

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN BASILICAS IN THE URBAN PLANNING OF PARTHICOPOLIS

The archaeological data represent the ancient and the Early Christian Parthicopolis as a city with extremely rich history and as an important economic, cultural and religious center¹. The city is a bishopric in the province I Macedonia under the direct leadership of the Thessaloniki episcopacy. Parthicopolis is situated under the contemporary town of Sandanski in the Valley of Middle Struma River in the Southwestern part of republic of Bulgaria (**Fig. 1**). The ancient city is almost at the same distance from the big administrative and metropolitan centers to the south and north, namely Thessaloniki and Serdica. Comparatively not far away from Parthicopolis are situated the cities of Heraclea Syntica, Neine, Pautalia, Stobi, Nicopolis ad Nestum, Amphipolis and Philippi, with which it had active economic, church and artistic contacts.

From the bishops of Parthicopolis up to now are known Jonah, who attended the Council of Serdica in 343-344, and Ioannes, who was represented by his presbyter Cyril at the Chalkedonian (IV Ecumenical) Council in 451. We also know from the mosaic building inscription of the same bishop Ioannes in the nartex of basilica № 2, that he was preceded by a bishop, whose name was written too in the inscription, but unfortunately is not preserved, except the first letter, which can be read either as "O" or as "C" (**Fig. 2**). Probably the name of the founder Antim, who according to another inscription² has built the bishop basilica № 4 and its baptisterium, may also belong to the bishops of Parthicopolis³ (**Fig. 3**). We find out from some other inscriptions, discovered in Parthicopolis, the names of the first Christians and their rank in the church hier-

¹ For more data on the ancient and Early Byzantine city under the contemporary town of Sandanski see S. Petrova, *On Early Christianity and Early Christian Basilicas of Parthicopolis*. In: *Studi sull'Oriente Cristiano*, Roma 2012, 161, 93-139, Accademia Angelica-Constantiniana di Lettere Arti e Scienze.

² В. Герасимова, *Два надписа от базилика № 4 в Сандански (предварително съобщение)*. In: *Нумизматика, сфрагистика и епиграфика*, 6, София 2010, 191-206.

³ The extremely important text describes the acts of Antim for benefit of the city, on the first place the built by him basilica, which he compares with the Temple in Jerusalem. From the text is obvious, that Antim has often done services to the city and maybe has saved it from unknown calamities. Nevertheless nowhere in the text is mentioned his rank, title or duty.



Fig. 1. Location of Parthicopolis (Sandanski).

Сл. 1. Локација Партикополиса (Сандански)

archy: the sub-deacon Crispinos⁴; the psalm singer Andrew, the primikerios of the city and his wife Eudoxia⁵; the candle-bearer Demetrios, etc. An inscription is found in the Northeastern necropolis of the city, a tomb epigram⁶ of the Early Christian Genolos, probably a Thracian name⁷. At the beginning the inscription was dated to 6th century, but later corrected to 4th century⁸.

Till now there have been discovered ten basilicas with different stage of preservation. Six of them are situated in the central part of the Early Byzantine city, very near one to another (basilicas №№ 1-4; №№ 7 and 8). The plan can be established to greater extend with six of them and all they are three-aisled (№№ 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8). Four of them have semicircular apse (№№ 4, 5, 7 and 8). The only basilica with entirely discovered plan and extremely rich decoration is the Bishop basilica (basilica № 4, basilica of Antim). The basilicas №№ 5, 9 and 10 are cemetery basilicas, while basilica № 6 can be interpreted as a monastery one (**Fig. 4**).

⁴ This duty is mentioned for the first time in the ancient inscriptions from Bulgaria.

⁵ В. Велков. *Нови епиграфски данни за античната история на град Сандански*, ИАИ 24, 1961, 257 and note 7; R. Pillinger. *Die Stifterinschrift des in Sandanski Johannes (Bulgarien) und ihr monumentales Umfeld. Mitteilungen zur Christlichen Archäologie, No 12*, Wien 2006, 56-72.

⁶ The epigram says: + Τι σπεύδι; μάθαν'θανην κε ερευ τάφω γιγνόσκω | Γένολον είνε ὅστις γηρας τίμιον | ὄσχιος κε βίον ακιλίδουτον επιμίκιστον | βίου χρόνον ζήσας πλρόσας ευσέμνος | στρατιαν νομεραρίον της στρατοπεδαρχικς | ταξεος του Ἡλλυριου κελεύστι δε Χριστου | ενθάδε κατετέθη μηνος Ὀκτωνβρίου ινδικτιον Δευτέρα +. In a jest tone and with the question "why are you in hurry" the soldier of Christ, who defines himself by his profession as an accountant (financial controller), „νομεράριος”, retells in epigrammatic style about his life.

⁷ D. Detschew, *Die Thrakischen sprachreste*, Wien 1976, 101.

⁸ В. Бешевлиев. *Два малко известни византийски надгробни надписа*. ИБИД (Сборник в памет на проф. П. Ников), XVI-XVII, 1940, 45 sqq.

A characteristic feature of some of the basilicas is the bigger width of the south aisle in comparison to the north one (№№ 2 and 7). There are used two techniques – opus incertum and opus mixtum, chronologically connected with the time of their building. The schemes and plans find out parallels in the prefecture Illyricum, diocese Thessalia. Predominantly spolia are used in the architectonic decoration and the building of all basilicas – capitals in Dorian, Ionian and Corinthian style, columns and bases. Only some details (small columns, small Dorian capitals and small bases) in the baptisterium of basilica of Antim are made especially from extremely white fine-grained marble. For the liturgy were also specially made the transennas (open-work for basilica № 1, or solid for basilicas №№ 2, 4, 7), the granite basin - phialae for sacred water and the profiled marble mensa in the martyrium of basilica № 4). The rich mosaic compositions reveal the high level of skillfulness of the mosaicists⁹.

It is obvious that the mosaic art was very popular in Parthicopolis. The presence of schemes, motifs and techniques, showing that they belong to the region of Thessalia and the Macedonian South does not exclude the work of local masters, who borrow elements from Thessalia and Macedonia.

Chronologically we can point out two main periods of building: monuments erected in the second quarter-middle of 4th century and monuments from the end of 4th – the middle of 5th century. Remnants and transformations in basilica № 4 from 6th century show the last building period in Parthicopolis, not later than the middle of the century, after which barbarian invasions and several devastating earthquakes are known. By their function the basilicas relate to three groups: 1. City ones (4th-5th century); 2. Cemetery ones (4th-6th century); 3. Monastery ones (second half of 4th to 6th century).

Basilica № 1¹⁰, with an atrium from the west side, is disposed south of basilica № 2. A bishop residence is built between them (**Fig. 51**). The eastern



Fig. 2. The narthex of the basilica No 2 with the building inscription of Bishop Joannes (Archives of AM, Sandanski)

Сл. 2. Нартекс базилике бр. 2 са натписом епископа Јована (Архив А. М. Сандански)

⁹ The mosaics cover the floors of basilicas №№ 2, 3 and 4; rooms in the Bishop residences.

¹⁰ Excavations in the 60-70-es of the last century of Prof. Dr. Al. Milcheva, National Archaeological Institute with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. For details see A. Димитрова-Милчева. *Сандански (Свети Врач)*. In: Римски и рановизантийски градове в България, София 2002, 269-294 with literature. For Via Mese see В. Попова.



Fig. 3. The marble plate with the inscription of the donator Antim (photo by V. Petkov).

Сл. 3. Мермерни панел са натипсом ктитора Антима (фото: В. Петков).



Fig. 4. Disposition of the basilicas and the Roman and Early Christian necropolises on the plan of the contemporary city (after S. Petrova).

