
Carolyn S. Snively

GOLEMO GRADIŠTE AT KONJUH,
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA: PROLEGOMENA TO THE
STUDY OF A LATE ANTIQUE FORTIFICATION

In Paris in 1899 Gabriel Millet¹ published a book on the monastery at Daphni, *Le monastère de Daphni*. The monastic complex is located ca. 10 km west of Athens, Greece, on the Sacred Way to Eleusis. In the first chapter of the book, he discussed the early Byzantine remains, which include a ca. 100 meter square fortified enclosure with a gate. Millet argued that the 6th century remains had belonged to an early monastery, although he noted that the square plan, the entrance through a tower, and others towers projecting from the enclosure wall were reminiscent of Justinianic fortifications. More recently, scholars have suggested that the Early Byzantine complex at Daphni was built as a fortified enclosure, monastic or otherwise, that guarded the pass and a major road into the city of Athens, or even that there are no Early Byzantine remains on the site at all.²

The refortification of the Balkans in the 6th century by emperor Justinian I—who frequently gets credit for the refortification efforts of his 5th century predecessors as well—has been much discussed in the scholarly literature but, at least for the Prefecture of Eastern Illyricum, the discussions have not provided answers to many of our questions. The differences in plan as well as in quality and techniques of construction in fortifications described as Justinianic not only suggest local initiatives and raise chronological questions but also make it difficult to draw conclusions about the overall organization of such a massive effort. Procopius' book describing the constructions of Justinian, i.e.,

¹ I express my thanks to the organizers of the international symposium Niš and Byzantium IV, in honor of Gabriel Millet, for the opportunity to present this paper on our work at the fortified site of Golemo Gradište, Konjuh; Late Antique fortifications have been a recurring theme in these symposia and seem to have been among the many interests of Millet. I also express my gratitude to Gettysburg College, which has supported archaeological research at Golemo Gradište since 1998.

² G. Fowden, "City and mountain in Late Roman Attica," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 108 (1988), 58-59; idem, "The Athenian Agora and the progress of Christianity," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 3 500, note 38; Ch. Bouras, in *Aetos: Studies in honour of Cyril Mango*, 1998.

De aedificiis or *Buildings*, tends to increase rather than lessen the uncertainties.³ Procopius mentions the reconstruction of the city of Niš, which he calls *Naisoupolis*, together with the rebuilding of Serdica, Germae, and Pautalia and, of course, the construction of the new city of Justiniana Prima at the emperor's birthplace,⁴ but scholarly attempts to identify known fortified places in the region from Procopius' lists are successful only occasionally.⁵

The fortified site of Golemo Gradište at Konjuh

Since 1998 the members of a Macedonian-American project have been carrying out archaeological investigations at the site of Golemo Gradište at Konjuh, ca. 40 km. east of Skopje, in Kratovo district.⁶ This site is the only city in a line of Late Antique fortresses that protected a section of an east-west Roman road running through the valley of the Kriva River; limited excavation at Klečevce, survey, and chance finds suggest relatively dense habitation in the Kriva valley during Late Antiquity. The ancient name of the site at Golemo Gradište is not known; Tranupara has been suggested.⁷ In the Late Antique/Early Byzantine period, the city was probably located in the province of Dardania,⁸ although our knowledge of the exact boundaries of those provinces is so uncertain that the city might equally well have been included within the neighboring province of Dacia Mediterranea.

The city consists of three parts: 1) a northern terrace, Terrace B, beside the Kriva river; 2) a steep, east-west ridge forming the acropolis; and 3) a southern part of the site located between the south foot of the acropolis and a lower ridge known as Malo Gradište. (Plan I, Figs. 1, 2, 3, 8) In this article we shall consider briefly the defenses of the lower city, i.e., of Terrace B, then move along the east side of the site to the fortifications of the southern part, go around the west end of the site to a possible ancient bridge over the Kriva river, and finally concentrate on the acropolis.⁹

³ Volume 8 (2000) of *Antiquité Tardive* has a number of articles about Procopius' *Buildings*, some of which deal with specific regions of the empire. For Illyricum, however, between the lacuna noted at IV.3.20 and the lists in IV.4 within which provinces and regions appear to be inextricably confused, Procopius raises far more questions than he answers.

⁴ Procopius, *de aedificiis* IV.1.31; IV.1.15-27.

