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EARLY CHRISTIAN BAPTISTRIES IN NORTHERN ILLYRICUM*

Abstract. – This paper discusses early Christian baptistries in the territory of northern Illyricum, which are dated to the period from the 4th to the beginning of the 7th century. The analysis of architectural shapes, positions and decorative elements makes it possible to define the basic types of baptistries, and their chronological attribution. The results of the analysis provides insight into the local specifics of the rite of baptism itself. Likewise, an attempt has been made to reconstruct the liturgical procedures that accompanied it.

Key words. – Early Christian baptistries, piscines, northern Illyricum, conversion, 4th – to the beginning of the 7th century.

The early Christian baptistries, their position and appearance, shed light in their own way not only on the place and significance of the church building where they were or to which they were attached, they also reveal the method of baptism itself and the specific local features that were often reflected in their spatial articulation. Adapted to the most essential needs of the rite of baptism, they are simple rooms, frequently with an irregular ground plan and sometimes with no inside decorative elements, at all. Though exhibiting great diversity in their design, in most cases, they constitute part of the church building itself; however, in a few cases they occur as separate buildings. In the period of Late Antiquity, they were not unique to this region but were a common feature throughout the broader Mediterranean region.

Although research in the domain of early Christian archaeology in our country, both of ecclesiastical architecture and decorative stone masonry, either of structural elements or church furnishings, commenced at the end of the 19th century,¹ we are still far from solving many of the questions the surviving monuments pose. Not many early Christian baptistries have been discovered in the regions of present-day Serbia or Montenegro, so far. Research papers have dealt with them as a separate topic on only two occasions.

In 1962, A. Khatchatrian published a collection with over 400 baptistries and baptismal piscines (with

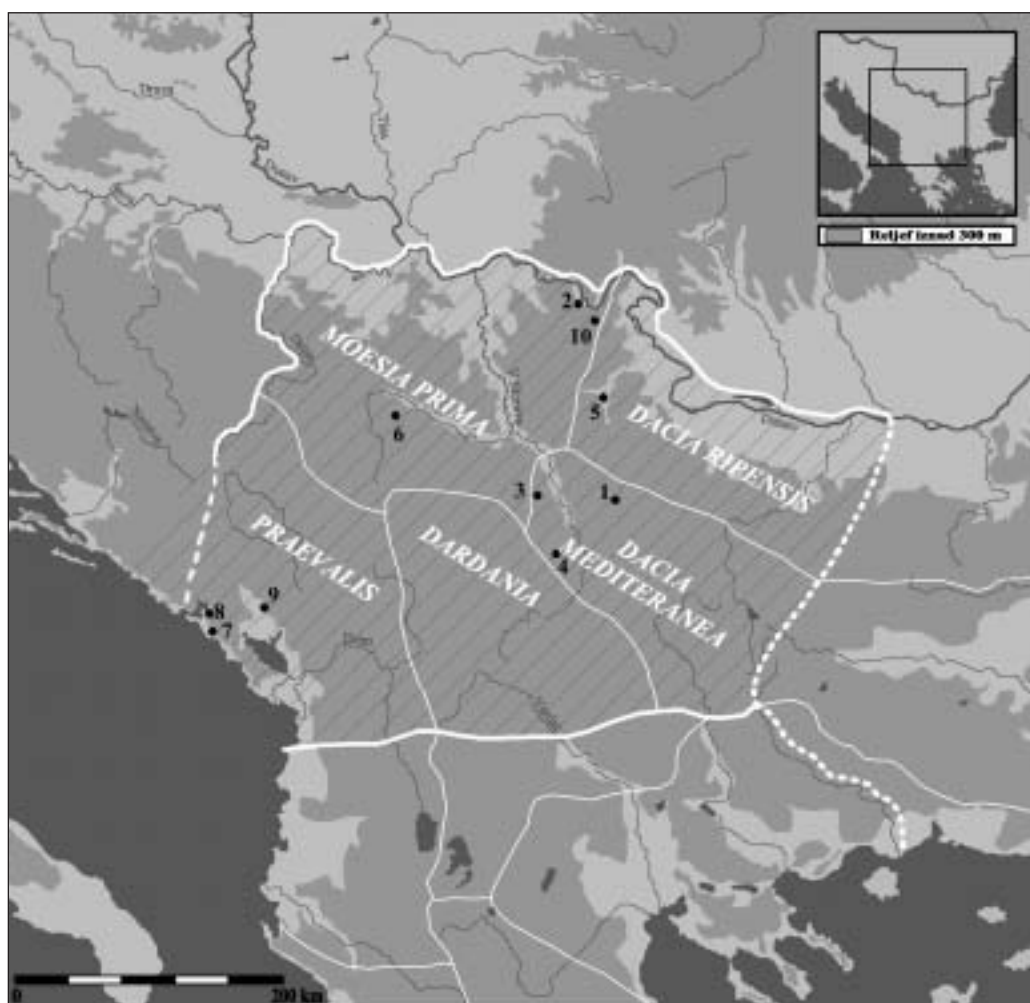
plans, descriptions and bibliographies), from countries across the entire Christian world of that era, dating from the 3rd to the 7th century.² Khatchatrian divided the baptistries she described into five groups, according to the geographical regions they belonged to (1. Syria, Palestine, Egypt; 2. Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, the Crimea, the Caucasus; 3. the Balkans, Greece, Constantinople; 4. Roman Africa, Spain, Italy, Dalmatia, Gaul, Switzerland, Germany), with all their features, principally bearing in mind the typological features of the monuments themselves. This vast material lacks a more detailed analysis of their designs and the spatial ensemble of their architecture, or reference to the origins of the individual types of these buildings, a point the author, in any case, underlines in her work.³

* The term northern Illyricum is used in this paper exclusively as a geographical definition for the territories of the present-day countries of Serbia and Montenegro.

¹ Evans 1883; Валтровић 1886, 70–71; Валтровић 1891a, 109–130; Валтровић 1891b, 130–142. For initial research in the second half of the 19th century, on Sirmium and its early Christian monuments, among which one should especially mention the remains of the basilica of St. Sinerota, see: Јерemiћ 2004, 43–75; Jeremić 2006, 115–131.

² Khatchatrian 1962. Although this work was written in the 1960s, it still represents the most complete collection on baptistries, written so far.

³ Khatchatrian 1962, XV.



Map 1. Distribution of early Christian baptistries in northern Illyricum: 1. Bela Palanka (Remesiana); 2. Boljetin (Smorna); 3. Babotinac, Prokuplje; 4. Caričin Grad; 5. Gamzigrad (Felix Romuliana); 6. Gradina on Mt. Jelica; 7. Grbalj (Podlastva Monastery); 8. Kotor; 9. Doljani near Duklja (Doclea), Podgorica; 10. Veliki Gradac (Taliata)

Карта 1. Распространености палеохришћанских крстионица у Северном Илирику: 1. Бела Паланка (Remesiana); 2. Бољетин (Smorna); 3. Баботинац, Прокупље; 4. Царичин Град; 5. Гамзиград (Felix Romuliana); 6. Градина на Јелици; 7. Грбаљ (Манастир Подласџва); 8. Кошор; 9. Дољани код Дукље (Doclea), Подгорица; 10. Велики Градац (Taliata)

The little that has been written about baptistries in our own literature is mostly found within wider analysis of certain sacral buildings. In her study on early Christian baptistries, I. Nikolajević collected data on the monuments registered in the former Yugoslavia.⁴ However, since it was impossible for her fully to document the numerous buildings she mentioned in her work, I. Nikolajević included only the designs of the baptistries that were not in A. Khatchatrian's opus and those designs that had been corrected in revised research work.⁵ In addition to maps of their distribution, I. Nikolajević also compiled a table, listing the dates of the

baptistries. Therefore, even today (in the absence of new archaeological finds and analysis), I. Nikolajević's study

⁴ Николајевић 1966, 223–256.

⁵ A. Khatchatrian documented three monuments in the territories of Serbia and Montenegro. These were the baptistries in Caričin Grad, ancient Duklja (Doljani). Khatchatrian mistakenly attributed the location of the third baptistry, which was in the church in Klisura near Niš, to Dalmatia, subsequently defining it as a baptistry. However, in later research, Đ. Stričević interpreted this space as a prothesis with a honephitirion. More will be said about the church in Klisura, in the text, later on.

can be considered the only synthetic survey of early-Christian baptistries in Serbia and Montenegro.

As for the territory of the former Yugoslavia, one should also mention the work of P. Chevalier,⁶ which deals with the same subject as the already mentioned works. In her exhaustive study, she collected data on some forty baptistries in the territory of the Roman province of Dalmatia. For us, this study was particularly useful, given the geographical proximity of the monuments she described. As we shall see later, apart from a number of local features that are specific, the architectural shapes of the baptistries in the province of Dalmatia have characteristics that are common to the baptistries in the broader area of the Balkan Peninsula.

Bearing in mind all the said studies on the *baptisteria* of Late Antiquity, we endeavoured to learn more about this subject from the new finds of baptismal monuments in Serbia and Montenegro, and interpret them in the proper way. In work on the collection of documents acquired from the archaeological excavations, or working on different data published in national and foreign publications, we came across the same problems the previous authors had encountered. The lack of complete data and the discrepancies in their interpretation was evident, both in the descriptions of the monuments themselves and in the presentation of their designs.

In compiling this paper, conceived as a catalogue of plans with the descriptions of the early Christian baptistries in Serbia and Montenegro, first, we had to define the notion of a baptistry. Initially, this term referred to the piscine itself, as the place that served for performing the baptismal ritual. In time, with the discovery of numerous baptistries in different geographical regions, it was concluded that the greater or lesser number of additional rooms constituted an ensemble that were used in the ceremony of baptism. There were antechambers, galleries, different annexes, etc., the function of which was sometimes difficult to determine. Such an example exists in Boljetin (Smorna), a military camp on the Danubian *limes*, where there was an additional chamber on the southern side of the church *naos*, which, although it had a separate entrance, was also connected to the naos of the church.⁷ This hall can be interpreted as a *catechumenon*, given the installation for baptism located next to the southern wall inside the naos.

