

**REVEREND PROTOTYPES?  
CONSTANTINIAN CHURCHES  
AND THEIR LATER IMITATIONS IN THE BALKANS**

Constantine's rise to supreme power around 313 and his support for the Christian faith represented an extraordinary change of fortune for the Christian communities of the entire Empire.<sup>1</sup> With official support, the size of the congregation grew rapidly and, at last secure in the ownership of property, it then had the confidence and wealth to build on a scale as never before. Constantine himself provided the Christian bishops of the major cities of the Empire with monumental and lavishly decorated churches, either episcopal or cemetery and martyrial ones, all of them well-known after the studies of eminent scholars such as Richard Krautheimer,<sup>2</sup> Ludwig

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NOTES

The abbreviations used here are those of the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, New York and London 1991 and of the *American Journal of Archaeology*.

<sup>1</sup> The bibliography on Constantine is vast. Among the most relevant studies, I select the following titles: N. Hepburn Baynes, *Constantine the Great and the Christian Church*, London 1930. T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London 1981. J. Bleicken, *Konstantin der Große und die Christen. Berlegungen zur konstantinischen Wende*, München 1992. Ch. Matson Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, London and New York 2004. Cf. also the recent exhibition catalogues: A. Donati, G. Gentili, eds, *Costantino il Grande. La civiltà antica al bivio tra Occidente e Oriente*, Rimini, Castel Sismondo, 13 marzo – 4 settembre 2005, Milano 2005; E. Hartley, J. Hawkes, M. Henig, Fr. Mee, eds, *Constantine the Great. York's Roman Emperor*, Yorkshire Museum, 31 March – 29 October, York and Aldershot 2006; A. Demandt, J. Engemann, eds, *Imperator Caesar Flavius Constantinus. Konstantin der Große*, Mainz am Rhein 2007.

<sup>2</sup> R. Krautheimer, Constantine's Church Foundations, in: *Akten des VII. internationalen Kongresses für christliche Archäologie, Trier 1965*, I, Città del Vaticano 1969, 237-253. *Idem*, *Architettura sacra paleocristiana e medievale e altri saggi su Rinascimento e Barocco*, Torino 1993, 3-39 (article no 1. «La basilica Costantiniana», originally published in English in: *DOP* 21 (1967), 115-140) and 40-49 (article no 2. «Constantino e la chiesa dei Santi Apostoli a Costantinopoli»), published in German in: *Mullus. Festschrift Theodor Klauser, JbAC Suppl.* 1, Munster 1964, 224-229). *Idem*, The Ecclesiastical Building Policy of Constantine, in: G. Bonamente, F. Fusto, eds, *Costantino il Grande dell'antichità all'Umanesimo, Colloquio sul Cristianesimo nel Mondo antico, Macerata, 18-20 dicembre 1990*, II, Macerata 1993, 509-552. Cf. recently D. Kinney, Krautheimer's Constantine, in: F. Guidobaldi, A.-G. Guidobaldi, eds, *Ecclesiae Urbis. Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi sulle chiese di Roma (IV – X secolo)*, Roma, 4-10 settembre 2000, I, Città del Vaticano 2002, 1-10.

Völkl,<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Deichmann,<sup>4</sup> and André Grabar.<sup>5</sup> My purpose in this paper is first to recall several examples in Rome, Constantinople and the Holy Land in order to summarise the general characteristics of the five-aisled basilica of the constantinian era; I will subsequently try to show that these very characteristics were adopted by some episcopal and martyrial churches in southern Balkans in later times. This could suggest that the first Christian churches built under imperial patronage were conceived by the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth centuries as reverend prototypes. The historical and ecclesiastical circumstances of the years around 500 might provide our study with clues for elucidating this building activity.

### *I. The Five-aisled Constantinian Churches*

The first Christian churches subsidised by Constantine were erected in Rome.<sup>6</sup> Possibly as early as the end of 312, he offered the land of the Lateran and gave sumptuous donations for the building and decoration of the cathedral of the city of Rome and its baptistery.<sup>7</sup> After 319 he also provided money for the foundation of four cemetery and martyrial churches *extra muros*, among which the cemetery and martyrial basilica of St Peter on the Vatican.<sup>8</sup> These two most prominent churches of the city were not identical in plan, due not only to the fact that their building started at different times or to the possibility that different architects were employed, but mainly to their different functions. The Lateran basilica, which was the episcopal church, consisted of a vast nave continued to the west by a deep sanctuary and flanked by two aisles on either side; projecting rooms, covered with transversal roofs, cut the western ends of the outer aisles.<sup>9</sup> The Vatican basilica, an *extra muros* funerary and pilgrimage centre, disposed of the transept between the apse, raised directly upon the grave of St Peter, and the five-aisled *quadratum populi*. The transept was continuous and undivided, lower than the nave and with lower end-bays at either side, projecting beyond the aisles; these end-bays were separated from the transept by *tribela*.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>3</sup> L. Völkl, *Die Kirchenstiftungen des Kaisers Konstantin im Lichte des römischen Sakralrechts*, in: *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, Geisteswissenschaften, Heft 117*, Köln and Opladen 1964.

<sup>4</sup> Fr. Deichmann, *Martyrerbasilika, Martyrion, Memoria und Altargrab, MDAI(R) 77* (1970), 144-169.

<sup>5</sup> A. Grabar, *Martyrium. Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique, I. Architecture*, Paris 1946, 204-313.

<sup>6</sup> See above note 3, *passim*. R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, New Haven, London 1986, 46 ff. *Idem*, *Rome. Profile of a City, 312-1308*, Princeton, New Jersey, 2000, 21 ff.

<sup>7</sup> R. Krautheimer, Sp. Corbett, A.K. Frazer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae. The Early Christian Basilicas of Rome (IV – IX Cent.)*, V, Città del Vaticano 1977, 29-47, 71-90, figs 15, 78, pl. I.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 240-259, pl. V.

<sup>9</sup> Only part of the southern room has been investigated; the north side chamber is thought to have been symmetrical. *Ibid.*, 30-32, 72, figs 23-25.

