

Kelsey Brunasso

**EXTRAMURAL CHURCHES IN LATE ANTIQUITY: REVISITING  
THE CASE OF THE CEMETERY BASILICA AT STOBI,  
MACEDONIA**

MA Thesis in Comparative History, with a specialization  
in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies.

Central European University

Budapest

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by

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(United States)

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Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the Master of Arts degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Interdisciplinary  
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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Examiner

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External Reader

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External Supervisor

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I, the undersigned, **Kelsey Brunasso**, candidate for the MA degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 17 May 2018

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# Abstract

Studies on Late Antiquity are focused on questions of transformation, continuity and decline, especially with regards to urban and rural landscape development. However, a crucial element of the landscape remains understudied: extramural churches. This thesis explores the role of extramural churches in the late antique landscape through the case study of the Cemetery Basilica at Stobi, Macedonia. It provides an updated understanding of the Cemetery Basilica and then examines the church in context, discussing its relationships with the city of Stobi and comparing it to other extramural churches in the region. The results of this exploration question previous assumptions about the function of the Cemetery Basilica and extramural churches throughout the region. It also demonstrates the need for further comprehensive study of extramural churches in late antique Macedonia and throughout the Mediterranean.

# Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

The city of Stobi was an important Roman trade center which transformed into a Christian provincial capital in Late Antiquity. Its abandonment at the end of the sixth century CE has allowed archaeologists the opportunity to study it without the complications of modern settlement for over a century. Stobi's transformation in Late Antiquity, which included the construction of at least six churches, coupled with the decline that shortly followed contribute significantly to our understanding of the processes of continuity and change which are characteristic of the period.



*Figure 1: An aerial view of Stobi. (Google Maps)*

Today, the archaeological site of Stobi sits tucked between a bend in the Vardar River and the sweeping arch of the A1 motorway in the modern day Republic of Macedonia (Figure 1). Built in the 1990s, this section of the motorway follows the ancient city's walls, dividing its urban center from its surrounding landscape in a very concrete and modern way (Figure 2). In



*Figure 2: The remains of the ancient city walls followed by the modern motorway, looking south from within the city. (Author's photo)*

particular, the motorway divides this ancient city from its extramural churches, even encircling one of them within its on-ramp (Figure 3). This modern division is evocative of the way that extramural churches exist in the scholarship on late antique Macedonia and Late Antiquity in general. Extramural churches, or those located outside the city walls, exist nearby cities, but they remain separate and probably only visible in passing. They occupy a physical and metaphorical interstitial space between the city and the countryside as well as between the scholarship on the city and countryside. As occupiers of interstitial space, they form a



*Figure 3: The apse of an extramural church at Stobi with the guardrail of the motorway in the background. (Author's photo)*

fundamental piece of the landscape, but one which has long been neglected. This thesis seeks to rectify this and shine a spotlight on extramural churches, exploring their role in the late antique landscape.

My exploration of the role of extramural churches in the landscape focuses on a single case study: the Cemetery Basilica of Stobi, Macedonia. Originally, Stobi drew my attention as a possible case study because of the six churches discovered at least three were extramural: the Extra Muros Basilica, the Cemetery Basilica, and the Palikura Basilica. In addition to these, the partial remains of another building, known as the Trans-Erigon Basilica, were discovered east of the city and have been interpreted as an additional extramural church.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, our knowledge of these four buildings is unequal. Since it was only partially excavated, very little is known about the Trans-Erigon Basilica. The excavation of the Extra Muros Basilica took place as part of roadworks and the results have not been published.<sup>2</sup> The Palikura Basilica was originally excavated during World War I and our knowledge of it still relies heavily on the limited reporting of those excavations. The Cemetery Basilica, while also originally discovered during World War I, provides the most information out of the four buildings. As its name implies, it is located in one of Stobi's cemeteries and this has resulted in much more scholarly attention. Because of the inequality of evidence, I chose to focus primarily on the extramural church with the most to offer, the Cemetery Basilica.

In order to explore the role of this extramural church in the late antique landscape I do not intend to examine the Cemetery Basilica in isolation. Instead, I concentrate on its context and relationships as well as how it compares to other extramural churches in the region. The

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<sup>1</sup> Jozo Petrović, "U Stobima danas" [Stobi Today], *Glasnik Hrvatskih zemaljskih muzeja u Sarajevu* (1942): 463-525; Carolyn S. Snively, "The Early Christian Basilicas of Stobi: A Study of Form, Function, and Location," (PhD Diss., University of Texas, Austin, 1979), 243-50.

<sup>2</sup> This church, also known as the Basilica behind the Viaduct, is only briefly described in Ivan Mikulčić, *Stobi: An Ancient City* (Skopje: Marop, 2003).



questions I hope to answer are: how does the Cemetery Basilica relate to the city of Stobi? What relationships can be identified between it and the city of Stobi? How do these relationships compare to ones which can be identified elsewhere in the late antique province of Macedonia? And what can this tell us about landscape development in the region?

### **Stobi in Late Antiquity**

Before discussing the relevance of these research questions, let me introduce Stobi (See Figure 4). Located at the confluence of the rivers Axios and Erigon (modern day Vardar and Crna), Stobi was inhabited from at least the third century BCE until the end of the sixth century CE.<sup>3</sup> The city prospered in the first to third centuries CE, becoming a center of the salt trade and even earning the status of *municipium*. Its strategic location on a north-south route connecting the Via Egnatia and Via Militaris contributed to its economic prosperity. The city was mostly rebuilt throughout the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries CE, transforming into a Christian center and then a provincial capital. At the end of the sixth century CE, the city was gradually abandoned following successive barbarian raids and increasing environmental pressures.

Administratively, the city of Stobi primarily belonged to the province(s) of Macedonia in Late Antiquity (See Figure 5). Hierocles recorded Stobi as the capital of the province of Macedonia Secunda in his *Synecdemus* of the late fifth to early sixth century CE.<sup>4</sup> However, this record and Justinian's *Novella* 11 from 535 CE are the only direct references to the province of Macedonia Secunda.<sup>5</sup> The chronicle of Marcellinus Comes refers to "both" Macedonias in 482

<sup>3</sup> Summaries of the of the city's overall development in James R. Wiseman, "The City in Macedonia Secunda," in *Villes et peuplement dans L'Illyricum protobyzantin, Actes du colloque de Rome (12-14 mai 1982)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1984), 289-314 and Djordje Mano-Zissi, "Stratigraphic Problems in the Urban Development of Stobi," in *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi, Volume I*, ed. James Wiseman (Austin: University of Texas at Austin, 1973), 185-232.

<sup>4</sup> Wiseman, "The City in Macedonia," 289.

