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DACIA MEDITERRANEA AND MACEDONIA SECUNDA
IN THE SIXTH CENTURY: A QUESTION OF INFLUENCE
ON CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

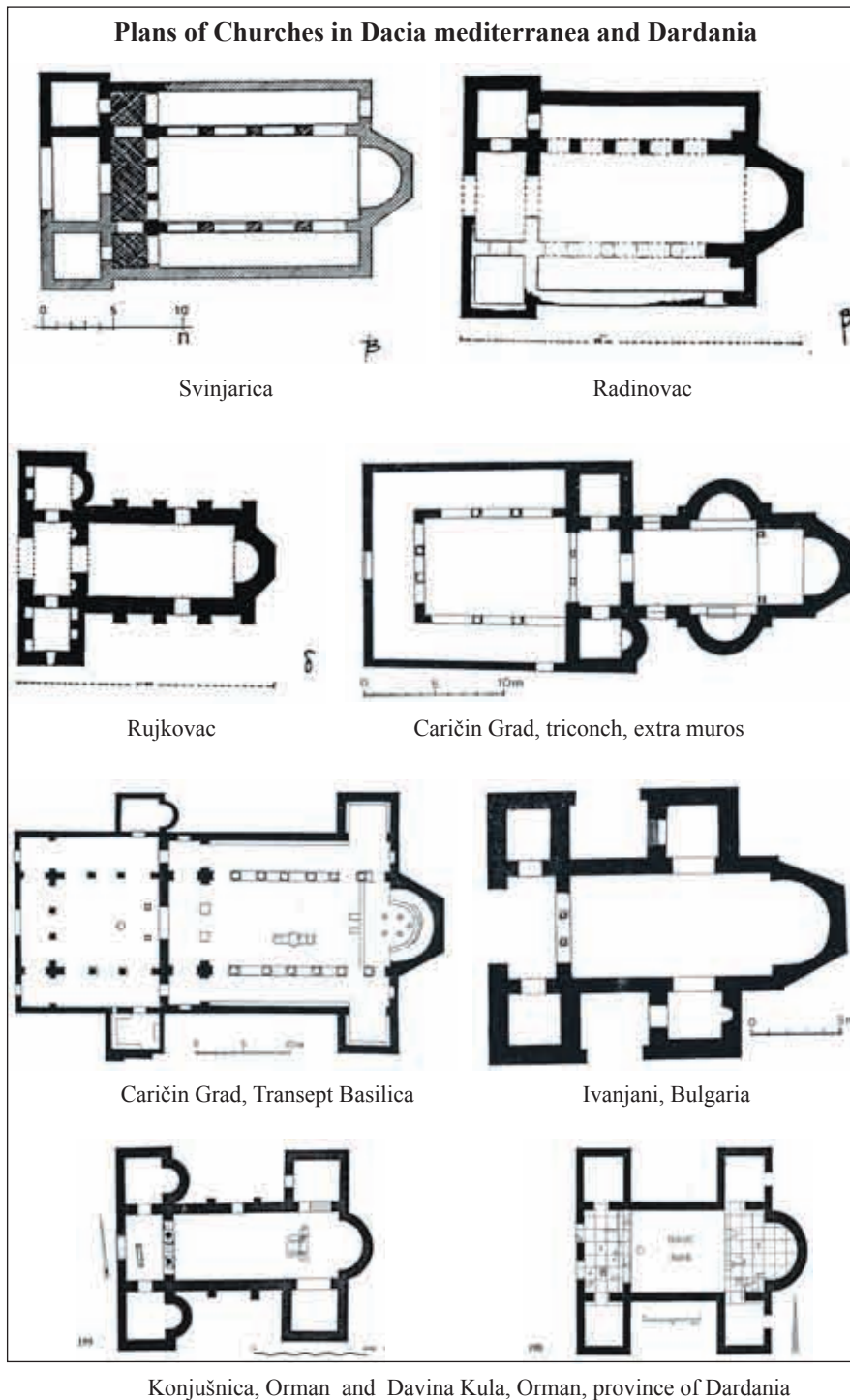
This paper examines an architectural and historical question, but it also explores the propriety of asking certain questions about history and architectural or ecclesiastical influence.