<sup>10</sup> Only the north side chamber has been partly uncovered, the south room is recon-

In Constantinople the episcopal church of Hagia Sophia was erected after 326 as a huge basilica<sup>11</sup> of a possible five-aisled plan with side-chambers projecting from the eastern wall, as Wolfram Kleiss has suggested<sup>12</sup>. A five-aisled church might have also been the old church of St Mokios, outside the constantinian walls, a renowned funerary and martyrial site of possible constantinian attribution.<sup>13</sup>

The Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was founded in 328 and consecrated in 336; a five-aisled basilica, the “martyrium” proper, had an open yard in front and a vast atrium at the rear, which gave access to the Anastasis Rotunda.<sup>14</sup> The reconstruction of the original plan by Virgilio Corbo contains two separate rooms at either side of the apse; the south room was occupied by the remnants of the Golgotha hill where a big cross, which could be seen also from outside the church, stood atop.<sup>15</sup> The basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem, completed soon after 330, had an octagon at the place of the apse; in order adjust the octagon to the rectangular shape of the five-aisled *quadratum populi*, two chambers were added at either side of the entrance to the octagon.<sup>16</sup>

In all these churches the uses of the transept<sup>17</sup> as well as that of the side-

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structed as symmetrical. A. Carpiceci, R. Krautheimer, Nuovi dati sull’antica basilica di San Pietro in Vaticano, Parte II, *BdA* 81/95 (1996), 20, 48-51, fig. 25.

<sup>11</sup> T.F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy*, University Park and London 1971, 11-19.

<sup>12</sup> W. Kleiss, Beobachtungen in der Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, *IstMitt* 15 (1965), 175-178, fig. 5 (dated to the theodosian period, but roughly valid also for the constantinian era). E.M. Antoniadis had long ago proposed a three-aisled plan, after Studios’ basilica (*Ἐκφρασις τῆς Ἀγίας Σοφίας*, Athens 1907, repr. 1983, 5-8, plan 2), while H. Kähler thought that the church was similar to the basilicas with “deambulatorio” in the outskirts of Rome (*Die Hagia Sophia*, Berlin 1967, 12). All the above proposals for the original plan of the church have been justly criticised by Mathews, *op. cit.*, 12, 14, 18-19, but the arguments against Kleiss’ proposal seem quite weak.

<sup>13</sup> R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l’empire byzantin, I. Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat Œcuménique, III. Les églises et les monastères*, Paris 1953, 367-371. C. Mango, *Le développement urbain de Constantinople, IVe – VIIIe siècles*, Paris 1985, 35, 47.

<sup>14</sup> Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, *op. cit.*, 60-63, figs 27 (A)-(C).

<sup>15</sup> V.C. Corbo, *Il Santo Sepolcro di Gerusalemme. Aspetti archeologici dalle origini al periodo crociato*, Gerusalemme 1982, 103-113, pl. 3 (plan). For Golgotha hill, cf. *ibid.*, 93-94, figs 40-41, 43-45. Only the western wall of the north side-chamber, characterised hastily as “sacrestia o pastoforio”, has been archaeologically investigated (*ibid.*, 104).

<sup>16</sup> H. Vincent, F.-M. Abel, *Bethléem. Le sanctuaire de la Nativité*, Paris 1914 (*non vidi*). P. Baggatti, *Gli antichi edifici sacri di Betlemme in seguito agli scavi e restauri praticati dalla custodia di Terra Santa (1948-1951)*, Gerusalemme 1952, 2-54, especially 16 ff. Only parts of two walls and fragments of the mosaic pavement of the north chamber have been uncovered (*ibid.*, 44 and 34 fig. 15).

<sup>17</sup> For the transept in general, see P.J. Kirsch, Das Querhaus der stadtrömischen Basiliken, in: Th. Klauser, A. Rucker, eds, *Pisciculi, Studien zur Religion und Kultur des Altertums. Franz Josef Dölger zum 60. Geburtstag dargeboten von Freunden, Verehrern und Schülern*, Münster 1939, 148-156. Ph. Lemerle, Saint-Démétrius de Thessalonique et les problèmes du martyrium et du transept, *BCH* 77 (1953), 673-694. A. Orlandos, *Ἡ ζυλόστεγος παλαιοχριστιανικὴ βασιλικὴ τῆς μεσογειακῆς λεκάνης*, I, Athens 1952, 169-185, 234. R. Krautheimer, Il transetto nella basilica paleocristiana, in: *Actes du Ve Congrès international*

chambers, if ever existed in all cases<sup>18</sup>, are much debated. As for the early history of the transept, Alessandro Carpiceci and Richard Krautheimer in a recent article on the history of the St Peter's basilica, judging from the differential thickness of the foundations of the walls of Old St Peter's, proposed that the transept and the apse were constructed first, and after an interval of some years an initial three-aisled and, subsequently, a five-aisled *quadratum populi* was added to the east.<sup>19</sup> If this is a credible assessment of the early history of the transept in this church, and there seems to be no reason to doubt it,<sup>20</sup> a transversal hall over the tomb of St Peter has been over a specific period the only structure over the venerated tomb, erected with imperial funds and by approval of the clergy of Rome. This kind of transverse hall with an apse at the middle of one of the long sides has certainly been erected for the accommodation of the liturgy and the veneration acts of the faithful, both citizens of Rome and pilgrims. Constantine had offered, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*, the lavish wall decoration and the device made of precious materials for the embellishment of the celebration.<sup>21</sup> In this church, the five-aisled *quadratum populi* was used for burials and the distribution of funerary meals which continued till the end of the century.<sup>22</sup> We may also think that even the first shrine of St Paul on the Via Ostiensis comprised such a transept with an apse over the very site of the saint's tomb during the constantinian era.<sup>23</sup> Despite the meagre evidence, the church of St Paul consists of a transept and a five-aisled hall which is thought as a

*d'archéologie chrétienne, Aix-en-Provence, 13-19 septembre 1954*, Città del Vaticano and Rome 1957, 283-290. E.K. Kaemmerling, *Ikonologie der römischen Querhausbasilika*, *RQ* 67 (1972), 125-152. J.-Fr. Reynaud, *Lugdunum christianum. Lyon du IVe au VIIIe s.: topographie, nécropoles et édifices religieux*, Paris 1998, 244-248. See also the paper of C. Snively, in this volume, 000-000.

<sup>18</sup> Side-chambers at either side of the outer aisles appear in another foundation of Constantine, the three-aisled church of Mambre, near Ramet el-Khalil, Israel. See E. Mader, *Mambre. Die Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen im heiligen Bezirk Râmet el-halil in Südpalästina 1926-1928*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1957, 95-115, plans 37-38, 40. Even if these chambers, unjustifiably identified as "prothesis" and "diakonikon", belong to the original plan of the church (*ibid.*, 110-111, pl. XLVII.86, XLIX.88), they did not communicate with the aisles and they surely had nothing to do with the sanctuary area.

<sup>19</sup> A. Carpiceci, R. Krautheimer, *Nuovi dati sull'antica basilica di San Pietro in Vaticano*, Parte I, *BdA* 80/93-94 (1995), 1-70; *idem*, *Nuovi dati sull'antica basilica di San Pietro in Vaticano*, Parte II, *BdA* 81/95 (1996), 1-84 (especially p. 6 and figs 4-10, 9-11 and fig. 12).

<sup>20</sup> Cfr. R. Ross Holloway, *Constantine and Rome*, New Haven and London 2004, 79.

