altar screen

As for the chancel arrangements, recent research seems to place their earliest known phase in the fourth century.[38] There are examples of chancel arrangements which do not only create a space for the choir – the schola – but which also continue in a kind of corridor half-way down the church towards the entrance. Mathews thinks that may reflect 'the external shape of the ritual of the Mass during this period'. He also stresses that the longitudinal shape of the Christian Basilica emphasizes the processional nature of the liturgy, and that 'the congregation area is chiefly in the aisles'. He concluded that the offertory and communion took place in the aisles with the help of 'wing barriers', chancels reaching out in the aisles.[39]

The only reconstructed altar screen so far is the one of the Basilica A, in Heraclea, visible in situ, and the screen from the Suvodol basilica on display in the Archaeological Museum of N. Macedonia.

The elements of the altar screen from the new city basilica from Bargala discovered in 2009, and Krivi Dol discovered in 1996, and completely in 2016, are well preserved but no reconstruction was made until today.

On the chancel slab from Suvodol, Bitola, the simple cross is on the back side and a central lozenge with enclosed stylized acanthus leaves on the front one, while 4 different motifs: fish (dolphin?), pomegranate, rosette and abstract floral ornament in the angles appear on the front.[40] The protruding frontal slabs are decorated with fish scales and so are the last plates further most in the altar. The rest of the plates are decorated with a central circle with a Christogram

[38] Brandt 2014, 45.
[39] Brandt 2014, 47.
[40] Mesesnel 1932, 22–44, fig. 8.

and two side crosses connected to the circle with bends that make a loom under the circle. This same motif is visible on the plates of the screen of the Small Basilica in Heraclea, only the mid motif is an empty wreath. There also central lozenges are employed, but one of it is very much damaged. The inner side of the plates is decorated with simple Latin crosses enclosed in a circle.

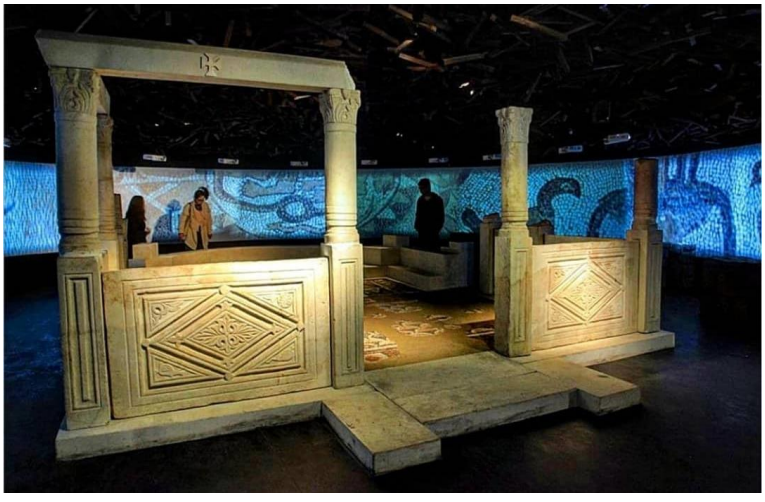


fig.24a. Suvodol, near Bitola (photo archive of Snežana Filipova).

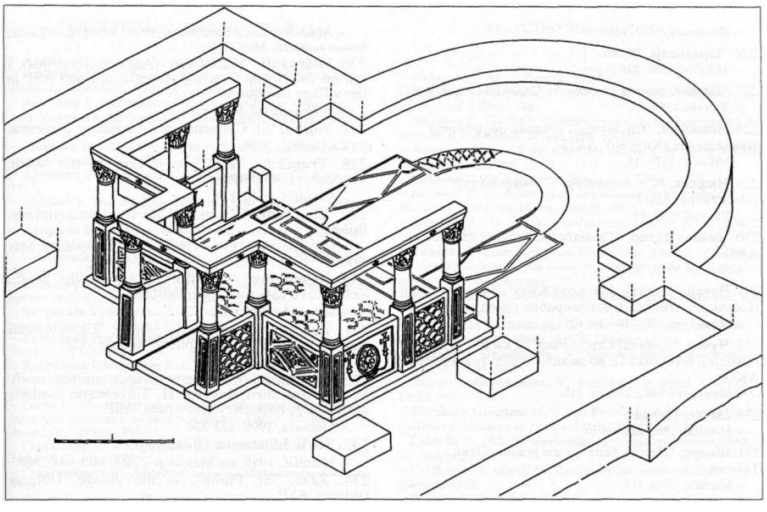


fig. 24b. Reconstruction of the presbytery at Suvodol, near Bitola (Filipova 1997, T. III).



fig. 25. Heraclea, Small basilica altar screen (https://macedonia-timeless.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/heraclea-3.jpg) (last consulted on 2.1.2024).

In the Episcopal Basilica in Stobi altar screen slabs have 1.6 m length, which makes them the longest. The lateral chancel slabs had massive frames decorated on both sides with acanthus, vine, ivy and other carved ornamentation, while those placed in front were decorated with open work. Holding these slabs were short, square, mullion-type pillars. They have the most elaborated frame with spiral branches, a motif of scissors, chevron, ivy leaves, pearls and beads, and other stylized flowers and leaves. Inside the open work slabs there are pearls, loops, central medallions, crosses, palmettes and animals.

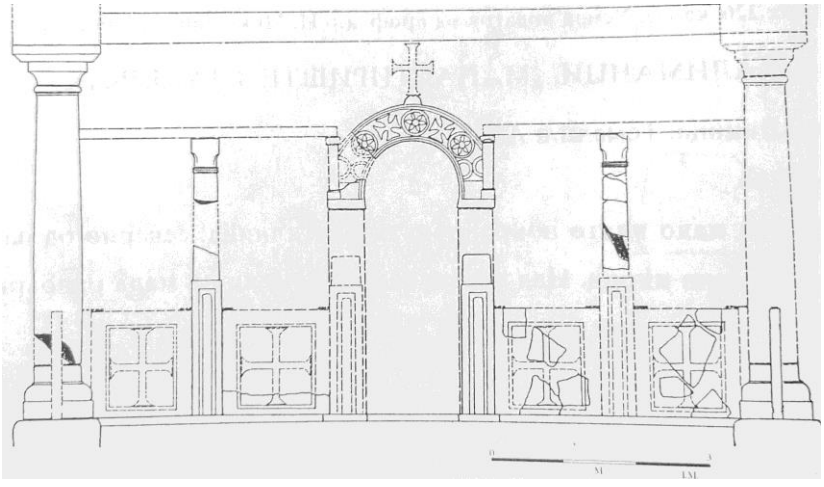


fig. 26. Reconstruction of the altar screen of the basilica at Lukovica (Filipova 1997, T. II).



Fig. 27a. Stobi, Episcopal Basilica, altar slabs in the Belgrade National Museum (Stojković 1957, fig. 173).



Fig. 27b. Stobi, Episcopal Basilica, altar slabs in the Belgrade National Museum (Stojković 1957, fig. 174).



Fig. 28a. Large Basilica, Konjuh, altar slabs(?)(photo archive of Carolyn Snively).



Fig. 28b. Large Basilica, Konjuh, altar slabs(?) (photo archive of Carolyn Snively).

The most skillfully made are the screen plates between the aisles, and the altar screen of the Episcopal Basilica in Stobi, and then the altar screen from the Small Basilica in Heraclea. The most rustical decoration shows the altar plates from the Palikura Basilica and they are also far from any classical model. This kind of cross combined with leaves has no parallels.

In the mid of the apse of the Episcopal Basilica in Bargala, behind the altar table that had five legs, was the tronos of the bishop, and aside were the seats of the clergy. One table leg has been preserved, decorated with a branch of ivy leaves.[41]

[41] Filipova 1997, 32, T XV, fig. 3.

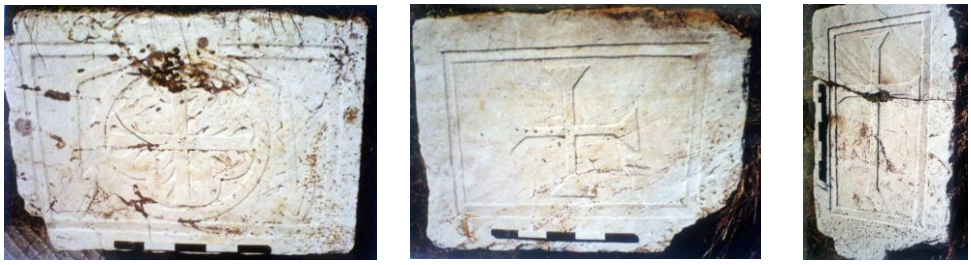


Fig. 29a, b, c. Stobi, Palikura Basilica altar slabs (photo archive of Snežana Filipova).

The altar screen plate found next to the altar table has been divided into three fields, framed by a cord motif (1.07 m x 0.52 m x 0.09 m, probably originally 1.60 x 0.80 m). The central part has a cross inscribed in a stylized wreath - that is a circle decorated with a cord motif. The side fields have two birds flanking a cantharos, while two trees frame the composition. The drawing is rather stylized and two dimensional.[42]

There is a fragmented chancel? screen slab, probably from the first phase preserved up to 0.35 x 0.06 x 0.17 m. A similar motif has been preserved in the altar screen of the new city basilica discovered in 2008/2009. There is a central circle and three inside inscribed rectangles with the central Malta type of cross. The central rectangle is presented straight, while the other two are inclined 90 degrees. The circle has 4 loops in the corners that inscribe the same cross as the one in the centre. Between the two circles on the left and the right side there is a flower bud.[43] The same but smaller buds decorate the outer frame of the inclined rectangle. The plate found in the new basilica is similar to this fragment, only there are no buds and there are two rectangles.

In the second or last phase the Π shape altar screen has been put down. A new synthronos was erected along the apse wall and the altar table was moved to the west. The presbytery was enlarged towards the west, while on the north and south the altar screen ended at the main colonnade.[44] Mango and Aleksova suggested the original shape of the bema was not conforming to the changing liturgical requirements and was thus modified.[45]

[42] Filipova 1997, 32.
[43] Filipova 1997, T XIV, fig. 1.a; 1.b; 1.c.
[44] Aleksova 1989, 44.
[45] Aleksova & Mango 1971, 270.



Fig. 30a. An altar slab, city basilica, Bargala (photo archive of Snežana Filipova).



Fig 30b. An altar slab, Krivi Dol, Štip (from the archive of Viktor Lilčić, published with his consent in Filipova 1997, T CXX, fig. 1).



Fig. 30c. An altar slab, Krivi Dol, Štip (from the archive of Viktor Lilčić, published with his consent in Filipova 1997, T CXX, fig. 2, 1997).

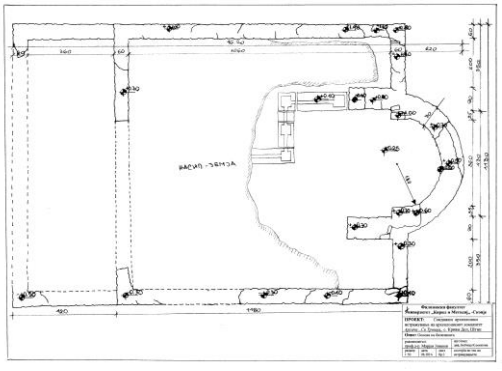


Fig. 31b. Layout of the basilica in Krivi Dol, Argači near Štip (drown: Ljubica Kljonkova).

The 5 altar screen slabs from the three aisled basilica (16 x 11 m) in Krivi Dol are the only ones decorated with doves standing on the horizontal beam of the dominant central cross (dimensions: 0.85 x 0.77 x 0.10 m), one cleaning its feathers. Some parts of the basilica were discovered in 1996, and it has been almost completely opened in 2016, but the results are not yet published. The plates show a geometrical motif of a six-petal rosette enclosed in a circle, and *crux*

gematta, similar to the one represented on the Konjuh impost capital.[46]

Altar columns (templon posts)

The columns that support the plates of the altar screen are without decoration in the earlier churches (Stobi, Bargala, Heraclea), while the 6th century ones show rich decoration. The one from Manastirište, Nebregovo basilica near Prilep has a cross with slightly widened ends and the Konjuh and Krivi Dol columns, have various vegetative motifs.[47] In the 6oes when the excavations at Bargala began, a rectangular chancel post was found near the monumental city gate (0.26 x 0.25 x 0.91 m). On the one side a cross surmounts spirally fluted ionic column. On the other side, there are two bands of chevron ornament and a cross in between, an imitation of real columns with zig-zag flutes and a similarly decorated column was actually found at the site! The position of the ornament with the ionic capital must have been seen from a higher standing point than the other side, which makes it the back side. It may have belonged to the Episcopal church.



Fig. 32a. Columns from the Large Basilica in Konjuh (photo archive of Carolyn Snively).



Fig. 32b. Columns from the Large Basilica in Konjuh (photo archive of Carolyn Snively).

The last phase of development of chancel columns shows the integration of the column and the capital. Such are the columns from the Palikura basilica, the City basilica in Bargala, etc. The columns from Konjuh rotunda have medallions made of vine branches with grapes and small birds inside. The large basilica from Konjuh has also branches executed analogues to the Krivi Dol ones. Still the latter are very rich in various motifs of flowers and leaves that sprout from a sinusoidal branch. The stylized lotus leaves on one of the columns from Krivi Dol has no parallels.

[46] Lilchik 2002, 1000–1007, figs. 1-5.
[47] Filipova 1997, T XXXV, fig. 6.



Fig. 33. A column from the Large Basilica in Konjuh (photo archive of Carolyn Snively).

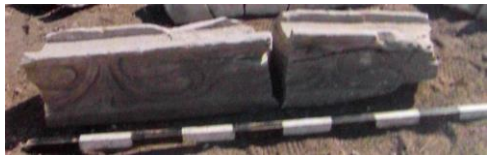


Fig. 34. A column from the Large Basilica in Konjuh (photo archive of Carolyn Snively).

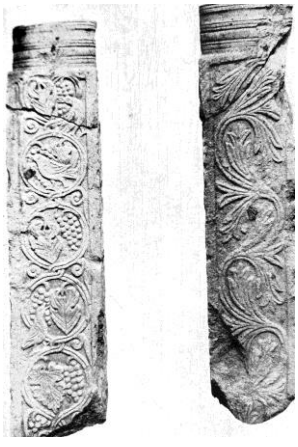


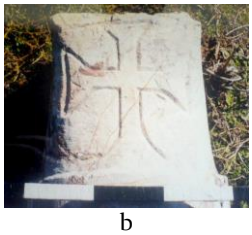
Fig. 35. Columns from the rotunda in Konjuh (Stojković 1957, fig. 151).



Fig. 36. Columns from the basilica in Krivi Dol, Štip, on display in front of the Museum and Gallery Štip (photo archive of Snežana Filipova).



a



b



c



d



e

Fig. 37 a,b,c,d,e. The upper part of the altar columns, Palikura Basilica (photo archive of Snežana Filipova).

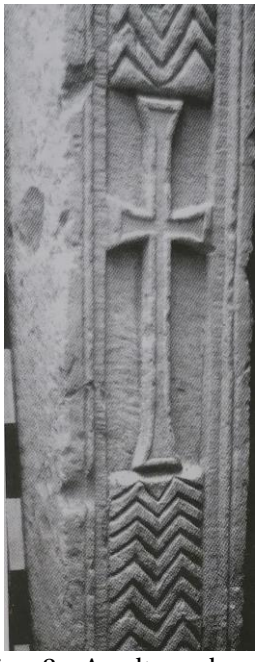


Fig. 38a. An altar column, Bargala (found at the western part of the city (Filipova 1997, T XXXIV, fig. 3a).



Fig. 38b. An altar column, Bargala (found at the western part of the city (Filipova 1997, T XXXIV, fig. 3b).



fig. 39a,b. Fragments of columns found in 1982 bearing the same decoration that might have been used as part of the same ensemble (photo: Snežana Filipova).

Side barriers

Intercolumnar screens had usually two passages frequently placed at both east and west end of each stylobate, in order to permit some movements and participation of the faithful to the Eucharist. Side barriers were common features in Macedonian basilicas and may

reach 1.50 m height, preventing the vision through the aisles (at Thessalonica (Acheiropoietos), Philippi (basilicas A and C), in the Episcopal and Cemeterial basilica at Stobi, in the three churches of Bargala and maybe in M. Kamenica and Konjuh. There is a reduced use of these elements in today's R.N. Macedonia; except for Stobi, probably due to the decreased dimensions of local basilicas.



Fig. 40,a,b. Stobi, Episcopal Basilica side barriers (https://www.google.com (last consulted on 2.1.2024).

All the side barriers found so far bear as a dominant motif the cross or Christogram enclosed in a circle, with ivy branches spreading to the flanking crosses or ends of the plate; or a cross under an arch, or a simple Latin cross.

The position and the function of several more plates coming from the Episcopal basilica in Bargala and the Extra Muros basilica in Bargala are not clear.[48] They are very well executed in andesitic stone, showing geometrical motifs of circles with four buds inscribed making a cross form, or fish scales filled with small crosses and a five-leaf palmette. The cord motif appears as a common framing device.

Another plate was discovered in the consignatorium of the small church or chapel attached to the south wall of the Episcopal Basilica when it ceased to function.[49] It contains a cross under an arch, above which an astragal motif is visible. The wide frame is decorated with very shallow execution of wine leaves and grapes. This kind of motif is very popular in several mediums in the 6th century. It could be the frontal plate of the altar table, like those in the Orthodox Baptistery in Ravena or in St. Eufrasius in Poreč.

[48] Filipova 1997, T XVIII, 6; T XIX.
[49] Filipova 1997, T XII, 1.



Fig. 41a. Plate from the consignatorium of the small church attached to the Episcopal Basilica in Bargala (photo archive of Snežana Filipova).



fig. 41b. Orthodox Baptistery in Ravenna altar (https://s3.us-east-2.wasabisys.com/media-0aj/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/02143919/05_7176-copy-2.jpg) (last consulted on 2.1.2024).



fig. 41c. St. Euphrasius in Poreč altar (https://api.europeana.eu/thumbnail/v2/url.json?uri=https%3A%2F%2Fcmc.byzart.eu%2Ffiles%2Foriginal%2Funibo%2Funibo_zeri_foundation%2F003_009_001520_01.jpg&type=IMAGE) (last consulted on 2.1.2024).

It is not clear what was the function of the large slab with a saint under an arch holding a rotulus found in the Episcopal Basilica in Bargala (1 x 0.95 x 0.20 m). He is middle-aged, with a short beard and a short hair that curls behind his neck. I have seen it in 1996 in the altar space of the Episcopal Basilica. During my last visit in 2014, the head of the figure was missing. It could be an altar plate from the protruding side of the 'Π' entrance, since it cannot be a side barrier. The back side is flat. A fragment of another similarly represented figure made of the same local stone can be seen in front of the Museum in Štip. Also at the site, I have located a fragment of another figure where only the hand is visible. How come so important findings have not been reported is not possible to comprehend. [50] So there are at least two figures of saints, evangelists (?) under an arch, dressed as philosophers. The only nearby analogy of large saint figures presented on the altar screens comes from Sandanski.[51]



Fig. 42 a,b,c. Saint under arch, holding a rotulus, Episcopal Basilica at Bargala (Filipova 1997, T CXXIV, fig. 2, and the photo archive of Snežana Filipova).

The Large Basilica with an atrium from Scupi unfortunately has only a fragment of the small Corinthian capital (0.23 x 0.22 x 0.23 cm) dated to the 6th century, but it should be late 5th century because the acanthus leaves are 'gone with the wind' model, the spherical top of the mullion, and a fragment of a marble pier that holds the upper part of the screen with an annulus that indicates the pier and the capital were made in one piece of stone (22.50 cm high, square base 11.50 x 11.50 cm). Also a very small piece of the marble screen plate (17.30 x

[50] Filipova 1997, 102.
[51] Petrova 2020, 189–222.

18.60 x 5.70 cm) has been found, yet no reconstruction of the altar screen has been made. No bema exists, the apse is trapezoidal.[52]



Fig. 43. A fragment from a saint, Bargala (photo archive of Snežana Filipova).



Fig. 44. A fragment from a saint, Bargala (photo archive of Snežana Filipova).



Fig. 45. Column from the tribelon of the Large Basilica in Scupi (Ončevska -Trajkovska 2009, fig. 15).

The synthronon

For the seats of the clergy in the space of the altar apses there are several possibilities, yet the most luxurious one in the late 4th and in the next two centuries is the installation of a smaller altar apse or Greek letter 'Π' form platform. Above this base the cathedra or the synthronos is erected, and seats on both south and north side are put.

In the first stage of the altar arrangement, the Episcopal Basilica in Bargala shows a flight of stairs that leads to a platform, where the

[52] Onchevska & Jovanova 2018, 374–376.

bishop stayed; the west wall of this structure was plastered and frescoed imitating the veined marble. The platform was flanked on the north and south side by two seats. These were removed later together with the podium. The second arrangement of the *synthronon* probably was higher than the first one. The entrance to the bema had a westward projection, and probably two columns supported the arch. These trends can be found also in Greek and Constantinopolitan areas.

The Episcopal Basilica in the Stobi altar apsidal space has probably been adapted to the remains of constructions below, an *oratorium* or *martirium*. In the mid is marble plate as a base from the altar table. A similar conception has the *synthrona* of the funeral basilicas in Stobi, and St. Erasmo near Ohrid, as well as the funeral basilica in Scupi. Only a fragment of a plate with fish scales has been found, not *in situ* in the old Episcopal Basilica.

Lateral *synthrona* or clergy benches constructed of stone blocks demarcate the north and south sides of the presbyterium in the Large Basilica in Konjuh. The better preserved southern one at its east end has three steps remained in situ, and it blocked the entrance to the apsidal corridor; a reused block, perhaps supporting a small column, stood in the space between the *synthronon* and the corridor. The *synthrona* belonged to a second phase or a renovation when the kuklion had ceased to function. In both Konjuh buildings, steps centered at the front of the construction in the apse led up into the apsidal space to the throne of the presiding clergyman.[53]

The platform for the altar table in Palikura is made of bricks and plastered with horosan, raised above the floor by a single stair.

According to Aleksova, the *synthronos* in the cemetery basilicas in Palikura, Scupi and St. Erasmo near Ohrid were identical or similar in the concept of construction.[54]

[53] Snively 2009.

[54] Aleksova 1997, 241.



Fig. 46. The south synthronos of the large basilica in Konjuh (Snively no year, fig. 6).

The ambo

There are only 4 churches with preserved ambos found so far (Bargala, Stobi, and 2 in Konjuh). Only the Stobi example shows an approach from both sides. The large ambo from the new large basilica in Konjuh has no elements preserved so that we can estimate if it had one or two flights of stairs to approach the platform, but the small one can only have one side approach since it is positioned immediately next to the altar screen, from the eastern side. Only the ambo from Bargala has western position of the stairs, which made Mango and Aleksova think the aisle was more approachable to the female believers in the southern aisle.

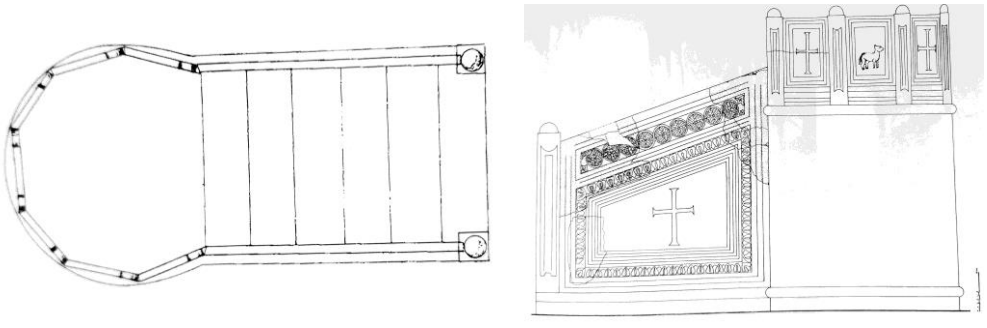


Fig. 47a, b. Layout of the ambo, Episcopal Basilica, Bargala (Aleksova 1989, no. 80, with additions by Snežana Filipova in Filipova T VII, fig. 1).

The decoration of the rotunda in the Konjuh ambo is divided into square fields filled with animals, a camel and a dog attacking a deer framed by sinusoidal branches, two of which are not preserved

and two have three leaf palmettes inside instead of animals. The small ambo from the large basilica in Konjuh shows a large peacock.

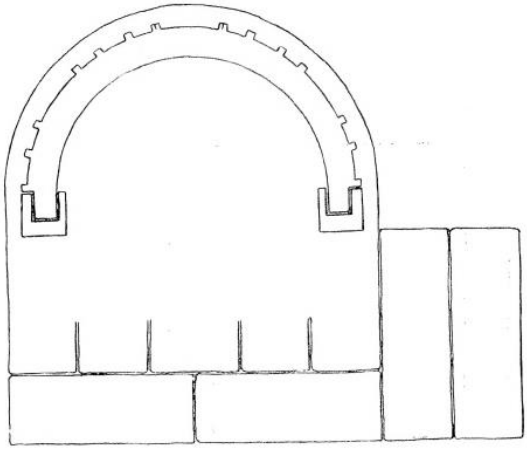


Fig. 48a. Layout of the ambo in Konjuh (Petrov 1970, fig. 6).

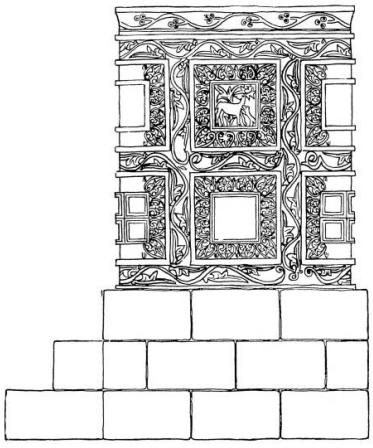


Fig. 48b. Reconstruction of the ambo in Konjuh (Petrov 1970, fig. 8).



Fig. 48c. The preserved fragments of the ambo in Konjuh (photo archive of Museum of H. Macedonia, scanned with the consent of Caroline Snively).

The most luxurious ambo is the marble one from the Episcopal Basilica in Stobi. It has been reconstructed by Rudolf Egger.[55] The upper platform of the ambo has been transferred to the National Museum in Belgrade and for 3 years has been part of the permanent exhibition with some of the capitals, the cornice and findings from the Episcopal Basilica in Stobi. It is executed in the *ajour* technique. Some

[55] Eger 1929, 14–42.

pieces of open work reliefs may be associated with it, or may belong to the transennae of the basilica. They include plants, crosses, animals (birds, donkey), and a fragmented human figure. The ambo was made from dolomite marble from Prilep, according to the investigation of Walter Prochaska.[56] Today the ambo, together with all the luxurious capitals and findings from Stobi is on display in the National Museum in Belgrade.

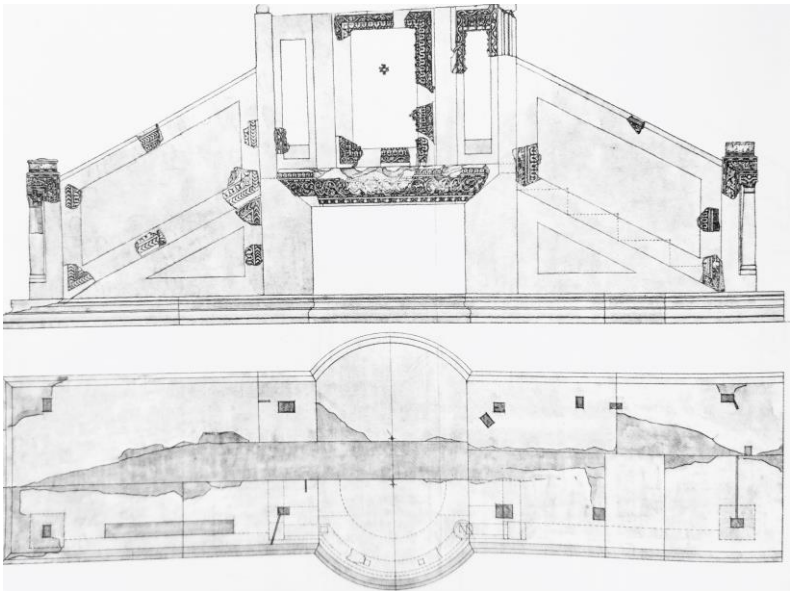


Fig. 49. The ambo of the Episcopal basilica in Stobi (Lilchik 2002, 836).

The simplest but elegant when it comes to the decoration of the upper part is the ambo from the Episcopal Basilica in Bargala. It has only crosses, a cantharos and a lamb enclosed in wide frame as small central motifs. The balustrade is decorated with circles made of two sinusoidal ribbons, filled with 4 palmetes. The framing edge has sharp pointed leaves that are represented one behind the other, thus making two levels.

Referring to the rotunda in Konjuh presbytery, Djidrova says: 'It is questionable whether the solea of this developed presbytery, fenced with slabs and at least encircled by architraves placed upon the high columns of the templon, .., didn't take over already at that time the

[56] Prochaska 2013.

role of an ambo.' She questions the function of the plates Konstantin Petrov recognized as ambo fragments to be something else.[57]

That could be the reason why only a few ambos have been discovered from the late 6th century churches. Or they were movable and made of wood?

The Large Basilica in Konjuh shows the existence of two ambos, one in the presbytery and the other in the nave. The slab from the small ambo (app. 0.80 x 0.55 m) that belonged to the staircase of the ambo shows a large peacock next to a plant with triangular-shaped leaves. It is framed by a sinusoidal branch with three-leaf palmettes.

Several joining fragments of a thick round block, probably from a much larger ambo, were found at the west end of Trench 47. A second ambo once stood in the nave of the basilica.

What was the reason for having two ambos? The parallels come from the octagon and the Basilica E, the so-called Museum Basilica, late sixth century, in Philippi. Reasons for their existence may be found in the Syrian influences, according to which the ambo and bema were synonymous, and the unobstructed conduct of the Great Entrance procession.[58]



Fig. 50a. The Large Basilica, Konjuh (Snively no year, fig. 12).

[57] Djidrova 2007, 158–159.
[58] Djidrova 2007, 160.



Fig. 50b. The ambo plate, The Large Basilica, Konjuh (Snively no year, fig. 15).



Fig. 50c. Parts of the round block thought to be from a large ambo in the nave (Snively no year, fig. 16).



Fig. 50d. Part of a decorated slab from the ambo (Snively no year, fig. 14).

The sculpture from the ambos, both from the new basilica and from the Rotunda in Konjuh, is without parallel in Dardania, but has common motifs with the branches with leaves represented on the columns of a basilica found in Krivi Dol, near Štip.[59]

[59] Lilchik 2002, 1000.

Solea (short east-west passage in front of the central entrance to the presbyterium, also known as schola cantorum)

The altar screens of the larger churches have the 'Π' shape entrance to the presbytery and the *solea* is either rectangular, or square, in most cases short or slightly elongated and in all the cases central. In the early Episcopal Basilica in Stobi, apparently there was a *solea* in each phase indicated by spaces in the mosaic floor (no reliable dimensions were provided). Phase II—the base for the *solea* extended *ca*. 2 m to the west. The space between the two sides of the base was *ca*. 1.20 m. In Phase I of the basilica on the terrace, the width of the solea was similar, but its length to the west is unclear, because the west end of the blocks was buried under the ones of the second phase. There were places where the Phase I floor was found further west, but not near the presbyterium. Blaga Aleksova excavated and removed those floors in the 1980s, but no information about elevation is provided. The floor of the apse was raised 0.24 m above the nave.

In the Synagogue or Central Basilica in Stobi—one side of the base for the *solea* was preserved; it extended ca. 1.20 m to the west. If the arrangement was symmetrical, then the space between the two sides of the base for the solea was ca. 0.90 m. There is no information about the relative height of nave floor and solea.

In the Konjuh rotunda the solea is located almost centrally under the dome (1 m inner width, length 1.17 m of the Π-shaped *solea*).[60] The *solea* of the Episcopal Basilica in Bargala is short, central, slightly rectangular (inner dimensions of the 'Π' form 1.80 m long x 1 m wide). The Small Basilica A in Heraclea is 2m long, 0.80 m wide. All these dimensions I have estimated using the plans, so they are not very precise.

In the Cemetery Basilica in Stobi the base for the chancel screen was still partly *in situ* in the 1970s. The base of the *solea* was extended ca. 1.40 m to the west, and the space between the sides of the base was ca. 0.80 m. No information on elevation was provided.

In the Extra Muros Basilica there was a *solea*; the base for its south side was found in 2003 or 2004 and was removed during the excavation, so no information is available.

In Krivi Dol basilica one side of the base for the *solea* was preserved.

[60] Lilchik 2002, 580.

The sixth century churches do not seem to possess protruding rectangular *solea*, their altar screen is made in one line. Some churches do not have preserved parts of the altar screens (Heraclea, Large Basilica, Scupi, large basilica with atrium etc.).

The altar table

The recent findings of a fragmented altar table from Krivi Dol, Štip in 2016 and the City Basilica in Bargala, in 2009, (an almost intact altar table) have revealed rectangular tables with no decoration. Previously we know only of fragmented pieces, like the edge of the red marble table from the Episcopal Basilica in Stobi that Eger informs us about. There is a piece of a table with a simple accented edge, and a leg from a table in Bargala, a leg of an altar table in the Suvodol basilica, and in the small basilica A in Heraclea.[61] They usually have 4 up to 5 legs and are decorated with ivy leaves (Bargala) or fish scales, chevron and a human arm (Suvodol).



Fig. 51. Altar table, city basilica, Bargala (photo archive of Kiro Spasov, Musej i Galerija Štip).



Fig.52. Altar table leg from the basilica in Suvodol (Lilchik 2002, 778, fig. 13.).

Motifs and ornaments

Is it possible that the 'all-seeing' Church symbolized by the peacocks or the birds picking grapes points to the cosmic nature of Christ? The presentations of peacocks merge the symbols of immortality, eternity, Christ's body and blood, since in winter it loses

[61] Filipova 1997, T VXXIV, fig. 1-5.

its feathers, and in early spring gets new. It is the body of the believer who discarded feathers of the mortality and replaced them with feathers of immortality, so the peacock became a symbol of the resurrection of the body, analogous to the general recovery of nature in spring.

The cross enclosed in a square, regarded as the emblem of the earth, and of earthly existence, may be opposed to the parapet slabs of the aisles or chancel slabs with a Christ monogram as a leader to the human salvation, while the cross enclosed in circle - the symbol of complex and profound ideas - eternity and never-ending existence, Cosmos, World. Time, may give hope and power to accept the passing earthly life with the inevitable afterlife. 'When the circle encloses the cross it reinforces the symbolism of both images and becomes a potent sign, embodying the pre-Christian symbolism of the sun-wheel, an idea common to Northern and Eastern mythologies.'[62]

In Christian art the peacocks confronting the Vine and the Tree of Life with doves pecking the grapes are closely related images. The 'hundred eyes' in the tail are sometimes used to symbolize the 'all-seeing' Church, worldly pride and vanity.[63] The medieval ambo of St. Sophia in Ohrid reused in the period when the church was turned into a mosque contained several *spolia*, among which one has a fragmented piece of peacock tail. It seems to be an Early Christian plate. Also according to the photo from the City basilica presbytery during the excavations, a fragmented plate with a peacock tail is visible.

In the arch of the altar screen of the basilica of Begov Dab, we encounter probably the most obvious case of significance given to the compass-rosette, which will be followed in the later period. Here the compass rosette enclosed in circle is placed on the top of the arch, flanked by two crosses followed again by two compass-rosettes, ending in two tangent half-circles.

A similar motif of a central cross enclosed in a small circle and again enclosed in rectangle(s), altogether framed by a circle with outer small circular loops, diagonally positioned is represented at a fragmented plate discovered in the Episcopal Basilica in Bargala, and on the altar plate (reconstructed) and mosaics from the city pseudo basilica in Bargala.

[62] Reutersvärd 1986, 147.
[63] Child & Colles 1971, 211.

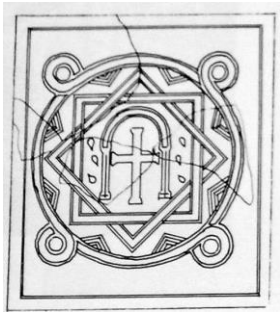


Fig. 53a. Drawing of an altar slab from the City Basilica in Bargala (Filipova 1997, TXII, fig. 3).

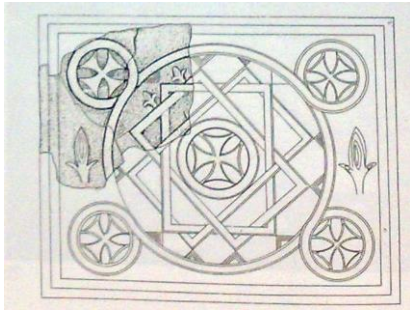


Fig. 53b. Drawing of a plate from Dreveno, Peštno (Filipova 1997, TXII, fig. 2).



Fig.53c. The reconstructed mosaic in front of the altar in the City Basilica in Bargala (Tutkovski 2021, 190, fig. 16).

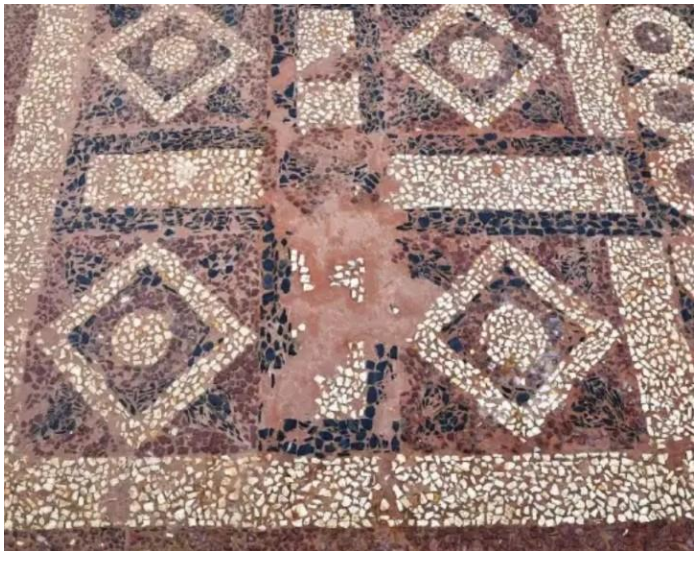


fig. 54. The mosaic middle field with large cross from the north aisle, Episcopal Basilica, Bargala (Tutkovski 2021, 181, fig. 5).

Walking over sacred images in biblical scenes and other Christian subjects, and particularly the sign of Christ was specifically banned by an imperial decree in 427, and the world of birds, fishes and animals prevailed in mosaic floors from 5th century onwards. Yet in the northern nave of the Bargala basilica there are several fields with geometrical elements and almost in the mid a large cross. So, we may think of a date earlier than 427 for this mosaic having the decree in mind.

Probably one of the reasons that in the second half of the 5th century the decorative sculpture in Stobi and its neighborhood and more precisely the *ajour* style applied, expresses the influence of some Thessalonican workshop as a result of reestablished influence of the Thessalonican vicariate and its administrative and artistic dominance in the region.[64]

The rotation of the decoration becomes evident. Once typical for one type of sculptural element or capitals, a certain type of decoration now transfers to other elements and capitals. Also, some ornaments become common for each visual art technique and sometimes are used simultaneously in all art works in a single object. Thus we see the same motifs that decorate the slabs of the altar screen depicted in the mosaic of the apse of the basilica at Suvodol (a large field with fish scales, and flanking the apse lozenges) and in the city basilica in Bargala.

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The Benches in the Furniture and the liturgical Planning of the Early Christian Basilicas of the Valley of Middle Struma

Svetla Petrova

Abstract: Several basilicas in Parthicopolis and its area reveal that the benches have been used as a part of its liturgical planning. They are built in different rooms and parts of the Early Christian/Early Byzantine architecture of the Valley of Middle Struma (Parthicopolis and its close area). The benches are in several different places: in the supposed *skeuophylakion* and annexes; also in the narthex, the south and the north aisle of basilica No 4 in Parthicopolis; in basilica No 2 in the same city; finally, in the basilica of Mikrevo. When used for resting, the benches designate the gender and the care for the ill Christians, attending the long rituals and liturgical acts. In the *skeuophylakion* and the waiting room they also served to place the gifts brought by the Christians. In parallel, there are similar benches in Greece and generally in the Church of Constantinople from the 5th century on.

Key words: basilicas, synthronon, benches, shelves, liturgical planning

Резюме: Няколко базилики в Партикополис и района му разкриват, че изградените пейки са били използвани като част от литургичното планиране. Те са били поставени на различни места в раннохристиянската/ раннови-зантийската архитектура на долината на Средна Струма (Партикополис и близкия му район). Пейките се разполагат в предполагаемия *скевофилакион* и пристройките; в притвора, южния и северния кораб на базилика № 4 в Партикополис; в базилика № 2 в същия град; накрая в базиликата в Микрево. Когато са използвани за почивка, пейките са обозначавали пола и грижата за болните християни, присъстващи на дългите ритуали и литургични действия. В *скевофилакиона* и чакалнята те са служели и за поставяне на даровете, донесени от християните. Паралелите показват наличието на подобни пейки в Гърция и като цяло в Константинополската църква от V в. нататък.

The Early Christian liturgical practice and furniture demonstrates the synthesis and the further development of the Jewish cultic tradition, the

one of the ancient Greek and Roman cultures, and of some Eastern traditions. They may involve a solemn standing in front of the deities, lying on special beds during the cultic and commemorative feasts, kneeling and more rarely sitting on chairs and benches. The first Christians in 1st-2nd century before the creation of the first Church buildings were practicing the ritual of '*fractio panis*' (Eucharist) in their private houses (Acts 2:46). At the same time, in the contemporary synagogues existed the practice of erecting multistage benches next to the walls in the interior, helping the gatherings.[1]

A sepulchral complex from 1st century, connected with Saint Peter and Paul, was found in Rome in the church of San Sebastiano, known in the antiquity as 'The Catacombs'.[2] It consists of a court and a mess hall with benches along the three of the walls.[3] Monumental *cubicula* are established in the catacombs from the end of 4th century, supplied with benches, connected with the ritual of the *refrigerium* and the commemorative banquets.[4] During the lifetime of Christ a habitual practice was the guests to sit or to be half-lying on long cushions, while during the Eucharist itself they were already standing in order to reveal their piety. The Christians were also standing during the whole service in the Early Christian basilicas and churches. The only known other position from Canon 20 of the First Ecumenical Council was the kneeling. However, the Canon forbids it on Sunday service and during the Pentecost. All this supposes that the kneeling was the habitual practice during the Early Church-period. In it the Church saw an act of penance, and in these parts of the liturgy the Christians were allowed to attend. Generally, during the Eucharist, two positions were known in the Early Christian Church: standing in the gesture of 'Oranta', or kneeling, but never sitting.

According to the archaeological data, the benches appear at the end of 4th – beginning of 5th century. We can't exclude the possibility the basilicas to possess wooden benches before the beginning of 5th century that did not reach us. The research up to the present moment of the Early Christian basilicas in the Middle course of the river of Struma reveal that the benches have been built mainly in Parthicopolis

[1] Matassa 2018, 1-2, 187–210.

[2] Numerous graffiti are discovered on the walls of the complex, in which the Early Christians express their piety to both apostles and their protection (See: Styger 1918, 59-61).

[3] Styger 1918, 48–98; MacMullen 2009, 69–114.

[4] Fiocchi Nicolai 2014, 273–360; Marinone 2000, 71–80.

(modern Sandanski) and in the basilica of the village of Mikrevo not far from Sandanski. Its height is different, from 40 up to 60 cm. In Parthicopolis the benches are found in Basilica No 2 – on the north wall of the exonarthex, and in room 5 – the *cathehumenium*. In the Episcopal complex of Basilica No 4, Episcopal (Cathedral basilica) the benches are found in the apse – a *synthronon* and along the western, northern and southern walls of the naos of the basilica; in the northern and southern aisles; in room 3, the chapel; and in the *scriptorium*, south of the chapel; in the *skeuophylakion* (room 6); in room 7, the *cathehumenium*; in room 8, the waiting room; in room 10, the narthex; on the north side of the Atrium; and in front of the *Atrium*, in the semi-circular piazza (fig. 1).

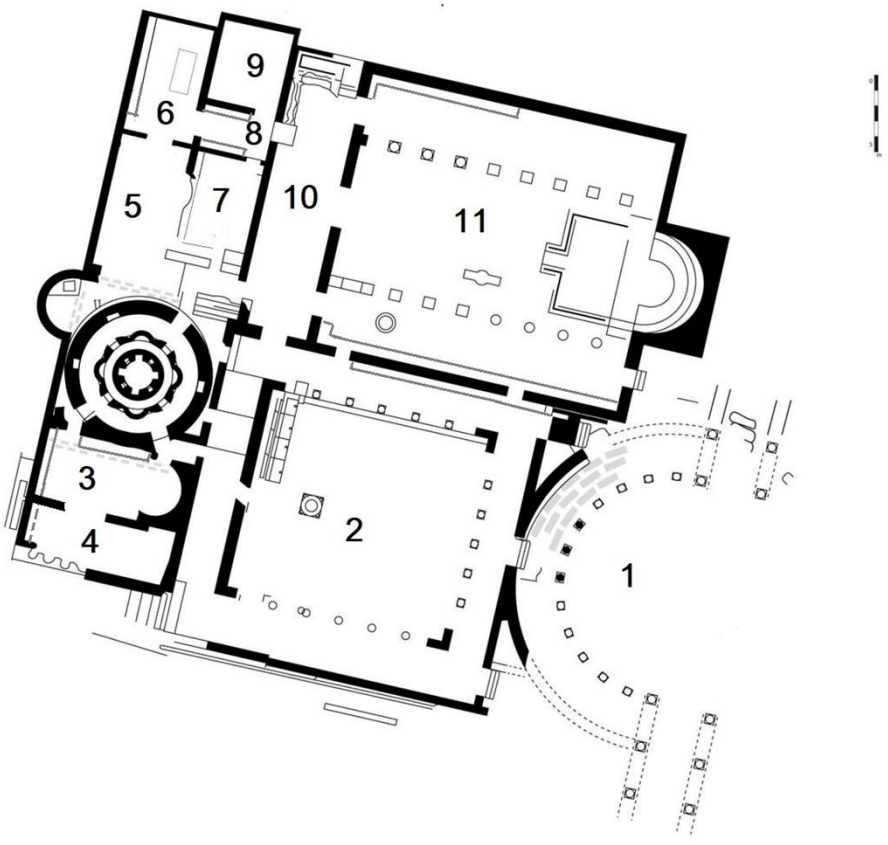


Fig. 1. Plan of the complex of the Cathedral Basilica (Episcopal, No 4) of Partikopolis with the locations of the discovered benches (author: Svetla Petrova).