Despite the previously mentioned, elementary difficulties we encountered while writing this paper, it seems that we nevertheless succeeded in classifying the material we collected, according to the architectonic form, the position and the chronological framework.

This made it easier for us not only to examine the specific, local features in the act of baptism itself, but also to try to reconstruct the liturgical activities that accompanied it.

All the monuments presented in this work are in the territories of present-day Serbia and Montenegro (Map 1). With the administrative division of the Roman Empire in the 4th century, this area fell within the eastern part of the Empire, that is, within the northern part of the Illyrian prefecture (*Praefectura praetorio per Illyricum*) that extended from the Danube in the north, to Macedonia in the south, from the Drina river and the Bay of Kotor in the west, to the River Vit in Bulgaria, in the east.⁸

With the edict of the emperor Galerius (311) and, some time later, the so-called Edict of Milan, issued by Constantine and Licinius (313), the Christians, as an already sizeable and influential societal force within the Roman Empire, were granted freedom to profess their faith. This transition from paganism to Christianity terminated with an edict in 380, during the reign of Gracianus and Theodosius I, abolishing pagan religion in the Roman Empire and linking its fate with the triumph of Christianity.

This crucial event, which singled out the Christian religion as the only one that could be professed throughout the whole Empire, brought radical changes not only to its internal administrative organisation but also in the domain of the architectural and artistic canons for sacral buildings. At that time, architectonic forms were still modest but they would become more elaborate as the political and economic importance of the church grew. At this time, the large urban centres acquired their first basilicas, as did the smaller towns and fortresses. Initially, sacral buildings were erected that needed to be equipped with installations that would be used in the increasingly mass baptisms of catechumens in the episcopal centres, and later in smaller urban agglomerations, as in the rural areas. The organisation of the Church corresponded to the administrative organisation of the provinces so that the major cities also became the episcopal seats.⁹

The territory of northern Illyricum came into contact with the new religion later than the southern part

⁶ Chevalier 1988, 111–163.

⁷ More details on the baptistry in Boljetin in the later part of the text.

⁸ Острогорски 1959, 55–56; Ferjančić 1997, 231–239.

⁹ Поповић Р. 1995, 29.

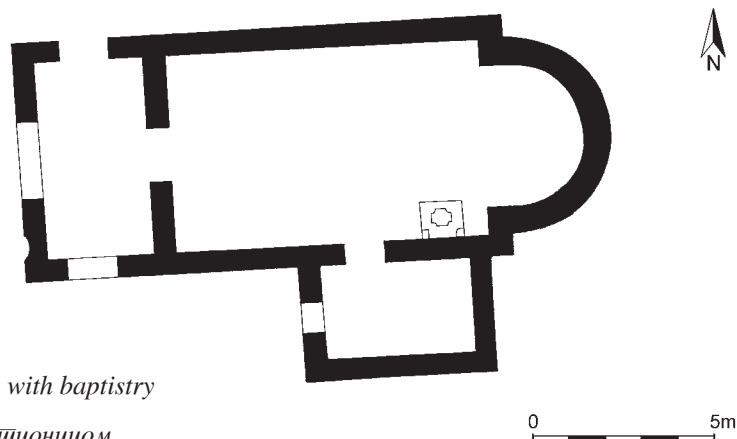


Fig. 1. Boljetin (Smorna); ground plan of church with baptistry

Сл. 1. Бољетин (Сморна); основа цркве са крстионицом

of the Balkans, where Christianity had already been present since the times of the Apostles. According to the New Testament scriptures, the first Christian communities were founded in the large cities, indicating that the beginnings of Christianity in the said area should be sought in the large urban centres.¹⁰ This phenomenon was characteristic for the entire Mediterranean region so that one can speak of Christianity as »the religion of the cities«.

The rise and fall of ecclesiastical life in the Balkans from the 4th to the beginning of the 7th century was closely bound to the changing political circumstances the provinces of the Illyrian prefecture were exposed to.

* * *

In one of the better preserved *castra* on the Danube limes, in the central part of the Boljetin (Smorna) locality,¹¹ a single-nave, basilica type church building was erected, which had a semi-circular apse on the eastern and a narthex on the western side.¹² Along the southern wall of the naos, close to the altar area, a rectangular annex was added, with a separate entrance from the outside but it (the annex) was also connected to the naos (fig. 1). On the inner side of the southern wall of the naos, opposite this annex, the remains were discovered of a baptistry with a piscina for baptisms. The outside of the piscina was in the shape of a cross. It was built of brick, and covered with two layers of lime mortar.

The purpose of the annex on the southern side could be described as a catechumenon, given the installation for baptism positioned along the southern wall of the naos. This would correspond fully with the liturgical rules of that time because only baptised neophytes had the right to attend the liturgy, standing in the naos of the church.¹³ It is evident that the baptistry was used for

baptising the members of the military garrisons that manned this fortress, and their families.

A similar example was recorded on the southern side of a single-nave church building in the Tsébélda locality, on the eastern shores of the Black Sea.¹⁴ In contrast to Boljetin, where the piscine was placed in the eastern part of the church naos, here, the baptismal section was installed in the south-western annex located next to the room that extended along the southern nave of the church towards the altar area, which probably functioned as a catechumenon, and both rooms were linked to the naos of the church.

The church in Boljetin dates back to the last phase of fortification.¹⁵ Inside it, not far from the altar, coins of Justinus I, Justinian I, Justinus II and Mauricius were discovered, according to which one may draw the conclusion that the camp was abandoned in the last years of the 6th century. Many of the buildings within the fortress, bear the marks of large-scale fire, which may well coincide with the invasion by the Avars and the Slavs at the end of the 6th century.

Inside another fortress on the Danubian limes, Veliko Gradište, *Taliata* in ancient times, which lay on

¹⁰ The New Testament scriptures contain an epistles the apostle Paul sent the Christian communities in the cities of the southern Balkan Peninsula: one to the Philippians in Macedonia, two to the Thessalonians, two to the Corinthians in Achaia and one to the apostle Titus on the island of Crete. *Дела ап. (Epistles)*, 16, 9–12; 17, 1–14; 19, 21–22; 20, 1–2.

¹¹ Кондић 1974, 53.

¹² Зотовић 1984, 212–225.

¹³ Поповић Ј. 1995 (гр. edition Сремски Карловци 1912), 430–432.

¹⁴ Khroushkova 1981, 17, fig. 2.

¹⁵ Зотовић 1984, 224.

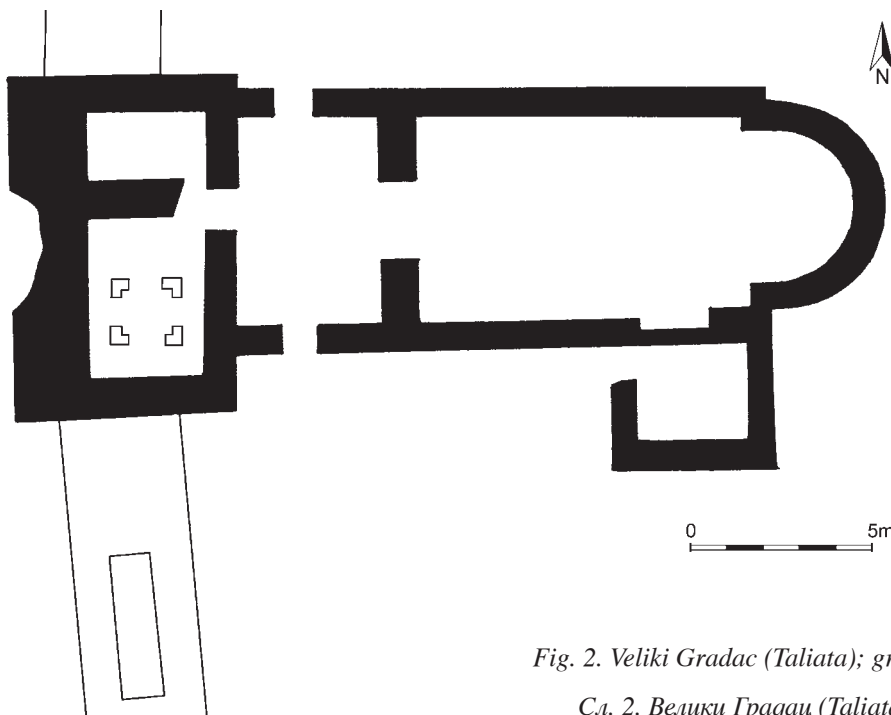


Fig. 2. Veliki Gradac (Taliata); ground plan of church with baptistry

Сл. 2. Велики Градац (Талиата); основа цркве са крстионицом

the border of the province of Moesia Prima and Dacia Ripensis during the period of Late Antiquity and the Early Byzantine period, there was another church, the ground plan of which was similar to the previously mentioned example, with a semi-circular altar apse facing eastwards, the narthex to the left side and the annex added on later along the southern wall of the naos, close to the apse section, with an opening for the entrance on its western wall (fig. 2).¹⁶ There was no communicating link between the naos and the annex, so we can suppose that this area did not serve as a *catechumenon*, as it did in the previously mentioned example.