<sup>21</sup> L. Duchesne, *Le Liber Pontificalis. Texte, introduction et commentaire*, I, Paris 1955, 175.1-177.5. The imperial donations may date not only to the reign of Constantine but also to his heirs'. Cf. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, *op. cit.*, 310 note 57. N. Henck, *Constantius ó Φιλοκτίστης*, *DOP* 55 (2001), 284.

<sup>22</sup> Krautheimer, *Architettura sacra*, *op. cit.*, 24 and note 54 (= *DOP* 21 (1967), 131-132 note 54). *Idem*, *Mensa-Coemeterium-Martyrium*, *CahArch* 11 (1960), 28-29, 32-35.

<sup>23</sup> Krautheimer, Corbett, Frazer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae*, *op. cit.*, 111-118, 148-149, 161, pl. III ("the alleged foundation of Constantine" which is also called "the pre-Theodosian church"). The church is currently under investigation. Cf. H. Brandenburg, *Die Basilika S. Paolo fuori le mura, der Apostel-hymnus des Prudentius (Peristeph. xi) und die architektonische Ausstattung des Baues*, in: F. and A.-G. Guidobaldi, eds, *Ecclesiae Urbis*, *op. cit.*, III, 1525-1578.

later addition.<sup>24</sup> If we consider the church of St Paul as a pilgrimage centre outside the city-walls of Rome equivalent to St Peter's basilica and as an equally elaborate cult-centre, then in my view their architectural history might have been quite similar. Thus, any future inquiry for the constantinian shrine over the tomb of St Paul should be focused to a possible constantinian origin of the walls and the apse of the transept. As for the side chambers, Krautheimer, quite hastily I dare say, believed that they served as "repositories for the offerings; in modern parlance we would call them sacristies".<sup>25</sup> Shortly though, according to Sible de Blaauw, the north side-chamber of the transept of St Peter's was used as a baptistery,<sup>26</sup> we may never know for certain their initial use.

## II. The Five-aisled Churches of the Eastern Illyricum

The existence of five-aisled basilicas in the Balkans is attested only in the south provinces of the Prefecture of Eastern Illyricum, whose ecclesiastic dependence from the Holy See of Rome lasted till the middle of the eighth century.<sup>27</sup> Nineteen churches of considerable dimensions have been till today entirely or partly unearthed or are still standing in the provinces of Achaia (thirteen examples), Epirus Vetus (two examples), Crete (one example), and at Thessaloniki (three examples), the capital city of the whole prefecture and of the province of Macedonia Prima.<sup>28</sup> This sparse geographical distribution does not seem to obey to any kind of specific logic, at least at first glance.

A five-aisled church with transept was erected beside the monumental

<sup>24</sup> Brandenburg, *Die Basilika S. Paolo fuori le mura, loc.cit.*, 1530, where a date ca. 390 is claimed for the completion of the transept and the preparations for the construction of the nave and aisles.

<sup>25</sup> Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture, op. cit.*, 48 (Lateran basilica), 56 (St Peter's).

<sup>26</sup> S. De Blaauw, *Cultus et Décor. Liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale, Studi e Testi 356, II, Città del Vaticano 1994, 487-491*; two altars dedicated to St John the Baptist (east wall) and St John the Evangelist (west wall) were also accommodated there.

<sup>27</sup> The bibliography on the history and the ecclesiastical dependence of Eastern Illyricum is ample; cf. indicatively E. Chrysos, *Zur Echtheit des 'Rescriptum Theodosii ad Honorium' in der 'Collectio thessalonicensis'*, *Κληρονομία 4/II* (1972), 240-247. D.I. Pallas, *L'Illyricum oriental. Aperçu historique. La problématique de son archéologie chrétienne*, *Θεολογία 51* (1980), 62-76. C.G. Fürst, *Οι κανονικές σχέσεις της εκκλησίας Θεσσαλονίκης με τον επίσκοπο Ρώμης*, in: *Χριστιανική Θεσσαλονίκη. Γ' Επιστημονικό Συμπόσιο: Από της Ιουστινιανείου εποχής έως και της Μακεδονικής δυναστείας, Ιερά Μονή Βλατάδων, 18-20 Οκτωβρίου 1989*, Thessaloniki 1991, 119-132. I am persuaded that Illyricum was under the jurisdiction of the Holy See of Rome till 752-753. See V. Grumel, *L'annexion de l'Illyricum oriental, de la Sicile et de la Calabre au patriarcat de Constantinople*, in: *Mélanges Jules Lebreton 2, RSR 40* (1951-1952), 191-200 and recently I. Karayannopoulos, *Η προσάρτηση του Ανατολικού Ιλλυρικού στο Πατριαρχείο Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, in: *Αφιέρωμα εις τον Κωνσταντίνον Βαβούσκον, V*, Thessaloniki 1992, 509-551.

<sup>28</sup> For the church building of Eastern Illyricum, see Y. Varalis, *Η επίδραση της θείας λειτουργίας και των ιερών ακολουθιών στην εκκλησιαστική αρχιτεκτονική του Ανατολικού Ιλλυρικού (395-753)*, I-II, PhD, University of Thessaloniki 2001.

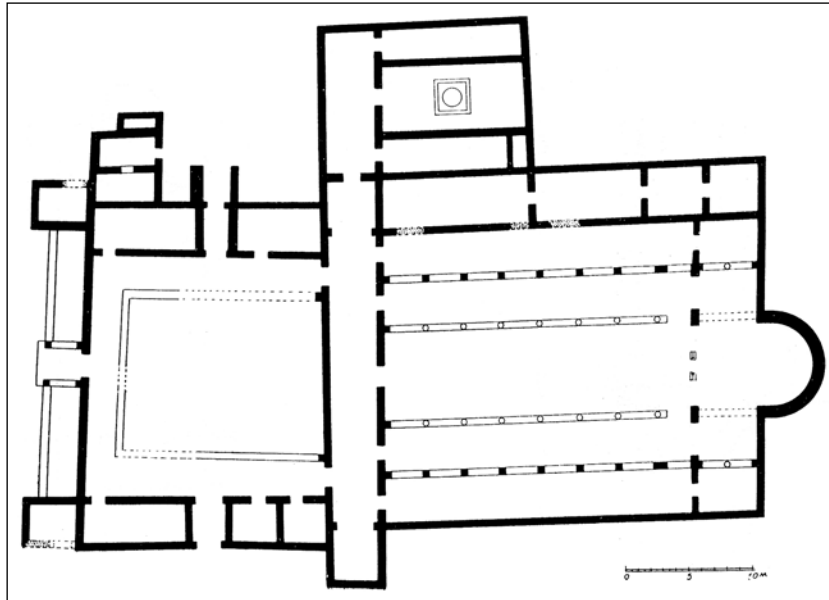


Fig. 1. Epidauros, basilica, late fourth century  
(N. Gkioles, *Παλαιοχριστιανική τέχνη. Ναοδομία (π. 200-600)*, Athens 1998, fig. 150)