To the end of 4th century the bench is unknown as a part of the furniture of Christian buildings. It was used only in the form of a *synthronon* in the apse of the basilica on which the bishop and the

clergy were sitting and acting during the services, rituals and preaching. The *synthronon* are elevated in two or more steps. They are connected with the liturgical furniture of the basilica and it is considered that its appearance is borrowed from the plan of the synagogue, and the chair of Moses is transferred to the bishop's throne, and the semicircular bench surrounding it – into *synthronon*. As the 'Greek *synthronon*' is considered the one in today's continental Greece according the practice of coming out of the *synthronon* to the west, and outside the end of the Apse. In the main central part, the representatives of the high clergy (the archibishop on the throne, the bishops, the priests and presbyters) took seats, while in the parts outside the *synthronon* sat the low representatives as readers and deacons.[5]

Only two basilicas with *synthronon* have been discovered in the valley of Middle Struma so far. This is the basilica in Mikrevo belonging to a still uncertain bishopric, and basilica No 4, the Cathedral basilica of Parthicopolis. But in three more from all the 10 basilicas in Parthicopolis, we can suppose the presence of *synthronon* (fig. 2): basilica No 1, the earliest built in the early Christian city, where Bishop Iona, a participant in the Council of Serdica (343-344), may have served; basilica No 2 of bishop Ioannes, who sent presbyter Cyril as his representative as participant in the Council of Chalcedon (451);[6] also possible *synthronon* had basilica No 3, having in mind its rich plan and mosaic decoration. Unfortunately, in all three cases the *bema*, the *presbyterium*, and the chancel are not found and not studied[7].

The three-stepped *synthronon* of the apse of the Cathedral basilica in Parthicopolis is decorated with a rich wall painting imitating a marble revetment. The *synthronon* at Mikrevo is two-stepped, plastered and also painted with imitation of a marble revetment. It is placed in the arc of the Apse, with a mosaic Chrism in front of the bishop's throne (fig. 3).

The biggest number of benches is found in the Cathedral basilica (No 4, known also as the Bishop's basilica), and in its western annex in Parthicopolis. The benches are built with boulders, and plastered with rose mortar. They are of different height which varies from 45 up to 60 cm, also with different width, between 40 and 50 cm. Some of them are

[5] These are the basilicas in Nea Anchialos A, B, D and G. and Martyros; Demetrias B; Theotokou in Thessaly; Nikopolis A, B, D, Spetsae, Skoutela, Epidauros.

[6] Popova 1981, 173–181.

[7] The apses of the basilicas No 1 and No 2 are under the main city street, the one of basilica No 3 is under houses built in the middle of 20th century.

decorated with wall paintings imitating marble plates similar to the one on the *synthronon* in the apse of the Cathedral basilica in Parthicopolis and in the basilica in Mikrevo. The benches were built at the end of 4th – the first quarter of 5th century, in the second building period of the Cathedral basilica and the addition of its annex, the *Episkopaeion*. Only the bench in the *skeuophylakion* was reworked, namely it was elongated and made higher in the second half of 5th – first half of the 6th century.

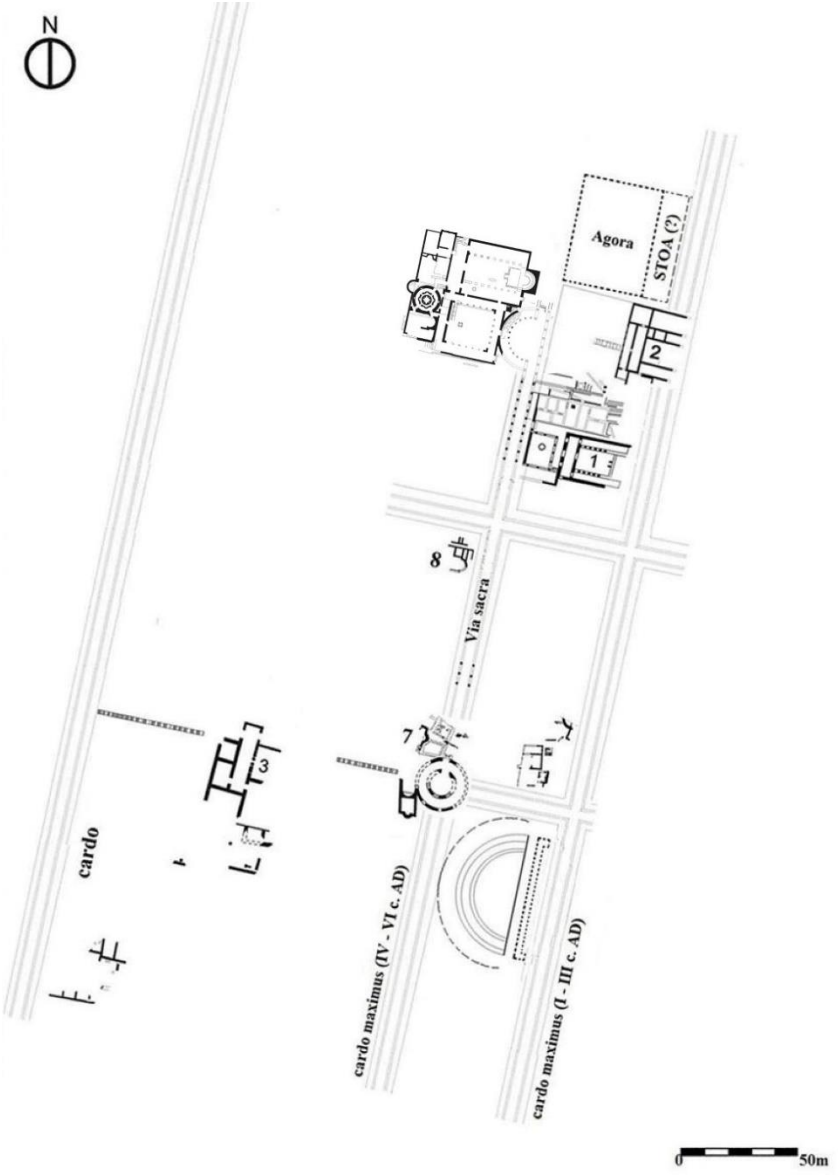


Fig. 2. The ancient and early Christian cadastre of Partikopolis. Plan of Basilicas No 1, 2, 3 and 4 (author: Svetla Petrova).

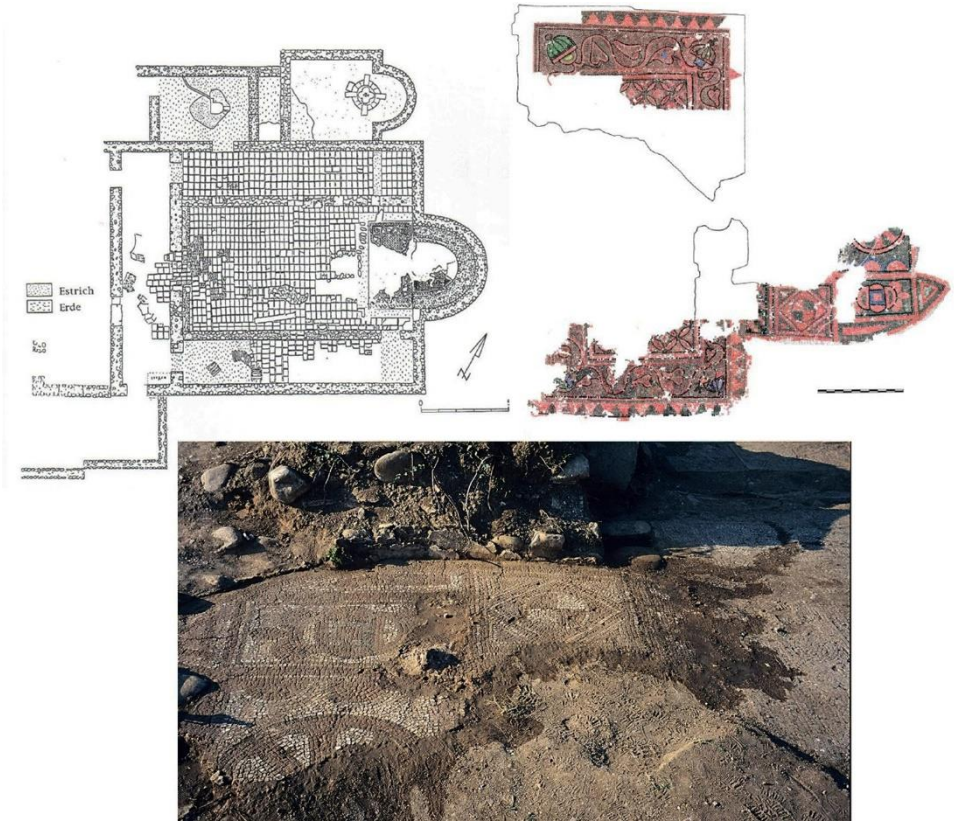


Fig. 3. The Episcopal Basilica at Mikrevo: 1. Plan; 2. Remains of the revealed mosaic, together with the image of Chrism in front of the episcopal throne; 3. Part of the mosaic with the Chrism (Pillinger *et al*. 2016, Taf. 317, Abb. 777; Taf. 318, Abb. 778, 779).

The bench built in the northern part of the narthex tangents the stairs to the gallery. The bench has the form of the letter 'Π' with a shortened eastern hasta with three sides: from the west, north and east. A mosaic pavement is found at its base, and its tesserae are equal to those of the mosaic panel of the nave. Re-used mosaic fragments have been taken as building material in horizontal position forming the plinthus and most of the height of the bench under the seat and partly under the stairs to the gallery on the second floor.[8] The mosaics fragments are taken from the previous mosaic existing on the place under the later installed here ambo in the south half of the central nave. It was erected in phase, after the second building period touched to the

[8] Petrova, in print.

wall of the narthex with two layers of wall decoration at the time of the construction of the ambo (fig. 4).



Fig. 4. The narthex of the Cathedral Basilica (Episcopal, No 4) of Partikopolis: 1. Bench at the northern part of the narthex, view from the south; 2. View from the east (author: Svetla Petrova).

Another bench in the form of the letter 'Γ' is discovered on a part of the periphery of the northern and western walls in the north aisle. Differently, the benches in the southern aisle occupy the whole length of the southern wall and part of the western one, next to the entrance to the aisle, similarly to the situation of the northern aisle, and again in the form of the letter 'Γ' (fig. 5). The bench in the *cathehumenium* occupies the whole western and partly the southern wall, next to the western side of the southern entrance. On these benches the cathehumens sat during their education and waited for their baptism in the baptistery (fig. 6).

Benches were also built next to the north and south walls of the waiting-room, but its height is bigger than of those in the narthex and the nave of the basilica (fig. 7). The upper surface of the benches is covered with square bricks (32,5 x 32,5 x 5 cm), similarly to the ones in the narthex, but with special marks on their visible side. Of the same type are the bricks covering the plots of the niches on the eastern side of the room situated west of the waiting room (anteroom). The benches in the narthex and the waiting room are covered with square bricks and the one of the *skeuophylakion* – with 60 x 30 x 6 cm bricks.

The waiting room with benches on its northern and southern sides has a pavement of marble plates. The walls are decorated with wall paintings in geometric 'pseudo-column' style, preserved on the northern and on the western wall. An entrance on the northern wall connects with a room probably with the function of a kitchen (possibly

simultaneously also as a *pastophoria*?). The so-called *'martyrium'*,[9] which is in fact the *skeuophylakion*, is placed west of the waiting room and the kitchen.

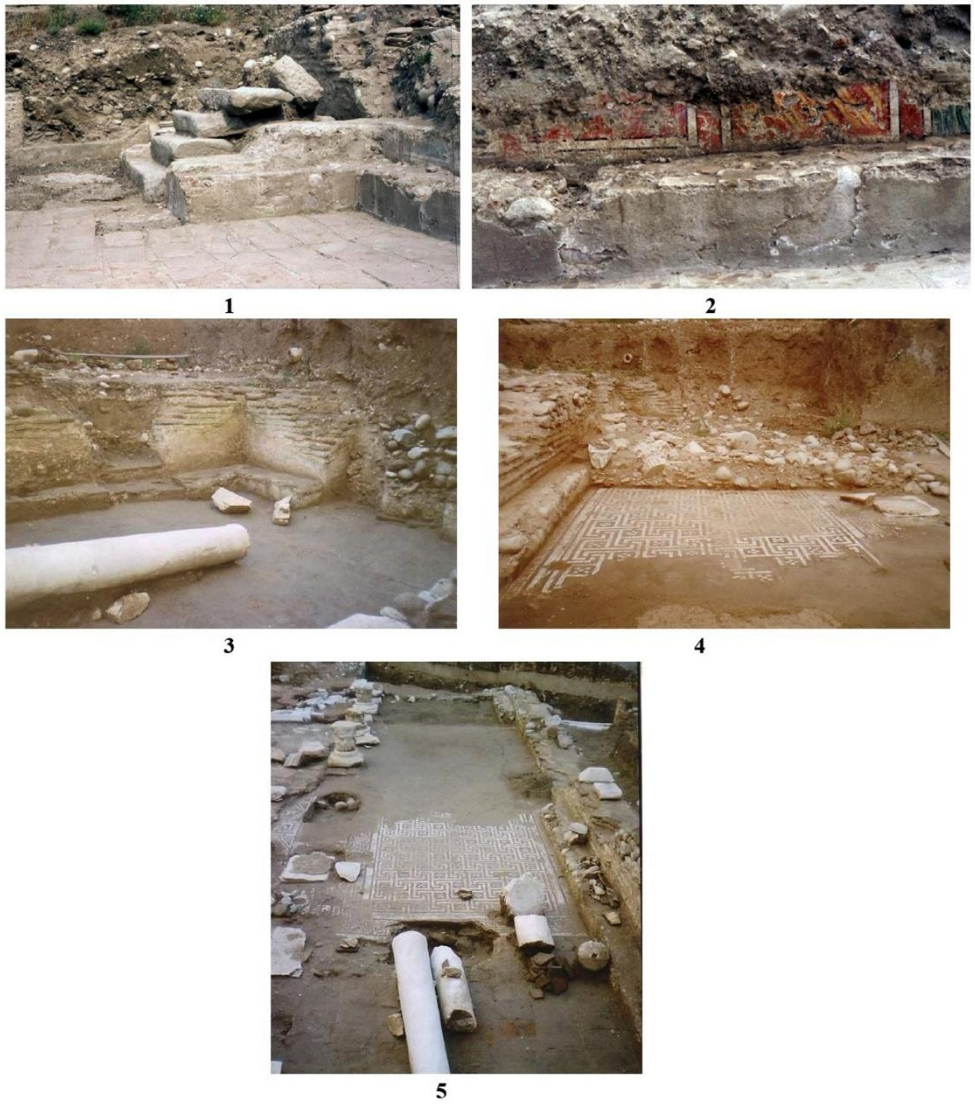


Fig. 5. The benches by the walls of the north and south nave of the Cathedral Basilica: 1-2. The north-west corner and the north wall with bench; 3-5. The southwest corner and the south wall wit bench (Archive of Archaeological museum - Sandanski).

[9] V. Petkov's hypothesis. See: Petrova & Petkov 2015, 434.



Fig. 6. The bench in the *catechumenium* – in the process of being revealed (Archive of Archaeological museum - Sandanski).



Fig. 7. The waiting room of the Episcopal complex of the Cathedral basilica. 1. Benches at the northern and southern walls; 2. The bench by the north wall, together with the two niches; 3. The brick covering of the bench, detail (author: Svetla Petrova).

The *skeuophylakion* has also a marble pavement, and this fact supposes identical period of building of both rooms and equal function. The *skeuophylakion* is supplied with a big masonry table with a profiled marble top (*mensa*), with two niches at its base for relics from its eastern side. The highest bench found is of 60 cm, built in the *skeuophylakion* and occupying almost the whole length of the western wall. It is covered with bricks 60 x 30 x 6 cm. in size. This bench is the only one with brick revetment on the top and from the outside, probably in order to protect it from the moisture coming from the slope. A *hagiasma* covered with a marble plate is discovered on the floor in front of the bench. Another function of the bench in the *skeuophylakion* may be referred also to the rituals for health having in mind the *hagiasma* on the floor. The walls and the ceilings of the room are covered with wall paintings (fig. 8).



Fig. 8. The *skeuophylakion* of the Episcopal complex:
1. The bench with the place of the hagiasma marked; 2. The *prothesis mensa*;
3. Niche on the east wall, detail (author: Svetla Petrova).

All the elements of the planning and its furniture reveal that this is not a *martyrium* but the *skeuophylakion* built in the second half – the middle of the 5th century; in the second building period of the basilica and its annexes, simultaneously with the narthex, the waiting room, the atrium, the other rooms western and southern of the basilica, and the

half-rounded piazza in front of it. In the middle of the 5th century the Christians were bringing their donations to the deacons standing at the entrance of the *skeuophylakion* according to the Constantinopolitan liturgy. In the New Rome this was a free-standing single building next to the basilica or a special isolated room in it. In the case of the Cathedral basilica of Parthicopolis, we can identify the room in the western annex, situated west of the narthex and the waiting room, with an entrance to the *skeuophylakion* through the anteroom. The Christians reached it by passing through the narthex and the waiting room, without the right of entering into the *skeuophylakion*. In front of it the deacons waited, taking the donations, writing down the names of the donators and of the already deceased to be mentioned in the service/liturgy. The *prothesis mensa* in the *skeuophylakion* served for censer and sanctifying of the selected gifts of the Christians.[10] Part of the donations were placed in the niches on the eastern wall of the *skeuophylakion*. Such niches for donations were also installed on the walls of the waiting room with benches for the people waiting for their turn.

The connection with the liturgy of Constantinople is underlined too by the liturgical planning and the role of narthex in it. Here the bishop or the priest responsible for the everyday service waited for the deacon to bring the Bible to the *mensa* in the bema. The laity gathering in the atrium and entering the narthex behind the bishop also waited here before the beginning of the service.[11] This happened twice: for the first time in the short period 388-391 during the ruling of Theodosius I, and for the second time from the second half of 5th century onwards, when the liturgy of Constantinople replaced the formal dependence on the Roman liturgy and the papal vicariate in Thessaloniki.

Benches are also discovered in the chapel south of the baptistery alongside the west and north walls, still in process of excavation and research (fig. 9) and on the southern outer wall of the basilica, on the northern wall of the atrium (fig. 10). With a low bench is also supplied the central Early Christian piazza of the city, situated to the east of the atrium. The piazza was the starting point for the stational church processions in the streets of Parthicopolis. The bench is plastered and covered with wall paintings (fig. 1; fig. 11). It is proven that the benches in the nave of Basilica No 4 were additionally raised, covering the

[10]Taft 1998, 86; Stanev 2013, 7.

[11] For more details see Stanev 2011, 313–345 and cit.lit.

previous mosaic border and part of the mosaic panels from the first building period. Their height varies from 35 to 50 cm, and their width is approx. 45 cm.



Fig. 9. The chapel with a bench on the north and west walls (Archive of Archaeological museum - Sandanski)



Fig. 10. The cathedral basilica and the atrium with benches on the north wall, a moment of the survey (Archive of Archaeological museum - Sandanski).



Fig. 11. Semicircular piazza. 1. A bench north of the entrance to the atrium; 2. Detail of the bench decoration; 3. View from above (Archive of Archaeological museum - Sandanski).

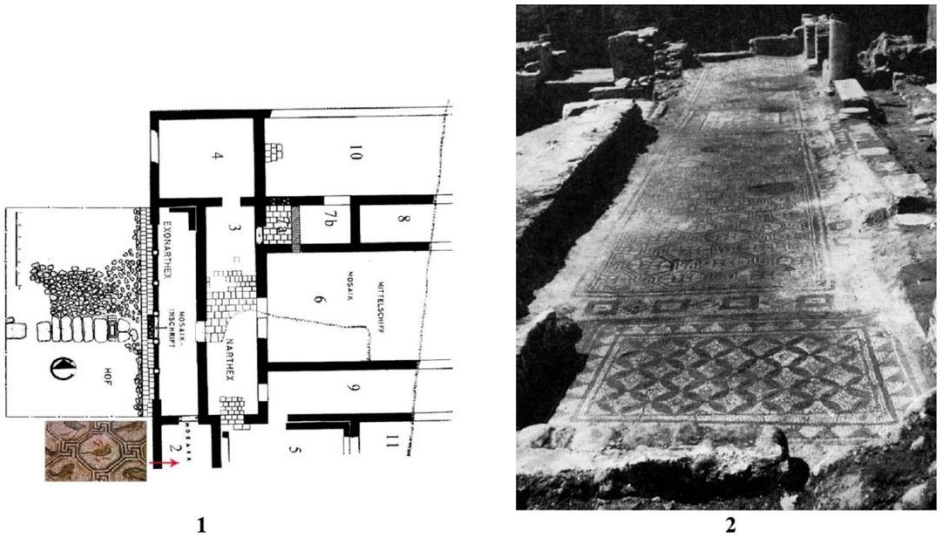


Fig. 12. Basilica of bishop Ioannes (Basilica No 2). 1. Plan; 2. The exonarthex of the basilica, with the mosaic floor and the 'Γ'-shaped bench in the northeast corner (Pillinger *et al*. 2016, Taf. 291, Abb. 720 added by S. Petrova; Taf. 292, Abb. 721).

Several benches have been excavated in basilica No 2 of Parthicopolis, known as the basilica of bishop Ioannes (fig. 12). A straight bench is built alongside the west wall of room 5. In the northeastern corner of the same room another bench was found, this time in the form of the letter 'Γ'. Because of the proximity and the supposed connection of this room with room No 2 and with the *baptisterium*, it may be suggested that room 5 has been the *cathehumenium*[12] of the Episcopal complex situated between basilicas No 1 and No 2. One more bench with 'Γ'-form is found in the northeastern corner of the exonarthex of the basilica, built at the same time as the exonarthex, as the size of the mosaic panel corresponding to the size of the bench also shows us. It should be related to the liturgy of the faithful and should be interpreted as a place for resting of the aged, ill and disabled people, participants in the rituals.

Similar in its form and place bench is unearthed in the exonarthex of the basilica of Mikrevo, which is the third monument from the valley of Middle Struma with benches (fig. 13). It is built in the northeastern corner of the exonarthex, similar to the bench in the exonarthex of the basilica No 2 in Parthicopolis, over part of its north

[12] See: Pillinger 2006, 56–72.

and east side. The height of the bench is 45-50 cm, built of boulders plastered with mortar and most possibly plastered on the whole surface.



Fig. 13. The Episcopal Basilica in Mikrevo. 1. The northeast corner of the exonarthex with an 'Γ'-shaped bench; 2. View from the atrium to the east, with the location of the bench in the exonarthex indicated (author: Svetla Petrova).

Conclusion

Generally, all the found benches in Parthicopolis and the ones in the exonarthex of the basilica in Mikrevo, as well as the discovered shelves for the gifts are made of boulders, plastered with mortar. Their outside form is different. The benches from the *synthronon* of the

Episcopal basilica (Cathedral basilica), and the bench from the half-round piazza are plastered and painted. On the plastered sides of the bench in the narthex of the Episcopal Basilica, there is a mosaic plinth as a continuation of the mosaic pavement on the north panel of the narthex, while the seating area is covered with bricks. The benches in the waiting-room are also plastered and its sitting surface is also covered with bricks. The plot of the shelf on the eastern wall next to the entrance of the *skeuophylakion* is covered with the same bricks. According to the size of the bricks of the bench in the *skeuophylakion* and the destruction of the south end of the bench, this was its brick revetment on the upper surface and aside with a raised level at the beginning of 6th century.

The observed differences suggest the functions of the benches. The first one was for sitting similarly to the benches in the north and south aisle of the Episcopal basilica, in the narthex and the chapel, in the atrium and the piazza; in basilica No 2 and the basilica of Mikrevo. These benches are built immediately next to the walls in order not to be an obstacle during the rituals and movements of the clergy and the congregation. But some benches are in fact shelves for the gifts, like the benches – shelves in the *skeuophylakion* and the waiting-room. After the consecration, the gifts were put on the mensa, and those that were not used were returned back to the shelves or distributed among the poor and ill people who could not attend the service. The benches in the waiting-room were also with a double function: the congregation sat on them or left the gifts to be taken later by the deacons.

The benches in the narthex were intended for the elder and disable people waiting for the beginning of the liturgy and the coming of the bishop. The location of the benches in the nave corresponded to the gender separation in the basilicas: the north benches were used by the women, and the south benches – by the men. It is remarkable that the latter ones are longer covering the whole length of the south wall and half of its west one. This separation is witnessed also by the closing of the intercolumniums of both aisles. Built benches are known also in other basilicas submitted to the Roman church in part of Illyricum: in the north wall of the nave of the basilica in Lyutibrod from the second building period; in basilica A of Berkovitsa; in the baptistery of the basilica in Golyamo Belovo, but also in Thrace – the *catholicon* of the monastery of Dragoinovo, near Philippopolis and in the church in

Isperihovo municipility of Bratsigovo.[13] The excavated examples till the present moment show that the benches were part mainly of the furniture of the Early Christian buildings, submitted to the Roman church, which was represented by its vicarius in Thessalonica. The bench appeared in 5th century as an additional element of the furniture of the basilica and was accepted also in the architecture, connected later with the Church of Constantinople.

The benches have several functions in dependence of their place in the basilica, in the additional rooms and places in the area, in the baptisterium, church or *skeuophylakion*. The benches served as solemn seats of the clergy in the synthronon; as shelves for the gifts of the Christians; as central places for gathering before the Big Entry of the Euharist and the everyday Small entry with the bible, the other scriptures and liturgical vessels used in the sacraments and rituals; for gathering before the beginning and at the end of the stational liturgy; for listening to the preparatory teaching to the catechumens; for waiting for the ritual of baptism; for a small rest of the aged and disabled people, pregnant women and small children; finally for the ritual of health with mineral water.

The comparison with benches in Greece in general, and in the churches particularly of Constantinople reveals similar benches which from 5th century become part of the liturgical planning and furniture during definite solemn ceremonies, but also during the everyday service. The benches and shelves are intended both for the clergy and the laity on different occasions: the Great and the Small Entry, the ritual for health, gathering before the beginning and at the end of the stational liturgy, baptism, theological education of the future Christians, etc. The big number of benches in Parthicopolis and its area show that this still poorly known element of the liturgical furniture has a great role in the concrete city in the province of Macedonia Prima and its liturgical practice.

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[13] For Dragoynovo monastery – see most recently in Topalilov 2020, 209–235.

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Liturgical Fittings and Fixtures in the Early Byzantine Church on Djanavara Hill near Varna

Vassil Tenekedjiev

Summary: The monastery church on Djanavara Hill near Varna (Odessos) (middle of the 5th – early 7th century AD) has a very strange architecture scheme that still poses difficult questions. The following paper focuses on a specific topic connected to the church: the liturgical arrangement of its interior, and all the related liturgical fittings and fixtures therein. Analysis of the interior relies on two sources of information: the available primary archaeological evidence, which the author was able to investigate personally, and the information in the archives which was collected during the first archaeological campaign in the early 20th century. The process of comparing and combining evidence from these two sources provided the necessary information to draw a relatively consistent picture of the liturgical fittings and fixtures, reflecting the changes and modifications that happened during the period of the church's use.

This study resulted in several observations and conclusions. The interior of the church (and perhaps the whole building), suffered some form of damage and was subsequently extensively repaired. Some specifics in the liturgical fittings and fixtures points to those repairs being made at a certain time during the 6th century AD, most probably in the first half or around the middle of the century. The repairs should be considered a very important reference point in the chronology of Djanavara church in general, and of the liturgical fittings and fixtures in its interior in particular.

It was expected that the analysis would also help to identify the liturgical tradition to which the church on Djanavara Hill belonged, and through this to bring some clarification to the complex problem regarding the origins of its unusual architecture. The results, however, are inconclusive. Nothing from the liturgical fittings and fixtures could be connected explicitly with the Near East, and this weakens the support for the dominant hypothesis of a Near Eastern origin of the building. On the contrary, the liturgical arrangement of the interior is common for the Diocese of Thracia, and some of the features should be explained with an influence from Constantinople.

Key-words: Liturgical planning, liturgical fittings & fixtures, Djanavara Hill, Early Christian architecture, chancel, altar table, synthrone, crypt, ambo

Резюме: Манастирската църква на хълма Джанавара край Варна (Одесос) (средата на V – началото на VII в.) има твърде необичаен архитектурен план, който все още поставя много, трудни за решаване въпроси. Настоящата статия се фокусира върху една конкретна тема: литургичното планиране на интериора на храма и всички свързани с това части от литургичното обзавеждане. При анализа са използвани два източника на информация: първични археологически данни, които авторът е успял да събере лично по време на разкопки, и информация от архивите от първата археологическа кампания в началото на XX в. Сравняването и комбинирането на сведения от тези два източника осигури достатъчно информация, за да се изгради относително пълна картина на литургичното планиране на църквата и да се проследят промените и модификациите в него, настъпили през периода на съществуване на сградата.

Проучването доведе до няколко наблюдения и заключения. В определен момент интериорът на църквата (а може би и цялата сграда) е претърпял сериозни щети и впоследствие е бил основно ремонтиран. Някои особености на елементите от богослужебното обзавеждане показват, че тези поправки са извършени през VI в. сл. Хр., най-вероятно през първата половина или около средата на века. Ремонтът трябва да се счита за много важен ориентир в хронологията на църквата като цяло и в частност на литургичната уредба на нейния интериор.

Очакваше се анализът на наличните данни да помогне за идентифицирането на литургичната традиция, към която принадлежи църквата на хълма Джанавара, и чрез това да допринесе за изясняване на сложния проблем относно произхода на нейната необичайна архитектура. Резултатите обаче са неубедителни в това отношение. Нищо от литургичното планиране на интериора не може да се свърже изрично с Близкия изток и това поставя под съмнение доминиращата хипотеза за близкоизточния характер на сградата. Напротив, богослужебното устройство на интериора е напълно обичайно за диоцез Тракия и някои от особеностите трябва да се обяснят с влияние от Константинопол.

Introduction

The Early Byzantine monastery church on Djanavara Hill[1] near Varna (ancient Odessos) is notable for its unusual architectural layout (fig. 1).[2] It is highly uncommon for the Balkan ecclesiastical architecture of the 4th – 6th century AD, but also lacks an exact parallel in the rest of the Early Christian world of the period. Navigating within this uncertain general context, this article focusses on a very specific and largely neglected topic: liturgical fittings and fixtures in the interior of the church.[3] Investigation on this topic could contribute, on one hand, to

[1] There is an inconsistency about the name. The site is located on the slope of a hill called in the past 'Djanavar tepe' (from Turkish, Djanavar Hill – 'Hill of the beast'). Today in Bulgarian, although rarely, the place is called 'Big Djanavar (Hill)'. The most common name is 'Djanavara' and it usually goes with 'hill' or 'locality'. The word can be transliterated from Cyrillic also as 'Dzhanavara'. Until the first excavation the exact place of the archaeological site has resembled a small mound and was called 'Ilan tepe' (from Turkish, Ilan Hill – 'Hill of the snakes') – a toponym, which does not exist anymore.

[2] There is a significant number of publications dedicated to the Djanavara archaeological site or discussing it in the context of some more general or more specific topic. However, there is not a comprehensive and critical study dedicated to the site and including all the available data yet. This is a selected list of publications (note that in those by the excavating team Alexander Minchev and Vassil Tenekedjiev, from 2007 on, there were new archaeological data and some of the old hypotheses were revised): Schkorpil 1910, 9; Schkorpil & Schkorpil 1921, 59–61; Ivanova 1922/1925, 460–461; Belyaev 1929, 120–123, fig. 4, pl. XVII; Mavrodinov 1931, 111–112; Mavrodinov 1955, 34, 65, 67; Dimitrov 1965, 55; Miyatev 1965, 22; Buschhausen 1971, 263–265, No C-1-3, pl. 1-3; Hoddinott 1975, 325–327; Ovcharov & Vaklinova 1978, 16–29, 59, figs. 126-128; Wetzmann 1979, 631, No 569; Yakobson 1983, 158–159; Mintschev 1985, 57–58; Minchev 1986, 36–38; Dimitrov 1992; Bojadjiev 1995; Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 175–176; Văleva 1999; Boyadzhiev 2000; Minchev 2001, 44–54; Ćurčić 2001, 49–50; Barsanti 2001, 69; Daim & Kühtreiber 2001, 358, No I/14.1; Vaklinova 2001; Doseva 2002; 2005; Minchev 2003, 15–18, Cat. No 1-3; Doncheva 2003; Minchev 2006, 184–185; Minchev 2007, 71–72, 77, 89–90; Minchev 2008; Atanasov 2008, 47; Minchev & Tenekedjiev 2009; Minchev 2009; Minchev & Tenekedjiev 2010; Oppermann 2010, 136–137; Ćurčić 2010, 163, 228–229; Minchev & Tenekedjiev 2011; Doseva 2011, 152–153; Popova & Lirsch 2011, 804; Minchev & Tenekedjiev 2012; 2013a; Dimitrov 2013, 91–92; Minchev & Tenekedjiev 2014; 2015a; Achim 2015, 287–342; Minčev 2016; Minchev & Tenekedjiev 2017; 2018; 2019; Korzhenkov *et al*. 2020; Korzhenkov *et al*. (in print); Minchev & Tenekedjiev 2021; Minchev 2021a; Minchev 2021b, 74–77; Tenekedjiev 2021.

[3] Liturgical Fittings and Fixtures in the Interior of the Churches in the Diocese of Thracia, 4th – 6th century AD was the topic of my PhD thesis, defended at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, in 2015 (Tenekedjiev 2015a; 2015 b). The information from the Djanavara church was incorporated in this study and analysed in the context of the whole Diocese. The statistics, observations and conclusions in the thesis were critical for the analysis in this paper.

the interpretation of the archaeological site and the clarification of its chronology and periodization, and on the other hand, it could shed light on questions regarding to which liturgical tradition the holy place belonged.

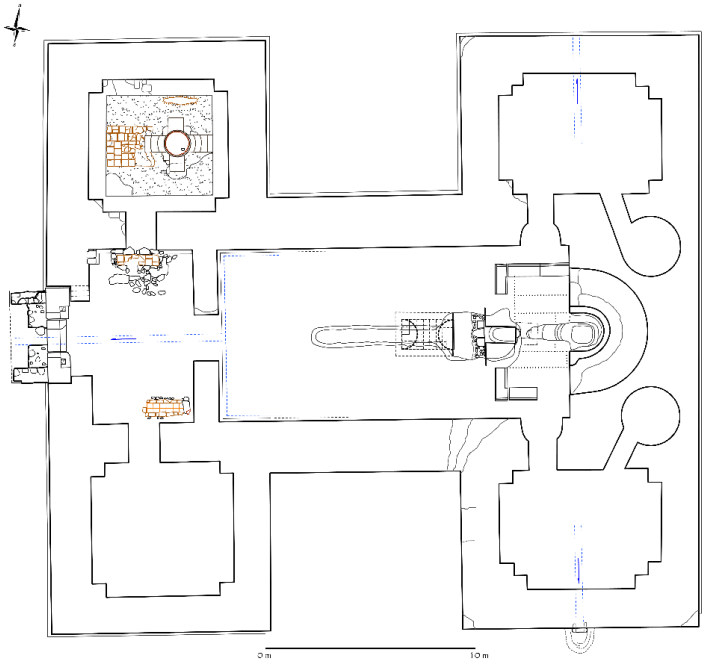


Fig. 1. Ground plan of the church on Djanavara Hill (original by Ivan Sarov, later supplemented and digitised by Martin Valchev).

'Liturgical fittings and fixtures' should be considered a *terminus technicus*. In the article, it comprises a list of several features closely linked to the Holy Liturgy (in the sense of Eucharistic liturgical service): *chancel* (*altar screen*); *mensa sacra* (*altar table*); *secondary tables with liturgical functions*; *crypt*[4] *for keeping and venerating relics*; *ciborium* (*canopy*); *cathedra* (*episcopal throne*); *synthrone*; and *ambo* (*pulpit*).

[4] Terminology concerning the places in Early Christian churches where the relics were kept and venerated is very inconsistent and confusing. Each term has its specifics, and there are arguments for and against its use. That is why in the paper the most commonly and universally used term 'a crypt' is preferred.

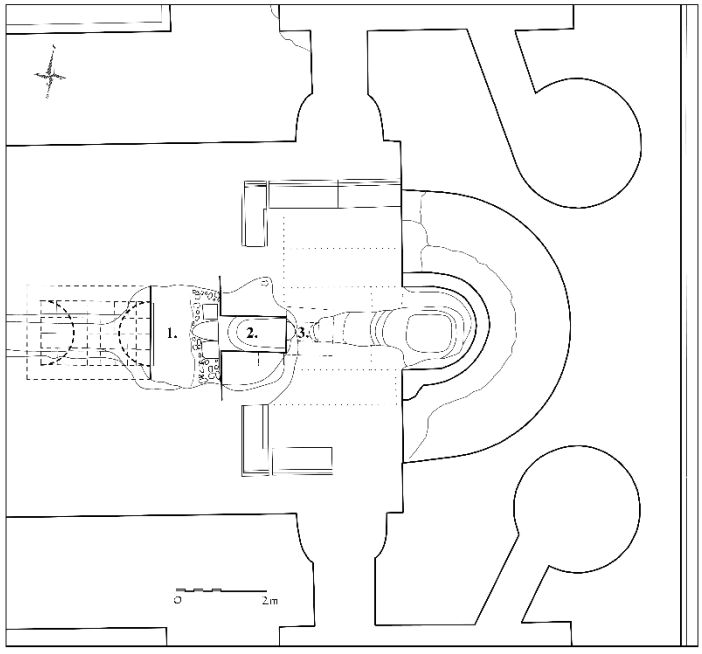


Fig. 2. Detail of the same ground plan representing the altar space and the area in front of it (original by Ivan Sarov, later supplemented and digitised by Martin Valchev).

The church on Djanavara Hill was discovered and excavated (for the first time) between 1915 and 1923 by Herman Škorpil, from Varna Archaeological Society. The most important information about the liturgical fittings and fixtures in the church was collected during that archaeological campaign. H. Škorpil made observations on the layout of the nave and the altar space, and also discovered marbles and other elements from the structures connected with the Liturgy. Unfortunately, the results from the excavation were not published.[5] It was planned that Herman's brother Karel Škorpil would do this in the United States of America in a comprehensive study entitled: *Christian Monuments in the Black Sea County of the Balkan Peninsula*.[6] Those

[5] With the exception of some short notes in: Schkorpil & Schkorpil 1921, 59–61 and Ivanova 1922/1925, 460–461. A very general and inaccurate ground plan of the church (captioned 'ground plan-sketch') by the architect Alexander Rashenov was cited in Vera Ivanova's article, fig. 301 on p. 461 (fig. 3). This was the only published ground plan of the site available until 2001 (See Minchev 2001, 44, fig. 1).

[6] Several drafts of the manuscript along with a big number of photographs and other related documents are stored in the Scientific Archive of Varna Regional Museum of

efforts, however, never proved successful. Meanwhile for many decades, the textual and graphic documents from the Djanavara site have remained scattered amongst the several archives in Bulgaria and abroad.

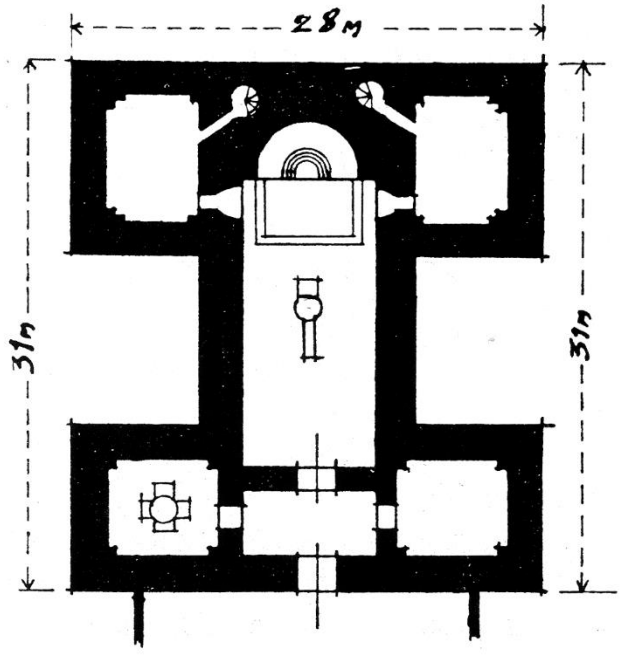


Fig. 3. The first published ground plan of the church on Djanavara Hill (author: Aleksandar Rashenov) (Ivanova 1922/1925, 461, fig. 301).

Archaeological structures and artefacts connected with the liturgical fittings and fixtures of the church on Djanavara Hill had an uncertain, and in some respect unfortunate fate. H. Škorpil passed away in 1923, and according to his will he was buried near the ruins of the church which he discovered.

History ('The Škorpil Brothers' and 'Varna Archaeological Society' funds). Unfortunately, these particular archive groups are not processed yet and the access is limited. Pictures, drawings and notes related to the same book can be found in the Scientific Archive of Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia (Funds 165k). Later in the paper the manuscript will be referenced as 'the (Škorpil's) unpublished manuscript'.

A curious letter from K. Škorpil to his close associate and participant in the excavation on Djanavara Hill A. Rashenov, suggests that actually the latter wrote the text about the church in the unpublished manuscript (Dimitrov 1992, 312; Boyadzhiev 2000, 188–189).

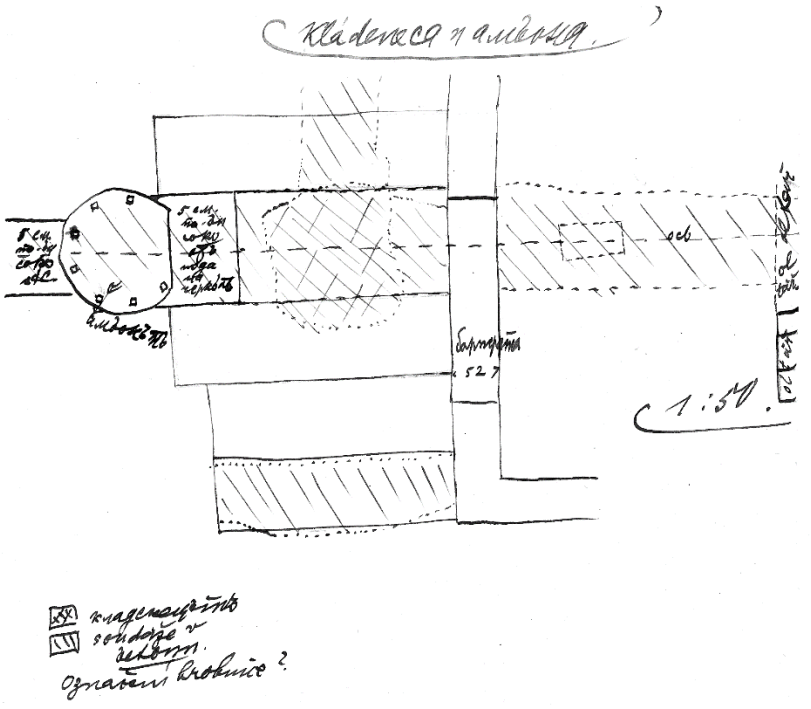


Fig. 4. Hand drawn sketch representing the altar space and the area in front of it (BAS Scientific Archive, Sofia, fonds 165k, list 1-522a, 42).

Varna Archaeological Society initiated the creation of a lavish monument at the burial site (completed in 1930) (fig. 5). The monument incorporated sculpted marble pieces from the church, including a certain number of pillars and colonettes from the chancel (mostly fragmented). In some cases, they suffered additional cutting in order to fit into the monument. Furthermore, the metal fence surrounding the grave was fixed to the marble elements by iron rods and cement that caused more damage to the artefacts. In the late 20th – early 21th century, the burial site was vandalised several times, leaving scattered and broken marble decorations. Following these incidents, the pieces were transferred permanently to the department of Archaeology[7] of Varna Regional Museum of History.

[7] Today's department of Archaeology is commonly called *Varna Archaeological Museum*.



Fig. 5. The monument at H. Škorpil's grave near the ruins of the church on Djanavara Hill (archive photo of 'Varna Archaeological Society' fonds in the Scientific archive of Varna Regional Museum of History).



Fig. 6. Fragmented marble elements: pillars and collonettes from the chancel, table legs, impost capitals, etc., found during the first archaeological campaign (archive photo of 'Varna Archaeological Society' fonds in the Scientific archive of Varna Regional Museum of History).

More marble elements are recognisable on some of the archival photographs (fig. 6-10, 30). Perhaps they have been kept in the Museum ever since the excavation, but the author was not able to find accurate documentation, and therefore unable to identify all of them with certainty among the numerous marbles in the museum storage spaces. Apart from the aforementioned artefacts, there were structures connected with the Liturgy preserved at the site. Some of them are still *in situ*: the underground chambers, including a crypt for relics and a tomb (fig. 23-29), the base of the altar screen (fig. 6, 8-11, 18, 30), and the remains of the synthrone (fig. 20-22).

Unlike these examples, the base of the ambo was found broken into pieces. Subsequently, it was reassembled and set back in its (presumably) original place (fig. 8-9, 30).

The conservation and restoration activities inside the church, which took place in several stages during the course of the 20th century, did not affect the liturgical installations – with one exception: the synthrone, which had been discovered in a largely damaged state and later had to be partly restored.



Fig. 7. Fragmented marble elements: pillars and collonettes from the chancel, table legs, impost capitals, etc., found during the first archaeological campaign (the man in the picture has not been identified thus far)(archive photo of 'Varna Archaeological Society' fonds in the Scientific archive of Varna Regional Museum of History).



Fig. 8. The altar space and the eastern part of the nave. First archaeological campaign, general view from the south-west (archive photo of 'Varna Archaeological Society' fonds in the Scientific archive of Varna Regional Museum of History).



Fig. 9. The altar space and the eastern part of the nave. First archaeological campaign, general view from the north-west (archive photo of 'Varna Archaeological Society' fonds in the Scientific archive of Varna Regional Museum of History).



Fig. 10. The area of the western chancel's façade with test trenches in front of it. First archaeological campaign, view from the north-west (archive photo of 'Varna Archaeological Society' fonds in the Scientific archive of Varna Regional Museum of History).



Fig. 11. Northern part of the altar space with the chancel's base and the mortar foundation of the second floor. 2008, view from the east (photo: Aleksander Minchev and Vasil Tenekedjiev, courtesy of Varna Regional Museum of History).

As with H. Škorpil's tomb nearby, the archaeological site was vandalised in the late 20th and early 21st century. In this case though, vandalism was accompanied by treasure hunting, causing extensive damage to the liturgical fittings and fixtures in the church. The upper part of the underground structure was destroyed. The middle section of the chancel's base was damaged and the marble blocks were moved from their original places. The ambo base was disassembled again and the fragments scattered around (some of these were never found). Last but not least, the previously restored upper part of the synthrone was destroyed again (two times). These disturbing events motivated Alexander Minchev from Varna Archaeological Museum to launch in 1997 a new excavation campaign on Djanavara Hill. Initially the excavations were restricted to small areas only, and there were long breaks between the seasons. After 2007, they became regular, almost annual, and more significant in scale.[8] Because of this recent archaeological campaign, the church was completely explored and

[8] I have been a member of the archaeological team since 2007. This provides me with the valuable opportunity to have first-hand information about the site, and to investigate personally the archaeological evidence concerning the paper's topic.

documented for a second time.[9] Afterwards the focus of the excavation shifted to the architectural complex surrounding the church, proving the assumption made by the Škorpil brothers that it was not standing alone, but used to be the centre of a large monastery.[10] The new archaeological campaign made a serious contribution to the study of the liturgical planning of the Djanavara church and the relevant fittings and fixtures. It was during the same period when the excavation team managed to find, put together and process the original archival documentation.[11] Today, all of this has provided the rare opportunity to combine and analyse information concerning the church and its liturgical planning and the related constructions collected from the whole period – from the discovery of the site in the early 20th century to the present day.