Сл. 4. Диспозиција базилика, римских и ранохришћанских некропола у ситуационом плану савременог града (по С. Петровој).

parts of these two basilicas have been destroyed and because of that cannot be established the form of their apses and the existence of a synthronon. They are considered as bishop basilicas and the arguments for that is the time of their building and particularly of basilica № 1, as well as of the residence between them. According to its plan basilica № 1 is of Hellenistic type and with column-arcade construction. The floor in the nave is paved with marble slabs, while the side aisles are covered with bricks. The walls are decorated with paintings. The transennas of the cancel are open-work. The cardo, compared already in literature with Via Mese in Constantinople, tangencing the atrium from west, is built by reused from Roman and Late Antique times architectonic elements (spolia). The time of building of this street should be specified in the end of the first and in the beginning of the second quarter of 4th century, at the same time of construction of basilica № 1 and its atrium (**Fig. 6**).

The place of the basilicas reveals that this cardo was forming the most representative urban quarter in Late Antiquity. The most northern part of the cardo is tangenced the central square of the previous Roman Agora, now abandoned. In our opinion the basilica № 1 with the bishop residence belonged to the

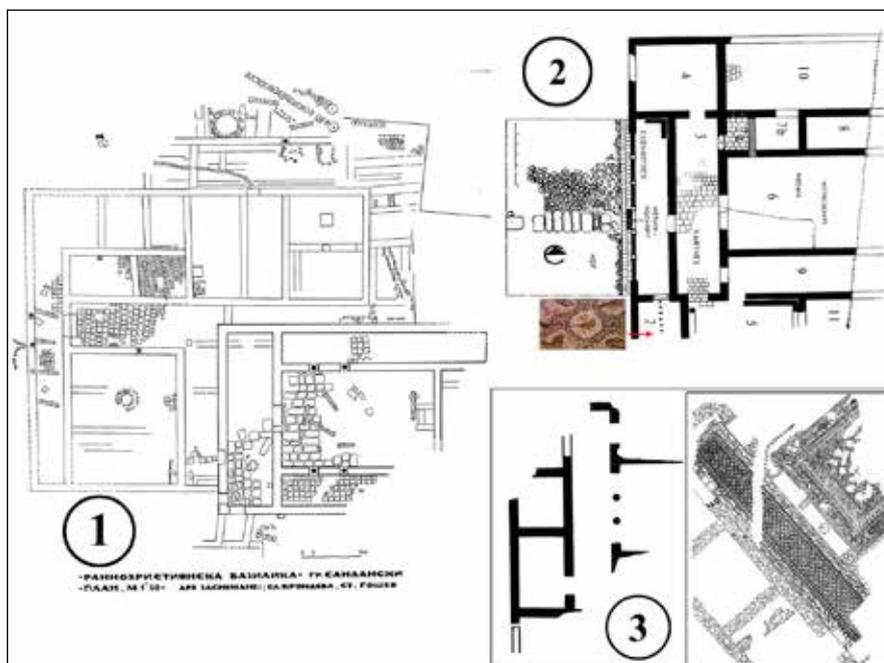


Fig. 5. Plans of basilicas №№ 1, 2 and 3.

5₁. Plan of Basilica No 1 with the bishop's residence
(after E. Krondeva and St. Goshev) (Archives of AM, Sandanski).

5₂. Plan of basilica № 2 (after R. Pillinger with additions of S. Petrova).

5₃. Basilica № 3. Plan and position of the mosaics (after V. Petkov, J. Filiyanova et al.)

Сл. 5. Планови базилика бр. 1, 2 и 3.

5₁. План базилике 1 са епископском резиденцијом (по Е. Крондевој и Ст. Гошеву)
(Архив А.М. Сандански).

5₂. План базилике бр. 2 (по Р. Пилингеру са додацима С. Петрове)

5₃. Базилика бр.3. План и положај мозаика (по В. Петкову, Ј. Филијановој и др.)

already known bishop Jonah, who attended the council of Serdica in 343/344. At the time of his taking part in the Council he has been already appointed as the bishop of Parthicopolis and should have a cathedra and a basilica. That's the reason to consider the basilica № 1 as the first one built in the city between 313 and 327¹¹. Already at the end of the first quarter of 4th century in the province of I Macedonia there existed differentiated bishop centers and erected basilicas in Stobi, Philippi etc. Compared with the nearby examples in the province, we suppose that the basilica of Bishop Jonah has been already built up to the 30-es of 4th century. Such a date according to us is supported too by the spread arcade construction in the colonnades of many basilicas in Rome: S. Giovanni

¹¹ For more details concerning the date of the basilicas see S. Petrova, *Op. cit.*, 2012, 16₁, 93-139.



Fig. 6. Cardo No 2, renovated by a porticoed colonnade during the Early Christian age – the so-called Via Mese/Via Sacra (photo by V. Petkov).

Сл. 6. Кардо бр. 2, обновљен ранохришћански портик са колонадама у правцу тзв. улице Месе/Виа Сакра (фото: В. Петков).

in Laterano, built in 313; the basilica of Maxentius and Constantine on the forum, built in 308-312; the basilicas built in the Forum of the Severus in Leptis Magna, in Tipassa¹², etc.

Northern of basilica № 1 was constructed the bishop residence and added the basilica of bishop Ioannes (basilica № 2). His name as its builder is known from the famous mosaic inscription in the central panel of the nartex (Fig. 5₂). It is considered that the basilica was built in the middle of V в. and in this way the basilica became double, consisting of №№ 1 and 2¹³. It is obvious from the same inscription that Ioannes challenged to emulation with the building activity of his predecessor. Also it comes out that the church building in the middle of 5th century has become a tradition as a sequence of the activity of his predecessor. The additional set up of the residence between both basilicas is probably an act namely of this predecessor. The floor of the residence's room № 2, which served as a reception hall, was decorated with the rare for Bulgarian lands technique of "coarse" mosaic in combination with three more usual mosaic techniques.

This is the first example of "coarse" mosaic among the monuments from Bulgaria and the second one also comes from Parthicopolis, from basilica № 4¹⁴. For the Emblem and the central parts are used opus vermiculatum, opus tessellatum and "coarse" sectile and for the periphery - predominantly normal and "coarse" opus sectile. It is considered that this mosaic is the earliest one among the discovered since now Early Christian pavements of Parthicopolis¹⁵. The mosaic is well composed and proportioned and shows the mosaicists's mastery. He comes from some big center, probably Thessaloniki, where he has learnt the craft of the mosaic. Most of the monuments with the "coarse" technique are concentrated namely in Thessaloniki, but

¹² H. Brandenburg. *Roms Frühchristliche Basiliken des 4 Jahrhunderts*. München 1979, 22 sqq.

¹³ For the date in the middle of 5th century, a date which we support. See: V. Popova. *The Pavement Mosaics of Bishop Ioannes' Basilica in Sandanski*. – In: Spartacus. Symposium rebus Spartaci gestis dedicatum 2050 a. Sofia 1981:173-181; : B. Попова. *Op. cit.*, 2007, 408-421.

¹⁴ B. Попова. *Op. cit.*, 2007, 408-421.

¹⁵ A mosaic fragment in the same technique and a similar composition was excavated in 2013 in the room northwestern from the baptisterium of basilica No4.

Fig. 7. The Artifacts of basilicas:

7₁. From basilica № 2;7₂. From basilica № 4.Сл. 7. Налази из базилике: 7₁.

Из базилике бр. 2;

7₂. Из базилике бр. 4.

they can be met as well in the rest of Macedonia, Epirus and Thessalia. The mosaic scheme, the proportions and the style point to the second half of 4th – the first third of 5th century. On the ground of the mosaic inscription of bishop Ioannes and the date of the mosaic in the residence it is considered, that namely his predecessor has invited the master from the Macedonian South.

The floors of the exonartex and of the nartex of the basilica № 2 (bishop Ioannes' basilica) have been laid with mosaics immediately over the ground and without foundations. The preserved in situ polychromic mosaic compositions and its panels are decorated with the images of birds, fishes and geometric motifs. The south aisle is wider than the north one. The basilica possessed very rich architectonic sculptural decoration. Here and in room have been excavated fully or partly preserved kempfers from the colonnades, separate columns, columns to the windows and capitals, all made from marble. Except that parts of a marble cancel and of mensae with incised cross, as well as other objects, were discovered in the nave (**Fig. 7₁**).