<sup>5</sup> Carolyn Snively, "Macedonia in Late Antiquity," in *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, ed. Joseph Roisman and Ian Worthington (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 545-71.

and 517 CE.<sup>6</sup> While bishops attending the church councils of Ephesus in 449 CE and Chalcedon in 451 CE are listed as being from Macedonia Prima, there is no mention of a Macedonia Secunda.<sup>7</sup> Based upon this evidence, scholars have argued that a single province of Macedonia existed until the mid-fifth century CE, when it was divided into a Macedonia Prima and Secunda. These provinces, regardless of their division, fell under the Diocese of Macedonia and under the Prefecture of Illyricum from the late fourth century CE onwards.<sup>8</sup> A province known as Macedonia Salutaris, known only from the *Notitia Dignitatum*, may have existed in the late fourth to early fifth century CE and it may have covered the area known later as Macedonia Secunda, but this province is much debated and little understood.<sup>9</sup>

Ecclesiastically, Stobi fell under the jurisdiction of the papal vicar in Thessaloniki until Justinian placed Macedonia Secunda under the jurisdiction of the new archbishop of Justiniana Prima in 535 CE.<sup>10</sup> The continued existence of Macedonia Secunda after 535 CE is unknown. It is not listed amongst the provinces reaffirmed as under the jurisdiction of Justiniana Prima's archbishop in Justinian's *Novella* 131.3 in 545 CE and the bishop of Stobi is listed as being from Praevalitana in the Diocese of Dacia at the council of Constantinople in 553 CE.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, it may be assumed that in the later sixth century CE the province of Macedonia Secunda was probably divided among its surrounding provinces. Stobi remained under the

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<sup>6</sup> Brian Croke, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus Comes: Translation and Commentary* (Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1995), 28 and 39.

<sup>7</sup> Snively, "Macedonia in Late Antiquity," 549.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 549-50.

<sup>9</sup> Snively, "Macedonia in Late Antiquity," 548-9; Wiseman, "The City in Macedonia," 289-91. Also: Fanoula Papazoglou, *Les villes de Macédoine à l'époque romaine*, Bulletin de correspondance hellénique, Supplément 16 (Athens: École française d'Athènes, 1988), 94-5; Charles Pietri, "Les provinces 'Salutaires': géographie administrative et politique de la conversion sous l'Empire chrétien (IVe s.)," in *Aevum inter utrumque, Mélanges offerts à Gabriel Sanders*, ed. G. Sanders, M. Van Uytenghe and R. Demeulenaere (Le Haye, 1991), 319-38; Ivan Mikulčić, *Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Befestigungen in Nordmakedonien: Städte, Vici, Refugien, Kastelle* (Munich: Beck, 2002), 25-8.

<sup>10</sup> Snively, "Macedonia in Late Antiquity," 549-50.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 550 and Richard Price, trans., *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553: with Related Texts on the Three Chapters Controversy*, Volumes 1-2 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009).

archbishop of Justiniana Prima, and although no longer the capital of a province, it retained its metropolitan status.<sup>12</sup>

## History of Research on Stobi

Our knowledge of Stobi derives primarily from its long history of excavations.<sup>13</sup> The first excavations at Stobi occurred during World War I. Undertaken by German soldiers under the command of a group of scholars and doctors in the army, these excavations uncovered three of Stobi's basilicas. Unfortunately, the records of these excavations were lost in the German retreat and they are preserved in only two publications.<sup>14</sup> Stobi was more systematically excavated by scholars from the National Museum of Belgrade from 1923 to 1942, revealing most of the known buildings. Regular reports of these activities were published in journals, such as *Starinar*, *Glasnik Skopskog naučnog društva* and *Godišnjak Srpske Kraljevske Akademije*. Rescue excavations occurred throughout the 1950s and 1960s. A large, joint Yugoslav-American project ran from 1970 to 1980 which continued the work of the National Museum of Belgrade, clarifying the stratigraphy of the site. This project produced thorough annual reports published in the *American Journal of Archaeology* and the *Journal of Field Archaeology* as well as three volumes of the *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi*, which detail the results of the project. Further rescue excavations and conservation projects followed throughout the 1980s to the 2000s with limited publications in the journal *Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica*. Since 2009 the National Institute Stobi has been conducting regular excavations and site management.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, vol. 2, 293.

<sup>13</sup> History of excavations in James Wiseman, *Stobi: A Guide to the Excavations* (Austin: University of Texas, Austin, 1973) and Mikulčić, *Stobi: An Ancient City*.

<sup>14</sup> Hans Dragendorff, "Archäologische und kunstwissenschaftliche Arbeit während des Weltkrieges in Mazedonien," in *Kunstschatz im Kriege II*, ed. Paul Clemen (Leipzig: E.A. Seemann, 1919), 155-66 and Karl Hald, *Auf den Trümmern Stobis* (Stuttgart: Strecker and Schröder, 1917).

<sup>15</sup> Goce Pavlovski, "Archaeological Site Stobi: Different Aspects of Popularization," *Archaeology and Science* 9 (2013): 155-61.

The long history of excavations at Stobi has produced a significant amount of scholarly literature focusing primarily on the excavation results and the history of the city. Additionally, art and architectural historians have studied Stobi and its contributions to early Christian art and architecture.<sup>16</sup> For instance, scholars have completed multiple architectural surveys of the city's early Christian basilicas as well as multiple studies of the city's floor mosaics.<sup>17</sup> While this research has contributed enormously to our understanding of Stobi, especially in Late Antiquity, the picture is still relatively piecemeal. The work of the various excavations and art historical studies has not been reconciled or synthesized. This is especially true for the city's extramural churches, where the work of earlier excavations have not been recontextualized or updated to reflect the current state of knowledge on Stobi. Our knowledge of the Cemetery Basilica, for example, has not had the excavation work done in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century reconsidered within the context of more recent work completed on its surrounding cemetery. Even the most recent work on Stobi, which includes the extramural churches, struggles to contextualize them.<sup>18</sup> This is another way in which these extramural churches are separated and neglected; they are being left behind in the scholarly discourse.

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<sup>16</sup> Stobi has been included in many regional art historical and architectural studies, such as Carolyn S. Snively, "Dacia Mediterranea and Macedonia Secunda in the Sixth Century: A Question of Influence on Church Architecture," *Niš and Byzantium* III (2005): 213-224; Snežana Filipova, "The Influence of Eastern and Western Architectural Models on the Churches Built in the Province Macedonia in the 5th-6th C.," *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 2, no. 3 (2013): 425-30; Snežana Filipova, "Early Christian Reliquaries and Encolpia and the Problem of the So-Called Crypt Reliquaries in the Republic of Macedonia," in *Rome, Constantinople and Newly-Converted Europe. Archaeological and Historical Evidence*, ed. M. Salamon, M. Wołoszyn, A. Musin, P. Špehar, M. Hardt, M.P. Kruk, and A. Sulikowska-Gaska (Leipzig: Geisteswissenschaftliches Zentrum Geschichte und Kultur Ostmitteleuropas, 2012), 113-30.

<sup>17</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas of Stobi," and Blaga Aleksova, "The Early Christian Basilicas of Stobi," in *XXXIII Corso di cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina, Seminario Internazionale di Studi su "La Macedonia iugoslava,"* ed. Raffaella Farioli Campanati (Ravenna: Edizioni del Girasole, 1986), 13-81; Caroline J. Downing, "Wall Paintings from the Baptistery at Stobi, Macedonia, and Early Depictions of Christ and the Evangelists," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 52 (1998): 259-80; Ruth E. Kolarik, "Mosaics of the Early Church at Stobi," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987): 295-306; Anita Vasilkova, "Borrowed images: Classical Imagery on the Christian Floor Mosaics of Stobi, Macedonia (from the fourth to the sixth century)," MA Thesis, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Mikulčić, *Stobi: An Ancient City*.



