



2018

Spaces for Deposition of Offerings in Early Byzantine Churches: Possible Sacristies at Golemo Gradište, Konjuh

Carolyn S. Snively
Gettysburg College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/classfac>

 Part of the [Classical Archaeology and Art History Commons](#), and the [Religion Commons](#)

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

Snively, Carolyn S., "Spaces for Deposition of Offerings in Early Byzantine Churches: Possible Sacristies at Golemo Gradište, Konjuh," in *Giving Gifts to God: Evidences of Votive Offerings*. Proceedings of the 1st & 2nd International Archaeological Conference, 2016-2017, D. Gjorgjievski, ed., Kumanovo, 2018, 175-182.

This is the publisher's version of the work. This publication appears in Gettysburg College's institutional repository by permission of the copyright owner for personal use, not for redistribution. Cupola permanent link: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/classfac/19>

This open access conference proceeding is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.

Spaces for Deposition of Offerings in Early Byzantine Churches: Possible Sacristies at Golemo Gradište, Konjuh

Abstract

This paper is primarily a presentation of two recently excavated rooms in the 6th c. Episcopal Basilica at the site of Golemo Gradište, village of Konjuh. The location and furnishings of the spaces raise the possibility that they were used for the deposition of offerings, such as bread and wine for the Eucharist, by members of the congregation as they entered the church. Gifts of bread and wine immediately move the discussion into issues of liturgy. In order to set the church and these specific rooms in context and to avoid entanglement in difficult liturgical issues, some background will be provided and some assumptions stated.

Keywords

votive offerings, Early Byzantine churches, Konjuh, sacristy

Disciplines

Classical Archaeology and Art History | Classics | Religion

Comments

This conference proceeding was originally presented at the 1st and 2nd International Archaeological Conferences held in Skopje & Kumanovo, 2016-2017.

SPACES FOR DEPOSITION OF OFFERINGS IN EARLY BYZANTINE CHURCHES: THE POSSIBLE SACRISTIES AT GOLEMO GRADIŠTE, KONJUH

Carolyn S. Snively

Gettysburg College
Gettysburg PA 17325 USA
csnively@gettysburg.edu

This paper is primarily a presentation of two recently excavated rooms in the 6th c. Episcopal Basilica at the site of Golemo Gradište, village of Konjuh. The location and furnishings of the spaces raise the possibility that they were used for the deposition of offerings, such as bread and wine for the Eucharist, by members of the congregation as they entered the church. Gifts of bread and wine immediately move the discussion into issues of liturgy. In order to set the church and these specific rooms in context and to avoid entanglement in difficult liturgical issues, some background will be provided and some assumptions stated.

The Late Antique city at Golemo Gradište probably stood near the southeastern boundary of the province of Dardania and thus within the Diocese of Dacia, in the northern half of the Prefecture of Eastern Illyricum. Thus, after 535 AD, it would have fallen under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Justiniana Prima.

The anonymous city at Golemo Gradište was apparently established in the 5th c. and reconstructed with strong fortifications, probably during the first quarter of the 6th c. The Episcopal Basilica occupied a central location in the lower city, on the northern terrace. Built near the middle of the century, two or three decades after the urban renewal, it replaced a structure, probably a large house, from the early 6th c. phase.¹ Several unusual features in the basilica have given rise to a hypothesis that toward the middle of the 6th c. the city received a new bishop, who was responsible for the construction of the basilica according to his own idiosyncratic or possibly foreign views.

Background

The performance of the liturgy in Christian churches developed in various ways across the Roman world. No literary sources can definitely be identified as describing the liturgy or the details of its performance in Early Byzantine churches in the Prefecture of Eastern Illyricum, although numerous attempts have been made to attach existing texts to the region.² Therefore the only certain evidence for actions connected with liturgy in the provinces of this prefecture consists of the architecture, furniture, and decoration of its churches. That evidence does not paint a unified picture, within a diocese or even individual provinces, although patterns may be observed.

The location of the Prefecture of Eastern Illyricum between East and West, between Constantinople and Rome, and its ecclesiastical status as subject to the Pope in Rome—at least when he could enforce his control over the region—have left open the question whether eastern or western religious practices were followed here.³ Practices apparently differed between East and West at several points in the liturgy. For example, in Rome at the beginning of the service, the people and the members of the minor clergy entered the church and took their places before the dramatic entrance of the bishop. In Constantinople, however, in the ceremony of the First Entrance the people entered

² Mailis 2011, p. 5-16 (history of scholarship), 21-24 (sources). The author discusses the state of the question of *diakonika* and then provides a catalogue of *sacristies in churches in the provinces of Epirus vetus, Macedonia Prima, Thessalia, Achaia, and Creta, i.e., the provinces of Eastern Illyricum within the modern Greek state. See also Varalis 2008, p. 78-83, and other works cited below.*

³ Space does not permit a discussion of the amount of influence exerted on church practice through the archbishopric of Justiniana Prima during Justinian's lifetime.