Introduction

In spring of 2004, the organizers of the Niš and Byzantium conference very kindly invited me to participate in Niš and Byzantium III to be held in June 2004. I hesitated to accept, on the grounds that my expertise lay further to the south and, although several intriguing questions about the monuments of Late Antique Niš were known to me, I really did not feel confident enough in my knowledge about the city to participate intelligently in the conference. Persuaded, however, by the value of the opportunity to learn about and to visit the monuments of Naissus, I finally accepted the invitation and looked for a legitimate connection between Macedonia, the focus of my research, and the region of Niš. It seems to me that, if only for the sake of those librarians who will eventually catalogue the *Acta* of a conference, one should connect one's contribution as closely as possible with its theme.

In the Roman empire, Naissus was a city within the province of Moesia superior. In Late Antiquity it was located in Dacia Mediterranea, one of the provinces of the Diocese of Dacia which, together with the Diocese of Macedonia to the south, formed the Prefecture of Eastern Illyricum. Although it served as a link on the major north-south route between the Aegean Sea and central Europe, the position of Naissus in the Latin-speaking Diocese of Dacia as well as natural geographical divisions would have separated it from the Greek-speaking Diocese of Macedonia to the south; the capital of Dacia Mediterranea, Serdica (Sofia in modern Bulgaria), lay to the east, on the way to Constantinople. Macedonia, with access to the Mediterranean Sea and crossed by the influential Via Egnatia, seemed another very different world.

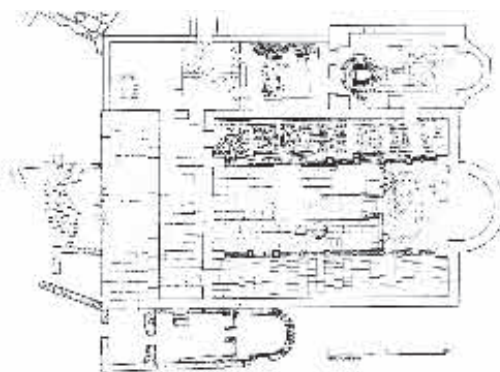
Ca. 45 km to the south of Niš, however, and near the putative boundary between the provinces of Dacia mediterranea and Dardania, lies the site



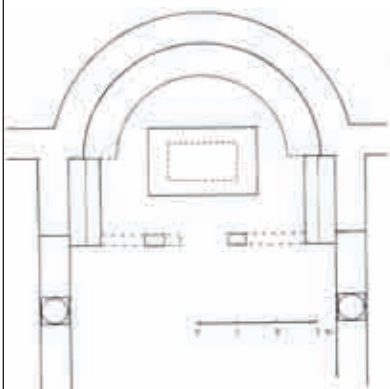
Plans of Churches in Macedonia secunda



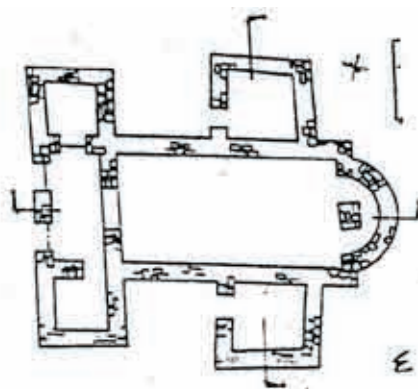
Mak. Kamenica, Begov Dab



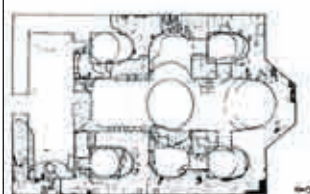
Bargala, Episcopal Basilica



Palikura Basilica, near Stobi, plan of Phase II presbyterium, reconstructed



Golem Grad, Lake Prespa



Krupište, cruciform church



Krupište, under Sv. Nikola



Krupište, church with three apses

of Caričin Grad, frequently if still not with certainty identified as Justiniana Prima, the birthplace of the emperor Justinian I as well as of Justin I. In the 6th century, Justinian's creation of the archbishopric of Justiniana Prima shifted the balance of power, although less so than Justinian had hoped, since the seat of the Prefect of Eastern Illyricum and thus the civil administrative power remained in Thessaloniki in the province of Macedonia (Prima). The province of Macedonia Secunda, however, fell under the ecclesiastical control of the new archbishopric to its north in the year 535 AD.

