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## **THE INFLUENCE OF CONSTANTINOPLE ON THE LATE ANTIQUITY CULTURE AND ART OF THE CENTRAL AND NORTHEASTERN BALKANS**

*Abstract:* The article is dealing with the influence of Constantinople on the central and Eastern Balkan provinces predominantly in three spheres: on the first place, in the architecture and city planning; on the second place, in the Early Christian/ Early Byzantine liturgy, its influence on the plans of the basilicas and on the stationary liturgy; and finally, in the monumental arts: the round sculpture, especially in the official portraiture, and in the mosaic decoration.

*Key words:* the city and fortress, Constantinopolitan, basilicas, the liturgical furniture.

The proximity of Constantinople to the heart of the Central and Northeastern parts of the Balkans, its administrative belonging, as well as its economic and cultural connections determined the constant and strong influence of the capital upon these lands (fig. 1, map). At the same time, these lands on their turn played important role in the political, economic and cultural development of the Late Roman Empire and Early Byzantium. Many Late Antiquity emperors, some Arian and Orthodox bishops and even patriarchs<sup>1</sup>, and numerous civil and military magistrates were descending namely from the Balkans, and played constant and special attention to these lands, beginning much earlier than the foundation of Constantinople, since the period of the soldier's emperors in 3rd century. For the second and third time the attention and the special care to the Balkans have been paid during the Constantinian rule and the Great Migration period (end of 4<sup>th</sup> – beginning of 7<sup>th</sup> centuries). For the greater part of the studied territories, Late Antiquity ended with the invasions of the Slavs and Avars around the second-third decade of 7<sup>th</sup> century, according to the found coins and coin treasures.<sup>2</sup> However, since 330, the year of inauguration of Constantinople,

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<sup>1</sup> A. Cedilnik, and D. Moreau, *Demophilus, the last Arian Bishop of Constantinople? Contribution (II) to the Christian Prosography of the Dioecesis Thraciarum*. Paper presented at the International Conference 'Late Antiquity Christianity in Southeastern Europe' (Yambol, 3d of October 2019, forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> K. Stanev, *Монетната циркулация в ранносредновековна Тракия, началото*



Fig. 1 Map of the Balkan Peninsula in 6th century

Сл. 1 Карта Балканског полуострва у 6. веку

every change in the New Rome was immediately echoed in Thracia, Scythia Minor, Macedonia I and Moesia Inferior and Superior, transformed later into the provinces Dacia Mediterranea, Thracia, Haemimont, Europe and Rhodope. They cover entirely or partly the territory of contemporary Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Serbia, Greece and the European part of Turkey. The new city planning of Constantinople, its buildings, installations for the city defense, water supply and entertainments, as well as its stational liturgy in the streets and the church interior, have been copied in the Balkans, however according to the local topography, variants of the confession and rituals, and most of all to the financial possibilities of the city, town, community or the concrete donator.

The study of the role of Constantinople on the Central and Eastern Balkans can be traced in three spheres: the first one is in the general city planning, with the newly made formula of center, street net, main buildings and buildings with specific functions; the second one concerns the Early Christian architecture and its liturgy; and the third one is connected with the monumental arts (mosaics, wall paintings and sculpture). However, while the picture in the Balkans from the architectural aspect of view is to one or another degree outlined, less is known and cited in literature on the degree the Constantinopolitan liturgy has been followed inside the basilicas and during the processions in the streets of the studied provinces, and the impact on the development of monumental arts. Only in the recent 20 years we have a better knowledge of the Late Antique sites and monuments in contemporary South Bulgaria thanks to the regular archaeological excavations and scientific research in Serdica, Mesambria, Kabile, Tuida, Augusta Traiana, Philippopolis and Perperikon<sup>3</sup>. In the immediate hin-

на VII - началото на IX век /K. Stanev, Coin Circulation in the Early Medieval Thrace, the Beginning of 7<sup>th</sup> – beginning of 9<sup>th</sup> centuries/, Историкии 4, 2011, 115-131.

<sup>3</sup> В. Динчев, „Св. София“ и Сердика, София, (2014) /V. Dinchev, Die „Hl. Sophia“ und Serdica, Sofia, 2014/; Н. Preshlenov, *Mesambria*, ed. D. V. Gramenos and E. K. Pret-

terland of Constantinople, its influence is much more significant in all aspects. The new excavations of the cities of the more distantly situated at the boundary of Thracia and Macedonia, Nicopolis ad Nestum and Parthicopolis<sup>4</sup>, also added evidences of the expected phenomenon, although in much complicated historical-religious circumstances, a subject to be discussed especially below. In North Bulgaria<sup>5</sup> entirely newly discovered and studied cities as Misionis at Turgovishte, Zaldapa in South Dobrudja and the partly excavated Ratiaria on the Danube in Dacia Mediterranea reveal very interesting Early Christian architecture (new basilicas, baptisteriums, episcopal residences, martyriums, crypts, tombs, mausoleums and baths), often covered with mosaic and wall paintings, and sites surrounded by impressive fortress system.

At the beginning it is necessary to remind a very important fact in the creation of Constantinople erected by the will of Constantine the Great and his heirs in the second quarter- second half of 4<sup>th</sup> century. The emperor used the economics, might, culture and art of Rome, Italy and the whole Roman Empire to raise a new cosmopolite city using the well-known building, architectural, theological and art traditions. He created a new city phenomenon on the base of the previous traditions curiously combined with novelties. This earliest layer and period of the new capital is now badly known covered by later medieval, Ottoman and modern buildings, also perished or destroyed by natural catastrophes, revolts, invasions, fires and numerous re-buildings. The studied lands of the Balkans in that sense may serve as evidence and mirror of the first ever and the Early Byzantine building period of Constantinople not preserved in the capital itself.

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ropoulos, *Ancient Greek Colonies in the Black Sea*, vol. II, Publications of the Archaeological Institute of Northern Greece- ТАП, Thessaloniki, 2003; R. Pillinger, V. Popova and B. Zimmermann, *Corpus der spätantiken und frühchristlichen Wandmalereien Bulgariens*, Wien, 1999, 34-39; E. Кантарева-Дечева, Ст. Станев и Д. Станчев, *Новоразкрити мозайки от епископската базилика на Филипопол (2019-2021 г.)*, Годишник на Академията за музикално, танцово и изобразително изкуство проф. А. Диамандиев, Пловдив, 2020, 23-34 /E. Kantareva-Decjeva, St. Stanev and D. Stanchev, *Newly excavated Mosaics from the Episcopal Basilica of Philippopolis*, Annual of the Accademy of musical, dance and figurative arts Plovdiv, 2020, 23-34); N. Ovcharov, Z. Dimitrov, D. Kodjamanova, K. Dochev, D. Stoimenov, N. Sharankov, *The Ancient and Medieval Perperikon. V. I. The Acropolis*. Sofia, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> S. Petrova and V. Petkov, *Paroikopolis/ Parthikopolis*, ed. R. Ivanov, *Thracian, Greek, Roman and Medieval Cities, Residences and Fortresses in Bulgaria*, Sofia, 2015, 341-492; S. Petrova, *Nicopolis ad Nestum/Mestum*. Ed. R. Ivanov, *Corpus of Ancient, Roman and Medieval Settlements in Modern Bulgaria*. Sofia, 2012, v. I, 289-361.

<sup>5</sup> On the results of the excavations of Misionis and Ratiaria, see the annual 'Archaeological Discoveries and Excavations' of the Bulgarian Archaeological Institute with Museum (in Bulgarian AOP); on Zaldapa see G. Atanasov and Y. Valeriev, *Early Christian Basilica No. 4 in Zaldapa with a Crypto-Hypogee for Holy Relics from the End of 4<sup>th</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, *Archaeologia Bulgarica* /forthcoming/; Ibid, *La résidence épiscopale à proximité de la cathédrale de la ville romano-byzantine de Zaldapa dans la province de Scythie*, *Archaeologia Bulgarica* XXIV, 1, 33-58; Ibid., *Basilica № 1 with a Newly Discovered Crypt from the Roman/ Early Byzantine City of Zaldapa. Addenda et corrigenda*, *Archaeologia Bulgarica* XXIV, 4, 45-80; Ibid, *The Crypt in the Sanctuary of the Basilica No 3 at the Ancient City of Zaldapa (Province of Scythia)*, ed. Miša Rakocija, Niš and Byzantium XV, 2017, 123 -132.

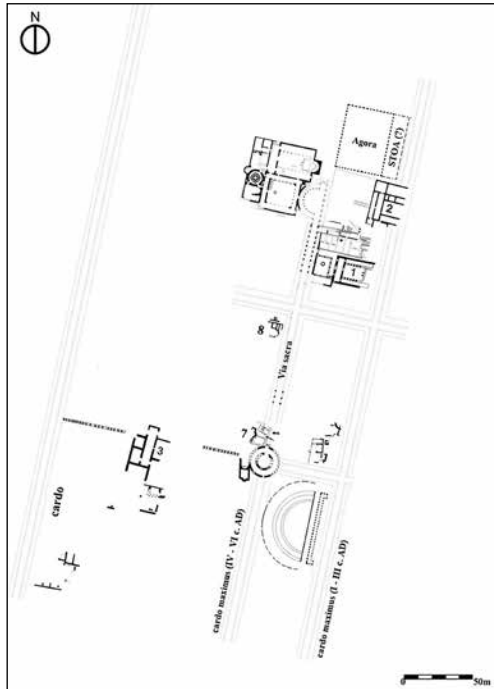


Fig. 2 Map of Parthicopolis in 4 th -beginning of 7 th centuries with the street for stational liturgy (after Petrova 2015, The Early Christian Basilicas.