The building was erected beside one of the towers, which in the previous period flanked the western gate. The area of the former gate was walled up in the 6th century, and the tower marked in the literature as tower 10 was transformed into a baptistry. The baptismal piscine was placed in the southern section of the tower. It was made of bricks joined with mortar. The piscine was of an irregular circular shape, it was built-in and sunken in the space. One descended into it by means of steps on the western and emerged by another set of steps on the eastern side, after the baptismal ceremony was completed. At its corners were four columns, probably supports for a baldachin.¹⁷ The find of a *foliis* of Justinus I (518–527) between the flooring of the naos of the church (where two stages of construction were evidenced) confirm the early Byzantine attribution of

this church. To all intents and purposes, the fortress, as in the previously mentioned case, was definitively abandoned at the end of the 6th century.

In the Gradina fortress on Mt. Jelica, near Čačak, among the basilicas from the Justinian epoch, particularly worth noting is the basilica with a baptistry, known in the literature as Basilica »C«. ¹⁸ In the north-western annex of the church, which had the function of a baptistry, there was a piscine, the walls of which were built in a cruciform shape, giving the impression that its bottom was raised from the floor (fig. 3).

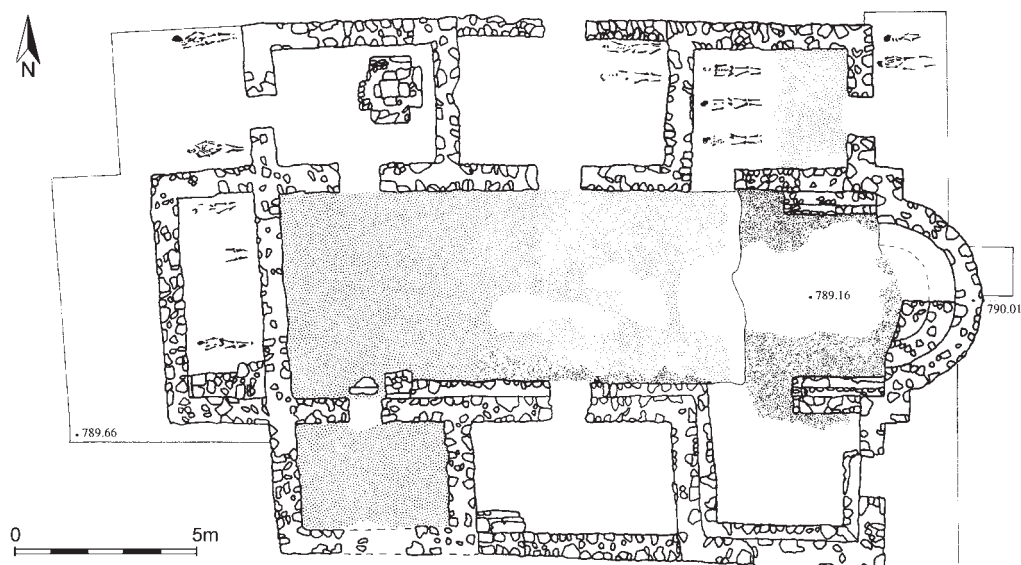
The walls of the baptistry were decorated with fragmentarily preserved frescoes in the lower zones (fig. 4). Judging by the fragments of the fresco decoration, the ornaments were an imitation of marble slabs in a reddish-brown colour, yellow and blue.¹⁹ The size of the piscine itself suggests that the ritual of baptising adults could have been performed only by their partial immersion in the water and by pouring additional

¹⁶ Поповић В. 1984, 265–282.

¹⁷ Поповић В. 1984, 276.

¹⁸ Милинковић 1995, 49–60; Milinković 2002, 71–133.

¹⁹ In the opinion of the researcher, the edge of the band along the southern and western wall of the baptistry indicates that green and dark blue prevailed in the painting of the central field. Милинковић 1995, 54, Т. IIb, Т. V; Milinković 2002, 99, Abb. 26.



*Fig. 3. Gradina na Jelici; ground plan of church »C« with baptistry
(according to: M. Milinković, Старинар LI, 2002, Abb. 22)*

*Сл. 3. Градина на Јелици; основа цркве »С« са крстионицом
(према: М. Миланковић, Старинар LI, 2002, Abb. 22)*



*Fig. 4. Gradina on Mt. Jelica; frescoes from the baptistry of church »C«
(according to: M. Milinković, Старинар LI, 2002, Abb. 26)*

*Сл. 4. Градина на Јелици; фреске из крстионице цркве »С«
(према: М. Миланковић, Старинар LI, 2002, Abb. 26)*

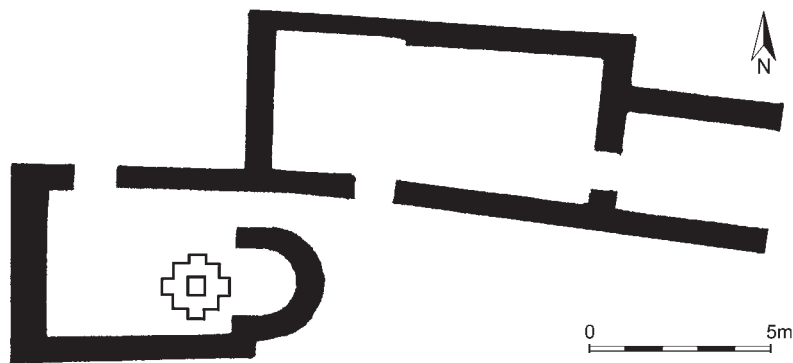


Fig. 5. Gamzigrad (Romuliana); ground plan of baptistery in the ensemble of Basilica II (according to: М. Чанак-Медић, *Гамзиград касноантичка палата архитектура и просторни склоп* 1978, с. 123)

Сл. 5. Гамзиград (Ромулиана); основа крстионице у склопу базилике II (према: М. Чанак-Медић, *Гамзиград касноантичка палата архитектура и просторни склоп* 1978, с. 123)

water over them (aspersion). The baptistery was connected by a doorway to the naos of the church. The church and the entire complex of sacral and profane buildings within the fortress in the Gradina locality on Mt. Jelica, belonged to the Justinian period. This certainly involves a fortified and significant ecclesiastical centre on the borders of the province of Moesia Prima and Dalmatia.

A church in Gamzigrad (*Felix Romuliana*), designated in literature as Basilica II (which was partly researched), has a room with a semi-circular apse facing east, which contains a piscine that, according to М. Чанак-Медић, may have served as a baptistery (fig. 5).²⁰ The walls of this space were built from brick joined with a mortar, made of mud. The difference in height at the entrance, which was on the eastern side, was resolved by means of marble steps positioned beside the apse. The piscine, of a cruciform shape was encompassed by a wall made from bricks and lime mortar. The central part of the piscine had a rectangular base, lined with marble slabs, the dimensions of which were 56 x 52 cm. The preserved part of the bottom of the piscine was at a depth of 74 cm. The opening in the bottom of the piscine was connected to a drain. According to the level of the steps leading into the baptistery, М. Чанак-Медић assumed that the upper level of the piscine (that is its edge or frame) was elevated several dozen centimetres above the floor.²¹ Given the small dimensions of the piscine, it may have served for baptising children, although one should not exclude the likelihood of it having been used for adults as well. However, in that case, the baptisms would have been

possible only by means of partial immersion in the water, with additional aspersion.

In the north-western quarter of the Gamzigrad complex, another baptistery was discovered (fig. 6). It was a structure with a quadrifoliate base, constructed as part of a large, triple-nave basilica in the 6th century, and is designated in the literature as Basilica III.²²

In an early Byzantine fortress in the Veliko kale locality in Babotinac near Prokuplje, the remains were discovered of a single-nave church. It had a semi-circular apse, facing the east, and a narthex on the western side (fig. 7).²³ In the south-eastern corner of the nave, a plateau was created in the shape of an irregular square, elevated 0.44 m above the floor of the church. In the central part was a circular piscine (fig. 8 a–b). The bottom of the piscine was at the level of the floor of the church. On it was a small, circular aperture that was, most probably, the beginning of a drainpipe. The coating on the walls of the piscine consisted of two layers of lime mortar. The thickness of the final layer was 1–2 cm.

In the southern pastophoria of the church, which was interpreted to be the diakonikon, in its apsidal section, was a pool, which, to all appearances served as a

²⁰ Чанак-Медић 1978, 134.

²¹ Чанак-Медић 1978, 135.

²² Чанак-Медић 1978, 138.

²³ Кузмановић-Цветковић 1986, 213–218. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Julka Kuzmanović-Cvetković, curator of the Toplica Museum in Prokuplje, for the technical documentation she supplied.