The history of Macedonia secunda—and even the existence of a province of that name—is based on a tiny number of sources and is full of uncertainties. Although it may have existed earlier, the province was first mentioned by Marcellinus Comes in the *Chronicon* for the year 482 and again for 517. As discussed below, in *Novella* 11 Macedonia secunda was listed among the territories subject to the archbishop of Justiniana Prima. Hierokles, *Synekdemos* 641, 1-9, listed eight cities in the province, of which only three, Stobi the capital, Argos, and Bargala can be identified with any certainty. The province clearly included the northern part of Macedonia, but its precise dates, territory, and boundaries are subject to dispute.¹

In 535 A.D., in his law *Novella* 11, titled *De privilegiis archiepiscopi primae iustinianae* or *Concerning the rights of the archbishop of Justiniana Prima*, Justinian honored his birthplace by establishing there an archiepiscopal seat, and he defined the status and jurisdiction of the new archbishop. This law constituted an attack against the power of the archbishop of Thessaloniki and through him against the Pope in Rome. Catelianus, the newly created archbishop of Justiniana Prima, received ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the provinces of 1) Dacia mediterranea itself (hence one of the arguments that Justiniana Prima was located in Dacia mediterranea), 2) Dacia ripensis, 3) Moesia secunda, 4) Dardania, 5) Praevalitana, 6) Macedonia secunda, and 7) part of Pannonia secunda, i.e., he acquired ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the Diocese of Dacia with minor additions. A brief historical summary in the *Novella* includes the establishment of the seat of the Prefect of Eastern Illyricum in Sirmium and its transfer to Thessaloniki after the destruction of Sirmium (440s). Justinian assumed, erroneously as it turned out, that the prefect would move from Thessaloniki to Justiniana Prima along with the new archbishop.

Ten years later, however, in the year 545 AD, *Novella* 131, *De ecclesiasticis titulis*, or *Ecclesiastical honors and positions*, was issued. Chapter 3 of this law summarized the status and jurisdiction of the archbishop of Justiniana Prima and reaffirmed his high position but made him also a papal vicar;² the province of Macedonia Secunda, however, was now missing from his jurisdiction. Nothing is known beyond the lack of mention of Macedonia secunda in

¹ For a detailed discussion of Macedonia secunda and its uncertainties with sources and bibliography, see F. Papazoglou, *Les villes de Macédoine à l'époque romaine*, *BCH Suppl.* 16, Athens 1988, 94-98.

² For a discussion of the position of the archbishop of Justiniana Prima and his status after 545 as a papal vicar, see R. A. Markus, *Carthage – Prima Justiniana – Ravenna: An Aspect of Justinian's Kirchenpolitik*, *Byzantion* 49 (1979), 277-302.

connection with the authority of the archbishop of Justiniana Prima in the year 545 AD; in fact, the province vanishes entirely from our sources. Macedonia secunda could have been omitted from Novella 131 by scribal error, it could have continued to function as a province for another half century, it could have been subsumed into another province or provinces. We simply do not know and probably shall never know with certainty.

So there was a brief period in the second quarter of the 6th century, during which Macedonia secunda was listed as being under the ecclesiastical control of the archbishop of Justiniana Prima and therefore presumably more subject to religious influences from the north than at any other time. The question here is whether it is possible to see traces of that influence in the church architecture of the province of Macedonia secunda.

There are several difficulties in the way of answering that question. But, to my surprise and interest, after the presentation at the conference of a short and very architecturally focused version of the discussion below, a number of colleagues questioned the validity of the question, specifically, that because of the new ecclesiastical administration, influence from Justiniana Prima might be seen in the church architecture in Macedonia secunda to the south. The objections, if I understood them correctly, were, firstly, that influence always came from the south to the north and therefore no influence from the north would have been exerted on Macedonia secunda, and, secondly, the recurring issue of whether or not one could expect to find archaeological or architectural evidence to confirm a known historical event.

In the Balkan Peninsula, the assumption that influence normally came from the south is usually correct. Evidence for the brisk movement of ideas along the Via Egnatia in both directions, east to west and west to east, seems fairly clear, along with the corollary that new ideas quickly reached harbor towns as well. But cities in the hinterland tended to receive news somewhat later and sometimes in garbled form. Even provincial capitals, e.g., Stobi in Macedonia secunda, located on a major north-south route along the Vardar River but north of the Via Egnatia and its cities, shows architectural features and decorative motifs that may be interpreted as simplified versions of ones known further south, e.g., in Veroia, Thessaloniki, and Philippi. On the other hand, it is difficult if not impossible for us to judge the extent to which the new archbishop of Justiniana Prima, established and supported by the emperor, might have influenced the bishops and cities under his jurisdiction.