Сл. 2 Карта Филипопоља од почетка 4. века до почетка 7. века са улицама где су одржаване литије (по: Петрова 2015, *Ранохришћанске базилике*).

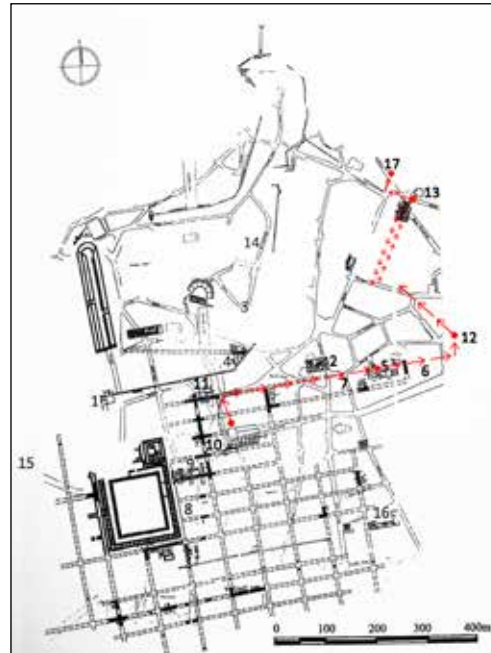


Fig. 3 Map of the Late Antique Philippopolis with the supposed route of the stational liturgy, after V. Popova, The Personification 2021

Сл. 3 Карта позноантичког Филипопоља са претпостављеном рутом литије, по В. Попова, *Персонификација* 2021.

First the attention should be drawn to the general changes in the city planning and the street net since the period of Constantine I up to the end of Late Antiquity, demonstrated mainly on the example of Mesambria, Augusta Traiana, Philippopolis, Parthicopolis and Serdica. The changes consist in erecting of new defending walls, enlarging significantly the fortified area of Constantinople, which has been repeated in the Balkan cities. Another important change was in dropping in Constantinople and elsewhere the dominant role of the previous Roman agorai and fora<sup>6</sup>, and in creating of several new city centers, mainly round or sigma-form plazas, situated near or next to the episcopal basilica with episcopal residence, at the imperial palace and residence (or of the civil magistrate); at the thermen, at the city gates etc.<sup>7</sup> The set of colon-

<sup>6</sup> L. Lavan, *Public Space in the Late Antique City. V. I. Streets, Processions, Fora, Agorai, Macella, Shops*. (Brill, Leuven-Boston), 2020.

<sup>7</sup> V. Popova, *On the Date and the Interpretation of the Complex at the Southwestern Gate of Augusta Traiana/Beroe* ed. I. Topalilov, *Studia academica Šumenensia*, vol. 4. Transition from late Paganism to Early Christianity in the Architecture and Art in the Balkans. Krassimir Kalchev in memoriam (1954-2004), (2017), 57-96.

naded streets first increased from Constantine to Theodosius I, however later has been often disturbed, overstepped, broken and closed in different ways. For instance, in Parthicopolis (fig. 2) the apses of the new basilicas cover almost the whole width of the real existing or supposed Roman streets; the so-called Rotunda, the end-point in the street for stational liturgical processions, together with basilica No 7 has closed totally the previous Roman *cardo*, probably leaving small path aside the hill's slope; finely, here alongside the outer walls of the complex with basilica No 1, one of the colonnade is eliminated. In Philippopolis the new thermen in the Eastern part of the city<sup>8</sup> are erected in such a way that entirely closed the street; also in the same city, in order to connect the Episcopal basilica with the Episcopal residence, the architect dropped. in one insula only, the orthogonal grid by inserting in that part an oblique small street. Besides, instead of the numerous streets of the city grid, now was dominating only a kind of starnch, consisting of the street for stational liturgy and other processions, and of the second main perpendicular or oblique street crossing it (usually they both are repeating the main *cardo* and the main *decumanus*). Of course, in Constantinople the picture was peerless complex and impressive, but in the smaller provincial cities the adapted and simple decision has been accepted in Parthicopolis, Mesambria, partly in Serdica I and II etc.<sup>9</sup> Only in the main cities of the province as Philippopolis in Thracia, the dimensions and the topography of the city at the skirts of the previous acropolis and down in the plain allowed more impressive dimensions and more complex net. Nevertheless, we see again two main arteria (fig. 3) meeting at a sharp angle: the first one entering through the Eastern Gate from northeast, than turning to the south; and the second one coming from east, and reaching the agora.

The example of the Eastern Gate of Philippopolis is better excavated and studied in its obvious reflection of Chalke in Constantinople<sup>10</sup>. Although previously being honorary arc of Hadrian, later and till Late Antiquity it was transformed into the Eastern city gate, and added to the fortification walls from both sides. Since the period of Theodosius I, this widest city street was covered with colonnades and decorated at least with one (if not even more) honorary statue (see below).

Concerning the plans and the liturgy of the Early Christian buildings, chronologically and in the right of the fact, we should begin with Parthicopolis and Philippopolis, because the Roman features in them in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, mainly in the early Constantinian period, have been reflected in the very Early Christian monuments. It should be supposed on this ground, that at that period the similarities between Rome and Constantinople in the studied aspects were obvious,

<sup>8</sup> M. Bospachieva, *New Facts about the Eastern Thermae of Philippopolis*, eds. L. Russeva-Slokoska, R. Ivanov, V. Dinchev, *The Roman and Late Antique City*, Sofia, (2002), 301-305.

<sup>9</sup> S. Petrova, *The Early Christian Basilicas in the Urban Planning of Parthicopolis*, ed. M. Rakocija, *Niš and Byzantium XIII*, (2015), 161-184; Preshlenov, *Mesambria*, 2003; V. Dinchev, 'Serdica II' Project', eds. V. Vachkova and D. Dimitrov, *Serdica Edict (311AD): Concepts and Realizations of the Idea of Religious Toleration*, (Sofia), 2014, 195-217.

<sup>10</sup> I. Topalilov, *Porta aurea of Late Antique Philippopolis*, *Bulgaria Mediaevalis* 7, (2016), 3-20.

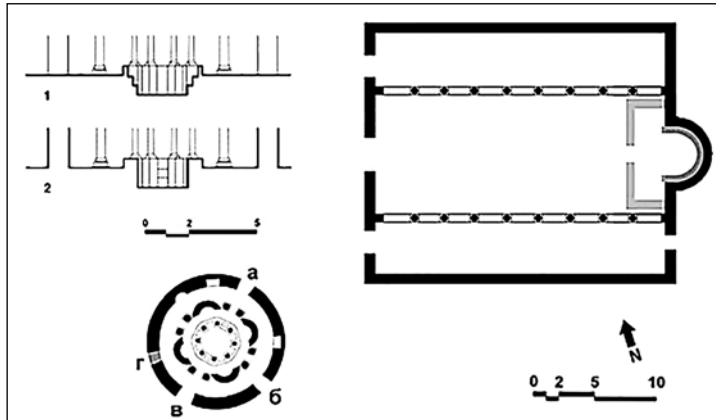


Fig. 4 The Cathedral basilica (basilica No 4) of Parthicopolis. I building period. After S. Petrova.

Сл. 4 Катедрална базилика (базилика број 4) са Партикопоља, Први грађевински период, по С. Петровој.

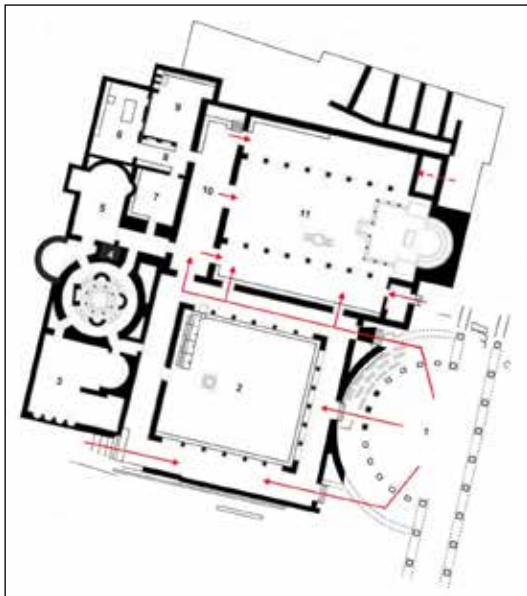


Fig. 5 The Cathedral basilica of Parthicopolis. II and III period with the plaza and part of the street for processions. Archaeological Museum Sandanski, plus S. Petrova.