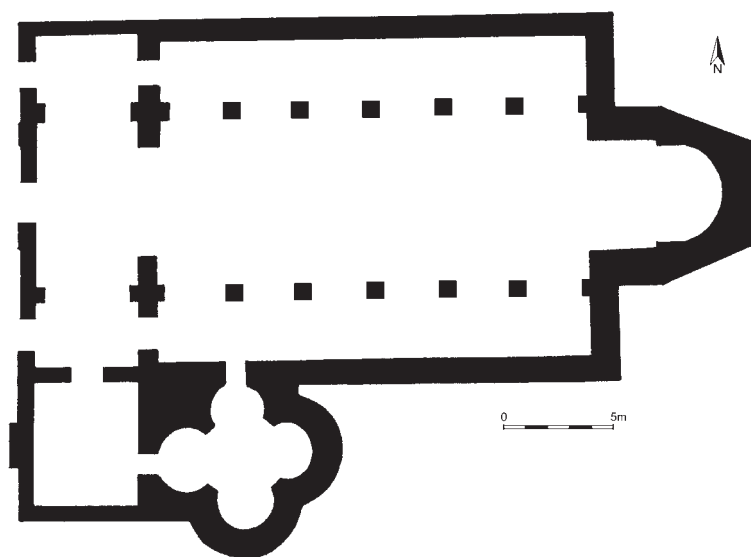


Fig. 6. Gamzigrad (Romuliana); ground plan of Basilica III with baptistry (according to: М. Чанак-Медић, *Гамзиград касноантичка палата архитектура и просторни склоп* 1978, с.л. 124)

Сл. б. Гамзиград (Romuliana); основа базилике III са крстионицом (према: М. Чанак-Медић, *Гамзиград касноантичка палата архитектура и просторни склоп* 1978, с.л. 124)

honephtirion.²⁴ The manner of building this basilica with the pastophoria on the western side indicates the period up to the first half of the 6th century. Later, changes in the liturgy would lead to changes in the plan of the churches so that the diakonikon and the prothesis would be positioned next to the altar space.²⁵

Unfortunately, ancient *Remesiana*, which lies in the more central city area of Bela Palanka, has not been sufficiently investigated and the excavations, commenced back in the 1950s, do not offer enough data to enable us to examine ecclesiastical activities in this important episcopal centre in *Dacia Mediterranea*.²⁶ The remains of the triple-nave basilica erected west of the Roman fort are evidence of the existence of the episcopal centre and a developed ecclesiastical life in *Remesiana*. In the southern annex of the basilica's narthex, there was a cruciform piscine. According to the research results so far, the basilica belonged to the early Byzantine period of building, in other words, to the 6th century.²⁷

Proof of the importance of the episcopal centre in *Remesiana* lies in the fact that the great church poet and missionary, Nikita, *Remesianensis*, resided and worked here in the 4th and the beginning of the 5th century. He is believed to have lived from the year 366 to 414.²⁸ His contemporary and friend, Paulinus of Nola provides reliable testimony about his life and work.²⁹ The assumption of I. Nikolajević that the frag-

ment of an inscription found in 1885, mentioning the church of SS. Peter and Paul, and today unfortunately lost, could be linked to the remains of the basilica with the baptistry seems justified to us.³⁰

The baptistry in Caričin Grad (most probably *Iustiniana Prima*) occupies a central place among the so far discovered baptistries in the region of northern Illyricum. It was discovered in excavations that were carried out before the II World War, in 1937.³¹ Later in the period

²⁴ Кузмановић-Цветковић 1986, 216.

²⁵ Стричевић 1959, 59.

²⁶ Мано-Зиси, Поповић Љ. 1959, 381–382; Николајевић 1966, 232; Гушић 1987, 21–35.

²⁷ Гушић 1987, 34. Unfortunately, the published results of hitherto research, without the appropriate plans, do not offer enough data about the church itself or its significance, nor about its baptistry. All my attempts to come by the original plans of this church and its baptistry were fruitless.

²⁸ Zeiller 1967 (rp. edition Paris 1918), 549–558.

²⁹ He was a great evangeliser of the barbarian tribes, primarily the Skythians, the Goths, the Dacians and the Huns, as well as the Besa tribe that inhabited the regions of the Rhodope and the Srednje Gore mountains in Bulgaria, who were known for their stubbornness, see: Поповић Р. 1995, 82; *Свети Никита Ремезијански* 2007; Поповић Р. 2007, 131–147.

³⁰ Николајевић 1966, 232; Petrović 1979, 106.

³¹ Петковић 1939, 141–152, с.л. 2; Petković 1948, 40–48, fig. 2.

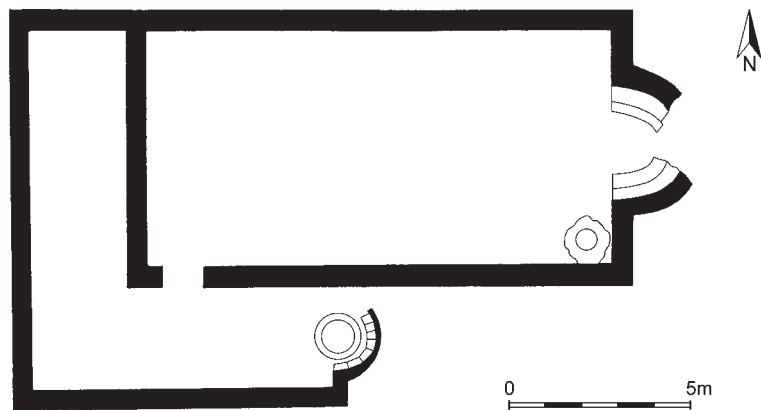


Fig. 7. Babotinac, Prokuplje; ground plan of church with baptistry

Сл. 7. Баботинац, Прокупље; основа цркве са крстионицом



Fig. 8. Babotinac, Prokuplje: a) piscine, view from the north; b) piscine

Сл. 8. Баботинац, Прокупље: а) пџсцина, поглед са севера; б) пџсцина

from 1977–1982, revisory excavations were conducted over the entire acropolis.³² The baptistry was built along the southern wall of the episcopal basilica but was not »organically« connected to it. The connecting element of the church and the baptistry was only the portico, erected along the western façade of the baptistry. It also had the role of a passageway from the eastern side of the acropolis, securing the approach to the building (erected west of the baptistry), known in the literature as the *consignatorium* although its true function has not been reliably ascertained.³³

The baptistry is a building on a roughly square ground plan with slightly reduced dimensions in its south-eastern compartment, which resulted from fitting in the entire building into an area that was already »wedged in« by the ramparts of the fort around the acropolis (fig. 9). The ground plans of the remaining three corner compartments were square-shaped. The central inner

space of the baptistry consisted of four conches shaped like horseshoes, with vaults in the upper zone. Thus, the cruciform disposition of the conches created a space with a square ground plan in the central section of the building, in the corners of which there were four massive columns on square pedestals, supporting the dome of the baptistry by means of arches and a drum. In the very centre of the space was a cruciform piscine, made up of the receptacle and four symmetrically distributed flights of steps. The baptistry was richly decorated, which is illustrated by the finds of luxuriant composite capitals, marble slabs, mosaics of glass paste, as well

³² This refers to Yugoslav–French archaeological research, when other facilities in Caričin Grad were examined inside and beyond the city ramparts, in addition to the acropolis. Duval 1984, 399–481.

³³ Кондић, Поповић В. 1977, 37.

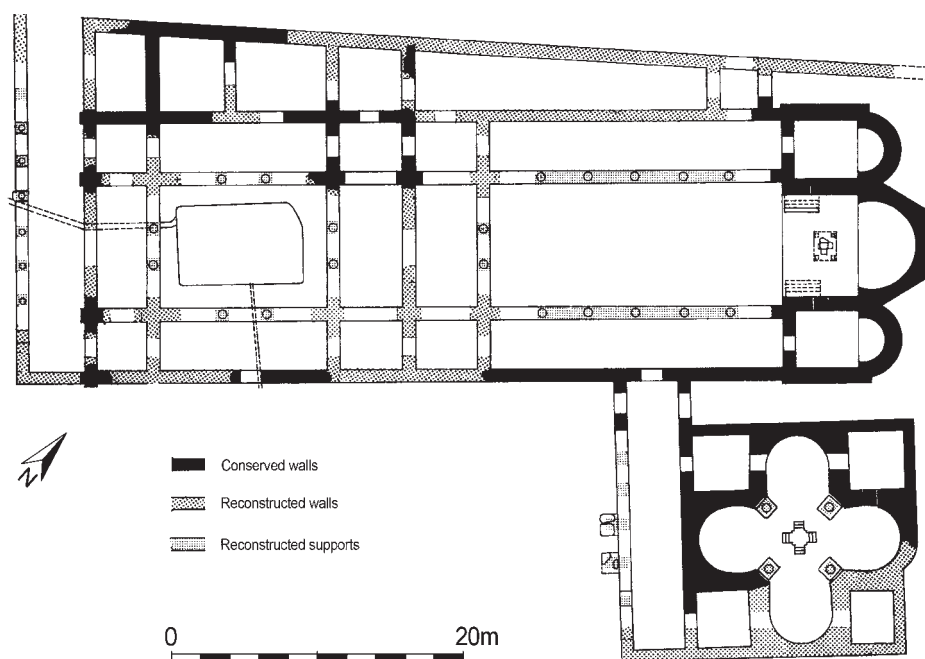


Fig. 9. Caričin Grad; ground plan of baptistry in the general plan of the Episcopal Basilica (according to: N. Duval, *L'Architecture religieuse de Tsaritchin Grad dans le cadre de l'Illyricum oriental au VI^e siècle, Villes et peuplement dans l'Illyricum protobyzantin* 1984, fig. 3; drawing M. Jeremić)

Сл. 9. Царичин Град; основа крстионице у склопу Епископске базилике (према: N. Duval, *L'Architecture religieuse de Tsaritchin Grad dans le cadre de l'Illyricum oriental au VI^e siècle, Villes et peuplement dans l'Illyricum protobyzantin* 1984, fig. 3; цртеж М. Јермић)

as fragments of frescoes (fig. 10).³⁴ The floors in the conches were covered with mosaics. In the northern and southern conches were geometrical ornaments and, in addition to geometrical motives in the eastern and western conches, there were plant and zoomorphic presentations. Among them, we find images of an octopus, a deer, a rabbit, a foal, a ram and a butterfly. The corner, square areas were paved with square bricks.

According to data from an earlier period (1937), the piscine was sunken and shallow. Its bottom was paved with bricks, while there were marks that could still be seen, from the layer of marble slabs on the walls.³⁵ Considering that no supply pipes or drainpipes were found during excavations, the earlier research workers believed the baptistry was a mausoleum or a martyrion.³⁶ Some time later though, V. Petković attributed a baptismal function to this building.³⁷

The data from the excavations conducted in the period from 1977–1982 brought new data to light, based on which one can more accurately explain the way in which the piscine was constructed and how it functioned.³⁸ In short, the piscine had two construction

phases. It was built of bricks, and all the visible surfaces of the walls were coated in a layer of white marble. In the southern conch, there were traces of a supply pipe, as well as a drainpipe, directed towards a crudely built shaft not far from the southern wall of the baptistry.³⁹ The overall depth of the piscine starting from the level of the first, upper step was 77 cm.⁴⁰ The second phase

³⁴ The lower parts of the walls were coated in marble slabs, while their upper parts were decorated with frescoes and mosaics, Кондић, Поповић В. 1977, 35, сл. 17.