Basilica № 3 is situated not far from basilicas № 1, 2 and 4 and has three aisles¹⁶. The eastern part with the apse was destroyed by a contemporary house in the previous century. Unfortunately in the new plan of Sandanski this basilica already does not exist, demolished by a recently erected apartment house. The nave is connected through a tribelon with a narrow and non-divided nartex and on its turn the nartex – with a three-parted exonartex (**Fig. 5₃**). The tribelon can be often met in the Early Christian monuments of Greece, but it is a rare phenomenon in Bulgaria. Since now it is witnessed only in two more churches in the country, dating from 5th century, namely the church in the village of Ivanyane, in the suburbs of Sofia,¹⁷ and in the village of Tzurkvishte (Klissekoyoi), near

¹⁶ D. Stojanova-Serafimova. *Die Frühchristliche Basilika in der Ul. Partizanska*. In: *Mitteilungen zur Christlichen Archäologie*. № 6, Wien 2000, 9-15.

¹⁷ В. Иванова. *Двете старинни църкви при с. Иваняне*. In: ИБАИ, 8, 1934, 224-299; Н. Чанева-Дечевска. *Раннохристиянската архитектура в България IV-VI в.*, София 1999, 300.

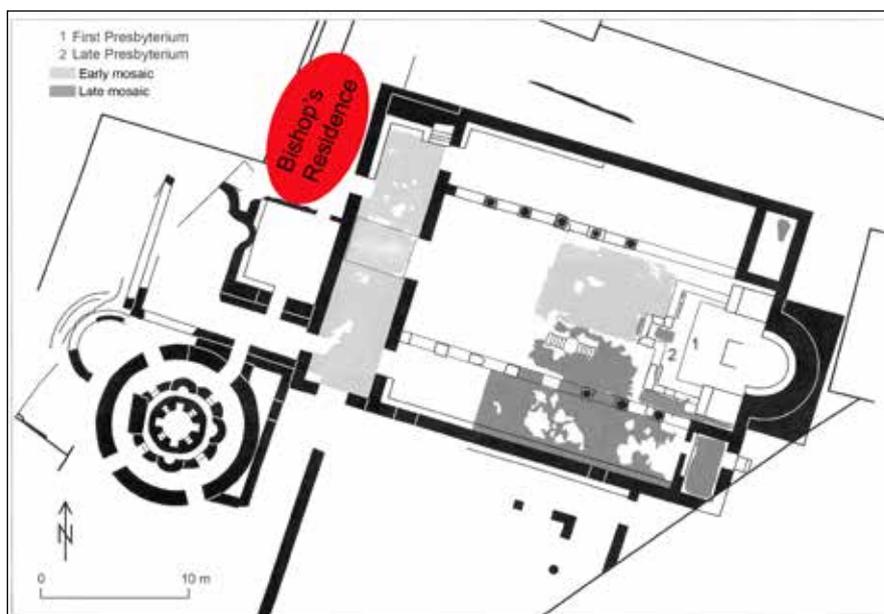


Fig. 8. The Bishop basilica № 4, with the baptistery and the bishop's residence to the west. Plan and construction - stages (after Hofbauer with additions of S. Petrova).

Сл. 8. Епископска базилика бр. 4 са крстионицом и епископском резиденцијом према западној страни. План и конструкција (по Хофбауеру са додацима С. Петрове)

Pirdop, Sofia district¹⁸. The correlation among the aisles and the nave is 1:2:1. The floor of the narthex and the nave have been laid with polychromic mosaics in opus tessellatum and opus vermiculatum. The decoration consists of interlacing circles with birds and geometric and plant motifs. A fragment with wall paintings "al fresco" has been found on the west wall of the narthex¹⁹.

The bishop basilica № 4, according to the found inscription, was built by the ktitor/donator Antim (**Fig. 8**). It is with entirely preserved plan and the richest decoration in comparison not only with the other basilicas of Parthicopolis, but generally in Bulgaria. It has several building period, the first and the second one more important. The apse is of Syrian type, built in, with three aisles and a shortened nave. In the first period an entrance was opened in the eastern part of the south aisle, giving the possibility to enter the basilica directly. There exist parallels for such direct entrances in Greece, Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria, but the aisles are without prothesis and diakonicon, with one only ex-

¹⁸ П. Мутафчиев. *Кръстовидната църква в Клисе кьой*. In: ИБАД, 5, 1915, 85-111; Н. Чанева-Дечевска. *Раннохристиянската архитектура в България IV-VI в.*, София 1999, 302.

¹⁹ D. Stojanova-Serafimova. *Wandmalereireste der Basilika 3 (Uirche an der Ul. Partizanska)*. In: R. Pillinger, V. Popova, B. Zimmermann. *Corpus des spätantiken und frühchristlichen Wandmalereien Bulgariens*. Wien 1999, 87-88, Abb. 193. See to wall-painting from basilicas №№ 1 and 4, 89 sqq.



Fig. 9. Mosaics from basilica № 4 in opus tessalatum, opus vermiculatum and opus sectile.

Сл. 9. Мозаици из базилике бр. 4 у техници opus tessalatum, opus vermiculatum и opus sectile.

ception²⁰. The basilica is a part of vast architectural complex, consisting also of an atrium from the south, a baptisterium with a chapel southwestern from the narthex, a martyrium with a sacred source and a bishop residence, immediately to the west from the narthex. There existed also a second floor and the staircase, leading to it, found at the northern side of the narthex. The division of the aisles in the first building period was made by an arcade on columns, similarly to basilica № 1. The walls of the basilica are covered with paintings, on some places even in two different chronological layers. The floors of the basilica and the narthex were covered with mosaics, in some parts also in two layers from different building periods. They are in opus tessalatum, opus vermiculatum and opus sectile (**Fig. 9, 9-a**). In their repertory are included different Early Christian motifs and symbols – fishes, birds, vases, especially cantharos with vineyard branches, and peacocks (**Fig. 10**). These are elements, known too from many monuments in Macedonia and Thracia – in Heraclea Lincestis, Stobi, Amphipolis, Thessaloniki, Pautalia, Philippopolis (the mosaic Eirene), Augusta Traiana, etc. Murals were also found in the baptisterim and in the martyrium (**Fig. 11 and Fig. 15**).

The marble transennas are unique for Bulgaria. They are in high relief and represent the Apostles (**Fig. 12**). The way the altar space is formed shows some particularities, rarely met in the churches from Bulgarian lands, but well known from the monuments in Eastern Illyricum. Three identical seats without elbow-rests are put up outside the apse at the left side, the right side and in the center

²⁰ See basilica B in Philippi, basilica of Joannes Prodomos (Studiou, Studius) in Constantinople, basilica of Demethrios in Thessaloniki.: In: Н. Чанева-Дечевска. *Раннохристиянската архитектура в България IV-VI в.*, София, 1999, fig. 16, фиг. 52, fig. 55 (the exception), fig. 10; the bishop basilica and the north basilica of Stobi. In: C. S. Snively. *The Episcopal Basilica, the Via Sacra, and the Semicircular Court at Stobi, R. Macedonia*. In: Nis and Byzantium, X (2012), 185-200, fig. 1 and 2; The so-called basilica “Old Metropolia” in Messambria, basilica № 2 in Krumovo kale neat Targovishte and basilica in Hissarlaka in Pautalia. In: Н. Чанева-Дечевска, *Ibidem*, 20, фиг. 51, фиг. 111.



Fig. 10. Basilica № 4. The mosaics from the narthex.

Сл. 10. Базилика бр. 4, Мозаици у нартексу



Fig. 11. a. Wall-painting decoration of the baptisterium (left); b. Wall-paintings in two layers in the naos (Right, in the middle and at the top); c. Wall-painting decoration of the anteroom (right below).