Слика 1. Епидaurus, базилика, касни четврти век  
(Н. Гиолес, *Παλαιοχριστιανική τέχνη. Ναοδομία (π. 200-600)*, Ατινα 1998., σλ. 150)

entrance of the sanctuary of Asclepius in Epidauros in the last decades of the fourth century (fig. 1).<sup>29</sup> The disposition of the four aisles at the sides of the nave and the short transept to the east has been unanimously interpreted as depending from constantinian prototypes.<sup>30</sup> In fact the transept at either end had two side-chambers, as in St Peter's, though not projecting beyond the outer aisles. The specific spot on which this church was erected and its plan are by all means indicative of the intentions of the local clergy and their architect: the new religion needed to separate itself spatially from the old cults but also to emerge competitively side-by-side to them, and with a plan that depends from a venerated prototype, that of the Vatican basilica.

Seventeen other churches adopted the plan of the five-aisled church with or without transept. These churches can be divided into two distinctive groups. The first group comprises thirteen examples of a five-aisled plan without transept. They have been excavated in Thessaloniki and in some secondary settlements in the province of Achaia. The majority of them are not yet published; information can be gathered only in annual archaeological reports. In the present state of our knowledge, except for the churches of Thessaloniki, it is not yet

<sup>29</sup> P. Kavvadias, *PraktArchEt* 1916, 39-41. *Idem*, Ανασκαφαί ἐν Ἐπιδαύρῳ, *ArchEph* 1918, 174-191. G. Sotiriou, Ἡ βασιλική τῆς Ἐπιδαύρου, *PraktAkAth* 4 (1929), 91-95. The transept of this church has been divided by arcades at a later period; the construction phases of the church will constitute the subject of a separate study.

<sup>30</sup> Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, *op. cit.*, 118-199, fig. 72.

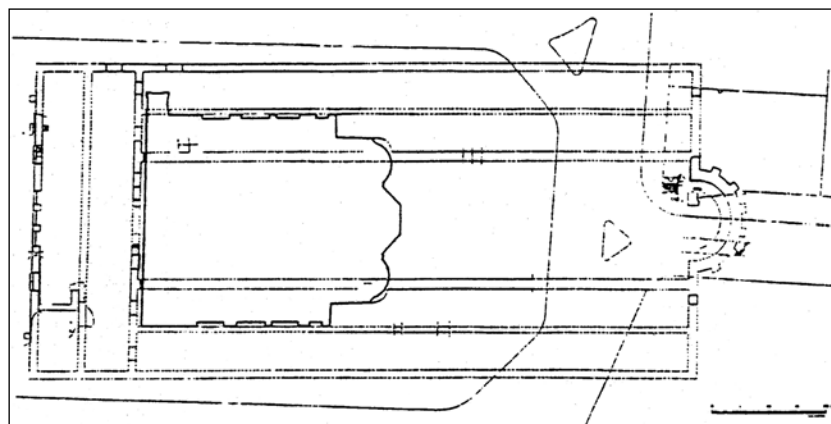


Fig. 2. Thessaloniki, basilica under St Sophia, second half of the fifth century  
(Κ. Theocharidou, *Η αρχιτεκτονική του ναού της Αγίας Σοφίας στη Θεσσαλονίκη από την ίδρυσή του μέχρι σήμερα*, Athens 1994, plan 3)

Слика 2. Солун, базилика испод Свете Софије, друга половина петог века  
(Κ. Теοкариду, *Η αρχιτεκτονική του ναού της Αγίας Σοφίας στη Θεσσαλονίκη από την ίδρυσή του μέχρι σήμερα*, Ατινα 1994., план 3)

obvious if they constituted the only – therefore episcopal – churches; for the time being it is conceivable to consider a great part of them as such, since the evidence concerning these settlements is quite poor. The second group, disseminated in the provinces of Crete, Achaia, Epirus and also in Thessaloniki, comprises four churches with perpendicular side-chambers at either side of the sanctuary. They are surely episcopal and one at least is martyrial.

Only the western parts of the exterior walls and the colonnades' stylobates and a small part of the apse are known from the basilica under Saint-Sophia church in Thessaloniki (fig. 2).<sup>31</sup> Archaeological evidence comprises only some sculptures and the decoration of the apse; pottery from the strata under the foundations of the colonnades indicates a date after the middle of the fifth century.<sup>32</sup> The basilica at the Heptapyrgion district is not yet published:<sup>33</sup> it has probably been a martyrial or cemetery church built in short distance of a monumental cistern. Archaeological data comprises crude mosaic pavements in the apse and aisles and architectural sculpture which may indicate a date not before 500.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> A. Mentzos, συμβολή στην έρευνα του αρχαιότερου ναού της Αγίας Σοφίας Θεσσαλονίκης, *Μακεδονικά* 21 (1981), 201-221. Κ. Theocharidou, *Η αρχιτεκτονική του ναού της Αγίας Σοφίας στη Θεσσαλονίκη από την ίδρυσή του μέχρι σήμερα*, Athens 1994, 34-39, plans 2-3, pl. 1.

<sup>32</sup> V.R. Anderson-Stojanovic, *Stobi I. The Hellenistic and Roman Pottery*, Princeton, New Jersey 1992, 63 and note 103.

<sup>33</sup> P. Amandry, *BCH* 68-69 (1944-1945), 430. Ch. Makaronas, Ειδήσεις αρχαιολογικά, *Μακεδονικά* 2 (1941-1952), 613-615 no 40. E. Kourkoutidou-Nikolaïdou, Κ. Eleftheriadou, *ArchDelt* 50 (1995), Β'2, 516-517.

<sup>34</sup> P. Asimakopoulou-Atzaka, *Σύνταγμα των παλαιοχριστιανικών ψηφιδωτών δαπέδων της Ελλάδος, III. Μακεδονία-Θράκη, 1. Τα ψηφιδωτά δάπεδα της Θεσσαλονίκης*, Thessaloniki 1998, 168-169, 171, 328-329 no 63, pl. 275.

In Attica, several five-aisled churches are reported. The basilicas of Lavrion<sup>35</sup>, Rafina<sup>36</sup> and Megara<sup>37</sup> are not yet published; a date in the later part of the fifth century is indicated by their excavators considering their mosaic and sculptures. The basilica of Aigosthena in the bay of the Corinthian gulf is built outside the late classical-hellenistic enclosure of the city (fig. 3):<sup>38</sup> the mosaic decoration of the pavements indicates a late-fifth century date<sup>39</sup>. In the first part of the following century the episcopal church of Antikyra was erected over earlier ruins; only the west part of the church has been uncovered<sup>40</sup>.