## Research Approach and Limitations

This thesis hopes to counter this scholarly marginalization by reconciling the sources and updating our understanding of Stobi's Cemetery Basilica in context. Integral to this aim is my approach, which purposely examines the Cemetery Basilica as an extramural church. The term "extramural" is an explicit choice which serves to highlight the church's relationships with its context. The purpose of this approach is to allow an updated understanding of the Cemetery Basilica to be placed back into the context of Stobi and the late antique landscape, thereby integrating it into the scholarship. It also serves as a countermeasure to existing assumptions about extramural churches, which rely on an understanding of them as buildings in isolation. Additionally, the extramural lens offers a potential alternate perspective on these churches which can raise new questions about the development of the landscape in Late Antiquity.

At this point I should make note of some important limitations to this research project. My goals are challenged by the diversity of the sources. In particular, the sources on late antique Macedonia span multiple languages, some of which I am more familiar with than others. In addition, as demonstrated by the extramural churches at Stobi, the quality and accessibility of these sources is not always equal. The diversity of sources is the primary reason for my single case study. It also dictates the parameters of my comparison to only the late antique province of Macedonia.<sup>19</sup>

With these limitations in mind, the chapters that follow will explore the role of extramural churches in the late antique landscape of Macedonia. In the first chapter, I address the existing literature. I discuss my approach and outline how my study of extramural churches can fit into the larger picture of Late Antique studies. Then, in the following chapter, I examine my case

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<sup>19</sup> When I refer to the late antique province of Macedonia, I am referring not only to the single province of Macedonia, but also collectively to the later provinces of Macedonia Prima and Secunda.

study, revisiting and reconciling its sources in order to provide an updated understanding of the Cemetery Basilica. In the third chapter, I build upon this understanding and examine how the Cemetery Basilica relates to the city of Stobi, identifying two key relationships. The fourth chapter compares these relationships with those exhibited elsewhere within the late antique province of Macedonia. In the final chapter, I discuss the conclusions that can be drawn from this case study and comparison, presenting future avenues for research.

# Chapter 1: Late Antiquity and Extramural Churches

Before delving into my case study it is necessary to review the existing literature and discuss where my research fits in. The study of extramural churches, as one component of the landscape, relates directly to much larger scholarly debates within Late Antique studies. Since Peter Brown's influential work, the period of Late Antiquity has become a substantial topic of study as well as an analytical concept focusing on the second to eighth centuries CE.<sup>20</sup> The primary focus has been on questions of transformation and change throughout the period, particularly with regards to the city as an indicator of continuity or decline.<sup>21</sup> This has recently been counterbalanced by similar studies on the late antique countryside.<sup>22</sup> Generally, regional approaches emphasizing the different contexts of specific regions have overtaken the earlier Mediterranean-wide studies.<sup>23</sup> With this in mind, my case study takes place in the late antique province of Macedonia and the Balkan region more generally, which has its own particular place in this scholarship.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity, AD 150-750* (New York: Norton, 1971) and Peter Brown, et al., "The World of Late Antiquity Revisited," *Symbolae Osloenses* 72 (1997): 5-90. On the concept, Edward James, "The Rise and Function of the Concept 'Late Antiquity,'" *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1, no. 1 (2008): 20-30. On its popularity as a subject, Averil Cameron "Ideologies and Agendas in Late Antique Studies," in *Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology*, ed. Luke Lavan and William Bowden (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 3-24.

<sup>21</sup> Luke Lavan, ed., *Recent Research in Late-Antique Urbanism* (Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2001) and J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (Oxford: OUP, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> William Bowden, Luke Lavan, and Carlos Machado, ed., *Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

<sup>23</sup> Against this trend, Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea—A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2000) and Peregrine Horden and Sharon Kinoshita, eds., *A Companion to Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> The terms "Macedonia" and "Balkans" have long and controversial histories in modern politics and scholarship. It is not within the scope of this thesis to address these issues, but I acknowledge their problematic nature. My usage follows that of Late Antique studies generally and any reference to the region of Macedonia refers strictly to the Late Roman province as discussed in the introduction. On the term "Balkans," Predrag Novaković, "Archaeology in the New Countries of Southeastern Europe: A Historical Perspective," in *Comparative Archaeologies: A Sociological View of the Science of the Past*, ed. Ludomir R. Lozny (New York: Springer: 2011), 339-462. On "Macedonia," see Loring M. Danforth, "Ancient Macedonia, Alexander the Great and the Star or Sun of Vergina: National Symbols and the Conflict between Greece and the Republic of Macedonia," in *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, ed. Joseph Roisman and Ian Worthington (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 572-98.

How does research on Macedonia in Late Antiquity fit into the broader scope of scholarship? Speaking generally, it does not. As a region, the Balkans are isolated in the literature.<sup>25</sup> They form a flyover region, sandwiched between the more studied provinces in the east and west. The province of Macedonia, especially, is a kind of heartland caught between Rome and Constantinople as well as the borderlands to the north and the south. This isolation results from the historical context of the region, especially modern political and linguistic divisions.<sup>26</sup> However, within the region, studies on the question of late antique transformation are flourishing, especially those focusing on urbanism and Christianization.<sup>27</sup>

The scholarship on late antique Macedonia mostly concerns the cities and Christian monuments, although there are ongoing efforts to include other features of the landscape, such as fortifications and private residences as well as the countryside.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately much of this scholarship struggles to produce meaningful synthesis. Frequently these studies amount to annotated lists of cities, which then simply list the buildings found in each city.<sup>29</sup> Buildings and cities are treated in isolation or are studied together without careful regard to context. There is a distinct lack of context driven work, especially surrounding churches.<sup>30</sup> Church plans “often float on apparently blank pages,” where their architectural form or significant decorative

<sup>25</sup> A.G. Poulter, “The Transition to Late Antiquity,” in *The Transition to Late Antiquity on the Danube and Beyond*, ed. A.G. Poulter (Oxford: OUP, 2007) 1-50.

<sup>26</sup> Novaković, “Archaeology in the New Countries of Southeastern Europe,” 339-462.

<sup>27</sup> For bibliography, see Papazoglou, *Les villes de Macédoine à l'époque romaine*, and Jean-Pierre Sodini, “The Transformation of Cities in Late Antiquity within the Provinces of Macedonia and Epirus,” in *The Transition to Late Antiquity on the Danube and Beyond*, ed. A.G. Poulter (Oxford: OUP, 2007) 311-36.

<sup>28</sup> Ivan Mikulčić, “Spätantike Fortifikationen in der S.R. Makedonien,” in *XXXIII Corso di cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina, Seminario Internazionale di Studi su “La Macedonia iugoslava,”* ed. Raffaella Farioli Campanati (Ravenna: Edizioni del Girasole, 1986), 253-77; Archibald Dunn, “Continuity and Change in the Macedonian Countryside from Gallienus to Justinian,” in *Recent Research on the Late Antique Countryside*, ed. William Bowden, Luke Lavan and Carlos Machado (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 535-86.