Сл. 5 Катедрална базилика Партикопоља, Други и трећи градитељски период са тргом и делом улица намењених за литије. Фото: Археолошки музеј Сандански, С. Петрова

while the differences less discernible. This situation of Roman influence was even strengthened in the second part of 4<sup>th</sup> century, when the papal vicariate has been constituted at Thessaloniki<sup>11</sup>, and thus the studied parts of the Balkans, especially Macedonia and Thracia, were submitted to the Roman pope, while politically and from administrative point of view after 395 they belonged to the Early Byzantium. It is considered that the metropolitan bishop, later the patriarch of Constantinople has received his prominent role only after the Chalcedonian Council in 451<sup>12</sup>. But the rivalry between the Roman Church and the one of Constantinople, although non-officially announced, has begun earlier. For instance, the metropolitan bishop Atticus in the first half of 5<sup>th</sup> century used to appoint bishops in Thracia, based on the letter of Sylvanus, bishop of Philippopolis to him, asking to be given another bishopric with milder climate because of his health.<sup>13</sup> The bespoken very complicated situation

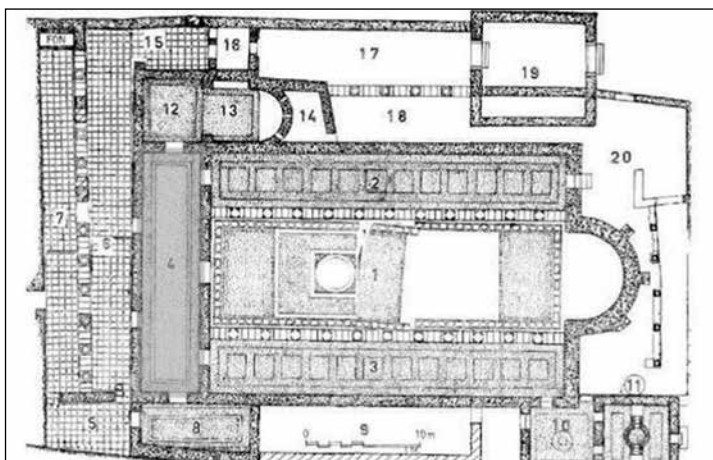
<sup>11</sup> Petrova and Petkov, *Paroikopolis/ Parthikopolis*, 351-352; 411-412, with references.

<sup>12</sup> I. Topalilov, *On some Issues related to the Christianisation of the Topography of Late Antique Philippopolis, Thrace*, eds. I. Topalilov and Z. Gerdzhikova, *Annales balcanici, Creation of the Late Antique World in the Balkans*, vol. 1, Tendril PH, (Sofia), 2021, 107 – 158, note 12.

<sup>13</sup> *Op. cit.*, 110, note 13.

Fig. 6 Heraclea Lyncestis,  
The Large basilica, plan  
from II period with the  
skeuofilakion. After  
Alexova-Lilicic.

Сл. 6 Хераклеја  
Линкестис, Велика  
базилика, план из друге  
грађевинске фазе са  
скевофилакионом, По:  
Алексова-Лилчић



in the Balkans had great sequences for the separation between the Eastern and Western churches. The presence of Arian bishops (some of them descending for instance from Augusta Traiana-Beroe), or relating to other heresies, their dismissal and replacement by Orthodox bishops in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century demonstrates the importance of Thracia for the general development of the Early Christianity, its liturgy etc. Thracia and to a definite degree Macedonia I and II, Moesia II and Scythia Minor were in that sense witness of many processes in the Early Christian architecture, liturgy and decoration which have not survived or is still not discovered in Constantinople itself.

The tie with Rome of Parthiopolis is expressed in the plan of the first building period of the Cathedral basilica (basilica No 4) without nartex and in the independent from the basilica's building free-standing round baptisterium of the Lateran type (fig. 4)<sup>14</sup>. The original apse in the first basilica has not been found, but it probably was one and half-rounded. The supposed original martroneum and senatorium where the citizens were receiving the Eucharist were replaced by the new and bigger chancel from the second building period (fig. 5), with reliefs, covering the screens of the first and the second chancel dated adequately in the second half of 4<sup>th</sup> – first half of 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> However, in Parthiopolis we don't see the usual huge and longitudinal Roman basilica, but a building with the perfect proportions in the golden section, probably because of the place and concrete configuration of the place under the steep slopes.

On the opposite, in Philippopolis the impressive Episcopal basilica long 86 m, and dated in the second quarter of 4<sup>th</sup> century, is combined with kyklion (fig. 7a-b)<sup>16</sup> in the apse. However, the latter is not connected with the aisles in

<sup>14</sup> S. Petrova, *The Baptistery of the Episcopal Basilica in Parthiopolis*, ed. M. Rakocija, Niš and Byzantium XV, (2017), 133-152.

<sup>15</sup> S. Petrova, *The Chancel Screens of the Episcopal Basilica (No 4) in Parthiopolis/Bulgaria (Preliminary Observations)*, ed. M. Rakocija, Niš and Byzantium XVIII, (2020), 189-222. The reliefs are sculpted entirely in the Roman iconography, style and way of treatment with scenes and representations from the Old and mainly the New Testament.

<sup>16</sup> The most important parts of the floor in the apse has been destroyed by the me-

U-like form (basilica with deambulatorium) as in Rome, so this was a combination of two types of Roman basilicas: the huge longitudinal one and the martyrial/or cemeterial U-like one. This was a magnificent Constantinian basilica intended for mass baptism and the numerous population of Philippopolis and the province of Thracia, quite comparable to the huge basilicas of Rome of Constantine I and the next emperors of 4<sup>th</sup> century. Other evidences of the Constantinopolitan Constantinian influence in the Balkans are the names of the earlier Christian churches and basilicas such as St. Sofia and St. Eirene/ Irene (in Serdica/now Sofia, in St. Sophia of Mesambria, in the churches and basilicas of Skopje, Medieval Kiev, etc.). In my opinion, supposedly the Episcopal basilica of Philippopolis was also St. Eirene.<sup>17</sup> It should be paid a special attention to the fact that probably under the influence of bishop of Constantinople, the bishop of Philippopolis ordered in his residence God to be represented in one of his essence as personification of Peace/Eirene). This attempt was among the earliest ones in the official Early Christian art in the series of allegories and personifications of God and the Church, very difficult for representing from theological and iconographic point of view.

The new city planning of the capital of Early Byzantium was a sample to be followed in the Balkans. One of its element, namely the round plaza of Constantine has been copied too, as well as the sigma-like plazas<sup>18</sup> Such is the found half-rounded plaza in front of Episcopal basilica and its atrium in Parthicopolis.(fig. 5). The church processions were beginning and ending namely in this plaza, and it became also together with the Cathedral basilica the center of the city's life in Late Antiquity. The main plaza of Parthicopolis is decorated with two colonnades and possesses benches and wall paintings in the interior. The created new formula imperial palace-hippodrome of the capital maybe has been repeated in Philippopolis, since Anna Comnena has mentioned in her description of the city in *Alexiad*<sup>19</sup> namely the hippodrome, although only the stadion has been unearthed in the city so far. In the so-called 'Small

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dieval necropolis over it and the modern buildings, so we cannot be sure if this is a crypt or a kiklion. Nevertheless, it seems that the kiklion is also quite possible. On the kyklion see C. Snively, *Golemo Gradište at Konjuh: Report on the Excavations 2000*, DOP 63, 2009. Here in note is cited also her 'Apsidal Crypts in Macedonia: Possible Places of Pilgrimage?', *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, Ergänzungsband 20.2 (1995): 1179–84; her second article, *A Type of Underground Cult Place from Late Antiquity: How did it Function?*, in *Early Christian Martyrs and Relics and their Veneration in East and West*, International Conference, Varna, 2003 (Varna, 2006), 163–72. Besides, for the kyklion Snively cites specifically A. Orlandos, *Η ξυλόστεγος παλαιοχριστιανική βασιλική της μεσογειακής λεκάνης* (Athens, 1952–57), 493–95; and, more recently, I. D. Varalis, *Τα χαρακτηριστικά της εκκλησιαστικής αρχιτεκτονικής της Νικόπολης: παραλληλίες και διαφοροποιήσεις*, ed. K. Zachos, *Νικόπολις Β'*, Πρακτικά του Δευτέρου Διεθνούς Συμποσίου για τη Νικόπολη (11–15 Σεπτεμβρίου 2002), (Preveza, 2007), 1:598–99, and especially note 31.

<sup>17</sup> V. Popova, *The Personification of Eirene from the Episcopal Residence in Philippopolis/ Plovdiv*, ed. M. Rakocija, *Niš and Byzantium XIX*, 2021, 299-324. However, in Mesambria it was devoted to the martyr St. Irene.

<sup>18</sup> S. Petrova, *The semicircular Piazza*, 2018, 104-107; 114-120.

<sup>19</sup> Anna Comnena, *Alexiad* XIV,8.



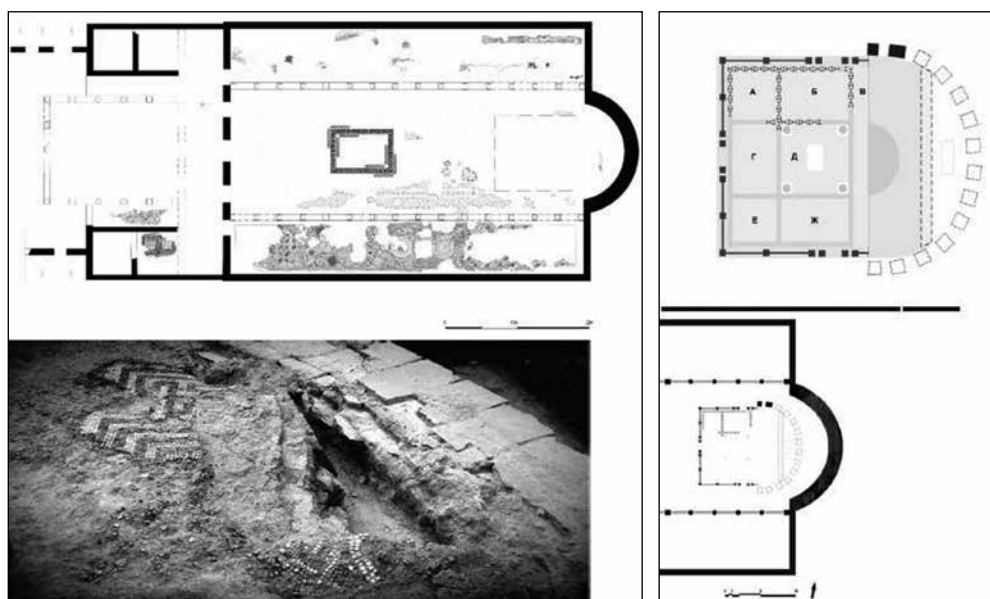


Fig. 7 Metropolitan basilica of Philippopolis: a/ general plan; b-c/the apse with the kyklion and chancel screen. After Kantareva-Decheva and Stanev 2021.