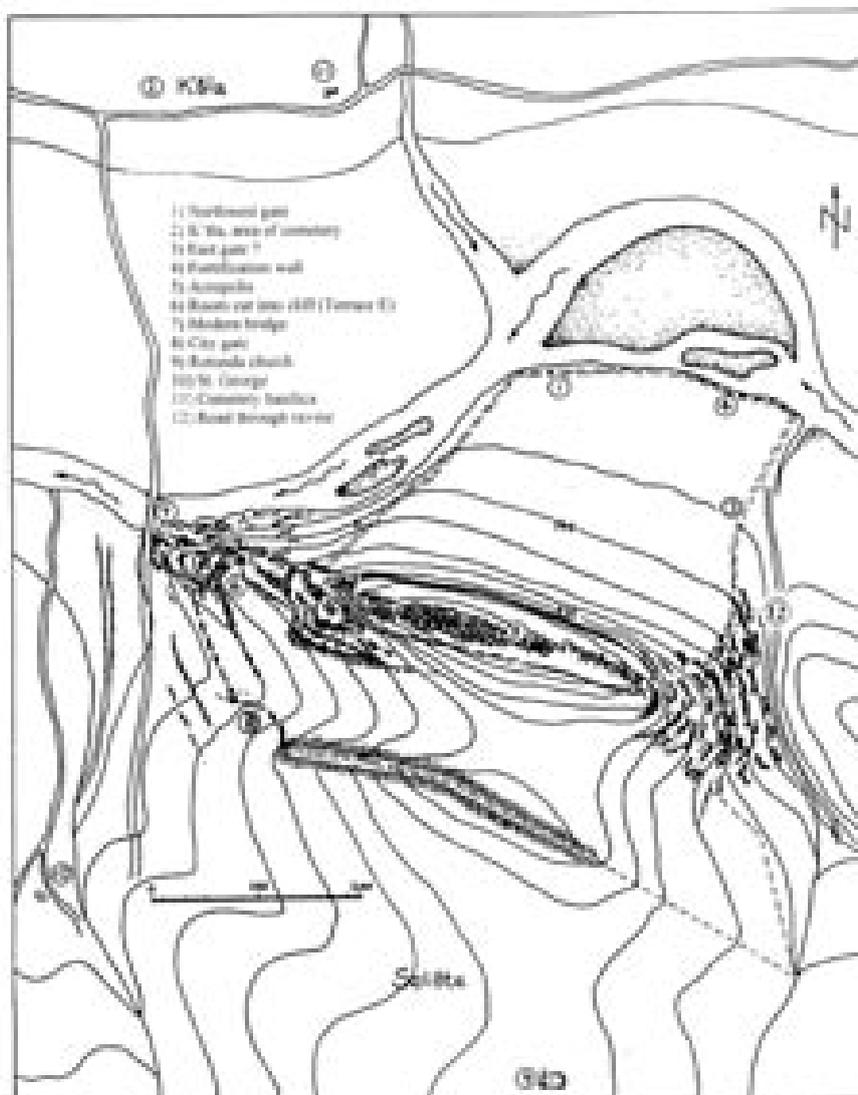
⁵ See, for example, M. Milinković, "Neka zapažanja o ranovizantijskim utvrđenjima na jugu Srbije," *Niš i Vizantija III*, Niš 2005, 168 and footnotes 18 and 19.

⁶ The site has been under investigation since 1998 by an American-Macedonian project, sponsored by Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and the Museum of Macedonia in Skopje. Mila Šurbanoska and Carolyn Snively are the co-directors of the project.

⁷ Lilčić, V., "Razmisľivanja okolu ubicacijata na Tranupara," *Kulturno Nasledstvo* 17-18 (1990-91) [1994] 33-47.

⁸ I. Mikulčić, "Dva bezimena docnoantički grada vo istočno Makedonija," *Zbornik na Arheološki Muzej na Makedonija* 6-7 (1967-1974) 120.

⁹ It should be noted that Ivan Mikulčić was the first investigator to provide a detailed description of the site of Golemo Gradište together with a plan and a discussion of the possible significance of the Late Antique city. (Svetozar Radojčić had concentrated on the Rotunda with mentions of certain features of the city site.) He pointed out and described numerous



Plan I. Golemo Gradište, s. Konjuh, Kratovo. (Plan by G. C. McArdle, 2001, using plans of I. Mikulčić, M. Milojević, and the National Survey Institute; now in need of revision)

План I. Големо Градиште, с. Коњух, Кратово. (План Г. Мекардла, 2001. год., уз коришћење планова И. Микулчића, М. Милојевића и Националног института за геодетска мерења; сада је неопходна ревизија)

features noted below and first raised many questions about the site and its fortifications. See especially Mikulčić, “Dva bezimeni,” 115-121, and “Antički gradovi kod Drenova i Konjuha u Makedoniji,” *Arheološki Pregled* 15 (1973) 179-182, as well as his more recent treatments of the site in *Srednovekovni Gradovi i Tvrđine vo Makedonija*, Skopje 1996, 223-226, and *Antički Gradovi vo Makedonija*, Skopje 1999, 358-361.