Presentation of the Available Data:

1. Notes on the planning of the church

The church on Djanavara Hill has a strictly symmetrical layout (fig. 1). It was built with a long axis with an east – west alignment, with slight inclination toward northeast – southwest. The central part of the building consists of a simple, elongated, rectangular nave, a rectangular narthex on the western side, and a rectangular altar space set in the eastern end of the nave, and including a semi-circular apse inside the eastern wall. Situated on the northern and the southern long walls of the central part of the building there are four adjacent rectangular rooms. Two of them are close to the eastern end of the long walls, and the other two – to the western end. The eastern rooms together with the thick wall behind the apse form the flat eastern façade of the church. Symmetrically, the western rooms together with the outer wall of the narthex form the flat western façade. The only entrance to the building is located in the middle of this façade. Opposite from it, on the long axis of the church lies the single entrance from the narthex to the nave. Two mirroring doorways lead from the narthex to the western rooms, and two more – from the eastern end of the nave to the eastern rooms. Two symmetrical spiral staircases were built inside the eastern wall, flanking

[9] Ivan Sarov made the new geodesic record of the church (ground plan and cross-sections). The geodesist Martin Valchev documented the most recent results from the excavations in the church and from the complex around it.

[10] This idea was expressed clearly in the Škorpil's unpublished manuscript.

[11] See note 6 above.

the apse. They are accessible from the eastern rooms and used to lead to the second level of the building, which now is completely destroyed. Today the exact layout and the particularities of that upper level can be reconstructed only as a hypothesis, mainly because of the odd architecture of the church and the lack of close parallels. One more flight of stairs was built inside the western wall of the narthex, to the north from the main door. Perhaps a mirroring staircase existed on the southern side of the door, as the church demonstrates a very strong symmetry in its design. This assumption cannot be proved archaeologically, however. During some of the restoration activities in the 20th century that part of the narthex, which had been discovered largely destroyed, was restored as a plain wall without any steps.

The general outer dimensions of the building are as follows: 31 m (east – west) and 28.25 m (north – south). The narthex is 4.50 m long (E – W) and 8.25 m wide (N – S). The dimensions of the nave are: length (E – W) 16.75 m and width (N – S) 8.25 m. The altar space is narrower than the nave. It is ca. 3.50 m long (E – W) and 6.50 m wide (N – S). The apse has a diameter of 6 m, and is a little deeper than an exact half circle – 3.70 m. Doors leading to the eastern rooms are (the northern) 1.25 m and (the southern) 1.35 m wide, and seen from the side of the nave they are situated in two not very regular 'semi-circular' conches (2 m wide and ca. 1 m deep). Most probably, these niches were topped with half-domes. Thus, with their place and shape they were flanking and resembling in a smaller size the altar apse. In addition, these two doors open into the narrow (90/95 cm wide) passages between the altar space and the long walls of the nave. Therefore, the niches in front of the doors had not only an aesthetic function, but also they provided more space on the two sides of the altar, at points that were crucial for the movement of people within the building. The side rooms are symmetrical two by two. The eastern are 7.75 m long (E – W), and 5.75 m wide (N – S); the western – 6.65 m long (E – W), and 6.30 m wide (N – S).

The north-western room houses an impressive cruciform pool with steps in the eastern and the western arm of the cross. Obviously, this space functioned as a baptistery. The other three rooms were very representative, with multi-coloured floor mosaics. However, it is not clear what exactly those rooms were used for. This question will be discussed further in the paper.

A very important part of the holy site was the underground structure located under the altar space and the middle of the nave. Its

detailed description will be provided later in the subsection dedicated to it.

Some geological characteristics of the site where the church stands also have certain relevance to the paper's topic. In the whole area, under the topsoil lie layers of sedimentary rocks (limestones, sandstones, etc.), formed millions of years ago when this part of the Balkan Peninsula was on the bottom of an ancient sea. Where the church was built, the topsoil is particularly thin and the foundations lie directly on the rock. The floors, in fact, were set almost directly on top of the bedrock, after certain levelling with layers of stones and mortar. Particularly interesting is the way the underground facility was designed and constructed. It was built in a natural cavern within the bedrock containing a deposit of sea sand. Between the floor of the nave and the vault of the cavern there is a layer of rock around 60 cm thick. This fascinating geological setting will be further commented upon in the article.

Another important fact concerning the floor should be mentioned here because of its direct impact on the exploration of the church. During the first excavation campaign, a certain number of test trenches were made inside the building. This is easily visible on some of the archival pictures and sketches (fig. 4, 10, 23), and in addition, traces of some of those interventions have been detected during the more recent excavations (fig. 1). Especially important are the trenches, or more exactly – a single trench with some interruptions along its length, dug in the altar space and the nave following the main axis of the building. It starts in the apse in front of the synthrone (fig. 21), stops at the altar screen, and then continues on the other side in the nave. The outlines of the trench are uneven, and the width is about 80 cm. The depth varies significantly (from ca. 15 cm to ca. 60 cm). This particular intervention was destructive and not easy to explain. It will be commented upon again in connection with each of the affected liturgical installations.

2. Chancel

As mentioned above, the altar space consists of two connected parts: a semi-circular apse and a rectangular area extended to the west from it into the nave (fig. 2). The altar screen is used to enclose the rectangular area from the north, south and west (fig. 8-10). Today only parts of its raised marble base still stand *in situ*. Škorpil's test trench there revealed an important fact: the level of the original altar space was not raised above that of the nave. At a certain point, the altar space

underwent a serious repair. The floor level was raised by 10/15 cm with a layer of white mortar containing small pieces of crushed brick and tile in the mixture. The floor of the area in front of the apse was covered with huge rectangular marble slabs – ca. 80 cm wide and most of them – ca. 2.80 m long. None of those slabs have survived, but the remains of the grout from the joints remain on the mortar layer underneath, indicating clearly their shape and size (fig. 11, 20-22). A small area of the original floor made of finer white mortar with small pieces of crushed brick is visible in the trench (fig. 21). Traces of a grout joint on the smooth top side of the mortar show that it used to be covered with slabs.[12] Close inspection of the chancel's base reveals beyond any doubt that it was set with the original floor. After the level was raised, the base 'sank' a little bit more into the floor.

The base of the altar screen is made from massive marble blocks, ca. 60 cm wide, ca. 35 cm high, and with different lengths (from 1.27 to 2.10 m) (fig. 8-10). Their back surfaces (the side facing the altar) were roughly tilled. On the contrary, the top and the outer face (i.e. those sides that were visible from the nave) were perfectly finished, and an example of very fine work. The outer side was sculpted with a well-proportioned profile following the model of the Attic base (fig. 12).

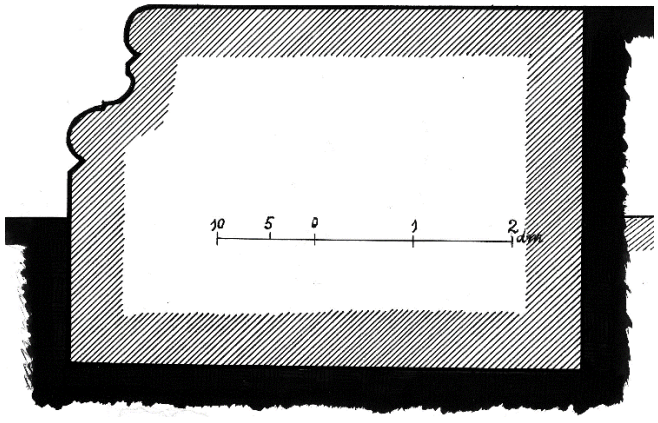


Fig. 12. Cross section of a marble block from the chancel's base (BAS Scientific Archive, Sofia, fonds 165k, list 1-511, 13).

[12] Some small pieces from the mortar foundation of the original floor were preserved in the apse too (fig. 21).

Particularly interesting are the holes on top of the base marking the places where the pillars (or the posts) of the altar screen once stood. Not all of those holes are still preserved because of some localised damages on the marble surface. Despite this, the surviving holes are numerous enough to reconstruct the design of the screen along general lines.

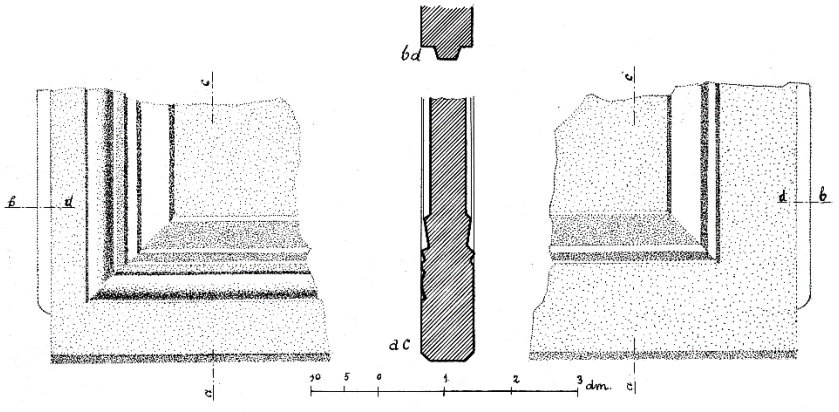


Fig. 13. Drawing and cross section of a fragmented marble chancel plate (BAS Scientific Archive, Sofia, fonds 165k, list 1-511, 35).

The most important entrance to the altar space from a liturgical point of view – the holy door – was in the middle of the west façade of the chancel. The door was ca. 1 m wide.[13] The opening was flanked by two pillars. Next to them, there were two impressively large marble plates (ca. 2.15 m in width), one on each side, reaching the pillars set into the corners of the enclosure.

Each of the lateral façades of the altar screen had two smaller plates (ca. 90 cm and ca. 70 cm in width) and (theoretically) a door between them – ca. 80 cm wide (fig. 11, 18). These two secondary entrances to the altar space corresponded to the entrances to the eastern rooms of the church.[14]

[13] Calculations hereby take into consideration the distance between the holes for fixing the pillars to the chancel's base (in some cases reconstructed on the principal of symmetry), the size of those holes, and the width of the pillars.

[14] An observation made for the first time by Iva Dosseva independently from the interpretation of the excavation team (Doseva 2002, 12).

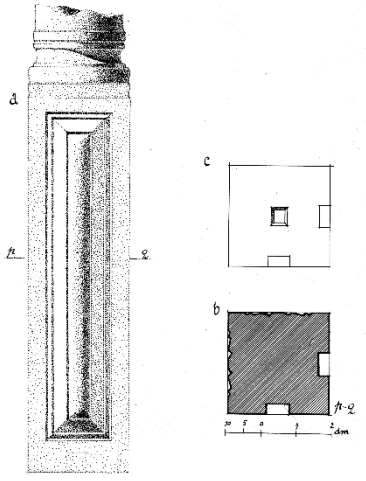


Fig. 14. Drawing and cross section of a fragmented marble chancel pillar surmounted by a collonette (BAS Scientific Archive, Sofia, fonds 165k, list 1-511, 23).

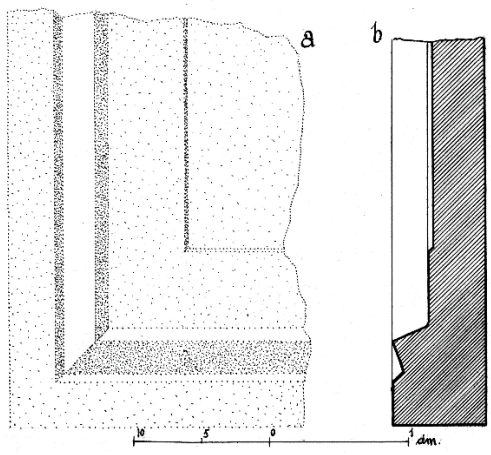


Fig. 15. Drawing and cross section of a fragmented marble rectangular table top (BAS Scientific Archive, Sofia, fonds 165k, list 1-511, 33).

A significant number of marble fragments from the construction of the chancel – plates, pillars, collonettes, handrails, etc. – have been found in the debris of the building, especially during the first excavations. Many of them are visible on the archival photos (fig. 6-7, 30) and some artefacts were recorded with drawings too. Unfortunately, very few of those artefacts can be seen today in the Archaeological Museum.

The chancel's plates were rectangular, approximately 1 m high, 5-6 cm thick and as noted, with different width. They had simple relief frames (fig. 13). Fragments from Djanavara Hill are very small and almost nothing survived from the decoration.[15] However, most probably it followed the contemporary fashion in the Western Black Sea region dominated by the workshops of Proconessos Island and Constantinople.[16] Among the most common motifs represented in the middle of the plates were the relief Latin crosses or the monograms of Jesus Christ combined with crosses, sometimes represented in a circle;

[15] With the exception of small relief details that could be from crosses or monograms of Jesus Christ).

[16] See for example the marble plates from different venues in the Western Black Sea region in: Barsanti 1989 (1990).

also combinations of rhomboid and triangular frames with floral ornaments in them, etc.

The plates were set in vertical position on the chancel's base, and as already noted supported from either side by pillars with rectangular cross-section (26/28 x 26/28 cm, and a little bit more than 1 m high), cut with long slots on their vertical sides devised for this purpose. On the top of one of the blocks of the base (the western one in the southern lateral side), there is a long and narrow area, like a strip, where the smooth surface was deliberately roughened with a chisel. Apparently, one of the plates was set on top of that strip and perhaps fixed with mortar. What was the precise reason behind this intervention is not known, but there are no such roughened strips under the rest of the plates of the enclosure.

On top of the plates, there were marble handrails. Those were long blocks with a simple profile, with flat and smooth tops, and with a shallow slot in the bottom side to fit into the top of the chancel's plates. Handrails were fixed to the supporting pillars with iron pins and/or with mortar. Holes for the pins are visible on some of the pillars, above the vertical slots for the plates. Some pieces of such marble handrails were found in the debris of the church and could be noted on some of the archival photographs (fig. 9).[17]

The design of the pillars depended on their position in the enclosure (fig. 14). As mentioned, the sides to which the plates should be fitted had long shallow slots. The rest of the vertical sides were decorated with simple rectangular relief frames carved one inside another. It is important to note that all examples of such pillars from the Djanavara church used to be surmounted by collonettes, and these double elements were cut together as a single marble piece. Usually they were found broken, but the fragments are easy to identify. These elements point out that the altar screen to which they belonged was of the so-called 'high' type. No pieces from the epistyle of the structure have been discovered so far. This is a common problem with the chancels of this type throughout the whole Diocese of Thracia.[18] The

[17] It should be noted that in the archival documents and in some publications, K. Škorpil interpreted such marble elements incorrectly as 'bases' under the plates and not as handrails. See for example Schkorpil 1905, 128, 137-138.

[18] Observations that I made while studying the materials from the Diocese of Thracia (Tenekedjiev 2015a; 2015 b).

most probable solution to this problem would be that maybe the top beam above the collonettes was made of wood.

Elements belonging to a high chancel should be connected not to the original design of the altar screen in the Djanavara Church, but to reconstruction after the repairs made in the interior. All problems associated with the type of the chancel and its dating will be discussed further at a later stage in the paper.

It should be added that same type of plates and handrails could be used both in the altar screen and in the hypothetical galleries on the upper level of the Djanavara church. This means that the original function and placement of the fragments found in the debris cannot be determined with certainty. However, the typical design of the altar screen and the slots and holes on the pillars show that elements (plates and handrails) of precisely this type were used in the altar enclosure.

3. *Mensa sacra* and secondary tables

Nothing has survived *in situ* from the construction of the altar table. Presumably, its place could have been on the main axis of the church – in the middle of the rectangular front part of the altar space, on the chord of the apse, or entirely in the apse (fig. 2).[19] The second and third options though are hardly credible because the synthrone does not leave enough room there to accommodate a large table. Furthermore, if fitted in the middle of the rectangular altar enclosure, it would be approximately above the crypt with relics. This link between the mensa sacra and the relics was particularly important in Early Christian church planning.[20] Therefore, this placement of the altar table in the Djanavara church should be considered the most logical and probable.

[19] Sotiriou 1929, 229–230; Tenekedjiev 2015a, 34; 2015 b, I, 182–183 (with a list of examples from the Diocese of Thracia).
[20] Orlandos 1995, 454–468.



Fig. 16. Fragment of a marble table top (probably sigma-shaped) (photo: Aleksandar Minchev and Vasil Tenekedjiev, courtesy of Varna Regional Museum of History).

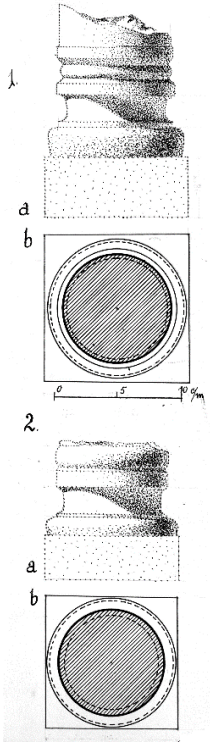


Fig. 17. Drawing and cross section of a fragmented collonette-like table leg (BAS Scientific Archive, Sofia, fonds 165k, list 1-511, 19).

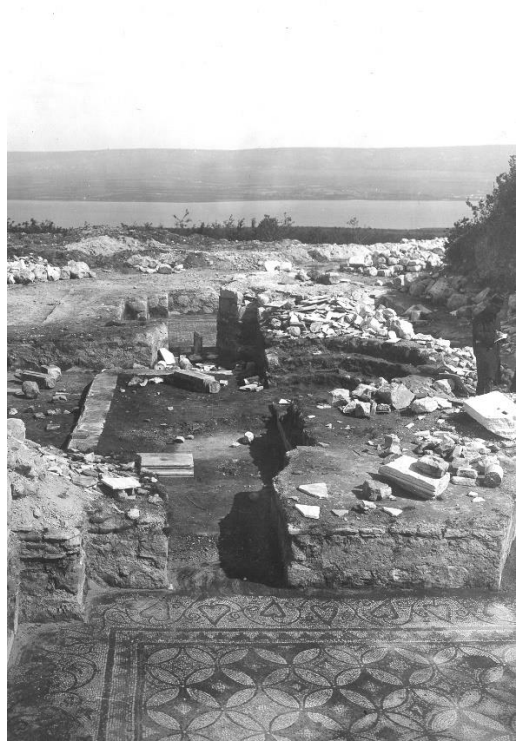


Fig. 18. The eastern part of the church: the side rooms and the altar space. First archaeological campaign, general view from the south (archive photo of 'Varna Archaeological Society' fonds in the Scientific archive of Varna Regional Museum of History).

Archaeological test trenches from the early 20th century have considerably damaged the middle part of the altar space, thus erasing all hypothetical traces of the holy table. One could assume that the first archaeological team did not find anything specific there, and that was why they proceeded with the digging of a substantial test trench. In any case, the course of the excavation in 2008 made it possible to investigate once again the floor in the altar space.[21] The aforementioned traces of grout joints preserved on the mortar bed of the floors (both the earlier and the later one) show that the area where the holy table should have stood was also covered with the marble slabs of the flooring (fig. 21). On the more recent floor there is no visible evidence of any special construction that could serve as a base for the mensa. As much as it can be determined from the small test trench in the altar space, the same observation is likewise valid for the original floor.

The next logical question is what the construction of the holy table would have been (both before and after the repairs), if there are no specific traces on the floor.[22] Analysis hereby concerns mostly the altar table after the repairs, and only hypothetically the one before that. The option of an altar table with a solid body (built of stone, bricks, mortar, etc.) should be completely ruled out, as such a construction would definitely leave easily identifiable remains. Then the mensa sacra should have been of a style with legs. Two options could be proposed. Firstly, the legs of the table could be fixed directly to the marble slabs of the floor. Secondly, a massive marble (or limestone) slab could be set on the floor and could serve as a table base. In this case, the legs would be fixed to its top side. Hypothetically speaking, the base could be made of stones or bricks bound with mortar but this option should be discarded for the same reason as that of the mensa with a solid body.

There is not enough archaeological evidence to reconstruct the exact shape and size of the holy table. However, some comments are possible. Generally speaking, the most common type of altar table in the Diocese of Thracia has a rectangular top supported by four legs in the shape of small collonettes.[23] Very rarely, only if the table is too large,

[21] Minchev & Tenekedjiev 2009.

[22] For more information about the types of the Early Christian liturgical tables from the territory of present-day Bulgaria see Tenekedjiev 2010; for the territory of the Diocese of Thracia – Tenekedjiev 2015a, 16–19, 34–35; 2015b, I, 89–100, 182–187.

[23] Tenekedjiev 2010; 2015a, 17–18, 34; 2015b, I, 183–184.

the construction could have six or more supporting legs.[24] Some possible fragments were found in the Djanavara church during both the first and the recent archaeological campaigns, yet it is not certain that any of them belonged to the construction of the altar table. Some of the fragments are from collonette-like legs (fig. 17). The rest are from table tops. Two fragments with frames with similar cross section (one of them found in the early 20th and the other – in the early 21st century) probably belonged to the same table top (fig. 15). It was rectangular and massive. The exact size could not be determined but the thickness of the central part (ca. 3.5 cm) suggests that it was the top of a relatively large mensa. There is also a small piece from a different rectangular table top. It is with a sculpted frame with a simple, elegant cross section typical for this kind of marble item. This piece is thinner than the other, and apparently belonged to a smaller table. These are the only two tops that could be connected, although hypothetically, with the mensa sacra of the church. It is not mandatory though that either of them should be a part of the holy table. A certain number of secondary tables were commonly in use in Early Christian churches, and the pieces found on Djanavara Hill could well have belonged to such fittings. Another marble fragment from the site most likely was from a secondary table (fig. 16). It is a corner of a table top and has a very specific cross-section with a deep curve connecting the central part with the raised frame. This kind of cross-section is more typical for table tops with a round shape, or with the so-called *sigma* shape. In an ecclesiastic context, tops with such form were generally used, not for altar tables, but for secondary tables: for collecting and preparing the offerings for the Eucharist, or to mark the place where some relics were kept (if it was not under the altar table), etc.[25] This third fragment most probably was from such a sigma-shaped table. Its function however could not be identified because it was not found in a clear archaeological context, and the fragment has no features that can help with the interpretation. It is not even certain whether the table in question had any ritual

[24] I have found only two examples so far. In both cases, only the marble base still exists. The first is in the Episcopal basilica in Marcianopolis (Devnya) (Tenekedjiev 2019, 146–147). The second is a *spolia* in the wall of the mediaeval church of Hagia Sophia in Bizye (Vize) that was built on the ruins of an Early Christian Church (Ötüken & Ousterhout 1989, 140, Pl. XXXIIIb).

[25] This topic was discussed for example in Kitzinger 1960, 30–32. The archaeological evidence from the Diocese of Thracia supports the conclusions (Tenekedjiev 2010; 2015a, 18–19, 35; 2015b, I, 94–100, 185–187).

purpose in the church and/or the monastery, or if it was used for some function in the more ordinary, daily life of certain inhabitants of the complex.[26]

A discussion about the secondary tables leads to another important question concerning the liturgical planning of Djanavara church. It regards the specific secondary liturgical place, called s*keuophylakion*, where the members of the congregation would bring their gifts for the Eucharist and the bread and the wine would be prepared for the sacrament. The *skeuophylakion* was also used to store and keep liturgical plates, books, vestments, and other items. In the Early Christian period, the location of this place could vary from church to church. It could be a chamber (or chambers) near the entrance, or near the altar space,[27] and it could even be a separate small building nearby.[28] Usually this place, or this room, was furnished with one or more tables, and sometimes with benches along the walls.[29] In the Djanavara church there is no room that could be identified for sure as a *skeuophylakion*. The building has four side rooms, but the baptistery should be excluded from the discussion for obvious reasons. As for the other three rooms, nothing there clearly suggests that they, or any one of them, functioned in such a way. There is only one that could be considered an exception, although debatable, and that is the north-eastern room. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the three rooms were floored with mosaics. In each of the two eastern rooms, there was also an underground channel – part of a complicated drainage system for rainwater. At a certain time that system was somehow compromised. At that time most likely, the aforementioned serious repairs were undertaken in the church – arguably the same event that affected the altar space. In fact, this was at this time that mosaic floors were laid. The channel in the south-eastern room was blocked with stones and mortar, and permanently ceased to function. The channel in the northern mirroring room was modified. A special rectangular opening framed with marble tiles was made in the mosaic floor, and it

[26] Good example of a sigma-shaped table used in clearly not ecclesiastic context was found in the Late Antique fortress near Byala, Varna Region (information by the excavation director Valeri Yotov from Varna Regional Museum of History; the artefact was mentioned briefly in Biernatski *et al*. 2014, sample 6). For another example, from Abritus near Razgrad, see: Tenekedjiev 2014, 196, 200.

[27] Sodini 1984, 456–471.

[28] Mathews 1971, 16–18, 155–162.

[29] Biernacki 1999, 79–83.

was connected with the former channel underneath (fig.19). The purpose of this opening is not clear. One can theorise that the north-eastern room served as a *skeuophylakion*, but this is debatable. On one hand, the room itself does not look like a place with a secondary, supportive function in the church's rites. It is spacious, in fact bigger than the altar space, and richly decorated. In addition, it serves as a passageway from the nave to the upper level of the building. On the other hand, the special sewer in the floor would be a suitable feature for a *skeuophylakion*. Besides, the chancel had two (though indeed hypothetical) doorways that were directly facing the entrances of the eastern side rooms (fig. 18). This fact suggests that there was some special necessity for such a direct link between the altar space and the rooms. It is difficult to answer unambiguously, but maybe they functioned after all (at least partly) as secondary places connected with the Holy Liturgy. The assumption is especially applicable for the north-eastern room.

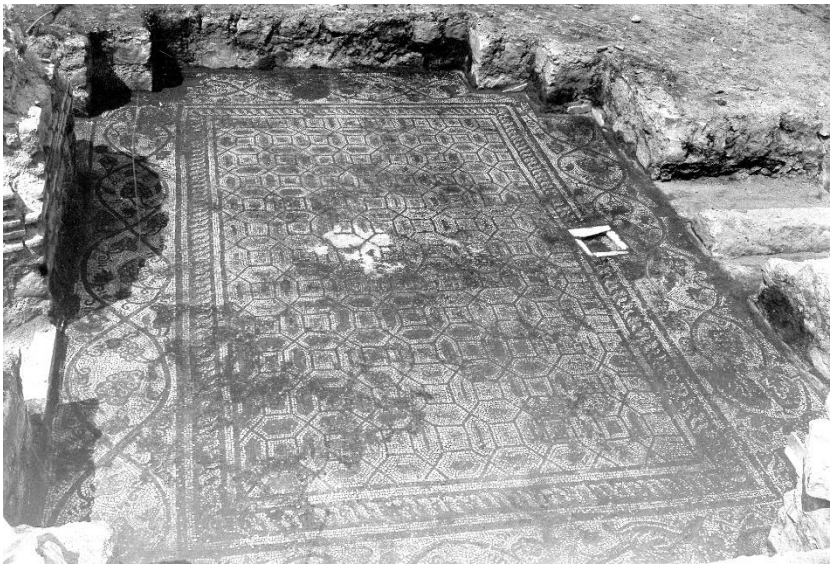


Fig. 19. The north-eastern side room with its floor mosaic and the sewer opening made in it. First archaeological campaign, view from the east (archive photo of 'Varna Archaeological Society' fonds in the Scientific archive of Varna Regional Museum of History).

At the end of this subsection, some notes are necessary regarding the ciborium in the Djanavara church. More precisely the question would be whether there was a canopy above the altar table or not – both

before and after the repairs. This fixture usually consists of four columns supporting a small dome, or a 'roof' with a different design.[30] Although ciboria were common elements in the complex of the altar table in the Early Christian churches, their presence was far from obligatory.[31] In the church on Djanavara Hill there is no archaeological evidence to suggest the existence of such a liturgical fixture. Ciboria were relatively large and massive, and it is noteworthy that there are absolutely no traces on the second floor in the altar space. The test trench there does not reach the areas where the columns of a hypothetical canopy should have stood. Therefore, no observations are possible for the earlier period. There are no marble elements from the site that could be linked to such a liturgical fixture either. A reasonable conclusion would be that there was no ciborium in the church after the repairs in its interior. Probably the same was valid for the period before that as well.

4. Synthrone and cathedra

The rear side of the altar space in the Djabavara church was dominated by a large synthrone in the apse (fig. 2, 8-10, 20-22). Its construction followed the curve of the conch and was devised with steps arranged theatrically. The synthrone ends at the chord of the apse with flat, vertical sides facing the nave. It was built of stone and white mortar containing small pieces of crushed brick. The front (western) sides of the fixture and the steps were made with roughly worked limestone blocks. The fill of the space behind them was made with crushed stones. By the time of the first excavation, four steps of the fixture had been preserved (the uppermost of them – only partly). Today, because of the previously mentioned cases of vandalism and the restorations, only part of the first step still remains in its original state. Fortunately, the apse was carefully inspected and documented in 2008 just before it suffered the worst damage.

The synthrone was built before the repairs of the altar space that raised its floor level. The second floor in the rectangular area in front of the apse does not continue inside it. It ends at the chord of the altar conch. The floor in the apse was raised more, and reached the level of the first step of the synthrone. As it is visible on some of the old photographs, the western vertical side of this new-constructed

[30] Orlandos (1954) 1995, 471–480.

[31] For the territory of the Diocese of Thracia, see: Tenekedjiev 2015a, 19, 34–35; 2015b, I, 101–103, 184–185.

platform, together with the lower parts of the two western sides of the synthrone, was covered with marble tiles (fig. 8-9).



Fig. 20. The synthrone. 2008, view from the south-west (photo: Aleksandar Minchev and Vasil Tenekedjiev, courtesy of Varna Regional Museum of History).

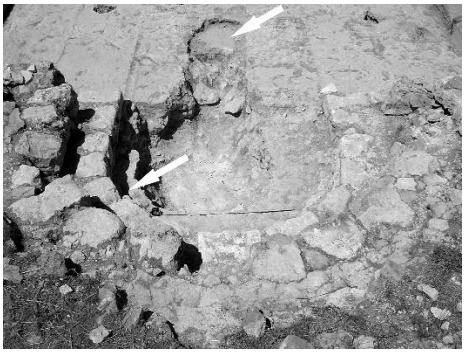


Fig. 21. The synthrone and part of the altar space (the white arrows point to the areas where the mortar bed of the original floor is preserved). 2008, view from the east (photo: Aleksandar Minchev and Vasil Tenekedjiev, courtesy of Varna Regional Museum of History).

The risers of the lower steps of the synthrone (including the first one) bear remains of white mortar with the imprints from marble tiles (fig. 22). No piece of this marble revetment has survived *in situ*, but there were numerous fragments found in the debris of the building. Similarly, marble tiles were used to cover the bottom part of the walls in all the spaces inside the church. Some pieces are preserved in various places. Furthermore, the pool in the baptistery was also lined with marble revetment. Some fragments are still visible there, fixed in the mortar. All this information provides a fairly clear idea of how the synthrone was originally decorated. A curious detail connected with the design of this fixture are the holes in the risers of the steps (fig. 21-22). Almost every block has a hole. Apparently, those were used to fit in metal pins that used to hold the marble tiles in their proper places.

The reconstruction of the synthrone is more or less hypothetical. The construction has a total width of ca. 2.10 m. The tread of each of the two lower steps is ca. 30 cm deep, and the riser is 30 cm high. If all the steps were of equal with, the fixture could have seven steps. This however, is not certain. The most important part of the synthrone is the top. It was only there where the seats of the clergy were accommodated. The top step served as a bench, and in the middle was the seat of the

bishop (the cathedra or the throne). One could expect that this top part of the synthrone and the cathedra in particular were designed in some more special and elaborate way. In the church on Djanavara Hill, the top of the fixture under discussion was completely destroyed. Therefore, it cannot be determined what the bench for the clergy and the cathedra looked like, nor even how many steps the synthrone had exactly – these are details which are essential for the interpretation and dating of the fixture.



Fig. 22. Southern side of the synthrone. 2008, view from the north-west (photo: Aleksandar Minchev and Vasil Tenekedjiev, courtesy of Varna Regional Museum of History).

6. Underground crypt for relics and tomb[32]

No doubt, the most interesting features of the church are the underground chambers found by H. Škorpil under the floor of the altar and the nave (fig. 2). As mentioned, they were constructed inside a natural cavern containing a sand deposit, formed in the sedimentary rocks under the site.

The exact shape and size of the original cavern are unknown. A rectangular opening with slightly outward-curving sides and rounded corners (1.04 m long and 80 wide) was cut in the rock roof of the cavern to provide access to it (fig. 23). The opening was located on the main axis of the church, in the space between the holy doors of the chancel

[32] The majority of the information in this subsection was published in an article dedicated to more recent Early Christian archaeological discoveries in Varna and its region (Tenekedjiev 2021). Here though, some new comments were added.

and the supposed place of the ambo in front of it. A portion of the sand was removed through the opening in the rock, and the cavity was used to construct several interconnected structures inside it.



Fig. 23. The opening in the floor providing access to the underground chambers (already partly damaged by a test trench). Underneath lies the tomb's vault. First archaeological campaign, view from the east (archive photo of 'Varna Archaeological Society' fonds in the Scientific archive of Varna Regional Museum of History).

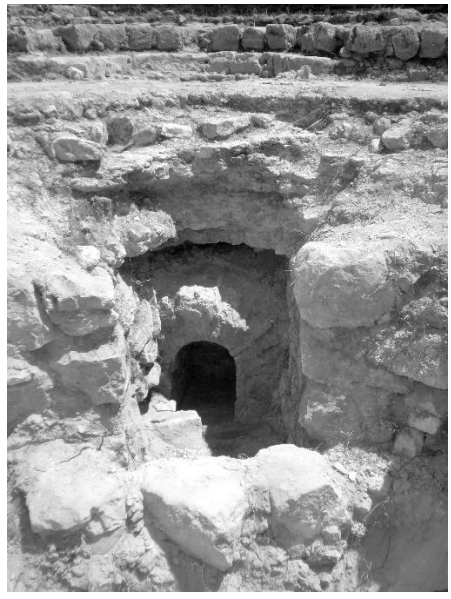


Fig. 24. Underground chambers 2 & 3, and the layer of rock above them (already partly destroyed by treasure hunters). 2008, view from the west (photo: Aleksandar Minchev and Vasil Tenekedjiev, courtesy of Varna Regional Museum of History).

The space right under the opening, or *chamber 1* (fig. 2:1), in fact could be called a 'chamber' only figuratively. It is just an irregular cavity in the sand deposit. Eastward from it, there are two other chambers set in a row on the main axis of the building. *Chamber 2* (fig. 2:2) looks like a short corridor (1.40 m long and 70/80 cm wide) with a floor of sand, the natural rock for the ceiling (now broken), and with long walls built of large, roughly hewn stones (fig. 24-26). On some of the old photographs, it is visible that the walls were plastered. Unfortunately, none of this plaster coating has survived to the time of the most recent excavation campaign. Originally, there was no western wall. The access was directly from the west, from *chamber 1*. After the relics were placed

inside, the access was closed permanently with masonry. *Chamber 2* served as a sort of vestibule to the easternmost chamber (or *chamber 3*) (fig. 2:3). Apparently, it was meant to be located under the altar table.

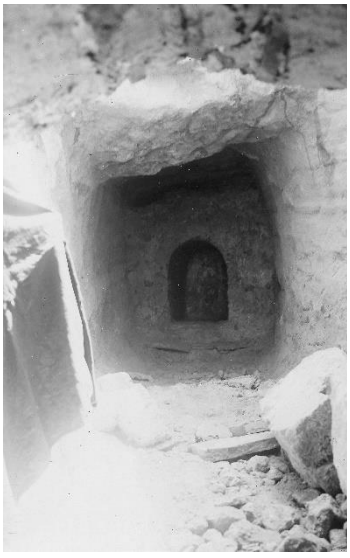


Fig. 25. Underground chambers 2 & 3 with the preserved layer of rock on top. First archaeological campaign, view from the west (archive photo of 'Varna Archaeological Society' fonds in the Scientific archive of Varna Regional Museum of History).

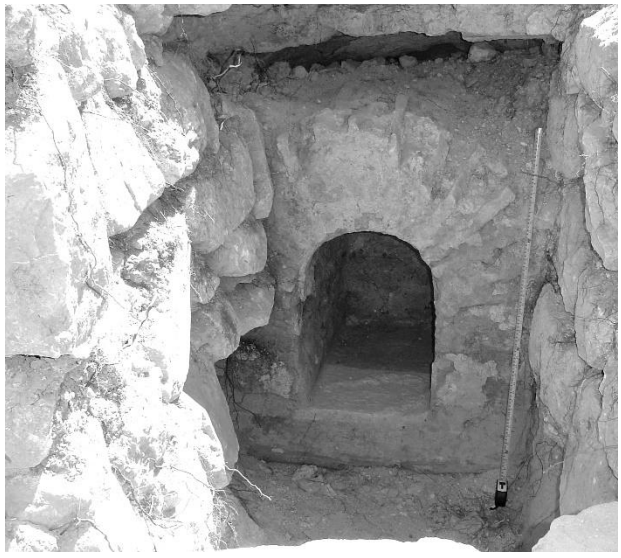


Fig. 26. Underground chambers 2 & 3. 2008, view from the west (photo: Aleksandar Minchev and Vasil Tenekedjiev, courtesy of Varna Regional Museum of History).

Chamber 3 was built entirely of red bricks (32 x 32 x 3 cm) and fine mortar containing small pieces of crushed brick. It has a rectangular plan and a barrel vault ceiling (67 cm long, 38 cm wide, and 58 cm high). The access was from the west, from *chamber 2*, and it was closed with a thin wall of bricks and mortar. *Chamber 3* and the wall in front of it were plastered with fine reddish mortar mixed with brick powder. This was the proper crypt of the church, and contained three reliquaries of marble, silver and gold, set one into another (fig. 27). The innermost box contains fragments of bones from an unknown saint, and a small wooden fragment, which probably was believed to be from the Holy Cross. Westward from *chamber 1*, there is a large rectangular tomb with

a barrel vault (2.42/2.47 m long, 1.40 m wide and 1.23 m high) (fig. 28-29). The structure occupies the area under the middle of the nave. It is built entirely of bricks with white mortar containing pieces of crushed building ceramic, and the floor is covered with bricks set in straight rows. Some of the bricks used in the tomb are red, but most of them are yellow in colour. All of these are of approximately the same size as the bricks used for the crypt. The access was from the east, from *chamber 1*, and after the burial, the tomb was closed by building its eastern wall. Two individuals were buried in the tomb: an adult male, whose body was in a wooden coffin, and a younger male whose bones were in a smaller wooden casket – obviously a secondary burial. This information is from H. Škorpil's excavation.[33] Today, the human remains found in the tomb are no longer preserved to be further inspected.

Burial in the tomb under the nave was difficult from a practical point of view. The main challenge was how to put the coffin through the narrow well-like opening cut in the floor of the church and the thick rock layer underneath. In order to deal with this serious obstacle the western side of this 'well' was not left vertical but cut in a certain angle (fig. 23).[34] Thus, it became possible, although not easy, to bring a coffin through the opening almost directly into the tomb. The peculiar fact that the eastern side of the tomb had been left open until the burial and the wall was built after it probably could be explained in the same way – as an effort to make the burial easier.

It is important to note as a general observation that the whole underground facility was not designed to be regularly accessed. After depositing the relics, and after the burial, the underground structures were completely and permanently closed. *Chamber 1* was filled back and the opening in the floor of the church – sealed with stones and mortar.[35]

7. Ambo

The church on Djanavara Hill had an ambo. Unfortunately, most of the pieces of its construction have not survived. The only preserved

[33] These details are from K. Škorpil's unpublished manuscript, and they differ a little bit from the short description, published in Schkorpil & Schkorpil 1921, 60. There the authors mentioned only that the coffins were two – one big and one small.

[34] K. Škorpil mentions this detail in his unpublished manuscript. This cannot be seen on the archival photograph, apparently because the latter was taken after that area was destroyed by a test trench (visible on the left side).

[35] Again, information from K. Škorpil's unpublished manuscript.

element is the marble base (broken but reassembled except for only two fragments) (fig. 31).

Three questions concerning the ambo arise here: firstly, about its original location in the nave, secondly about its design, and lastly about its orientation.



Fig. 27. Set of reliquaries made of marble, silver and gold with semi-precious stones, nested one into another, found in the underground chamber 3 (photo: Rumyana Kostadinova, Courtesy of Varna Regional Museum of History).

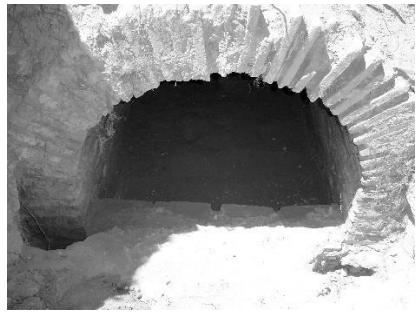


Fig. 28. The tomb under the middle of the nave. The eastern wall was almost entirely demolished when the tomb was accessed for the first time. 2008, view from the east (photo: A. Minchev and V. Tenekedjiev, courtesy of Varna Regional Museum of History).

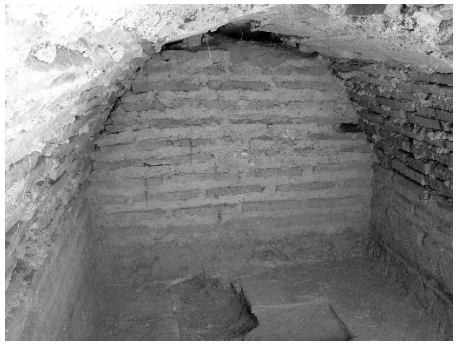


Fig. 29. Interior of the tomb under the middle of the nave. 2008, view from the east (photo: Aleksandar Minchev and Vasil Tenekedjiev, courtesy of Varna Regional Museum of History).



Fig. 30. The reassembled marble base of the ambo. At the background – the chancel's base. First archaeological campaign, view from the south-west (archive photo of 'Varna Archaeological Society' fonds in the Scientific archive of Varna Regional Museum of History).

The question of the location seems easy to answer. H. Škorpil and his team put the ambo's base in the middle of the nave, on the main axis, right above the tomb. The fixture was recorded there on the first published ground plan of the church (the one provided by Alexander Rashenov) (fig. 3), on several archival photographs (fig. 8-9, 30), and on a hand-drawn sketch in the Škorpil brothers' archive in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia (BAS) (fig. 4). Furthermore, K. Škorpil provided some information about the ambo in his unpublished manuscript. He noted there that the exact location of the base was identified by traces on the mortar foundation of the floor. More precisely – ridges remaining from the grout joints between the now missing marble slabs. He specified that the base was on the main axis, at 2.9 m to the west from the altar's enclosure.

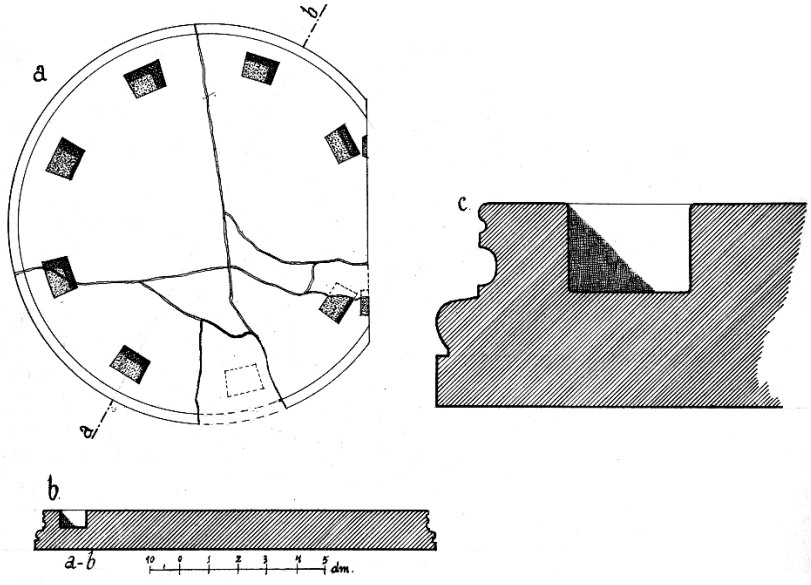


Fig. 31. Drawing and cross section of the base of the ambo (BAS Scientific Archive, Sofia, fonds 165k, list 1-511, 14).

The question about the shape of the ambo remains hypothetical, because no element from the upper part of the fixture have been discovered so far. Nevertheless, the base could provide some very important hints. It is a round plate, 18 cm thick, and with diameter of 1.37 m. The bottom side is flat and well worked. Top is also flat and the vertical side (the periphery) is sculpted and has an elegant Attic-like profile. On the top side, following the curved edge and at even distance

from one another, there are eight trapezoid holes (13 x 9 x 6 cm). The top part of the construction was fixed in them. Most probably, the ambo did not have a solid body or a body assembled of slabs, but eight separate pillars or colonettes supported the upper platform. The fact that base's upper sides were made in such a very fine manner, and apparently were meant to be visible, supports this assumption. The round periphery of the base was cut straight on one side and there are two additional holes near the straight edge. The cut was made there to fix stairs, and this is certain evidence that the ambo had steps only from one side. K. Škorpil did not fail to note this too in his unpublished manuscript, adding that the steps were facing the altar. However, there are some confusing details in the available archival images that need to be discussed further. They concern both the shape of the ambo and the orientation of its construction.

On the first published ground plan of the church, the ambo has a very peculiar layout (fig. 3). The middle part is round, and there are two rectangular extensions from east and west. The former is shorter and wider, and the latter is longer and narrower. No specific information on that matter has been provided in the available short publications on the church. Thus, this sketchy image became one of the difficulties in the interpretation of the site. The long rectangle was identified as a flight of stairs (from west!).[36] No explanation was proposed though for the odd eastern rectangle where a second flight of stairs would be expected. The Škorpil's above-mentioned hand-drawn sketch in the archives of BAS could add some more details to the discussion, although it is unlikely to solve the problem. On the sketch the area of the altar space, the chancel, the underground chambers, and the ambo were represented (fig. 4). Traces of grout joints on the mortar foundation of the floor in the nave and in the altar space were also depicted. An especially interesting addition to the sketch are the test trenches from the first excavation. They were visualized with patterns, explained in a legend. Unfortunately, despite all these details the image is still confusing. Firstly, the two rectangular extensions were filled with the pattern for test trenches. Secondly, they were drawn with solid lines like the grout joints on the mortar. Thirdly, short notes were added to the rectangles, saying: *5 cm higher than the floor of the church*. The reconstructed base of the ambo was represented overlapping the rectangles. In fact, the archaeological situation cannot be analysed in a satisfactory manner.

[36] Doseva 2011, 152.

What were those rectangular shapes projected above the floor level? It looks like they cannot be linked directly to the marble ambo's base. Could they be part of another fixture? Probably an earlier ambo? Another question is why the author of the first published ground plan added the rectangles to the base. On the one hand, A. Rashenov knew the site very well and it is hard to accept this as a mistake.[37] Possibly the excavation team thought that the round marble slab and the rectangles were part of the same structure, and this was just an illustration of their theory. But then why did K. Škorpil note in his unpublished manuscript that the ambo had only one flight of stairs – probably on the eastern side? On the other hand, the ground plan in question is very inaccurate in many respects. Therefore, ultimately, it cannot and it should not be accepted as a very reliable source of information. The case with the ambo is a good example of how sometimes the documentation in the archives could be very confusing and misleading, and should be approached with caution.

To summarise, regardless of the available documentation, the questions concerning the ambo in the Djanavara church still remain to a certain extent debatable.

Discussion

When discussing the liturgical fittings and fixtures inside this church, several questions should come to our attention. The first and most important of them is about how much factual information is available. Some sub-questions follow, such as to what extent the fittings and fixtures allow their original shape to be reconstructed, and how reliable would those hypothetical reconstructions be. Two further questions connected to the previous, concern the building phases and the repairs. Is there sufficient information for each of the periods, and is it possible to differentiate the original liturgical fittings and fixtures from those after the repairs?