Сл. 11. а. Зидно сликарство крстионице, лево; б. Два слоја зидног сликарства наоса (десно, у средини и у горњем регистру); ц. Зидно сликарство предворја

of the altar. The space of the cancel, the way the bema is made and the so-called “Greek” synthronon²¹ with seats outside the area of the apse can be found to the south in Philippi and to the west in the Great Bishop basilica (basilica of Philip) in Stobi. The two - shoulders ambo, sunken in the marble pavement and made by bricks (weld together with pink mortar and covered with marble revetment), is placed in the south half of the nave (**Fig. 13**). This type of ambo derives from the Constantinopolitan ambo and at the end of 5th-beginning of 6th CC

²¹ The synthronon of basilica No4 is the only example of the type in Bulgaria, while in Greece it is widely used. For this type – see: A. K. Орландов. *Η ζυλοστεγος παλαιοχριστιανικη Βασιλικη*. Αθηναί 1994, 495-497; 509-511, Εικ. 471; Εικ. 472; Εικ. 493, Basilica of Thassos Island. The first element is the throne in the middle of the semicircular apse, served for the bishop (not preserved in Sandanski). The benches immediately next to the bow of the apse and the seats against and outside it, like in our case, are intended for the priests. The presence of raised benches is a particularity of the Greek basilicas. The most significant changes during the second building period of the interior finished with the erecting of the diakonikon and prothesis at both sides of the apse, with dimensions of the north room 4,50 x 2,45 m and of the south room 4,30 x 1,95 m. The floor of both of them is covered with marble slabs.

Fig. 12. Part of a marble slab from the cancel transenna (photo by V. Petkov).

Сл. 12. Део мермерног фрагмента од транзене (фото: В. Петков).



spreads in Eastern Illyricum, especially in Thessaloniki and some other cities in Macedonia and Greece, for instance in the basilicas of relatively near situated Stobi and in basilica A of Philippi²².

The atrium of basilica № 4 of Parthicopolis at its south part is similar to basilica C in Amphipolis. While for Asia Minor, Syria and Dalmatia the atrium is an exception, it is often part of basilica's planning in Northern Greece (Philippi, basilica A) and Bulgaria (basilicas №№ 1 and 2 in Sandanski, the basilica in Mikrevo²³ and basilica № 1 around Nicopolis ad Nestum²⁴). The atrium of basilica № 4 in Sandanski has almost a square plan, surrounded from three sides with colonnaded porticus, except the west one. The latter is a compact wall and a fountain with four spouts is made in its northwestern corner and a well is placed in the western part of the atrium (**Fig. 14**).

The uniqueness of basilica № 4 is additionally revealed by the martyrium, discovered in 2012²⁵. It is situated in the northwestern corner of the complex²⁶.

²² И. Досева, *Ранновизантийските амвони от територията на съвременна България: образци и адаптации*. In: Изследвания в чест на Стефан Бояджиев, София 2011, 139-160. For the Constantinople type of ambo, its development in Thessaloniki and its influence see: pp. 141-142; 150-151.

²³ V. Petkov, V. Hristova, O. Somova. *Die frühchristlichen Kirche beim Dorf Mikrevo, Bezirk Sandanski*. In – Die Mitteilungen zur Christlichen Archäologie, 1998, 23-30.

²⁴ В. Попова. *Две раннохристиянски базилики в околностите на Никополис ад Нестум*. In: Изследвания в чест на Стефан Бояджиев, София 2011, 263-294.

²⁵ The research of the martyrium was performed by the team lead by V. Petkov, director of the Archaeological museum in Sandanski, with deputy Dr. S. Petrova (National Archaeological Institute with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences), and participants from the museum in Sandanski.

²⁶ The martyrium is northwest from the nartex and consists of three rooms: anteroom, 22 square m.; martyrium 45 sq. m. and a third room, 23 sq. m. In 2013 were discovered dolia for grain, a fountain and a sewer alongside the north wall, whose function is still unknown, but most probably of economic essence. We shall stop our attention to the interpretation of the so-called martyrium further in connection with the bishop residences. For the cross, probably processional, see В. Петков. *Уникален раннохристиянски кръст от VI-ти век откриха археолозите в Сандански*. In: 53-та Национална археологическа конференция, Сандански, Програма. Сандански 2014, 6-8. The cross was found west of



Fig. 13. Basilica № 4. The ambo in situ (photo by V. Petkov).

Сл. 13. Базилика бр. 4. Амвон in situ (фото: В. Петков).



Fig. 14. The Atrium.

Сл. 14. Атријум

Almost against the center of its west wall, on the floor with marble plates, was found a sacred source²⁷, also covered with a marble plate. The official entrance leading inside is in the west part of the nartex and has a marble threshold with traces of the movement of a heavy gate²⁸. This entrance connects the nartex and the basilica with the martyrrium and the residence to the west. The anteroom with marble pavement is oriented east-west. Benches are built alongside the south and the north wall, with height from 0.30 m up to 0.50 m, where the bishop's visitors waited for their turn. The low part of a granite cantharos, probably 1, 20 m high, is discovered in the southeastern corner. On the north wall, probably during the last building periods, have been made two niches for icons and gifts. Here was discovered a fragment of wall paintings with a unique for the time and the region image, the face of a saint, which by iconography and style belongs to 6th century.

The martyrrium is oriented south-north and connected constructively with the residential complex (**Fig. 15 down**). The wide entrance to the martyrrium is from the west part of the anteroom. Similarly the martyrrium's floor is also covered with marble slabs. Built foundations for a mensa (**Fig. 15 up**) were excavated in the central part of the room in direction towards the east wall²⁹.

the baptistery and in front of the furnace (prae-furnium) (See Fig. 7₂ in the middle).

²⁷ This source for sacred water is the fourth one in the south aisle and the second one in the atrium with the unique fountain with four spouts. Only the source in the martyrrium is still functioning.

²⁸ В. Петков, *Археологически разкопки на Епископска базилика в гр. Сандански, обект „Мартуриум“*. В – Археологически открития и разкопки през 2012 г., София 2013, 307-309.

²⁹ The preserved original height is 1.10 m, long 2.10 m and wide 1.10 m. These found-

Fig.15. The martyrium (?)
with the mensa (photo by
S. Petrova).

Сл.15. Мартиријум
(?) и менса (фото: С.
Петрова).



All the walls of the martyrium are covered with paintings in two layers in mixed technique – the decoration has been begun al fresco, but finished “al secco”. To the south of the martyrium are visible the outlines of a four - conchal building, still not excavated.

Before describing the baptisterium of basilica № 4, we shall stop our attention to the problem of existence of another and earlier baptisterium with small dimensions and uncertain form, situated between the hall with mosaic of the bishop residence at basilica № 1 and the basilica itself³⁰. According to it for a certain period this baptisterium served for both basilicas, №№ 1 and 2, and functioned at one and the same time with the baptisterium of basilica № 4. If the baptisterium to basilica № 1 really existed, it should be the first Christian baptisterium in Parthicopolis, dated in 4th century. Later it was demolished and filled with bricks. Still this suggestion needs more arguments. In our opinion at the end of 5th century there was a change in the functions of the bishop complex between both basilicas №№ 1 and 2. Probably after bishop Ioannes' death his basilica lost its temporary significance together with that of basilica № 1 for many reasons. Firstly, because the number of adults; receiving baptism, has diminished and the baptisterium of basilica № 4 was enough for the purpose. Probably another reason was the increasing importance of basilica № 4 after its second and third building period, the erecting specially of the so-called Rotunda next to basilica № 7³¹ and the attention to the processions at

dations are decorated from all sides with paintings. At the front side there are white crosses on red background, inscribed in green circle. At the east side are placed two niches, under a profiled table, made by fine marble, probably from Thasos. Here probably the reliquaries have been kept. Their fate remains unclear: either they have been plundered during some of the invasions or they have been saved and moved to another place by the priests before the basilica was set on fire in the second half of 6th century.

³⁰ Unpublished excavations of V. Petkov and J. Bojinova in 2002

³¹ The excavations of basilica No7 were leading by Dr. S. Petrova and deputy V.