¹ For the site of Golemo Gradište, see most recently Snively 2017 and Sanev *et al.* 2012.

together with or, in fact, probably just after the bishop.⁴

While later sources provide evidence for at least partial reconstruction of the early liturgy in Rome and Constantinople, the situation in Eastern Illyricum remains unknown. The Balkan peninsula is often entirely omitted from discussions of East and West. In terms of liturgy, it is frequently lumped in with the East, i.e., with Constantinople, Asia Minor, Syria, etc. And a note of caution is in order here: the post-iconoclastic sources describe the liturgy in Constantinople as structured around a series of appearances of the clergy from the sanctuary behind the iconostasis and their returns to that hidden space. In contrast, a series of grand processions through the nave and frequently through the entire length of the nave had shaped the Early Byzantine liturgy. As Mathews points out, the relatively open basilica plan of the 5th and 6th centuries and the more closed central plan of Middle Byzantine times reflect this development of the liturgical performance.⁵ Furthermore, the arrangement of Early Byzantine churches in Constantinople differs significantly from the arrangement of churches in Eastern Illyricum, to such an extent that Mathews, followed by Robert Taft, argues that the performance of the liturgy, not necessarily the spoken words but the actions accompanying them, also differed significantly between Constantinople and Eastern Illyricum.⁶

One of the processions through the nave, mentioned above, takes us directly into the issue of deposition of gifts. Christians made all kinds of gifts to the church, e.g., alms for the poor, vessels of precious metal, or stretches of mosaic pavement. Undoubtedly unrestricted gifts of money were the ones most popular with the clergy. Our focus here, however, returns to the mundane offerings of wine and bread by members of the congregation. In the West apparently such offerings were deposited directly on the main altar of a church by the members of the congregation, although the details and whether or not an actual offertory procession occurred remain not only uncertain but much disputed.⁷ In Constantinople,

however, the deacons brought the bread and wine to the altar from the *skeuophylakion*, a separate room or building outside the church, where presumably they had been deposited by the faithful before the service. No evidence has been found for a procession of the faithful.⁸ In the Eastern Orthodox liturgy, this practical transfer by the deacons of an appropriate amount of bread and wine for the Eucharist developed into the Great Entrance or the Entrance of the Mysteries, probably in the post-Iconoclastic period.

In contrast to the church plans found in Constantinople and Rome that usually do not have western annexes, church plans in Eastern Illyricum very frequently include rooms or groups of rooms attached to and accessible from the narthex or occasionally the atrium. Features such as tables, benches, containers for liquids, drains, and fireplaces may appear in the rooms. Thus an argument can be made that members of the Christian community brought their gifts of bread and wine to the church and deposited them in a designated space near the entrance. During the service an appropriate amount of bread and wine from among the gifts was moved to the sanctuary in preparation for communion. Recent scholarly opinion holds that the evidence is insufficient to call those rooms—if indeed their function can be definitely identified—*diakonika*. Jean-Pierre Sodini and more recently Athanassios Mailis refer to them as *sacristies*.⁹

The architectural plans of many 5th and 6th century churches in these regions¹⁰ demonstrate the importance of at least one room at the west side of a church, accessible from the narthex and without indication of a specific function such as baptism. The Central Basilica (also known as the Synagogue Basilica) at Stobi illustrates the measures taken to create such a room. The basilica was inserted into a narrow space between a street and an existing residence, without possibility of an annex to north or south of the narthex. The builders reduced the size of the courtyard of the atrium and shifted it from the axis of the basilica to the north, in order to make space for a room that opened to the west from the south part of the narthex.

A few basilicas have no western annexes. Frequently, however, a complex of two or three rooms are found, of which one may have an apse. Annexes may appear on the north or south side of the church, often in a roughly symmetrical arrangement. Sodini's detailed discussion of the annexes of Basilicas A, B,

⁴ Mathews 1962, p. 75-77; Mathews 1971, p. 140, 143, 145.

⁵ Mathews 1971, p. 178-179.

⁶ Mathews 1971, p. 5, 107, 108, 111, 120; Taft 1975, p. 33-34.

⁷ Taft 1975, p. 13: "The evidence for such a procession in the West is indisputable." Yarnold 1992, p. 231: "The offertory: In the fourth century the practice of earlier times was continued: the bishop 'offered' the gifts 'offered' by the faithful. The people themselves brought their gifts up to the altar, but there is at this time no evidence whether or not there was a formal offertory procession, or at what point in the Eucharist (or before it) this offering took place."

⁸ Taft 1975, p. 11, 16-17; Wybrew 1992, p. 154-155.

⁹ Mailis 2011, p. 128; Sodini, Kolokotsas 1984, p. 150.

¹⁰ The provinces probably most relative for comparative material for Golemo Gradište are Macedonia prima, Macedonia secunda, Epirus nova, Dardania, Moesia, and Dacia mediterranea.

C, and D at Byllis shows two examples of symmetrical rooms at north and south of the narthex (C, D), a two-room complex southwest of the narthex (A), and a fairly large room only indirectly accessible from the south side of the narthex in the episcopal basilica (B).¹¹ While the need for an annex or annexes was clearly an issue in many churches, the choice of location may have been *ad hoc* or *practical rather than dictated by a rigid rule*. So far, no clear pattern has emerged of the existence or arrangement of annexes according to province, urban or rural location, episcopal churches vs. others, etc., although similarities may be observed in a region or in a particular city.