Figure 1. Golemo Gradište from the north, from the village of Dimonce. Note how the city wall runs up the slope of the acropolis at east and west; note also Terrace A just below the bedrock at the top of the ridge.

Слика 1. Големо Градиште са северне стране, из села Димонче. Погледајте како се градски зид подиже уз косину акропоља на истоку и западу; такође погледајте Терасу А непосредно испод стене на врху гребена.

This Late Antique city was heavily fortified. The Kriva river runs beside the north and west sides of the site and in antiquity may have also protected the lower part of the east side of the northern terrace; the river could have been encouraged to run along the southern edge of its flood plain and thus to form a protective channel beside the eastern side of Terrace B.¹⁰ An eastern gate to this lower city has been tentatively located, and a gate certainly pierced the fortification wall at the northwest corner of the terrace.¹¹ Both a dip in the fortification wall and cuttings in the bedrock beside the river point to a gate at this spot. At present the stream here is wide and shallow,¹² and no traces of bridge foundations are visible. One might imagine either a ford or a bridge with light-weight wooden superstructure, easily removable in time of danger.

Beside the Kriva river, along the north side of Terrace B, the fortification wall rests on a bedrock foundation, which forms a narrow but passable ledge in front of the wall (Fig. 4). The wall is easily traced around the three sides of Terrace B and up the slope toward the east and west ends of the acropolis ridge.

¹⁰ Although such a change in the course of the river may sound like a major undertaking, the extensive landforming carried out on the acropolis of the city demonstrates both the ability and the willingness to undertake such projects.

¹¹ Mikulčić, "Dva bezimeni," 118.

¹² According to the 1970 plan from the National Survey Institute, the terrain across the river from the northwestern corner site of the site has experienced many changes, probably most of them during the last decade; the small stream that ran into the Kriva near this point has been channeled, and the Beton construction company has used area for the mixing of concrete.



Figure 2. Golemo Gradište from the southeast. Note the steep eastern slope of the ridge at the right and the saddle between the ridge and Malo Gradište to the left.

Слика 2. Големо Градиште са југоистока. Запазите стрму источну косину гребена на десној страни и седло између гребена и Малог Градишта на левој страни.

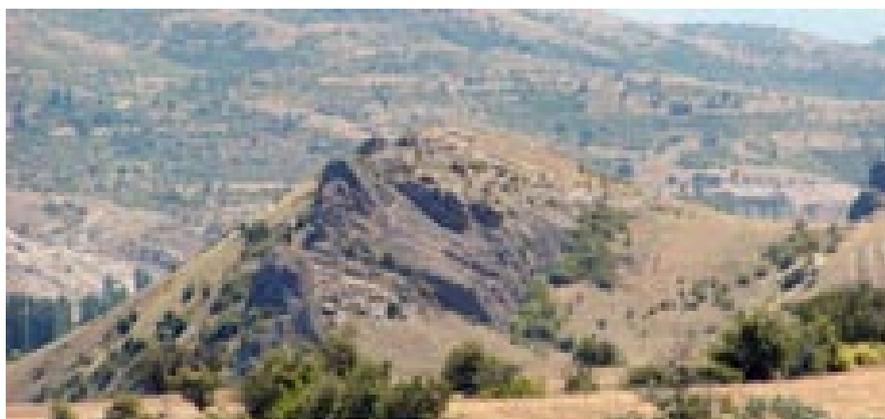


Figure 3. Golemo Gradište from the west, from the village of Beljakovce. Note the rock wall marking the west end of Section D in the middle of the photo. Malo Gradište is partly visible at the right.

Слика 3. Големо Градиште са западне стране, из села Бељаковце. Видите стеновити зид који обележава западну ивицу Секције Д у средини фотографије. На десној страни делимично се види Мало Градиште.

A deep ravine divides Golemo Gradište from the next hill, Gađin Kamen, to the east. An ancient road,¹³ partly paved with stone slabs, partly cut into the bedrock, ran through the ravine and then continued on toward the southeast, past the modern village of Konjuh, and eventually to Ovče Polje. The east slope of the acropolis rises steeply above the ravine (Fig. 2) and is, for all practical purposes, not accessible from the road below.

The eastern edge of the southern section of the city lay at the top of the ravine, where it is still marked in places by the remains of a fortification wall.