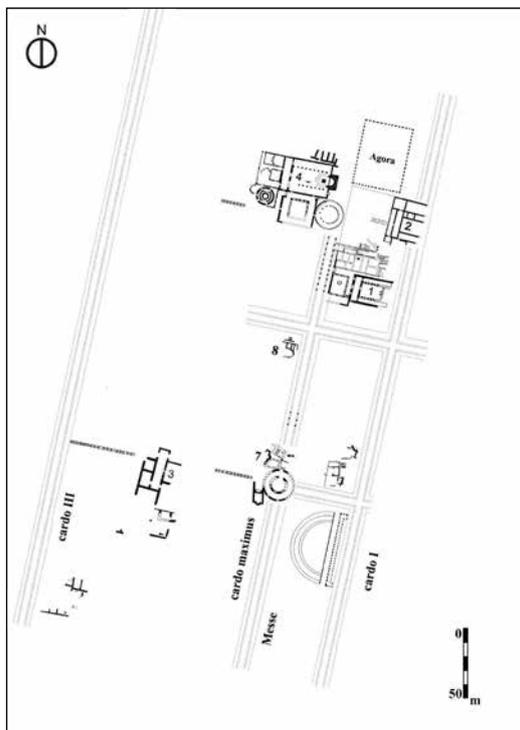


Fig. 16. General plan of the discovered archaeological structures in Parthicopolis: the basilicas, the theater, The North round piazza, the South Rotunda (Fountain/Nimphaeum), the Baths and the quarter of glass and pottery workshops (after S. Petrova).

Сл. 16. Општи план откривених археолошких структура у Партикополису: базилике, театар, северни кружни трг, јужна ротонда (фонтана / нимфеон), купатила и кварт за производњу стакла и радионице керамике (по С. Петровој).

the open from basilica № 4 to basilica № 7. The mentioned Rotunda has been excavated part by part three times by different excavators, but still its study and interpretation is not complete and certain (Fig. 16). For instance noting is known from the layers under it and we still have no data about the existence of water supply structures there. Nevertheless according to our interpretation the Rotunda is the main City Fountain, reminding in its plan of the round part of some monumental baths, mausoleums, temples, churches and baptisteriums in Roman and Late Antique times.

The dimensions of the excavated structures at basilica №7 are imposing and a suggestion can be made for their function after Chalkedonian (IV Oecumenical) Council in 451. In the light of the church legislation after the emperor Zeno³² every basilica should have its own bishop. In Stobi, for instance, several bishops of the city are really known from inscriptions in one and the same period. Consequently one may think of the next existing bishop complex with residence in the case of basilica No7 in Parthicopolis.

The baptisterium is not only an essential part of the complex of the basilica of Antim, it is unique. Its rotunda is covered with cupola, there are galleries on two levels and four semicircular niches are around the piscine (Fig. 17). A round

baptisterium is depicted on a sarcophagus from Vatican; the monument from Nocera has a ring colonnade inside, but an octogon from outside; maybe a baptisterium from Tunis is more similar, but not identical; the form and decoration of our monument have close parallels only in the baptisterium of the bishop basilica in Stobi. Similar round baptistery with mosaics, but inscribed in rectangular room, is found in Plaoshnik at Ohrid (Lihnidus), dated too in 6th century³³.

Petkov.

³² See: P. van Nuffelen, J. Leemans. *Episcopal Elections in Late Antiquity: Structures and Perspective*, 1-19; A. Thiers. *Procedure and Hierarchy: Models of Episcopal Election in Late Antiquity. Conciliar and Papal Rule Making*, 541-554. In: Johan Leemans, Peter van Nuffelen, Shawn W. J. Keough, Carla Nicolaye (Eds.). *Episcopal Election in Late Antiquity*. Berlin-Boston, 2011, and other articles in this volume.

³³ S. Petrova, V. Petkov. *ΠΑΡΟΙΚΟΠΟΛΙΣ /ΠΑΡΘΙΚΟΠΟΛΙΣ (Ancient and Early*

Fig. 17. The baptisterium
(photo by V. Petkov).

Сл. 17. Крстионица
(фото: В. Петков).



Thus there are three round baptisteries with mosaics in Macedonia, beginning with the earliest one in Parthicopolis after the middle – the end of the 4th century. We think that the construction of Basilica № 4 started between the middle – the end of the 4th c., after 330AD, when the building of Christian temples was no longer forbidden and Constantinople and its urban planning was declared the “New Rome”. This data is supported by the inscription deciphered recently, which is dedicated by the donor Antim. The study of this donator’s inscription, discovered in the baptisterium of the basilica, provides the most accurate data about the beginning of its construction – between the middle – the end of the 4th century. The donor Antim raised the most lavishly decorated temple in the city³⁴. This dating of the start of the building of the basilica is based on its constructive-decorative design – arcade construction with a colonnade supported by Corinthian capitals – spolia, dated to the 2nd-3rd c. The new kind of baptisterium (Parthicopolis and Stobi) may reflect such basic for Christianity monuments as the Lateran baptistry of Constantine the Great, combined with the plan and symbolic of the Holy Sepulchre Rotunda in Jerusalem.

Next urban basilica is that under № 7, partly excavated. It is situated 40 m east of basilica № 3. While the latter is up on the slope, the previous one is situated down, immediately west of the Via sacra, full of six basilicas in the center of Parthicopolis (№№ 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8). Known is only the eastern part with the apse of basilica № 7, part of the southeastern corner, part of the south aisle, much wider than the north one, similarly to basilica № 2, and a part of the north aisle with traces of staircase in the northeastern corner, leading to

Byzantine City), forthcoming; Robert Milburn. *Early Christian Art and Architecture*. California and Los Angelis, 1988. Chapter 12. Fonts and Baptisteries, 203-214; J. Schweitzer. *Baukörper und Raum im tetrarchischer und konstantinischer Zeit*. Bern, 2005, Abb. 16, Milano, *Thermen am Circus*; A. Pülz. *Das sog. Lukasgrab in Ephesos. Eine Fallstudie zur Adaption antiker Monumente in byzantinischer Zeit*. ÖAW, Wien, 2010; Tunis baptisterim – S. Ristow. Frühchristliche Baptisterien. In: *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, Münster Westfalen, 27, 1998, № 728, 260, Taf.34-b; Miško Tutkovski. *The Symbolic messages of the Mosaics in the southern basilica at Plaošnik in Ohrid*. In: *Niš and Byzantium*, XII, 2013, 129-142 and the cit. lit for Stobi – See: C. S. Snively. *Op.cit*, 2012, 185-200.

³⁴ В. Герасимова, *Op. cit.*, 2010, 201–204



Fig. 18. Basilica № 7 (photo by S. Petrova).

Сл. 18. Базилика бр. 7 (фото: С. Петрова).

the second floor (**Fig. 18**). The basilica is built in *opus incertum*. At the end of 4th – beginning of 5th century some reconstructions have been made – additional entrances from the south, a new room, built by bricks, the walls decorated with wall paintings³⁵. In the last quarter of 5th century entirely brick walls appeared and a whole complex to the south was formed, but unfortunately with no possibility for a complete research because it continues under the contemporary street. From the architectonic sculpture are discovered: two granite columns; two Roman-Corinthian four-leaf capitals, used as spolia; a capital from a cancel's column; a rectangular cancel transenna, made by fine white marble; a granite basin-phiala; numerous glass fragments from incense-burners, window glasses and fragments of wall paintings. The planning and especially the apse are in conformity with the street.

Basilica № 8 is the last urban basilica found at excavations up to the present moment. It is situated about 25 m north of basilica № 7, at the same side of the street, and built in the same way in *opus incertum* as basilica № 7 from the first building period (**Fig. 19**). Known only is its northeastern part with the north part of the apse³⁶. It is established that it has been built over an older building after the Goths' invasions in the last quarter of 4th century.

The basilicas *extra muros* №№ 5, 6, 9 and 10 are excavated only partly. They are part of the Eastern, Western and Southwestern necropolis of the city and this is the ground to defy them as cemeterial. The apse and parts of architectonic elements have been unearthed at basilica № 5 – capitals, bases and

³⁵ S. Petrova, *Op. cit.*, 2012, 161, 93-139.

³⁶ The basilica was excavated during the building preparations for a contemporary many-storeyed block.

columns. This basilica relates to the Southern necropolis. According to the excavator basilica № 9 belongs to the Eastern necropolis³⁷. It's fortified, judging by its plan clear only at the west part. Basilica № 10, also cemeterial, is from the same period of existence of the Western necropolis, namely 4th-6th CC³⁸. Basilica № 6 is probably a part of a monastery complex, situated about 2 km northwest from the center of the contemporary town (see Fig. 16).