<sup>29</sup> Sodini, “Transformation of Cities,” is a relatively successful exception. Also, although focused on architecture, Kara Hattersley-Smith, *Byzantine Public Architecture between the fourth and early eleventh Centuries AD, with special reference to the towns of Byzantine Macedonia*, (Thessaloniki: Society for Byzantine Studies, 1996) and Agnieszka Ochał-Czarnowicz, “Between East and West: Early Christian Architecture in Macedonia in the Social Context,” *Studies in Ancient Art and Civilization* 14 (2010): 189-206.

<sup>30</sup> This phenomenon is summarized nicely by Rebecca Sweetman, “The Christianization of the Peloponnese: The Topography and Function of Late Antique Churches,” *Journal of Late Antiquity* 3, no. 2 (2010): 203-61 and Ine Jacobs, “Ecclesiastical Dominance and Urban Setting. Colonnaded Streets as Back-Drop for Christian Display,” *Antiquité Tardive* 22 (2014): 263-86.

features are noted, but their context is lost.<sup>31</sup> This lack of contextualizing not only inhibits meaningful synthesis, but also perpetuates disciplinary divisions. The archaeological research emphasizes individual urban centers at the cost of the surrounding region, while the architectural and art historical analyses examine individual buildings or features at the cost of their context. And while the archaeological data is there and much art historical analysis has been done, the two have not been connected and placed into their historical context.<sup>32</sup> Stobi, as one of the most extensively excavated cities in the region, exemplifies this phenomenon. This is especially true for its extramural churches, which are often left out of both city-wide and region-wide discussions, are mentioned merely in passing, or are left isolated from their context at Stobi.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, there appears to be a lack of successful synthesis in research on late antique Macedonia, which reflects an underlying lack of context driven research. This affects not only our ability to understand the regional processes of urban transformation and landscape development in the period, but also how these transformation processes affect extramural development. There is a need for more context driven studies which can reconnect individual buildings and cities to their surroundings. This is where my research enters the scene. By reexamining an extramural church in context and focusing on how it relates to that context, I endeavor to address this gap and demonstrate the worth of contextual approaches. I will also attempt to compare the extra-

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<sup>31</sup> Jacobs, "Ecclesiastical Dominance and Urban Setting," 264.

<sup>32</sup> The issues surrounding interdisciplinary research are not limited to Stobi or late antique Macedonia, but affect Late Antique studies in general. There is much discussion on interdisciplinary issues, especially how and when to integrate archaeological and textual sources. Poulter, "The Transition to Late Antiquity," 1-3; Luke Lavan, "Late Antique Archaeology: An Introduction," in *Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology*, ed. Luke Lavan and William Bowden (Leiden: Brill, 2003), vii-xvi and Cameron, "Ideologies and Agendas," 3-24, in the same volume.

<sup>33</sup> For example, Ernst Kitzinger, "A Survey of the Early Christian Town of Stobi," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 3 (1946): 81-162; Ivan Mikulčić, "Früchristlicher Kirchenbau in der S.R. Makedonien," in *XXXIII Corso di cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina, Seminario Internazionale di Studi su "La Macedonia iugoslava,"* ed. Raffaella Farioli Campanati, (Ravenna: Edizioni del Girasole, 1986), 221-51; Mikulčić, *Stobi: An Ancient City*.

and intramural relationships at Stobi to those found elsewhere in the region, expanding the context of my study. In this way, I hope to inspire new directions for future regional syntheses.

In order to do this I will rely on “extramural” as a methodological concept and analytical category. What do I mean by this? The term “extramural” is an adjective which describes something outside or beyond the walls. It is typically used as just that: a descriptor. It is even used in the modern names of excavated churches, although in its Latin form, such as the Extra Muros Basilica at Stobi. I intend to use extramural as more than just an adjective, but as a lens or framework for my research. Inherent in the term is an emphasis on the location and the context of the thing being described. As a concept, it highlights relationships. Therefore, by purposely utilizing it as a concept and category for analysis, I am focusing on the context and the relationships of my case study.

By viewing my case study through the lens of an extramural church, I am treading on relatively unexplored methodological grounds. Extramural has not generally been considered a category for analysis in late antique studies, since most extramural buildings are seen according to other categories, such as rural or suburban. Furthermore, these buildings remain understudied overall. Cemeteries and their accompanying constructions, such as tombs or martyria, are a notable exception. Extramural by Roman law, cemeteries and their accompanying buildings have been the subject of extensive scholarship, especially the early Christian ones.<sup>34</sup> A significant portion of this scholarship concerns the development of saints’ and martyrs’ cults in early Christianity.<sup>35</sup> Since André Grabar’s influential study, the architectural space of these

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<sup>34</sup> For relevant bibliography on Roman funerary monuments, see Ann Marie Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces in the Late Antique Mediterranean: Architecture, Cult, and Community* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), 47-8. Most literature on early Christian burial originates in the discipline of Early Christian Archaeology and studies on the Roman catacombs, William H. C. Frend, *An archaeology of early Christianity: a history* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1997); Kim Bowes, “Early Christian Archaeology: A State of the Field,” *Religion Compass* 2, no. 4 (2008): 575–619.

<sup>35</sup> See Peter Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) and James Howard-Johnston and Paul Antony Hayward, eds., *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown* (Oxford: OUP, 1999).

cults has garnered much scholarly attention and produced a dominate model of church development, where a tomb or grave is transformed over time into a monumental church and eventual pilgrimage site.<sup>36</sup> However, recently scholars, such as Ann Marie Yasin, have questioned this model.<sup>37</sup> Yasin has demonstrated how this model, or “narrative of monumentalization,” contributed to a falsely linear narrative of the development of Salona’s extramural basilicas.<sup>38</sup> This issue is especially relevant to the scholarship on late antique Macedonia, where this model has influenced how the region’s extramural churches are interpreted. Across the region, the existence of cemetery churches has been conflated with the existence of a cult of martyrs.<sup>39</sup> However, Yasin’s scholarship proves the need to reexamine the viability of this model for individual sites and regions.

Interestingly, although extramural or “cemetery” churches are often at the heart of this monumentalization narrative, there are no comprehensive studies of them as a specific class of monument.<sup>40</sup> And there exists no regional study for late antique Macedonia.<sup>41</sup> When these churches are studied, I find their status as extramural has been taken for granted and their funerary purpose foregrounded. Furthermore, the nature of these churches, especially their spatial and stratigraphic relationships, is often left unexamined and unquestioned.

Because they are understood only as funerary, these churches have also been used to support arguments for the early development of Christian funerary rituals, in addition to their role in

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<sup>36</sup> André Grabar, *Martyrium: Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique*, 2 vols. (London: Variorum Reprints, 1972. First printed Paris, 1946).

<sup>37</sup> Ann Marie Yasin, “Reassessing Salona's Churches: *Martyrium* Evolution in Question,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 20, no. 1 (2012): 59-112.

<sup>38</sup> Yasin, “Reassessing Salona’s Churches,” 59-69.