Most of the basilicas of the typical five-aisled plan have been excavated in the Peloponnese<sup>41</sup>. The basilica of the Kenchrean port, to the east of Corinth, is the best uncovered: it incorporated the remains of profane building(s) and of a pagan shrine of Isis<sup>42</sup>. The mosaic pavements of the church complex are dated to the late fourth or early fifth century, quite early in my opinion<sup>43</sup>. In Pallantion an old excavation by the Italian Archaeological School has unearthed the nave of a church and a large narthex to the west; the proportions of the nave and the dimensions of the narthex probably indicate a five-aisled basilica whose date to the sixth century is proposed without explicit data; coins of Justin II found in the layers that covered the narthex only indicate the period of its abandonment<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> M. Oikonomakou, *ArchDelt* 36 (1981), 55, pl. 22a. M. Lazari, *ibid.*, 83, pl. 31. E. Gkini-Tsofopoulou, *ArchDelt* 40 (1985), 82, plan 1. *Eadem*, *ArchDelt* 43 (1988), B<sup>1</sup>, 87, pl. 54e. J. Travlos, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie des antiken Attika*, Tübingen 1988, 204-205.

<sup>36</sup> Travlos, *Bildlexikon*, *op. cit.*, 380, fig. 479.

<sup>37</sup> P. Zoridis, *ArchDelt* 34 (1979), B<sup>1</sup>, 54-57 no 13, 59 no 22, plan 12 nos 13, 22. *Idem*, *ArchDelt* 35 (1980), 45-48, plans 6, 8. *Idem*, *ArchDelt* 42 (1987), 43-46 no 12, plan 8 no 12, 15. P. Asimakopoulou-Atzaka, *Σύνταγμα των παλαιοχριστιανικών ψηφιδωτών δαπέδων της Ελλάδος, II. Πελοπόννησος-Στερεά Ελλάδα*, Thessaloniki 1987, 143-144 no 82. Cf. Recently N. Gkioles, Οι δέκα άγιοι μάρτυρες των Μεγάρων, η εποχή επανεμφάνισής τους και τα κατάλοιπα των παλαιοχριστιανικών μαρτυρίων τους, *DChAE* 23 (2002), 94 and notes 63-65.

<sup>38</sup> A. Orlandos, *PraktArchEt* 1954, 129-140.

<sup>39</sup> Asimakopoulou-Atzaka, *Σύνταγμα*, *op. cit.*, 139-141 no 78.

<sup>40</sup> A. Kourenta-Raptaki, *ArchDelt* 35 (1980), B<sup>1</sup>, 100, pl. B. *Eadem*, *ArchDelt* 36 (1981), B<sup>1</sup>, 80. *Eadem*, *ArchDelt* 45 (1990), B<sup>1</sup>, 96, plan 9. *Eadem*, *ArchDelt* 49 (1994), 103, pl. 46a. *Eadem*, Παλαιοχριστιανική Αντίκυρα. Μια πρώτη προσέγγιση, in: *Θωράκιον. Αφιέρωμα στη μνήμη του Παύλου Λαζαρίδη*, Athens 2004, 113-117, pl. 39-40a.

<sup>41</sup> In Alea (Tegea), near Mantinea, the well-known basilica dedicated to martyr Thyrsos has been thought as a three-aisled basilica with a chapel out of the north aisle; I believe that there is another aisle out of the south side of the church. For the old excavations, see V. Bérard, Tégée et la Tégéatide, *BCH* 17 (1893), 13-14. A. Orlandos, Παλαιοχριστιανικά και βυζαντινά μνημεία Τεγέας-Νυκλίου, *ABME* 12 (1973), 12-81. Asimakopoulou-Atzaka, *Σύνταγμα*, *op. cit.*, 77-80 no 21. Cf. also A. Avraméa, Η βασιλική του Θύρσου στην Τεγέα και η επιγραφή της, *DChAE* 20 (1998-1999), 35-40.

<sup>42</sup> R. Scranton, J.W. Shaw, L. Ibrahim, *Kenchreai. Eastern Port of Corinth, 1. Topography and Architecture*, Leiden 1978, 65-67, 71-72, 76-78, 107-120. D. Pallas, Βασιλική Κεγχρεών, *EEBS* 47 (1987-1989), 295-309.

<sup>43</sup> Asimakopoulou-Atzaka, *Σύνταγμα*, *op. cit.*, 92-93 no 32.

<sup>44</sup> G. Libertini, Scavi in Arcadia (Agosto-Settembre 1940), *ASAtene* 1-2 (1939-1940), 227-230, fig. C. *Idem*, Chiesa bizantine nell'area dell'antica Pallanzio, in: *Πεπραγμένα του Θ' Διεθνούς Βυζαντινολογικού Συνεδρίου, Θεσσαλονίκη 1953*, Athens 1955, I, 250-254, fig. 1, pl. 48-51. Asimakopoulou-Atzaka, *Σύνταγμα*, *op. cit.*, 75-76 no 19.



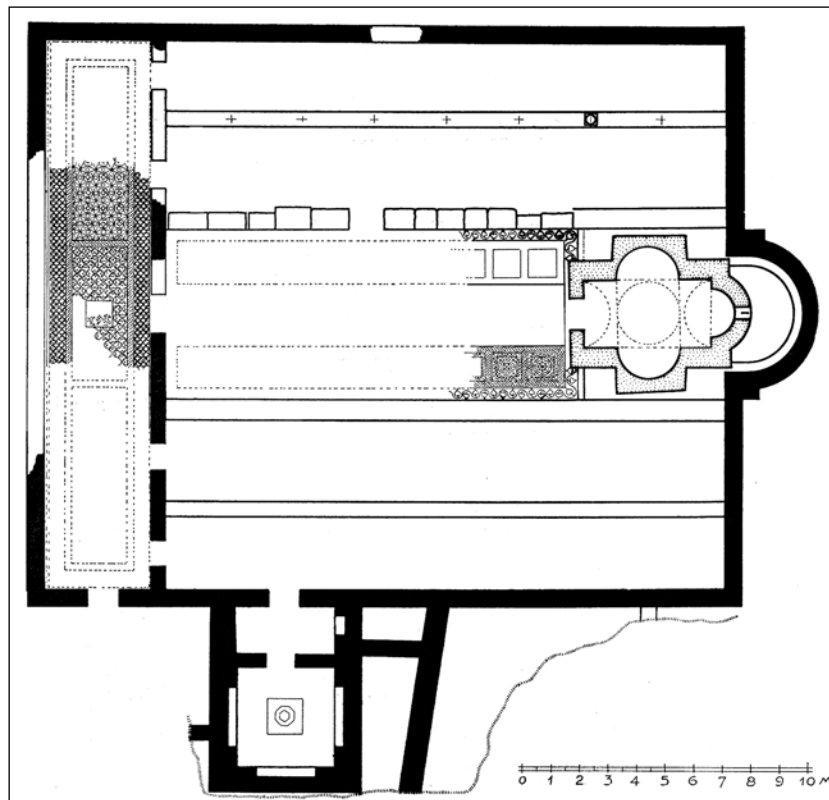


Fig. 3. Aigosthena, basilica outside the city walls, late fifth century  
(A. Orlandos, *PraktArchEt* 1954, 130, fig. 2)