The western annexes of the Episcopal Basilica

In the Episcopal Basilica on the terrace at Golemo Gradište, doorways at the north and south ends of the narthex gave access to rooms that in turn led to complexes of annexes along the north and south sides of the basilica. Two doorways in the west wall of the narthex led into a row of five rooms located west of the narthex and its annexes (**Fig. 1**).¹² The sole entrance to the basilica from the west in its final phase was through a narrow doorway into Room 5, a small room serving as a corridor from the outer door to the narthex. South of Room 5 and accessible from it lay Room 4 (**Fig. 2**), a rectangular space with benches built against all four walls. Near the east wall two stone blocks were set into the mortar floor; near them were a ca. 0.70 m long column fragment and a piece of a stone plaque or table top (**Fig. 3**).¹³

From the narthex a second doorway in the west wall led into Room 6, from which one could enter Room 7 to the north (**Fig. 4**). The southeast corner of Room 7 was divided off by a narrow wall and two stone slabs (**Fig. 5**). Within this stone-paved enclosure (Room 7b), which could have been entered only by skinny individuals, parts of a round marble table top and fragments of a small broken storage vessel were found. A pithos occupied the northwest corner of the larger Room 7a, and a fire pit (or possibly a drain) was located beside the east wall (**Fig. 6**). A section of the west wall of the room had been blocked up; in an earlier phase it may have been a doorway from the exterior.

Although the blocked doorway in Room 7 indicates some rearrangement of space and possibly also of function, both Rooms 7 and 4 appear to have been

in use during the final phase of the church. They join numerous annexes whose location at the west end of churches and whose installations suggest but cannot prove that the annexes were used for the deposition of gifts by the faithful members of the congregation.

Bibliography

Mailis, A., 2011. *The Annexes at the Early Christian Basilicas of Greece (4th-6th c.)*: Architecture and Function (BAR, 2312), Oxford.

Mathews, T. F., 1962. "An Early Roman chancel arrangement and its liturgical uses," in *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 38, 71-95.

Mathews, T. F., 1971. *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy*, University Park and London.

Sanev, G., et al., 2012. "Excavations on the Northern Terrace at Golemo Gradište, Konjuh, 2007-2010," *Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica* 20, 347-364.

Snively, C. S., 2017. "Golemo Gradište at Konjuh: A New City or a Relocated One?" in *New Cities in Late Antiquity: Documents and Archaeology*, E. Rizos (ed.), Turnhout, Belgium, 205-219.

Sodini, J-P., and K. Kolokotsas, 1984. *Aliki*, 2: *La basilique double* (Études Thasiennes 10), Athens and Paris.

Sodini, J-P., 1984. "Les dispositifs liturgiques des basiliques paléochrétiennes en Grèce et dans les Balkans," in *Corsi di cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina* 31, 441-473.

Sodini, J-P., 2004. "Les annexes liturgiques des basiliques de Byllis," in *L'Illyrie méridionale et l'Épire dans l'Antiquité* 4, Paris, 432-446.

Taft, R. F., 1975. *The Great Entrance. The History of the Transfer of Gifts and Other Pre-anaphoral Rites of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, Rome 1975.

¹¹ Sodini 2004; more generally Sodini 1984.

¹² Five rooms have been excavated so far. A sixth room may be located to the north of Room 7. At present it appears that the west walls of these five or six rooms mark the western extent of the basilica.

¹³ A taller, thinner column with a squared top was also found nearby; a second column with a squared top appeared in the northeast corner of the room.

Carolyn S. Snively

Varalis, I., 2008. “Τα προσκτίσματα των παλαιοχριστιανικών εκκλησιών,” in Προσκτίσματα των Παλαιοχριστιανικών, Βυζαντινών, και Μεταβυζαντινών Ναών, Thessaloniki, 70-83.

Wybrew, H., 1992. “The Byzantine Liturgy from the Apostolic Constitutions to the Present Day,” in *The Study of Liturgy, revised edition*, London & NY, 252-263.

Yarnold, E. J., 1992. “The Liturgy of the Faithful in the Fourth and Early Fifth Centuries,” in *The Study of Liturgy, revised edition*, London & NY, 230-244.

Summary

Recent excavations in the Episcopal Basilica in the anonymous city at Golemo Gradište, Konjuh, have revealed two annex rooms that might be identified as sacristies. Both rooms are located at the west side of the church and include installations that could have been used for the deposition of gifts of bread and wine by members of the congregation, as they entered the church. No literary sources can definitely be identified as describing the liturgy or the details of its performance in Early Byzantine churches in the Prefecture of Eastern Illyricum. Therefore the only

certain evidence for actions connected with liturgy in the provinces of this prefecture consists of the architecture, furniture, and decoration of its churches. One issue has been the identification of annex rooms sometimes called diakonika but in more recent scholarship known as sacristies. So far, no clear pattern has emerged of the existence or arrangement of annexes according to province, urban or rural location, function of churches, or other category, although similarities may be observed within a region or in a particular city.