³⁵ Петковић 1939,

³⁶ Месеснел 1938, 189, сл. 11; Grabar 1948, 54.

³⁷ Петковић 1950, 346.

³⁸ Duval 1984, 414–416.

³⁹ Duval 1984, 414, fig. 11.

⁴⁰ I obtained the data on the dimensions of the piscine from Dr. M. Jeremić, who, as a member of the Yugoslav–French team, took part in the excavations of the acropolis (1977–1982), with the technical filmings and an analysis of the discovered architecture. The complete analysis of the architecture of the acropolis has been prepared for printing and will be published in the volume, *Caričin Grad III*.

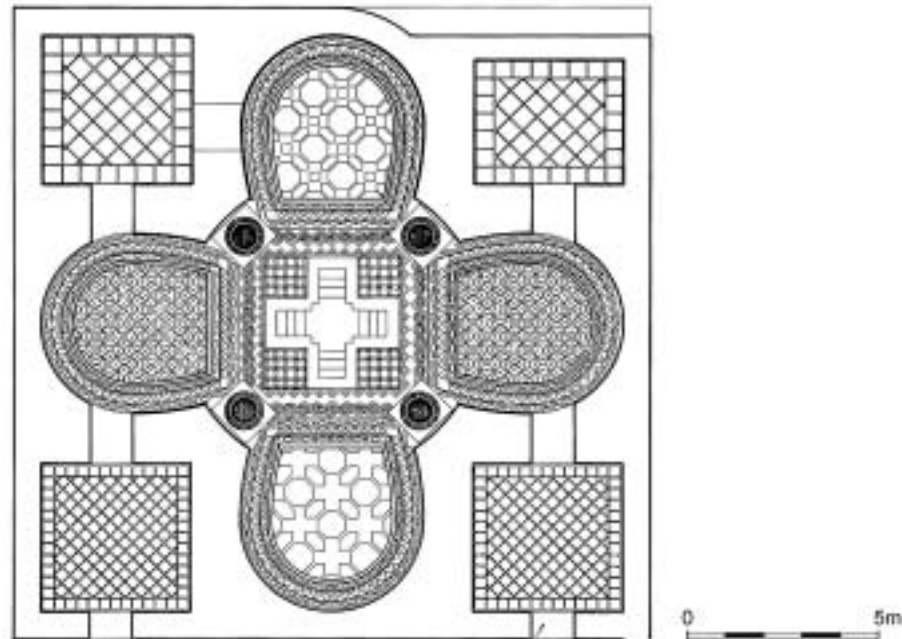


Fig. 10. Caričin Grad; ground plan of baptistery, reconstruction (according to: N. Duval, *L'Architecture religieuse de Tsaritchin Grad dans le cadre de l'Illyricum oriental au VI^e siècle, Villes et peuplement dans l'Illyricum protobyzantin* 1984, fig. 10; drawing Č. Vasić)

Сл. 10. Царичин Град; основа крстионице, реконструкција (према: N. Duval, *L'Architecture religieuse de Tsaritchin Grad dans le cadre de l'Illyricum oriental au VI^e siècle, Villes et peuplement dans l'Illyricum protobyzantin* 1984, fig. 10; цртеж Ч. Васић)

was marked by repairs, when the supply of the piscine and the drainage of the water from the said receptacle no longer functioned. A new floor of bricks in lime mortar was now elevated to the level that corresponded to half of the former depth of the piscine.⁴¹

The episcopal church, the baptistery, and then the building erected west of it, interpreted as a consignatorium, as well as the building complex along the northern side of the street of the acropolis, designated as the episcopal palace, constituted a single, fortified architectural ensemble, isolated from the rest of this specific urban agglomeration.⁴² The whole of this complex, as well as the fortress of Caričin Grad itself, belong to the Justinian epoch, in other words, the 6th century.

Today, the assumption mainly accepted in professional circles is the identification of Caričin Grad with *Iustiniana Prima*.⁴³ This city was founded in the first decade of Justinian's rule, when numerous fortresses were either renovated or completely new ones were constructed on their foundations across the broader territory of northern Illyricum. According to a description

by Procopius (*De aedif.*, IV, 1),⁴⁴ the city was founded by Justinian I in the vicinity of his native town, *Taurisium*, in a desire to link the civil and ecclesiastical centres of Illyricum with his native land and to memorialise his birthplace. With his *Novela XI* from the year 535, the newly established ecclesiastical region was not within the canonic jurisdiction of the older Church centres but had the nature of a completely autonomous and independent church organisation.⁴⁵ The jurisdiction of the new archbishopric covered five provinces of the diocese of Dacia, that is, the northern part of the

⁴¹ Duval 1984, 414.

⁴² Васић 1987, 127–138.

⁴³ On the problem of the whereabouts of *Iustiniana Prima*, the most complete presentation was given by: Баришић 1963, 127–140; see: В. Поповић, 1990, 53–108.

⁴⁴ *De aedif.* IV, 1 p. 104.20–107.2; translation according to: Баришић 1955.

⁴⁵ Р. Поповић 1995, 71, п. 29.

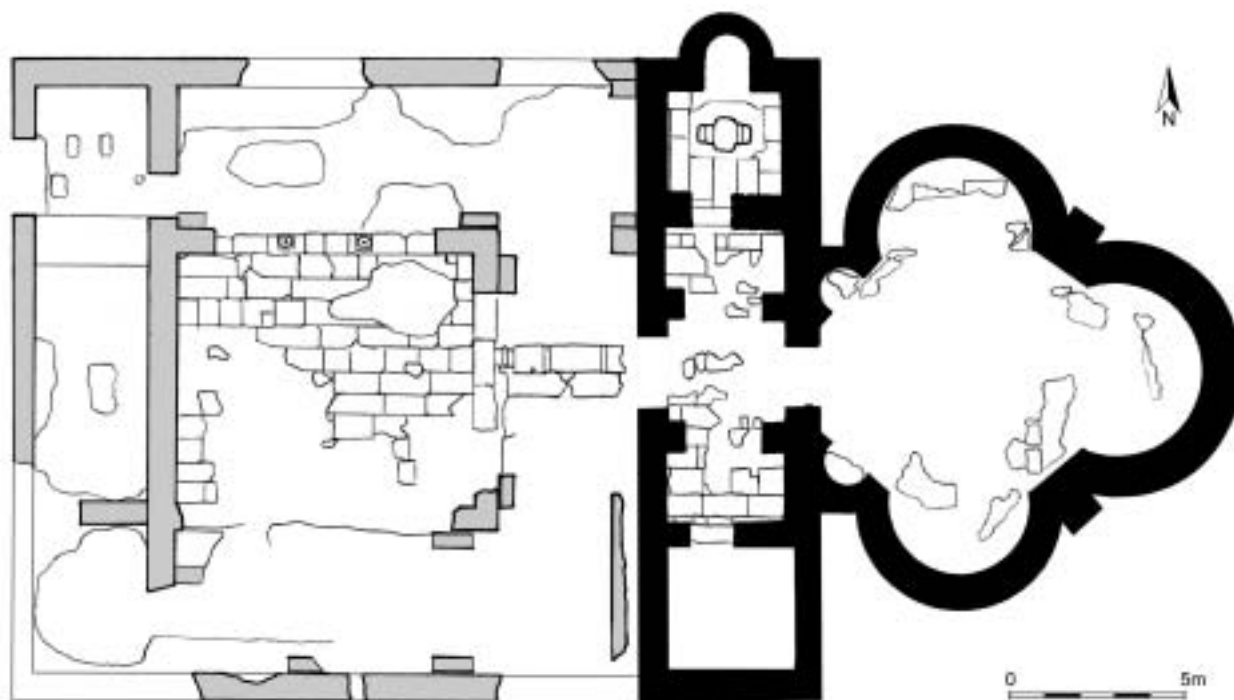


Fig. 11. Doljani near Duklja, ground plan of church with baptistry (according to: V. Korać, *Starinar IX–X*, 1959, sl. 1)

Сл. 11. Дољани код Дукље, основа цркве са крстионицом (према В. Кораћ, *Старинар IX–X*, 1959, сл. 1)

prefecture Illyricum: *Dacia Mediterranea*, *Dacia Ripensis*, *Moesia Prima*, *Dardania*, and *Praevalis*, and the northern part of the diocese of Macedonia with the province of *Macedonia Secunda* and, finally, part of the province of *Pannonia Secunda* with the city of *Basiana*.

The many years of internal strife in Byzantium, following the death of the emperor Mauricius, during the reign of the emperor Phokas (602–610) led to general upheaval in the northern regions of the Balkan Peninsula, which also had its effect on the church organisation in the diocese of Dacia. From the surviving sources, one can follow the history of the archbishopric of *Iustiniana Prima* until the beginning of the 7th century. At the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century, the episcopal cathedra in *Iustiniana Prima* was occupied by Archbishop John. His name was recorded in documents thanks to the correspondence he maintained with Pope Gregory I (590–604). The last letter of Pope Gregory dates from the year 602.⁴⁶ This, at the same time, is the last mention of *Iustiniana Prima* in official documents. It appears that no doubt under the influence of the Avar and Slav invasions, the diocese lost its earlier political importance even before the fall of Byzantine power in the northern part of the prefecture of Illyricum.