Сл. 7 Филипопољ, катедрална базилика: а) генерални план; б, в) апсида са киклионом и преградом. По: Кантарева- Дечева и Станев 2021.

basilica' of the city, a donator's mosaic inscription mentions some patricius<sup>20</sup>. This mentioning together with his donation for the basilica, his supposed residence in Philippopolis, the also supposed hippodrome with its chariot racing makes the life of the city to look like quite similar to the metropolitan one.

In the second building period of the Episcopal basilica of Parthicopolis happened the total change and decisive transformation to the liturgy of Constantinople: the narthex added, with stairs leading to the galleries; the new apse of the Syrian type built, the new bigger and wider chancel erected, with high synthronon and two side wings; new 5 entrances opened from the east, south and west sides; prothesis and diakonikon formed. The baptisterium of this Episcopal basilica also reveals two main building periods, with probably changed and enriched baptismal rituals and added rooms for the catechumens. Probably in the later III building phase, the prothesis and diaconikon have lost its significance replaced by the skeuofilakion (fig. 5, room 6)<sup>21</sup> inserted in the

<sup>20</sup> R. Pillinger, A. Lirsch und V. Popova, *Corpus der spätantiken und frühchristlichen Mosaiken Bulgarien.*, Wien, (2016), 231-232, with references.

<sup>21</sup> In the symposium in 2018 Late Antique Balkans in my report on the stationary liturgy in Parthicopolis, my opinion was expressed that this was not a martyrion, and that here have been kept all necessary liturgical objects. See my article *New Data on the Early Christian/ Early Byzantine Liturgy in the Central and Eastern Balkans*, *Studia academica Šumenensia* (in print); also the article (also forthcoming) of S. Petrova *Early Christian Architecture between the Middle Strymon and Middle Nestos*, with the interpretation of the so-called 'martyrium' as 3 different rooms: skeuofilakion, kitchen and waiting corridor.

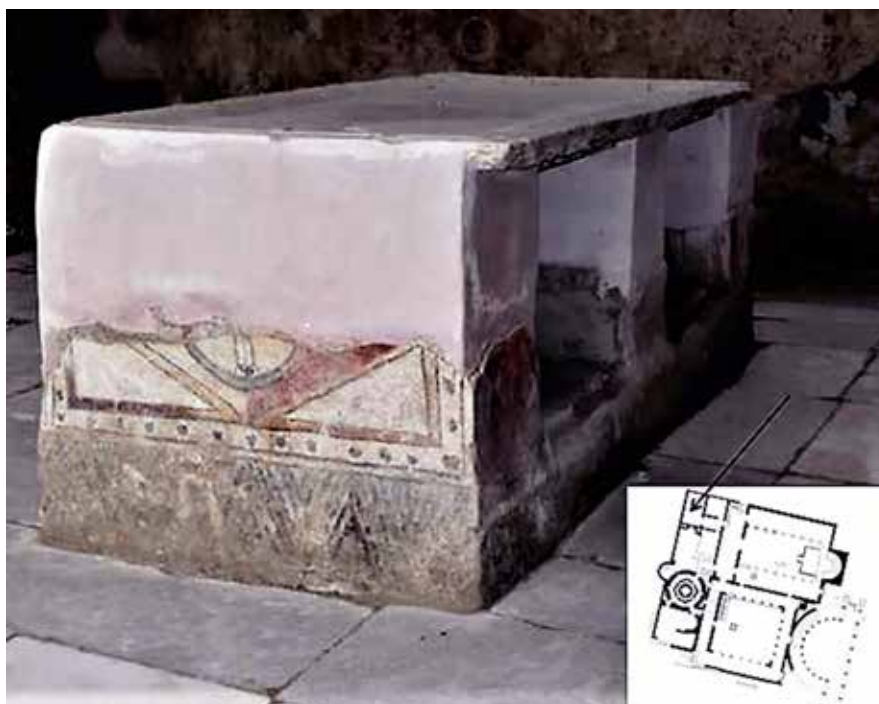


Fig. 8 The mensa in the skeuofilakion of the Cathedral basilica of Parthicopolis. Archaeological museum Sandanski.

Сл. 8 Менса у скевофилакиону катедралне базилике Партикопоља. Археолошки музеј Сандански

northwestern annex of the basilica. In the preliminary publication the annex has been interpreted as martyrium on the base of a massive supposed mensa sacra. But many arguments point to the possibility of the interpretation it as a skeuofilakion. First of all, the room of the so-called martyrium is not suitable for visiting by the crowds of Christians, because the access to it is too long and difficult: through the atrium, then follows the nartex, the waiting room, reaching the last room only at the west end of the annex. Secondly, in the annex there are several rooms not typical for martyrium: a kitchen with vessels and oven (fig. 7, No 9); a waiting corridor (No 8) with bench for the Christians waiting to hand down their gifts to the deacons; finally a small almost square hagianon for mineral water in room 6. The mensa (fig.9) also had not the typical 'mensa martyrium' form and probably contained the necessary for every church Bible, the set for the Eucharist, the garments of the bishops and deacons, their body crosses, etc. The gifts of the Christians are laid to the deacons in front of the skeuofilakion and kept there in the two niches really attested on the eastern wall of the skeuofilakion. Similar additionally added skeuofilakion, but at the northeastern end has been built also in the second building period

Fig. 9 a/ Metropolitan basilica of Philippopolis, south aisle, Fountain of Life during the excavations. E. Kantareva-Decheva; b/ wall painting with the Fountain of Life from Rome; c/icon with Theotokos, the vessel and Christ.



Сл. 9 а) катедрална базилика у Филипопољу, јужни брд, Извор Живота током ископавања (по: Е. Кантарева. Дечева) ; б) зидно сликарство са Извором Живота из Рима; в) икона Богородице, сасуд и Христос



of the Large basilica of Heraclea Lyncestis (fig. 6)<sup>22</sup>, with two entrances: from the west where the deacons receive from the Christians the gifts, and from the east, where the deacons exit in order to enter the north aisle also from east. The differences with Constantinople in Parthicopolis are revealed in the proportions of the basilica; the place of the ambo aside, to the south of the main axis of the nave; finely in the unusual place of the skevofilakion at the west, because the hill over and the topography of the place were not allowing the standard erecting it northeastern of the basilica. I suppose that the missing now sixth entrance from the east of the north aisle was also initially present, but later closed. The Large basilica of Heraclea Lyncestis and the Episcopal basilica of Parthicopolis are both built in the period of Constantine the Great, and passed synchronously to the Constantinopolitan liturgy in the second half of 5<sup>th</sup> century, revealing most of its features.

The usage of hagiomon can be observed not only in martyriums, but since Leo the Thracian it becomes connected with the cult of the Holy Virgin<sup>23</sup>, and in 6<sup>th</sup> century attested in the porticoes with fountains with healing water of the episcopal residence in Olympos in Turkey.<sup>24</sup> In Parthicopolis basilica No 7 also

<sup>22</sup> B. Alexova, *Loca sanctorum Macedoniae. The Cult of the Martyrs in Macedonia from 4<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries*, (Makedonska Civilizacija), Skopje, (1997), fig. 5.

<sup>23</sup> See the references of I. Topalilov, *The Impact of the Religious Policy of Theodosius the Great on the Urbanization of Philippopolis, Thrace*, eds. O. Brandt-V. Flocchi Nicola, Costantino e i Costantinidi: l'innovazione costantiniana, le sue radici e i suoi sviluppi, Acta XVI Congressus Internationalis Archaeologiae Christianae, p. II, Romae, (2013), 1853-1863.

<sup>24</sup> G. Öztaşkın, and M. Öztaşkın, *Olympos Episkopeionu Peristyl Mozaiklerindeki İnsan Betimlemeler*, Olba, vol. XXVII, (2019), 413-442; Popova, *The Personification of Eirene*, 314.



Fig. 10 The anastylosis of the colonnades of the street for processions in Parthicopolis. Archaeological museum Sandanski.