The second objection brings us back to the recurring problem of attempting to correlate historical and archaeological evidence. It is always a temptation for an archaeologist to connect, for example, a destruction dated to the third quarter of the 3rd century with the Herulians, or one dated to the second half of the 5th century with Theodoric. The question being asked here is somewhat more complicated. The Hellenized territory of Macedonia secunda had been oriented toward the south for centuries; its churches—as described below—clearly belong to the Aegean world. Would its detachment from the Diocese of Macedonia and its placement under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of an arch-

bishop in a newly built city in a northern province have any effect on its church architecture? And is it a legitimate scholarly task to choose an historical event and then to look for visible consequences of that event in architecture?

*The architectural comparison*³

As noted above, several difficulties stand in the way of considering the this question. The first is that of defining the boundaries of both provinces; in numerous places, neither ancient sources nor geographical features allow precision in defining boundaries of either Dacia mediterranea or Macedonia secunda.⁴

The second difficulty is chronological. Except in the rare cases where an inscription provides a precise date, usually neither ceramic nor numismatic evidence is able to provide more than a *terminus post quem* or a period of perhaps a quarter century for the date of construction of a Late Antique building or its renovation; the date of numerous buildings is floating within as much as a century. A related issue is that the majority of churches in the province(s) of Macedonia, with a few exceptions earlier and later, were built between ca. 460 and the middle of the 6th century; by the time the churches at Caričin Grad were completed, relatively little new ecclesiastical construction was going on further south.

Thirdly, when one thinks of the church architecture of the province of Dacia mediterranea, one tends to look first at Caričin Grad. If we accept the identification as Justiniana Prima,⁵ we might assume that interactions with the new archbishop would have taken place at the new city and that visiting church officials would have had opportunity to observe the buildings there. If, however, construction at Caričin Grad began only after *Novella* 11 was issued in the year 535 AD, it seems quite likely that the city would have been a busy and confusing construction site for at least a decade after 535; how much architectural influence it could have exerted in that state remains uncertain.

A related question is whether the churches of Caričin Grad and vicinity are typical of the ecclesiastical architecture of Dacia mediterranea. No simple

³ The most useful collection of plans I have employed is the unpublished dissertation of Iannis Varalis, *Η επιδραση της θειας λειτουργιας και των ιερων ακολουθιων στην εκκλησιαστικη αρχιτεκτονικη του Ανατολικου Ιλλυρικου (395-753)*, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2001. V. Lilčić has provided a collection of plans from around the empire in his *Ranohristijanska crkva*, Skopje 2003, 182-232. A third collection of plans of churches in the Republic of Macedonia may be found in B. Aleksova and V. Lilčić, *Ranohristijanski crkvi vo Makedonija. Istraženi i registrirani crkvi na terenot*, and V. Lilčić and V. Iljoska, *Katalog na ranohristijanskite crkvi vo Republika Makedonija*, Makedonsko Nasledstvo 5, Skopje 1997, 10-38.

⁴ I was somewhat amused to discover that the site of Golemo Gradište at Konjuh, in the Republic of Macedonia, where I have been conducting excavations for several years and which displays two interesting and unusual Early Byzantine churches, is described as being located in the province of Dacia mediterranea, Dardania, or Macedonia secunda, depending on which scholar one consults.

⁵ As we shall do for the sake of argument in this paper.

answer to this question can be found. The churches of the city do share a number of the characteristics of the church buildings of *Dacia mediterranea* described below, but at the same time they form a heterogeneous and rather odd group.⁶

If we examine the churches of the province of *Dacia mediterranea*, the usual rather mixed picture appears. The three aisle basilica with eastern apse and narthex at west remains the most common type. In contrast to the church architecture of the Diocese of Macedonia, however, the basilicas show more examples of apses three-sided on the exterior, of basilicas displaying three eastern apses rather than a single central one, of piers rather than columns dividing the aisles from the nave, of double narthexes, and of narthexes clearly divided into three separate parts. The number of one aisle churches is relatively large, and they appear in several types, ranging from the very simple one room church with eastern apse to more elaborate types with lateral exedras and rooms extending from the north and south sides of the narthex. There are several examples of an elongated apse attached to a basilica or other type of church, but frequently the presbyterium takes up a relatively short space at the east end of the nave and the chancel barrier runs straight across the nave. Synthrona with one or more steps were often built into the apse, while the lateral synthrona found further south are few. The presence of an atrium to the west of the church is rare, except at Caričin Grad where six of the churches display atria.