Thus, in the time of Mauricius (582–602), the administrative centre moved from *Iustiniana Prima* farther south to Thessalonica, where the highest-ranking representative of civil authority, the *Praefectus praetorio per Illyricum*, resided.⁴⁷

In the region of the province of *Praevalis*, the former territories of which corresponded more or less to the present-day region of Montenegro, three baptismal structures have so far been registered. Although the remains of baptismal installations have not been recorded in the episcopal centre of Duklja (*Doclea*), a baptistry was discovered in its immediate neighbourhood, in a triconch in Doljani near Duklja. This baptistry, with an apse on the northern side was located in the northern part of the three-part narthex, while in the central section a cruciform piscine was installed, sunken into the floor (fig. 11).⁴⁸ Catechumens descended into it by steps positioned on the eastern and western sides of the piscine (fig. 12).

⁴⁶ Гранић 1926, 132.

⁴⁷ Гранић 1926, 133, п. 66.

⁴⁸ Кораћ 1959, 383–385. сл. 1; Ковачевић 1967, 271, сл. 22; Мјовић 1978, 673, сл. 25.

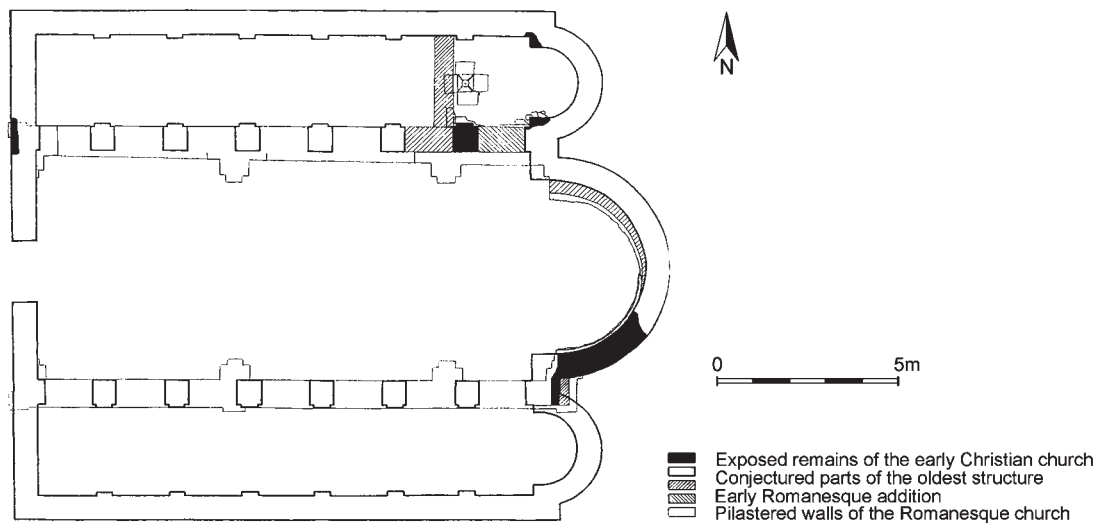


Fig. 13. Kotor, ground plan of early Christian basilica with baptistery beneath the present-day Church of the Blessed Virgin of Rijeka (according to: М. Чанак-Медић, Архитектура Немањиној доба II цркве у Полимљу и на Приморју, Београд 1989, 209, сл. 4)

Сл. 13. Коџор, основа ранохришћанске базилике са крстионицом испод данашње цркве св. Марије од ријеке (према М. Чанак-Медић, Архитектура Немањиној доба II цркве у Полимљу и на Приморју, Београд 1989, 209, сл. 4)



Fig. 12. Doljani near Duklja (Doclea), baptistery with piscine, view from the south (according to: Н. Бојосављевић, Манастир Златишца, Дољани код Подгорице 2001, сл. 14)

Fig. 14. Kotor, piscine of early Christian basilica beneath the floor of the sacristy of the present-day Church of the Blessed Virgin of Rijeka (according to: J. Martinović, Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji 29, 1990, sl. 25)

Сл. 12. Дољани код Дукље (Doclea), крстионица са пјисцином, поглед са југа (према: Н. Бојосављевић, Манастир Златишца, Дољани код Подгорице 2001, сл. 14)

Сл. 14. Коџор, пјисцина ранохришћанске базилике испод пода сакрисије данашње цркве св. Марије од Ријеке (према: J. Martinović, Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji 29, Split 1990, sl. 25)



Fig. 15. Podlastva Monastery, Grbalj; remains of a early Christian piscine beside the present-day Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin (according to: Марковић, *Грбаљ кроз векове*, 55–68, с. 2)

Сл. 15. Манастир Подласћва, Грбаљ; остаци палеохришћанске писцине поред данашње цркве посвећене Рођењу Богородице (према: Марковић, *Грбаљ кроз векове*, 55–68, с. 2)

The dimensions of the baptistry indicate that it could have been used to baptise adults, i.e. that baptism was performed with catechumens by immersion. Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that the church was active in the time of the mass baptisms of adults and the conversion to Christianity of a large number of the autochthonous population of the province of *Praevalis*. The preserved remains of the decorative sculpture, the method of construction and the existence of the piscine for baptising adults, classify this church in the Justinian epoch.⁴⁹

Beneath the Romanic church of the Blessed Virgin in Kotor, known as the Church of the Blessed Virgin of Rijeka, or *Collegiata*,⁵⁰ the remains were discovered of an early Christian triple-nave basilica. In its northern nave, or more precisely, in its eastern apsidal section, in the area of the present-day sacristi, the remains were found of a piscine. On the outside, it was cruciform, whereas the receptacle had a square ground plan (fig. 13). Its inner surface was made up of the sides of four stone blocks of roughly equal size, arranged in the shape of a cross, while at the bottom was a stone slab with a hole in the middle for draining off the water (fig. 14). The piscine was installed in the floor of the nave to a depth of 2 m. The dimensions of the piscine suggest that the baptism of adults in it could be performed only by partly immersing them in the water, with additional aspersion. The large triple-nave basilica along with the baptistry, research workers believe, can be chronologi-

cally attributed to the 6th century, bearing in mind all the recorded architectural features of this sacral building, beneath the earlier Romanic church of the Blessed Virgin of Rijeka, which was actually the first phase in the genesis of this significant shrine in old Kotor.⁵¹

In the region of Grbalj, the remains of a piscine were discovered in the space between the southern wall of the church dedicated to the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin and the convent of the Podlastva monastery.⁵² The room that housed the piscine was slightly raised in comparison to the other sections of the basilica, and paved with square bricks, and it is still not possible to exactly locate the position of the piscine in relation to

⁴⁹ Kopah 1959, 385.

⁵⁰ This church has retained the status of a concathedral church to the present day. The bishop of Kotor also bore the title of abbot of the Church of the Blessed Virgin. A tombstone with a relief engraving of the image of the bishop, which was kept in the Kotor Lapidarium, and originated from an earlier period, indicates that the bishops of Kotor were once buried here. The epithet *Collegiata* originates from the collegiate of canons, which belonged both to this church and to the cathedral of St. Trifun, see Martinović 1992, 173.

⁵¹ The church and therefore the baptisterium were more closely dated to the early Christian period, in the archaeological research done during the mid-eighties. Martinović 1984, 23–44; Martinović 1986, 17–73; Martinović 1990, 21–31; Martinović 1992, 172; Чанак-Медић 1989, 203–251.

⁵² Марковић 2005, 55–68.

the basilica. The piscine was cruciform with four conches that created a regular quadrifoliate shape (fig. 15). It was made of hewn stone and square bricks joined together with lime mortar. The inside of the piscine was coated in a thick layer of lime mortar. Like the majority of baptistries in our country, there are no installations for supplying or draining off water, which indicates that emptying the piscine was done manually. Bearing in mind the size and the depth of the piscine itself, we may assume that it served for baptising adults, most probably by immersion with additional aspersion, as in the case of the previously mentioned church in Kotor. The early Christian basilica on the site of the present-day Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin in the Podlastva monastery is dated to the 6th century, judging by the preserved architectural decorative plastics.⁵³

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This survey of the distribution of early Christian baptistries in Serbia and Montenegro, has enabled us to classify them according to their typological features and chronological frame. At the same time it enabled us to divide the said buildings into two basic groups:

– Baptistries that represented an autonomous, centrally built space, in which a piscine was installed. Such solutions were most often linked to the episcopal church intended for baptising adult catechumens, and which was originally performed by means of immersion, which required a pool of larger dimensions. Where the territories of Serbia and Montenegro were concerned, this type of case was registered only in Caričin Grad. Here, as we said, the baptistry was located right next to the episcopal basilica but there was no »organic« architectural link to the basilica itself (the baptistry was 3.5 m away from the southern diaconikon of the church, which was located beside the apse on the eastern side). These centrally planned buildings were erected throughout the Mediterranean region, most often within episcopal complexes, and their ground plans had the most diverse shapes: rectangular, square, triconchal, tetraconchal, hexagonal or circular.⁵⁴

– The second group consisted of baptistries that were mostly incorporated into the space of the church building itself. Although very few baptistries of this kind have been found in Serbia and Montenegro so far, we can nevertheless distinguish two basic types in relation to their position in the space of the church building.

The baptistries could be directly connected to the narthex of the church. They were mostly attached to

one of the compartments of the narthex. We encounter such an example in the triple-nave basilica erected west of the Roman *castrum* in Bela Palanka (*Remesiana*). In Doljani, near the old town of Duklje (*Doclea*), for instance, the baptistry was located in the southern part of the narthex but, generally speaking, they could also be installed in its northern section.

Baptismal installations positioned in the naos of the church itself, in most cases in the eastern section near the altar, was one of the regional characteristics. This feature was recorded in the churches in fortresses dating from Late Antiquity, in Boljetin (*Smorna*) or Babotinac near Prokuplje.