<sup>39</sup> Blaga Aleksova, *Loca Sanctorum Macedoniae: The Cult of Martyrs in Macedonia from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Skopje: Macedonian Civilization, 1997).

<sup>40</sup> For some regional studies, Yvette Duval and J.C. Picard, ed., “*L’inhumation privilégiée du IV<sup>e</sup> au VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle en Occident. Actes du colloque tenu à Crétel les 16-18 mars 1984* (Paris: Editions de Boccard, 1986). Yasin also discusses North African examples with bibliography, *Saints and Church Spaces*, 69-91.

<sup>41</sup> Carolyn S. Snively provides only a brief survey in “Churches and Cemeteries: Religion and Death in Early Byzantine Macedonia,” in *Старохристијанската археологија во Македонија* [Early Christian Archaeology in Macedonia] (Skopje, Македонска академија на науките и уметностите, 2003), 59-74.

the promotion of martyrs' and saints' cults.<sup>42</sup> However, since they remain fundamentally understudied this only further complicates current debates about early Christian commemoration of the dead. The consequences of only seeing these churches through the framework of funerary practices or martyrs' cults is another reason why I prefer to utilize the concept of extramural as my lens. It represents a more neutral viewpoint with which to address and reexamine the evidence, which in turn allows for potential new perspectives on the relationship between extramural churches, saints' and martyrs' cults, and Christian commemoration of the dead.

In summary, I intend to use the concept of extramural as a lens to examine the Cemetery Basilica at Stobi in context, focusing on its relationships, as well as to facilitate comparison within the region of late antique Macedonia. This will address a need in the scholarship for context driven research which no longer studies buildings or cities in isolation and which can contribute to larger syntheses. In addition, by reexamining a cemetery church through the neutral framework of extramural, I will spotlight these understudied buildings, correcting and complicating the uncritical assumptions which have often been attached to them.

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<sup>42</sup> Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces*, 46-100; Laurie Brink, O.P. and Deborah Green, ed., *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context, Studies of Roman, Jewish, and Christian Burials* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008); Éric Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, trans. Elizabeth Trapnell Rawlings and Jeanine Routier-Pucci (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).



## Chapter 2: Reconstructing the Cemetery Basilica

So-called because of its location, the Cemetery Basilica can be found circa 250 meters southwest of the Porta Heraclea upon a terrace which functioned as part of Stobi's necropolis (See Figure 4). In this chapter I intend to discuss briefly what we know about the Cemetery Basilica through its excavation history and other sources. Then, by integrating the disparate sources, I will provide a reconstruction of the church's ground plan, noting its features and chronology. By reexamining the evidence and updating our understanding of the Cemetery Basilica I will then be able to discuss it more fully in context in the following chapters.

### Excavation History & Sources

The Cemetery Basilica was first uncovered by German soldiers who revealed the church and its floor mosaic during World War I. Unfortunately, the records and materials associated with these excavations have since been lost; we know about them only from the brief reporting on them published by Hans Dragendorff in *Kunstschatz im Kriege II* and Karl Hald's *Auf den Trümmern Stobis*.<sup>43</sup> The first published plan of the Cemetery Basilica comes from when Ćiro Truhelka discussed the church's architecture in 1928 (See Figure 6).<sup>44</sup> Truhelka's plan is imprecise due to the fact that he observed the church before it had been fully excavated. His plan does, however, reveal that by 1928, either as a result of the World War I era excavations or later ones, a large, vaulted tomb located to the south of the Cemetery Basilica was known.

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<sup>43</sup> Dragendorff, "Archäologische und kunstwissenschaftliche Arbeit," 161-3; Hald, *Auf den Trümmern Stobis*, 24.

<sup>44</sup> [Ćiro Truhelka] Ћиро Трухелка, "Археолошке белешке из Јужне Србије" [Archaeological notes from South Serbia], *Glasnik Skopskog naučnog društva* 3 (1928): 71-82.

Balduin Saria briefly reported excavating the area just north-east of the church as part of the National Museum of Belgrade investigations in 1924.<sup>45</sup> He discovered only a plundered grave and an unidentified structure, however Djordje Mano-Zissi and Jozo Petrović continued investigating in 1936. They excavated the majority of the church and discovered thirty-six graves within the structure.<sup>46</sup> The 1936 ground plan resulting from these excavations shows a more accurate representation of the church's form, including the location of the discovered graves and a fuller picture of the presbyterium, narthex and adjoining rooms (See Figure 7).

The work done by the National Museum of Belgrade in 1936 was the last time the Cemetery Basilica was extensively excavated. Three decades later in 1969, the Conservation Institute of Macedonia completed some repairs to one of the tombs at the church and salvaged a small piece of mosaic.<sup>47</sup> The joint Yugoslav-American project excavated some graves just north of the church and hundreds more in the West Cemetery throughout the 1970s.<sup>48</sup> While this project did not excavate the church itself, their work has provided much needed knowledge about the extent and development of Stobi in general and the city's necropolis in particular, which allows us to put the Cemetery Basilica into context.

In addition to the excavations, three architectural studies have focused on Stobi's buildings, including the Cemetery Basilica. K. Petrov examined the church's particular architectural features in a 1975 article, but his work offered little new knowledge and his revised ground plan proved inaccurate.<sup>49</sup> Carolyn Snively conducted the most systematic study of the

<sup>45</sup> [Balduin Saria] Балдуин Сариа, "Ископавања у Стобима" [Excavations at Stobi], *Glasnik Skopskog naučnog društva* 1 (1925): 287-99.

<sup>46</sup> Petrović, "U Stobima danas," 463-525. Djordje Mano-Zissi, "Berichte über die Ausgrabungen in Stobi," in *Berichte über den VI. Internationalen Kongress für Archäologie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1940), 591-3.

<sup>47</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 182 and 207.

<sup>48</sup> James Wiseman and Djordje Mano-Zissi, "Excavations at Stobi, 1973-1974," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 1, no 1-2 (1974): 133-8.

<sup>49</sup> K. Petrov, "Revidirana osnova i arhitektonskite osobenosti na grobišnata bazilika vo Stobi" [The revised base and architectural features of the cemetery basilica in Stobi], *Godišen Zbornik na Filozofskiot Fakultet* 27 (1975): 153-72.

Cemetery Basilica in her 1979 Ph.D. dissertation. Using the previous scholarship as well as her own site surveys, Snively's study was the first to examine the relationship between the graves found in church and the church itself.<sup>50</sup> The most recent scholarship on the Cemetery Basilica was done by Blaga Aleksova in 1982, who also studied Stobi's Early Christian basilicas, conducting her own surveys and trial excavations. Aleksova's work refined our knowledge of the church's surviving plan and uncovered the floor of the presbyterium.<sup>51</sup> Together the work of Snively and Aleksova provide the most accurate picture of the Cemetery Basilica (See Figures 8 and 9).

The Cemetery Basilica has been the subject of three separate excavations and at least four architectural studies. With the exception of the most recent work, our knowledge of most of the excavations is limited and the stratigraphy of the site is not well documented. Generally, the scholarship on Stobi has focused elsewhere, often mentioning the Cemetery Basilica only in passing or in a footnote.<sup>52</sup> Despite this neglect, there is still much that can be said about the Cemetery Basilica, especially when we reconcile the sources, revisiting the older analyses in light of more recent discoveries. It is in this way that it is possible to reconstruct the plan of the church.