¹³ First published by Lilčić, "Razmisluvanja."



Figure 4. A detail of the city wall along the north side of Terrace B, beside the Kriva River, from the north. Note the bedrock foundation and the fortification wall above.

Слика 4. Деталј градске зидине дуж северне стране Терасе Б, поред Криве реке, северно. Обратите пажњу на стеновити темељ и зид утврђења изнад њега.

Malo Gradište formed the southern edge of the city. Stones from a fortification wall are still in situ here and there on the leveled top of the ridge. A number of large white stone blocks were noted near the line of the now destroyed eastern part of Malo Gradište,¹⁴ ca. 100 m from the southeast corner of the city. The presence of these blocks raises the possibility of a gate in the city wall, from which a road would have led south toward the Rotunda.¹⁵

Malo Gradište ends abruptly and steeply ca. 250 m from the west end of the acropolis. A city gate has been postulated at or beside the curving bank between the end of Malo Gradište and the lower south slope of the acropolis.¹⁶ From there two roughly parallel lines of fortification wall run northwest toward the acropolis.

¹⁴ According to local villagers, in the early 1980s the Sileks company destroyed the fortifications at the southeast part of the site with heavy machinery, in order to bring in tractors and other equipment with which to cultivate the eastern part of the space between the acropolis and Malo Gradište. This occurred despite the fact that the site has been under legal protection since the early 1970s. One should, however, note that ca. 1970 this same area was divided up among several owners from the village of Konjuh and appears to have been under some type of cultivation already at that time.

¹⁵ The 6th century Rotunda church is the sole, relatively well known monument from Konjuh. See S. Radojčić, "Crkva u Konjuhu," *Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 1 (1952) 148-167; R. F. Hodinott, *Early Byzantine Churches in Macedonia and Southern Serbia*, London 1963, 220-226; and C. Snively, "Golemo Gradište at Konjuh: Report on the Excavations in 2000," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002) 293-302.

¹⁶ Mikulčić, *Antički Gradovi*, 360, and fig. 233 on p. 359.



Figure 5. The west end of the acropolis ridge, from the east. Note the doorway of the rock-cut room opening onto Terrace D, and other cuttings in the rock face.

Слика 5. Западна ивица гребена акропоља, са источне стране.
Погледајте улаз у просторију која је усечена у стену и излази на Терасу Д,
као и друге усеке на површини стене.

On its northwest side, along the river, the cliff of the acropolis falls steeply enough that little additional defense would have been required. At present, a narrow path rises near the west end of the acropolis, beside and above the river and near the modern bridge;¹⁷ from it, one can scramble up to the acropolis or around to the upper southwest corner of Terrace B. The west city wall would have blocked this route to Terrace B.

Across the middle of the city, the acropolis rises 100 m above the river to a height of ca. 440 m above sea level (Figs. 1, 2, 3, 8). This ridge is thinly covered with soil in some parts and shows bare rock in others. As noted above, its eastern face, above the ravine and road, is steep and nearly impossible to climb except at the north and south corners. The western end of the ridge is lower in elevation but displays cliffs rising above the river for a distance of 50-75 m. The eastern portion of the ridge consists of a ca. 140 m long plateau (C) that slopes down to east and south; between 2000 and 2004, our excavations were focused in this area. At the west end of the plateau, the terrain rises ca. 6 m to the high point of the acropolis and to a ca. 110 m long area (D) in which the sloping south face of the ridge was quarried and carved into a maze of rooms, paths, water channels, stairs, and other rock-cut features (Figs. 8, 9, 10). Beyond this area

¹⁷ Radojčić, “Crkva,” mentions an ancient bridge but its location remains uncertain.



Figures 6 and 7. Views of two sections of the rock-cut path running across the east slope of the acropolis ridge; at left a view from the north, at right from the south.

Слика 6 и 7. Изглед две деонице стазе усечене у стену које иду преко источне падине гребена акропоља; лево је поглед са севера, а десно поглед са југа.



Figure 8. Golemo Gradište from the south. At the right is the west end of the plateau C, central section D ends in a rock wall in the middle of the photo, and the complex around Terrace E is at the left.

Слика 8. Големо Градиште са јужне стране. Десно је западна ивица платоа Ц, централни део Д завршава се у стеновитом зиду на средини фотографије, а лево је комплекс око Терасе Е.

to the west is a featureless rock face, difficult even to walk across, followed by a north-south ravine, natural or man-made. Beyond this barrier is a small southern-facing terrace surrounded by cliffs (Fig. 5). From the terrace opens a room quarried into the cliff and supplied with a window, benches or beds, niches, and a tomb in the floor.¹⁸ Cuttings in the rock faces for beams suggest the existence at one time of a small community, centered around the small terrace, but with stairs and hand- and foot-holds in the cliffs leading to other rooms and spaces above the small terrace (Complex E).¹⁹ Beyond the terrace other rooms and features are visible in the south face of the ridge, whose elevation drops toward the west; the two parallel lines of city wall mentioned earlier run up to its face.