A baptistry that deserved particular attention was the one with a quadrifoliate shape, positioned along the southern nave of the big triconchal Basilica III in Gamzigrad (*Romuliana*). It was similar in form to the tetraconchal baptistry of the Northern Basilica in Stobi, located on the northern side of the church, and was dated to the second half of the 5th century.⁵⁵ The remains of the piscine have not been discovered so that at present, one can only assume that it may have had a cruciform shape, analogous to the example from Stobi.⁵⁶

One should also mention the question of the pastophoria with smaller apsidal endings on the eastern side found in Kuršumlija⁵⁷ (fig. 16a), Klisura near Niš⁵⁸ (fig. 16b), Caričin Grad (fig. 16c)⁵⁹, and in Babotinac near Prokuplje (fig. 7).⁶⁰ The remains of small, cruciform, shallow piscines that were installed in semi-circular niches and equipped with plumbing, persuaded D. Stričević to initially interpret them as a place that served for baptising children. In the course of later excavations, however, the same author changed his mind, and thought that these piscines were not for baptisms but were used as a honephtirion (*χωνεπτήριον*), since

⁵³ Марковић 2005, 60–61.

⁵⁴ Khatchatrian 1962, fig. 18, 23, 50–52, 107–110, 173–179, 237–246, 316, 53, 111–113, 189–191, 317–355.

⁵⁵ Вајзман 1973, 26–28, сл. 1; Лилчић 2002, 853.

⁵⁶ It is assumed that this basilica was never completed. Чанак-Медић 1978, 138.

⁵⁷ Стричевић 1953, 179–198, сл. 1А.

⁵⁸ Стричевић 1953, 179–198, сл. 1С; Стричевић 1959, 63.

⁵⁹ Мано-Зиси 1953, 154, сл. 45; Кондић, Поповић В. 1977, 135–139, сл. 97.

⁶⁰ Кузмановић-Цветковић 1986, 216. Although we have no data about whether the pool discovered in the southern annex was equipped with plumbing, the mentioned analogies suggest that this is a honephtirion, that is a place for washing church vessels, used during the liturgy.

their small dimensions and the place where they were located made them unsuitable for performing baptisms.⁶¹ It is obvious that this question will have to remain open until new, revisory excavations are conducted at the said localities.

In our descriptions of the piscines, we can say without doubt that the majority of them were of cruciform shape. At present, depending on the shape of their inner opening, we are able to distinguish three types:

- where the upper opening of the pool is shaped like a cross, as in the case of the baptistry in the church in Boljetin;

- where the shape of the upper opening is square, as recorded in Gamzigrad in Basilica II, or in the basilica, lying beneath the Church of the Blessed Virgin in Kotor;

- where the shape of the inner opening is cruciform, with four conches that form a quadrifoliate, as in the case of the early Christian basilica that existed on the site of the present-day church that belongs to the Podlastva monastery in Montenegro. This kind of shape is rather rare in the region of the Balkan Peninsula. Typologically analogous examples were discovered in the province of Dalmatia in the localities of Lepenica, Klobuk and Dabravina.⁶² The origin of this type of piscine should be sought in the East and chronologically, they can be attributed to the 6th century.⁶³

Besides those with a cruciform shape, there are also piscines that are circular, such as those in Veliki Gradac and Babotinac near Prokuplje.

Access to the piscines was most often resolved by constructing steps. By installing two small flights of steps, one enabling the person to enter the piscine and the other, to get out of it after the ritual ended, is connected to the ritual of baptism and in keeping with Christian symbolism, given that the neophyte did not return by the way he or she had entered but took a new route. The step structures were preserved in Veliki Gradac, in Basilica II in Gamzigrad, in Caričin Grad, and in Doljani near Duklja.

Very often, the baptistries had the proper installations for the supply and drainage of water. Their remains were recorded in Basilica II in Gamzigrad, in Caričin Grad, in Babotinac near Prokuplje, and in the early Christian basilica beneath the Church of the Blessed Virgin in Kotor.

The dimensions of the piscines could differ considerably, indicating the existence of the different baptismal rites that were practised in the initial stage of the development of Christianity. The differences in the dimensions testify that two different rituals were used

in baptism in the period from the 4th to the end of the 6th century. This kind of situation was also recorded in our regions, as well.

The initial rite of baptism by immersion was most probably used in baptistries where the piscines were of larger dimensions. This case was recorded in Caričin Grad, in Doljani near Duklja and in the baptistry discovered in the Podlastva monastery complex in Grbalj. If the pools with water were shallower, then people resorted to additional aspersion. As time went on, parallel to the ritual involving total immersion, a new kind of partial immersion in the water was practised, with additional aspersion. The practice of baptising a person in two ways began in the 5th century. In our country, the earliest example of baptism with additional aspersion, bearing in mind the size of the piscine, was most probably applied in Gamzigrad, in Basilica II, which is chronologically dated to the 5th century.⁶⁴ In the opinion of M. Čanak-Medić, the piscine, with its dimensions, could have been used for the baptism of children but if adults were also baptised here only the ritual with additional aspersion can have been used.⁶⁵ This twofold way of baptising was practised in the majority of baptistries registered in our country. Most of them date from the 6th century.

This was not an isolated case in the Balkan Peninsula. Baptism by immersion with additional aspersion was recorded in a considerable number of churches in Roman province *Dalmatia* (in Dabrovina, Vinjane, Mogorjelo, the initial hexagonal piscine of Salona, in Bare and perhaps in Gradac, Klobuk, Nereze, Palača and Dubrovnik, as well).⁶⁶ According to P. Chevalier, this twofold manner of baptising was used in cases when the depth of the piscine was between 70 cm and 90 cm, where it was impossible for neophytes to be completely immersed in the water and so one had to resort to additional aspersion.⁶⁷ In time, as the process of conversion came to an end, the need to baptise adults declined and so in most of the baptistries, the piscine became smaller.

Based on the results of hitherto research in the regions of Serbia and Montenegro, it is still impossible to fully examine how the process of reducing the size of

⁶¹ Стричевић 1959, 63.

⁶² Chevalier 1988, 133, fig. 14.

⁶³ Duval, Lézine 1959, 138, 146.

⁶⁴ Чанак-Медић 1978, 136.

⁶⁵ Чанак-Медић 1978, 135.

⁶⁶ Chevalier 1988, 144.

⁶⁷ Chevalier 1988, 144.

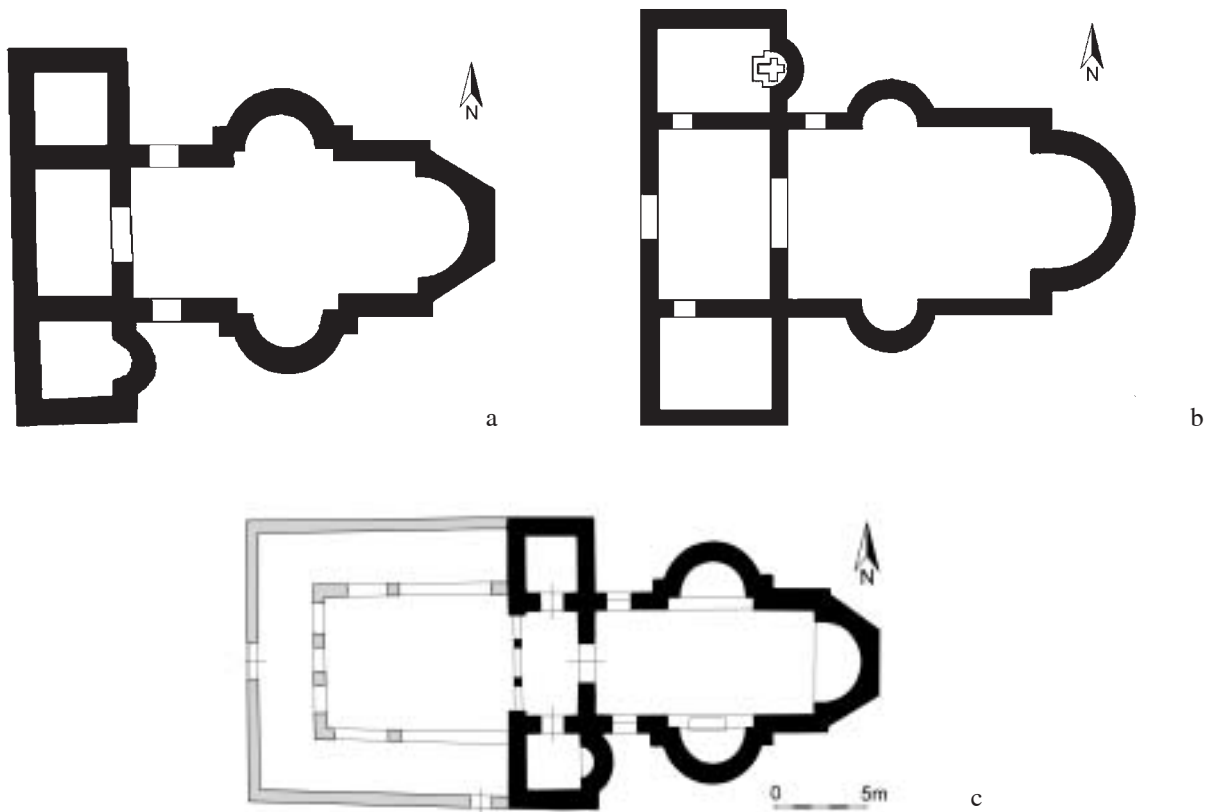


Fig. 16. Ground plan of church: a) near Kuršumlija (according to: Ђ. Свјричевић, ЗРВИ 2, 1953, 181, сл. 1А);
 b) in Klisura near Niš (according to: Ђ. Свјричевић, ЗРВИ 2, 1953, 181, сл. 1С);
 c) ground plan of triconchal church outside a rampart in Caričin Grad
 (according to: В. Конђић, В. Појовић, Царичин Град, Београд 1977, сл. 97)