### **Reconstructing the Cemetery Basilica**

According to all of the plans, the Cemetery Basilica was a three-aisled building, with a nave approximately two and a half times wider than its aisles, ending in the east with a semi-circular

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<sup>50</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 182-216.

<sup>51</sup> Aleksova, "Early Christian Basilicas," 62-9.

<sup>52</sup> For instance, Kitzinger, "Survey of the Early Christian Town of Stobi," 146, note 288.

apse with an inner, concentric apsidal wall. At the west end of the church there is a long, narrow narthex with adjoining rooms to the north and south.<sup>53</sup>

At the southern end of the narthex is a large, vaulted tomb. The tomb is square with *arcosolia* on three sides and an entryway with a staircase to the west. Since it is unclear when exactly the tomb was excavated, our knowledge of its form comes from later documentation.<sup>54</sup> Petrović recorded the tomb walls were painted with a gold cross on a white background.<sup>55</sup> Snively noted that the walls of the tomb were preserved higher than the exterior of the vault, indicating the possibility of a structure above the tomb.<sup>56</sup> While no trace of this structure survives, Truhelka suggested a chapel once stood above the tomb.<sup>57</sup> The tomb is constructed of the same materials as the church itself and is contemporaneous with it.

Since no excavations have taken place to the west of the church's narthex, it is impossible to come to any firm conclusions on the existence of an atrium. Snively identified a large, in situ threshold block in the eastern wall of the north end of the narthex, which is the only evidence for an entrance to the church.<sup>58</sup> Supporting this, the room to the east of the threshold appears to be a type of open porch. Its north wall was constructed of marble *spolia*, including a piece from the theater of Stobi, and in situ upon the room's east wall are two column bases.<sup>59</sup> Assuming that this porch and threshold are indeed the church's entrance, it is less likely that there was an atrium to the west.

<sup>53</sup> The church measures roughly 21 by 17 meters in size. For exact measurements see Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," figure 65, table 3; contra Aleksova, "Early Christian Basilicas," 80.

<sup>54</sup> Truhelka, "Археолошке белешке," 79-80; Mano-Zissi, "Berichte über die Ausgrabungen in Stobi," 593; Petrović, "U Stobima danas," 488-90; Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 187-8.

<sup>55</sup> Petrović, "U Stobima danas," 490.

<sup>56</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 187.

<sup>57</sup> Truhelka, "Археолошке белешке," 79-80.

<sup>58</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 186.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 184-6.

Both Snively and Aleksova noted the absence of a discernible floor level throughout much of the church and preservation of the walls only a few centimeters above the foundations.<sup>60</sup> This makes identifying doorways problematic. Therefore, we can assume there were doorways which communicated between the narthex and the nave, but we cannot say how many or where they were located. The same can be said for the adjoining rooms to the north and south of the narthex.

The 1936 plan indicates the nave and aisles were separated by colonnades of five irregularly spaced columns beginning with short *antae* projecting from the eastern wall of the church and concluding with longer walls projecting from the western wall (See Figure 7).<sup>61</sup> Snively distinguished that individual piers supported the columns, rather than a continuous stylobate as in the other churches at Stobi.<sup>62</sup> Only three of the column bases remained in situ and only some of their supporting piers were extant in 1936. By the time Snively conducted her survey these column bases had been removed from their original locations and were simply in and around the ruins of the church.<sup>63</sup>

The 1936 plan shows that the presbyterium extended from the apse to the eastern most columns. This is confirmed by Snively and Aleksova, who both report that white marble blocks found in situ form the base of a chancel screen running across the width of the nave and forming a short *solea* in the center.<sup>64</sup> There were two *synthronoi* located in the northeast and southeast corners of the presbyterium, again indicated in the 1936 plan and confirmed by Snively and Aleksova.

<sup>60</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 184; Aleksova, "Early Christian Basilicas," 66.

<sup>61</sup> Petrović, "U Stobima danas," 490; Mano-Zissi, "Berichte über die Ausgrabungen in Stobi," 593.

<sup>62</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 189.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 190.

<sup>64</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 191-2; Aleksova, "Early Christian Basilicas," 66.

Preserved in situ immediately in front of the internal apse wall and centered between the colonnades is the marble base of the altar.<sup>65</sup>

Snively recorded twenty-five column fragments of “blue-gray, pink, or white marble,” five marble column bases, and impost blocks around the remains of the church.<sup>66</sup> Along with these fragments, which give some sense of the Cemetery Basilica’s decorative program, the original German excavations discovered a mosaic floor in the nave depicting geometric designs and animals (See Figure 10).<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately, this mosaic was left unprotected and has since been destroyed, but luckily, Dragendorff’s publication preserved a photograph and the Conservation Institute of Macedonia salvaged a surviving piece in 1969.<sup>68</sup> Aleksova’s survey discovered in situ in the presbyterium an *opus sectile* pavement made of large red breccia and white marble pieces in geometric forms arranged into rosettes.<sup>69</sup> Thus, it seems the Cemetery Basilica enjoyed two separate mosaic floors, one throughout the nave and one in the presbyterium.

As stated above, the church walls are barely preserved above the foundation level and the floor level of the majority of the church is unknown. Thus, there is little reconstruction that can take place concerning the Cemetery Basilica’s elevation. Besides the chancel screen, there is no additional evidence of other divisions in the nave, such as screens placed between the columns as existed in some phases of the Episcopal Basilica. The discovery of impost blocks among the ruins of the church suggests that it may have had arcades dividing the nave and aisles rather than an architrave. The church, from the modern viewer’s perspective of the ground plan, appears haphazard and irregular. But, presumably, this would have been less obvious to those enjoying its space.

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<sup>65</sup> Snively, “Early Christian Basilicas,” 191-2; Aleksova, “Early Christian Basilicas,” 66.

<sup>66</sup> Snively, “Early Christian Basilicas,” 190-1.

<sup>67</sup> Dragendorff, “Archäologische und kunstwissenschaftliche Arbeit,” 162.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 158.

<sup>69</sup> Aleksova, “Early Christian Basilicas,” 66-7.

## *Chronology*

The Cemetery Basilica appears to have had only one major construction phase, with a second minor phase represented by repairs and additions.<sup>70</sup> Snively recognized that at some point following the original construction, the north wall of the church was rebuilt, a second concentric inner wall was inserted into the apse, and the northeast entrance was enclosed by an open porch. All three additions and repairs were constructed with similar building materials and architectural fragments, indicating that they may have occurred at the same time.<sup>71</sup> A third phase is characterized by mud mortar and stone walls which created small rooms within the west end of the nave. These walls were recorded in the 1936 excavations.<sup>72</sup> Because of their similarity to other late constructions found at Stobi, Snively argued that these represent a much later, post-abandonment phase of use.<sup>73</sup>

Due to the general lack of stratigraphy documented in the Cemetery Basilica, the dating of the church was, until the 1970s, based entirely on its architecture. According to its architectural features and location in Stobi's necropolis it was dated to the fourth and fifth centuries CE.<sup>74</sup> However, as part of the joint Yugoslav-American project, the fragment of nave mosaic salvaged by the Conservation Institute of Macedonia in 1969 was analyzed by Ruth Kolarik and Momčilo Petrovski in relation to Stobi's other mosaics.<sup>75</sup> The analysis revealed that the mosaic originally covering the nave of the Cemetery Basilica was nearly identical in design and construction material to a mosaic found in the south aisle of the Episcopal Basilica at Stobi

<sup>70</sup> This is based on the remains of the foundations. Since no more than a few centimeters of wall construction survives, this conclusion is limited.