An entirely separate group of questions, although strongly dependent on those mentioned above, concerns the interpretation of the liturgical features of the church's interior. One further problem to be discussed is about the construction periods and the dating. Then comes the complex problem about the tradition in liturgical planning to which the Djanavara church belonged, and about the possible influences on this specific matter.

[37] See note 6 above.

Firstly, let us deal with the query about how much factual information is available. Although the first impression is that there is a lot of information about the liturgical planning of the church and the related fittings and fixtures in it, the actual situation is rather different. Here some of the most notable examples follow. The exact shape, size, and even the precise location of the altar table is unknown (both before and after the repairs in the altar space). There is no information about how exactly the epistyle of the chancel was designed. The top (and most important) part of the synthrone is completely destroyed and cannot be reconstructed with certainty. No definite conclusions can be made about the exact design, the precise location and the orientation of the ambo. Lastly, not much could be said about the interior arrangement of the side rooms in the building, and whether or not they had some functions in the liturgical life of the church.

Having all that in mind, hypothetical reconstructions are an extremely important and helpful tool in the analysis of the church's interior. However, one should always bear in mind that often those reconstructions cannot go beyond mere speculations based on some parallels from around the Early Christian world and on imagination. Therefore, reconstructions should be used very cautiously when interpreting the existing archaeological data.

In the case of Djanavara church this becomes even more complicated when the different periods or phases in the building's history come into consideration. We can, at this point, discuss the matter of original layout and subsequent alterations of the interior schema hand-in-hand with the queries regarding dating and periodization, as the two are immediately connected in the evidence required for their discussion.

As it has been noted several times, the interior of the building, including the altar space, underwent extensive repairs at least once. Most of the available data concerns the period after the repairs, but in some cases information about the earlier period could be retrieved as well. This allows us to produce a relatively consistent picture of the liturgical arrangement of the church reflecting the changes and modifications that have happened over the course of time.

The chancel's base, and respectively the layout of the altar space, remained the same from the time when the church was constructed around the middle of the 5th century AD, to the final destruction of the

building in the early 7th century AD.[38] Originally though, the level of the floor was the same in the nave, in the rectangular enclosure of the altar space, and in the apse. There is no information about the conch itself, but the rectangular space in front of it had a flooring of large marble slabs. The base of the chancel was made of large marble blocks that rose significantly above the floor level. Probably the first altar screen belonged to the so-called 'lower' type (without collonettes above the pillars) that was common before the introduction of the Constantinopolitan 'high' type in the late 5th - early 6th century AD.[39] Nevertheless, this is just an educated guess, as there have been no elements found at the site so far that could be explicitly connected with a low chancel. There are no traces of any modifications on the chancel's base after the repairs, therefore both the original and the later altar screen should have had three doors: the holy door in the middle of the enclosure's western façade and two secondary doors in the middle of the lateral façades. The latter faced the entrances to the eastern side rooms of the church.[40]

The place of the altar table most likely was in the middle of the rectangular part of the altar space, above the crypt which contained the relics. The area of the floor where the columns of a hypothetical canopy above the mensa sacra could have stood, is not accessible for investigation because of the remnants of the later floor. Therefore, this question remains open.

Part of the original liturgical planning of the church, beyond any doubt, was the sophisticated underground facility under the altar space and the central area of the nave. The access point was an opening in the floor right in front of the holy door of the chancel. It was not designed for regular access. Furthermore, the underground facility was deliberately sealed. To sum up, it consisted of several interconnected spaces and had two separate semantic centres: a small crypt with relics under the altar space, and a tomb *ad sanctos* under the middle of the nave.

Perhaps the ambo whose base was found in the debris of the nave also belonged to the earlier period. This is only a speculation inspired

[38] The dating of the church and its complex was revised because of the new archaeological evidence. See Minchev & Tenekedjiev 2021, 59.

[39] Mathews 1971, 110; Sodini 1984, 442, 472.

[40] For more information about the Early Christian altar screens in the Balkans, see: Doseva 2002; 2005.

by the elegant design of the sculpted marble base that is reminiscent of the chancel base. It had steps only from one side, probably from east.[41] Very likely the pulpit was located above the tomb.

There is no information concerning the earlier period about any secondary spaces connected to the liturgical service. Nothing in the three side rooms of the church in that period (of course excluding the fourth room that was a baptistery) helps to identify their exact function and respectively to link them with the liturgy.

We should assume that the synthrone was a high structure with multiple steps. This is a logical conclusion, bearing in mind that there is evidence of no less than four steps. If this assumption proves right, the synthrone should not be dated before the early 6th century AD.[42] Accordingly, it should not have been constructed together with the church, but added to its apse later. This question though remains open because it depends on too many debatable facts.

Another open question is regarding when the church was furnished with a high type of chancel. Having in mind the time when the type appeared and spread in the provinces, it should have happened in the 6th century AD. It is not possible though, to specify if this took place before or after the repairs in the altar space.

These works affected the floor level of the rectangular enclosure, which was raised and then covered again with marble slabs. Consequently, it should be expected that the *mensa sacra* was renovated, or even replaced with a new one. The exact location of the holy table in the later period is not known but most probably it remained the same – approximately above the crypt. In this period there was no ciborium above the altar table.

The synthrone remained in the apse. As its upper part is missing it cannot be determined if it was redesigned somehow after the repairs, or not. Serious modification was made though in the lower part of the fixture. The floor of the apse was raised above the new floor in the rectangular part of the altar space, and reached the level of the first step of the synthrone.

After the repairs, the altar screen of the church was certainly of the high type. Marble fragments discovered in the debris help to

[41] The dating of the fixture to the earlier period though, is debatable because there is an opinion that this particular type of ambo came into use in the early 6th century (see Doseva 2011, 146).

[42] Sodini 1984, 442, 472.

reconstruct a typical chancel with large vertical plates, supported by pillars that in turn were surmounted by collonettes. Not a single piece from a marble epistyle was found, which gave way to the assumption that the top beam of the structure could have been made from wood.

It was only a hypothesis for the earlier period, but it is certain that after the repairs there was an ambo in the church. Its location most probably should have been above the tomb in the middle of the nave. If the suggestion that the pulpit was from the original liturgical furniture of the church is correct, then the fixture should have survived the repairs and continued to be in use thereafter. If not, it was a new construction brought in after the works in the nave.

Because of the unknown events that led to the repairs, the drainage channels for rainwater in the two eastern side rooms ceased to function. Part of the one in the north-eastern room was modified and connected with a sewer in the new floor. At this time the floor of the two eastern and the south-western chambers were decorated with multi-coloured mosaics. Maybe the sewer in the north-eastern room is evidence that at least *this one* of the three, and at least partly, was used in the liturgical life of the church (as a *skeuophylakion*?).

There is no simple answer to the question regarding sufficient evidence or information about each of the periods. All the observations presented here show that there are enough archaeological data to create a general picture of the liturgical arrangement before and after the repairs. However, in many respects it is not sufficient to support a more detailed study. Therefore, many 'blank spots' need to be filled in with hypothetical reconstructions. Furthermore, only in certain cases can the available archaeological evidence be safely attributed to one of the periods under consideration. This is the case with the structures *in situ*, the tall elements of the chancel, etc. Unfortunately, in many other situations it is either difficult or impossible to disentangle with any certainty original features from those of the subsequent repairs. This concerns for example the table tops and legs, the plates and the handrails of the chancel, etc.

This discussion leads inevitably to a confrontation with a very essential, but by no means final, problem, namely when these repairs in the church took place. It is difficult to say with certainty because the Škorpil brothers did not provide any material from the first excavations that concerned this particular topic. Thus, interpretation could rely only on the types of the liturgical fittings and fixtures and their

archaeological context. Unfortunately, one cannot expect a very precise result from this approach.

To summarise the already presented facts, the 'high' type of chancel and the synthrone, assuming that it was of the 'high' type with multiple steps, point generally to the 6th century AD. As the synthrone was built before the raise of the floor level in the altar space, the repairs should have happened at some time during the 6th century but probably not at the very beginning. The reign of Justinian I (527 – 565) when there was a general intensification in the building, reconstruction and embellishing of churches, looks as a probable period to date the repairs to as well.

A very complex question is that concerning the liturgical tradition which impacted the planning of Djanavara church. It becomes even more difficult because of the uncertainty in the reconstructions of some of the liturgical fittings and fixtures, and the extremely unusual general layout of the building.

Some architectural features, above all the altar apse hidden in the eastern wall, together with some other archaeological and historical pieces of evidence, inspired the hypothesis about the Near Eastern influence.[43] Supporters of that hypothesis, starting from the Škorpil brothers, elaborate it in various directions. For example, they explore the possibility that the church and its complex were commissioned and subsequently used by a group of immigrants from the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, and that they replicated on this hill near Odessos the architectural traditions of their homeland. Some specialists even speculate that those immigrants could be Monophysites or followers of another Christian heresy popular in the Near East.[44] A further option could be proposed too, that not the commissioners, but rather the architects and the builders came from the Eastern Mediterranean or from Eastern Asia Minor. Upon close inspection this whole hypothesis, however, has fundamental weaknesses, starting from the fact that Djanavara church does not have a close parallel in the Near Eastern ecclesiastical architecture. It is important to add that churches should be compared not only on the basis of the ground plan (or parts of it), but also concerning the architectural forms used in the design and

[43] The Near Eastern hypothesis has been discussed in almost every publication dedicated to Djanavara Church. See the list in note 2 above.
[44] Georgiev 2006.

construction, the building materials and techniques, etc.[45] To summarise, the hypothesis regarding a Near Eastern connection sounds intriguing, but from scientific point of view, it remains debatable. Nonetheless to discard it completely does not further the understanding of the church, mainly because there is no reasonable alternative hypothesis so far. One could theorise that the building was a kind of innovative architectural experiment but even if that was the case, such an opinion would be especially difficult to prove scientifically.

How exactly could the analysis of the liturgical fittings and fixtures contribute to the interpretation of the general concept of Djanavara church's liturgical planning? If one ignores the architectural layout of the building, the liturgical arrangement of the nave was nothing but common for the Diocese of Thracia.[46] Furthermore, the high type of chancel, as well as the synthrone with multiple steps were Constantinopolitan inventions.[47] As for the undivided altar space without symmetrical dependent side chambers, it was very common in Thracia,[48] and it is considered a feature influenced by the traditions in the capital too.[49] Of course in the case of the church on Djanavara Hill, this observation is a bit problematic because of the uncertain interpretation of the side rooms adjacent to the nave.

A different perspective gives the analysis of the ambo, which is particularly difficult. The type with steps from one side only was not popular in the Diocese of Thracia, where the Constantinopolitan type with two opposite stairs decisively dominated.[50] The one-side-staircase ambo is identified as 'Thessaloniki-type' and came into use in the early 6th century AD.[51] Indeed, the example from Djanavara Hill has no certain parallel in the Thracia so far.[52] A very important question,

[45] Parallels for Djanavara church (of certain features only: like the apse hidden inside the eastern wall, or the symmetrical four side chambers) exist in the Near East, Asia Minor and in the Balkans. This is not sufficient though to trace a direct connection between them and the church on Djanavara Hill.

[46] Doseva 2002; Tenekedjiev 2015a, 29–39; 2015b, I, 168–194.

[47] Sodini 1984, 442, 472.

[48] Doseva 2002, 11.

[49] Mathews 1971, 105–111; Sodini 1984, 448.

[50] Doseva 2011, 143–144.

[51] Doseva 2011, 146.

[52] In the middle of the nave of the basilica on Chirakman Cape near Kavarna, there are traces of a (presumably) wooden ambo (Mirchev *et al.* 1962, 30, fig. 6). The shallow grooves in the flooring draw the outlines of an odd structure: rectangular from the

therefore, is about the original place of the ambo in the nave, which as explained earlier is not clear. If it was not on the main axis (as restored by H. Škorpil) but shifted to one side, this could be a further hint pointing to some foreign influence for the Diocese (there are examples of ambos to the side from the main axis in the Western Half of the Balkans[53] and in the Near East.[54] Here comes the logical question – whether the shape of the ambo, as a single example, is sufficient evidence to see a specific foreign influence in the concept of the church's general liturgical planning.

Conclusion:

Analysis of the liturgical fittings and fixtures contributes in several ways to the study of the monastery church on Djanavara Hill. The most obvious contribution of course is the description of all structures related to the topic. It helps to reconstruct, at least hypothetically, the outlook of this extremely interesting Early Christian architectural monument.

Investigation of the available archaeological data, presented in this paper, allows us to make also some observations and conclusions. One of them concerns the dating and periodization. The most essential fact regarding these questions is that the interior of the church (and perhaps the whole building), suffered some kind of damage and as a consequence was extensively repaired. Some specifics in the liturgical fittings and fixtures suggest that those repairs should have happened at certain time in the 6th century AD, most probably in the first half or around the middle of the century. The repairs should be considered a very important reference point in the chronology of Djanavara church in general, and of the liturgical fittings and fixtures in its interior in particular.

Still the result from the excavations of the monastery are preliminary, and do not allow the excavators to match any of the building phases there with the repairs in the church's interior. Hopefully, the continuing excavations will make this possible in the future.

west and rounded from the east. May be this is an evidence of a pulpit with one flight of steps from the west (Doseva 2011, 153). However, the groove is not sufficient for the reconstruction of the whole fixture.

[53] Sodini 1984, 452–453.

[54] Tsafrir 1993, 3.

It was expected that the analysis would also help to identify the liturgical tradition to which the church on Djanavara Hill belonged, and through this to bring some clarification to the complex problem about the origins of its odd architecture. A particularly interesting question was whether the liturgical planning of the church and the related fittings and fixtures would support the dominant hypothesis of the Near Eastern origin of the building. Unfortunately, the results in this respect are inconclusive. There is nothing connected with the liturgical arrangement of the church's interior that points explicitly to the Near East. On the contrary, the liturgical fittings and fixtures are common for the Diocese of Thracia. Furthermore, some features should be explained with influence from Constantinople. The 'Near Eastern' liturgical tradition in church planning, however, should not be overemphasized. Early Christian churches in the eastern Roman provinces demonstrated a big variety in liturgical planning, and not all of the features could be interpreted as specifically 'regional'. Besides, the influence on this matter from Constantinople was reasonable in the Near East too. All this suggests that the liturgical fittings and fixtures in Djanavara church cannot support explicitly the Near Eastern hypothesis, but also cannot rule it out decisively, especially because the interpretation of the church's architecture still cannot be explained satisfactorily.

More than 100 years since it has been discovered, and after decades of excavations, the monastery church on Djanavara Hill remains a sort of archaeological enigma. Analysis of the liturgical fittings and fixtures should be considered only a small piece in the general study of the church and its monastery. Hopefully, it will help to complete in the future the big picture of this extraordinary Early Christian site near the ancient city of Odessos.

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On the Liturgy and the Liturgical Practices in Basilicas No 3 and No 1 of the Early Christian Zaldapa[1]

Georgi Atanassov

Abstract: This article examines some features related to liturgical practices in Basilica No. 3 in Late Antique Zaldapa. The author assumes, on the basis of the Constantinopolitan liturgy, that in the atrium the meeting of the *faithful* and *catechumens* with the clergy and the bishop took place and here the procession of the solemn entrance, the *First Entrance*, is formed, with entry into the church through the narthex, whence the bishop and the clergy proceed through the royal doors, and the men and women through the south and north entrances respectively. More difficult to decide is the route of the *Entrance of the Mysteries*. The author assumes the trapezoidal room formed by the west portico of the atrium as the *diaconicon* from which the deacons would have taken the offering (the bread and wine) and carried it through the narthex of the south portico of the atrium into the narthex, and thence through the south aisle to the altar, where the offering was received by the bishop and placed on the altar table. It is possible, however, that at an early stage the discus with the bread and the pot of wine were brought into the temple through one of the east entrances to the apse, and then passed through the north or south aisle, in front of the pulpit and the solea, from the archdeacon to the high priest, who was by the altar table. When the liturgy, respectively the *Great Entrance* with the gifts, was changed around or after the middle of the 6th century, the route of the deacons with the gifts was also changed, which from the diaconicon may have already been brought into the basilica through the narthex and this may have necessitated the closing of the entrances flanking the apse. This allows to assume that the *diakonikon* was originally inserted into the annex from the south, connected by an entrance to the south aisle, and that the offerings, respectively the bread and wine, were prepared at this place. After the changes in the mid-6th century the *diaconicon* was moved to the atrium and the *Entrance of the Mysteries* received a new route similar to that in the churches of Constantinople, which at this stage remains a hypothesis. It is clear, however, that

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liturgical practice in the cathedral of Zaldapa in the sixth century followed the Constantinopolitan rite and reflected the changes that occurred around the middle of the sixth century.

Key words: liturgy, Zaldapa, Constantinople, *First entrance*, *Entrance of the Mysteries*

Резюме: В настоящата статия се разглеждат някои особености, свързани с литургичните практики в базилика № 3 в късноантичната Залдапа. Авторът допуска, въз основа на Константинополската литургия, че в атриума се осъществява срещата на оглашените и катехумените с клира и епископа, който идва заедно с придружаващите го свещенослужители и тук се формира процесията на тържествения вход, Първият вход, с влизане в църквата през притвора, откъдето епископа и свещенослужителите продължават през царските двери, а мъжете и жените съответно през южния и северния вход. По-труден за решаване е маршрута на Входа на мистериите. Авторът приема трапецовидното помещение, оформено до западния портик на атриума като диаконикон от което дяконите са изнасяли предложението (хляба и виното) и през притвора на южния портик на атриума са ги внасяли в нартекста, а от там през южния кораб към олтара, където приношението се приема от епископа и се поставя на олтарната маса. Възможно е обаче, в един ранен етап, дискоса с хляба и потира с виното да са внасяни в храма през един от източните входове до апсидата, след което през северния или южния кораб, пред амвона и солея да са предавани от архидякона на първосвещенника, който е до олтарната маса. При промяната на литургията, респективно на Великия вход с даровете, около или след средата на VI в. е променен и маршрута на дяконите с даровете, които от диаконикона може вече да са внасяни в храма през притвора и това да е наложило зазиждането на входовете, фланкиращи апсидата. Това позволява да се допусне че първоначално диакониконът е бил вместен в анекса от юг, свързан с вход с южния кораб и на това място да са приготвяни приношенията, респективно хляба и виното. След промените в средата на VI в. диакониконът е бил преместен към атриума и Входа на мистериите получил нов маршрут сходен с този в Константинополските църкви, което на този етап остава хипотеза. Ясно е обаче че литургичната практика в катедралата на Залдапа през VI в. следва Константинополския обред и отразява настъпилите промени около средата на VI в.

In the last decade, the Early Christian topography has been revealed to a greater extent in the interior of the provinces Scythia and Moesia Secunda, as a result of the systematic archaeological excavations in Zaldapa, the biggest Roman-Early Byzantine city (fig. 1). Apart from basilica No. 1 discovered by K. Shkorpil at the end of the 19th century (fig. 2), basilicas No. 3 and No. 4 were fully studied; basilica No. 3 with the large annex from the south (residence?) from the beginning of the

6th century (probably the cathedral) (fig. 3, 4, 5)[2] and basilica No. 4 from the end of the 4th century (fig. 3, 5). Partly have been studied basilica No 2 at the Northern Gate; basilica No 5 at the southeastern corner of the fortress; the remarkable tetraconch church east of basilica No 3; finally basilica No 1 was additionally studied (fig. 1-2).[3] At present, the most completely studied are basilicas No 1 and 3, which gives the possibility to go deeper at this preliminary stage to the liturgical practices, since the spaces around the churches are still not entirely excavated. This is valid to a greater extent for the progress of the liturgy in basilica No 1 having in mind the limited archaeological data. The space around it has not been excavated, we don't know the approach from the street to the nartex, if there existed any annexes, where they were placed and how they were looking out.[4] On behalf of this, at the excavations in 1906 everywhere have been found the preserved superstructure, high about 1 m, with all the relevant entrances as commented above.[5] As it has been already mentioned, both basilicas No 1 and 3 have been built simultaneously, with equal plans, as a work of one and the same architectural idea,[6] and that, together with the other facts, allows the restoration of the places of the missing entrances of basilica No 3, whose superstructure with two entrances has been preserved only at the southeastern corner. An important discovery was the entirely studied atrium with the street in front of it and the big annex from the south.[7]

[2] Most probably, Zaldapa has got its episcopate around the middle of 6th century in the diocese of the archiereias of Tomis, the capital of the province of Scythia (Atanasov 2008, 299–320; Atanasov 2012, 327–380).

[3] Atanasov *et al*. 2017, 123–132; Atanasov 2020, 11-16; Atanasov & Valeriev 2020a, 33–58; Atanasov *et al*. 2020, 732–737; Atanasov & Valeriev 2020b, 729–731; Atanasov & Valeriev 2021, 45–80; Atanasov 2023; Atanasov & Valeriev 2023; Atanasov *et al*. 2023; Atanasov & Milanova 2023.

[4] Atanasov & Valeriev 2021, 45–80.

[5] Schkorpil 1907, 7–8; Torbatov 2000, 46–58, fig. 23.

[6] Atanasov & Valeriev 2021, 45–80.

[7] Atanasov & Valeriev 2020b, 33–58.



Fig. 1. Plan of Zaldapa by B. M'Barek in collaboration with D. Moreau and N. Beaudry, based on publications by K. Schkorpil, S. Torbatov, G. Atanasov, M. Mirchev, Y. Valeriev and satellite photos by *Google maps*.



Fig. 2. Drone photo of early Christian basilicas No. 3 and No. 4 in Zaldapa (photo: G. Atanasov).

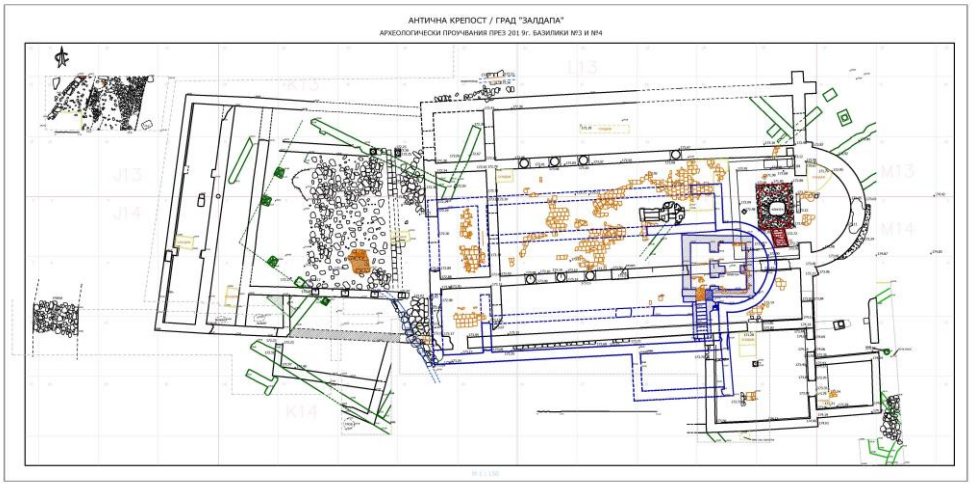


Fig. 3. General archaeological plan of basilicas No. 3 and 4 (authors: G. Atanasov, Y. Valeriev & M. Marinov).

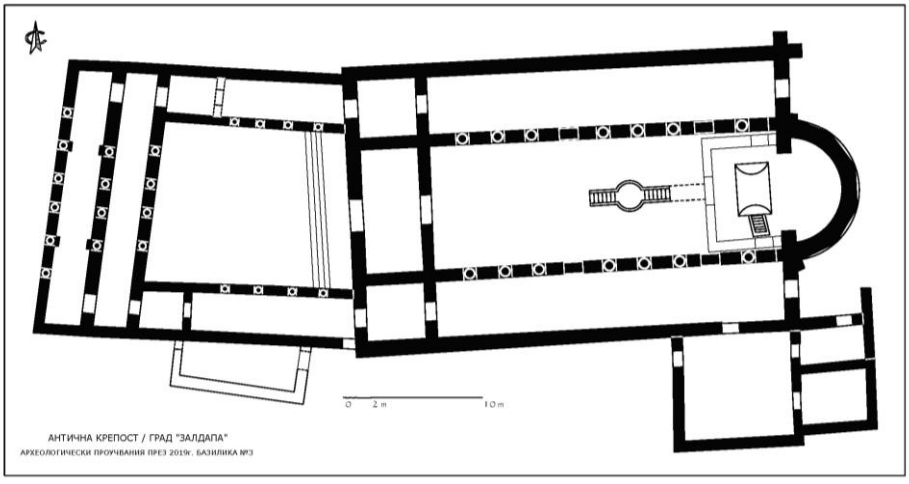


Fig. 4. Reconstruction of the plan of the cathedral /basilica No. 3/ of Zaldapa (authors: G. Atanasov & M. Marinov).

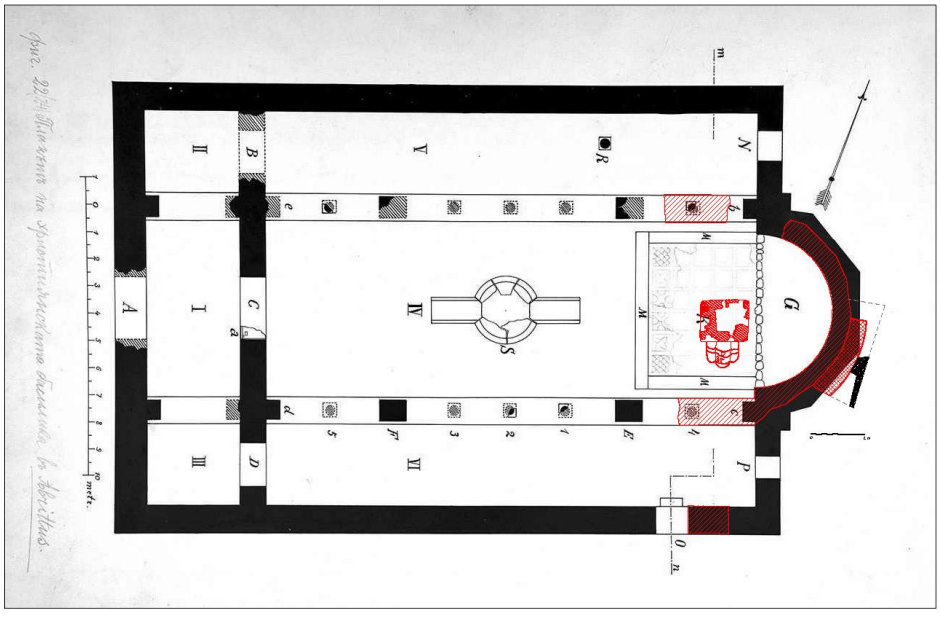


Fig. 5. Plan of Basilica No. 1 by K. Schkorpil in the archive of Varna Museum adapted by G. Atanasov /in red/ after the surveys in 2016-2018 (author: G. Atanasov)

The Small Entrance* or *the Entrance into the Temple.
The Atriums are important places for the *faithful* and the *catehumens*. And at the same time, this is the place of meeting of the believers with the clergy, led by the bishop who is accompanied by the presbyters and deacons before the solemn entrance at the beginning of the liturgy.[8] Here the procession of the solemn entrance is formed by entering the church through the nartex, and from there the bishop and the ecclesiastics are taking their places in the temple passing through *the Holly doors,* and the lay men and lay women use the southern and the northern entrance.

The Entrance of the Mysteries/ The Great Entrance.
The Entrance of the *Mysteries* is the climax, the insignia of the liturgy, in this respect the bringing of the Eucharistic bread on discos and of the wine in the chalice is realized from the preparation place to the altar. However, it has several steps. The first one requires that in the morning, before the church opens its doors, the believers leave their gifts, wine, bread and other offerings in a separate room, i.e. outside the nave of the temple, in this case a separate room in or around the atrium,[9] because up to 8th century the Eucharist has been performed only with the gifts of the believers, which is, by the way, their obligation. Namely in the *deakonikon* (*skeuvofilakion*) the deacons used to prepare the gifts (*protheisis*), and to bring them to the altar with the so-called *Entrance of the Mysteries* or *The Great Entry*, as it was called later, when the gifts, the discos and the chalice were carried in a solemn way to the altar. Before that, the pontiff (the bishop or the presbyter) calls upon the catechumens to leave the temple, and they withdraw to the nartex and the atrium. After their leaving the church, the pontiff invocates the doors to be closed, most probably the ones between the nave and the nartex. The sources do not inform where exactly was the door through which the presbyter and the deacons introduced the discos and the

[8] Delvoye 1962, 288–289; Delvoye 1966, 439; Stanev 2011, 313–345; Picard 1989, 505–558; Lemerle 1945, 301–322; Pallas 1980, 499–517; Khrushkova 2016, 343–344; Mathews 1971, 141, 145–147; Taft 2000, 39–40; Uaibru 2002, 60.

[9] It is called up to 6th century AD *skeuvofilakion* (Leclerq 1924, 733–735; Krautheimer 1965, 69, 92, 210-212, 986; Mathews 1982, 125–138), which in Constantinople especially in 415 AD was a separate round building in the St. Sophia of Theodosius (Dirimtecin 1961, 390–400). The *skeuvofilakion* is witnessed also in three more churches of the capital: in St. Eirene (also from the north side), in St. Theodorus Sforakious and in St. Mary of Vlaherissa, where it was on the south (Mathews 1971, 16–18,85, 89–90,161; Taft 1975, 185–191; Taft 2000, 191).

chalice in St. Sophia. According to the statement of Constantine VII Porphyroginetus, this happens through a door near the *skeuvofilakion* situated at the southeastern corner of the church. From there, the procession continues to the altar where the gifts were received by the bishop and placed on the Holy altar.[10] Because in St. Sophia and St. Eirene in Constantinople the *skeuvofilakion* is to the north of the church at *the Entrance of the Mysteries (The Great Entrance*), when leaving the *skeuvofialkion*, the procession would enter the church through a door aside, maybe using the door in the center of the northern passage of St. Sophia, or through the nartex, after that passing through the left (female) aisle and from there going to the altar.[11]

But when the *deakonikon* is in the southern part of the church as it is in basilica No 3 in Zaldapa, it is logical *the Entrance of the Mysteries* from the *deakonikon* to the atrium to pass through the south porticus, after that in front of the southern entrance to the nartex, and finally through the south (male) aisle to the altar.

Now an attempt will be made to correlate this Constantinopolitan liturgical practice to the one of the basilicas of Zaldapa. Definitely, the presence of an atrium in basilica No 3 (fig. 3-5) presupposes that here the meeting of the proselytes and the catechumens with the clergy and the bishop is happening in forming *the First Entrance*, during which all together are entering the basilica through the nartex. Maybe because of this reason, the atrium of basilica No 3 in Zaldapa has a door from the south in connection with the nartex, while the episcopal residence has an entrance from the west (fig. 4). In this way, the bishop or the pontiff with the ecclesiastics accompanying him, when coming out from the residence (where they have changed to their liturgical attires) could reach and enter the atrium in the shortest way, without being disturbed, in order to meet the believers at the entrance of the nartex. Here the process of the solemn entry is formed by entering the church through the nartex, the bishop and the ecclesiastics through the King's door, and the men and women through the south and the north entrance respectively, taking their places in the temple.

It is noteworthy that both basilica No 1 and No 2 of Zaldapa have been furnished with three entrances (the three-parted nartexes demand it) which connect the nartex with the three aisles of the basilica (fig. 2

[10] Taft 1975, 24–37; Matews 1971, 138, 154–158, 161–162; Mathews 1982, 125–138; Uaibru 2002, 65.
[11] Matews 1971, 138, 154–158, 161–162.

and 4). It is not occasional that in 5th-6th century namely the catholicons have atriums. It is noteworthy that in general about 20 churches have been discovered in Chersonesos in Crimea peninsula, one of the leading Early Christian episcopal centers, but only the cathedral Uvarov's basilica possesses an atrium.[12]

It is curious where the catechumens establish themselves in the basilicas of Zaldapa after leaving the church before the Entry of the Mysteries. There have been set forth plausible arguments that in the catholicon basilicas of 5th - 7th century the galleries are intended not for the women but for the catechumens who had no right to take part and hear clearly the Eucharistic liturgy.[13] If we suppose, having in mind the mighty foundations and the constructive peculiarities of basilicas No 1 and 3 of Zaldapa, and that they had galleries, then the question follows where the approach to them has been placed. If we follow the practice in Constantinople, they could be reached through stairs or a *pandus* situated usually outside the churches, next to the outer walls of the north and the south aisle, in proximity to the nartex, like in St. Sophia.[14] However, this problem is still not solved since such stairs to the galleries and in the nartex are registered in some churches, for instance in St. St. Sergius and Vacchus in Constantinople, in basilica No 4 in Parthicopolis etc.,[15] but this makes the movement difficult to a greater extent, especially from the three-party nartex to the aisles aside.[16] Traces of similar stairs in both basilicas of Zaldapa have not been found during the archaeological excavations neither outside the churches nor in the nartex, but in basilica No 3 these structures are preserved only in the substructure. It is possible that the stairs to the galleries were wooden of the snail/ helix type in the parts aside of the three-party nartex, but archaeological traces of them cannot be found to the moment. If we acknowledge such a hypothesis, this would mean that similar stairs in the parts aside of the three-party nartex would cause discomfort to the movement of the laity from the atrium through the nartex to the north and south aisle. In basilica No 1, better preserved in superstructure, K. Shkorpil witnesses three entrances from the nartex to the nave, but the western one from the street is only one, leading to the nave (fig. 3). Here theoretically the stairs could be placed at the

[12] Sorochan 2005, 711–903, fig. 196, 221–223; Khurshkova 2016, 341–343, fig. 4, 16, 21, 27, 28.
[13] Matews 1971, 117–118, 125–129.
[14] Uaibru 2002, 60; Matews 1971, 23.
[15] Ebersolt & Thiers 1913, 8; Uaibru 2002, 83–84; Petrova 2012, 108, fig. 16.
[16] Matews 1971, 23.

southwestern and northeastern corner of the three-party nartex to the south and the north gallery. However, basilica No 3 is bigger and more representative, and it has an atrium which presupposes the existence of entrances also from the south and north porticuses of the atrium to the three-party nartex (fig. 3-5), as it is in the cathedrals of Philippi, Istria, Chersonesos, Mesembria, probably in Novae, in Ioannes Studius in Constantinople, etc. If we accept a similar solution for basilica No 3 in Zaldapa, then it would be very difficult to place the stairs from the south and north department of the three-party nartex to the south and the north gallery. The contentions on the approach to the galleries by the help of stairs in the nartex are too hypothetical having in mind the bad preservation of the nartex and respectively the total lack of superstructure in that part of basilica No 3 in Zaldapa. Finally, in spite of the good constructive characteristics of basilicas No 1 and No 3 in Zaldapa, we should leave open the possibility that there were no galleries in them, which means that the catechumens at *the Entrance of the Mysteries* left the nave and found themselves either in the nartex, or rather in the atrium.

The most debatable and difficult for solution point is the route of *the Entrance of Mysteries* especially in basilica No 3 in Zaldapa, and respectively the place of its *skeuvofilakion*. These rooms in Constantinople are situated outside the corpus of the church, and in practice they were adequate to the deakonikons, which usually were annexes to the nartex or the atrium. A thesis has been already established that up to 8th – 9th century the *deakonikon* and the prosthesis are one and the same room, but the identification of the *deakonikon* is still problematic in the church architecture and archaeology. In this connection, first we shall put the accent on the square room about 8 sq. m big, formed at the western end of the south porticus of the atrium of basilica No 3, whose outlines are witnessed only in substructure. We have at disposal insufficient data on such a room also in the northern porticus at the opposite side, but here the superstructure is totally missing, and the boundaries of the substructure have been washed away because of the entirely dismantled foundations. Hypothetically, it can be supposed that the room from the south should be identified with the *deakonikon* of the church/ eventually the northern one with the *prothesis* (?), because these typical for the liturgy rooms are lacking during 6th century in the eastern part. By the way, according to the monograph on the cathedral basilica in Histria, whose atrium is the most similar to that one in Zaldapa in the province of Scythia, it is presumed that initially the *deakonikon* and the

prothesis were the two square rooms on the south (respectively about 30 sq. m) and on the north (about 40 sq. m), constructively connected and flanking the atrium, and that after the middle of 6th century they have been moved and additionally built on both sides of the apse (fig. 6).[17] The rooms aside the atrium have entrances to the street from the west and also to the northern and southern porticus of the atrium, while the newly erected two rooms flanking the apse from the north and south are respectively about 60 and 75 sq. m, having entrances to the transept and respectively to the bema of the church.

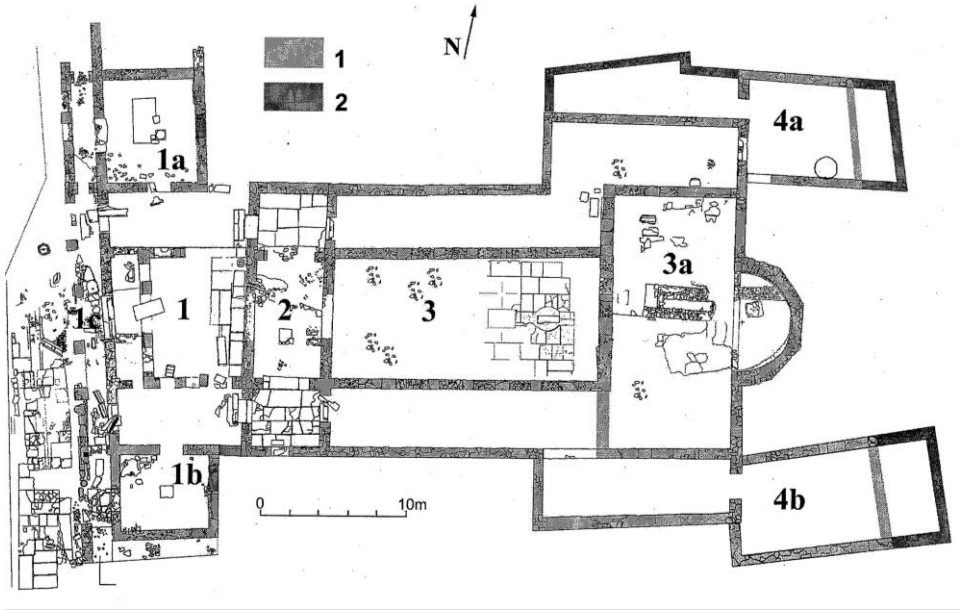


Fig. 6. Plan of the Cathedral of Istria by Al. Sucevianu. 1 – atrium. 1a, b – annexes to the atrium (original prothesis - 1a ? and original diaconicon - 1 b). 2 – Three-piece artex. 3 – Naos – transept. 4 a, b Later added prothesis /?/ and diakonicon.

We have already noted that there are no written and archaeological data on the existence of prosthesis, and we also assume that they were united with the *deakonikon* in one room, placed to a certain distance from the apse, most often to the south next to the nartex and the atrium. But still there is no integrated opinion. Similar rooms flank the atrium of the episcopal basilica in Nessebar,[18] one of

[17] Sucevianu 2007, 20–22, 81–82, Pl. VIII, XII.
[18] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 228–230, fig. 51.

them is interpreted as a baptistery,[19] and the other two rooms as stairs leading to the galleries over the northern and southern aisles of the church. Both hypotheses are less credible because of the missing traces of a piscine, water-main and canalization obligatory for the baptisteries in 6th century, and also because the approach from both rooms attached to the atrium to the galleries is in constructive aspect a very difficult solution. It is more suitable to look for the similarity with the two square rooms in the atrium of the cathedrals in Zaldapa and Histria (fig. 4 and fig. 6). A big and vast square room is applied to the south episcopal basilica in Kabile, it is a point of discussion if it is a *deakonikon*[20] or an episcopal residence.[21] The room described by A. Dimitrova-Milcheva as *deakonikon*, is attached from the outside to the southern wall of the atrium of the cathedral basilica.[22] However, the vast surface of about 125 sq. m, the three-party plan with a corridor and wall paintings suggest rather an episcopal residence similar by its plan and surface with the residence of basilica No 3 in Zaldapa, attached to the south wall of the nave (figs. 3-5). The rectangular prolonged room about 40 sq. m is sticking to the northern wall of the cathedral of Kabyle, considered by the researchers as a baptistery.[23] Nevertheless, this is less possible, because here, similarly to Nesebar, there are no traces of water-main and canalization, and nothing is left from a piscine built in the floor, obligatory for the baptisteries up to 7th century. Rather it concerns the stairs to the galleries (here it is possible, because they are sticking to the nave), or the *deakonikon* of the church, similar in form and dimensions with the additionally erected one to the southern wall of the nartex and the atrium in Zaldapa. The cathedral basilica of Novae also has an aattached to the south of the nartex *skeuvofilakion*.[24] Here can also be mentioned the room added to the northern wall of the nartex and in proximity of the atrium of basilica A in Stobi from 5th century which has been synonymously defined by S. Pelekanides and R. Hoddinott as *deakonikon*.[25] Analogical is the place of the *deakonikon*

[19] Boiadziev 1962, 323, 328.
[20] Dimitrova 1982, 134–136, fig. 1.
[21] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 235–236.
[22] Dimitrova 1982, 134–136, 141, fig. 1.
[23] Dimitrova 1982, 136, 139, fig. 1.
[24] Bernatsksi & Klenina 2003, 86-89; Biernacki 2005, 71; Biernacki 2013, 38; Kalinowski 2002, 185–186.
[25] Hoddinott 1963, 161, 170–171, fig. 80, pl. 47.

(*skeuvofilakion*) of the cathedral (Uvarov's) basilica in Chersonesos.[26] More examples can be listed of deakonikons (*skeuvofilakions*) applied to the southern walls of тhe basilicas in the Eastern Mediterranean.[27] The location of the *deakonikon* next to the atrium of basilica No 3 in Zaldapa from the beginning of 6th century is in the spirit of the Constantinopolitan liturgical practice from the first half of 6th century, but the problem is the small space. It has been established that in some skeuvofilakions the laity only hand their gifts through the door where they are taken and brought in by one of the deacons. In another case, the laity enter through one of the doors, leave their gifts and go out through another/opposite door.[28]

On this background, very curious is the annex added at a later stage to the outer wall of the southern porticus of basilica No 3 in Zaldapa (next to the supposed deakonikon in the porticus, fig. 4 (in a space of about 28 sq. м). This is three times bigger than the earlier *deakonikon* in the south porticus of the atrium of basilica No 3, but its function is enigma. First of all, it may be hypothetically supposed that having in mind the small space of the initial *deakonikon* in the southern porticus, and because of some changes in the liturgy (parallel to the walling of the eastern gates flanking the apse?), a new bigger *deakonikon* has been built. Even more, because in the deakonikon not only a great amount of gifts (bread, wine, etc.) have been brought, but also the church plate is kept, it was necessary one of the deacons to write down the names of the donators and the names of the faithful (alive or dead) represented by separate gifts. Already it has been noted that such a space of 8,5 sq. m of the supposed *deakonikon* in the southern porticus of the atrium is too modest in order to answer all aforementioned demands. It can be supposed that the laity were not allowed to enter it, but only to hand the gifts at the door, but even this cannot compensate the limited space. That was the reason at a later stage to build a bigger *deakonikon* applied to the southern wall on the boundary of the atrium with the nartex. The entrance to this room was from the west, and also a door existed from the east. The deacons carried the bread and the wine bringing them to the nartex through the door connecting the nartex with the southern porticus, and from there through the south aisle to the altar. Actually, it is logical when the

[26] Sorochan 2005, 776, fig. 196; Khushkova 2016, 345–346.
[27] Pallas 1977, 313; Sodini & Kolokotsas 1984, 51–52.
[28] Matews 1971, 23; Stanev 2013, 5–7.

deakonikon is situated in the southern part of the basilica as in basilica No 1 of Zaldapa, *the entrance of the Mysteries* from the *deakonikon* to the atrium to pass through the southern porticus and after that in front of the southern entrance to the nartex where the prayer has been said. From there, the procession goes to the altar, where the archiereus took the gift and put it on the altar table.[29]

The question remains opened for the reasons which have brought to the walling at a later stage of both entrances at the eastern branches of basilicas No 1 and 3 in Zaldapa flanking the apse (figs. 7, 8). In the same way, the entrance at the apse of the cathedral in Marcianopolis has been walled,[30] and the basilica in Spetses in Greece. The accesses to the eastern part of the cathedral in Chersonesos are blocked too,[31] also of the basilicas in Mangup[32] and in Storgosia, with additionally erected apses flanking the central apse, and these re-buildings relate in general to the second quarter – the middle of 6th century. In my opinion, it is not impossible that the cathedral in Novae had also such entrances.[33] In analogical way are blocked also the eastern entrances of basilica D in Nea Anchialos, by two later added rooms;[34] the southern and the northeastern entrances (with apses) of the great basilica of Thassos[35] and of the Codratos basilica in Corinth.[36] Definitely, this is a result of the changes in the liturgical practice, but still it remains unclear in which direction, because of the unclear function of the entrances flanking the apse. Nevertheless, there are some archaeological data that the walling of the eastern doors flanking the apse or the addition of side apses to the one-apse basilicas coincide in time with the appearance of the three-apse basilicas in the Balkans, the main one being the cathedral in Caricin grad built around 530 AD.[37].

[29] Taft 1975, 24–37; Matews 1971, 138, 154–158, 161–162; Mathews 1982, 125–138; Uaibru 2002, 65.
[30] Tenekedjiev 2019, 145, fig. 3, 18.
[31] Khrushkova 2016, 339–362, fig. 15, 16.
[32] Khrushkova 2017, 108–111, 120–124, 129, 131, fig. 16.
[33] Biernacki 2013, 33.
[34] Garacher 2003, 518, Pl. 60.
[35] Hoddinott 1963, 181–183, fig. 89.
[36] Garacher 2003, 461, pl. 25.
[37] Strichevich 1958/1959, 59–66.