Сл. 10 Анастилоза колонада и улице за литије у Партикопољу. Археолошки музеј Сандански.

contains such a basin and hagiostron.<sup>25</sup> The medieval name of Parthicopolis is Sveti Vrach, Saint Healer (in singular). The area is famous with its thermal and cold mineral waters and always connected with healing since pagan and Early Christian times. It is not clear with whom namely this name is connected among the many Christian healers, saints and martyrs; is it medieval or Late Antique, because of the absence of reliable sources so far. But particularly for Philippopolis, it may be supposed that the cult of Theotokos can be seen in the unusual iconography of the “Fountain of Life”, with lacking at all deer, and the impressive monumental dimensions of the scene occupying the central part of both aisles (fig. 10a). One of her epithets is proving it, as well as the coinciding of many iconographic elements: the vase/vessel with the fountain streams, the peacocks and the doves, and the flowers indicating the Garden of the Paradise. Her epithet as ‘Sacred Vessel’ and ‘Life-Giving Font’ appears first in the hymns to the Holy Virgin, her church with hagiostron in Constantinople has been erected by Leo the Thracian, and supposedly and gradually the transformation made from the well-known ‘Fountain of Life’ in Late Antique (fig. 10b) and Early Christian monuments to the medieval Virgin with the child Christ in the fountain (fig. 10c). It impresses that in Parthicopolis we see twice the including of hagiostron in the liturgy: for the first time in basilica No 7 tangential to the Rotunda, and for the second time in room 6 (the skeuofilakion) of the Episcopal basilica. In the Eastern Mediterranean this previously pagan tradition of the sacred sources has been inherited and continued in the Early Byzantine period, witnessed by the mentioned monument in Olympos, and most of all in the cult of the Mother of God (Theotokos) as the Fountain of Life and some Christian Healers, saints and martyrs. We see similar including of the thermal water and healing sources in the Eastern Mediterranean in Constantinople, the Balkans and Asia Minor. The hagiostron everywhere are included in the liturgy, in the case of Parthicopolis from the second half of 4<sup>th</sup> till the beginning of 7<sup>th</sup> century, when several catastrophic earthquakes and the Barbarian invasions to-

<sup>25</sup> Petrova and Petkov, *Paroikopolis/ Parthicopolis*, 438-39, fig. 72.

Fig. 11 The basin of basilica No 7 immediately to the Rotunda in Parthicopolis.

Сл. 11 Базен базилике број 7 недалеко од ротонде у Партикопољу



tally destroyed Parthicopolis.<sup>26</sup> In Philippopolis the beginning of the cult of the Mother of God is supposedly connected from iconographic and semantic point of view also with the Fountain of Life since the time of Leo the Thracian and Basilisk.<sup>27</sup>

The street for the stational liturgy (fig.11) is very distinctively outlined in the city planning of Parthicopolis since the second half – end of 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>28</sup> It is short, only 200 m long, and made of spoliae (columns, bases, capitals and impost) from the non-functioning already Roman pagan buildings. This is witnessed by the form and decoration of these architectural elements, but also by the Greek inscription on one of the reused Roman columns, speaking of the donation of the Roman city pagan priest and his wife.<sup>29</sup> They have paid for erecting a new stoa, maybe part of the Roman agora or of the same future street for stational liturgy. But some of the columns have received new contemporary impost capitals. The street is leading to a Rotunda made of two wide concentric circles, covered from inside with wall paintings. As the excavations of the Rotunda are not published, its description and interpretation are still speculative. The central part of the Rotunda was destroyed by a contemporary water instalation, so we don't know what was there initially. It seems that in Roman times this was a crossing between one *cardo* and one *decumanus* of the city,

<sup>26</sup> *ibidem*, 484-5.

<sup>27</sup> See also the recently supposed date 'after 475' in I. Topalilov, *The impact*, 2021, 316.

<sup>28</sup> В. Попова, *Един паметник с ретка мозаична техника од ранновизантијскиот Партикополис* (A Monument with rare Mosaic Technique from the Early Byzantine Parthicopolis), *Изкуствоведски четения* 2007, 408-420, especially 418-19; Petrova, *The Early Christian Basilicas*, 173-4, 177-18; Petrova, *The semicircular Piazza*, 104-107; 114-120.

<sup>29</sup> А. Димитрова-Милчева, *Епиграфски дани за стобата на античниот град при Сандански (III в. на н. е.)* (Dimitrova-Milcheva A. Epigraphic Data on the Stoa of the ancient City at Sandanski (3<sup>rd</sup> C.), *Археология* 1, 1982, 53-57.





Fig. 12. The bronze processional cross found during the excavations of the Cathedral basilica of Parthicopolis.

Сл. 12. Бронзани процеснијски крст пронађен током ископавања катедралне базилике у Партикопољу

on the level of the lema of the Roman theatre, and at the beginning of the steep slopes over. Because of the latter, part of the streets on the hill were in fact arranged in three levels, and partly in stairs, not streets<sup>30</sup>. The beginning of such stairs has been archaeologically revealed west of the baptisterium and its praefurnium (fig. 5, left corner at the baptisterium) of basilica No 4. The nearby city Heraclea Sintike<sup>31</sup> also has decumanuses in the form of stairs too because of its topography on the small mountain 'Kojuh'. So this is a local peculiarity of the city planning and its street grid in the area of mountainous Middle Strymon.

The Rotunda of the street for stational processions has a general entrance from the north, and three more oriented entrances to the world directions, probably answering the initial Roman *cardo* (going probably to one of the main City Gate to the west), also the *decumanus* leading both downward (between the theatre and the bath opposite to the theatre), and upwards to the stairs beginning from here up the hill as a con-

tinuation of the same *decumanus*. The Rotunda cannot be a martyrium since there is no data on martyrs either originating, or killed, or buried in a martyrium in Parthicopolis. It also cannot be a mausoleum since supposedly it is inside the fortress, and no personality of such a high rank is known to live and die in this city. Most probably this was the city fountain or nymphaeum (but less possible is to see in it the city *macellum*), later transformed to an Early Christian building especially for the purpose of the stational liturgy. Such a precedent is already known from Ephesos,<sup>32</sup> where one of the city fountain has been transformed to an Early Byzantine building. Another very interesting fact is that basilica No 7 was later built in such a way that it gave no place for passing there, just tangentially to the Rotunda from the north side (fig. 10). Additionally, the basilica has a basin and *hagiasmon* still functioning even now (fig. 12). In that case, the movement was possible only by walking in a small path between the slope and the basilica No 7. We may also suppose that the Rotunda may have played the role of the Church of Anastasis and the Sepulchre in Jerusalem or a similar symbolic role by its complete round form and orientation to the world directions. Again we know such reminding of the Sepulchre of Jerusalem in Rome in the plan and the liturgy in the Rotunda of St. Stefano.

<sup>30</sup> Petrova, *The Early Christian Basilicas*, 180.

<sup>31</sup> On Heraclea Sintika, see the annual reports of excavations in the recent five years in AOP, also the just published book of L Vagalinski *Herakleia Sintika*, Sofia, (2022).

<sup>32</sup> A. Pültz, *Das sog. Licasgrab in Ephesos. Eine Fallstudie zur Adaption antiker Monumente in byzantinischer Zeit*, ÖAW, (Wien), 2010.



Fig. 13 The aerial view of Mesambria/Nesebar.

Сл. 13 Поглед из ваздуха на Месемврију /Несебар

According to the Early Christian mythological belief, the direction of moving should be either forward or to the right, but never to the left, first visiting the basilicas on the northern side of the street for processions. Entering the Rotunda also from the right side, after turning round it from west to south and east, the visitor is coming out from the same entrance/now exit, and parting back to the Cathedral basilica, but walking already from the other (eastern) side of the street, visiting or only stopping in front of the earliest so far basilica No 1 and the basilica of bishop Ioannes (basilica No 2).<sup>33</sup> Generally, six basilicas are situated from both sides the processional street, one of them (No 3) ascending over the slope in proximity to the Rotunda. Most probably the church procession was stopping in front of each basilica, some of them also entered for rituals, at the head of the archbishop and the other representatives of the higher and lower clergy carrying the processional cross (fig. 13), maybe since 6<sup>th</sup> century, also with icons.

It is a problem who has been buried in the crypt at the kyklion of the Episcopal basilica of Plovidiv – a single saint or martyr like the known from epigraphical data Saint Theodota, or the known from the sources

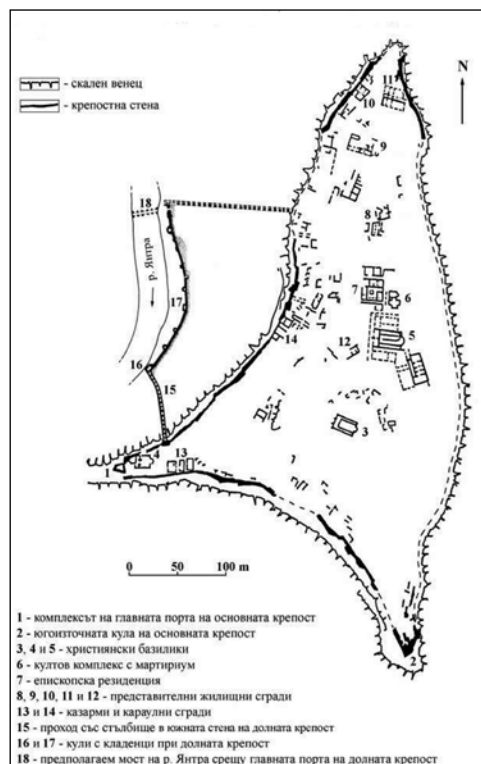


Fig. 14 The hill Tsarevetz of Veliko Turnovo with the Early Byzantine buildings.

Сл. 14 Брдо Царевец код Великог Трнова са рановизантијским грађевинама

<sup>33</sup> Petrova, Petkov, *Paroikopolis/ Parthicopolis*, 422-24.



Fig. 15 The chalice of Justinian and Theodora from the village of Nova Nadejda.