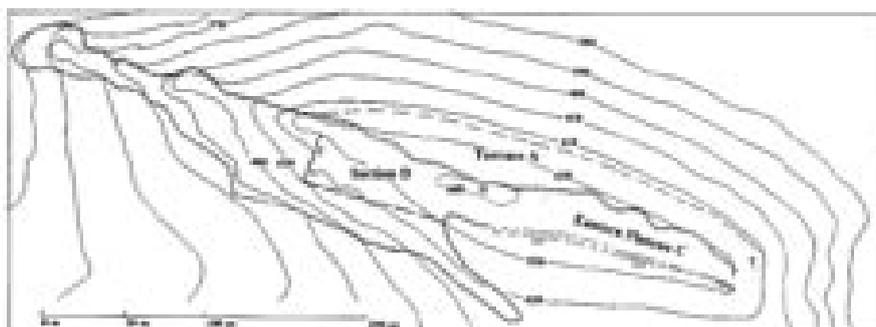
¹⁸ Radojčić, "Crkva."

¹⁹ The traditional identification of this complex is that of a medieval monastic settlement.



Figure 9. Detail of central section D, from the south.

Слика 9. Детаљ централног дела Д, са југа.



Plan II. The acropolis of Golemo Gradište, showing the three sections of the fortress. (Plan by C. Snively, 2005, based on the topographical plan of the National Survey Institute)

План II. Акропољ Големог Градишта, који показује три секције утврђења.
(План К. Снајвли, 2005. год., заснован на топографском плану
Националног института за геодетска мерења)

A narrow terrace, Terrace A, runs along the north face of the acropolis, several meters below the level of the eastern plateau. From Terrace A, the terrain drops abruptly to Terrace B, 60-80 m. below. It is unclear whether the steep north face of the acropolis provided sufficient protection or a fortification wall once stood along the northern edge of Terrace A.

Thus the fortress on the acropolis consisted of three of the described parts (Plan II), i.e., the eastern plateau (C), the quarried and carved rock face (D), and Terrace A.

The Fortress: Terrace A

Terrace A formed the northern part of the fortified area. It runs ca. 250 m from the east end of the ridge to a point approximately even with the west edge of Part D of the acropolis. The terrace slopes steeply from south to north for much of its length. The bedrock cliffs that form the acropolis ridge define the irregular south edge of the narrow terrace. Several rock-cut stairs carved into the bedrock connected Terrace A with both the eastern plateau (C) and the central section of the acropolis (D). Rooms and other features had been quarried into the north face of the cliff at various levels and overlooked the terrace or were accessible directly from it.

From the north side of Terrace A, the terrain drops abruptly toward Terrace B far below. In 2001 two test trenches were excavated for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not an actual fortification wall had once marked the north edge of the narrow terrace.²⁰

The results were inconclusive. Heavy destruction debris including roof tiles appeared above and around the remains of rubble walls in both trenches; apparently buildings with stone walls and tile roofs once covered Terrace A. In both trenches, however, north-south walls stopped abruptly ca. 1 m from the present north edge of the terrace, and no trace of constructions was found at the very edge, which has undoubtedly suffered from erosion over time. It remains uncertain therefore whether a fortification wall once marked the north side of the terrace and has collapsed down the slope below without a trace or the steep northern face of the acropolis was deemed sufficient protection against attack.

The Fortress: Plateau C

Five seasons of investigation were focused on the eastern end of the acropolis; it consists of a narrow plateau that slopes gently down from north to south and from west to east. It measures nearly 150 m in length and varies in width from ca. 15 to ca. 28 m. Along its northern side the eroded remains of rock-cut foundations are visible; the bedrock drops abruptly for a few meters to Terrace A.

This eastern plateau is, in fact, an artificial creation. The bedrock along the northern side of the plateau was quarried and no doubt used for building, while the newly exposed rock surfaces were carved into foundations for structures. A massive wall marks the south edge of the plateau. As a terrace wall, it held enough earth in place to create a plateau level enough for use; it still retains deposits up to 2 m deep within which, between the wall and the bedrock visible at the north, the remains of rubble walls have been found. As a fortification wall, provided with towers and at least one gate, it protected the south side of the eastern part of the fortified area. Our present hypothesis is that this plateau was created during the first half of the 6th century, as a part of the establishment of a fortress on the acropolis ridge.