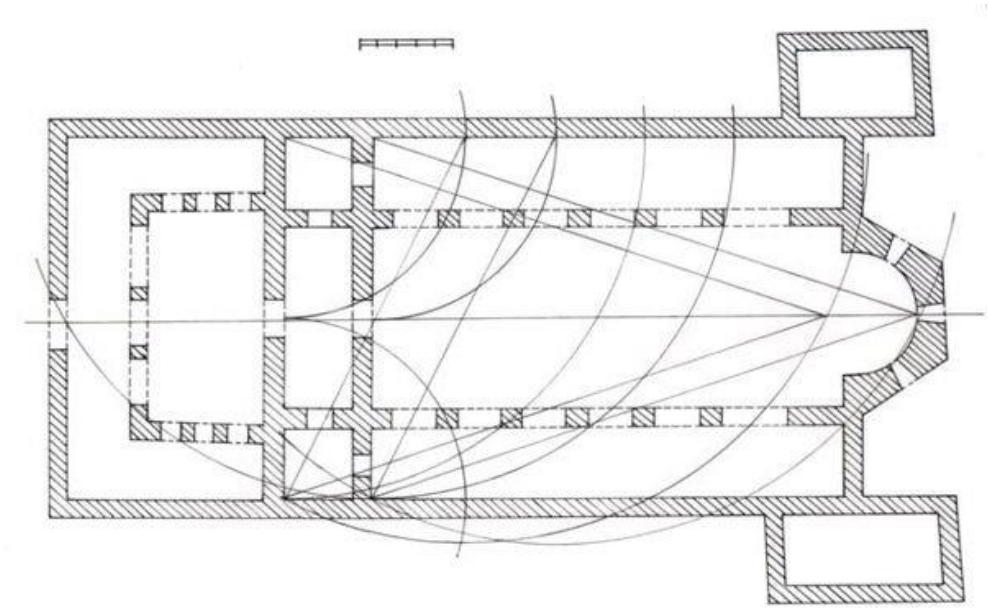


Fig. 7. Plan of the Cathedral of Abritus by G. Dzanev with two rooms attached to the northeast and southeast of the apse /protesis and diaconicon?/

In the Balkan provinces there are over 30 basilicas registered with three-apse-altars from 6th century.[38] Only in Bulgaria there are a dozen of them: the *extra muros* in Marcianopols; the cathedral in Novae; in Karanovo; The Eleusa in Nesabar; basilica No 9 in Hissar; the basilica in Golyamo Belovo; the basilica in Pirdop, etc.[39] In most of these cases, undoubtedly there is an access from the side apse to the presbyterium, respectively to the central apse (unlike in Syria). Generally, this novelty can be related to the second quarter – middle of 6th century. Indicative of this is the cathedral in Novae, in which the one-apse altar is rebuilt during the third building period (518-557) in three-apse one, with obvious access from the presbyterium to the side apse rooms, accessible also from the aisles.[40] However, this was not an innovation in a limited interval of time, but a process of several decades during the time of Justianus I (527-565) and Justin II (565-574), and finished only in 9th century, because parallel to the building of the three-apse cathedral in Caricin grad, the southwestern basilica has been

[38] Strichevich 1958/1959, 59-66.
[39] Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 71–78, 184, 205–206, 231, 266–268, 274, 277–280, 303–305, fig. 10, 31, 53, 60, 85, 100.
[40] Biernacki 2005, 57–58; Biernacki 2013, 33.

erected, with entrances to the east flanking the apse, also walled at a later time.[41]



Fig. 8. An exemplary reconstruction of the exterior of Basilica No. 3 with a residence attached from the south. View from the southwest (authors: G. Atanasov & Sv. Rusev).

After the gradual appearance of the three-apse basilicas around the second third and the end of 6th century which have been finally imposed after 8th – 9th century, it was quite natural that the entrances of the eastern walls of the basilicas flanking the central apse disappeared entirely. A long discussion is held if the *prosthesis* and *deakonikon* were inserted in the side apses already in the second quarter of 6th century,[42] or this happened after the reign of Justinianus I at the end of 6th century,[43] or after 6th century,[44] or immediately after the iconoclastic period 6th – 9th century,[45] and even in 10th century.[46] However, it preponderates the idea of Th. Mathews that the side apses in some churches in the Balkans (especially in Bulgaria, Macedonia and Northern Greece) are connected with the local practices: '*The occasional appearance of rooms of possible prothesis purpose near the apses in churches of Greece or Yugoslavia may be explained by local*

[41] Mano-Zisi 1958/1959, 295–305; Hoddinott 1963, 213–214, fig. 144.
[42] Strichevich 1958/1959, 59–66; Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 71–79.
[43] Pallas 1984, 550–557.
[44] Varalis 2002, 282–298.
[45] Krautheimer 1965, 210–212; Uaibru 2002, 130; Taft 2000, 79; Sorochan 2005, 718–719,776–777; Patrich 2006, 379–392; Khrushkova 2016, 345.
[46] Mathews 1971, 105–107; Donceel-Voûte 1998, 132–134; Stanev 2007, 70–72.

liturgical usages, but not by appealing to the development of the Byzantine liturgy'.[47] Many Syrian churches from 5th – 6th century have side rooms flanking the apse, but they have no entrances to the presbyterium and are interpreted as rooms for keeping the relics.[48] It is especially emphasized that this transformation to the three-party altar has not been imposed but developed slowly reaching a climax in 6th and 7th century. But even then, the three-party altars were not applied universally, because there still prevailed the churches with one apse, including Syria in this period, and respectively the old ritual prevailed.

It is another question if this reflects or does not reflect the differences in the Christological doctrine between the Orthodox and the Monophysites.[49] We shall focus on G. Strichevich's hypothesis on the transition to the three-party altar which has begun in the Balkan provinces of Early Byzantium in the second quarter of 6th century, but obviously, it did not dominate everywhere. The Constantinopolitan liturgical practice with the one–party altar continues and its specific *Entrance of the Mysteries* or *The Great Entry* from an outer *skeuvofilakion*/*deakonikon* through the nartex to the altar which will be discussed below.[50] However, cannot be excluded the fact that in the Balkan provinces of Byzance in the middle of 6th century began the shortening of *the Entrance of the Mysteries (The Great Entry*) from the closely situated rooms attached to the altar (with apses or without them) to the altar table. The numerous basilicas from 6th century, including in Zaldapa, are without rooms and apses flanking the apse of the presbyterium; the cathedral in Histria is with additionally built rectangular rooms flanking the apse;[51] in Novae, a three-party altar is re-built on a later stage;[52] the churches in Marcianopolis, Caricin grad, Karlovo, Pirdop, Golyamo Belovo, Throezmis etc., with three-party altars. It is noteworthy that in the province of Scythia, to which Zaldapa

[47] Mathews 1971, 162.
[48] Donceel-Voüte 1995, 198, n. 85; Patrich 2006, 84, 386–392.
[49] Patrich 2006, 84, 386–392.
[50] Taft 1975, 24–37; Matews 1971, 138, 154–158, 161–162; Mathews 1982, 125–138; Uaibru 2002, 65.
[51] The most indicative in this case is the cathedral of Histria in Skythia, where the *deakonikon* at the beginning is situated in the southern portycus of the atrium, but later, around the middle of 6th century, two rectangular rooms have been added by a gap to both sides of the five-sided apse, and connected with entrances with the altar part, interpreted with a good reason as a *prosthesis* and *deakonikon* (Suceveanu 2007, 20-22, 81–82, Pl. VIII, XII).
[52] Biernacki 2005, 57–58; Biernacki 2013, 33.

belongs, from the documented 37 basilicas, only the cathedral of Throezmis is with a three-party altar.[53]

It becomes clear that there does not exist categorical and universally adopted explanation of the function of the side apses with entrances to the presbyterium of the pointed before basilicas from 6th century, but this thing next to the other ones suggests innovations in the liturgy /probably influenced by Syria/ but they did not become predominant. Most probably, the walling of the entrances flanking the apses in many basilicas has to do with such innovations, among them the ones in Zaldapa, but there are no re-buildings around the apses of basilica No 1 and No 3, which are revealed in the cathedrals of Histria, Novae and in basilica No 2 of Storgosia.

Having in mind the archaeological realities in basilicas No 1 and No 3 in Zaldapa (especially the walled eastern entrances to the apses), and the fact that the route of *the Great Entry* in 5th -6th century is not established indisputably, it is necessary to discuss one more possibility. There is a hypothesis that quite possibly the offering, i. e, the discos of bread and the chalice of wine, after being carried out of the *skeuvofilakion*, respectively the *deakonikon*, are brought in the temple through one of the eastern entrances next to the apse, after which they are handled through one of the northern or southern aisles in front of the ambo and solea by the archideacon to the main priest who is standing next to the Holy table.[54] The route of the deacons with the gifts has also been changed during this still not established change of the liturgy, with respect to *the Great Entry* with the gifts, around or after the middle of 6th century; the gifts were already brought to the temple through the nartex, and this imposed the walling of the entrances flanking the apse. By the way, the problem with the *deakonikon*, respectively the route of *the Great Entry/ the Entry of the mysteries* remains open concerning both the cathedral of Zaldapa and generally the Orthodox East in 5th – 6th century. Therefore, we can look at one more possibility: initially the *deakonikon* is placed in the annex from the south connected with a special entrance with the southern aisle (figs. 3,4),[55] and at that place the offerings, respectively the bread and wine have been prepared. In such a situation, *the Entry of the Mysteries* or *the Great Entry* is directly through the door connecting the annex with

[53] Iațcu 2012, 71–72, fig. 33.

[54] Uaibru 2002, 97.

[55] Even more, because the annex of the earlier basilica No 4 has been studied at the same place, playing the role of a *skeuvofilakion*.

the south aisle of the basilica, or from the annex through the eastern entrance next to the apse, and from there to the altar. After the middle of 5th century, the annex has been re-built in episcopal residence, the eastern entrance next to the apse has been walled in, and parallel to this, a new *deakonikon* has been attached to the atrium, respectively *the Entry of the Mysteries* acquires a new route similar to the one in the churches of Constantinople and described above: from the *deakonikon* through the nartex and the south aisle to the altar.

However, there is a problem in the realization of this route also in a pure chronological plan. The archaeological investigation reveals that the annex from the south has been added later to the already existing basilica which places new questions about the possibility the *skeuvofilakion* to be placed here. However, after building the basilica, the entrance at the southern wall is formed, used later as an entrance to the annex/the residence. Does it have any relation to *the Entry of the Mysteries* at an earlier stage? There is an analogical entrance on the southern wall in the cathedral basilica of Novae, supposedly connected with the route of the offering from the *skeuvofilakion* to the altar.[56] It has been walled up at a later stage, and *the Great Entrance* gets then a new route: from the *skeuvofilakion* through the corridor to the west in the direction of the nartex, and from there through the Holy doors to the altar. The reconstruction of *the Entrance of the Mysteries* is similar through the door of the southern wall of the cathedral of Mesembria, but this is hardly likely because of the hypothesis offered in this case that the *skeuvofilakion* is situated at the opposite northern wall,[57] and rather the entrance is from the *skeuvofilakion* through the north gate to the nartex.

Then the logical question follows why a fundamenus entrance is formed from the south as no annex has been added from the south helping the communication. And finally, is this entrance necessary for the *Entance of Mysteries*? This supposition for the change of the route of the *Entrance of Mysteries* is too hypothetical until the function of the entrance to the south becomes clear, as well as the entrances flanking the apses, and the reasons of their walling on a later stage. Here I would like to offer one more possibility. It is known that after the end the plates are brought back by the deacons to the *skeuvofilakion*, respectively the *deakonikon*. It is accepted that their route is opposite to the *Entrance of Mysteries* connected with the carrying of the offerings

[56] Kalinowski 2002, 185–186.

[57] Stanev 2007, 70-71, fig. 2, 5, 9.

to the temple, i.e. from the altar through the ambo, the northern or southern aisle, through the nartex and back to the *skeufovilakion*, respectively *deakonikon*, when the bishop/the first priest calls 'everybody to their homes'. [58] Is it possible for the route following after this calling of the plates to be brought back by some of the eastern doors flanking the apse especially when the temple is too full of laity? Generally, at this stage of knowledge, the route of the *Entrance of Mysteries* in the cathedral of Zaldapa is still in the sphere of the not well argued suppositions. If we have found a room under the annex–residence attached to the southern wall of the basilica (just over the annex from the south of the earlier basilica No 4 (fig. 3), then it could be supposed that this was the initial *skeuvofilakion* /*deakonikon* of basilica № 3, respectively the offering has been brought in from there through the southern entrance by the deacons to the altar. Traces of such a room were not revealed, but it is possible that they have been obliterated when the new annex/the episcopal residence has been built at a later stage. It is possible that the new *deakonikon* attached to the wall of the southern porticus of the atrium is formed only after the construction and re-building of the annex from the south as an episcopal residence (fig. 9).



Fig. 9. An exemplary reconstruction of the exterior of the southeast corner of Basilica No. 3 with a residence attached from the south. View from the northeast. (authors: G. Atanasov & Sv. Rusev).

[58] Matews 1971, 173.

These preliminary observations can be added, affirmed or corrected after the complete investigation of the space around basilica No 1 and No 3. Finally, the full study of basilicas No 2, No 5 and the tetraconchal church by the information of the studied already basilicas No 1 and No 3, as well as of the cistern at the skirts of the fortress connected with the atrium of basilica No 2 with a tunnel/hagiazmon? (fig. 1) would make it possible to observe also the stational liturgy of this remarkable fortified city, which has got its episcopal cathedra in the diocese of the archiereus of Tomis, the capital of Scythia.

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Martyrium of the basilica of the martyrs in Niš – reconstruction and function

Miša Rakocija

Abstract: This article re-elaborates and complements the knowledge about the martyrium of the Basilica of the Martyrs, which has been insufficiently researched, inadequately protected as well as presented. We are obliged to do so due to its significance for the first Christians in the Balkans and Europe. Our intention is to reconstruct the martyrium interior on the basis of old photographs and architectural elements found, with the unique possibility of relying on paintings in a slightly more recent nearby early Christian tomb, on the wall of which a sketchy drawing presents the martyrium interior. We will put our effort into grasping the symbolism of the drawing in the tomb and its function in accordance with the proposed ideal reconstruction of the martyrium interior.

Key words: martyrium, early Christianity, ciborium, mausoleum, reconstruction

Резюме: В тази статия се разширяват и допълват знанията за мартириума на Базиликата на мъчениците, който е недостатъчно проучен, неподходящо защитен и представен. Това уточнение е необходимо, поради значението му за първите християни на Балканите и Европа. Правим опит да реконструираме интериора на мартириума на базата на стари снимки и откритите архитектурни елементи, с уникалната възможност да разчитаме на рисунките от малко по-късната близка раннохристиянска гробница, на стената на която ескизна рисунка представя интериора на мартириума. Опитваме се да разкрием символиката на рисунката в гробницата и нейната функция в съответствие с предложената идеална реконструкция на интериора на мартириума.

In Niš (Serbia), the hometown of Emperor Constantine, who is the founder and first builder of the martyrium,[1] there is a monumental

[1] Grabar 1946, 204.

martyrium with a basilica on the east side (church 'A').[2] The underground martyrium (*hypogeum*) together with the slightly later added basilica on the east side, represent a special cult building, designed as a unique architectural unit.[3] It belongs to the group of common mausoleums called *memoria* where the veneration of a certain martyr began (*martyr, Μάρτυς*), first on his grave, and later the commemorative cult space was expanded – 'holy place (*locum sancti*)'.[4] Perhaps it is here where the martyrs' relics were kept, for which Niš was known in the Christian world as *martiriopolis* and a famous place of pilgrimage in the 4th century (fig. 1).[5]

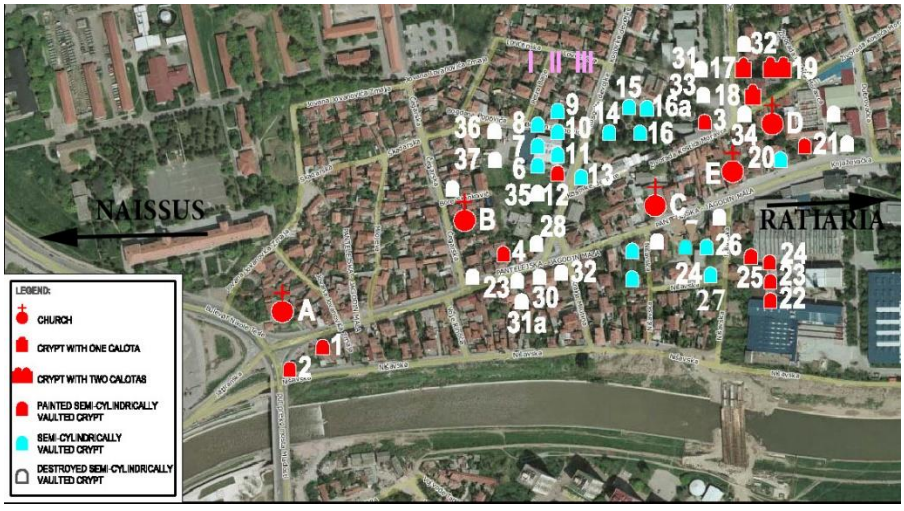


Fig. 1. City necropolis Jagodin Mala, the layout of the known churches and tombs (author: Misa Rakocija).

The names of the martyrs of Niš have been forgotten, but we have reliable information about their reputation and fame. Victricius, the prominent Christian thinker from the 4th century and Bishop of

[2] Rakocija 2011, 19–27; Rakocija 2013b, 31–68; Rakocija 2013c, 139–140; Rakocija 2013d, 133–188.

[3] Technical documentation elaborated and revised on the basis of the condition found with projection of newly observed architectural elements with reliance on newly discovered old photographs, the diary of Đ.M. Zisija, sketches of V. Tomašević from 1953 from documentation of the National Museum in Belgrade and the report of A. Nenadović, made by arch. Nadežda Rakocija.

[4] Grabar 1946, 29, 30.

[5] Since 4th century, the belief has been spread that remains of the followers who suffered for Christ's faith are sacred - Grabar 1946, 357.

Rouen, the later St. Victricius (*Sanctus Victricius*), informs us about it. The Bishop Victricius, in his writing '*De laude sanctorum*', mentions Naisus as one of the famous cities where relics of saints are kept, which makes miracles by healing the miserables: '*An aliter in Oriente, Constantinopoli, Antiochiae, Thessalonicae, Naiso, Romae in Italia miseris porrigunt medicinam*'. [6] We notice that among the most important urban centers of that time where the martyrs' relics were kept (Constantinople, Antioch, Thessalonica and Rome), the Bishop Victricius equally placed Niš. It is not difficult to conclude how much Niš was renowned for its martyrs, when the information about it reached Gaul and the Bishop Victricius, who ranked it among the great cities - martyriopolises (*Martyriopolis)* and a famous place of pilgrimage. In such important Christian centers, martyrs who suffered in the city itself or its immediate surroundings were venerated. Above their grave, an above-ground part of the martyrium was built, and then the church, which was discovered in Niš. The above written source, supported by archeological data, offers a clearer picture of the initial form of the martyr veneration above his grave. Thanks to an old photograph and interpretation of a drawing on the wall in a nearby early Christian tomb, we know that there was a ciborium inside the martyrium and in front of it, in the basilica exonartex, we found *mensae martyrum*.[7]

Until the 6th century, Niš as well as the whole of Illyricum, fell under the supreme ecclesiastical authority of the Roman Pope.[8] The See of Rome appropriated the Balkans at the end of the 4th century. Throughout the 5th century, the Balkans, as well as Niš, belonged to the Diocese of Milan.[9] At that time, the city of Naisus, with its bishops and priests, whose names are all Latin, is more in favor of the West than the East. The bishops of Naissus are in direct contact with the Holy See.[10] Ideas that appeared under the strong influence of Western Christians, but also the ancient heritage, are recognizable in the construction and

[6] Sancti Victrcii rothomagensis episcope, De laude sanctorum, P.L. XI, 453; Zeiller 1918/2005, 122; Mirković 1956, 67, 68. Victricius listed the cities on the basis of geographical area and not by importance, which is why he placed Niš after Thessalonica and before Rome.

[7] Rakocija 2013d, 167–169.

[8] Granić 1925, 113–134; Grujić 1928, 95; Nikolajević 1973, 163.

[9] Grujić 1928, 95; Krautheimer & Ćurčić 2008, 118. From the end of the 5th century, a greater influence of Constantinople on Illyricum was recorded – Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 31.

[10] Rakocija 2008, 45–58.

painting of Niš tombs,[11] architecture, applied art, while via late antique mosaics, connection with the Adriatic coast was established.[12] Such an approach to art was brought to Naisus by Latin bishops and priests, who originated from the region of today's Italy, who served here in the period from the second half of the 4th to the beginning of the 7th century (fig. 2).[13]

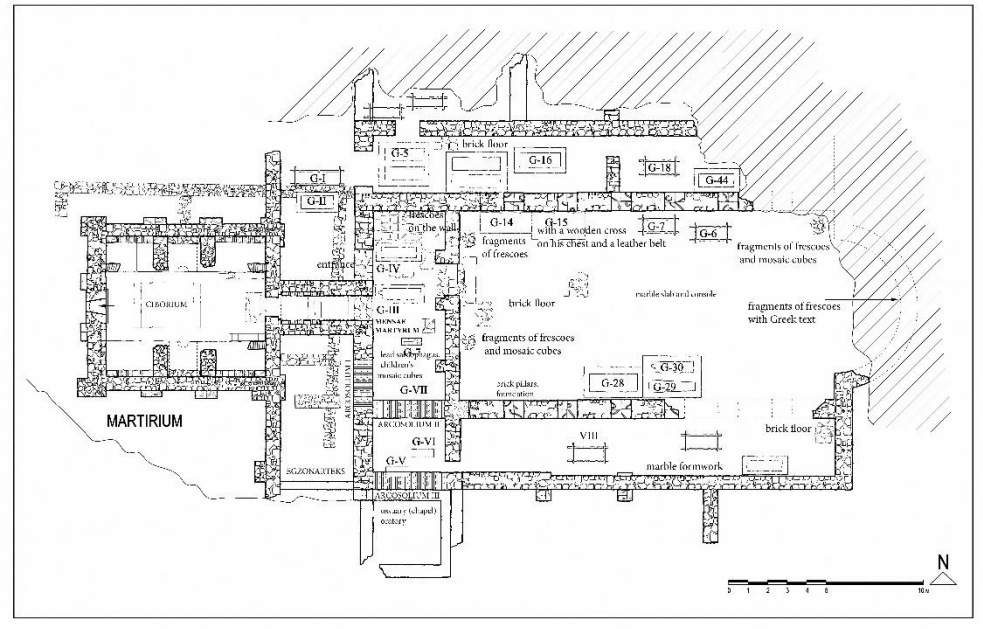


Fig. 2. Martyrs' Basilica, basis, elaboration based on the diary of Đ.M. Zisi, the sketches of V. Tomašević from 1953 (documented in the National Museum in Belgrade) and the state found, elaborated by architect Nadežda Rakocija.

The architectural unit of the Basilica of the Martyrs (*basilicae martyrum*) comprises the martyrium (family *mausoleum*) from the second half of the 4th century, and in the 5th or 6th century, according to S. Ćurčić, [14] a three-nave basilica added to its east side. It is a cemeterial basilica, which, in accordance with the Roman tradition, was built outside the city walls, nearby the city ramparts. Facing the eastern

[11] Rakocija 2010, 73–74; Rakocija 2013e, 95-105; Rakocija 2014, 49–70.
[12] Trovabene 2006, 144; Rakocija 2006, 101, figs. 10, 11.
[13] Famous bishop of Naissus: 1) *Cyriacus* before 343; 2) *Gaudentius* around 343; 3) *Bonosus* was replaced around 391; 4) *Marcianus* around 409-414; 5) *Dalmatius* oko 467; 6) *Gaianus* around 516; 7) *Proiektus* around 553, priests *Germanicus and Rustikus* and deacon *Lupentius* - Zeiller 1918/2005, 326; Rakocija 2008, 45–58, with literature.
[14] Ćurčić 2010, 147.

city gate through which the road led past the Basilica of the Martyrs, the cemetery and further to *Viminacium* and *Ratiaria*. The cemeterial basilica is located in the western part of the necropolis at the representative place that belonged to the entrance area of the city cemetery. Today, it is the urban settlement of Jagodin Mala, elevated above the Nišava River, from which the view of new and old Niš is equally beautiful.

Available documentation

The tomb, known today as the martyrium, was discovered by A.O. Slavetić in 1933, which he rightly called it the 'mausoleum'.[15] He found the mausoleum with a ruined vault and a masonry rectangular structure in the middle, while the window on the west wall above the apsidole was well preserved. All this can be seen in Slavetić's drawing and photography, and they are complemented by existing architectural elements, some of which are still in the martyrium today. Together, they are all important for the ideal reconstruction of the interior, which will help us to define more closely its function (fig. 3).

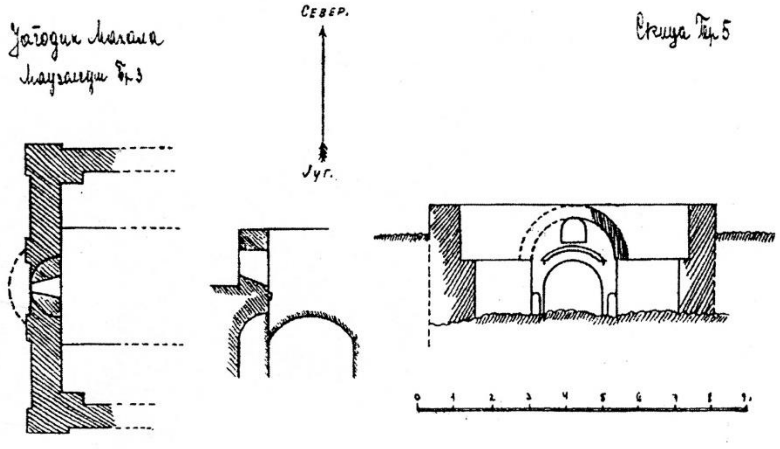


Fig. 3. Mausoleum (A.O. Slavetić, 1933).

The path to ideal reconstruction and definition of its function leads through a detailed analysis of preserved old photographs and drawings from the time when the martyrium was excavated in 1933. That year when Slavetić discovered the tomb, he was photographed inside it, next to the stairs along the east wall. The photo was taken from

[15] Oršić-Slavetić 1934, 304, fig. 5.

the west, so that in the foreground there is a masonry pedestal on which a long square profiled stone beam and a massive round pillar shaft are placed. One can see the plastered walls and foundation base of the stone fence that closed the eastern *arcosolia*, while the step tread was covered with beautifully processed thin, probably marble slabs. There is also a smaller base and a pillar capital, square profiled stone beams and massive slabs in the *arcosolium*, some of which are still in the martyrium today (fig. 4).



Fig. 4. A.O. Slavetić in the newly discovered mausoleum with a brick rectangular construction in the middle, 1933 (National Museum in Niš).



Fig. 5. Mausoleum 1933 (photo: A.O. Slavetić) (National Museum in Niš).

The following photo reveals appearance of the west side of the martyrium. We see in more detail a masonry stepped pedestal covered with marble paneling, from which a large pillar has been removed and a long square stone beam remained, visible in the previous photograph. An unusual massive square pillar with one end conically finished, lies between the pedestal and the central apse. In the southern apsidole, a long square stone beam is erected, similar to the one on the pedestal. It should be noted that there are no traces of a fence foundation in front of the western *arcosolia* (fig. 5).

Immediately after cleaning the interior of the tomb, in 1933, a third photograph was taken.[16] It was taken from above, from the east side, so that the entire interior of the martyrium can be seen. It is the same as the previous one, except that here on the pedestal there is a fragment of the marble paneling and a round metal hoop that has not been recorded so far. The hoop may be *in situ* or was placed there

[16] Milošević 2004, 123–124.

because of the photograph taken; however, it is undoubtedly part of the tomb inventory (fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Mausoleum 1933 (photo: A.O. Slavetić) (National Museum in Niš).



Fig. 7. Mausoleum 1937 (photo: R.O. Bratanić) (National Museum in Niš).

Few years later a photograph was taken that was published by R.O. Bratanić in 1937, where he finds that the building, which he calls the 'big tomb', has grown into weeds and is very neglected. In the photograph, traces of a masonry pedestal can still be seen on the martyrium floor, a conically shaped window above the central apse has

been preserved, but architectural elements cannot be seen from the weeds (fig. 7).

Photos and a sketch by A.O. Slavetić from 1933, a description of Bratanić from 1937, a newly discovered report by Aleksandar Nenadović from 1962, as well as an unconsidered hoop and architectural fragments that are still in martyrium today, together with new information, will help us understand the possible appearance of the martyrium interior.

Bratanić describes the martyrium in detail and states its dimensions. The martyrium is 7.44 m long, 6.28 m wide, and its height is 3.40 m; it is made of beautifully stacked bricks, and was once plastered with hydrostatic plaster. On each longitudinal side of the rectangular central space (7.15 x 3.10 m) there are two deep *arcosolia* (height 1.60 m, width 2.80 m, depth 1.60 m).[17] All four *arcosolia* are vaulted with a barrel vault inside which the deceased were laid to rest. Within a triangle that is formed between the archivolts of *arcosolia*, there is a smaller niche (0.63 x 0.51 x 0.38 m), which separates them at 0.65 m height from the floor.[18] On the west side, there is a big niche 1.80 m high, 1.52 m wide and 0.86 m deep and to the right and left are two smaller niches 1.34 m high, 0.53 m wide and 0.28 m deep, which were precisely measured by Bratanić. Above the central big niche is a small, conically shaped window through which the tomb was illuminated. The central part of the tomb was vaulted with a barrel vault, the segments of which have been preserved along the martyrium east wall. One can go to the tomb down the twelve steps on the east side. Bratanić does not mention the pedestal, which then, judging by the photograph, could be barely noticed (fig. 8).[19]

Bratanić assumes that the tomb is part of a larger building that was used for church purposes. For dating, he relies on the found coins of Constantine the Great (306-327) and Constantius II (337-361). It is

[17] There is a great similarity between the rectangular base surrounded by arcosolia and the base of the tombs with two calottes in Jagodin Mala and Niška Banja. Such is the base of the crypt from the Roman and early Byzantine fortifications on the site of Karataš (Diana) on the Danube River, where a parapet slab with chrismon similar to the one discovered in Niš was found. Significant difference is that in the Niš martyrium, on the wall opposite the entrance opening, there are three apsidioles, and not another arcosolium - Nikolajević 1978, 686; Rakocija 2006, 101–102 : Rakocija 2013d, 95, 258–259, 323–332.

[18] About the niches on the tomb side walls see: Rakocija 2004, 148–157.

[19] Bratanić 1937, 182, 183. General neglect of the building and insufficient visibility may be the reason why he does not mention the square pedestal in the center of the martyrium.

important to mention the pillar shaft made of red sand stone that can be seen in Slavetić's photograph from 1933, and is still in the martyrium today, as well as an early Christian impost capital made of white marble, [20] which he thinks corresponds to the red stone pillar. According to Bratanić, a large number of skeletons and remains of wooden sarcophagi were found inside the tomb, which were exhibited in the Museum until the World War II, when a bomb fell on the Museum (fig. 9).

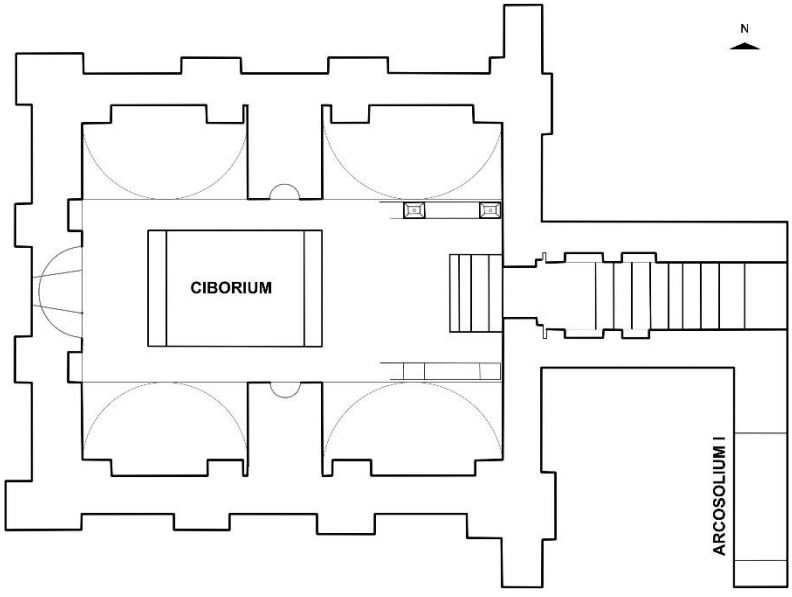


Fig. 8. Martyrium, the base of the underground part and the upper floor (drawing; Nadežda Rakocija).

We learn more about the found movable material from Nenadović's report written in 1962:

'*It was excavated and emptied of rubble in June and August 1933 by the National Museum in Nis. During the excavation, several pieces of jewelry were found in it: two fibulae, several bronze rings and a bracelet made of glass paste. Parts of wooden sarcophagi, which were prepared and preserved, were also found. All of these items were destroyed during the 1944 bombing. In addition, the following items were also found: a white marble capital, which is today displayed in the Niš Fortress*

[20] Stojković-Nikolajević 1952, 170, 172–174, figs.1, 2; Rakocija 2013d, 166–167.

lapidarium. One fragment of the sandstone pillar was also found, which is still in the martyrium today.'[21]

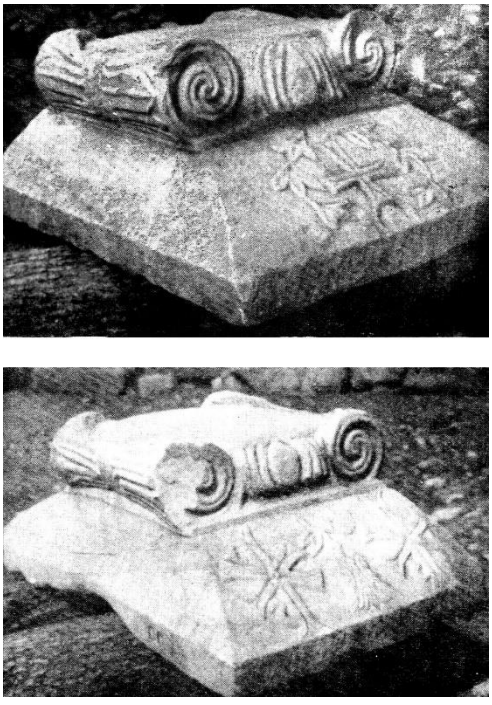


Fig. 9. Ionic impost capital (after Nikolajević Stojković 1952, fig. 2).



Fig. 10. The basis of the fence of the northeastern arcosolium (photo: Misa Rakocija).

Analysis of the documentation and found state of martyrium

Arcosolia were enclosed by a **fence** made of massive stone slabs and square pillars, the bases of which are clearly visible in Slavetić's photograph (1933). In the photograph in front of the northwestern and southwestern arcosolium, neither the bases of the fence are visible, nor any traces of them. In front of the northeastern *arcosolium*, two rectangular stone bases (28 x 37 cm) with a hole for fastening the little pillars and 10 cm lower, a plastered interspace (77 cm long and about 28 cm wide) on which the partition stone slab was supported between the two pillars, are clearly visible today (fig. 10). In the martyrium even today, the fence enclosing the tombs consists of square stone beams with an interspace filled with massive stone slabs decorated on one side

[21] Nenadović 1962, data given on 23.07.1962; Rakocija 2013d, 146–147.

only, which have a hole in the lateral side for fastening them to a little stone pillar. The little stone pillars of the tomb partition are properly processed with rectangular cross-section (90 x 26 x 15 cm), while the partition slabs (70 x 60 x 27 cm) are framed with multistage strips in a shallow relief (fig. 11).



Fig. 11. The basis of the fence of the arcosolium; the fragments of the parapet panels and the column from the fence of the arcosolium (photo: Misa Rakocija).

On the front side of a larger fragment of the parapet slab, the damaged parts create contours that only resemble a fish. We observe the clear Christian symbolism of the scratched cross on the lateral side of the same slab. On the lateral side of the slab, below the square hole for fastening it to the little pillar, an equilateral cross is scratched, each arm of which ends in short horizontal lines in the shape of the letter 'T' (*patibulum*). This is one of the oldest forms symbolizing the three-

armed cross called *crux comissa* or *patibulata*,[22] and, perhaps, it is not a coincidence that the same is also found in the tomb of Domitilla in Rome from the 4th century.[23] In Niš, the four *crux comissa* form the equilateral Greek cross named *crux imissa* or *crux quadrata*, which strengthens our view that the martyrium belongs to the 4th century.[24] In Niš, we find clearly legible symbolism of the cross that is 'covered' by still living memory of one of the oldest forms behind which the symbol of the cross is hidden. The cross with arms in the shape of the letter 'T', which is placed on the priest's head, is directly related to the magical and divine.[25] However, the cross was scratched during the slab carving, thus revealing its Christian character, with intention of being covered and invisible (*crux dissimulata*) after the slab installation, but undoubtedly with deep and sincere faith in one God. Thus, the cross became 'invisibly present', by which its apotropaic ability to protect was not diminished.[26] Maybe it happened before the Edict of Milan (313), when the Christians were hiding, informing us that the prominent Christian family of Naissus closed the tombs in the family *mausoleum* with parapet slabs with carved probable fish, while the stonecutter from a much lower class was a Christian who discreetly engraved the cross during his work, aware that after installing the slab, the cross will remain invisible. After all, late antique mausoleums and early Christian martyriums are commemorative buildings that celebrate the victory over death and the resurrection of martyrs (fig. 12).

The found fragments, such as the pillar shaft made of red stone and parapet slab, are still in the martyrium today. The pillar is of the usual late antique type (R-48, length 1.8 m), mentioned by Bratanić, without entase with the upper ring under the capital made in shallow plastic, as is common in Caričin Grad.[27] In the martyrium, we see other fragments of stone and marble architectural decoration: fragment of a smaller base of a pillar (R-38 cm, h-25 cm), circularly worked stone (R-48 cm, h-21 cm), square stone beams with grooves (75 x 25 x 15 cm), a

[22] Mirković 1982, 172.
[23] Painting of the nearby tomb with representation of Peter and Paul is closest to the painting in the Catacombs of Domitilla – Rakocija 2014, 49–70.
[24] From the 5th century the cross is clearly shown in the catacombs; until then, Christ's monograms and crosses disguised in various forms were mostly presented - Mirković 1982, 173–174; Dimitrova 1995, 19–24.
[25] Sulzberger 1926, 447.
[26] Gabelić 2002, 435.
[27] Mano-Zisi 1955, 135.

fragment of profiled marble slab (50 x 28 x 13 cm), five fragments of stone slabs with strip-profiled rim (10-15 cm thickness), and they can be recognized on Slavetić's photograph from 1933. It is difficult to define more closely the massive square pillar (about 1,5 m, in relation to the known 2 m width of the pedestal) with a conically finished end, which can be seen in Slavetić's photograph. Such an architectural decorative plastic, fine thin marble slabs (3-5 cm) that covered the pedestal and step tread, together with decorative arch of the central apse (perhaps in ceramo-plastic), indicate once richly decorated interior of the *mausoleum* (fig. 13).

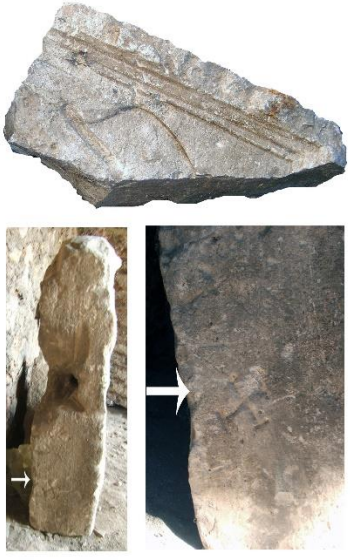


Fig. 12. A fragment of the parapet panel with a carved 'fish' from the barrier of the arcosolium; the lateral side of the panel with an opening for tightening and a carved cross; carved cross (photo: Misa Rakocija).



Fig. 13. a) The trunk of the column and the fragment of the parapet panel in the northwestern arcosolium;
b) Architectural decorative plastic in the northeastern arcosolium (photo: Misa Rakocija).

On the martyrium **west wall**, there are three niches expertly made of radially stacked bricks.[28] The middle apse is the largest, deepest and vaulted with semi-calotte (fig. 14). Above the archivolt of the central apse (counter-apse in relation to presbyterium of the basilica) is another arch of radially stacked smaller bricks, which is projected 8 cm into space in relation to the crown of the arch of the central apsidole

[28] Presence of niches on the west wall is common in the 5th century, which is one of the reasons why Stričević dated its origin to that time - Stričević 1953, 196.

semi-calotte and is surmounted by one horizontal row of bricks. This clearly emphasizes the significance of the largest central apse. It is flanked by two smaller and lower niches whose archivolts lie on longitudinal walls.

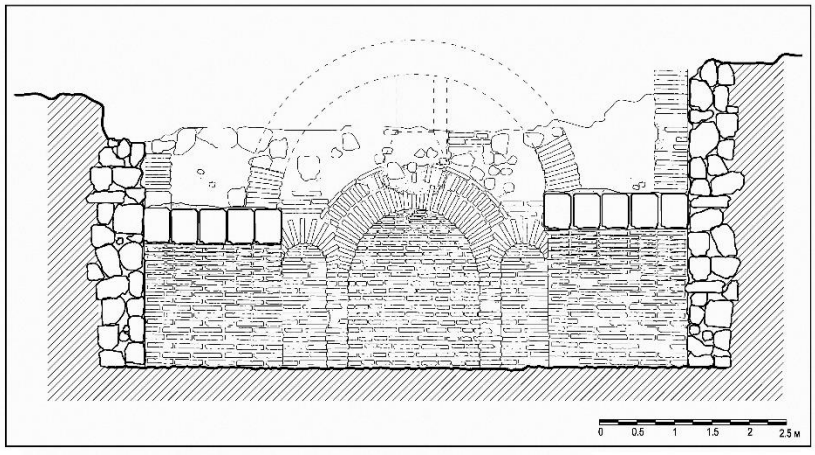


Fig. 14. Western side of the martyrium, longitudinal cross section (sketches by architect J. Rakocija).

Early Christian small vaulted tombs of that time often have one small niche on the west wall opposite the entrance. According to the proposed typological systematization, they are dated to the second half of the 4th and to the 5th century.[29] In the family mausoleums of that time, which are larger in size, there are no longer small niches but one large inner apse in front of or above the martyr's tomb (relic), like in the apse of St. Anastasius' mausoleum in Marusinac (Salona). [30] The mausoleum in Alberca near Murcia (Spain), just like in Marusinac, has large apse on the west side that covers the width of the crypt.[31] On the east side, there is a spacious apse and mausoleum excavated in the square of St. Stephen in Sopianae (Pécs, Hungary).[32] One apse on the east wall has the martyrium of the Basilica in Merkel (Voden village, Bulgaria).[33] Only in the martyrium in Niš, the west wall is divided by three apses in a way that they remind of the altar space. The cult of

[29] Rakocija 2004, 154–157.
[30] Grabar 1946, 58–59; Krauthajmer & Ćurčić 2008, 35. A number of chapels in the apses were discovered at the early Christian cemetery in Manastirine (Salona).
[31] Gómez 2004, 1–23, fig. 3.
[32] Huidák & Nagy 2009, 30, fig. 10.
[33] Boyadzhiev 2002, 215; Drazheva 2009, 141–149.

martyrs was worshiped in front of them. For this reason, the central apse is visibly emphasized in its size and the representative treatment of the arch (fig. 15).



Fig. 15. Martyrium, the view from the eastern side (photo: Misa Rakocija).

Above the emphasized and decorated central apse there is a conically shaped **window**, a kind of opening for light and ventilation (*spiraculum*), through which honor was paid and direct contact with relics was made (*fenestela*), or it was a window for confession of sins (*fenestela konfesiones*). In the tomb in Pécs, the central niche has an opening that is directly connected with the skylight, so that its placement above the central niche is not accidental (*cataracta*). In front of the counter-apse, on the masonry pedestal that is visible in the photograph, the martyr's relics should be expected.

The existence of fenestela, together with remains of walls above the vaulted arcosolia, reveal that the martyrium had the **above-ground construction**,[34] such as the tombs from Sopiana, Alberka in Spain, Pécs (Hungary) and Salona had.[35] The mausoleum at the Alberka locality from the first half of the 4th century is equally oriented east-west with buttresses on all four sides.[36] The family mausoleum in which St. Anastasius was buried (around 305-310) in Marusinec from Salona, has

[34] Zotović & Petrović 1968.
[35] Ćurčić 2010, 60–63.
[36] Krauthajmer & Ćurčić 2008, 35; Gómez 2004, 1–23, fig. 3, with a parallel on the Iberian Peninsula.

pilasters (buttresses) projecting on the outside.[37] Equally strong pilasters surround the martyrium discovered in St. Stephen's square in Pécs (Sopianae) from the second half of the 4th century, on the basis of which an ideal reconstruction was made.[38] In Niš, strong pilasters that took over the load of the above-ground part surround the martyrium on the outside, while they are reinforced with slightly shallower pilasters on the inside. Above the central apse there is fenestela, which is also the landmark from where the above-ground construction of the martyrium starts (fig. 16).



Fig. 16. Martyrium, the adding of the pilaster in the free space within the arch of the vault (photo: Misa Rakocija).

To the above-ground part of the martyrium also belonged the above-mentioned massive red stone pillar shaft which collapsed from a certain height onto the pedestal in the martyrium center, breaking through the floor and the vault, which was recorded in Slavetić's photograph from 1933. A recess in the pedestal surface is an imprint of the pillar that collapsed through the vault. This can be clearly seen in the older photograph by Slavetić and the pedestal in the foreground at the moment when the mausoleum was discovered. On the pedestal lies a pillar shaft, one end of which is conically broken (length 1.8 m, diameter 0.48 m). Such an imprint of the pillar is visible in the second photograph after it was removed from the pedestal. Namely, by its fall,

[37] Grabar 1946, 94, 95; Fülep 1975, 24–26; Nikolajević 1984, 530; Bulić 1986, 132–175.
[38] Huidák & Nagy 2009, 30, fig. 10.

the pillar visibly truncated the southern edge of the pedestal and left a deep trace in its mass. This information is significant because only a pillar that fell from a big height could have left such a trace in the solid masonry structure. Considering the pillars dimensions, it belonged to the above-ground construction of the tomb and at certain moment it fell from about 4 m height through the floor of the above-ground part and the vault of the martyrium.

Considerations imposed by the comparison method must remain within the framework of assumptions, from which attempts can be made to ideally reconstruct the above-ground part of the martyrium that was defined at the same time when the basilica was additionally built (5th-6th century). The above-ground building of the martyrium included powerful external pilasters on all four sides with accentuated angular pilasters. The outer pilasters on longitudinal walls in the interior are accompanied by smaller pilasters, making a pair of pilasters as we can see in Marusinec (Salona).[39] In the same way, larger outer pilasters are followed by the smaller ones on the inner side of the south wall of the basilica nave.[40] This strengthens our assumption of simultaneous construction of the above-ground part of the martyrium and the basilica.

Undoubtedly, the above-ground building was raised high enough to allow access to *fenestella* and contact with the relics. This involves well-designed access to the *fenestella* corresponding to its function and stairs leading to the entrance to the above-ground part of the martyrium. It is certain that also in Niš, walls of the above-ground part of the martyrium were reinforced on the outside with square brick pilasters, as in Alberka, Pécs and Marusinec, on the basis of which their ideal reconstruction was made. This opens a possibility that the martyrium in Niš also had similarly designed above-ground part with buttresses reinforced with shallow pilasters on the inside, elevated on several steps thus allowing the religious believers an access to the *fenestella*. If we accept that, it is necessary to find place in the above-ground construction for the massive red stone pillar for which we stated that it was part of the above-ground building, because its dimensions could not belong to the mausoleum interior. That is why we will assume that Bratanić is right when he relates the early Christian Ionic impost

[39] Marin 1987, 58.
[40] Rakocija 2013d, 157–158.

capital made of white marble and decorated with relief to this pillar.[41] At least one pair of such pillars with relief decorated capitals in the above-ground construction could have been part of the representative entrance to the church. These observations should be taken into account during reconstruction of the martyrium and the basilica. Analogies have been considered and constructive elements have been developed that could shape the above-ground structure, for definition of which there is not enough data at present. Further research will more closely define the appearance of the above-ground part of the martyrium which was the integral part of the basilica. Regardless of what the above-ground part of the martyrium looked like, it took on the role of atrium from where the relics of saints or the deceased were honored,[42] from where the representative entrance led to the basilica (fig. 17).