Сл. 15 Путир Јустинијана и Теодоре из села Нова Надејда

38 martyrs of Philippopolis and Byzie.<sup>34</sup> It is quite possible that the relics of these martyrs have been replaced from this early for the studied lands basilica to the newly built martyrium extra muros in the second half of 4<sup>th</sup> century at the Eastern Gate of Philippopolis. The road of the procession from the Episcopal basilica to this martyrium situated extra muros is outlined (fig. 3),<sup>35</sup> visiting on the way to and from the martyrium the known several basilicas (one of them the previous synagogue turned in 5<sup>th</sup> century into Christian basilica) in the central and eastern part of the city. In this, the politic of the Theodosian dynasty in Constantinople has been followed, turning the synagogues to churches. However, it is quite possible that the procession included the visit of the small basilica on the previous acropolis too, (fig.3, No 14) situated not far from the theatre<sup>36</sup>, as well as other still not discovered Early Christian Christian cult monuments of Philippopolis.

The other city with statitional liturgy of the Constantinopolitan type was Mesambria (fig. 14). Because of its topography on a peninsula at the Black Sea Western littoral, and being connected only with a narrow land with the continental part, Mesambria may be called 'The Small Constantinople' for the similar marine landscape, the numerous basilicas, churches and one monastery, concentrated on the small space of the half-island and built in the same plans, technique and liturgical planning as the capital. The statitional liturgy most probably has been performed only inside the fortress walls on the peninsula. In several concrete cases in Mesambria (and well as mainly on the Black Sea, in South Dobrudja and South Bulgaria) the plan and the decoration of the architecture in the capital of Early Byzantium is entirely copied, as it is in St. Sophia (The so-called Old Metropolia) of Mesambria repeating the church of St. Ioannes Studios<sup>37</sup>, and in the plan and the mosaic scheme of the

<sup>34</sup> I. Topalilov, *On some Issues*, 110, note 12; 111-113, with references; Н. Шаранков, *За датата и мястото на мъченичеството на света Теодота от 'града на Филип'*, *Bulgaria Mediaevalis* 6, 2015, 17-26.

<sup>35</sup> Popova, *The Personification of Eirene*, 321-323. It is also possible that first after taking the bishop from his residence, the procession is going directly to the Martyrium of 38 Martyrs through the main street of the Eastern Gate, visiting the basilicas intra muros only on the way back.

<sup>36</sup> Pillinger et alli. *Corpus* 2016, 248-9, Taff. 179, Abb. 462-3; Taff. 180, Abb. 464-5.

<sup>37</sup> Ст. Станев, *Старата Митрополия в Несебър в контекста на литургичното планиране на Константинополските църкви* /S. Stanev, *The Old Metropolitan Church in Nessebar in the Context of liturgical Planning of Constantinopolitan Churches*, *Годишник на Департамента по история на Нов Български Университет, София*, т. I, (2006), 50-83.



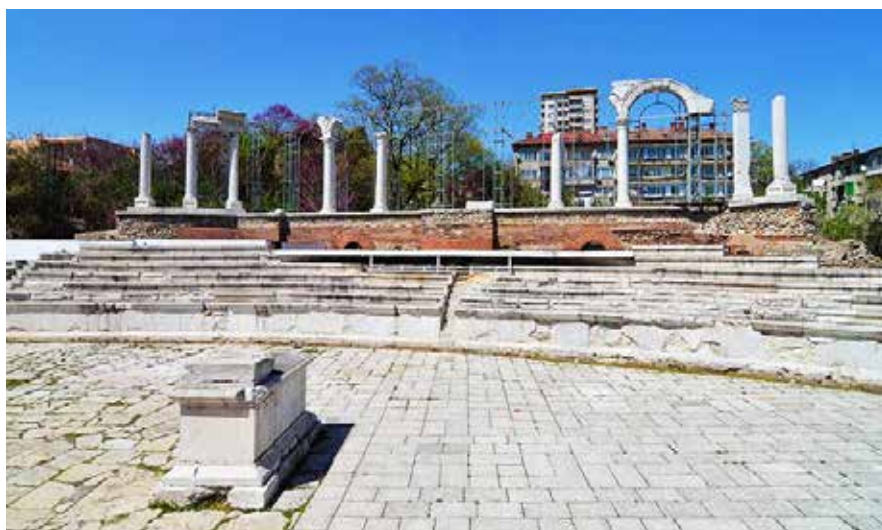


Fig. 16 The thermen-gymnasion with the auditorium/theatron, the plaza in front of them and the base for the equestrian statue in Augusta Traiana-Beroe. After Restoration.

Сл. 16 Термална дворана са гледалиштем/позориштем, трг испред њих и база за коњичку статуу у Августа Трајана-Берое. После рестаурације .

baptisterium in Tuida, copying Gulhanie in Constantinople and similar plans.<sup>38</sup> The list of such literal borrowings can be continued with many other examples from the Balkan provinces.

The other big cities and sites with many excavated basilicas, in some cases combined with a martyrion, and supposedly with the same kind of liturgy, are Pautalia (with at least seven basilicas); Serdica; the hill Tsarevets of Veliko Turnovo (fig. 15); the city on the Perpericon Hill in the Rhodope; the city of Misionis near the modern town of Turgovishte; Marcianopolis, now Devnya; Odessos, now Varna; Zaldapa in South Dobruja (near the village of Abtaat); Durostorum (Silistra); and Nicopolis ad Nestum and its environs (near the modern town Gotse Delchev),<sup>39</sup> The route of the stational liturgy in them is to be specified combining the data from the city and liturgical planning, the liturgical findings and the written sources. Very important among the findings is the liturgical chalice (Pl. 16),<sup>40</sup> an imperial donation of Justinian I and Theodora found

<sup>38</sup> Renate Pillinger et al., *Corpus* 2016, 117-121, Taff. 67, Abb. 190-191.

<sup>39</sup> On the two published basilicas situated outside and relatively near to Nicopolis ad Nestum, see В. Попова, *Две раннохристиянски базилики от околностите на Никополис ад Нестум, Изследвания в чест на Стефан Бояджиев*, София, (2011), 263-294.

<sup>40</sup> М. Даскалов и Б. Думанов, *Метални предмети от периода VI-VII в. във фонда на Исторически музей –Хасково* /Metodi Daskalov and Boyan Dumanov, *Metal Objects from the Period 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> centuries from the Fund of the Historical Museum in Haskovo/*, *Известия на Исторически музей Хасково*, 2, (2003), 193-206, especially 200-201, fig. 4, with references.

in South Bulgaria. It is a splendid Constantinopolitan work gifted to a church or basilica in the province of Rhodope, in whose eastern part Perpericon was the most important bishopric, and Nicopolis ad Nestum in its western part.

The monumental arts from Late Antiquity in the Central and Eastern Balkans demonstrate the usual dominance of mosaics and wall paintings, while sculpture is only on the second place. It is realized mainly in the official imperial cult in the form of equestrian statue of Constantine I or Constantius II placed in front of the auditorium of the thermen-gymnasion of Augusta Traiana-Beroe (fig. 17a-b).<sup>41</sup> Namely Constantius II was given to rule over this part of the Balkans. Only the marble base is preserved, and two coins found under it date very exactly as t. p. q. the statue. It was erected at that plaza probably after a long history of it, after the latest in time banishment of the gladiatorial fights in 4<sup>th</sup> century. It is placed alongside the newly-made street leading from the new southwestern gate to the trade center with shops of the city. Philippopolis and Augusta Traiana were Arian-oriented cities, with Arian bishops at the head at this period, so the initiative to place namely here the statue underlines the role of this place for the official imperial cult and the connection of this dynasty with the second Arian city in Thracia after Philippopolis.

A very unusual female head of a lady (fig. 18) from the court of Constantine I is found in the Late Antique site near Perushtitsa,<sup>42</sup> where the tetraconch of the so-called Red Church, a fourth-century martyrion, has been painted at least twice. The iconography has some features of Helena, but also several differences with her. So, this might be Constantia, the half-sister of the emperor, and wife of Licinius I, very estimated even after the murder of her husband and her son Licinius II. The tragical events with the death of Valens at the battle with Goths at Hadrianopolis has been reflected in the probably post-mortem head of the emperor,<sup>43</sup> with a specific diadem and very mighty face. It was part probably of a full-length statue found in the place called Constatia, previous Simeonovgrad near Haskovo in South Bulgaria. Constantia and Valens are attested with few only monuments and every appearing of a new one is significant for the ancient history, Early Christian religion and art. In case the monument from Rhodope is really a post-mortem portrait, this may point to the concrete place Valens has perished burned by the Goths in a villa. Generally, Constantia/Simeonovgrad is not far from Hadrianopolis, but situated in the northeastern mountainous part of the Rhodope province.

A marble male head was unearthed in Bononia at the Lower Danubian Limes (fig. 20).<sup>44</sup> It was probably representing either Arcadius or Honorius,

<sup>41</sup> Popova, *On the Date and the Interpretation*, 79-80, Pl. II, fig. 1-3; Pl. V, fig. 4; Pl. VII, fig. 1-2.

<sup>42</sup> R. Pillinger, V. Popova, B. Zimmermann, *Corpus der spätantiken und frühchristlichen Wandmalereien Bulgariens*, (Wien), 1999, 53-57, black-and-white fig. 104-114b; colour plates: 61, fig. 103, 106, 107b; Pl. 62, fig. 109-11; Pl. 63, fig. 112-113b.

<sup>43</sup> V. Popova-Moroz, *Late Antique Portrait from Constantia*, Thracia 11, (1995), 463-470.

<sup>44</sup> В. Попова, *Идентификация на официалния римски и ранновизантийски портрет от България*, Изкуство и идеология, Университетско издателство „Св. Климент Охридски“, София, (2011), 171-209, especially 194, with references.



Fig. 17 Late Antique portrait of a lady from the Constantinian milieu a/Portrait head of Arcadius (?) from Bononia. Archive of the Institute for Art Studies Sofia; b/ weight of Pulcheria from Philippopolis.