²⁰ The terrace was designated Sektor IC. It was located to the north of Sektor IB on the plateau.



Figure 10. A rock-cut room with niches, in Section D. From east.

Слика 10. Просторија са нишама, усечена у стени, у Секцији Д. Изглед са истока.

As far as the overall arrangement of the plateau is concerned, it was divided into east and west halves by a central north-south street. This street ran from a gate in the south wall to a rock-cut corridor at the north side; the corridor connected with two rock-cut stairs, now much eroded, that led down to north and east. The street showed several phases and paving that ranged from stone slabs near the gate through several varieties of very rough *kaldrma*. In a late phase the *kaldrma* extended to the east and apparently paved a central square.

A complex of several large rooms with remains of a courtyard and entranceway occupies most of the width of the plateau near its west end. Very little contextual material was found to suggest a function for the building; it has been tentatively identified as elite residential or administrative. A rock-cut cistern, 5 m deep, is located in the northwest corner of the plateau. Above it, on the slope leading up to Part D of the acropolis, stand the rock-cut foundations of a one-room house or other structure.

Evidence for crafts, industrial activities, and storage of food has been found in various sectors of the acropolis. What eludes us so far is an understanding of the overall organization of structures on the plateau, with streets or alleys, and a clear sense of divisions among housing, industrial areas, storage, and other functions. The more we investigate, however, the more we suspect that either few such functional subdivisions ever existed or that they were obscured by successive occupations of the acropolis.

The south fortification wall of the acropolis has been investigated in several places, from west to east, in Sectors IA, IB, ID, and IG.²¹ In the first three areas, the wall measured ca. 2 m in width and was constructed of roughly-worked, light-colored stone blocks and lime mortar; darker stones appeared in the foundation. Its original height cannot be accurately estimated.

A 19 m long stretch of the wall in Sector IA included a rectangular tower whose entrance is still visible across the preserved top of the fortification wall. Some evidence of rebuilding at the west end of the wall raised the possibility that a gate had once been located here and had later been closed and built over. At the very end of the excavated stretch of wall, where further investigation is impeded by a large heap of spoil dirt, the inner face of the wall steps back, leaving a fortification only ca. 1.20 m wide running toward the west.

Approximately in the middle of the plateau, a 2.5 m wide gate was found in the wall. A rectangular tower abutted the wall and protected the gate on the east side. Immediately inside the gate but set back slightly to the east, a well-cut threshold block marked the entrance to a room, from which one could enter the tower by way of a doorway through the fortification wall. Unfortunately the original arrangements of this room were completely destroyed in a late phase.

On the opposite side of the central street, a doorway gave access to a square room; a pithos stood in the corner, and a number of iron tools were found in the floor deposit. Another door, at the north side of this western room, led to an open area, within which the foundation of a staircase leaned against the outer face of the north wall of the room. One may speculate that the stairs provided access not only to a second story over the square room but also to the top of the fortification wall.

Several architectural features, i.e., the tower east of the gate, a retaining wall ca. 6 m outside the fortification wall, and the remains of a short but massive north-south wall that abutted the west end of the retaining wall, all combined to form a small courtyard outside the gate. Traffic probably followed a ramp leading up the south face of the acropolis and entered the courtyard from the west side, although the gap between the tower and the retaining wall leaves open the possibility of access also from the east. Three steps just outside the threshold block of the gate demonstrate that the fortress was not accessible to wheeled vehicles.

The 5 m long stretch of fortification wall that marked the south edge of Sector ID was of interest mainly for the bottom of a ca. 0.40 m wide, smoothly mortared feature noted in the northern half of its preserved upper surface. The southern half of the wall had been destroyed to a level below the opening. In the room on the inner side of the wall, beside the mortared feature, a pithos had been set into the floor. Other pithoi were found in the room, however, and all of them post-date the construction of the fortification wall. The purpose of the opening in the wall remains undetermined.

The situation in Sector IG, at the east end of the plateau, is somewhat more complicated. The fortification wall is only ca. 1.70 m wide and barely preserved to the ground level in use at the time of building. It shows more than

²¹ In Sektor IE, the wall had been so completely destroyed that it provided no useful information.

one phase of construction and the foundation at least was built with lime mortar of higher quality than that noted in the other sectors. A rectangular tower abuts the wall and, here again, traces of the floor of its entrance could be observed in the preserved top of the fortification wall.