The church architecture of Macedonia secunda—and, to a considerable extent, of the Diocese of Macedonia—is significantly more homogeneous. The three aisle basilica with semicircular eastern apse—sometimes with exterior buttresses—and western narthex is without question the predominant building type and was used in perhaps 85 percent of the known churches.⁷ Annexes are usually attached to the ends of the narthex and sometimes to the side walls of the church. The urban churches of Stobi, which was the capital of Macedonia secunda, displayed atria; in fact, in both Macedonia prima and secunda, atria were more frequently attached to churches in large cities.

As was the case in many three aisle basilicas in *Dacia mediterranea* as well, the division between exterior space and interior space was the west wall of the narthex; communication between the narthex and the nave and aisles was relatively free, without actual doors. In Macedonia secunda, however, rows of columns rather than piers divided the nave from the aisles. Sometimes parapet screen slabs were placed between the columns on the stylobate and in one example, again at Stobi, screen slabs stood on a separate stylobate in the aisle. The chancel screen dividing the presbyterium from the nave was often pi-shaped,

⁶ At least two detailed analyses of the churches of Caričin Grad have been published; see Vladislav Popović, *La signification historique de l'architecture religieuse de Tsarichin Grad*, XXVI Corso di cultura ravennate e bizantina, Ravenna 1979, 249-311; and C. Snively, *Justiniana Prima (Caričin Grad)*, Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum, XIX (Bonn 1999) cols. 638-667.

⁷ In the three aisle basilicas of *Dacia mediterranea*, the interior width of nave and aisles is usually 90 to 100 percent of the interior length of the nave or aisles; a few exceptions include the Acropolis Basilica at Caričin Grad and a basilica at Buhovo in Bulgaria. I had expected to find that the three aisle basilicas in Macedonia were longer and narrower, as is the case at Stobi, but in fact several churches display nave and aisles wider than their length.

and seats for the clergy sometimes appeared on the sides of the presbyterium, sometimes in the apse. The standard location for the altar was just west of the chord of the apse, i.e., outside the apse in the presbyterium proper.

It may be instructive to glance briefly at the province of Dardania, located in part between *Dacia mediterranea* and *Macedonia secunda*. Dardania, a Latin-speaking region and one of the provinces of the Diocese of Dacia, not surprisingly displays ecclesiastical architecture more similar to that of Dacia than to that of Macedonia.

Of the features in Macedonian churches that might indicate influence from the north, we shall examine three: the short presbyterium, the apse that is three-sided or polygonal on the exterior, and a one aisle church of unusual form.

In the Palikura Basilica, near Stobi, the final phase of the presbyterium, as reconstructed from old photographs and the description provided by the excavator,⁸ took up a small amount of space at the east end of the nave. The presbyterium included lateral synthrona as well as a one step synthronon or semicircular platform in the apse, but the chancel screen ran straight across the nave at the west ends of the lateral synthrona and the altar stood partly within the apse. The Palikura Basilica cannot be dated closely, but architectural sculpture from the final phase points to the middle or even later 6th century.

Such an arrangement is rare in Macedonia, although the altar stood in a similar position, partway into the apse, in the three aisle basilica at Begov Dab, Makedonska Kamenica.⁹ There the apse seems to have been pulled into the nave; it protrudes only slightly beyond the east wall of the church. The building dates to the 6th century.

Although there are other possibilities,¹⁰ the best parallel in *Dacia mediterranea* for the short presbyterium is the Transept Basilica at Caričin Grad, where the chancel screen runs straight across the nave, a semicircular synthronon is attached to the interior of the apse wall, and about two thirds of the altar is located within the apse.

A second possible example of northern influence on Macedonia is the appearance of the polygonal apse. This feature appears in a church at Kruševo¹¹ (not illustrated) and in three churches at the village of Krupište as well as in the

⁸ D. Hald, *Auf den Trümmern Stobis*, Stuttgart 1917, 31-32, figs. 16-18.