Сл. 17 Касноантички портрет даме из Константиновског милвеа а/Портрет главе Аркадија (?) из Бононије. Архив Института за студије уметности Софија; б/ Пулхерија из Филипопоља



Fig. 18 tomb stele of the vicarius Alexander

Сл. 18 Стела викара Александра



Fig. 19 The silver ring of Vitalianus from Northeastern Bulgaria. Varna Archaeological Museum.

Сл. 19 Сребрни прстен Виталијана из Северноисточне Бугарске. Археолошки музеј Варне

sculpted in a very good mild manner. Previously Ratiaria was the main city of Dacia Mediterranea, however, at the time of Theodosius I Bononia probably went at the head. This was bust or part of a full-length statue expressing the worshipping of the imperial cult at the moment the Empires became already two, when the Early Byzantium was ruled by Arcadius. This means that the statue is erected in the period 395 (the year of announcing the division) and 408

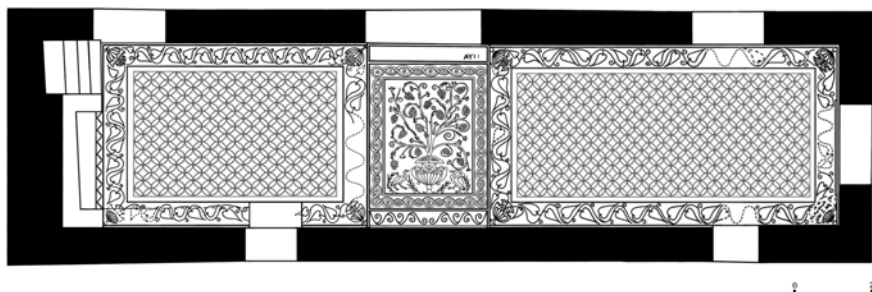


Fig. 20 Parthicopolis, the Cathedral basilica, nartex, mosaic pavements. A. Dimitrov.

Сл. 20 Партикопол. Катедрална базилика, нартекс, мозаички под. А. Димитров

(the year Arcadius died). This portrait should be added to the known already monuments of the Theodosian dynasty from the Balkans revealing a very good metropolitan level of treatment. The same dynasty is represented too by a steel-yard bust-weight of balances showing Pulheria (fig. 21).<sup>45</sup> It is entirely in the iconography and style of Constantinople, obviously officially sent to the market of Philippopolis. It impresses the very good level and detailed iconography of all the official monuments answering the demands of a monument made in the capital.

Another kind of official monuments are the honorary ones devoted to Basilisk in the street for processions, military triumphs and stationary liturgy near the Eastern Gate of Philippopolis, and the statue of Aspar from Augusta Traiana-Beroe.<sup>46</sup> But from the statues have survived only the inscriptions on its bases. These important personalities of the Eastern and Western Empire (a consul, military chieftain and even emperor for a short time) we know from their consular diptychs (fig. 21 left up)<sup>47</sup> and coins. But while Aspar was probably dressed in a toga, particularly the statue of Basilisk can be imagined on the base of his solids in military garments, with helmet and cuirass. Among the military chieftains should be mentioned the famous Vitalianus who caused so many troubles to Constantinople. Recently a silver ring with the same name (fig. 22)<sup>48</sup> has been found in his native lands, now in northeastern Bulgaria. A

<sup>45</sup> S. Cherneva-Tilkiyan, *A little known Bust-Weight from Philippopolis (present-day Plovdiv)*, *Archaeologia bulgarica* 2, 1997, 50-53.

<sup>46</sup> В. Велков, *Градът в Тракия и Дакия през късната античност*, БАН, София, 1959, note 4 on Basiliscos and p. 144 on Aspar.

<sup>47</sup> M. McEvoy, *Becoming Roman?: The Not-So-Curious Case of Aspar and the Ardaburii*, – *Journal of Late Antiquity* 9/2 2, (2016), 483–511; C. Zaccagnino, G. Bevan & A. Gabov, *The Missorium of Ardaburius Aspar: new Considerations on its archaeological and historical Context*, *Archeologia Classica* 63/2, (2012), 419–454; A. Schwarz, *Barbarian Consules in Late Antiquity. Immigrants and their Descendants as Bearers of the consular Office*, eds. J. Drauschke, E. Kislinger, K. Kühtreiber, T. Kühtreiber & G. Scharrer, *Lebenswelten zwischen Archäologie und Geschichte. Festschrift für Falko Daim zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*. Monographien des RGZM 150, Mainz, (2018), 349-356.

<sup>48</sup> A. Minchev, *Късноантичен сребърен пръстен с мъжки бюст и надпис Vitalianus от с. Бозвелийско, Варненско, Добруджа 32*, (2017), 127–167/ A. Minchev, *A Late*

trivial portrait of him is shown on the ring. He stayed for long in Philippopolis, taking part in the erecting of the second fortress wall, as a known inscription shows, and often used to organize his political and military plans and raids namely from here.<sup>49</sup>

The merits of the Theodosian dynasty should be especially underlined for the development of pavement mosaics in a new style, probably a creation of the capital workshops. The new puristic, non-figural style<sup>50</sup> should be mentioned on the first place. It was intended to cover vast spaces of the new basilicas and churches, avoiding the pagan mythological representations. There are limited number of mosaics in this style, unearthed during the excavations of the Episcopal basilica of Marcianopolis, in a bath in Augusta Traian-Beroe, in a panel of the south aisle of the Episcopal basilica of Philippopolis (fig. 23), and in the martyrial/cemeterial basilica No 2 in the area of Nicopolis ad Nestum. All they belong to two different phases of the earlier and later rule of Theodosius I. In Constantinople such examples are not found yet, however the extreme high artistic quality of such mosaics, the place in the hinterland of Constantinople and the lack of such mosaics among the locally made ones in Thracia, Moesia, Greece and Macedonia prove the metropolitan origin of the puristic style. There is also a special technique for such non-figural mosaics<sup>51</sup> covering the very impressive basilical space in Philippopolis (fig. 24): the dimensions of each tessera is as twice and more big as the normal one, and the same motif laid by such tesserae is also as twice big as the one made of normal tesserae. By that technique, the masters could advance and cover the pavements more quickly, easier and cheaper because the mosaicists of figural mosaics were paid higher than the one of non-figural mosaics. The origin of this mosaic workshop from the capital may be confirmed also by the second panel of this south aisle mosaic, combining the elements of the 'rainbow style' with the puristic one, and the usual ornamental and geometric motifs, all of highest quality as variety, colour, dimensions, proportions and design.

Two other panels of the mosaics of the same Episcopal basilica in Plovdiv are connected with the way the mosaic inscriptions copy the official Constantinopolitan style of writing, and usually accompanying the building and donation of the imperial family, the patriarch and the separate bishops. This is the panel in the south aisle with the inscription of some bishop<sup>52</sup> whose name is unfortunately not preserved (fig. 25). It is placed in tabula ansata, supported by a short column. Two vessels for wine and oil are flanking the tabula too. This very official episcopal building inscription is placed in the south aisle because namely this bishop has begun the new layer of mosaic decoration from the south aisle, while we can suppose that the main Constantinian building inscription

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*Antique Silver Ring with Male Bust and Inscription Vitalianus from the Village of Bozvelisko, Varna District, Dobrudja, 32, 2017, 203–214.*

<sup>49</sup> М. Боспачиева и В. Коларова, *Пловдив – град върху градовете. Филиппопол-Пултудева-Пълдин*, София 2014, 195.

<sup>50</sup> V. Popova, *The Mosaic Pavements of the Episcopal Basilica in Marcianopolis*, ed. M. Rakocija, Niš and Byzantium XVII, (2019), 97-114.

<sup>51</sup> R. Pillinger et alli., Corpus 2016, Taff. 140, Abb. 364.

<sup>52</sup> Topalilov, *The Impact*.





Fig. 21 The emblem with thiasos of maenads and satyr from a Late Antique building in Augusta Traiana-Beroe. Regional Historical Museum in Stara Zagora.

Сл. 21 Амблем са менадама и сатиром из позноантичке грађевине у Августу Трајани-Берое. Регионални историјски музеј Старе Загоре.

was in front of the nave and its earlier mosaics, replaced later by a third in turn mosaic level on the same place of the nartex. This time it was made probably in the time of Marcian in the bejewelled style (fig. 26),<sup>53</sup> showing a cabochon decorated with precious stones, and representing in the centre a splendid peacock, surrounded by other birds, flowers and vessels in extremely picturesque colours. The peacock is placed against the east, not to the west to the visitors in the atrium of the basilica. The reason is that the peacock and the whole central panel is facing the bishop standing at the central entrance and receiving the acclamations of the Christians during the so-called 'Small Entrance'. The nartex of the Episcopal basilica of Sandanski (fig. 27) is covered with the vine raising from a vase with flanking birds and remnants of a building inscription, also in *tabula ansata* at the doorstep. This composition shows again the place of the

<sup>53</sup> This style is rarely mentioned in the literature on ancient mosaics. As a whole, it is applied only as separate motifs and colour treatment, and combined with other styles.

bishop waiting for the deacon to bring the Bible from the diaconikon or from the skeuofilakion, and for the gathering of the Christians in the atrium and the narthex, after that the clergy is entering the nave and chancel, the laity men parting to the south aisle, the women to the north one or the gallery, and the catechumens allowed to attend partly the rituals in the narthex (?) up to a definite moment, dismissed afterward and the door of the nave closed.