We had assumed that a gate was located at this end of the plateau, in part because scanty remains of a rock-cut staircase can still be seen as one ascends the southeast "corner" of the acropolis from the southern section of the city. Rock-cut foundations at the northeast corner of the eastern plateau had been interpreted as those of a tower. When the foundation walls of a tower appeared at the southeast corner of the plateau, a gate was then expected to be found between the towers.

Although a rock-cut staircase did come to light between the newly discovered southeast tower and the putative northeast one, no trace of an actual gate was found, either at top or bottom of the staircase. And, the south fortification wall apparently had continued to the east and down the slope beyond the southeast tower.

These discoveries caused us to look more closely at the east end of the acropolis, where the following observations were made. Terrace A is open to the east below the putative northwest tower; there is no trace of a wall running across the east end of the terrace. Since Terrace A and Plateau C are closely connected by numerous staircases, there would be no point in fortifying the latter but leaving the former readily accessible.

Some distance down the east slope of the acropolis from the Sector IG excavations,²² a rock-cut path runs north-south across the east end of the acropolis (Figs. 6, 7), keeping roughly the same elevation for most of its traceable length. Assuming that the easiest route up the north slope of the acropolis, in antiquity as now, is near the east city wall running from Terrace B up the slope, we hypothesize that such a route connected with the rock-cut path. It in turn would have connected with the path from the south side now marked by fragmentary remains of a rock-cut stairway. Thus communication between Terrace B and the southern part of the site was possible within the fortifications of the city as well as by the road in the ravine outside and below the east end of the city.²³

It appears safe to conclude that the fortification marking the east end of the fortress on the acropolis is located east of and below the Sector IG excavations but well above the rock-cut, north-south path. Perhaps continued observation and survey of the terrain between those features will provide clues to the location of the east fortification of the acropolis and the east gate.

The Fortress: Central Section D

A rather steep rise of several meters from Plateau C marks the east side of the central section of the acropolis, section D (Figs. 8, 9). At its west side a high

²² In this situation the vertical distance is greater than the horizontal one. This rock-cut path was noted only at the very end of the 2005 season, when we did not have equipment on site to map its location accurately.

²³ Mikulčić, "Dva bezimeni," 117, had speculated about the possibility of communication between the northern and southern parts of the city, across the east slope of the acropolis.

bedrock wall serves as boundary and fortification; cuttings for an entrance (postern gate?) are still preserved on the rock barrier. At the north side of section D, the bedrock drops several meters to Terrace A. At the south side, the slope gives way to a vertical drop; a wall might have been required to prevent the inhabitants from falling over the edge rather than to keep intruders out.

Near the northeast corner of section D (and immediately beside the National Survey point at 440.46 MASL), a room ca. 10 m east-west and ca. 4.5 m north-south had been quarried into the bedrock.²⁴ A brief investigation of the fill of this space in 2000 demonstrated that in its last datable use, the room had served as a basement for a building above it. Cuttings for beams in the north rock wall indicated a floor level, and substantial stone blocks from a wall that once employed the rock wall as a foundation had fallen into the basement. This area is the only place on the site where Byzantine pottery has been found in a stratified context.

To the west of the room just described, the steep southern slope of section D consists of a maze of rooms cut into the bedrock together with connecting paths, stairs, and water channels. One of the rooms toward the southwest corner of this section was partially excavated in 1998. It consisted of a space ca. 2 m wide east-west and at least 5 m long. The floor was level and relatively smooth. A few stone blocks suggested that a wall had once closed part of the south end of the room. A niche had been quarried into the west rock wall, probably for storage, since cuttings were preserved into which boards could have been inserted to close off the niche. The fill of the room consisted mostly of destruction debris with stones and roof tiles. The smashed remains of a number of large storage vessels were found on the floor; they suggest a late 6th century destruction.

Because of the steepness of the slope, streets or paths run east-west and staircases provide north-south communication within the overall complex. Even now, however, the explorer of section D is likely to encounter dead ends, from which one must either retrace one's steps or climb up or down a steep rock face. Cuttings in one east-west path point to the existence of an internal gate or check point. In fact, we begin to wonder if the maze-like character of section D might have been deliberately planned to confuse intruders into this part of the fortress.

Preliminary Conclusions but More Questions

The fortress on the acropolis of Golemo Gradište—located within an already fortified city—has now been defined and described. Approximately 250 m in length and no more than 50 m wide at any point, with three distinct sections located on different levels and on steeply sloping terrain, this fortified area certainly does not meet our expectations for the traditional Roman fortress and stands out as unusual even in Mikulčić's surveys of Late Antique fortified sites in the Republic of Macedonia.²⁵

²⁴ We have speculated whether the room might originally have been used as a cistern.