Слика 3. Егостена, базилика изван градских зидина, касни пети век  
(А. Орландос, *PraktArchEt* 1954., 130, сл. 2)

In Molaoi, a partly uncovered five-aisled basilica was erected in early sixth century (fig. 4)<sup>45</sup>; in the later part of the same century, as indicated by the crude mosaic pavements, a chapel has been added to the east of the two north aisles<sup>46</sup>. The basilica at Philiatra, Kyparissia, has only partly been explored<sup>47</sup>, while that of the Kalpaki, near Mantinea, can be only traced on the surface<sup>48</sup>.

Four episcopal five-aisled churches with transversal side-chambers at either side of the sanctuary were erected in the late fifth-century in the west part of Greece and in Creta. The most ancient seems to be the Basilica B, or basilica of

<sup>45</sup> R. Etzeoglou, *Παλαιοχριστιανική βασιλική παρὰ τοὺς Μολάους Λακωνίας*, *ArchEph* 1974, 244-253, plan 1, pl. 80-87, where the basilica is dated to the middle of the century.

<sup>46</sup> Asimakopoulou-Atzaka, *Σύνταγμα*, *op. cit.*, 100-103 no 45.

<sup>47</sup> D. Pallas, *PraktArchEt* 1960, 177-192, pl. 144-150. *Idem*, *ArchDelt* 10 (1960), B', 122-125, pl. 102-103. Asimakopoulou-Atzaka, *Σύνταγμα*, *op. cit.*, 110-111 no 53.

<sup>48</sup> V. Konti, *Συμβολή στην ιστορική γεωγραφία της Αρκαδίας (395-1209)*, *Σύμμεικτα* 6 (1985), 114.

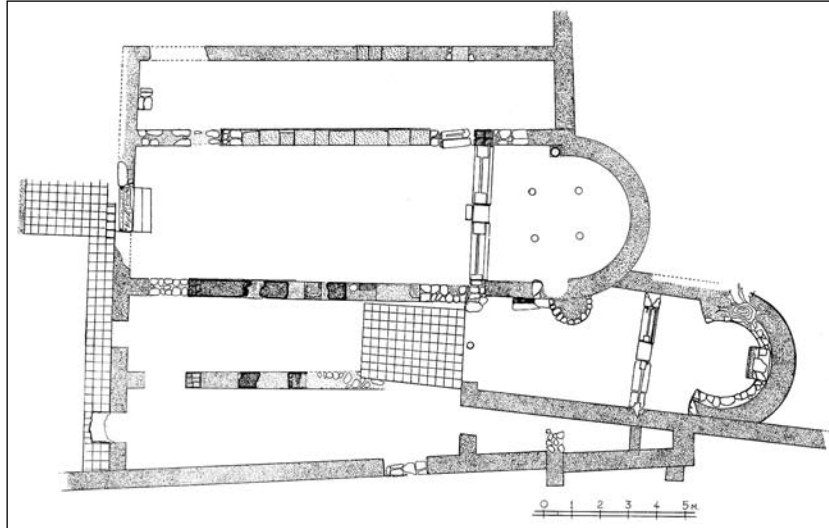


Fig. 4. Molaioi, basilica, early sixth century (R. Etzeoglou, *Παλαιοχριστιανική βασιλική παρά τους Μολάους Λακωνίας*, *ArchEph* 1974, 245, fig. 1)

Слика 4. Молаи, базилика, рани шести век (Р. Ецоглу, *Παλαιοχριστιανική βασιλική παρά τους Μολάους Λακωνίας*, *ArchEph* 1974., 245, сл. 1)

St Alkison, in Nikopolis (fig. 5); a date to the later third of the fifth century can be argued on the basis of its sculpture and *opus sectile* decoration<sup>49</sup>. Contemporary with this church was probably the episcopal church of Nafpaktos, further to the south, from which only the east end has been excavated<sup>50</sup>. In Corfu, the Palaiopolis basilica was the bishopric seat of the late antique capital of the island: two dedicatory inscriptions mention the bishop Jovian, who was probably active during the early sixth century<sup>51</sup>. The first construction phase of the great and lavishly decorated episcopal church of Gortys in Crete has been assigned to the age of Justinian, while a second construction and decoration phase is dated

<sup>49</sup> D. Pallas, s.v. Epirus, *RBK* II, Stuttgart 1971, 215-221, fig. 3. Y. Varalis, Τα χαρακτηριστικά της εκκλησιαστικής αρχιτεκτονικής της Νικόπολης: παραλληλίες και διαφοροποιήσεις, in: *Νικόπολις Β'*, *Πρακτικά του Δευτέρου Διεθνούς Συμποσίου για της Νικόπολη, 11-15 Σεπτεμβρίου 2002*, Πρέβεζα 2007, 595-604 *passim*. Cf. also the papers of V. Papadopoulou, Βασιλική Αλκίσωνος. Η ανασκαφική έρευνα των τελευταίων ετών, and of V. Papadopoulou and A.I. Konstantaki, Ανάγλυφα αρχιτεκτονικά μέλη Βασιλικής Β (Αλκίσωνος). Παρατηρήσεις και συμπεράσματα, *ibid.*, 609-635 and 637-657, respectively.

<sup>50</sup> P. Lazaridis, *ArchDelt* 21 (1966), B'2, 267-268, pl. 260c. *Idem*, *ArchDelt* 28 (1973), B'2, 395-397, plan 1. P.L. Vocotopoulos, *ArchDelt* 28 (1973), B'2, 394-395, plan 1, pl. 350a-b. N. Zias, *ArchDelt* 29 (1973-1974), B'3, 543, plans 1-2. D. Triantaphyllopoulos, *ArchDelt* 33 (1978), B'1, 167-168. V. Papadopoulou, *ArchDelt* 45 (1990), B'1, 280.