Сл. 16. Основа цркве: а) код Курушумлије (према: Ђ. Свјричевић, ЗРВИ 2, 1953, 181, сл. 1А);
 б) у Клисурси код Ниша (према: Ђ. Свјричевић, ЗРВИ 2, 1953, 181, сл. 1С);
 с) основа триконхалне цркве ван бедема у Царичином Граду
 (према: В. Конђић, В. Појовић, Царичин Град, Београд 1977, сл. 97)

the piscine came about, which could point to the completion of the process of Christianisation in these regions. That it was still under way in the 6th century and that mass baptisms of adult catechumens were still taking place, can be seen in the examples of the piscines of the baptistries in Caričin Grad, in Doljani near Duklja or the piscines in the Podlastva monastery complex in Grbalj, the dimensions of which indicate that adults were baptised in them. When referring to Serbia and Montenegro, at present Caričin Grad⁶⁸ is the sole example where the dimensions of the piscine were reduced. In our immediate neighbourhood, we can also mention the complete transformation of the baptistry in the episcopal centre in Salona in the 6th century,⁶⁹ or the reduction of the entrance (steps) and the reduction

of the dimensions of the piscines documented in numerous localities in the province of Dalmatia: on the island of Otok in the last phase,⁷⁰ Lepenica 2,⁷¹ in Srim,⁷² and in Bare.⁷³ These changes were recorded

⁶⁸ The archaeological excavations in the acropolis of Caričin Grad (1977-1981) showed the level of the bottom of the piscine was at one time raised to roughly half of its initial depth. Duval 1984, 415-416.

⁶⁹ Chevalier 1988, 150, fig. 21, 22.

⁷⁰ Chevalier 1988, 150, fig. 20.

⁷¹ Chevalier 1988, 150.

⁷² Chevalier 1988, 150.

⁷³ Chevalier 1988, 150, fig. 23.

directly prior to the penetration of the Avar and the Slav tribes deeper into the interior of the Balkan Peninsula, when the relatively slow process of Christianising the Romanised autochthonous population was almost at an end and when the need for converting adults became rarer. We may assume that these examples also existed in the territories of Serbia and Montenegro but this will only be established after future research.

In most cases, baptistries in Serbia and Montenegro are characteristically simple in architectural structure, with modest decorative repertoire inside or none at all, in some cases. A rare example of mosaic floors and architecturally decorative plastics was documented only in Caričin Grad. Likewise, the number of baptistries that belonged to the episcopal centres was small (Caričin Grad, Bela Palanka, Doljani near Duklje). The presence of baptistries in churches of the so-called rural type, like those on the Danubian limes or in Babotinac near Prokuplje, point to the existence of a large number of catechumens, which led to episcopal duties being transferred to other priests.⁷⁴ This phenomenon was particularly noticeable in the 6th century, which was in keeping with the aspiration of Justinian I to finish the process of Christianising the non-urbanised areas in the Balkan Peninsula.⁷⁵

When we speak about the areas in the immediate neighbourhood of Serbia and Montenegro, it is noticeable that in the territory of Macedonia, baptistries were most often connected to large urban agglomerations.⁷⁶ Meanwhile, in the province of Dalmatia, a considerable number of baptistries also appeared in smaller, less urbanised places.⁷⁷ Like the Dalmatian baptistries, ours too were simple in structure, where the practical requirements of the ritual had primary importance and the achievements in terms of architecture and the decoration of the interiors did not express any particular inventiveness.

* * *

In the data that we managed to collect and present in this work there are still some puzzles and questions that we are unable to answer in full, regarding the constructional and decorative solutions in the facilities we investigated, as well as the link between those elements and liturgical requirements. We may assume that the baptistry came into being as soon as a piscine of circular, square or cruciform shape was created within a particular room. However, we still cannot say with any assurance how the process of Christianisation unfolded in the Central Balkans, between the 4th to the beginning of the 7th century. After the period of intense construction of baptistries, not only in large urban centres but also in smaller settlements and fortified castra on the Danubian limes, were the dimensions of the baptismal piscines reduced or did they even fall out of use, as recorded for instance in the province of Dalmatia? Whether the ritual of baptism by immersion was gradually replaced with a ritual of aspersion, because there was less need for the baptism of adults, still remains in the domain of supposition. Did the presence of baptistries in churches of the so-called rural type and the transfer of episcopal duties to other priests indicate the existence of a large number of catechumens from the Roman *pagus*? To these one might also add the matter of dating certain churches, which also makes it difficult to pinpoint the time of the construction of the baptistries and the liturgical rituals that accompanied the original process of converting the autochthonous Romanised population in the Central Balkans, from the 4th to the beginning of the 7th century when this long process of Christianisation was interrupted by the invasion of the barbarian tribes from the north (the Avars and the Slavs) precisely when it was in its final phase.

⁷⁴ Lemerle 1945, 335; Stommel 1959, 5–14; Мирковић 1965, 60.

⁷⁵ Popović R. 1995, 232–234.

⁷⁶ The most important baptistries were erected in the episcopal centres: in Stobi, Herakleia, Lichnida, Skupi, Bargali, Konjuh, etc. Of the abundant literature dealing with the question of these baptistries, we mention the most recent titles: Алексова 1989; Милчић 1999; Лилчић 2002.

⁷⁷ Chevalier 1988.

ABBREVIATIONS:

<i>AP</i>	<i>Arheološki pregled</i> , Beograd.
<i>AV</i>	<i>Arheološki vestnik</i> , Ljubljana.
<i>Гласник САД</i>	<i>Гласник Српскої Археолошкої друштва</i> , Београд.
<i>Godišnjak РМК</i>	<i>Godišnjak Pomorskog Muzeja u Kotoru</i> , Kotor.
<i>VAHD</i>	<i>Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju dalmatinsku</i> , Split.
<i>ЗРВИ</i>	<i>Зборник радова Византолошкої институциї</i> , Београд.
<i>ЗРМЧ</i>	<i>Зборник радова Народної музеја у Чачку</i> , Чачак.

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Резиме:

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РАНОХРИШЋАНСКЕ КРСТИОНИЦЕ У СЕВЕРНОМ ИЛИРИКУ

Ранохришћанске крстионице, њихов положај и изглед осветљавају на свој начин не само место и значај црквене грађевине којој припадају и са којом су у вези, већ и локалне специфичности повезане са начином крштавања које се често рефлектују у њиховом просторном склопу. Споменици презентовани у овом раду потичу из Србије и Црне Горе чија територија је током касноантичког и рановизантијског периода улазила у састав северног дела префектуре Илирик (*Praefectura praetorio per Illyricum*).

Класификацију крстионица могуће је извршити на основу типолошких и хронолошких мерила. Према типолошким карактеристикама издвајају се два основна типа:

– крстионице које су представљале самосталан, централно грађен простор који окружује писцину. Код нас је такав случај забележен једино у Царичином Граду где је крстионица постављена непосредно уз епископску базилику;

– крстионице које су представљале конструкцију инкорпорирану у саму црквену грађевину. Овај тип крстионица је најчешћи на простору централног Балкана. Међу њима можемо такође издвојити два типа у односу на њихов положај према самој црквеној грађевини:

– крстионице непосредно везане уз нартекс црквене грађевине, најчешће инсталиране у северном или јужном компартменту нартекса;

– крстионице постављене у самом наосу цркве и то претежно у источном делу, ближе олтару.

Посебно треба издвојити крстионицу четворолисног облика облика смештену уз јужни брод велике тробродне базилике III у Гамзиграду (*Romuliana*).

Овде треба поменути и проблем пастофорија са мањим апсидалним завршецима на источној страни које су највероватније представљали хонефтерионе. Ове пастофорије су углавном биле снабдевене водоводним инсталацијама.

Писцине се појављују у различитим облицима, од којих је најчешћи у форми крста (са горњим отвором такође у

облику крста или квадрата). Поред крстообразних постоје и писцине кружног облика.

Прилаз писцини најчешће је решаван конструкцијом двојног степеништа. Код нас су степенице сачуване у крстионици цркве у Великом Градцу (*Taliata*), у Гамзиграду у базилици II, у Царичином Граду, у Дољанима код Дукље.

Димензије писцина могу се знатно разликовати што указује да су у периоду од IV до краја VI века паралелно функционисала два различита обреда крштавања, *immersio* и *aspersio*.

У већини случајева крстионице са нашег подручја карактеришу једноставна архитектонска решења и оскудно или потпуно непостојање декоративних елемената. Редак пример са сачуваним мозаичним подом и архитектонском декоративном пластиком забележен је једино у Царичином Граду.

Поред крстионица које потичу из епископских центара (Царичини Град, Бела Паланка, Дољани у близини Дукље), забележено је и присуство крстионица у црквама подигнутим на Дунавском лимесу или Баботинцу код Прокупља. Ови примери указују на постојање великог броја катихумена, што је довело до преноса епископских овлашћења на друга свештена лица. Постојање крстионица тзв. руралног типа је појава која је присутна на читавом простору Балкана. Распрострањеност ових крстионица била је у складу са тежњом Јустинијана I, великог хришћанског владара, да коначно доврши процес христјанизације неурбанизованих делова Балканског полуострва. Инвазијом варварских племена са севера крајем VI и почетком VII века, пре свега Авара и Словена, овај релативно дуг процес христјанизације паганског, већ увелико романизованог, аутохтоног етноса био је прекинут у својој завршној фази, када је уништена целокупна урбана структура префектуре Илирик, а самим тим и већ прилично распрострањена и чврсто формирана црквена организација.