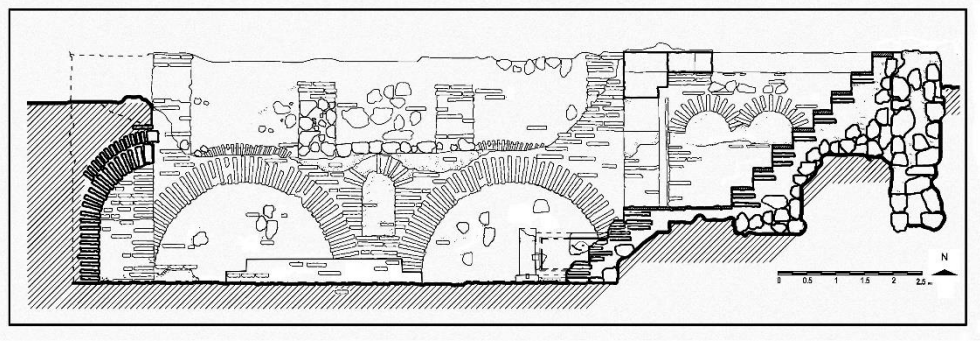


Fig. 17. Longitudinal cross section through the martyrium, northern side (elaboration and finishing by architect J. Rakocija according to the diary of Đ.M. Zisi and the sketches of V. Tomašević from 1953) (National Museum in Belgrade).

The martyrium was entered by lifting a stone slab in the floor of the exonarthex of the church that was additionally built in the 5th-6th century. That happened in special situations during the ceremony when the pilgrims passed, so that the chosen ones could pass by the grave and the relics that were on the pedestal. Everyday contact with the martyr's tomb (relics), perhaps even a visual one, was made through a window

[41] We should add that colonnades in the basilica were made of brick pillars, which means that this capital did not belong to them - Rakocija 2013d, 159.

[42] In the atrium, among other things, the deceased ones were honored, so in relation to that function, its frequent appearance next to grave churches was observed: Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 22.

(*fenestella*).[43] The window size and its conical shape reveal that light penetrated inside the tomb in a deliberate way, directed at the ciborium and the relics at a particular time of the day. For this reason, west side of the above-ground part of the martyrium had to be architecturally designed for the purpose of being a martyrium sanctuary, enabling the beam of light and the believers to come into contact with the relics and pay public reverence (fig. 18).



Fig. 18. Martyrium, the view from the western side (photo: Misa Rakocija).

During the church construction, the crypt with the martyr's tomb was leaned against the west wall of the additionally built church and was not incorporated into the eastern – the altar space of the church, where it belongs: 'under the altar, where the souls of those killed for the word of God rest' (Rev. 6: 9)[44], as in St. Peter's in Rome or

[43] Grabar 1946, 497.

[44] After the end of persecution, the temple could not be consecrated unless the saint's relics were under the throne, which was determined by the 7th canon of the Seventh Ecumenical Council - Mirković 1982, 188–189.

St. Demetrius' in Thessalonica.[45] The martyrium in the Markeli fortress near Karnobat (Bulgaria) from the end of the 4th century was also incorporated into a basilica construction in front of the altar space,[46] which in the 6th century after liturgical changes,[47] consists of three apses, arranged as on the west wall of the martyrium in Niš. In Niš, the connection between the martyr's tomb and the altar of the later added basilica is not lost. This was achieved by arranging the apses on the martyrium west wall as the altar space after the liturgical changes, with three apses of which the central altar apse is the largest. The opposite central apse on the mausoleum west wall, which should be qualified as the 'counter-apse', faces the basilica apse and is located exactly in its axis, thus 'communicating' with the altar apse of the church. It has been done with unexpected precision, passing exactly through the middle of the nave, connecting the center of both apses. This geometric accuracy, derived from craft virtuosity, with the force of its symbolism points to the apsidal space where sacred relics of the martyrs have been placed to this day.[48]

The martyrium rectangular central space was exceeded, along its entire length, by a barrel vault. The interspace lateral to the arch of the vault, above the arcosolia and under the floor of the above-ground part, was at certain point divided by additionally built stone walls and brick pilasters, which were thus strengthened. This younger construction phase is difficult to determine in time, as well as the possible function of the chambers thus formed.[49] However, it is important to record it thus confirming the life continuity of the holy place until the 10th-11th century, when the latest discovered graves in the basilica are dated.[50] At

[45] It is considered that a main characteristic of the northern Italian so-called 'standard basilicas' is annexing the martyrium near the ends of lateral - Krauthajmer & Ćurčić 2008, 175. It is an open question when the martyrs' tombs under the altar became common occurrence, the earliest example was recorded in Rome in the 6th century - Nikolajević 1978, 681, with bibliography.

[46] Drazheva 2009, 141–149. On tombs in the church construction, see - Rakocija 2016, 72–82.

[47] Stričević 1959, 59–65.

[48] Mirković 1982, 102. The apse of the crypt below the Basilica with the Crypt in Caričin grad is on the east side - Spremo-Petrović 1955, fig. 1, 14, 16; Kondić & Popović 1977, fig. 52.

[49] The rectangular space shaped in this way resembles tomb partitions covered with floor slabs - Milošević 2004, 127.

[50] Mano-Zisi 1953; Rakocija 2013d, 147.

that time, memory of the old cult place was still alive and the church was probably still active (fig. 19).[51]



Fig. 19. Martyrium, the saved fragment of the arch with a barrel-shaped vault (photo: Misa Rakocija).

Pedestal (throne) - ciborium

At the moment when the martyrium was discovered, within its center, occupying the place of honor in front of the apse on the west wall, a rectangular stepped elongated structure in the form of pedestal was found. It is not clear why Slavetić and Bratanić do not mention the masonry pedestal (throne), which can be clearly seen in three of Slavetić's photographs from 1933. Aleksandar Nenadović is the only one to describe it sparsely in his note from 1962: '*the stone throne is in front of the apse, it is 2 m wide and 0,40 m high. This throne was destroyed*

[51] Rakocija 2013d, 172–173.

during the 1941-1944 occupation and the stone was mostly taken out of the martyrium'.[52]

It can be stated that the rectangular construction consists of the lower longer and the upper shorter part in the form of stairs on the east and west side. The entire construction is made of bricks and covered with thin, presumably, marble slabs (3-5 cm), clearly visible in the photograph, together with fragments preserved to this day. On the pedestal (throne) lies one long square stone beam, the second one is leaning against the southwest corner, the third more massive one lies between the central apse and the pedestal, while the square long beam (maybe two) is upright in the southeastern arch. All are squarely profiled and processed, some still in the martyrium. In the photograph, two smaller capitals next to Slavetić are seen, the pillar base (diameter 26 - 38 cm, height 25 cm with a square hole in the middle), one fragmented pillar shaft, stone or marble formwork slabs, still in the martyrium today (fig. 20).

The above mentioned smaller architectural decorative elements belonged to the representative *ciborium* intended for venerating the cult and they found their place in its proposed ideal reconstruction. Above the pedestal covered with marble paneling, the *ciborium* rose on four stone pillars connected by square profiled architrave beams that were found around.[53] It is to be expected that under the *ciborium* there was a vial in which relics were kept, particles of martyrs - body fragments (*pignoria*),[54] blood or ashes. Such ciboriums rose above the martyr's tomb or relics in the Rome catacombs, as in the Catacombs of Domitila,[55] and often, as in Niš, with a window for a direct contact with the martyr's relics. The martyrium enclosed spaces in the cemetery in Salona also have fence with an apse on one wall and a table in the middle with the martyr's tomb which is covered with baldachin.[56] This is why discovery of the mensae martyrum in front of the martyrium entrance was expected. The slab is adjusted to funeral activities *(agapae)* with channels and a specially shaped casting for liquids (wine,

[52] Note in Nenadović 1962, data given on 23.07.1962.
[53] Rakocija 2007, 133.
[54] In the 4th century, fragmentation of the saints' bodies as well as their distribution in cities, even trading in them, was recorded, so Theodosius I issued a decree implementing the conclusion by the Council of Constantinople (381), where item 7 prohibits trade in martyrs' relics - Grabar 1946, 456, 460.
[55] Spera 2006, 14–21, fig.13.
[56] Krautheimer & Ćurčić 2008, 34–35, with literature.

oil) where libations (*libation*) were performed on the commemoration day of the martyr's suffering.[57] It could be the beginning of forming the martyr's cult and the holy place (*locum sancti*). Where *mensae* were located, there were also the holy graves.[58] The recorded mensa is another confirmation of the cult of martyrs early established in Niš (fig. 21).[59]

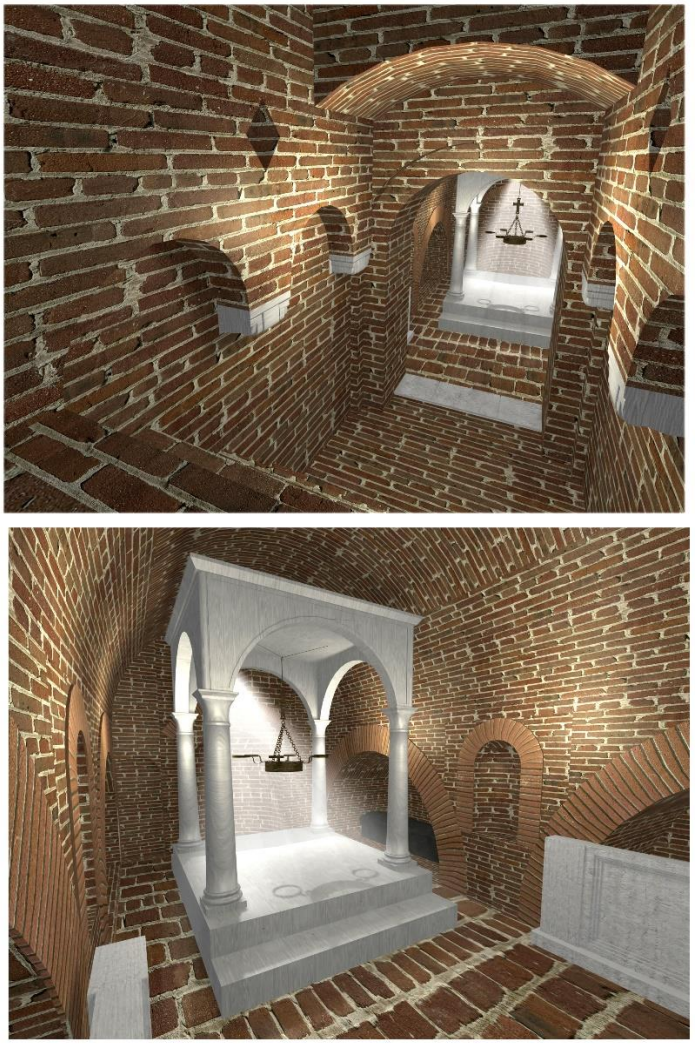


Fig. 20. Martyrium, interior (ideal reconstruction: architect M. Dimanić).

[57] Grabar 1946, 48, 49.
[58] Duval 1984, 214–215.
[59] Rakocija 2013d, 167–169.



Fig. 21. mensae martyrum (photo: Misa Rakocija).

The ciborium with the martyr reliquary was in front of the big apse (counter-apse) and in direction of the spreading beam of light and the view believers had through a small window - fenestella *(fenestella confessionis)* on the west wall. In this way, there was a direct contact with the martyr's tomb (relics), as well as with the presbyterium of the basilica opposite the counter-apse. In such counter-apses of the basilica-martyrium opposite the presbyterium in Tunisia (Holy Assumption) and Africa, there are relics or records on martyrs.[60] That is a sufficient reason for assuming that the same case was in Naisus. However, martyriums that originated from the group funeral tombs, as in Niš, basically represent a free-standing apse under whose conch the martyr's sarcophagus is placed.[61] Beneath the ciborium is the martyr's tomb which signified the sanctity of the place.[62] Between this central holy sasudi with the *ciborium* and the martyrium walls, there was enough space for priests and believers to pass and pilgrims to go round the martyr's relics in the Niš martyrium.

The round hoop on the pedestal remained unnoticed by researchers, and thus a possible resolution of its purpose, which we believe is essential for defining the pedestal function. On the basis of the photograph, we can conclude that the metal hoop is of regular circle

[60] Duval 1970, 86–87.
[61] Grabar 1946, 67, 98.
[62] The baldachin also rose above the sarcophagus of Constantine's daughter Constantine, today Santa Constanta (St. Constance) from the year 350 - Krautheimer & Ćurčić 2008, 67.

shape (a diameter about 30 cm, width about 10-12 cm). With its shape, together with the place where it was found, it intrusively resembles the 'corona' of a chandelier - polycandillion. Handles with bearings for glass Virgil lamps were attached to the hoop-corona.

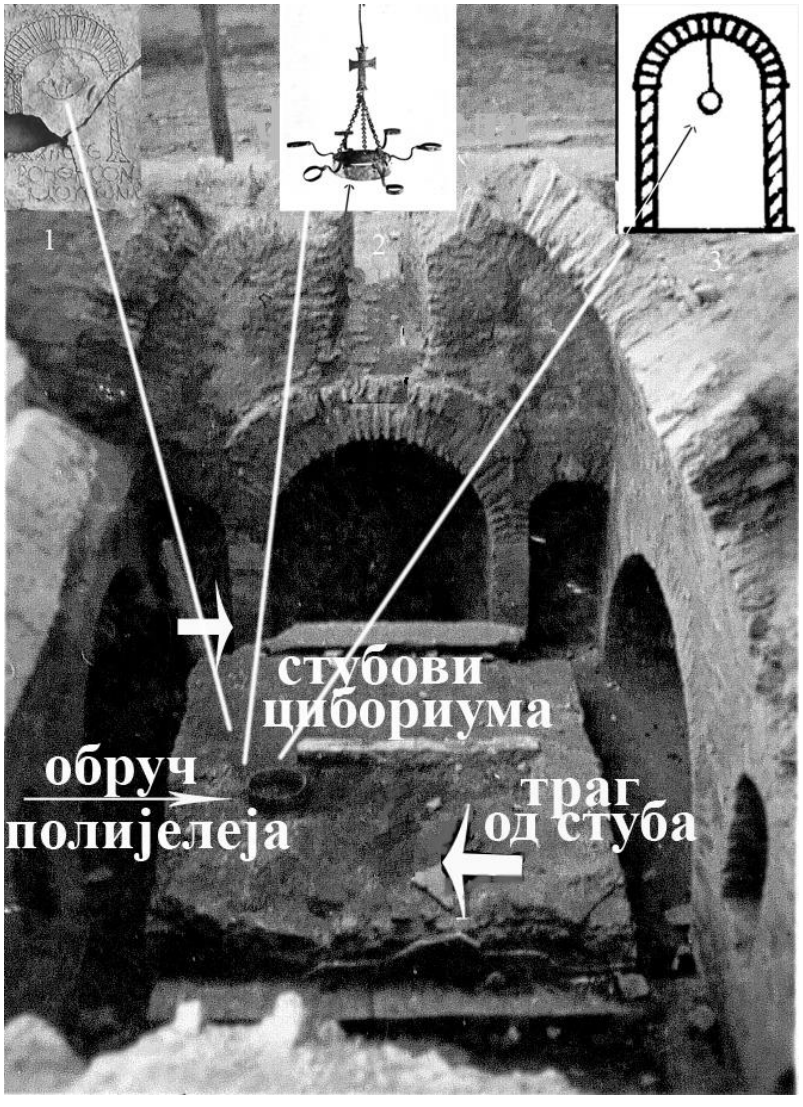


Fig. 22. Martyrium with the postament for the ciborium and the explanations of the details, a view from the eastern side (after 1933). Possible appearance of the chandelier below the ciborium 1) Bargala, the brick from the basilica with a carved ciborium with the chandelier (after Aleksova 1989, fig. 45) 2) Chandelier from the vicinity of Pirot (according to G. Marjanović-Vujović); 3) Jagodin Mala, tomb number 1, decoration of the western wall, ciborium with a ring of the chandelier, a detail (according to R. O. Bratanić).

The Niš chandelier hoop is identical to the one from the Pirot surroundings.[63] Such a hoop hangs in the middle of sub-arcade space of the *ciborium*, painted in the nearby destroyed tomb no. 1 near the Mladosti bridge.[64] In Niš, the stylized chandelier - polycandillion was painted, scratched inside an identical *ciborium* on a brick from Bargala. [65] There is no doubt that the Virgil lamp (chandelier - polycandelon), in the first centuries of Christianity, occupied the place under ciborium, for which there are many examples. In tomb no. 1, the painted architectural construction is a *ciborium* with a polycandelion, as one could see in the martyrium (fig. 22).[66]

All that we find in the martyrium – the west wall with the larger central apse flanked by two smaller ones, designed as the altar space and a pedestal with a *ciborium* and a polycandillion above the martyr's relics and a mensa in front of the martyrium entrance. It is possible that under the ciborium there was a vial (box for keeping holy relics), in which the relics of a martyr unknown to us today were kept, as in St. Demetrius' in Thessalonica[67] and in Polyconchal Church in Ohrid, [68] and Salona. [69] The vial with relics, or perhaps miniature coffin-sarcophagus, could be located under the polycandillion on a pedestal with a *ciborium* in the crypt center. The existing architectural elements allow its ideal reconstruction presented here.

From the martyrium to the basilica

From the martyrium, four steps lead to the basilica, to the arched entrance opening, followed by a short platform on which eight more steps lean forming a dromos vaulted with a barrel vault. Stairs lead to an opening in the floor of exonarthex of the additionally built basilica, which was closed by a stone slab. The staircase is made of bricks and paved with beautifully polished stone (marble) slabs (thickness 3-5

[63] Such a simple chandelier, consisting of hoops, Virgil lamp holders and chains, was discovered at the Đeltaš site near Pirot, dated to the 6th century: Marjanović-Vujović 1973, 14–15; Ilić 2008, 133, fig. 6; Milinković 2011, 75, 76, figs. 2, 3.

[64] Rakocija 2009, 111, 112.

[65] Aleksova 1995, 140, fig. 46. The martyr Musonius is thought to be in question, over whose grave *memoria*, a martyrium, was erected.

[66] Rakocija 2009, 109–121; Rakocija 2013d, 269–279.

[67] Mentzos 2006, 259–269, with older literature.

[68] Bitrakova-Grozdanova 1975, 36.

[69] Grabar 1946, 98, Pl. XIV, 3. In the tomb area south of the altar, through the fenestella, the believers in Salona also had contact with the relics of martyrs and bishops - Bulić 1986, 140–141.

cm).[70] The entrance part *(dromos)* consists of flanked staircase with a landing decorated with two arcades on each side (fig. 23). Arches of arcades made of radially stacked bricks rely on stone consoles decorated in a shallow relief, one of which is decorated with a scratched vertical rhombus and the other with a shallow volute (fig. 24). On the access staircase southern wall, between the arches of arcades, four bricks (12 cm) form an upright rhombus in the empty interior wall, just above the console with the scratched upright rhombus.



Fig. 23. Martyrium, southern side of the dromos (photo: Misa Rakocija).

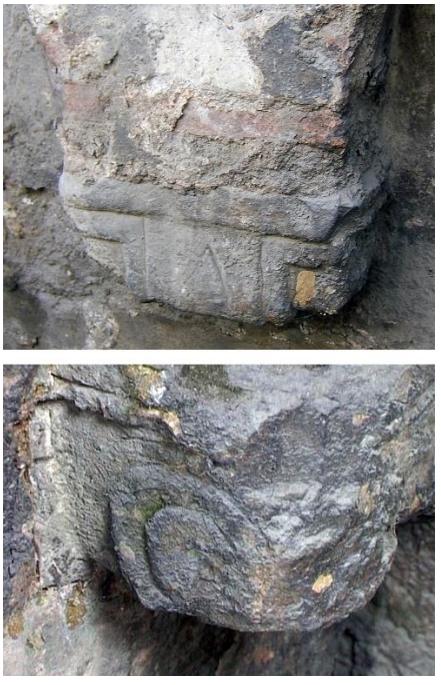


Fig. 24. Martyrium, console with a rhombus; console with volutes (photo: Misa Rakocija).

The presence of rhombuses in the entrance part as a symbol of the entrance door for rebirth embodied in Resurrection[71] is to be expected at this place.[72] Ceramic-plastic decoration in a rhombus shape, and the same one scratched on the console, here, at the entrance to the

[70] Similar to the martyrum in the village of Voden, Boljarsko in Bulgaria - Chaneva-Dechevska 1999, 240, fig. 57, a, b, c; fig. 90.
[71] Jeličić 1985, 6; Lilčić 2003, 250.
[72] The Christians saw in the rhombus in perspective a shifted stone slab above the Christ's tomb as evidence of Resurrection - Underwood 1950, 91–92; Grabar 1980, 124; Jeličić 1985, 6.

tomb, symbolize the door leading to the heavenly garden of paradise. With equal symbolic significance of entering paradise, a rhombus is painted in front of the plants of the Garden of Eden on the wall of the above mentioned nearby tomb no. 1.[73] By painting a *ciborium* and rhombus, the painter of tomb no. 1 intends to present with a few lines and in full force of its symbolism the appearance of the reputable martyrium interior which surrounded the prominent citizen of Naisus resting here.[74] Judging by the traces of fresco plaster, the walls of dromos were also painted (fig. 25).[75]

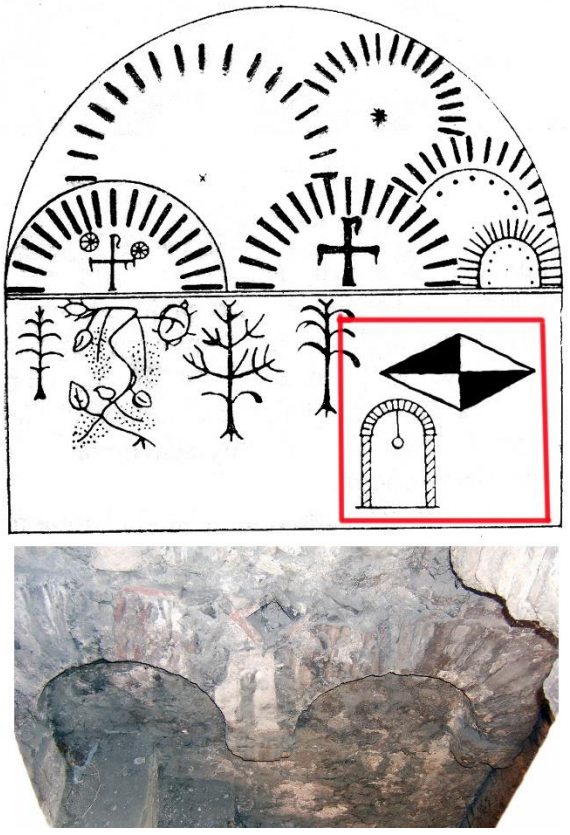


Fig. 25. 1) Jagodin Mala, tomb No. 1, decoration of the western wall, a detail of the ciborium with a rhombus (according to R.O. Bratanić); 2) Martyrium, southern side of the dromos, a rhombus between the arcades and on the console (photo: Misa Rakocija).

[73] Rakocija 2013, 273–275.
[74] Rakocija 2009, 112.
[75] Rakocija 1998, 16, 53–54.

About the painters of Niš tombs, we stated that they imitate their surroundings, bringing us details from Niš everyday life at that time.[76] Thanks to the manner of Niš artists and the painting of the nearby tomb no. 1 near the Most mladosti bridge, we have one more confirmation of the martyrium interior appearance. Martyriums are essentially buildings dedicated to the Resurrection of the Martyrs and their interiors as well as furniture were adjusted to that purpose.[77] Thanks to the painter who evoked the famous martyrium interior on the wall of the nearby tomb no.1, as well as to the preserved architectural elements and known photographs, we can reconstruct the appearance of the martyrium interior with a *ciborium*, which more clearly defines its function, from its construction to the basilica extension on its eastern side.

This commemorative architecture indicates how the buildings formed the cult of martyrs and the holy place.[78] Thus, the mausoleum–martyrium and the basilica–martyrium were formed in stages, where the cult of martyrs arose and developed until the beginning of the 7th century, having its role also in the middle Byzantine period from 11th to 12th century.[79] The Basilica of the Martyrs in Niš offers the opportunity to follow the development of architectural form of buildings above the martyr's tomb and their transformation into a church with the martyr's tomb or with his relics.

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[76] Rakocija 2015, 111–129.

[77] Grabar 1946, 351.

[78] Grabar 1991, 410.

[79] Here we can follow the development of *memoria*, i.e. the martyr's tomb from the second half of the 4th century to the beginning of the 7th century, as well as on the site of the island of Majsan in Dalmatia (Croatia), where it is assumed that Bishop Maximus I (+346) was buried - Fisković 1983, 65–80. Similarity of the Niš Basilica of the Martyrs with the tomb of St. Leonid, whose underground tomb on the island of Ilisos in Athens, as in Niš, is connected with a subsequently added tomb (around 400) - Ćurčić 2010, 147.

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Two *mensae* from the Episcopal Basilica of Philippopolis*

Iva Dosseva & Stanislav Stanev

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Abstract: The focus of this study are the slabs of two marble tables, fragments of which were discovered during the excavations of the Episcopal Basilica of Philippopolis (2016-2018). Judging by the sigmoid shape, its measurements and the peculiarities of its processing as well as by the archaeological parallels (table from the Diocletian's Palace in Split), it could be assumed that table No. 1 is likely to be a top of a table, intended for incorporation into a sigma-shaped monolithic *stibadium* and originally functioned in a secular context. We may also assume that it was reused in the basilica as a functional element of its interior. On account of these assumptions the tabletop is included in the existing typology of the liturgical tables from the territory of present day Bulgaria (Tenekedjiev), as a supplement to Group B, Type I: with a frame with simple profile; Subtype I: without any decoration on the frame; Variant 1: with solid flange. Table No. 2, concave 'beak-shaped' rim type, which is supposed to be used according to its original purpose, falls into group B: circular tabletop, as a new Type II: with a convex, curved 'beak-shaped' rim and variant I: with a curved flange and shaped base.

It is believed that both tables from Philippopolis were not altar-tables; and also that they were used in the last period of the basilica.

Keywords: liturgical table, top of sigma table, *stibadium*, 'beak-shaped'

Резюме: Предмет на изследването са две мраморни маси, фрагменти от които са открити по време на проучванията на Епископската базилика на Филипопол (2016-2018).

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Съдейки по сигмовидната форма, размерите, особеностите при обработването и на паралелите (маса от двореца на Диоклециан в Сплит), изказва се предположението, че плот № 1 е от маса, предназначена за вграждане в сигмообразен монолитен стибадий, първоначално е функционирала в светски контекст и, че вторично е използвана в базиликата като функционален елемент от интериора ѝ. Затова плотът се включва в съществуващата типология на богослужебните маси от територията на съвременна България (Тенекеджиев), като допълва група Б, тип I: с рамка с прост профил; подтип I: без украса на рамката; вариант 1: с плътна рамка. За плот № 2 се предполага, че е използван според първоначалното си предназначение. Специфичната извивка на ръба на плота е дала името на типа, към който принадлежи - „гарванов клюн". Плотът попада в група В: кръгли плотове, като нов тип II с извит 'beak-shaped' ръб и вариант I с извит бордюр и оформена база.

Приема се, че и двете маси от Филипопол не са били олтарни, но и че са използвани през последния период на базиликата.

This article studies two marble tables, fragments of which were discovered during the excavations of the Episcopal Basilica of Philippopolis. It aims to enrich the existing typologies as well as to provide material for further research of the functional subdivisions of the liturgical tables.

The study of the Early Christian and Early Byzantine liturgical tables marks a long scientific tradition in the light of which a huge number of specimens has been introduced into scientific circulation and various typologies with limited general validity have been created.[1] A great number of monuments from the territory of nowadays Bulgaria were published independently and subsequently systematized into two compendium volumes, the second of which being written some forty years later than the first.[2] Published in 2011, this latter work presents a typology, compiled by Vassil Tenekedjiev, which covers archaeological material on 27 tabletops.[3] To it should be added the substantial number of samples from Bulgaria that have become known in the last ten years –

[1] Tenekedzhiev 2010, 444–445.

[2] Ivanov *et al*. 1969; Tenekedzhiev 2010. Maria Chichikova's study has – at least in connection with the publication of one specific monument – compendium qualities: Chichikova 1972. The study of liturgical *mensae* evolves further on in a PhD thesis by Vassil Tenekedjiev (Tenekedzhiev 2019a; Tenekedzhiev 2019b, 12–14).

[3] The available then archaeological data refer to 12 table foundations as well as 32 table supports, some of them being apparently parts of one and the same table (Tenekedzhiev 2010, 445–446). In his unpublished PhD thesis Tenekedjiev includes more specimens of liturgical *mensae* (Tenekedzhiev 2019a).

both countertops[4] and bases,[5] which provide important information about the specific archaeological complexes. Despite the comprehensive research that stretches from formal diversity and centers of production and distribution to evolution of symbols and theological interpretation, some questions of paramount importance have remained still unanswered. Such a question is the one about the functions of the *mensa*. As during the first centuries of the Christian era church utensils and furniture did not differ in shape from the ones used in a secular environment, and as long as archaeological data are not always unambiguous – the defining of the character of a table (if it is meant for liturgical use or not) remains a major problem. And even if there is no doubt concerning the liturgical use of the table, there still remains the task of defining its peculiar function in the liturgy. Current studies in the subject show, that besides its functioning as a Holy altar ('a place of sacrifice'; Gr. ἱερόν; Sl. престол/prestol; *mensa sacra, mensa altaris*), a table could be used as a 'table of oblation' (a secondary table in the *prothesis*, used for the preparation of the wine and the bread for the divine liturgy). Church interior could also accommodate tables for other liturgical purposes, as the ones found in baptisteries.[6] A separate group features the commemorational tables, including the martyrial tables (mensae martyrum), which were originally used in the necropolises. There is also a group of church banquet tables.[7] Rarely could we have an unambiguously defined functionality of a specific liturgical table. The specimens from nowadays Bulgaria are no exception in these terms, as significant part of them has no clear provenance. Not being found *in situ*, the two *mensae* from the Episcopal Basilica of Philippopolis could only be object of purely hypothetical study.

1. Top of sigma table of the enclosed flange type (= clôturées)
Twelve fragments, grey marble with white veins.

[4] Vaklinova & Komitova, 2016, 310; Biernacki 1999; Biernacki *et al*. 2015, 418, 420–421, 425, 428–429, 432, nos. 1, 2, 6, 9-10, 14–15; pl I, 1,2,6; Popova 2011, 272, 284.
[5] Popova 2011, 284, fig. 11; Popkonstantinov *et al*. 2016, 395; Hristov & Kirov 2016, 466; Grozdanov & Grozdanova 2017, 543; Tenekedjiev 2019, 142, 146–147, fig 19; Topalilov 2007, 53, abb. 15; Valeva 2021, 34 et cit.lit.
[6] Kitzinger 1960, 29–30; Chalkia 1991, 113–122; cf. Tenekedzhiev 2019b, 12. We should mention the remarkable table – spolia which is embedded in the bottom of the baptismal font of the baptistery at Tebessa (Kitzinger 1960, 31, fig. 16; cf. Żurawski 2013, 778).
[7] Duval 1985, 438–439; Chalkia 1991, 123–128.

Preserved measurements: the floor is 3.2 - 4.1 cm thick, while its surrounding band is 4.8 - 5.2 cm thick; the flange is 10.5 cm high and 3.5 cm wide on top.

Reconstructed overall dimensions: 156 cm wide and 156 cm long.

The preserved fragments give enough information on the overall appearance of the tabletop (fig. 1). The inner face of the flange is bevelled in a way that its intersection forms a right-angled trapezoid. Along its outline the floor is surrounded with a 17.3 – 17.8 cm wide, slightly raised band (0.7 cm) (fig. 2). From the available fragments, it is not possible to establish if this band was interrupted in the middle of the chord, forming thus a canal. Table's upper surface, as well as its frontal part (chord), is polished while the lateral sides are coarse (fig. 3-4). The underside bears only the traces of the primary stone-cutting of the marble block from which the tabletop is made.



Fig. 1. Assembled fragments of the sigma table (photo: Stanislav Stanev)



Fig. 2. Left-hand side of the sigma table (photo: Stanislav Stanev)

The overall appearance of the tabletop is rather conventional and refers to the category of the sigma-shaped tables and more precisely to the enclosed flange type B.2, according to one of the classifications,[8] which is also known as 'clôturées', type C, according to another.[9] The flange of the top from Philippopolis is more solid than the flanges of the

[8] Raptis & Vassiliadou 2015, 263–256, fig. 3, Pl. I. 6–7.

[9] Roux 1973, 136; Chalkia 1991, 42–45, 69-71. As specimens from Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Israel, Italy, Macedonia (Stobi), Libya, Syria, Tunis and Turkey (Chalkia 1991, 177–191).

majority of the sigma-shaped tables of the enclosed flange type, among which are the tables from the Cairo Museum[10] and from Cape Drepanon in Cyprus.[11] In terms of its measurements the tabletop could be assigned to the group of the largest specimens.[12]



Fig. 3. Right-hand corner of the sigma table. Frontal part (left) is polished while lateral side (right) is coarse (photo: Stanislav Stanev)



Fig. 4. The sigma table's lateral sides are coarse while upper surface is polished (photo: Stanislav Stanev)

The *mensae* from Philippopolis bears resemblance in overall dimensions, proportions and technological construction (fig. 5) with the marble table from the *triclinium* of Diocletian's Palace in Split.[13] The lateral sides of the flanges of both tables are treated similarly – those of the frontal parts (chords) are polished, while the rest are roughly processed (coarse). Assuming that the polished faces were visible and the rough ones hidden, Katia Marasović admits that the table from Split was surrounded by a *stibadium*[14] – just as it is exhibited in the City Museum (fig. 6). This gives us reason to believe that the two tables were designed to be incorporated into sigma-shaped monolithic *stibadia*, which, although rarely documented, were typical of the banquet halls (*triclinia*) in the wealthy *domus*.[15]

[10] Strzygowsky 1904, abb. 157 = Chalkia 1991, fig. 22.
[11] Raptis & Vassiliadou 2015, fig. 3.
[12] Cf. Biernacki 1997, 75; Chalkia 1991, 187, C It. 1; 189, C L. 2; Raptis & Vassiliadou 2015, 263.
[13] Marasović 2009, fig. 1-2; Marasović *et al*. 2012, 1014–1015, fig. 11.
[14] Marasović 2009, 482–483; Marasović *et al*. 2012, 1015.
[15] Lippolis 2001, 79–83.

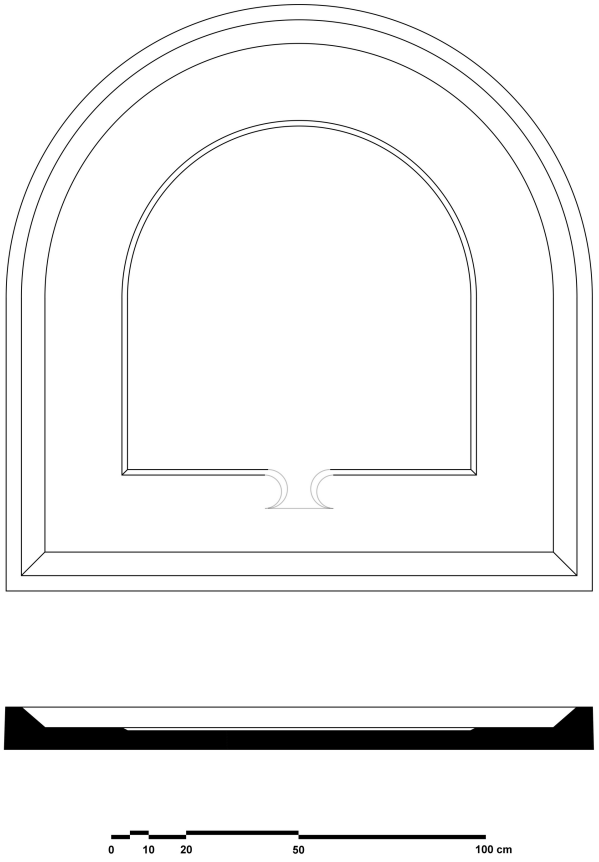


Fig. 5. A graphical reconstruction of the sigma table
(drawing: Stanislav Stanev)



Fig. 6. The marble mensa from Diocletian's Palace, City Museum of Split
(https://commons.wikimedia.org/
wiki/File:Diocletian%27s_Mensa,_City_Museum,_Split.jpg)

We may never know though when exactly the table from Philippopolis lost its original use and from where it was transferred to be reused (whether reused in the basilica or in the ensemble of buildings that preceded the basilica). From the territory of nowadays Bulgaria, we are not aware of another tabletop intended for incorporation into a sigmoid monolithic *stibadium*, as well as we do not know of the registration of *stibadia* at all. We may also assume that it was subsequently reused as a liturgical table.

According to Tenekedjiev's typology tabeltop No. 1 refers to the first type of sigma-shaped tables – those with a frame with a simple profile (B.I) and without any decoration on the frame (B.I.I).[16] For this peculiarity to be covered the typology has to be expanded by adding 'variant 1 with a solid flange' (Group B, Type I with a frame with a simple profile; Subtype I without any decoration on the frame; Variant 1 with a solid flange).

2. Top of circular (?) table of the concave 'beak-shaped' rim type

One fragment (31 x 20 cm), white fine-grained marble (fig. 7).

Preserved measurements: the floor is 1.6 – 1.9 cm thick; the rim is 5 cm high and 3.1 cm wide.

Reconstructed overall dimensions: 85 cm in diameter

The fragment is part of a floor and a rim, the outer wall of which is rounded and protruding; it is concave on the inside, forming thus a pointed, slightly curved inwards upper edge (fig. 8). The general type of concave tables *en bec de corbin*/ *à bec du corbin*[17] bears its name from this peculiar profile. In terms of the samples of the latter type, variations in form are reduced to a minimum since only a couple of subcategories are known to us. The outer contours of the curved rim of the first variation (to which No. 2 belongs) stand almost vertically to the foot, forming thus a 'base',[18] while the curve of the second variation smoothly reaches the lower rim of the floor, and a very thin and shallow cavetto runs in close proximity to the foot.[19]

[16] Tenekedzhiev 2010, 442.

[17] Roux 1973, 173, fig. 91; Marcadé & Roux 1977, 457–459, nos.4-5, figs.8-9; Sodini 1999, 44–45, figs. 9-12; Gwiazda 2014, 531–533; Raptis & Vassiliadou 2015, 267–268, Pl. I.11-12.

[18] Loverance 2007, 327, no. 38; Raptis & Vassiliadou 2015, 267, Pl. I.12, E: Gr 29.

[19] Marcadé & Roux 1977, 459, no. 5, fig. 8-9; Chalkia 1991, 52–53, 215; Roux 1973, fig. 91; Loverance 2007, 327, nos. 39-40; Raptis & Vassiliadou 2015, 267, Pl. I. 11, fig. 4, E: Gr 28.



Fig. 7. Table of 'beak-shaped' rim type, a fragment (photo: Stanislav Stanev)



Fig. 8. Table of 'beak-shaped' rim type, a fragment (photo: Stanislav Stanev)

Similarly to most known 'beak-shaped' specimens, the marble from which the tabletop No. 2 is made is white with a yellowish tinge and an extremely fine structure. It is very precisely processed; only the flat underside lacks final polishing.[20]

The specimens of the concave 'beak-shaped' type tabletops are relatively common. They are usually round in shape but for some sigma-shaped exceptions. Admittedly rectangular-shaped specimens are also known.[21] The fragment considered here does not provide sufficient evidence for us to definitively identify the shape of the table. Based on studies of the few more fully preserved specimens, it is known that at least some of the circular-shaped tables had one support.[22] We may also infer the possibility that some of the tables were portable.[23] It is the peculiar shape of the specimens that gives researchers ground to term them 'beak-shaped type vessels and/or plates'.[24]

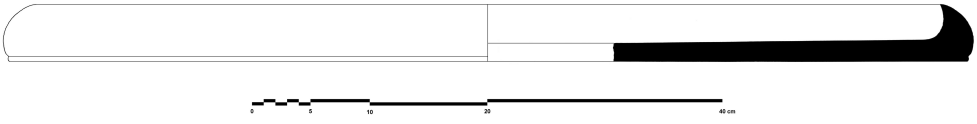


Fig. 9. A graphical reconstruction of the circular table (drawing: Stanislav Stanev)

[20] Marcadé & Roux 1977, 459; Gwiazda 2014, 532; Raptis & Vassiliadou 2015, 267.
[21] Raptis & Vassiliadou 2015, 267.
[22] Roux 1973, 179; Raptis & Vassiliadou 2015, 267.
[23] Martiniani-Reber & Decrouez 2001, 168.
[24] Gwiazda 2014, 531-533.

The measurements of tabletop No. 2 (fig. 9) are not larger than the usual for the type, the diameter of which ranges between 56-69 cm and 100-110 cm.[25]

Most of the 'beak-shaped' rim type finds originate from the coastal 'contact' territories of the empire, associated with active maritime traffic, but also from the inland: Jiyeh (Porphyreon), a site on the Phoenician coast; Syria (Raphaneae); Palestine (Jerusalem); Transjordan (Mount Nebo, Petra); Alexandria; Greece (Corinth, Delphes, Nea Anchialos, Spetses) and the islands (Tassos, Cyprus: Salamis, Kurion), as well as Tomis, Cartage, Salona, Rome.[26]

From the territory of nowadays Bulgaria we know of only one specimen (*T.P.Q.* late 3rd century), discovered during the archaeological excavations at the Petrich Kale fortress in the municipality of Avren near Varna. Although in a fragmented state, almost the entire circular slab is preserved.[27]

Despite some uncertainty about its overall shape, table No. 2 could be assigned to group B according to Tenekedjiev's typology, which comprises circular table slabs[28] type II with a convex, curved 'beak-shaped' rim and variant I – with a curved rim, that stretches to the lower edge of the slab.

Centers of production

Although without the necessary petrographic analyzes of the Philippopolis specimens, any comment on the type of marble, its career, and the place of its processing would remain within the realm of conjecture, we would attempt at some preliminary observations. It is well known that most types of marble tables are widespread in the Late Antique and early Byzantine world and are the products of the marble 'industry', concentrated in several centers and mainly in the imperial quarries and workshops on the island of Proconnesos in the Sea of Marmara, famous with its *white marble with greyish-blue veins*.[29]

Precisely because of its solid rim flange with rectilinear outlines

[25] Chalkia 1991, 53; Gwiazda 2014, 532.
[26] Chalkia 1991, 48–51, nos. E: Cip 4, E: Gr 26-34, E: It 7-11, 16-17, E: Rom 3, E: Sir 3, E: Tun 1et cit. lit.; Gwiazda 2014, 532–533 et cit. lit.; Raptis & Vassiliadou 2015, 267–268 et cit. lit.
[27] Dikov 2021; cf. Manolova-Voikova 2019; Manolova-Voikova & Lazarenko (2021), 1967, fig. 4.
[28] Tenekedzhiev 2010, 444.
[29] Sodini 2002, 129–130 et cit. lit.

of the profile, the table top No. 1 differs decisively from the otherwise similar table from the Diocletian's Palace in Split made from *pavonazzetto* marble (Dokimeion),[30] as well as from the 'classic' Early Byzantine samples of liturgical tables. Therefore, we should not exclude the possibility of its being produced by a regional or local workshop, specialised in copying the Constantinopolitan standard with a cheaper material.

As most samples of the 'beak-shaped' tables resemble each other in shape, material and applied technique, it is highly likely that they all are produced by the same stonework center.[31] To our knowledge such a center has not been located yet, the island of Prokonessos being the best suggestion, on condition that the pure white marble was imported to the island.[32]

Function

The questions posed by Ernst Kitzinger as to whether tables of the same type had the same purpose as well as whether tables of different types differ also in function still remain open.[33] It is assumed that most Holy altar tables are rectangular in shape, possibly sigmoid, and least likely to be round.[34] The simultaneous presence of a number of tables in an Early Christian church provides a valuable opportunity to explore and elaborate on their various functions. Such cases are rare, and among the examples from Bulgaria we should mention the bishopric church in Novae,[35] church No. 1 near Gurmen,[36] and the church on Cape St. Atanas near the town of Byala. At the last location, in addition to the preserved *in situ* base of the Holy altar as well as almost all of the fragments of its rectangular top (carefully 'buried' just outside the apse wall foundation), fragments of at least four other liturgical (?) tables were found in various places of the complex, one of which has been found to be sigmoid in

[30] Marasović *et al*. 2012, 1014; Marasović 2009, 483.

[31] Marcadé & Roux 1997, 459; Raptis & Vassiliadou 2015, 267–268, 280, 283; Chalkia 1991, 53, 195–215, n. 9; Sodini 1999, 44–45. As can be expected, there are imitations, distinguished by material and applied technique, but the table considered here hardly falls into their group.

[32] Raptis & Vassiliadou 2015, 280–281.

[33] Chalkia 1991, 66–69; Raptis & Vassiliadou 2015, 277–279.

[34] Kitzinger 1960, 25; Raptis & Vassiliadou 2015, 279; Tenekedzhiev 2019b, 12.

[35] Biernacki 1999.

[36] Popova 2011, 284–285, 288–289.

shape.[37] The spectroscopic-and-isotopic analyzes performed show that the marble from which the tables are made originates from different quarries.[38] The different origin of the lapidary elements of the church interior, and in particular of the tables, suggests the possibility that they are from different buildings of the complex and/or that for the two main constructional periods of the basilica and the other buildings there were different suppliers of marble products. Another explanation is that some stonework centers specialized in making certain types of tables; for example, the workshops at Dokimeion are known for their sigma-shaped tables.[39]

Although the characteristics of the formal typology of the two Philippopolis slabs do not present significant peculiarities, they nevertheless raise some questions. Were these tables synchronous (produced or functioning)? Were any of them produced and used during the Roman period? This question concerns specifically the sigmoid table in view of the abundancy of Roman lapidary materials, some reused for their intended purpose, others not. Were both tables used at the same time in the church interior? Did the same tables perform the same functions during the two centuries of functioning of the basilica, which housed both the holy liturgy and the worship of the relics?[40] We assume that the answer of the last question is negative – for purely practical reasons if not for others. Hence the question of the fate of a table once it has been replaced by another. Were the old tables 'buried', as was the case in the church at Cape St. Atanas?

Judging from their shapes as well as from their being used during the last period of the basilica (after the end of the fifth century) we may assume that both tables from Philippopolis were not altar tables. It is important to keep in mind that the basilica is extremely spacious and a huge number of worshipers were present during the services. Therefore, there should have been more than a couple of tables of the same purpose. Moreover, it could be argued that in the basilica there were at the same time more tables than those discussed here.

[37] Biernacki *et al*. 2015, 429, tabl. 3, nos. 1, 6, 10, 15. The analysis in terms of the form of these findings as well as of their specific function has not yet been published.
[38] The slabs (samples nos. 1, 6, 9, 10, 15) are respectively from Dokimeion (or Naxos), Dokimeion (or Aphrodisias), Proconnesos (or Dokimeion), Dokimeion (or Aphrodisias), Naxos (or Proconnesos) (Biernacki *et al*. 2015, 421, 425, 429, tabl. 3).
[39] Niewöhner 2014, 253–256; cf. Biernacki *et al*. 2015, 432.
[40] Stanev & Tankova (in print).