<sup>71</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 204.

<sup>72</sup> Petrović, "U Stobima danas," 488-90; Mano-Zissi, "Berichte über die Ausgrabungen in Stobi," 593.

<sup>73</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 204-6.

<sup>74</sup> Truhelka, "Археолошке белешке," 79-80; Petrović, "U Stobima danas," 488-90; Mano-Zissi, "Berichte über die Ausgrabungen in Stobi," 593.

<sup>75</sup> Ruth Kolarik and Momčilo Petrovski, "Technical Observations on Mosaics at Stobi," in *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi, Volume 2*, ed. James Wiseman (Boston: Boston University, 1975), 65-109.

(See Figure 10).<sup>76</sup> Fortunately, the stratigraphy of the Episcopal Basilica has been examined and documented more closely and its many phases of use dated more thoroughly.<sup>77</sup> The layer consisting of the corresponding mosaic in the Episcopal Basilica has been dated to the third quarter of the fifth century or circa 450-475 CE.<sup>78</sup> The near identical mosaic forms led Kolarik and Petrovski to conclude that the mosaics were probably laid at the same time.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, the first and only major phase of the Cemetery Basilica may be dated to circa 450-475 CE as well.

There is little evidence to specify a date for the phase two repairs made to the Cemetery Basilica's north wall, the addition of the inner apse wall and the entrance porch. The incorporation of marble *spolia* into these secondary constructions may have coincided with the remodeling of the Episcopal basilica, which occurred sometime in the early sixth century CE.<sup>80</sup> This supposition is entirely hypothetical, however, so the second phase of the Cemetery Basilica can only be roughly dated between the church's construction in circa 450-475 CE and the abandonment of Stobi at the end of the sixth century CE.

To summarize, while the excavations and studies concerning the Cemetery Basilica have provided little information about its stratigraphy, the ground plan of the church can be confidently reconstructed. The Cemetery Basilica was a three-aisled basilica divided by irregular colonnades with a long, narrow narthex in the west and a semi-circular apse with an

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<sup>76</sup> They even used the exact same kinds of stones in the construction of the two mosaics, Kolarik and Petrovski, "Technical Observations," 79.

<sup>77</sup> For detailed discussion of the stratigraphy James Wiseman, "Stobi in Yugoslavian Macedonia: Archaeological Excavations and Research, 1977-78," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 5, no. 4 (1978): 395-426; Blaga Aleksova and James Wiseman, ed. *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi, Volume 3* (Titov Veles: Macedonian Review Editions, 1981); Carolyn S. Snively, "The Episcopal Basilica, the Via Sacra, and the Semicircular Court at Stobi, R. Macedonia," *Niš and Byzantium X* (2012): 185-200. For further dating based upon ceramic analysis: Virginia R. Anderson-Stojanović, *Stobi: Results of the Joint American-Yugoslav Archaeological Investigations, 1970-1981: Volume 1: The Hellenistic and Roman Pottery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014. First published in 1992).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. The corresponding mosaic in the Episcopal Basilica is associated with Phase I of the building.

<sup>79</sup> Kolarik and Petrovski, "Technical Observations," 78-9.

<sup>80</sup> Wiseman, "Stobi in Yugoslavian Macedonia," 421-4; Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 216.



inner, concentric apse in the east. The presbyterium extended west into the nave up to the eastern-most columns, divided from the nave by a chancel screen running across the width of the nave and forming a short *solea*. It included an altar centered in front of the apse and two lateral *synthronoi* in the northeast and southeast corners. The church was constructed circa 450-475 CE and subsequently repaired. This ground plan reflects a church that is equipped for the regular performance of the liturgy and which is comparable to the city's Episcopal Basilica. It also reflects specific features which are unique and directly related to the church's context.

## Chapter 3: The Cemetery Basilica in Context

Now that I have examined what we know about the Cemetery Basilica we can turn to how it relates to the city of Stobi. If we view the Cemetery Basilica in context, two things stand out: its location within the western necropolis of Stobi and its shared presbyterium arrangement, in particular the inner apse wall, with the Episcopal Basilica. By examining these two relationships, it will become clear that there is much more to say about the Cemetery Basilica.

### **The Western Cemetery**

The first and most pressing relationship between the Cemetery Basilica and Stobi concerns the church's location in the city's western necropolis, known as the Western Cemetery. How do the graves found in the church relate to the church itself? How does the church relate to the wider context of the Western Cemetery?

### ***The Church-Cemetery Relationships***

To begin, Snively identified forty-seven graves within the church, some of which had been recorded in the previous excavations, and some of which had been revealed by subsequent looting (See Figure 8).<sup>81</sup> But what was the relationship between the church and these graves? Of the forty-seven graves, Snively recognized that at least fifteen predate the church.<sup>82</sup> This is evident if one examines the church's multiple architectural irregularities. First, the south wall of the church curves inward. Second, the columns are asymmetrically arranged and do not sit upon a continuous foundation wall and stylobate, but instead upon individual piers. Third, the colonnades, while relatively parallel to each other, do not run parallel to the exterior walls of the church. This results in the apse being centered between the colonnades, rather than along

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<sup>81</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 195. Aleksova found the situation to have deteriorated in 1982, she could no longer locate all of the graves previously identified, "Early Christian Basilicas," 67.

<sup>82</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 197-8.

the eastern wall, and creates aisles which are narrower at one end and wider at the other. Fourth, the narthex suffers from a similar situation, where the north end is narrower than the south, including the annexes. And finally, the south wall of the narthex does not align with the south wall of the church.

Snively correctly associated each of these irregularities with the existence of a grave.<sup>83</sup> For instance, the angled position of the colonnades and their individual pier foundations are arranged in order to avoid graves in the nave. The asymmetrical width of the narthex conveniently avoids multiple graves. Where construction over a preexisting grave was unavoidable, arches were inserted into the wall to preserve access to them. In at least one instance, the entry point of a tomb was moved to accommodate the structure of the church while maintaining access to the tomb for future use. Therefore, it appears the construction of the church was actively designed to avoid the destruction of these graves.

Because of our lack of knowledge concerning the floor levels of the Cemetery Basilica, it is hard to say anything about the relationship of the remaining thirty-two graves to the church. They are dated roughly to the fourth and fifth centuries CE.<sup>84</sup> The general lack of graves in the nave may be the result of the mosaic floor, which would have prevented further burial. The nave mosaic was dated to the third quarter of the fifth century CE and this may be considered a *terminus ante quem* for the graves in the nave.<sup>85</sup> The relationship between the *opus sectile* floor in the presbyterium and the three graves located there is unknown.