Augusta Traiana-Beroe demonstrates a very interesting mosaic relating to the time of Julian and representing a part of the Dionysiac thiasos (fig. 28)<sup>54</sup>. It is considered that such mosaics reflect the private life of the Constantinopolitan dignitaries in Late Antiquity, especially during season banquets (late autumn and early spring when the traditional Dionysos holidays have been celebrated) accompanied by theatre and mythological performances in the spirit of the classical *paideia*.<sup>55</sup> The brilliant picturesque renaissance of such pagan iconographies and style were typical for the elite of Constantinople and Thracia, but also for the whole Eastern Mediterranean world during the rule of Julian and generally Late Antiquity. Again in Augusta Traiana-Beroe can be observed another rare for Thracia phenomenon, the preliminary sinopia-like preparatory design of a male portrait of the vicarius Alexander (fig. 21, left below) made for his tomb stele, and a stele of a young girl named Anna represented in the paradise (fig. 21, right up).<sup>56</sup> These Late Antique portraits remind the graffiti-like representations in Aquileia and Rome, the tombs and catacomb portraits in both empires from 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century, but most of all the portraits of San Vitale of the civil and church magistrates next to Justinian (fig. 21, right below). Similar to the sculptural portraits, the iconography and style are entirely metropolitan. In spite of the preparatory technique, concerning the quality of its design and portrait, it can be compared on the ground of its artistic value and verism to the wall mosaic portraits of San Vitale. The sinopia-like essence maybe prompts the presence of an itinerary metropolitan mosaicist of wall and vault mosaics in Augusta Traiana, invited to decorate some basilica or church, and occasionally asked to do the tomb stele, not typical for the city.

The Late Antique wall paintings from the Balkans decorate some martyria, numerous basilicas and churches, mausoleums, crypts and tombs of the clergy and the elite. The monuments are already gathered together in the Corpus of Late Antique and Early Christians wall paintings from Bulgaria<sup>57</sup> and in separate publications from Rumania, Serbia, Makedonia, Greece and Turkey.<sup>58</sup> The choice of schemes and figural scenes depends to a greater degree

<sup>54</sup> Pillinger et al. *Corpus* 2016, 152-158.

<sup>55</sup> Ö. Dalgıç, *The Triumph of Dionysos, in Constantinople: A Late Fifth-Century Mosaic in Context*, DOP 69, (2015), 15-48.

<sup>56</sup> К. Калчев, *Проникване и разпространение на ранното християнство в Августа Траяна/Берое (дн. Стара Загора) през IV-V в.*, В: Крпштохристиянство и религиозен синкретизъм на Балканите, София 2002, 31-34.

<sup>57</sup> Pillinger et al., *Corpus* 1999.

<sup>58</sup> see also I. Gargano, *The Evidences of Christianity in Viminacium: a Study of historical Sources, Epigraphy, and funerary Art*, eds. I. Topalilov and Biser Georgiev, *Studia academica Šumenensia*, vol. 3. *Transition from Late Paganism to Early Christianity in Architecture and Art in the Balkans*, (2016), 11-29, fig. 6-7; J. Murešan, *The Painted Roman*

on the function of the building and the belonging of the workshop to a definite tradition. Alongside with the general characteristics of the Early Christian art, it can be supposed that at least in the case of the martyrium at Perushtitsa<sup>59</sup>; the martyrium of Augusta Traiana-Beroe with tetraconch with tombs (one of them no 2 with liturgical inscription, citing psalm 131/132)<sup>60</sup>; the crypt in the basilica of Voden<sup>61</sup>; at the end, the recently excavated more than 5 mausoleums of bishops(?) in Perperikon<sup>62</sup>, the influence of the martyrial cults and cemeterial art of Constantinople can be felt, especially of the translatio of relics, the burials of bishops and of representatives of the elite in St. Apostles of Constantinople.

### Conclusions

The city planning and separate buildings and installations of the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire served for centuries as examples to be copied, as sign of supreme prestige and highest metropolitan culture and art, especially during the Constantinian, Theodosian and Justinianic ruling. A lot of new techniques and styles have been created in the capital in architecture, mosaic, jewellery etc. But Constantinople played also the role of legislator and lawgiver in the sphere of the stationary liturgy and the decoration of the Early Christian buildings. The stationary liturgy was already a distinctive feature of Early Byzantium and its city life, including the Balkan landscape. The religious system and structure consisted of complex abstract theological notions, such as the name of God as Sophia and Eirene, up to the splendid separate liturgical objects such as the silver and golden chalice expressing the court and ceremonial spirit and character of culture. Besides, the New Rome was the distributor of new modes in culture and art created in the provinces, for instance of the Syrian 'rainbow' style, spreading it further in the Balkan lands, after a significant modification. This has resulted in a monumentality, serenity and richness of culture and art not known before.

In that sense the process of urbanization and cosmopolitanism of the Balkans from the Roman times has continued, going deeper and intensified, however namely as a Christian culture, and mainly in the cities, monasteries and the centres of pilgrimage. All the mentioned types of city culture and art are now more evenly distributed in the Balkans covering even remoted or difficult to access areas such as Zaldapa and Rhodope's inside previously uncivilized. The

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*Tomb on the lower Danube. Aspects regarding the Crossover from Paganism to Christianity in funerary Symbolism*, eds. I. Topalilov and Biser Georgiev, *Studia academica Šumenensia*, vol. 3. Transition from Late Paganism to Early Christianity in Architecture and Art in the Balkans, (2016), 125-153, with many illustrations and references; E. Dimitrova, *The Painterly Horizons of the Frescoes of the Episcopal Basilica: Iconographic Design, Symbolic Configuration, Stylistic Modularity*, *Early Christian Wall Paintings from the Episcopal Basilica in Stobi, Stobi (Haemus)*, (2012), 21-36.

<sup>59</sup> R. Pillinger et al. *Corpus* 1999, 53-57.

<sup>60</sup> *Op. cit.*, Taff. 14, Abb. 64; Taff. 16; Colour Taff. 58, Abb. 65.

<sup>61</sup> *Op. cit.*, 34, Taff. 58, Abb. 57.

<sup>62</sup> The mausoleums are just announced and unpublished, excavated in 2020-2021.



Christian culture in them is usually of the highest level following the metropolitan samples realized either by direct import of elements, or by the presence of such artisans or of local workshops under its influence. While in the Roman period the Balkans were only episodically involved in the cultural processes, now the spreading of new styles and iconographies is almost immediate since Constantinople is on a stone's throw or maximum one-day-coasting. Thracia and the Western

Black Sea littoral were always stronger influenced by Constantinople from the very beginning, while Macedonia and Dacia have been involved in that process mainly since the middle of 5<sup>th</sup> century. The ancient forms of art in official portraiture (bust, full-length statue, equestrian statue), and the inherited from the Roman period mosaic and wall paintings' schemes, motifs and scenes were used in the Balkans as paidea for more than 300 years, but each time modified or transformed according to the Early Christian notions, with the exception of the holidays to the wine, Dionysos and theatre performances privately.

The provincial culture and art of the Balkans are the mirror of the artistic and cultural processions in Constantinople unfortunately not preserved or still not attested in it. Many times the historical and military events have led to serious troubles, revolts, sieges and wars in which the Balkans and the capital stand against each other. However, the exchange of culture and art between Constantinople and the Late Antique Balkans has ceased only in several relatively short crucial periods of political, economic, natural and demographic catastrophes. Generally, the Late Antique/ Early Christian period of Constantinople assured one of the most brilliant peak period of development of the Central and Eastern Balkan lands unknown before in culture and art, due to the new capital's artistic potential of the Eastern Mediterranean in comparison to the surrendered to the barbarians Rome.

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УТИЦАЈ ЦАРИГРАДА НА ПОЗНОАНТИЧКУ КУЛТУРУ И УМЕТНОСТ  
ЦЕНТРАЛНОГ И СЕВЕРОИСТОЧНОГ БАЛКАНА

Источни делови Балкана представљају укрсницу утицаја Рима и Цариграда, иако је постепено улога патријарха у Новом Риму јачала и његов утицај и улога цариградске литургије постају суштински од друге половине 5. из 6. века. Урбано планирање на централном и источном Балкану указује на споре промене али све веће присуство цариградске Литургије. Примери римског утицаја могу се пратити у плановима и литургији најранијих базилика у Филипопољу и Партикопољу. Замена новим утицајем Цариграда десила се у другој половини 5. века у катедралној базилици (базилика бр. 4) Партикопоља, на њеном централном тргу испред ове базилике, недалеко од новог скевофилакиона, уз употребу агијазме за термалну и хладну минералну воду у литургији. У Филипопољу се утицај престонице осећа у крипти, пре свега у новом типу литургијског мобилијара, амвону, синтронону, у мозаичком натпису, начину писања, као и посебном мозаичком темом везаном за „Мали вход“.

Када је у питању званична портретура, присутни су портрети Константина, Валентинијана и Теодосија и њиховог периода владавине. Осим у мермеру, њихови портрети су приказани у бронзи. Утицај званичних маузолеја и сахрањивања административне и црквене елите у цркви Светих Апостола у Цариграду вероватно је остварен у постојању осам касноантичких маузолеја у Перперикону. Тракија и Западно Црноморско приморје као непосредно залеђе престонице све чешће и потпуније опонашају примере Цариграда, на пример у Месемврији, Залдапи, Филипопољу и Августу Трајани, али и у Сердици у Јустинијановом периоду, посебно у Св. Софији у Сердици.