²⁵ Mikulčić, *Srednovekovni Gradovi and Antički Gradovi*.

The numerous questions that remain unanswered or in some cases have not yet even been posed concerning the fortress at Golemo Gradište, Konjuh, justify the use of the term “prolegomena” in the title of this article. Section D, Terrace A, and the east end of the acropolis ridge wait to be surveyed and mapped in more detail. The relationships between the fortress and the northern and southern parts of the lower city are unclear, both chronologically and in terms of function. What is the connection between the 6th century fortress and the Roman garrison of the 3rd or 4th century, not necessarily located at Golemo Gradište but somewhere nearby, as indicated by several tombstones of army veterans? Should the fortress be seen as an imperial initiative, a provincial one, or even local? Was it primarily connected with oversight of mining and metallurgy in nearby regions or protection of roads or with these two interrelated concerns? Do the similarities in rooms and other rock-cut features among Golemo Gradište at Konjuh, Gradište at Opila, and Grad at Kanarevo, all fortresses in the Kriva valley, indicate anything more significant than easy-to-quarry bedrock and a local tradition of stoneworking? *Ballista* balls, iron arrowheads, and evidence of destruction and rebuilding suggest that fortification was not a precaution but a necessity at Golemo Gradište. Some evidence from the acropolis indicates but cannot yet demonstrate a pattern somewhat similar to that seen at Caričin Grad, i.e., that after the military garrison left, the local population moved into the abandoned fortress.

Amidst all the uncertainties and unanswered questions, a few facts stand out. One is the date. Although pottery from the 4th and 5th centuries is found on the acropolis, the majority of the Late Antique ceramic material is from the 6th century and can be described as Justinianic.²⁶ The date of the end of Late Antique occupation on the acropolis remains to be determined.

Surveys of the site carried out before 1998 suggested fairly extensive occupation after the Late Antique period, and a literary source mentions a guardpost at the site in the 14th century. To our surprise, however, except for a Byzantine coin and two Turkish ones, our excavations in six sectors on eastern plateau C, in one sector on Terrace A, and in two rock-cut rooms of section D have revealed relatively little material that can be dated later than the 6th century. A significant amount of Byzantine pottery was found in a rock-cut room at the east side of section D. Obviously the chronology of rock-cut architecture is difficult to determine. We may conclude, however, at least tentatively, that the majority of the defensive arrangements on the acropolis of Golemo Gradište at Konjuh date to Late Antiquity and more specifically to the middle and later decades of the 6th century.

²⁶ Virginia Anderson-Stojanovic, our ceramic analyst, reached this conclusion about the date of the material during the summer season of 2005, as she was comparing the acropolis material with that from our 2005 excavations on the northern terrace (B). She will publish a summary of her conclusions about the nature and chronology of the Konjuh pottery as a chapter in a book, *Golemo Gradište, Konjuh: an unknown Late Antique city in eastern Macedonia / Големо Градиште, с. Коњух: Нејознат Доцноантички град во Источна Македонија*, Museum of Macedonia, Skopje, scheduled for publication in 2007.

Каролин С. Снајвли
ГОЛЕМО ГРАДИШТЕ У КОЊУХУ, РЕПУБЛИКА МАКЕДОНИЈА: УВОД У
ИЗУЧАВАЊЕ КАСНО-АНТИЧКОГ УТВРЂЕЊА

Поновно подизање утврђења на Балкану током VI века, под владавином императора Јустинијана I – коме се често приписују заслуге за обнову утврђења које су предузимали његови претходници у V веку – несумњиво је знатно увећало број брда чије врхове су красиле тврђаве. Ове утврђене локације представљају трајни изазов за археологе, а касно-античка утврђења била су тема многих излагања на претходним симпозијумима о Нишу и Византији.

Још од 1998. године, чланови тима македонско-америчког пројекта обављају археолошка истраживања на локалитету Големо Градиште у Коњуху, око 40 km источно од Скопља у Републици Македонији. Град, чије античко име није познато, састоји се од јако утврђеног доњег града, у којем се уздиже акропољ, такође утврђен, делимично људском руком а делимично природно. Ово налазиште је једно од низа утврђења, али је и једини град који је штитио римски пут кроз долину Криве реке у правцу исток-запад.

Наша истраживања била су усмерена на источни плато акропоља. Резултати показују да су зидине око акропоља – а вероватно и доњег града – биле подигнуте у VI веку; да су доживеле земљотрес, непријатељски напад и реконструкцију; и да је утврђење престало да буде брањено или настањено почетком VII века.