<sup>51</sup> A. Xyngopoulos, *PraktArchEt* 1936, 99-110. I. Papadimitriou, *PraktArchEt* 1939, 92-99. *Idem*, Ο Ιοβιανός της βασιλικής της Παλαιοπόλεως Κερκύρας, *ArchEph* 1942-1944, 39-48. V. Kallipolitis, *PraktArchEt* 1955, 187-188. *Idem*, *PraktArchEt* 1956, 162-163. *Idem*, *PraktArchEt* 1957, 81-82. St. Pelekanidis, P. Asimakopoulou-Atzaka, *Σύνταγμα τῶν παλαιοχριστιανικῶν ψηφιδωτῶν δαπέδων τῆς Ελλάδος, I. Νησιωτικὴ Ἑλλάς*, Thessaloniki 1988, 95-97 no 69.

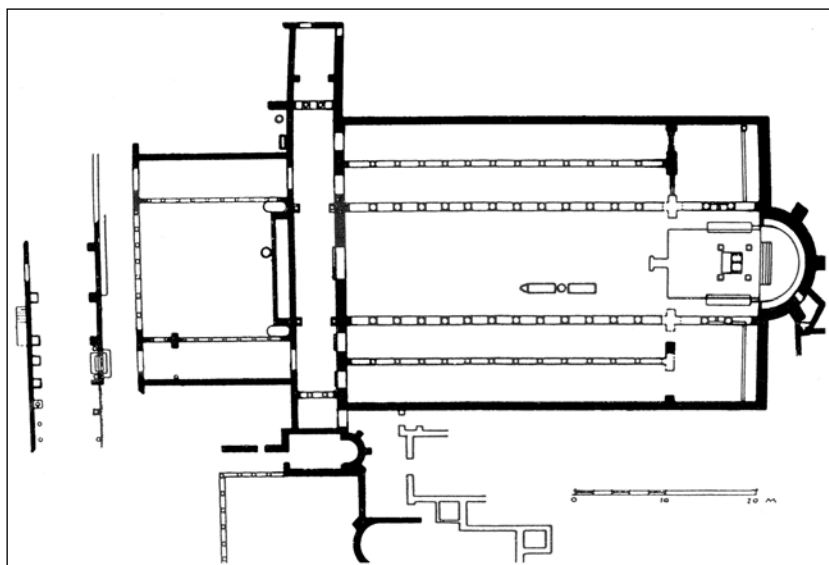


Fig. 5. Nikopolis, basilica B (of St Alkison), later third of the fifth century (N. Gkioles, *Παλαιοχριστιανική τέχνη. Ναοδομία (π. 200-600)*, Athens 1998, fig. 156)  
 Слика 5. Никополис, базилика Б (светог Алкисона), последња трећина петог века (Н. Гиолес, *Παλαιοχριστιανική τέχνη. Ναοδομία (π. 200-600)*, Атина 1998., сл. 156)

to the reign of Heraclius<sup>52</sup>.

Last but not least, the basilica of Saint Demetrios in Thessaloniki belongs to this group of five-aisled churches with transverse side-chambers on either side of the sanctuary<sup>53</sup>. In this church colonnades line the side-compartments from two sides and extend to the east the apse area. The church has been founded by the prefect Leontios in early fifth century as a three-aisled basilica provided with a court to the east, as has already been shown by professor Aristotelis Mentzos<sup>54</sup>. Although the major parts of the church that we see today

<sup>52</sup> R. Farioli Campanati, La basilica di Mitropolis a Gortyna. Campagne di scavo 1991-1997, *CorsiRav* 44 (1998), 83-121. Cf. also Y. Varalis, Παρατηρήσεις στην παλαιοχριστιανική ναοδομία της Κρήτης, in: *Creta Romana e Protobizantina, Atti del Congresso internazionale, Iraklion, 23-30 settembre 2000*, III, Padova 2004, 835 no 66, with previous bibliography.

<sup>53</sup> G. and M. Sotiriou, *Η βασιλική του Αγίου Δημητρίου Θεσσαλονίκης*, Athens 1952, especially 64-146.

<sup>54</sup> A. Mentzos, Ενδείξεις και πληροφορίες για τον αρχαιότερο ναό του Αγίου Δημητρίου, in: *Χριστιανική Θεσσαλονίκη. Πρακτικά ΙΓ' Διεθνούς Επιστημονικού Συμποσίου: Η επαρχιακή μητροπολιτική σύνοδος Θεσσαλονίκης*, Thessaloniki 2000, 179-202. Cf. also *idem*, Ο ναός του Αγίου Δημητρίου προ και μετά την πυρκαγιά του 7ου αιώνα, in: *Χριστιανική Θεσσαλονίκη. Πρακτικά ΙΒ' Διεθνούς Επιστημονικού Συμποσίου: Ο ιερός ναός του Αγίου Δημητρίου προσκύνημα Ανατολής και Δύσεως*, Thessaloniki 2001, 217-245. A mid-fifth century remodeling of the church cannot be excluded; a now lost dedicatory inscription had mentioned a certain Leo, either the emperor Leo I (457-474) or pope Leo the Great (440-461). Cf. G. Velenis, Σχόλια σε δύο ψηφιδωτές επιγραφές του Αγίου Δημητρίου Θεσσαλονίκης, *DChAE* 24 (2003), 38-44.

are dated to the early sixth century, as has been suggested by professor Jean-Michel Spieser<sup>55</sup>, I would personally opt for a date after the earthquake of 518.

### III. Venerated prototypes?

The concentration of so many churches of the five-aisled plan in the prefecture of Eastern Illyricum indicate that this plan was not merely successfully adapted to the needs of the clergy and the congregation of this part of the Mediterranean. I think that the plan has been purposely selected among the existing ones for certain reasons, which depended on the plan itself and its history and on the will of the bishops that gave the building commissions<sup>56</sup>. A five-aisled building is primarily appropriate for the gathering of large congregations which attended the various offices and the liturgy every Sunday. The plan has also had a certain history; it was considered appropriate for the great episcopal and martyrial churches of Rome, Constantinople and the Holy Land, whose architectural and intellectual influence as administrative and ecclesiastical centres was exercised over the Empire<sup>57</sup>. The increasing development of pilgrimage both to east and west from the fourth century on was a decisive factor for the diffusion of ecclesiastical architectural types which were surely studied and copied by architects in the great cities of the state<sup>58</sup>. This specific architectural type had also been endowed with the seal of imperial finance, authority and endorsement; this could not have been imperceptible since great dedicatory inscriptions, such as that in Saint Peter's basilica in Rome, mentioned and thus immortalized Constantine and one of his sons as donors<sup>59</sup>. Thus it is quite un-

<sup>55</sup> J.-M. Spieser, *Thessalonique et ses monuments du IV<sup>e</sup> au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Contribution à l'étude d'une ville paléochrétienne*, Paris 1984, 165-214, especially 210-212. Cf. also Mentzos, *Ενδείξεις και πληροφορίες*, *loc. cit.*, 180 note 3 with the bibliography concerning the proposed dates.