Also: if the sigma-shaped table was associated with the oblations,[41] how justified would it be to look for a different function of the 'beak-shaped' table? This type of tables were attested in the naves as well as in the auxiliary rooms of churches in coastal Phoenicia and it is considered that they had been used for offerings or by the lectors.[42] A remarkable case is the Kampanopetra basilica in Salamis, in which, fragments of more than 10 tables with a concave 'beak-shaped' profile were found. [43] The specifically curved rim, which requires more sophisticated stonework techniques and makes it difficult to clean the slab when used, might be functionally restricted, for example, to small-sized offerings such as bread particles to be blessed for symbolic communion or consecrated as part of the Eucharistic gifts (*tables devaient recevoir et retenir des offrandes morcelées, par exemples des bouchées de pain destinées à être bénies pour un repas commun symbolique ou consacrées pour la communion*). [44] In any case, the relatively high rims of both types do not imply the necessary for the Holy altar tables cloth coverings. Numerous images and written sources testify to the established practice of covering the Holy altar tables from the very early days of the church history, in contrast to the pagan altars.[45]

CHRONOLOGY

Both considered tabletops belong to common types, which were generally in use from the 3rd to mid-7th century. As most researchers point out, tables without figurative relief decoration could most accurately be dated based on the archaeological context.[46] Given the complex periodization of the Episcopal Basilica and the previous ensemble of buildings, we could not offer a specification of the dates within the 3rd to the end of the 6th century.

Conclusion

The tables' fragments, together with other lapidary materials from the Episcopal Basilica, clearly indicate the existence of a vigorous import activity on a territory that is not directly related to maritime

[41] Kitzinger 1960, 30–32.
[42] Gwiazda 2014, 533.
[43] Marcadé & Roux 1977, 459, no. 5. fig. 8-9; Chalkia 1999, 195–196, Cip. 2; Raptis & Vassiliadou 2015, 267.
[44] Roux 1973, 179.
[45] Leatherbury 2017.
[46] Raptis & Vassiliadou 2015, 279–280 et cit. lit.

traffic. This very circumstance points at the prestigious state of the building as well as to its prominent place in terms of the imperial propaganda.[47]

While we take into account the probability that in view of its formal features (shape, measurements and most of all, method of processing) table No. 1 did not initially have a liturgical purpose, we find it appropriate to include this sample in the typology of the liturgical tables, as these characteristics do not necessarily prevent (from a given moment onwards) its functioning as a proper full-fledged element of the church interior. Thus, the two slabs find a place in Tenekedjiev's typology and enrich it.[48] Table No. 1 falls into Group B, type I: with a frame with a simple profile; subtype I: without any decoration on the frame (variant 1 with solid flange). Table No. 2 falls into group B: round slabs; type II: with convex, curved 'beak-shaped' rim (variant I with curved flange and shaped base).

As already commented in the literature on the topic, in contrast to Constantinople and Rome, many churches in the Balkans featured annexes, constructed in the west part of the buildings, that were accessible from the narthex or from the atrium. It is in these premises or groups of premises that sometimes tables, benches, containers for liquids and sewers are found.[49] Examples of tables in premises outside the sanctuary were found in the Episcopal Basilica on the terrace at Golemo Gradište, the village of Konjuh,[50] the Episcopal Basilica in Novae,[51] as well as in a church in Nicopois ad Nestum.[52] In this context falls the Episcopal Basilica of Philippopolis,[53] with its pair of rooms south of the atrium, which are thought to had functioned as a diakonikon/skevophylakion. The tables' fragments published here not only supplement the existing typology of liturgical tables from the territory of nowadays Bulgaria, but also provide material for research of the functional subdivisions of the tables. Their scholarly dissemination will aid future studies on the liturgical planning of the church building, the organization of its interior and the functioning of the so-called auxiliary rooms, as well as the overall study of the history of the site.

[47] Cf. Sodini 1999, 41.
[48] Tenekedzhiev 2010, 444.
[49] Snively 2018, 176–177.
[50] Snively 2018, 177.
[51] Biernacki 1999, 83–84.
[52] Vaklinova & Komitova 2016.
[53] Kantareva-Decheva & Stanev (in print).

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Some notes on the relationship between the architectural plan of the baptismal complexes of Cyprus and the liturgy of the 5th and 6th centuries.[1]

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Summary: The island of Cyprus located along the pilgrimage itineraries to the Holy Land and important maritime trade routes of the Mediterranean, absorbed architectural features from various regions of the *orbis christianus antiquus*. Although influenced by other traditions, the architecture of the island presents some original features, which are not found elsewhere. One of these original features is the architectural form and articulation of the baptisteries which are dated to the fifth century.

The Cypriot baptismal complexes follow a processional type that can be named a 'Cypriot type'. They consist of a free-standing rectangular building, composed of different chambers that follow the processional type of the baptismal liturgy. The development of the Cypriot baptisteries' architectural plan and spatial perception was directly related to the island's baptismal liturgical tradition, initially influenced by the Syrian-Antiochene tradition and then by the Jerusalemite one.

The baptisteries, which follow this 'Cypriot type', they all belong to the fifth century. These are the baptistery of Ayios Epiphanios in Salamis-Constantia, the baptistery at the Episcopal precinct at Kourion, the baptisteries of Ayios Philon and Ayia Triada at the Carpasia peninsula and the baptistery at Cape Petounta in Mazotos.

The baptistery at basilica A at Ayios Georghios of Peyia, which is dated to the sixth century, slightly escapes from the 'Cypriot type' and forms an *uniqum* in the excavated archaeological record of the island. The example of the Peyia baptistery can be used as a case-study for perceiving the amalgamation and continuation of local traditions into the Byzantine architecture.

Key words: Cyprus, early Christian architecture, baptisteries, liturgy

[1] For other articles treating the Cypriot baptisteries and on similar lines see Michail 2011/2012; 2013; 2018; 2022.

Резюме: Остров Кипър, разположен по протежение на поклонническите маршрути към Светите земи и важните морски търговски пътища на Средиземноморието, е възприел архитектурни особености от различни региони на *orbis christianus antiquus*. Въпреки, че е повлияна от други традиции, архитектурата на острова представя някои собствени характеристики, които не се срещат другаде. Една от тях е архитектурната форма и членението на баптистериите, които се отнасят към V век.

Кипърските кръщелни комплекси следват процесен тип, който може да бъде наречен 'кипърски тип'. Те се състоят от свободно стояща правоъгълна сграда, съставена от различни помещения, които следват процесионния тип на кръщелната литургия. Развитието на архитектурния план и пространственото възприятие на кипърските баптистерии е пряко свързано с кръщелната литургична традиция на острова, която първоначално е повлияна от сирийско-антиохийската традиция, а след това от йерусалимската.

Баптистериите, които следват този "кипърски тип", принадлежат към V век. Това са баптистерият на Агиос Епифаний в Саламис-Констанция, баптистерият в епископския комплекс в Курион, баптистериите на Агиос Филон и Агия Триада на полуостров Карпасия и баптистерият на нос Петоунта в Мазотос.

Бапстистерият в базиликата А в Агиос Георгиос в Пейя, който датира от VI в., леко се отличава от "кипърския тип" и представлява *uniqum* сред археологическите разкопки на острова. Примерът с баптистерия в Пея може да се използва като пример за възприемане на сливането и продължаването на местните традиции във византийската архитектура.

Cyprus, an island located at a crossroad between East and West, received Christianity right from the beginning of the apostolic era and more specifically during the persecution of the Archdeacon Stephen, around 34 AD, as mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles.[2] In 45 AD, the island of Cyprus was visited by the Apostles Barnabas, Paul and Mark, who founded the Church of Cyprus and established an organized Christian community at the island.[3] The Apostles Barnabas and Mark, during their second apostolic missionary journey to the island in 50 AD, aided the spread and establishment of Christianity.[4] However, the only data concerning the early Christianisation of the island derive from the Acts of the Apostles and not the archaeological record. We have to keep in mind though that during the first centuries of the establishment of Christianity we do not have a clear Christian architecture and therefore the layout of a building dedicated to the Christian cult did not differ from that of domestic housing, thus

[2] Acts 8:1, 11:19.

[3] Acts 13:1-12.

[4] Acts 15:36-39.

making the identification of the former in the archaeological record extremely difficult. For example, the oldest building known to have the purpose of the Christian initiation and baptism is the so-called *Domus Ecclesiae* at the frontier town and trading center of Doura - Europos in Syria.[5] The church and the baptistery at Doura - Europos present a unique example of a house converted to a *Domus Ecclesiae* probably around 232 AD.

Evidence of the presence of early Christian edifices of cult in Cyprus are attested only by the end of the fourth century - early fifth century in many coastal and inland areas, such as Tamasos – Ayios Herakleidios, Tremithous – Ayios Spyridon, Soloi – Ayios Auxibios, Nea Paphos – Chrysopolitissa and Toumballos, Lambousa – Acheiropoietos, Amathous – Ayios Tychon, Kourion, Salamis – Ayios Epiphanios etc.[6]

It is clear from the structural remains of the buildings brought to light until now that the Early Christian architecture of Cyprus was greatly influenced by that of Constantinople and the Aegean coast, and to a lesser degree by the architecture of Palestine and Syria.[7] Although influenced by other areas, the architecture of the island has some unique features which are not found elsewhere, such as the form of the baptisteries, which are described as 'processional baptisteries'.[8]

What makes these Cypriot baptisteries so unique is the fact that their spatial arrangement follows a processional liturgical arrangement, which derives from Cyril's of Jerusalem *Catecheticae orationes quinque*, the main literary source, which survived from the eastern liturgical tradition of this period.[9]. This spatial arrangement reveals a regional type that can justifiably be identified as a 'Cypriot

[5] Kraeling 1967.

[6] For more information concerning the Early Christian churches of Cyprus and relevant bibliography, see Hadjichristophi 2012; Jeffery 1915-1916; Maguire 2012; Manning *et al.* 2002; Megaw 1956a; 1956b; 1957; 1958; 1960; 1974; 1976a; 1976b; 1986; 1997; 2001; Megaw *et al.* 2007; Megaw & du Plat Taylor 1981; Michaelides 1988; 1989; 1993; 1998; 2001a; 2001b; 2002; 2018; Nicolaou 2015; 2018; Pallas 1977; Papacostas 1999; 2001; 2013; Papageorghiou 1962; 1963; 1964; 1965; 1966a; 1966b; 1968; 1969; 1970; 1985a; 1985b; 1986a; 1986b; 1990; 1993; 1996; 2001; 2002; Procopiou 2000; 2013; 2018; Rautman 2000; 2001a; 2001b; 2003; 2004; 2007; Roux 1998; Soteriou 1931; Stewart 2008; Tinh 1985/1989; Vionis 2018; 2019.

[7] Papageorghiou 1986a, 497.

[8] Papageorghiou 1986a, 497.

[9] Migne 1857b, 1065–1128.

type', considering that baptismal complexes with exactly the same arrangement were not discovered elsewhere outside the island.[10]

In the Cypriot baptisteries, the initiates, after having participated in the pre-baptismal rites that included the final catechesis, the renunciation of Satan, and the union with Christ through the profession of faith, went to the main hall the so-called ἐξώτερος οἶκος. They then entered into the *apodyterion*. In the *apodyterion* they would undress and, after being anointed with oil, would enter the Ἅγια τῶν Ἁγίων (baptismal font) through a narrow passage, which pierced the wall of the recess that hosted the baptismal font. Next, they entered the font going down a set of steps and then, after their triple immersion, they left the font and appeared on the other side via another set of steps. As a final point, through a different narrow passage, they proceeded to another room furnished with an apse, the so called *chrismarion*, where they would re-robe and receive the post-baptismal anointing with holy chrism by the bishop. After that, the newly-baptisted, having put on their white *emfotia* garments and holding lit candles would pass in a procession to the nearby basilica for their participation in the Divine Liturgy and their first holy communion, as described in the text by Cyril of Jerusalem.[11]

By the beginning of the fifth century, buildings that hosted the act of baptism were constructed in the island in association with a basilica but not always with an episcopal basilica. Unfortunately, the surviving examples are exclusively in coastal areas and therefore we lack evidence from the inland (fig. 1). Hopefully, new excavations will shed more light on the baptisteries of the island, providing us also with examples from the inland.

The oldest baptismal structure can be identified at the island's great seven aisled episcopal basilica of Ayios Epiphanios at Salamis/Constantia on the east coast of the island (fig. 1). This major basilica was built shortly after 403 AD to host the bishop Epiphanios' relics. The baptismal complex of Salamis' episcopal precinct was unfortunately only partially excavated before the Turkish invasion of

[10] The closest parallel outside Cyprus is the baptistery of Saint Theodore at the city of Gerasa which is dated to 494–496 (Kraeling 1938, pl. 33), although nothing quite comparable to the Cypriot baptisteries has been recorded in Palestine or elsewhere. Even in the baptistery at Gerasa, which is similar in some aspects, the outer chamber is of modest dimensions and more fully integrated with the font. See also Megaw 1976b, 364–368.

[11] Migne 1857b, 1065–1128.

1974, but its architectural plan may reasonably be inferred from the uncovered remains and from comparisons with other contemporary Cypriot examples. The baptismal complex is located to the southeast of the basilica and is linked to it by a long and spacious corridor (fig. 2). Probably during the seventh century, the corridor was transformed into a small three-aisled church furnished with an apse and a *synthronon* to the east, which was placed over the baptistery's sixth-century mosaic floor.[12]

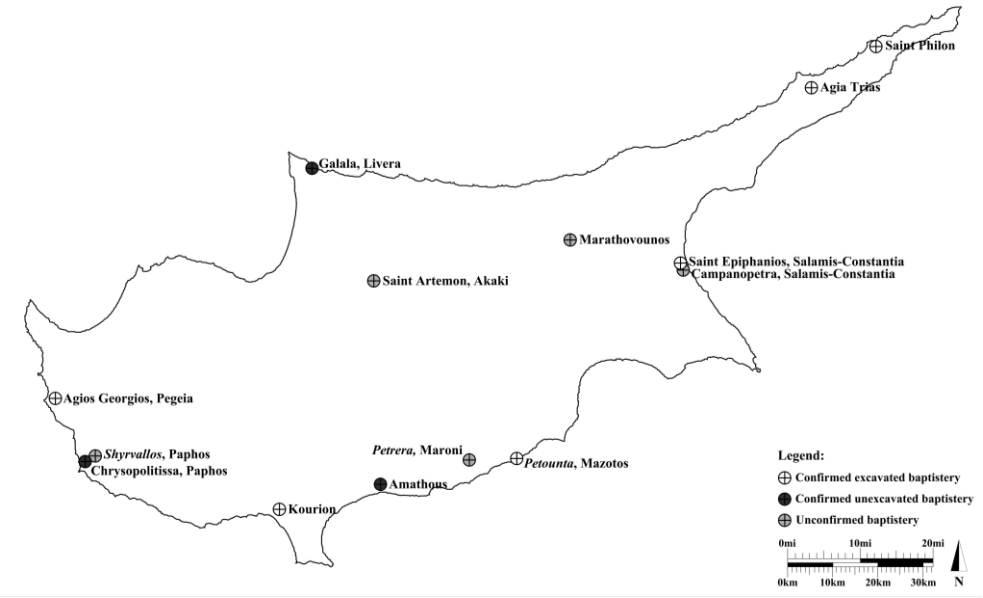


Fig. 1: Map of Cyprus showing the location of the Early Christian baptisteries (drawing: Charalambos Paraskeva).

This early-fifth-century baptismal complex is rectangular in plan and consists of various chambers (fig. 2). A corridor divides the complex in two parts to the north and south. In the north part only a few chambers were excavated, which were used for the act of baptism and the pre-baptismal and post-baptismal rites. A small rectangular room, almost entirely occupied by the cross-shaped font, came to light. The cruciform font, which was built in masonry with steps in the opposite arms of the cross, is placed in a rectangular recess on the south side of the main room and a small apse is formed in its south wall (fig. 3). To the west of the font, the room was probably used as the

[12] Papageorghiou 1966, 156.

apodyterion and the room to the east of the font, although not completely excavated, was (or probably became, as it will be discussed later on) the *chrismarion* (fig. 2). It can easily be assumed from the uncovered architectural vestiges that the baptismal complex extends further to the north (fig. 2-3).[13] Examining this spatial arrangement, one can reasonably assume the presence of a large rectangular, most probably colonnaded, room towards north, as it is also attested in the other Cypriot examples, which will be presented later. Since the excavations were not concluded before 1974, we hope that future archaeological investigations will uncover the whole plan of the complex. Because of its early date, the baptistery of Ayios Epiphanios, was probably the prototype of the other Cypriot baptisteries of the fifth century.[14]

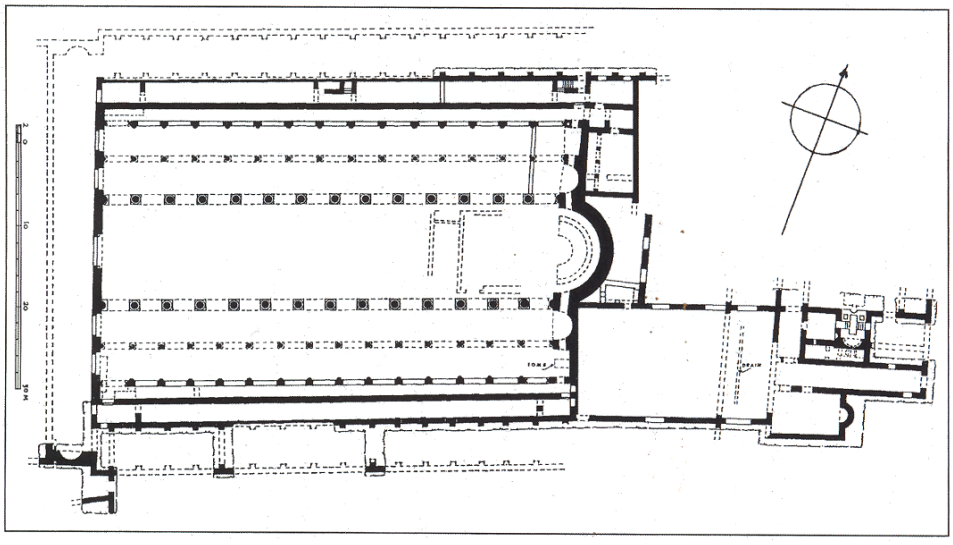


Fig. 2: Salamis/Constantia - Ayios Epiphanios, plan of the basilica and its annexes (Megaw 1974, 63, fig.A).

For a more accurate image of a 'Cypriot type' baptistery we should turn to the episcopal precinct of Kourion (fig. 1). The Kourion baptistery, which was excavated by A.H.S. Megaw and his colleagues,

[13] Megaw 1974, 62; Pallas 1977, 292.

[14] The construction of the episcopal basilica at Salamis started under the bishopric of Epiphanius. After his death, in 403 A.D., the bishop was buried in the unfinished basilica with a special permission granted by the Emperor Arcadius. Megaw 2007, 172; Papageorghiou 1986b, 156.

was fully uncovered and presents the best example so far known from Cyprus.[15] In the city of Kourion, the episcopal precinct was erected in the early decades of the fifth century in a place formerly occupied by a secular Roman building to the southwest corner of the Roman Forum.[16]



Fig. 3: Salamis/Constantia - Ayios Epiphanios, the baptismal font as seen from above (photo: Eleftherios Charalambous).

The baptismal complex of Kourion is a freestanding edifice, located to the north of the three-aisled basilica, with a narrow, paved alley separating the two buildings (fig. 4). The atrium of the baptistery communicates with the basilica through an entrance situated at the north side of the narthex. According to Megaw, the baptistery was constructed at about the same time as the basilica or not long after it.[17] The basilica was probably constructed shortly after the reign of Honorius (395-423), on the basis of coins found in the fill that was used to raise the sanctuary floor to a higher level than the rest of the building.[18]

Similarly to the baptistery adjoining the Ayios Epiphanios basilica, the Kourion baptistery follows a processional arrangement along the south side of the main chamber (fig. 4). In Kourion, however, important information about the liturgy derives from the archaeological data and the surviving architectural vestiges, especially

[15] Megaw 2007, 107.
[16] Megaw 2007, 345–349.
[17] Megaw 2007, 172, 558.
[18] Megaw 2007, xxiii.

the evidence from the room to the east of the baptismal font, as well as the apsidal area of the main chamber.

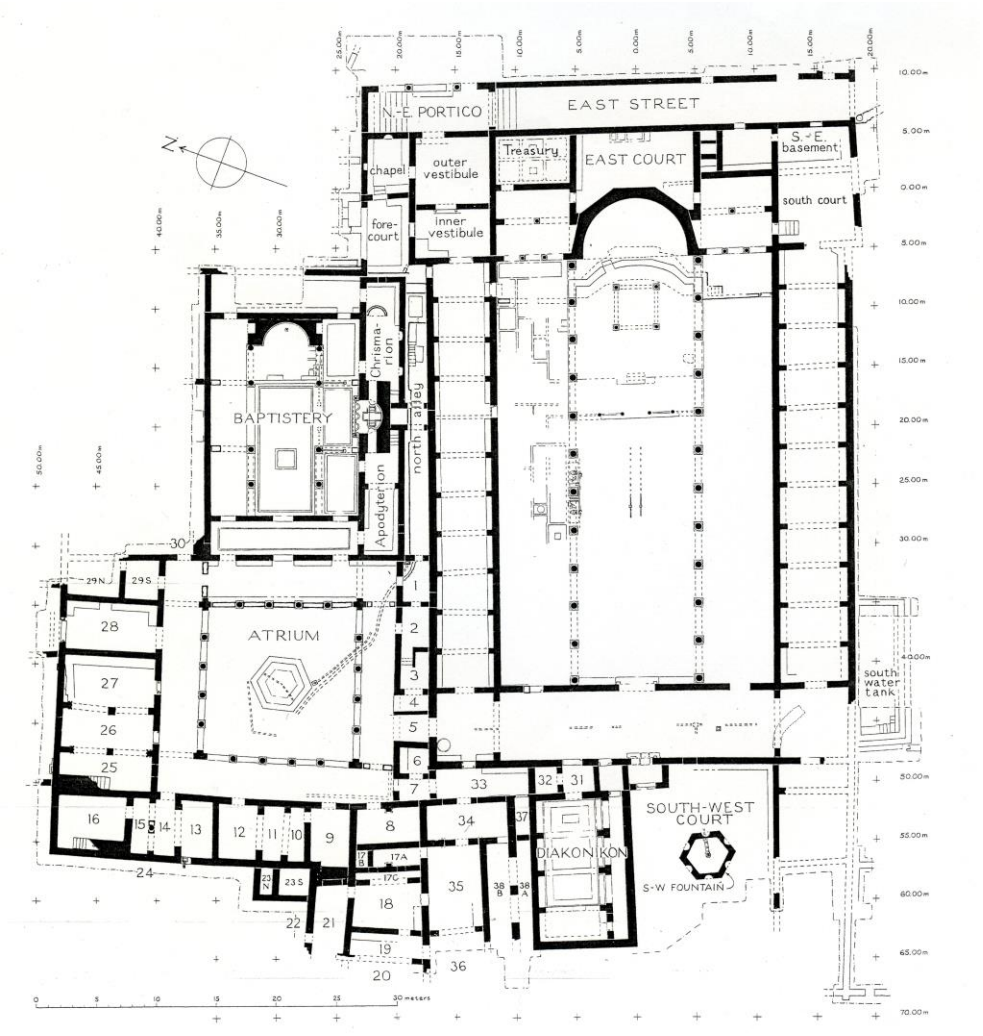


Fig. 4: Kourion, plan of the basilica and its annexes (Megaw 2007, 75, fig. 1.Z).

Evidence from the east room of the Ἅγια τῶν Ἁγίων may suggest that during its first phase, this room was not used as a *chrismarion*. The apse that marks the position of the bishop during the post-baptismal anointing is a later addition since it is placed directly over the fifth century floor (fig. 4). Furthermore, the excavation of a pedestal to support a marble base in the inscribed apse of the ἐξώτερος οἶκος (main hall), concealed later by the sixth century *opus sectile* floor, suggests that it originally supported a basin or a table (fig.

5). We may therefore assume that the act of anointing with chrism or a similar act was performed in the main hall.[19] No traces of an altar or of enclosing chancel barriers were found in the apse, so the main chamber of the baptistery was certainly not used for the Eucharistic *synaxis*.

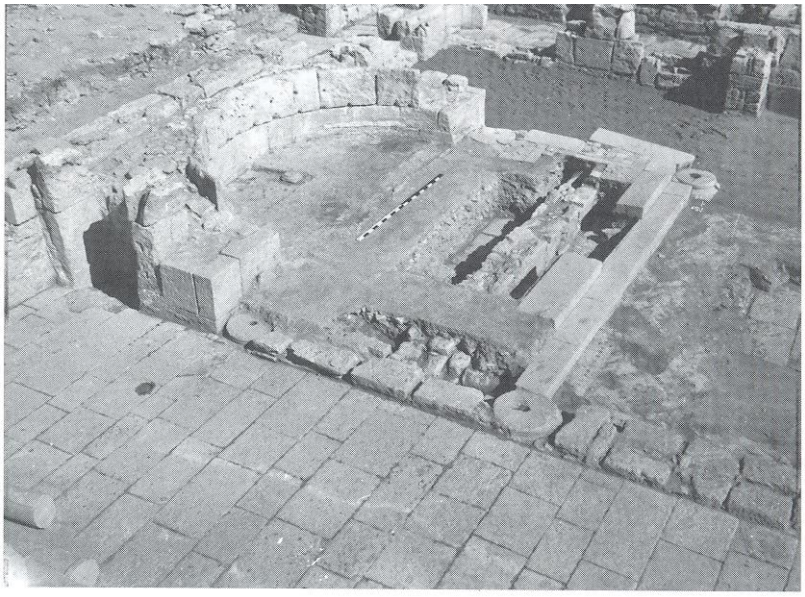


Fig. 5: Kourion, the apse of the baptistery's main hall looking southeast (Megaw 2007, Pl. 1.21.a).

Undoubtedly, the apse in the ἐξώτερος οἶκος was used for accommodating the bishop during the pre-baptismal rites. But the presence of the marble basin makes it difficult to understand its role in these pre-baptismal rites. This may be explained if we consider the small freestanding apse in the east room, called *chrismarion* afterwards, as a later addition (fig. 4).[20] In this case, we can suppose that in the first phase the act of anointing with chrism or oil was performed by the bishop in the main chamber only. However, as Megaw notes, the location of this marble element seems to be too far away from the Ἅγια τῶν Ἁγίων to have had any function in the consecration of the oil for the pre-baptismal anointing or the post-baptismal chrismation.[21] In addition, it is not reasonable to think that

[19] Megaw 1976, 364–365.
[20] Megaw 2007, 109.
[21] Megaw 1976, 366.

the newly baptized proceeded naked to the apse of the main hall to receive the chrism and then return to the east room to put on their white garments. The fact though that the marble pedestal was concealed by the sixth century *opus sectile* floor suggests that this element was no longer necessary for the baptismal rites. We can, therefore, presume a change in the ritual.

The presence of the marble base in the central apse of the ἐξώτερος οἶκος (main hall) shows that at the beginning of the fifth century, a different ritual, which most likely only included a pre-baptismal anointing/chrismation, was probably performed. This relates to the Antiochene Church baptismal ritual, where a pre-baptismal anointment with holy chrism by the bishop is mentioned in various literary sources.[22] Following Megaw, it seems reasonable to suggest that at Kourion, the Syrian-Antiochene practice with a single, pre-baptismal chrismation had initially been adopted. This probably changed in the early sixth century because of political and ecclesiastical reasons.[23] The theory of a change in the ritual is also strengthened by the fact that the east room was transformed into a *chrismarion* by the addition of a free-standing apse that marks the position of the bishop while performing a post-baptismal chrismation. This practice had already been attested in the fourth century in the Holy Land, as mentioned in the *Catecheticae orationes quinque* by Cyril of Jerusalem.[24] Such an architectural rearrangement in a Cypriot baptistery should not surprise us if we consider the hostility between the Church of Cyprus and the Patriarchate of Antioch during the fifth century. This change in liturgical action is related to trends towards an ecclesiastical autonomy from the Antiochean Patriarchate and stresses the bonds of the Church of Cyprus with Jerusalem.

Moving to the north-east coast of the island, at the ancient city of Carpasia, part of the early Christian episcopal precinct was discovered in the 1930's around the church of Saint Philon, which was built in the twelfth century on top of the early Christian vestiges (fig.

[22] Megaw 1976, 366–367; Shepherd 1961, 41–42.

[23] In 536 AD, the administration of Cyprus was transferred from the *comes Orientis* to the *quaestor exercitus*, residing in Odessus. In the fifth century, the Church of Cyprus was in a great rift with the Church of Antioch because Antioch made jurisdictional claims over the island. For further information on the history of the Church of Cyprus see Downey 1958 and Hackett 1901.

[24] Migne 1857b, 1089–1093.

1).[25] The early Christian basilica was probably also dedicated to Philon, disciple of Saint Epiphanius and first bishop of the city towards the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century.[26]

The freestanding baptistery of Ayios Philon, located to the south of the basilica, is smaller than the baptistery of the Episcopal precinct of Kourion. It is relatively well preserved and it is also dated to the early fifth century (fig. 6).[27] The baptismal complex and the basilica are separated by a covered corridor paved with gypsum slabs, the so-called *marmara* or 'Cypriot marble' slabs. An adjoining corridor, leading to the south, separates the baptistery from the east annexes of the episcopal precinct (fig. 6). It also consists of a free-standing rectangular building with different chambers, which follow the processional 'Cypriot type' described above (fig. 7). Similarly to Kourion, on the east wall of the ἐξώτερος οἶκος there initially had been a small central apse, which was later, probably in the mid-sixth century, walled up and concealed by a marble revetment. The apse, as at Kourion, marked the position of the bishop during the pre-baptismal chrismation performed in the main chamber. When the apse in the main chamber was walled up, the room to the east of the font became the *chrismarion* and was provided with an elaborate *opus sectile* floor dated in the sixth century (fig. 7). As in Kourion, the annulment of the apse implies a change in the ritual. We can, therefore, suppose that the baptistery of Ayios Philon was originally arranged according to the Syrian-Antiochene practice, with the performance of a pre-baptismal chrismation in the main hall. The suppression of the central apse and the creation of another one in the room to the east of the font brought it in line with the Jerusalem practice.

Apart from the large urban centers, baptismal complexes that follow the processional 'Cypriot type' were also found in two other sites that do not appear to be associated with an episcopal basilica.

The first is located at the Carpasia peninsula, circa 3 km to the west of the village of Ayia Triada, near Gialousa, in an unknown

[25] For a discussion concerning the episcopal basilica of Ayios Philon see Maguire 2019.

[26] Rapp 1991, 1. 103, 147; 2. 157.

[27] Megaw & du Plat Taylor 1981, 216. The dating of the episcopal precinct of Carpasia, and therefore for the baptistery, to the early fifth century proposed by A. H. S. Megaw and J. du Plat Taylor is based on coin evidence and on pottery finds, dated from the fifth to the sixth century.

ancient rural settlement (fig. 1). This basilical complex that also dates to the fifth century is equipped with a baptismal complex that belongs to the 'Cypriot type', although it is not associated with an episcopal see.

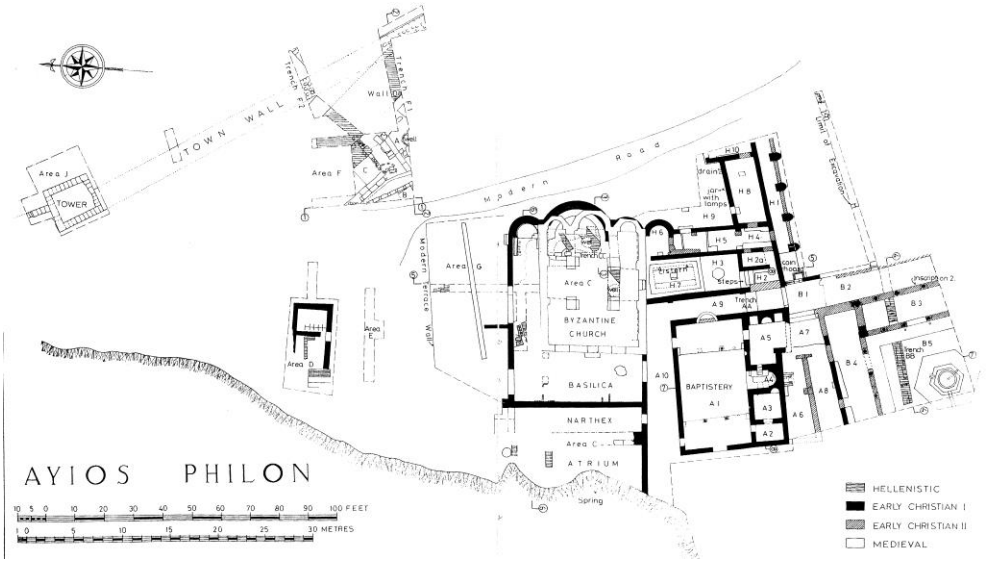


Fig. 6: Ayios Philon, plan of the basilica and its annexes (Megaw & du Plat Taylor 1981, 210, fig. A).

The free-standing baptistery is positioned to the southeast of the basilica and communicates with the narthex through a long corridor that in a later phase – after the abandonment of the complex – was transformed into a small church that blocked the passage to the baptistery (fig. 8-9).[28] What is remarkable about the Ayia Triada baptismal complex is the fact that, on the east wall of the ἐξώτερος οἶκος, the semicircular apse attested in the previous examples is absent (fig. 8). Furthermore, the east wall of the *chrismarion* is furnished with an apse that looks coherent with the initial phase of the baptistery (fig. 8).[29] Based on these architectural remarks, a later date is more suitable for the baptismal complex at Ayia Triada, which was arranged for the Jerusalem ritual right from its foundation (fig. 8-9).

[28] Papageorghiou 1990, 156.

[29] Maguire 2017, 140. Maguire argues that at Ayia Triada the apse in the east wall of the *chrismarion* was inserted in a later phase. He thinks that the apse must have been a later addition since it was encroached onto a corridor to the east, reducing its width.



Fig. 7: Ayios Philon, the baptistery as seen from above
(photo: Eleftherios Charalambous).

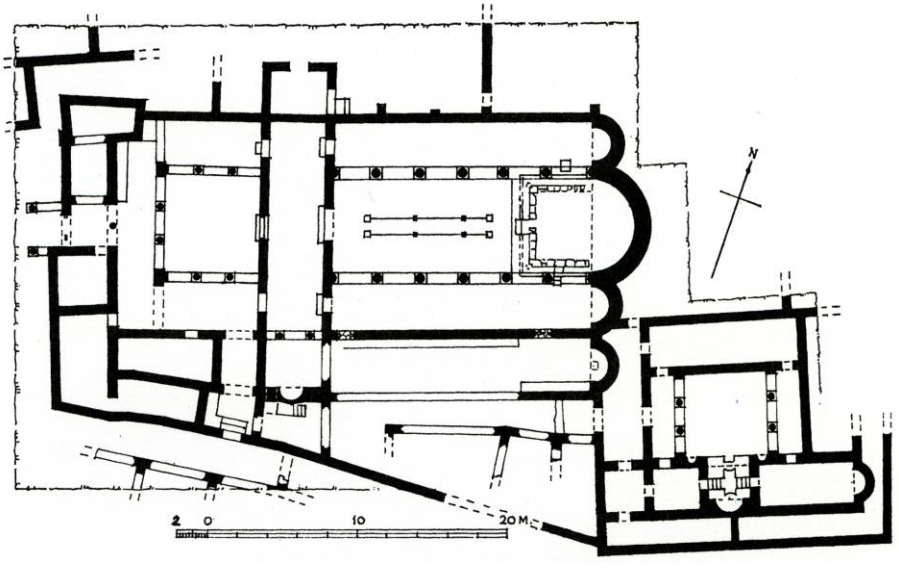


Fig. 8: Ayia Triada, plan of the basilica and the baptistery (Megaw 1974, 70, fig. D).



Fig. 9: Ayia Triada, the baptistery as seen from above (photo: Eleftherios Charalambous).

The second early Christian baptismal complex dated to the fifth century that does not seem to be associated with an episcopal basilica was discovered at the promontory of Cape Petounta, close to Mazotos village, in the Larnaca district, at the south coast of the island (fig. 1). It was probably part of an early Christian basilical complex. The basilica of the complex seems to be located to the south of the baptistery and, although it has not been investigated, we can assume its location since portions of walls are visible on the ground surface. It is worth noting that much of the basilical complex collapsed due to the erosion of the coast. Some wall remains are visible to the south-east, but unfortunately they end up in the cliff.

The site was discovered in 2007, during a surface survey conducted by the Department of Antiquities. In 2008, Georgios Georgiou, archaeological officer of the Department of Antiquities, undertook a trial excavation to investigate the nature of these vestiges. The limited excavation brought to light the remains of an early Christian baptismal complex, preserved in a good condition. The baptismal complex is situated on the summit of the promontory that

dominates the coast and a flat plain which might have been a small natural harbor in antiquity.



Fig. 10: Mazotos - *Petounta*, the uncovered remains as seen from above (Georgiou 2013, 119, fig. 2).

The limited excavation only revealed the northern part of the baptismal complex (fig. 10). A room with a protruding semi-circular apse oriented to the east dominates the center of the excavated area. The room is approached through an entrance opened on the west wall by a wide monumental corridor which probably leads to the adjacent basilica to its south. The large apsidal room was probably the ἐξώτερος οἶκος of the baptismal complex and was used for the pre-baptismal rites. To the north of the apsidal room there is another rectangular room whose central part is dominated by a stepped cross-shaped baptismal font (fig. 10-11). A door opening on its west wall functions as the entrance and/or the exit towards the monumental corridor. The threshold of the door, paved with imported marble, leads to a step which rises to the level of the baptismal font. From a set of three steps the initiates entered the font and left via three other steps on the other side after their triple immersion (fig. 11). From there, the only way out was probably provided by a narrow passage posted to the north, an area that has not been completely excavated (fig. 10). It seems probable that it has functioned as the *chrismarion*.[30] Even though only

[30] Georgiou 2013, 122.

a small part of the whole baptismal complex was excavated, it can be assumed that the small baptistery of this unidentified coastal settlement follows the other Cypriot examples. We hope that future excavations will fully reveal the architectural plan of the baptismal complex and its connection to the basilica.



Fig. 11: Mazotos - *Petounta*, the baptismal font (photo: the author).

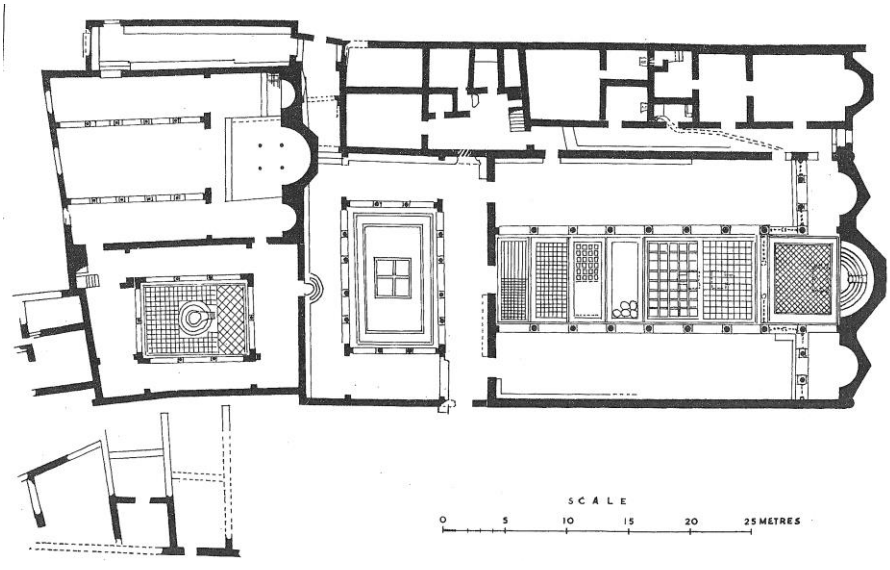


Fig. 12: Peyia - Ayios Georgios, plan of the basilica and the baptismal complex (Papageorghiou 1985, 315, fig. 5).

Moving on to the sixth century we go to the west coast of the island and the rich settlement of Ayios Georgios of Peyia, located at Cape Drepanon (Fig. 1). A.H.S. Megaw excavated between 1949 and 1955 a bathhouse and three early Christian basilicas, all of which date to the sixth century. To the west of the atrium of Basilica A, the largest of the three basilicas of the settlement, a baptismal complex was brought to light (fig. 12).



Fig. 13: Peyia - Ayios Georgios, the baptismal complex as seen from above (photo: Thomas Sagory).

The baptismal complex is located, as mentioned above, at the west side of the atrium of Basilica A at a higher level, opposite to the front entrance, and forms an *unicum* (fig. 12). Here, we find for the

very first time, the baptismal font installed at the centre of a large, four-sided room with porticoes and no longer centered in a narrow recess in a peripheral position, thus giving a completely different spatial alignment to the whole building and reminding us of Constantinopolitan prototypes. At Peyia, according to Charalambos Bakirtzis, who was responsible for the publication of the old excavation data and has directed more recent excavations at the site, the baptismal font was cruciform and not circular in shape as it looks nowadays[31]. The circular form that we encounter at present is the result of illicit looting activities at the site, which altered the original form of the baptismal basin. Also, to support the above mentioned theory, it should be mentioned that the mosaic, which decorates the margins of the baptismal font, has a cross-shaped outline (fig. 13).

What is interesting about the Peyia baptismal complex is the fact that, the baptismal hall is adjoined by a modest three-aisled transept basilica lying on its north (fig. 12-13).[32] This small basilica, dating before the building of basilica A and the baptistery, probably became, with some modifications, the ἐξώτερος οἶκος and/or the spacious *chrismarion* of the baptismal complex, recalling the older Cypriot examples.[33] However, I would suggest that it is also possible that this small transept basilica was used for the Eucharistic *synaxis* where the newly baptized would receive their first holy communion, since traces of liturgical installations are documented.[34] If this theory is correct this basilica could be a '*paroisse baptismale*' as it is defined by Février and Sodini.[35] Although the processional character of this baptistery is not obvious, its architectural layout, with the incorporation of the transept basilica in the baptismal complex, may suggest that, although innovative in some aspects, this continuity was not random, but may relate to specific aspects of the liturgy of the Church of Cyprus, *autocephalus* since 488 and independent of the other great patriarchates of the Eastern Mediterranean. Therefore, the example of the Peyia baptismal complex can be used as a case-study for tracing not only the amalgamation and continuation of some local traditions in Byzantine architecture, but also, if properly set in its

[31] Bakirtzis 2020, 27, n. 13.
[32] For a discussion concerning the transept basilica at Ayios Georgios of Peyia see Nicolaou 2015, Scheda A.4.
[33] Megaw 1960, 349; 2007, 174.
[34] Nicolaou 2015.
[35] Duval & Caillet 1996, 225–234.

historical and social context, important ecclesiastical and political issues. We should keep in mind that this still not identified rich settlement at Cape Drepanon has strong relations with Constantinople and was probably a sort of Byzantine commercial and military base under the control of *Quaestura Iustiniana Exercitus*, an administrative unit established under Justinian I.[36]

In conclusion, exclusively from coastal areas, the Cypriot baptismal structures dating to the fifth century, display characteristics that are unique, thus, revealing a regional trend. This consists of a free-standing rectangular building, which comprises different rooms that follow a processional arrangement. This spatial structure makes visible the separation between the act of baptism and the Eucharist. The Cypriot examples follow a processional type, but in a specific 'Cypriot' manner, which is strongly associated with the baptismal liturgy: first with the Syrian-Antiochene and then with the Jerusalemite liturgical tradition. The sixth century example from the Basilica A of Ayios Georgios of Peyia can be used as a case-study for perceiving the amalgamation and continuation of local traditions into the Byzantine architecture of the sixth century. The Peyia baptistery, although innovative in some aspects, follows in part the earlier examples. The big change comes in the seventh century with the prevalence of child baptisms, as reflected in the only example excavated so far at the island, the baptismal structure at Panayia tou Kampou in Choirokoitia.

The baptismal structure and the remains of a three aisled basilica at Choirikoitia are dated to the seventh century and were found during a preliminary and still incomplete excavation, conducted in the context of drainage works in the surrounding area of the 15th century church.[37] To the east of the central apse of the early Christian basilica and at a short distance from it, a small rectangular structure has been identified as a baptismal font (fig. 14). It is a free standing rectangular construction, built in stones and gypsum mortar. In this construction, a semicircular apsidal niche accommodates a cylindrical basin (fig. 15). This basin, identified as a baptismal font, has a cylindrical shape and 0.52m depth. Its walls are lined with gypsum, while its bottom is made up of a large square stone and smaller stones attached to gypsum mortar.

[36] Goutziokostas & Moniaros 2009, 147–149.
[37] Procopiou 2018, 80.

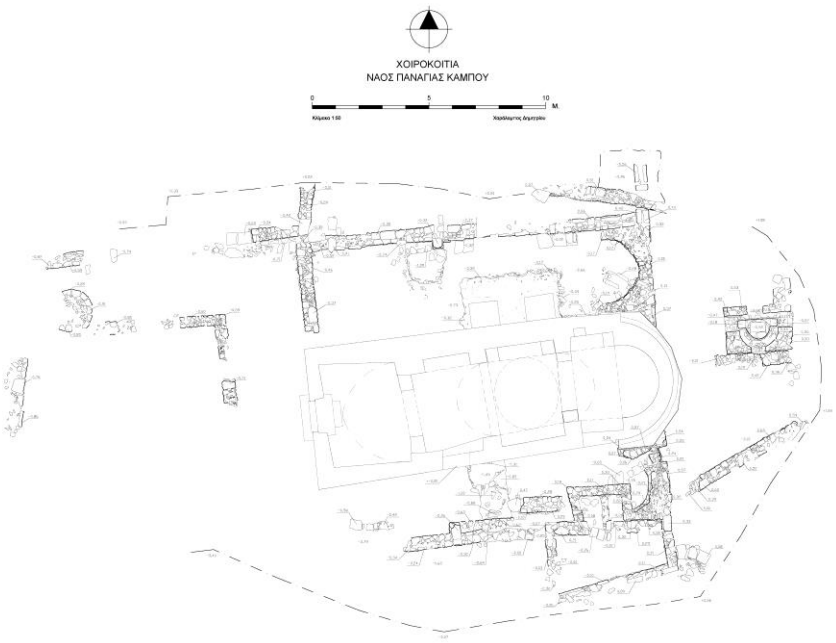


Fig. 14: Choirokoitia - Panayia tou Kampou, plan of the basilica (Procopiou 2013, fig. 9).



Fig. 15: Choirokoitia - Panayia tou Kampou, the baptismal font as seen from above (photo: Eleni Procopiou).

To the west and east of the font there are two square notches that look like steps or seats, also lined with gypsum mortar (fig. 15). These notches probably hosted the *ἐπορκιστόν ἔλαιο* in which they anointed the candidates, without excluding any other practical use during the act of baptism.[38]

Unfortunately, due to the limited extend of the excavation it is difficult to further investigate the relationship and communication of the baptismal structure with the early Christian basilica. This may have been an annex of the basilica to the east of its central apse with the baptismal font placed in the center or at the eastern part of it. Also, no wall tangible to the structure was found and therefore the relationship and communication of the alleged baptistery with the basilica cannot be ascertained at this stage. Hopefully future excavations will answer our questions.

The structure to the east of the central apse of the basilica of Panayia tou Kampou in Choirokoitia could, however, be identified as a baptismal structure, considering the conditions of the seventh century. In the seventh century the initiates were baptized at a young age and the baptisms were not as massive as in the early years. For this reason, there was no need for large buildings that would host the baptismal rite. The changes brought about by the gradual prevalence of child/infant baptism are probably reflected in the example of Panayia tou Kampou, where the alleged font is relatively small in size and depth, intended to serve the needs of the Cypriot rural society to which it was associated. If the interpretation of the architectural structure of Panayia tou Kampou as a baptistery is valid, then it is the only so far known example of a baptismal structure dated to the seventh century and related to the establishment of the child baptism in the island.