Since now two bishop residences have been unearthed in Parthicopolis (see Fig. 5₁, and Fig. 16). The earliest one is placed between the double basilica parallel to the east end of the Via sacra (№№ 1 и 2)³⁹. It has been dwelled by bishop Ioannes and earlier – by his predecessor. The residence is placed deep in the complex and to reach it one should go through several passages next to the atrium, alongside the basilica itself and the so-called “kitchen” of the bishop, without crossing or entering them. At the same east side of the street there are no apses, only the atrium and several rooms of the basilica of Jonah and the vast court west from the exonartex of the basilica of Ioannes (and maybe some other buildings, not found yet?). The second residence, whose existence was already expected, is still in process of excavating and study (see Fig. 16). It was intended for the bishop of basilica № 4 (for Antim, in case he was at the same time the founder of the basilica, or for another man of the same rank, in case Antim was only the donator). Probably the so - called “martyrium” and the three-conchal building are part of this residence, the first one with function of preparing the communion and the subjects and materials for the other sacraments, the second one for dwelling. This is the second case in Parthicopolis and general in Bulgaria of excavated rooms with such a function, and the first one with the table for preparation and sanctification of loaves and wine. The faithful are waiting for the brought by them breads and wine, sitting at the benches of anteroom, immediately west from the nartex. The dolia point out too to the economic function of this part of the complex, also remote to the bottom of the plan, similarly to the residence of the double basilica. This part of the complex of basilica No 4 also can be reached by the back passages, not entering the basilica and the atrium – the passage between the atrium and the basilica, beginning immediately after the recently found round building (east of the atrium), then crossing the south part of the nartex till the anteroom. Usually the entrances to the martyriums are solemn and directly leading to them from the streets, or mutual, serving to enter at the one side the martirium, and at the other side the basilica. In all cases these entrances are not hidden at the bottom of basilical complexes and with indirect access, like in the situation of the basilica of Antim.

At this west side of the street we see the most important part of basilica № 4, namely the apse, as well as the atrium. From this basilica begin the processions up the South “Rotunda”-the City Fountain (Nimphaeum/Νυμφαῖον, Cistern), which is stopping the street, maybe leaving only a small semicircu-

³⁷ V. Petkov, O. Somova. *Eine spätantike nekropole des 3.-6. Jahrhunderts beim Loven dom in Sandanski*. In – Mitteilungen zur christlichen archaologie № 9, Wien 2003, 24-47.

³⁸ В. Петков, С. Петрова, Г. Гошев. *Раннохристиянски некропол и Гробница-Мавзолей от Партикополис*. In: Паметници Реставрация Музеи, № 1-2, 2010, 3-10.

³⁹ Виж: В. Попова. *Op. cit.*, 2007, 408-421.



Fig. 19. Basilica № 8 and earlier structures (photo by S. Petrova).

Сл. 19. Базилика бр. 8 и раније структуре (фото: С. Петрова).

lar passage from the east (the immediately west is occupied by the pool and basilica No 7) for skirting around it, and continuing back up to the basilica of Antim (see Fig. 16). The excavations are still going on and we can only guess the function of the second Rotunda in front and east from the atrium of Antim's basilica, being a part of a big circle with a round wall, repeated by benches and a round colonnade and covered with a brick floor⁴⁰. This North half-“Rotunda” or full Rotunda may serve either as a vestibule to the basilica and to the described passage between the atrium and the basilica, or as a distributing circus - place (piazza), a counter part to the south of the City Fountain, situated next to basilica № 7. The entrances of the circus-place are leading to all directions and to every basilica around. Now unearthed are the entrances to the atrium and to the described passage, to basilica № 2 and probably also the continuation of the street to the north, tangenting of a short decumanus. Until now only the beginning short decumanus found north of the residential complex between the basilicas №№ 1 and 2, southeast of the round square; as thus marks the end of the insula (see Fig. 16). In all cases both rotundas are the two points, outlining the street for processions at the open, with the starting point at Antim's bishop basilica, as it was already proposed. It is noteworthy that a tall cross (most likely for such processions, held by the sub-deacon) was found recently in front of the prefurneum, west from the baptistery (see Fig. 7₂ in the middle) and published⁴¹. This supports the interpretation of the “martyrium” rather as a secondary place for preparing substances and keeping objects generally for the liturgy (communion), processions, etc.

The topography of these several basilicas and both round buildings (rotunda 1 and 2) reveal two nucleuses intra muros in the center itself of the Early Byzantine Parthicopolis (see Fig. 16). The north one is the most important, situated between the basilica of Antim and the double basilica of Jonah and Ioannes at the north end of the Mese. To it belongs also basilica № 8, situated a little bit aside, but near to the basilica of Antim and at the same west side of the street. The second nucleus to the south end of the street includes the City Fountain itself and basilica № 7, both on the street level, the basilica with tribelon № 3,

⁴⁰ In Stobi is found semicircular square in front of the Basilica. C. S. Snively. *Op.cit.*, 2012, 185-200.

⁴¹ В. ПЕТРОВ. *Op. cit.*, 2014, 6-8.

towering over the street at the slope, and maybe also some other basilicas, still not discovered, at the left and the right side of the Via Sacra. Some transformed parts of the city baths north of the theater and the theater itself should not be excluded as places of basilicas, churches and martyriums, since in all Late Antique world this was a practice. The north nucleus began its forming earlier, from the second quarter - end of 4th century, with added later in the middle of 5th century basilica of bishop Ioannes and the second and third building periods of the basilica of Antim. The second south nucleus was formed at the time when the theater stopped its existence and the Fountain was built after its destruction, in 5th-6th century. At that point only the first building period of basilica № 7 is earlier, from 4th century.

The concentration of several Early Christian basilicas at one and the same place and their domination over the urban milieu replaced the old ancient center of the agora, which similarly of many other ancient cities of that time lost its significance⁴². In Roman times it was occupying either the same place between the basilica of Antim and the double basilica, or most probably the space north of them, from the contemporary fountain and the small garden around it to the north, the Turkish fountain as a boundary to the south, the raised level parallel to Macedonia str. to the east, and the end of Mara Buneva str. and the hill's slope to the west. This is, except the basilicas around, the only flat and enough for agora place in the ancient city, raised naturally over the terrain. The former Roman street *cardo* № 2 probably did not change as a topography and direction. It was its look that was transformed in the middle of 4th- 5th century by the usage of *spolia* (the Roman column with inscription from the stoa⁴³; capitals in Dorian style, bases and pedestals, sunken and reused as bases).

In Parhicipolis namely the *cardo* streets, not the *decumani*, were the main longer veins for traffic, on the first place the middle *cardo* № 2, which really was "Mese", the middle street as in Constantinople⁴⁴. This happened because of the specific natural orientation of the hill and the small amount of places, suitable for an agora and normal *insulae* in Roman times, as well for basilicas and

⁴² И. Топалилов. *Римският Филипопол. Топография, градоустройство и архитектура*. Т. I, София 2012, 182-183; F. Vittinghoff. *Zur Verfassung der spätantiken „Stadt“*. – In: Studien zu den Anfängen des europäischen Stadtwesens (Vorträge und Forschungen, Bd. IV). Konstanz, 1958, 11-39. M. J. L. Lavan, W. Bowden. *Recent research in late-antique urbanism*. In: Journal of Roman Archaeology 2001.; P. Sodini. *Archaeology and Late Antique Social Structures*. In: Late Antique Archaeology. vol. 1. Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology. BRILL 2003, 31-45; B. Polci. *Some aspects of the Transformation of the Roman domus between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. In: Late Antique Archaeology, vol. 1. Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology 2003, 79-112; L. Lavan. *The monumental streets of Sagalassos in late Antiquity: an interpretative study*. In: P. Ballet, N. Dieudonné-Glad, C. Salion. (eds). *La rue dans l'Antiquité*. Presse Universitaires de Renne. 2008, 201-214.