⁹ I. Mikulčić, *Dve ranohrišćanske crkve kod Makedonske Kamenice*, Starinar n.s. 27, Beograd 1976, 181-191. The name of this site seems to suffer some confusion. V. Lilčić refers to it as Gradište, village of Lukovica: *Makedonskiot kamen za bogovite, hristijanite i za život po život*, Skopje 2002, 560-563.

¹⁰ A church at Balajnac in the vicinity of Niš is of interest in this respect; apparently its rather short presbyterium in the first phase was enlarged to the west in the succeeding phase. See, most recently, M. Milinković, *Antiquité Tardive* 3 (1995) 198-200. This whole question of how the presbyterium varies in both size and shape through time as well as among the provinces of Eastern Illyricum would repay re-examination, from the point of view of liturgy as well as archaeology.

¹¹ M. Ivanoski, *Sвето Preobrazenie*, Arheološki Pregled (1988), 201-202. A polygonal apse has also been noted in one of the two churches at Gradok or Markovi Kuli at Čanište in the Prilep region; both are of interest for this discussion but fuller publication and more definite dates are needed; see N. Čausidis, *Nekolku docnoantički gradišta vo Mariovo*, *Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica* 13 (1992), 213-226.

second phase of the baptistery of the Episcopal Basilica at Bargala. At Krupište the cruciform church¹² has a cross in square plan quite similar to that of Hosios David in Thessaloniki, except that its apse is polygonal on the exterior and it preserves a narthex at the west; in this instance, most of the influence comes from the south. The second church at Krupište consists of foundations investigated under the modern church of the village;¹³ the apse of the original building is elongated as well as polygonal, but its date could be Early Byzantine or later. Only the east end of the third church at Krupište has been excavated; it displays a polygonal apse at the end of each of its three aisles, as well as chapels with semicircular apses attached to the north and south aisles, and built pillars rather than columns on the stylobates.¹⁴ All three churches date to the 6th century or later.

At Bargala the second phase of the baptistery may be one of the latest features of the episcopal complex. Located at the northeast corner of the basilica, it replaced an earlier and smaller baptistery with a font located further to the west.¹⁵ The use of the polygonal apse in this renovation reinforces the idea that it should be seen as a late feature in the ecclesiastical architecture of Macedonia secunda.

The polygonal apse had been a standard feature of churches in Constantinople already in the 5th century, e.g., in the Basilica of John Studios and the Chalkoprateia Basilica. It continued to appear in the 6th century in churches such as Ayioi Sergios and Bacchos, Ayios Polyuktos, and Ayia Eirene.¹⁶ With the possible exception of a partly excavated church at Kitros,¹⁷ however, no examples of the three-sided apse are known in Macedonia prima before the 7th or 8th century, so that this feature did not come from the south into Macedonia secunda.¹⁸

A feature that might usefully be explored in this comparison is the use of piers rather than columns of the stylobates, and when the feature appeared in Macedonia secunda; that investigation would require more space than is available here.

On the island of Golem Grad in Lake Prespa, a small (ca. 10 m long) one aisle church displays a semicircular apse, a narthex with attached rooms that

¹² B. Aleksova, *Krupište, Stipsko, Arheološki Istraživanja 1975 i 1981 godina*, Zbornik na Arheološkiot Muzej 10-11, Skopje (1979-82), 85-100.

¹³ Z. Rasolkoska-Nikolovska, *Crkvata Sv. Nikola vo Krupište*, Zbornik na Arheološkiot Muzej 8-9, Skopje (1975-78), 131-155.

¹⁴ B. Aleksova, *Episkopijata na Bregalnica*, Prilep 1989, 88-100. There are apparent similarities in plan to the three aisle church at Čurline, near Niš; see Kondić and Popović, *Caričin Grad. Utvrđeno naselje u Vizantijskom Iliriku*, 1977, 155-156.

¹⁵ B. Aleksova, *Novi istraživanja na baptisteriumot vo Bargala*, Zbornik posveten na Boško Babić, Prilep 1986, 29-38.

¹⁶ Thomas F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy*, 1971.

¹⁷ E. Marki, *Archaiologikon Deltion* 38 (1983) B2, 289 and fig. 10.