Hopefully new excavations and surveys will bring to light more baptismal structures enriching our data and providing us with both inland and coastal examples, in order to create a more accurate image of the Cypriot baptismal tradition.

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[38] Volanakis 1976, 53–54.

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Predigt 43 des Učitel'noe evangelie Kostantins von Preslav: zwischen Übersetzung und Eigenkreation*

Sermon 43 of Učitelno evangelie Constantine of Preslav: between translation and original creation

Dobriela Kotova

Abstract: Constantine of Preslav composed his remarkable Didactic Gospel (DG) in the late 9th century. It not only belongs to the early church literature in Bulgaria but is also relevant to the history of the Byzantine New Testament catenae, their restructuring and new life in the Old Slavonic environment. It, furthermore, is the first Old Bulgarian collection of sermons, which, even though a compilation and translated in its major part, is a completely original work having a specific concept, mode of composition and literary form, and which had no counterpart in the Byzantine literature at the time of its creation. The moment in history and the need for ecclesiastical public teaching predetermined its occurrence, content, form and peculiarity. All its 51 sermons were written with a constant thought about the target audience – the newly converted Slavs – and were composed to their level of knowledge. Being linked to liturgical practice, DG explains concisely and clearly in a quite new literary language the complex matter of the Gospel readings for all Sunday liturgies. At the same time, as a text that draws on the model of the Biblical exegesis, this collection makes an impact through the rhetorical stylings of homiletics, besides, it summons and instructs, condemns and praises, persuades and inspires.

With its large translated sections, the collection becomes subsumed in the vast sea of the Slavonic translated literature. This, unfortunately, seems to diminish the author's creative achievement and thus – the originality of his creation. This article seeks to demonstrate the originality of his creative conception and skillful literary realization of the 43rd Sermon. Created entirely in the spirit of medieval literature and according to all the rules of the rhetorical genre, this preaching impresses with its emotional intensity, with the ingenuity of its artistic ideas, and with the deep pastoral

concern of its author for his congregation. A short sermon, composed with inspiration, literary skill and theological knowledge, it reveals both the artistic talent and high Byzantine education of Constantine as well as his extraordinary commitment to the mission he undertook.

Key words: Constantine of Preslav, Uchitelno evangelie (Didactic Gospel), catena manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, Homilies, Medieval Bulgarian literature; Greek-Slavonic translation.

Резюме: В края на IX в. Константин Преславски създава своето забележително Учително евангелие (Didactic Gospel)(УЕ). То е не само явление в ранната църковна книжнина в България, но има отношение и към историята на византийските новозаветни катени, тяхното преформатиране и нов живот в славянска среда. Това е първият старобългарски проповеднически сборник, който въпреки своя компилативен и в голяма част преводен характер е завършено оригинално произведение и като замисъл, начин на съставяне и литературна форма към момента на своето възникване няма съответствие във византийската литература. Историческият момент и нуждата от църковно-обществено учителство предопределят появата му, неговите съдържание, форма и своеобразност. Всичките 51 слова са изградени с постоянната мисъл за обикновените хора, новопокръстените славяни, съобразени са с нивото на техните знания.

Обвързано с богослужебната практика, УЕ просвещава и разяснява стегнато и ясно на един съвсем млад литературен език сложната материя на евангелските четива за всички неделни литургии. Същевременно като текст, който се опира на модела на библейската екзегетична беседа, произведението въздейства чрез реторическата стилистика на хомилията, призовава и поучава „в закона Господен“, заклеймява и възхвалява, убеждава и вдъхновява.

С обширните си преводни части творбата се влива в огромното море на славянската преводаческа литература, което сякаш омаловажава творческото постижение на автора при нейното създаване и по този начин и значението на самото произведение като оригинално творение. Настоящата статия се стреми да покаже оригиналността на творческия замисъл и умелото му литературно реализиране при съставянето на 43-та проповед. Сътворено изцяло в духа на средновековната литература и по всички правила на реторичния жанр, словото впечатлява със своята емоционална наситеност, с находчивостта на творческите идеи, с дълбоката пастирска загриженост на неговия автор към своето паство. Кратка проповед, съставена с вдъхновение, литературно умение и богословско знание, разкриващи както творческия талант и високото византийско образование на Константин Преславски, така и изключителната му ангажираност към поетата от него мисия.

Am Ende des 9. Jh. verfasste Konstantin, Bischof von Preslav sein bemerkenswertes Lehrevangelium (Učitel'noe evangelie, weiter UE). Es ist nicht nur ein Phänomen in der frühen kirchlichen Literatur Bulgariens, sondern hat auch eine Relevanz für die Geschichte der byzantinischen Katenen zum Neuen Testament, ihre Neuformatierung und ihr neues Leben im slavischen Raum. Das UE ist die erste altbulgarische Predigtsammlung und trotz seines kompilatorischen und größtenteils übersetzten Charakters ein vollständiges Originalwerk, das in Bezug auf Konzeption, Kompositionsweise und literarische Form zum Zeitpunkt seines Erscheinens kein Vorbild in der byzantinischen Literatur hatte.[1]

Es entstand als Erwiderung auf die Bedürfnisse der jungen bulgarischen Kirche. Mit der liturgischen Praxis eng verbunden, beleuchtet und erklärt das UE kompakt und klar die Evangelien-Lesungen für alle Sonntagsliturgien nach dem beweglichem Kirchenkalender. Gleichzeitig greift Konstantin Preslavskis Werk als Text, der sich am Modell des biblischen exegetischen Diskurses orientiert, auf die rhetorische Stilistik der Homiletik zurück. Es ermahnt und belehrt „im Gesetz des Herrn", verurteilt und lobt, überzeugt und inspiriert.

Die Frage der Datierung des UE wird schwerlich jemals endgültig geklärt werden können. Nach dem bisherigen Forschungsstand liegt die Entstehungszeit des Werkes in der Zeitspanne zwischen 886 und 893/894.[2] Das Lehrevangelium ist nur mit vier vollständigen Abschriften überliefert, von denen die älteste – Synodalhandschrift Nr. 262 aus der Sammlung des Staatlichen historischen Museums in Moskau (GIM Sin. 262) – russisch ist und nach der neuesten Datierung von Krys'ko und Mol'kov aus der zweiten Hälfte des 12. Jh. stammt.[3] Die anderen Kopien sind serbischer Redaktion: Gilferding (RNB Gilf. 32, 1286), Wiener Handschrift (ÖNB Cod. Slav. 12, 14. Jh.) und Hilandar-Handschrift (Hil. 385, 1344). Die vollständige Ausgabe des Lehrevangeliums erschien 2012,

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[1] Hannick 2006, 166–169.

[2] Bezüglich der Datierung des UE vgl. Grasheva 1995, 435; Gallucci 2001, 49–50; Spasova 2005, 84–85.

[3] Krys'ko & Mol'kov 2017, 361.

durchgeführt von M. Tichova anhand der Sin. 262 mit Ergänzungen und Varianten aus den anderen drei Abschriften und entsprechendem griechischen Text.[4] (Alle Stellenangaben aus dem UE werden hier nach dieser Ausgabe gemacht).

Das beachtliche Werk umfasst 51 Homilien zu den Perikopen der Sonntagsliturgien im Kirchenjahr, die eine Einleitung, einen exegetischen Teil und Schlussworte beinhalten. Die Einleitungen und die Nachworte sind nicht gänzlich, wie man lange behauptete, doch weitgehend eigenständige Texte des Konstantins. Die mittleren Kommentarteile sind dagegen eine Übersetzung, wenn auch an mancher Stelle eine interpretierende und durch eigene Worte ergänzte. Gemäß der Zuschreibung am Anfang jeder Predigt gehören die Auslegungen zum entsprechenden evangelischen Text am häufigsten zu Johannes Chrysostomus, gefolgt von Kyrill von Alexandrien und Isidor von Pelusium.

Seit den Erkenntnissen der ersten Forscher des Lehrevangeliums Gorskij und Nevostruev, Archimandrit Antonij und Michajlov[5] Ende des 19 Jh. sucht man die griechischen Vorlagen des Werkes hauptsächlich in den von John Cramer Mitte des gleichen Jahrhunderts veröffentlichten Katenen zum Neuen Testament.[6] Es war Archimandrit Antonij, der bewies, dass sich Konstantin nicht der Originalhomilien des Goldmundes und der anderen Kirchenväter, sondern Katennen-Kommentare zu den Matthäus-, Johannes- und Lukasevangelium als Quelle bedient hat, was Gorskij und Nevostruev zuvor nur vermutet haben.[7] Schon damals wurde jedoch bemerkt, dass die Übersetzung im UE an vielen Stellen mit dem von Cramer edierten Text nicht übereinstimmt. Man nahm an, dass Konstantin zusätzlich zu seiner Hauptquelle auch auf ein besseres handschriftliches Zeugnis dieser Katenen oder eine Sammlung gekürzter Homilien von Johannes Chrysostomus zurückgegriffen haben soll. [8]

Die Katenen-Kommentare, die Cramer anhand des Codex Paris. Coisl. 23 herausgab, gehören eigentlich zu den *catenae integrae in*

[4] Tihova 2012; siehe in der Einleitung die historiographischen und paläographischen Beschreibungen der Handschriften RNB Gilf. 32, Wien ÖNB Cod. Slav. 12 und Hilandar 385 und die detaillierte Beschreibung der GIM Sin. 262 von E. Uhanova.
[5] Gorskii & Nevostruev 1859; Antonii 1885; Mikhailov 1894.
[6] Cramer 1844a; 1844b.
[7] Antonii 1885, 40, 52–165, Gorskii & Nevostruev 1859, 411–420, 423–424.
[8] Antonii 1895, 179, 198 (n. 6); Gorskii & Nevostruev 1859, 423; Mikhailov 1894, 6.

Matthaeum und Joannem Typus A und *catena Typus B in Lucam*. Letztere korrespondieren zwar weitgehend mit der slavischen Übersetzung, lassen aber auch große Differenzen erkennen. Denn eigentlich standen Konstantin nicht diese, sondern ältere Katenen als Vorlage zu Verfügung,[9] deren Text, teilweise stark abgeändert, als Basis-Kommentar in die Cramerischen Katenen eingeflossen ist. Konstantin besaß nämlich Abschriften der *catenae primae* (der Grundformen) des Typus A zu Matthäus und Johannes (CPG C110.1 und C140.1), bei denen es sich um eine Kompilation exzerpierten, rein-exegetischen Materials aus den jeweiligen Homilien des Johannes Chrysostomus ohne jegliche rhetorischen Ausschmückungen und moralische Vorschriften handelte. Die Erläuterungen in den Lukaspredigten des Lehrevangeliums wurden aus der Lukaskatene des Typus A (CPG C130) entnommen, deren Grundgerüst hauptsächlich aus Fragmenten der Homilien des Kyrill von Alexandrien, dann des Origenes und Titus von Bostra und aus Scholien anderer Autoren bestand.[10] Die Grundkatenen Typus A zu Matthäus- und Johannesevangelium und die Lukas Katene Typus A haben noch keine Editionen bekommen.

In einigen der Predigten zu den Perikopen des Matthäusevangeliums findet sich außerdem eine gelungene Kompilation zwischen dem Katenentext und zusätzlichen Auszügen aus den jeweiligen Originalhomilien des Johannes Chrysostomus, die Konstantin selbst mit hohem literarischem Verstand exzerpiert und verarbeitet hat.[11]

Je nach Autorschaft der ursprünglichen patristischen Kommentare, die über die Katene Erläuterungen zur jeweiligen Sonntagslesung lieferten, wurden die Predigten des Lehrevangeliums als „сѣказаниѥ“ nach einem der heiligen Väter Johannes Chrysostomus, Kyrill von Alexandrien oder Isidor von Pelusium betitelt. Nur Sermo 42 wurde Konstantin selbst zugeschrieben und bis vor kürzester Zeit hielt man sie komplett als seine Eigenkreation. Nach den jüngsten Erkenntnissen jedoch erwies sich diese Zuschreibung als irrtümlich, denn für den exegetischen Teil dieser Predigt wurde die griechische

[9] Ausführlich über die griechischen Quellen des UE in Kotova 2023, vgl. Kotova 2022a; 2022b; Petrov 2022.

[10] Zur Klassifizierung der Matthäus-, Johannes- und Lukaskatenen siehe Reuss 1941; 1957; 1966; 1984; vgl. CPG 1980, 2018.

[11] Vgl. dazu Kotova 2022; Petrov 2022.

Vorlage gefunden.[12] Die Attribution der Predigten zum Lukasevangelium ist auch nicht immer korrekt, denn einige lassen sich als Kommentare identifizieren, die ursprünglich auf das Schaffen des Severus von Antiochien oder des Goldmundes zurückgehen, aber im UE Kyrill oder Isidor zugeschrieben werden. Eigentlich trifft der Name von Isidor als Autor der Erläuterungen für keine Predigt zu.[13]

Das Zusammenspiel zwischen Übersetzung und selbstverfasstem Text

Mit seinen umfangreichen Übersetzungen fließt das Lehrevangelium in das weite Meer der slavischen Übersetzungsliteratur ein, was die schöpferische Leistung des Autors bei der Schaffung des Gesamtwerks und damit die Bedeutung des Werks selbst als Berufung und Eigenkreation herunterzuspielen scheint. In diesem Beitrag wird versucht, die Eigenständigkeit des kreativen Konzepts von Konstantin, seine geschickte literarische Umsetzung und die Originalität der Ideenfindung in Sermon 43 aufzuzeigen.

Der Bedarf an kirchlich-gesellschaftlicher Lehre in Bulgarien nach der Bekehrung bestimmte die Entstehung von Konstantin Preslavskis Lehrevangelium, seinen Inhalt und seine Form. Naums Auftrag, die Auslegung des Heiligen Evangeliums aus dem Griechischen zu übersetzen, überwältigte Konstantin zunächst, wie wir vom Prolog erfahren.[14] Daraufhin entschied er sich, nur Erläuterungen für die Sonntagslesungen zu übersetzten, wandte sich den Vorbildern der Byzantinischen Predigtliteratur des 4. Jahrhunderts zu und erschuf, inspiriert vor allem von den Homilien des Goldmundes, ein in

[12] Die griechische Vorlage dieser Predigt gehört zu der Lukaskatene Typus A (CPG C130) und ist in den handschriftlichen Zeugnissen dieser Katene zu lesen. Meine Erkenntnisse darüber, ausführliche Analyse und Gegenüberstellung des slavischen und des griechischen Texts siehe in Kotova 2022b.

[13] Nur in Predigt 35 befindet sich eine kleine Passage, die als Teil des Katenenkommentars A (CPG C130) zu Lk 10.25-37 mitübersetzt wurde und ursprünglich aus einem Brief von Isidor stammt, mehr dazu in Kotova 2023, 34; kürzlich hat G. Mitov dieses Fragment im Zusammenhang mit der slavischen Rezeption der Werke Isidors untersucht, vgl. Mitov (in press).

[14] Vgl. dazu die Textausgabe des Prosa-Prologs des UE von E. Gallucci mit Informationen über die handschriftlichen Zeugnisse, die eine vollständige Fassung des Prologs bezeugen (Galluci 2001, 125-128, 63–65), denn im von Tichova herausgegebenen Text der Sin. 262 ist die Passage über die treibende Rolle von Naum bei der Entstehung des UE nicht vorhanden (Tihova 2012, 5–7, 3b2–4a21).

Konzeption und Gestaltung originelles Werk. Das UE ist mit Recht als eigenständige Kreation des Preslaver Gelehrten anzusehen. Denn, wie Christian Hannick formuliert hat, „würde man das kommentierte Evangeliar des Konstantin von Preslav der literarischen Gattung der Homiliarien zurechnen, so verdiente Konstantin den Ruhm eines Vorläufers innerhalb der byzantinischen Literaturgeschichte. Homiliarien für die Sonntage des gesamten Kirchenjahres gibt es nämlich in Byzanz erst ab dem 11. Jh.“[15]

Angesichts der immensen Literatur und ihres hohen Stils griff Konstantin nicht auf die Originalhomilien der kirchlichen Väter zurück, sondern auf die byzantinischen Katenen zum Neuen Testament, in denen nur reines exegetisches Material aus Scholien verschiedener Autoren ohne jegliche rhetorischen Ausschmückungen bereits exzerpiert und zusammengefasst worden war. Aus den Matthäus-, Johannes- und Lukaskatenen wählte er die jeweils zutreffenden Passagen aus. Die abgespeckten Katenenkommentare versah er mit eigenen Einleitungen und Schlussworten, die nach allen Regeln der rhetorischen Kunst verfasst wurden. In manchen Predigten ergänzte Konstantin sehr geschickt den trockenen Katenentext mit von ihm selbst exzerpierten Auszügen aus den Originalhomilien des Chrysostomus und fügte sogar eigene Worte hinzu. Nachdem auf diese Weise die literarische Form der Homilie wiedergewonnen wurde,[16] ordnete der Preslaver Gelehrte seine Predigten in die liturgische Abfolge ein und kreierte eine eigenartige Sammlung von 51 neuen kleinen und originell anmutenden Homilien. Dem gesamten Werk stellte der leidenschaftliche Literat und Prediger eine inspirierte poetische Einleitung voran, das Alphabetgebet an die Heilige Dreifaltigkeit, das „mit seinem lyrischen Ton, dem aufrichtigen Pathos und der formalen Perfektion des alphabetischen Akrostichons zu den brillantesten Werken der altbulgarischen Literatur gehört.“[17] Kürzlich wies E. Dikova nach, dass sich dieses poetische Stück von Konstantin Preslavski voll und ganz in die Tradition der byzantinischen jambisch-alphabetischen Akrosticha einfügt und dass Abweichungen davon auf gattungsspezifische und rhetorische Anforderungen zurückzuführen

[15] Hannick 2006, 166.

[16] Mehr über die künstlerischen Mittel, mit denen Konstantin den homiletischen Still wiederherstellt, in Mitov 2022.

[17] Stoikova 2008, 241. Eine Übersicht der Bibliografie zum Alphabetgebet siehe in Boyadzhiev 2016, 106, 610 und passim im Literaturverzeichnis (629-708), Literaturangaben auch in Dikova 2022.

sind, die die byzantinische Schulung des altbulgarischen Schriftstellers offenbaren. Inspiriert durch das Alphabet-Akrostichon des hl. Gregor des Theologen (I.2.30, PG 37 col. 908-910), übertrifft Konstantin Preslavskis Alphabetgebet sogar das Vorbild, nicht nur wegen des beinahe doppelt so großen Umfangs, sondern auch wegen der Fähigkeit seines Autors, die Prinzipien der byzantinischen Poesie und Rhetorik in einer jungen Literatursprache zu vermitteln, selbst um den Preis, dass er sekundäre Regeln bricht, indem er die Form eines zusammenhängenden Textes vorzieht, weil sie für ein Neophytenpublikum besser geeignet ist.[18]

Das ganze Vorhaben stellt Konstantins didaktisches und literarisches Können unter Beweis. Einerseits muss er aufklären, indem er nicht nur die auf Griechisch verfassten geistlichen Texte ins Slavische übersetzt, sondern auch die wichtigsten christlichen Dogmen und Postulate anhand von Beispielen, biblischen Zitaten, Ermahnungen, praktischen Vorschriften usw. für die Neubekehrten nochmal verständlich auslegt. Andererseits muss er inspirieren, emotional berühren, überzeugen. Und es sind die Einleitungen und Schlussworte, die dem Preslaver Bischof die Form geben, in der er seine eigene „adhortative" Exegese und leidenschaftliche Lehre entfaltet.

Die Einleitungen sind in der Regel kurz. Manchmal enthalten sie ein Zitat oder eine Metapher, die das Thema der Predigt andeuten, doch häufig ruft Konstantin einfach dazu auf, aufmerksam zuzuhören, um die hohen Wahrheiten zu verinnerlichen. Oft wird die lebensspendende Kraft des Wortes Gottes, der Nutzen der Predigt, des Wissens und der Bücher betont. Gelegentlich finden sich kurze Gebete. Faszinierend sind die Demut und die Bescheidenheit, mit der er von sich selbst redet. Lediglich ein Diener Gottes und seiner Herde. Die Bewunderung für sein Vorbild Chrysostomus ist dagegen grenzenlos. In vielen Einleitungen bringt Konstantin seine Bewunderung und Verehrung für den Heiligen Vater zum Ausdruck. Er nennt ihn z.B. „einen hochfliegenden Adler", weist darauf hin, dass er von seinem Festmahl geborgt hat (13/68c16-d06), dass er ihn als seinen „Lehrer in den Wegen Gottes" vor sich hat (48/216d01-05), er fordert die Zuhörer auf, genau zu hören, wie „die goldene Zither, das Musikinstrument Christi, die schönsingende Glocke, dieser goldmündige Johannes spricht und lehrt und das Evangelium auslegt" (25/122c9-20). Doch anders als in den Schlussworten finden sich in den Einführungen keine direkten Anleihen beim Goldmund.

[18] Dikova 2022.

Hingegen sind Inspirationen von anderen Kirchenvätern zu vermerken, z.B. Epiphanius.

Die Nachworte sind viel länger. Sie bestehen vor allem aus Vorschriften und Ermahnungen, genau wie die Schlussteile der Homilien des Chrysostomus. Und eben in den Schlüssen mancher Matthäuspredigten gliedert Konstantin ganze Passagen des Goldmundes ein, die aber erstaunlicherweise nicht aus den abschließenden Worten seiner Homilien stammen, sondern aus den exegetischen Teilen. In aller Kürze hebt Konstantin zuerst die Tragweite der bereits erläuterten Wahrheiten hervor, fasst den Sinn der Geschichte zusammen und drängt darauf, sie als Wissen und Vorbild zur Nachahmung zu bewahren. Dann findet er immer einen originellen Weg, um zu seiner eigenen moralisch-didaktischen Linie überzugehen, die nicht unbedingt mit der aktuellen Perikope zusammenhängt.

Predigt 43 – die Bedeutung der Worte

Eine der leidenschaftlichsten und der schönsten Predigten im Lehrevangelium des Konstantin Preslavski, Sermon 43, beschäftigt sich exegetisch mit der Perikope aus dem Lukasevangelium 18, 35-43 über die Heilung des Blinden bei der Stadt Jericho. Fälschlicherweise ist sie im Titel Isidor von Pelusium zugeschrieben, weil in den Katenen-Manuskripten ein Fragment seiner Scholien zu der Perikope vom Pharisäer und dem Zöllner in unmittelbarer Nähe vor dem Kommentar über den Blinden zu lesen ist. Offensichtlich hat die Person, die die Attributionen in den Überschriften der Predigten im UE gemacht hat (es ist möglich, dass es nicht Konstantin selbst gewesen ist), die Grenzen beider Fragmente in der griechischen Vorlage nicht korrekt erkennen können. In der Tat gehören die von Konstantin übersetzten Erläuterungen ursprünglich zur 126. Lukashomilie von Kyrill von Alexandrien.

Als eine der kürzesten in UE, stellt die 43. Predigt eine vollendete kleine Homilie dar, die mit Inspiration, literarischem Können und theologischen Wissen erarbeitet ist. Vielleicht liegt es daran, dass sie von Anfang bis Ende dem Thema des Lichts Gottes, des wahren Lichts der Seele und der Kraft des Glaubens folgt. Im Gegensatz zu anderen Predigten knüpfen hier sowohl die Einleitung als auch der Schluss sinnvoll am Inhalt des übersetzten mittleren Teils an.

Als Leitmotiv in der Einleitung tritt das Postulat auf, dass Gott Licht ist. Gott sei gekommen, um unseren Verstand und unser Herz zu erleuchten, damit seine Worte und Taten verstanden werden können.

Dies wird durch geschickte Kombination aus Bibelzitaten und Konstantins eigenen Worten deutlich zum Ausdruck gebracht:

43/197 b08-20: **Тъ бо есть свѣтъ** дшь нашихъ·**просвѣщаѭи вьсакого** ѵелвка въ всь миръ градоуща·тъ ѥсть въстокъ въстокомъ·ꙗкоже реѵе пр҃ркъ·тъ **просвѣщаѥть сѣдѧщаѧ въ тьмѣ·и въ сѣни съмрьтьнѣ·**(Denn **Er ist das Licht** unserer Seelen, **das alle Menschen erleuchtet, die in diese Welt kommen.** Er ist der Osten des Ostens. Wie der Prophet sagte „**Er bringt denen Licht, die in der Finsternis und im Schatten des Todes sitzen**“.)

Joh. 1:9: Ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον, ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον.

Lk 1:79: ἐπιφᾶναι τοῖς ἐν σκότει καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου καθημένοις

Nachdem Konstantin so anschaulich erklärt hatte, dass das Licht Gottes allen gilt, auch den Sündern, die in der Finsternis und im Schatten des Todes stehen, aber durch die Erleuchtung gerettet werden können, fordert er seine Zuhörer auf, still zu sein, weise Augen zu erheben und zu hören, was nicht er, sondern der Evangelist durch die Worte des Heiligen Vaters Chrysostomos sagt, und dann mit großem Nutzen zu ihren Leuten nach Hause gehen zu können. Auf diese Weise leitet er geschickt über zum Gleichnis über die Heilung des Blinden und dem Thema der geistigen Einsicht durch die Augen der Seele, worüber er im Schluss ganz klar sprechen wird. In diesem Sinne ist die bewusste Abweichung in der Übersetzung des Zitats aus dem Johannesevangelium bemerkenswert: „Das wahre Licht, τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν“ wird irgendwie erklärend durch „das Licht unserer Seelen, дшь нашихъ“ ersetzt. Von der theologischen Abstraktion entfernt, lockert Konstantin den Ausdruck auf, schließt sich den Zuhörern an und lenkt ihre Aufmerksamkeit in die gewünschte Richtung.

Die Einleitung enthält eine sehr interessante Aussage – тъ ѥсть въстокъ въстокомъ (Er ist der Osten des Ostens). Die Metapher ἀνατολὴ ἀνατολῶν stammt von Epiphanius, aus seiner „In divini corporis sepulturam homilia“, greift aber auf das Lukasevangelium 1:78 zurück. Die Epiphanius` Passage ist äußerst bewegend, emotional intensiv, und es heißt dort unter anderem: „Sage mir, o Joseph, willst Du den Osten des Ostens, den Jesus, wie einen Toten im Osten begraben, willst du mit deinen Fingern die Augen desjenigen wie die eines Toten schließen, der mit seinem reinen Finger die Augen des Blinden öffnete?“[19]

[19] Epiph. Cypr. Hom. Div. Corp. Sep., CPG 3768 / PG 43: 448.49-53.

Die Homilie war im slavischen Kontext sehr verbreitet. Im Laufe des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts bekam sie, wie man vermutet, zwei verschiedene Übersetzungen und mehrere Redaktionen.[20] Die erste Translation gehört zur Gruppe der ältesten Übersetzungen im Codex Suprasliensis.[21]

Sicher holt sich Konstantin an dieser Stelle von Epiphanius` Homilie Anregungen, in welcher gleich nach dem Wortspiel „den Osten des Ostens im Osten begraben" das Gleichnis über den Blinden angedeutet wird.[22] Auch die beiden biblischen Zitate aus Konstantins Einleitung sind bei Epiphanius anzutreffen, wenngleich in abgeänderter Form.

UE 43/197b08-13 Тъ бо ѥсть свѣтъ дшь нашихъ·просвѣщаѭн вьсѧкого ѹелвка въ всь миръ градоуща / **Joh 1:9** Ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον, ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον. / **Epiph. PG 43: 449, 10-12** ποίας δὲ ἆρα καὶ λαμπάδας ὑπανάψεις τῷ φωτὶ τῷ ἀληθινῷ, τῷ φωτίσαντι πάντα ἄνθρωπον;

UE 43/197b08-13 ѭкоже ρεѵε пр͡р̂къ (gemeint ist Is. 9:1)·тъ просвѣщаѥть сѣдѧщаѧ въ тьмѣ·н въ сѣнн съмрьтѣнѣ·/ **Lk 1:79** ἐπιφᾶναι τοῖς ἐν σκότει καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου καθημένοις. Vgl. **Is. 9:1** οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐν χώρᾳ καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου, φῶς λάμψει ἐφ᾽ ὑμᾶς. / **Epiph. PG 43: 440, 44-45** οἱ ἐν σκότει καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου καθήμενοι τὸ μέγα φῶς ὑποδέξασθε.

Auch der feierliche Ton und die rhetorische Gestaltung des Textes scheinen sich an Epiphanius anzulehnen, zum Beispiel bei der Verwendung der Anaphern:

PG 43: 448,49-449,5
Ἆρα γὰρ, ἆρα, εἰπέ μοι, ὦ Ἰωσὴφ, καὶ πρὸς ἀνατολὰς καταθάπτεις νεκρὸν, τὴν ἀνατολὴν τῶν ἀνατολῶν; **ἆρα δὲ** καὶ τοῖς σοῖς δακτύλοις νεκροπρεπῶς Ἰησοῦ κατακλείεις τὰ ὄμματα τοῦ τῷ ἀχράντῳ δακτύλῳ τοῦ τυφλοῦ ἀνοίξαντος ὄμμα; **ἆρα δὲ** καὶ τὸ στόμα περικλείεις τοῦ τὸ μογι-

43/197b08-19
Тъ
бо ѥсть свѣтъ дшь нашихъ· просвѣщаѭн вьсѧкого ѹелвка въ всь миръ градоуща **тъ ѥ-сть** въстокъ въ-

[20] Spasova 2014, 64-65; Mircheva 2006, 172-174.
[21] Dobrev 2018a, 63-64; Mircheva 2011, 6.
[22] ἆρα γὰρ ἆρα εἰπέ μοι, ὦ Ἰωσήφ, καὶ πρὸς ἀνατολὰς θάπτεις καθάπερ νεκρόν, τὴν ἀνατολὴν τῶν ἀνατολῶν Ἰησοῦν; Ἆρα δὲ καὶ τοῖς σοῖς δακτύλοις νεκροπρεπῶς Ἰησοῦ κατακλείεις τὰ ὄμματα τοῦ τῷ ἀχράντῳ δακτύλῳ τοῦ τυφλοῦ ἀνοίξαντος ὄμμα; (PG 43: 448.49-53).

λάλου ἀνοίξαντος στόμα; **ἆρα δὲ** καὶ χεῖρας περιστέλλεις τοῦ ἐκτείναντος τὰς ξηρανθείσας χεῖρας; ἢ καὶ τοὺς πόδας νεκροπρεπῶς καταδεσμεῖς τοῦ τὸ βαδίζειν δόντος τοῖς ἀκινήτοις ποσίν; **ἆρα καὶ** ἐπὶ κλίνης αἴρεις τὸν τῷ παραλύτῳ κελεύσαντα·Ἆρον σοῦ τὸν κράβατον, καὶ περιπάτει; **ἆρα δὲ καὶ** μύρα κενοῖς τῷ οὐρανίῳ μύρῳ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ κενώσαντι…

стокомъ· ꙗкоже рече пр҃рькъ **тъ** просвѣщаѥть сѣдѧщаꙗ въ тьмѣ·

Der Text der Homilie war zweifelslos dem Preslaver Gelehrten in kleinsten Details bekannt und es ist vielleicht nicht ausgeschlossen, dass er etwas mit ihrer Übersetzung zu tun haben könnte. Jedenfalls wird hier ein weiteres Beispiel für die Rezeption dieser Homilie und ihren Einfluss in der Preslaver Literatur des 10. Jahrhunderts geliefert.

Der mittlere Teil der Predigt ist der zweitkürzeste im Lehrevangelium – nur 80 Zeilen (43/197c14-198c15). Dies ist auf die Kürze des Katenenkommentars zurückzuführen, die wiederum mit den Besonderheiten der Lukashomilien des Kyrills zusammenhängt: Sie sind nämlich eher praktische Anweisungen als eigentliche Kommentare, eher eine Paraphrase des evangelischen Textes als Erläuterungen. Das trifft auch in diesem Fall zu, ebenso wie in Predigt 42: der übersetzte Katenentext enthält praktisch keine echte Exegese.

Das Nachwort dagegen ist mit 145 Zeilen (43/198c16-200b13) die drittlängste Konklusion im Uchitelno Evangelie, fast doppelt so lang wie der interpretative Teil und kompensiert praktisch seine exegetischen Defizite. Konstantin entfaltet hier seine eigene Lehre, indem er die Botschaft des Gleichnisses für die Neubekehrten anhand von Beispielen und klaren Aussagen adaptiert. Dabei lenkt er die Interpretation bewusst in Richtung Themen, die seines Erachtens für die neuen Christen sehr wichtig sind, zieht aus der Geschichte des Blinden Glaubenssätze und Verhaltensnormen, die es zu verinnerlichen gilt. Er übt, so zu sagen, eine Exegese durch Ermahnungen. Mit Blick auf die Laien seiner Gemeinde geht der Bischof von Preslav noch weiter. Er schlägt eine Brücke zwischen den allgemeinen christlichen Aussagen und der Lebenswirklichkeit der Menschen und gibt Ihnen konkrete Ratschläge.

Konstantin schließt direkt auf die rettende Kraft des Glaubens, preist die Courage und den unerschütterlichen Wunsch des Blinden trotz Drohungen und Verboten, nicht nur mit den Augen des Körpers, sondern auch mit den Augen der Seele zu sehen, was in der Tat bedeutet, klar zu sehen (43/198c16-d15). Die Idee ist schon in der

Einleitung angesprochen, wo vom Licht unserer Seelen und Hören mit erhobenen, weisen Augen die Rede ist. So reduziert sich die Pointe des Gleichnisses auf eine eindeutige Metapher: die Augen der Seele, die durch das wahre Licht Gottes erleuchtet werden. Sie sind weise (in anderen Predigten „hell“) und nur mit ihnen können wir Gottes Worte und Taten verstehen, seine Gebote erkennen und sie ausführen und Erlösung erlangen. Deswegen sollen wir dem Blinden folgen, indem wir den Gott preisen und zu Ihm beten, mit den Augen der Seele sehen zu können (43/198d16-199a1).

Und da es zu dieser Zeit für die junge bulgarische Kirche besonders wichtig war, den christlichen Glauben zu verteidigen und zu stärken, wandte sich Konstantin dem ersten Gebot zu - der Liebe zu Gott, der Beharrlichkeit in ihr und in ihrer Verkündigung.

In erster Person Plural ermahnt der Prediger (ich gebe es ungenau wieder): Wie der Blinde, so lasst uns auch beten, dass wir mit den Augen unserer Seele die Gebote Gottes erkennen und sie tun, indem wir uns nicht vor dem Kaiser fürchten, uns nicht vor den Fürsten scheuen und uns nicht vor den Obrigkeiten schämen. Und wenn es Verfolgung und Folter gibt, so lasst uns seine Liebe nicht entfremden, sondern lasst uns mutig predigen, ihn verherrlichen und zu ihm beten (43/198d16-199a21). An dieser Stelle greift Konstantin auf ein langes Zitat von Apostel Paulus, dass uns nichts von der Liebe Gottes trennen könne, betont dabei seine Kühnheit und erinnert auch an die heiligen Märtyrer – Menschen wie wir, die bereit waren, ihren Körper der Folter und dem Tod durch Feuer und Tiere hinzugeben, aber nicht die Liebe Gottes zu verleugnen (43/199b1-c18). So couragiert müssen auch wir Ihn lieben und uns von ihm nicht abwenden. „Ich weiß, вѣдѣ, dass ihr Ihn liebt“, fährt Konstantin fort, „aber ich zwinge euch, Ihn noch mehr zu lieben. Ich weiß, вѣдѣ, dass ich euch lästig bin, indem ich jeden Sonntag darüber spreche, aber ich werde nicht müde werden, bis ihr besser seid. Brüder, wenn wir wöchentlich, wenn nicht täglich, so gelehrt werden, werden wir für die gegenwärtigen Angelegenheiten der Herrscher besser sein. Dann werden wir heller sein. Und eine größere Belohnung wird auferlegt werden. Denn, wenn wir die Angelegenheit des Herrschers beherzigen, tun wir auch den Dienst Gottes“ (43/199c18-200a16). Der Schluss endet mit einem Aufruf zu lieben, damit Er uns auch liebt, wenn Er kommt, um die Lebenden und die Toten zu richten, und einem jeden nach seinen Werken vergilt, und mit der üblichen Doxologie (43/200a17-b13).

Es ist deutlich anzusehen, dass sich das Nachwort der 43. Predigt durch eine ausgeprägte Rhetorik und Intensität der Belehrung ausgezeichnet ist und vom literarischen Talent seines Autors spricht. Zu vermerken sind die direkten (1) und rhetorischen Fragen (2), der eingefügte imaginärer Dialog mit den Zuhörern (3), die Wortfiguren wie Anaphern und Parallelismus, die auch eine rhythmisierende Wirkung haben (4, 4a), die Verkürzung der Distanz zwischen ihm und den Belehrten – durch die Anrede „Brüder“ und die Verben in 1. P. Plural, aber vor allem durch die Betonung seiner eigenen Hirtensorge (4a):

(1) Слъишасте ли вѣроу слѣпьца·вїдѣсте ли дрꙁновенїа моужьска·/ Habt ihr vom Glauben des blinden Mannes gehört? Habt ihr seine männliche Courage gesehen?

(2) Въспомѧнемъ же къ семоу и сѣ̂тъıѧ мꙋнкъı·не нашего ли рода бѣша вьсн·сни не въдаша ли телеса своѧ моукамъ·и wгневи·и ꙁвѣрии·и съмьртн·да не wтъпадѫть wтъ любъве ѥго·/ Erinnern wir uns auch an die heiligen Märtyrer: Waren sie nicht Menschen wie wir? Haben sie nicht ihre Leiber der Folter, dem Feuer, den Tieren und dem Tod ausgesetzt, damit sie nicht von seiner Liebe abfallen?

(3) реѵеть же мн нѣкъто w̃ васъ·то не любимъ лї ба·вѣдъ же и аꙁъ ѩко любите·нъ…/ Aber jemand von euch wird zu mir sagen: „Lieben wir Gott nicht?“ Ich weiß, dass ihr Ihn liebt, aber ich zwinge euch, Ihn noch mehr zu lieben.

(4) …не боѧще сѧ цр̂ѧ не стъıдѧще сѧ кнѧꙁь·не срамлѧıѫще сѧ вельможь·нъ аще и гонениѥ настоить·аще моукъı прѣдълежѧть аще ноужда належитъ·не боѧти сѧ·нн wтълоуѵити сѧ w̃ любъве ѥго·/ [so lasst uns …die Gebote Gottes erkennen und sie tun], uns nicht vor dem Kaiser fürchtend, uns nicht vor den Fürsten scheuend, uns nicht vor den Obrigkeiten schämend, und auch wenn Verfolgung kommt, wenn es Folter gibt, wenn uns Gewalt aufgezwungen wird, (lasst uns) weder fürchten noch uns seine Liebe entfremden.

(4a) вѣдъ же и аꙁъ ѩко любите·нъ поноуждаıѫ въı·да болъшьмн въꙁлюбите·вѣдъ же ѩко тѧжькъ въı ѥсмь·по вьсѧ недѣла къ вамъ бесѣдоуѧ·нъ не wстаноу сѧ доньдеже добрѣше боудете·/ Ich weiß, dass ihr Ihn liebt, aber ich zwinge euch, Ihn noch mehr zu lieben. Ich weiß, dass ich euch lästig bin, jeden

> Sonntag darüber sprechend, aber ich werde nicht müde werden, bis ihr besser geworden seid.

Konstantin bezieht seine Anweisungen deutlich auf das gegenwärtige Leben seiner Zuhörer. Vielleicht ist es denkbar, in seinen Ermahnungen, den Kaiser, die Fürsten und die Obrigkeiten nicht zu fürchten und sich trotz Gefahr der Verfolgung, Folter und Gewalt nicht von Gottes Liebe zu trennen, einen Hinweis auf die Unruhen und möglichen Christenverfolgungen zur Zeit des Fürsten Wladimir Rassate (889 – 893) zu sehen.[23] Er war der älteste Sohn des zuvor abgedankten und sich ins Kloster zurückgezogenen bulgarischen Knjasen Boris-Michael, der den Schritt der Taufe vollzogen und seine gesamte Regentschaft dem Ziel der Christianisierung seines Reiches unterstellt hatte. Rassate teilte die Vision seines Vaters jedoch nicht und unterstützt von einem Teil der altbulgarischen Elite, versuchte die alte heidnische Religion wieder einzuführen. Laut Ivan Dobrev bringt Konstantin Preslavski seine Abneigung gegen Rassate auch im von ihm erdichteten und dem Lehrevangelium vorangestelten Alphabetischen Gebet (Azbuchna molitva) zum Ausdruck, indem er zur Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit betet, ihn von der Bosheit des Pharaos zu befreien (ѳаѓаѡша ма·ҁъѧобы иҁбавн·⁖).[24]

Unter „den Angelegenheiten der Herrscher“ sollte man aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach entweder die von Boris betriebene Politik oder die politischen Vorsätze der Staatsführung von seinem drittgeborenen Sohn Simeon zu Beginn seiner Herrschaft verstehen. 893 griff Boris überraschend wieder in die Staatsgeschäfte ein. Er kehrte aus dem Kloster nach Pliska zurück, ließ seinen Sohn Vladimir Rassate verhaften und nahm die Macht wieder an sich. Nach der direkten Konfrontation mit seinem eigenen Sohn berief Boris ein Konzil ein, das das Schicksal des ersten bulgarischen Staates für das nächste Jahrhundert bestimmen sollte. Das Slavische (Altbulgarische) wurde als Liturgiesprache in der Bulgarischen Kirche eingeführt. Als deutliches Zeichen für den endgültigen Bruch mit allen heidnischen Wurzeln wurde die Hauptstadt von Pliska nach Preslav verlegt. Zum neuen bulgarischen Herrscher erklärte das Konzil Simeon, der im Geiste des neuen Glaubens erzogen und aufgewachsen war, eine byzantinische

[23] Schon Vasil Zlatarski sah die Wahrscheinlichkeit für eine solche Interpretation, vgl. Zlatarski 1971, 253 (N. 105).
[24] Dobrev 2018b, 441.

Ausbildung erhalten und jahrelang in Konstantinopel residiert hatte. Simeon war scheinbar die perfekte Wahl, um den Frieden mit dem byzantinischen Reich zu wahren und die Bekehrungspolitik fortzusetzen. Doch bald nach dem Aufstieg des neuen Herrschers auf den bulgarischen Thron fand Byzanz in seiner Person einen seiner schärfsten und unerbittlichsten Feinde. „Politisch und kulturell ganz an Byzanz ausgerichtet", träumte Simeon bald „von einer bulgarischen Fortsetzung des (ost-)römischen Kaisertums".[25] Sowohl für ihn als auch für seinen Vater zuvor war das Christentum die einzige Option für die Zukunft des bulgarischen Reiches. Die Einführung der neuen, eine gemeinsame Identität einfordernden geistlichen Ordnung war der einzige Weg zur Integrität aller Bevölkerungsgruppen des Reiches und zur Verwirklichung der ambitionierten politischen Ideen dieser beider Herrscher. Dieser Weg führte über das bewusste Fördern der Entwicklung des slavischen Schrifttums und die rasche Missionierung der slavischen Mehrheitsbevölkerung.[26] Mit der aufklärerischen und der höchstanspruchsvollsten literarischen und philologischen Arbeit wurden eine Gruppe von ehemaligen Schülern von Kyrill und Method, exzellenten Literaten und hochgebildeten Männern des Geistes, leidenschaftlichen Lehrer und erfahrenen Missionäre beauftragt. Darunter zählte auch der Preslaver Bischof Konstantin. Er beherzigte die „Angelegenheiten der Herrscher"[27] und widmete daran alle seine geistlichen und intellektuellen Kräfte, denn er verstand die Berufung zur missionarischen Arbeit als Bestimmung seines Lebens.

Vielleicht sind es gerade die aktuellen politischen Ereignisse, die den Schluss der 43. Homilie so leidenschaftlich und rhetorisch werden lassen. Von ihnen bewegt, nutzt Konstantin die Gelegenheit, in der Einleitung und im Schluss dieser Predigt, die dem Gleichnis über die Heilung des Blinden von Jericho gewidmet ist, das Thema des einzig wahren Lichts, des Lichts Gottes, hervorzuheben und es den Zuhörern als Rahmen für alles, wozu er sie aufrufen will, nahezubringen. Es ist das Licht, das jeden erleuchtet und aus der Finsternis herausführt, die Menschen befähigt, mit den Augen der Seele zu sehen, um sein Gebot erkennen und erfüllen zu können und die Erlösung zu erlangen. Das Beispiel des Blinden, des Apostels Paulus und zahlreicher heiliger

[25] Mühle 2020, 177.
[26] So über die Ereignisse (im Kontext der mittelalterlichen Nationswerdung Bulgariens) Mühle 2020, 173–186.
[27] Vasya Velinova vermutet, dass das UE bei seiner Entstehung dem Knyazen Boris gewidmet war (Velinova 1998, 76)

christlicher Märtyrer untermauert Konstantins leidenschaftlichen Aufforderungen zu starker Liebe zu Gott, zu Beharrlichkeit und zu unerschütterlichem Glauben auch angesichts unüberwindlicher Hindernisse und tödlicher Bedrohungen – ein Thema von größter Aktualität für die neu bekehrte Gemeinde und die junge bulgarische Kirche und nicht zuletzt für die ambitionierte Regierungspolitik der beiden Herrscher Boris und Simeon. Der größte Lohn für die bedienungslose Liebe zu Gott sei laut Konstantin, dass wir „heller / свѣтьлѣнше“ werden und Gott uns beim Jüngsten Gericht lieben und erlösen wird. Die sugerrierte Alternative wäre dann die Zerstörung unserer Seelen und die Rückkehr in das Land der Finsternis und des Todesschattens.

Nicht zuletzt sei auch die Rolle der biblischen Zitate bei dem Aufbau der Einleitung und des Schlusswortes erwähnt. Es sind insgesamt 6 Zitate (2 in der Einleitung und 4 im Schluss), die nicht nur die Aussagen und Aufforderungen Konstantins stützen, sondern auch durch den Bezug auf einen konkreten Kontext die christliche Lehre, Dogmen und Postulate den Menschen verständlich nahebringen und ihre praktische Anwendbarkeit verdeutlichen.

Die Unterordnung mehrerer Zitate unter einen Gedankengang, das geschickte Lavieren zwischen verschiedenen theologischen Themen, zeugt von Konstantins äußerst guter theologischer Versiertheit und fundierter Fachkompetenz. In voller Übereinstimmung mit der mittelalterlichen literarischen Denkweise schuf Konstantin nach dem Vorbild der Kirchenväter mit großem literarischem Können seine eigenen kleinen Homilien und vereinte sie in einem großen Werk mit einer Vision: Möge vor allem den Neubekehrten geholfen werden, den richtigen Weg zu Gott zu finden und ihren Glauben zu stärken; mögen die Gottesdiener die Unterstützung, die sie brauchen, und die richtige Literatur für die Ausführung ihrer Hirtenaufgaben in diesem Buch erhalten können!

Das Werk folgte somit dem Gebot jener aufregenden Zeit, als man die Grundlagen der slavischen Kirchenliteratur und Literatursprache und der christlichen Kultur legen sollte.

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Antonii (Vadkovskii), arkhimandrid (1885) *Iz istorii drevnebolgarskoi tserkovnoi propovedi. Konstantin, episkop Bolgarskii, i ego Uchitel'noe evangelie* (Kazan').

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