⁴³ For the inscription see: А. Димитрова. *Епиграфски данни за стоата на античния град при Сандански (III в. н. е.)*. In: Археология 1, 1982, 53-57.

⁴⁴ Similar to Constantinople, where important streets were with porticoes, and the city had one main and several secondary arteries, and several round piazza at the crossings, see: Marlia Mundell Mango, *The porticoed Street at Constantinople*, in *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*. Ed. by Nevra Necipoğlu, Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill 2001, 29-52, esp. 30, 40-45 and fig. 1.

processions in Early Byzantium and of the necessity to join the passing by main route from Serdica to Thessaloniki. Since now no decumani are excavated, but it can be supposed, that they were predominantly shorter streets or passages. On some steep places there didn't exist decumanus, only leading up stairs. The first several steps of such a staircase was unearthed during the excavations in 2014 and they are already exposed at the complex of basilica № 4, immediately west of the baptisterium and the tri-conchal building. Probably there also existed stairs, leading from the City Fountain up to basilica № 3 with tribelon. The possibilities of the terrain of this low shoulder-part of Pirin mountain, oriented north-south with deflection of 12-17 degrees and with three more or less natural flat terraces allowed basically only three basic cardo (cardo № 1 in Antiquity, now Macedonia street; the ancient middle cardo № 2, now Gotze Delchev street; the ancient cardo № 3, repeated now partly by Cyril and Methodius street), in direction north-south with the same deflection. They divide the city's upper, middle and lower part. Namely the middle one is the cardo maximus, leading to the west end of the agora. The "Macedonia" cardo also could be the first in importance, tangential to the agora from the east. But it passes exactly at the boundary of a steep displacement, which is increasing towards the agora - a fact, which places cardo № 2 on a better position.

The South Gate (Porta Tessaloniki/Porta Heraclea Sintica/Porta Serdica), the most important city gate, was situated somewhere before the House of Culture on square Bulgaria, at the crossing of Gotze Delchev str. and Maritza str. (or Bashlijska str., where remnants of a solid wall have been found occasionally - **Fig. 20**). The second possibility is at the crossing of Macedonia str. and the continuation of Maritza Str. Thus the solution depends of the fact which cardo namely has been chosen in Roman times as the main one. There also exists the theoretical possibility the main cardo in Roman times to be the "Macedonia" one, replaced in Early Byzantine times with the Via Sacra. Obviously in both cases its continuation comes out from the South Gate and joins the route Serdica - Thessaloniki somewhere in the region of the monument of Spartacus at the end of the modern city. As usually, necropolises from both sides of the Gate could also be helpful in tracing not only this local route, but as well the precise place of the Gate itself. The massive of a Roman and Early Christian necropolis was excavated south of the supposed Gate, now square Bulgaria. But the lower parts of the hill alongside the local route have been insufficient to embrace all the burials and in Late Antiquity the necropolis climbed up and occupied some other parts of the terrain extra muros (the southwestern, western and northern necropolises from Roman and Early Byzantine times). In the flat parts of the river valleys and alongside the main and the local routes there also existed necropolises, for instance at the locality "Ushite" alongside the main route to Serdica, and the Eastern necropolis near to the left bank of the river Sandanska Bistritza, at the foot of the next hill to the east and at the beginning of the local route, functioning since Antiquity, to the village of Polenitza and through Melnik to the ancient city Nicopolis ad Nestum.

Up to now three of the basilicas are situated in Early Christian necropolises. Basilica № 10 is situated namely among the burials of the Southwestern necropolis and high on the hill, with discovered only its northwestern corner, situ-

ated south from the corner of a double Early Christian tomb. The basilica № 9 (if we accept it as such) is situated in the Eastern necropolis⁴⁵, in the locality Hunting house (the building no longer exists), among the burials of different time. According to us the plan of this monument, excavated only in its west part, does not demonstrate the typical basilica elements. Instead of them we see rooms in two chain rows (a monastery?). This necropolis and basilica were visible from many high places of Parthicopolis, because they were situated very low in the terrain.

Such visual connection obviously existed among all the basilicas at both sides of the Mese (Via Sacra) and between the City Fountain and the new circus in front of basilica № 4. This main artery, cardo № 2, existing at least since Roman times, preserved its importance in Early Byzantine times, but transformed as a street for solemn processions with longitude of ca. 200 m, stopping in front of every church at the west side (when walking to the Fountain), and then on the way back to the churches from the east side (see Fig. 16). This was the heart of the Early Christian Parthicopolis, the city's spine. Thus the basilicas' disposition intra muros developed the new urban focus during the Early Byzantine period, consisting of a center around the splendid basilica № 4, surrounded by several other basilicas and bishop residences. At the same time the basilicas extra muros at the periphery were connected either with necropolises, or with monasteries, probably also with the secondary routes to the mountain of Pirin to the north and to the towns and villages nearby in east and west directions.

It can be supposed that in some quarters, where the terrain does not allow any changes, the old Roman insulae predetermined the emplacement of the ba-

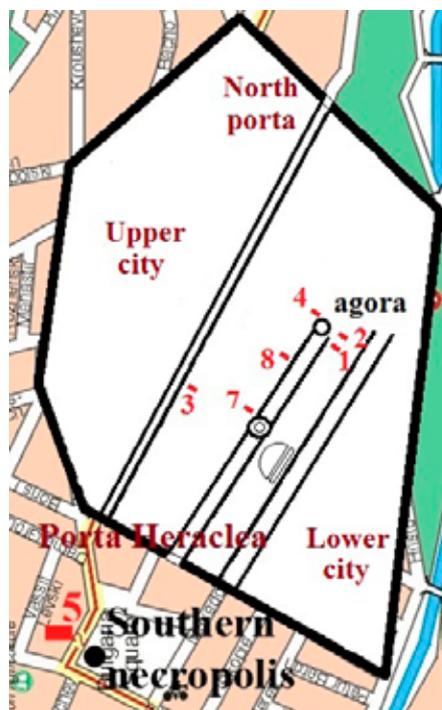


Fig. 20. Schema with the city intra muros (the excavated cardo № 2, both round structures, the theater, the supposed agora, cardines №№ 1 and 3 and the supposed fortress walls with the two main gates) and the necropolises and monastery with basilicas №№ 5, 6, 9 and 10 among the contemporary quarters and streets (See and Fig. 4).

Сл. 20. Схема са градом унутар зидина (испитивани кардо бр. 2, две кружне структуре, театар, претпостављена агора, ходници - кардинес бр. 1 и 3 као и претпостављени зидови утврђења са две капије) и некрополе, манастир са базиликама бр. 5, 6, 9 и 10 међу савременим квартовима и улицама (види и Сл. 4).

⁴⁵ V. Petkov, O. Somova. *Op. cit.*, 2003, 24-47.

silicas in Early Byzantine times. In several places the streets form the end of the insulae, for instance at the north outline of the Roman theater and the insula with basilicas №№ 7 and 3 west of the Mese. Basilica № 8 is erected at the corner of another insula and the basilica of Antim occupies the last insula before the Agora. In our opinion the changes were due to the new Christian religion and the new norms of life, aiming the old agora and the pagan buildings to be abandoned, transformed or simply forgotten. The new center now is the martyrium with its relics (still not found?), the bishop basilica (the basilica of Antim) and the round piazza in front of it, distributing to all directions of the city. Similar planning can be observed in Amphipolis, where the four basilicas with rich architectonic decoration and mosaics together with the bishop residence formed the nucleus of the city agora. In Stobi, where the ancient forum is still not found, the bishop basilica, like in Parthicopolis, is situated on the most representative street with monumental porticoes, leading to the supposed forum. The same situation is in other Early Byzantine cities of Thrace, where the basilicas and the bishop complexes occupy their central parts. The circus planning of important city crossings and in front of important buildings is repeated also in the planning of the City Fountain of Parthicopolis and can be seen in other Early Byzantine cities of Macedonia, Asia Minor and the Near East: in Ephesus in the Rotunda at the commercial agora, in Gerasa/Jerash, in its Oval Forum, in Justiniana Prima (Caričin grad), etc.⁴⁶. The center in Early Byzantine Parthicopolis is shifted from the Agora to southwestern direction, but very near to it and with the main street *cardo* № 2, the *Via Sacra* of Parthicopolis⁴⁷.