¹⁸ There are a few examples in the province of Thracia, but mostly at or near Diocletianoupolis/Hisar, and therefore not likely to exert direct influence on Macedonia secunda. See, however, the discussion by Popovic, *XXVI Corso di cultura ravennate e bizantina*, Ravenna, 1979, 261.

extend to the north and south beyond the side walls of the church, and two additional lateral rooms attached to the side walls of the church and accessible only from the exterior. The extent of the presbyterium is unclear, but the altar stood within the apse. The church is dated to the 6th century.¹⁹

If one looks strictly at the general plan and shape of the church and not at the communication among the parts, a number of similar churches may be found. One is located in Bulgaria, at Ivanjani.²⁰ Two more are found at separate sites near Orman, Skopje, in the province of Dardania.²¹ The reason that one hesitates to make any connections between the church at Golem Grad and ones just cited²² is that communication among the nave, the lateral rooms, the exterior, and the space between the two sets of lateral rooms seems to be different in each example.

The results of this comparison and of the attempt to find influence from Dacia mediterranea on the church architecture of Macedonia can best be described—at this stage—as inconclusive. It is possible, however, that the new orientation toward the north explains a number of 6th century architectural and decorative features in the cities of Macedonia Secunda, influenced not only by the architecture of Caričin Grad itself but also by that of older northern centers such as Naissus and Serdica. One can point to suggestive features in Macedonia, e.g., the short presbyterium, the three-sided apse, and the use of piers rather than columns, although they do not provide actual proof of northern influence. This study has also pointed to several sites and to that period, not definitely dated but probably in the 540s or the middle of the 6th century, when a few churches were still being erected and careful renovations being carried out—before the long slide into increasingly poor repairs and eventual abandonment and destruction.

I would conclude, therefore, because this investigation has shown the possibility of influence from the north and has provided directions for further investigation of the ecclesiastical architecture of both Dacia mediterranea and Macedonia secunda as well as some broader issues of Early Byzantine architecture in the Balkans, that the search for architectural evidence for a change in ecclesiastical administration was a legitimate topic to raise and examine.

¹⁹ V. Bitrakova Grozdanova, *Iskopuvanjata na Golem Grad od 1981 do 1986. godina*, *Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica* 10 (1985-1986) [1989], 101-133.

²⁰ R. F. Hoddinott, *Bulgaria in Antiquity. An Archaeological Introduction*, 1975, 279, fig. 75. In fact, a second one is also found in Bulgaria, at Crkvište (Klise-Kuoi) near Pirdop, but apparently outside of Dacia mediterranea in the province of Thracia; see Hoddinott, *Bulgaria in Antiquity*, 279.

²¹ For the church at Konjušnica, see B. Aleksova, *Ranohristijanska bazilika od krstoviden tip vo s. Orman, Skopsko*, *Zbornik na Arheološkiot Muzej* 10-11, Skopje (1979-1982), 77-84; for the one at Davina Kula, see Lilčić, *Ranohristijanska crkva*, Skopje 2003, 99.

²² As well as with cruciform churches like Church B at Caričin Grad.

Каролин С. Снајвли

СРЕДЊА ДАКИЈА И ДРУГА МАКЕДОНИЈА У ШЕСТОМ ВЕКУ: ПИТАЊЕ
УТИЦАЈА НА ЦРКВЕНУ АРХИТЕКТУРУ

У касно-античком периоду Наисус се налазио у северном делу Префектуре Источног Илирика, у провинцији Средње Дакије, у Дакијској дијецези. Мада је био једно од чворишта на главном путу између Егејског мора на југу и централне Европе на северу, модерне политичке границе и непроменљиве географске поделе учиниле су да Ниш, као и Наисус некада, буде више окренут и више утицаја испољава према северу него према југу. Македонија, на обалама Медитерана и пресечена утицајном саобраћајницом *Via Egnatia*, изгледала је као сасвим други свет. Међутим, у VI веку, када је Јустинијан подигао архиепископију *Justiniana Prima*, равнотежа снага се померила, иако можда не онолико колико се Јустинијан надао, будући да је седиште префекта Источног Илирика остало у Солуну. Провинција Друге Македоније потпала је под контролу нове архиепископије на северу. Архитектура Царичиног града није одражавала најновија достигнућа из Константинопоља, па се може поставити питање до ког степена је овај град утицао на архитектуру провинција под његовом црквеном контролом. Ипак, могуће је да се овим новим фокусирањем на север објасни један број архитектонских и декоративних карактеристика VI века у градовима Друге Македоније, на које није утицала прилично неодређена архитектура самог Царичиног града, већ архитектура старијих центара на северу, као што је Наисус.