<sup>56</sup> For the role of bishops as construction commissioners, cf. D. Feissel, *L'évêque. Titres et fonctions d'après les inscriptions grecques jusqu'au VII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, in: *Actes du XI<sup>e</sup> Congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne, Lyon, Vienne, Grenoble, Genève et Aoste, 21-28 septembre 1986*, Città del Vaticano and Rome 1989, I, 801-828; A. Avraméa, *Les constructions profanes de l'évêque d'après l'épigraphie et les textes d'Orient*, in: *ibid.*, 829-835.

<sup>57</sup> The role of Rome and Constantinople is more than obvious; for the place of Jerusalem as the greatest pilgrimage centre of the Orient, cf. recently J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades*, Warminster 2002.

<sup>58</sup> The training and activity of the architects in Late Antiquity is rarely treated. Cf. G. Downey, *Byzantine Architects: Their Training and Methods*, *Byzantion* 18 (1946-1948), 99-118. W.E. Kleinbauer, *Pre-Carolingian Concepts of Architectural Planning*, in: M.J. Chiat, K.L. Reyerson, eds, *The Medieval Mediterranean: Cross-Cultural Contacts, Medieval Studies at Minnesota* 3, St Cloud, Minn. 1988, 67-79. Useful and inspiring insights can be found in R. Krautheimer, *Introduction to an 'Iconography of Medieval Architecture'*, *JWarb* 5 (1942), 1-33 and *idem*, *Success and Failure in Late Antique Church Planning*, in: K. Weitzmann, ed., *Age of Spirituality: A Symposium*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1980, 121-139.

<sup>59</sup> For the dedicatory inscriptions of St Peter's, cf. Krautheimer, Corbett, Frazer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianarum Romae*, *op. cit.*, 171-172, 274. See also R. Krautheimer, *A Note on the Inscription in the Apse of Old St Peter's*, *DOP* 41 (1987), 317-320, and *idem*,

derstandable how this church plan was adopted for so many Balkan churches. But why did this plan emerge specifically at the end of the fifth and the early sixth century?

If we are not misled by the published archaeological data, the most plausible explanation for this fact is to be found in the turbulent ecclesiastical history of the Prefecture of Eastern Illyricum<sup>60</sup>. It is well known that from 482 till 519 the Acacian schism divided the holy sees of Rome and Constantinople: patriarch Acacius of Constantinople was accused of heresy and excommunicated since he signed the Emperor Zeno's *Henotikon* which was favourable to monophysitism. Pope Felix and his successors preserved the orthodox faith and pressed all the bishops under their jurisdiction and among them those of the prefecture of Eastern Illyricum through the archbishop of Thessaloniki, to give Acacius the *anathema*<sup>61</sup>. Thus the period coincides with the selection of a most reverend prototype in church architecture; the episcopal churches of certain cities, whose bishops were called to support the pope against heresy, adopted the most appropriate plan, Roman in origin and reverend by imperial authority. If this is a legitimate point of view, then the archaeological and architectural data of the southern provinces of the Prefecture offer significant historical testimony of the alignment of its bishops with the papal orthodoxy, since the existing written sources attest a certain papal pressure only over the bishops of the northern part of the Prefecture<sup>62</sup>. It is not a mere coincidence that the city of Thessaloniki, whose archbishop was either trying to retain a fine line between Rome and Constantinople either in full allegiance with the see of New Rome<sup>63</sup>, had three five-aisled basilicas that could be dated presumably after the earthquake of 518, i.e. after the period during which the schism had attained its worst convulsion. Hopefully the publications of the churches of Eastern Illyricum will be soon available and their excavated material will specify the proposed dates for their construction. Certainly these publications and painstaking in-depth research might enrich our knowledge on the subject and verify the above hypothesis.

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The Building Inscriptions and the Dates of Construction of Old St Peter's: A Reconsideration, *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 25 (1989), 1-23, where a post-constantinian date is proposed.

<sup>60</sup> For the ecclesiastical history of the Illyricum, cf. recently Ch. Pietri, La géographie de l'Illyricum ecclésiastique et ses relations avec l'église de Rome (Ve-VIe siècles), in: *Villes et peuplement dans l'Illyricum protobyzantin, Actes du colloque organisé par l'École Française de Rome, Rome, 12-14 mai 1982*, Paris 1984, 21-62.

<sup>61</sup> E. Schwartz, *Publizistische Sammlung zum Acacianischen Schisma*, Munich 1934 (non vidi). Chr. Fraise-Coué, L'incompréhension croissante entre l'Orient et l'Occident, II. Le Schisme d'Acace, in: L. Pietri, ed., *Histoire du Christianisme des origines à nos jours, III. Les églises d'Orient et d'Occident*, Paris 1998, 167-196. W. Bowden, *Epirus Vetus. The Archaeology of a Late Antique Province*, London 2003, 154-157.

<sup>62</sup> See Fraise-Coué, L'incompréhension croissante, *loc. cit.*, 175, 179-180, 186-188.

<sup>63</sup> For the delegates of Pope in Thessaloniki, cf. A. Mentzos, Αγία Σοφία ή Άγιος Μάρκος, *Βυζαντινά* 21 (2000), 356-358.

Јанис Д. Варалис

УЗВИШЕНИ ПРОТОТИПОВИ?  
КОНСТАНТИНОВЕ ЦРКВЕ И ЊИХОВЕ КАСНИЈЕ ИМИТАЦИЈЕ  
НА БАЛКАНУ

Константинова црквена архитектура већ је проучена и добро је позната. Константин, први хришћански император, изградио је чувене цркве у Риму, Константинопољу и Светој Земљи како би обезбедио монументалне култне центре за хришћанску верску заједницу и високе свештенике у овим највећим градовима Империје. Опште карактеристике Константинових цркава (монументалне петобродне грађевине са попречним бродовима или кружним структурама у олтарском делу, околни маузолеји - *mausolea* и атријуми - *atria*, све богато украшено) носе печат царске моћи и сагласности.

Још увек није у потпуности испитано, те је стога и мало познато да су архитектонски тип и друге карактеристике ових цркава биле репродуковане у неколико, углавном епископских, цркава на јужном Балкану (Ахаја: Егостена, Антикира, Епидаурис, Кенхреја, Лаврион, Молаи А, Нафпактос, Палантион А, Филиатра, Рафина; Крит: Гортис; Епирус Ветус: Крф, Никополис Б; Македонија: Солун, црква испод Свете Софије, базилика на акропољу, Свети Димитрије). Мада истраживање ових цркава још није окончано, нека запажања у вези са планом и анексима ових грађевина могу открити занимљиве аспекте њихове архитектуре. Посебно је интересантно време градње ових цркава, јер се већина њих датира у касни пети и рани шести век, односно у период такозване акакијанске шизме (484-519).