In our opinion the building of basilicas in Parthicopolis has begun after the treaty of 317, when the emperor Constantine gave special rights to the eparchies of Pannonia and Macedonia. This hypothesis of us is supported by archaeological proofs, for instance the kind of transenna and its dating from basilica № 1, the usage of arcade construction, dividing the interior in three parts, etc. The political situation itself on the Balkans, namely the civil war between Constantine the Great and Licinius, transformed after 324 in religious too, has created the possibility for a mass building of churches in the provinces of Pannonia and Macedonia, protected by Constantine. The written sources and the archaeological data are the ground to consider that the builder and donator of basilica № 1 was Jonah, the first known bishop of Parthicopolis. The erecting to this basilica of the atrium with a well also should be related chronologically not to the 5th century⁴⁸, but earlier, in second half - end of 4th century, when

⁴⁶ A. Pülz. *Das sog. Lukasgrab in Ephesos. Eine Fallstudie zur Adaption antiker Monumente in byzantinischer Zeit*. ÖAW, Wien, 2010; H. Kraeling, *Gerasa, City of Decapolis*, New Haven, 1938; E. Zanini. *The Urban Ideal and Urban Planning Byzantine Mediterranean Cities of 6th Century A.D.* In: L. Lavan and W. Bowdwn (eds.). *Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology*, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2003, p. 208, fig.5.

⁴⁷ According to the last data during the fulfillment of the project about restoration and conservation of basilica № 4, south of the atrium are uncovered the remains of a large and representative peristyle (round Square) probable early Byzantine Agora of Parthicopolis (?).

⁴⁸ A. Dimitrova. *Die frühbyzantinische Stadt bei Sandanski im Lichte der archäologischen Forschungen*. *Études Balkaniques* 15/4, 1979, 127-146; Al. Dimitrova-Milčeva. *Die Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Stadt bei Sandanski (4–6 Jh)*. Nach Archaeologischer Anga-

the Roman street with the colonnade has been transformed in the so-called Via Mese, tangential to the west wall of the basilica's atrium. Then, with the forming of the new urban center, began the building of the complex of basilica № 4. At the same time when basilica № 1 still was the bishop one in the 30-es of 4th century, began the first building period of the future new bishop basilica № 4. Its ktitor/donor, judging by the inscription and probably at the same time its bishop, was Antim. This richest in all aspects building dominated in Parthicopolis in Late Antique and early Byzantine times. After the edict of Theodosius in 392 the Christianity became the only official religion and many adults should be baptized in a short period. We should not forget and the edict of Theodosius I, Gratianus and Valentinianus II, issued 12 years earlier, in which the Christianity was announced as a State religion in the whole Roman Empery. According to us that explains the erecting of the splendid baptisterium of basilica № 4.

During the same time of erecting of basilica № 1 and not later than in the middle of 4th century is dated the first building period of basilica № 7. At the end of 4th - beginning of 5th century, after the Goths' invasions, which set on fire the whole city, it is widened to the south with rooms, built entirely with bricks, identically to the City Fountain. Namely then the "closing" with it of the street to the south direction has been done. In the second half of 5th – first half 6th CC followed the second and the third building period of basilica № 4, reflecting the cultural influences of the big centers of Christianity, predominantly in Constantinople, Greece, Macedonia and Asia Minor. The apse of Syrian type, the unusual and unique plan of the baptistery, the plan of the supposed martyrrium and the rich decoration are entirely new phenomena in the architecture of Early Byzantine Parthicopolis.

The erecting of basilicas №№ 2, 5, 6, and 8 can be related to the second half of 4th and to 5th centuries. With the reconstructions of the earlier built churches, all the six basilicas №№ 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8 continue to be the spine of the Late Antique and the Early Byzantine urban center. The building of the cemetery basilicas followed the functioning of the necropolises and we consider that they are also among the first built basilicas, although extra muros. Having in mind their function, one can expect that in them should be absent some of the elements of the normal urban basilicas, analogically to basilica № 2 from the not far situated Nicopolis ad Nestum⁴⁹. In our opinion the monastery basilica № 6 in Parthicopolis was probably built after the 40-es of 4th century, the time of the Council of Serdica, and up to the third quarter of 4th century, when the monkhood was formed and when there appeared the first monasteries in Thrace, for instance probably around basilica №1 in Nicopolis ad Nestum, etc⁵⁰.

All the basilicas in the region, similar to the Early Byzantine Parthicopolis, have been destroyed during the invasions of the Avars and the Slavs in 577/578. The remains, still standing after these events, have been finally demolished to the ground by the big earthquake at the end of 6th-beginning of 7th century.

ben. In: BHR, No 4, Sofia 1991, 75-84; A. Димитрова-Милчева. *Op. cit.*, 2002, 269–294.

⁴⁹ В. Попова. *Спасителни разкопки на базилика № 2 в с.Гърмен, окръг Благоевградски*. In – Археологически открития и разкопки през 1978, 97.

⁵⁰ В. Попова, *op. cit.*, 2011, 263-294.

Parthicopolis stopped its existence both as a city and as a bishop center and in mediaeval times it was only a small site. Under the influence of the Christianity and especially the cult of S.S. Cosma and Damian, probably bound to the hot local healing springs, this site was renamed and got the Slavonic name Sveti Vrachii (Saints Healers). The ruins of the Early Christian basilicas were used for several mediaeval necropolises, scattered both intra and extra muros, as a remembering for the sacredness of the basilicas' area.

Светла Петрова
РАНОХРИШЋАНСКЕ БАЗИЛИКЕ И ЊИХОВО МЕСТО У УРБАНОМ
ПЛАНИРАЊУ ПАРТИКОПОЛИСА

У Партикополису је до данас пронађено десет базилика различитог степена очуваности (Сл. 1), а такође позната су и имена неколико епископа, чија активност је у директоној повезаности са изградњом базилика бр. 1, 2 (Сл. 2) и бр. 4. Једина базилика која има сачуван план готово у потпуности је бр. 4, Епископска базилика, чији ктитор је вероватно Антим (Сл. 3 и 8). Од осталих споменика сачувани су различити делови, зидови и декорација (Сл. 5, 16, 18, 19).

Сполијација је врло честа појава када је реч о архитектонском украсу готово свих базилика. Засебни елементи архитектонског украса су израђени само за Епископску базилику и крстионицу. Зидови имају углавном мозаике са геометријским орнаментима уз употребу златних тесера (Сл. 11 лево). План базилика је тробродан а неке од њих имају сачуване мозаике (Сл. 9, 10, 11). Особеност северне базилике је што је јужни брод већих димензија од северног. У базилици број 4 особит је веома редак елемент у Бугарској: апсида сиријског типа, јединствене представе Апостола (Сл. 12), затим амвон у средњем броду, атријум на јужној страни (Сл. 13, 14) облик крстионице (Сл. 17). Јединствено је и то што се западно постројење уствари на овом месту користило као мартирјум(?).

Присутне су две технике *opus incertum* и *opus mixtum*. Топографски гледано, базилике су постављене на различите начине и у одговарајућим деловима града, било изван зидина или унутар самог центра града (Сл. 4 и 16). Њихове основе као и грађевинска техника имају паралеле у префектури Источни Илирикум у Тесалији, под снажним утицајем Цариграда као и градова на Истоку попут Герасе, Ефеса и т.д.

Новоформирана главна улица *Via Sacra*, слична улици Месе у Цариграду, раздваја град на две целине, Горњи и Доњи град, који вероватно воде према главној градској тј. Јужној капији Порта Хераклеја (Синтика). По мишљењу аутора Јужна и Северна капија су повезане са још једним важним ходочасничким путем који је вероватно био у употреби у последњој четвртини четвртог века. Базилике су девастиране у исто време као и град 577/578. године током инвазије Авара и Словена. Партикополис је изгубио статус епископског седишта почетком седмог века, а потом је преображен у мањи град који је у средњем веку углавном повезан са култом Светих Врача, посебно култом Светих Кузмана и Дамјана.