The Cemetery Basilica was built above and designed to preserve preexisting burials, but how does this relate to the Western Cemetery overall? The Western Cemetery begins outside the

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<sup>83</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 197-200.

<sup>84</sup> This is based upon their form alone, since the excavators described the graves as being plundered. Petrović, "U Stobima danas," 472, 488-90; Mano-Zissi, "Berichte über die Ausgrabungen in Stobi," 593.

<sup>85</sup> Again, the dating is based upon its shared design and construction with a mosaic in the south aisle of the Episcopal Basilica, Kolarik and Petrovski, "Technical Observations," 78-9.

Porta Heraclea, extending to the terrace where the Cemetery Basilica is located. Graves continue to be found along the ancient road leading south from the Porta Heraclea for at least 900 meters.<sup>86</sup> The entire area has not been fully excavated, however significant sections were investigated as part of the joint Yugoslav-American project in the 1970s, along with multiple salvage excavations associated with roadwork projects from the 1960s to the 1990s.<sup>87</sup> The graves from the Western Cemetery, including the area immediately surrounding the Cemetery Basilica, date roughly from the early Roman era through to the late fourth and fifth centuries CE.<sup>88</sup> It appears to have been the main cemetery for the city of Stobi, based upon the sheer number of graves discovered.<sup>89</sup> It was expansive in the Roman period, but experienced an era of contraction or concentration after the fourth century CE. At this time the area surrounding the Porta Heraclea fell out use as a cemetery and houses and shops were constructed.<sup>90</sup> This shift in the concentration of the Western Cemetery may reflect a new focus of burial around the area of the Cemetery Basilica.

Thus, the Cemetery Basilica was carefully constructed upon a long preexisting cemetery and it appears as though the construction of the church coincided with a general trend towards burial further from town. The existence of churches built within cemeteries is known throughout the region of late antique Macedonia and the entire Mediterranean.<sup>91</sup> However, the careful design

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<sup>86</sup> Ivan Mikulčić, "The West Cemetery: Excavations in 1965," in *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi, Volume 1*, ed. James Wiseman (Austin: University of Texas at Austin, 1973), 61-95.

<sup>87</sup> Wiseman and Mano-Zissi, "Excavations, 1973-1974," 133-8; Al B. Wesolowsky, "Burial Customs in the West Cemetery," in *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi, Volume 1*, ed. James Wiseman (Austin: University of Texas at Austin, 1973), 97-142; Mikulčić, "The West Cemetery," 63; [Elica Nikolova] Елиса Николова, "Стоби – западна некропола – ископување 1995 година" [Stobi – The West Cemetery – 1995 excavation], *Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica* 18 (2008): 247-70.

<sup>88</sup> Mikulčić, "The West Cemetery," 92; Wesolowsky, "Burial Customs," 98.

<sup>89</sup> Mikulčić, "The West Cemetery," 62-3. Graves have also been discovered to the east and northeast of the city, but they have not been fully investigated or published. Pre-Roman burials have been located within the city walls, however, the nature and extent of the Hellenistic burials is still under investigation. Mano-Zissi, "Stratigraphic Problems," 200.

<sup>90</sup> Wiseman and Mano-Zissi, "Excavations, 1973-1974," 134-5.

<sup>91</sup> For numerous examples see Slobodan Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans: From Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) and Richard Krautheimer and Slobodan Ćurčić, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

and construction of the church in order to preserve preexisting graves at Stobi is unique. This unique design demonstrates the continued, contemporaneous use of the area as a cemetery, since elsewhere at Stobi we see the construction of homes and shops over earlier burials.<sup>92</sup> Scholars have assumed that, because of the care taken to preserve the existing graves associated with the Cemetery Basilica, these graves must be Christian and that the church was constructed for the purposes of a Christian liturgy for the dead.<sup>93</sup> However, I would like to examine these assumptions closer.

### *The Meaning of Church-Cemetery Relationships*

First, the assumption that the graves associated with the Cemetery Basilica were Christian predicates another assumption: that there was a preexisting Christian cemetery under the care of the church. However, Éric Rebillard's work on the burial and commemoration of the dead in Late Antiquity has effectively problematized these kinds of assumptions.<sup>94</sup> Rebillard demonstrated that religion was not necessarily the defining factor in burial practices at this time and that Christians and non-Christians shared cemeteries.<sup>95</sup> Additionally, he showed how tombs were protected by both civil and religious law and that while the church sometimes took on the civil duty of burying the poor, it did not claim authority over the burial practices of anyone.<sup>96</sup> At this time, the family remained the primary authority on matters of burial.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, it should not necessarily be assumed that the graves associated with Cemetery Basilica were exclusively Christian and that they constituted a preexisting Christian cemetery. The church had the duty to preserve the preexisting graves regardless of the religious identity

<sup>92</sup> Wiseman and Mano-Zissi, "Excavations, 1973-1974," 134-5.

<sup>93</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 203; Blaga Aleksova, *Loca Sanctorum Macedoniae*, 143-5.

<sup>94</sup> Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead*.

<sup>95</sup> Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 16-36. See also: Mark Johnson, "Pagan-Christian Burial Practices of the Fourth Century: Shared Tombs?" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5, no. 1 (1997): 37-59.

<sup>96</sup> Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 58-88 and 100-22.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 100.

of their inhabitants. Furthermore, it is more likely that exclusively Christian burials followed the construction and consecration of the church.

The assumption that the church was built for specifically Christian memorial services is also problematic, since Rebillard also demonstrated that there was no fixed or uniform Christian ritual or liturgy for the dead at this time.<sup>98</sup> As with the location of burial, traditional practices coexisted with Christian ones, such as prayer, celebration of the Eucharist, and the presence of clergy.<sup>99</sup> In fact, the church tolerated a variety of individual practices at this time, since it did not want to appear as though it was asking people to neglect their dead.<sup>100</sup> Thus, just as we should not automatically draw a straight line from a cemetery church to a preexisting Christian cemetery, we should also not assume that a Christian liturgy for the dead inherently follows a cemetery church. This conclusion raises the question of function: if there were no formal Christian rituals surrounding death, then why would there need to be a fully equipped church in the cemetery?

The established model for cemetery churches dictates that they are constructed upon or nearby a martyr's or saint's burial; this is their reason for existing.<sup>101</sup> Their purpose is connected to promoting the cult of a martyr or saint. Rome offers the standard examples, but there are examples from nearby Thessaloniki and Salona as well.<sup>102</sup> In line with this thinking and in addition to the other assumptions discussed above, scholars have presumed that the Cemetery Basilica also included a martyr's burial.<sup>103</sup> Early scholars considered the large tomb at the south end of the church's narthex a martyrium.<sup>104</sup> However, Snively was the first to question this

<sup>98</sup> Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 123-75.

<sup>99</sup> Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 123-75.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 174-5.

<sup>101</sup> Yasin, "Reassessing Salona's Churches," 63-9; Richard Krautheimer, "Mensa-Coemeterium-Martyrium," *Cahiers Archéologique* 11 (1960): 15-40; André Grabar, "From the Martyrium to the Church: Christian Architecture, East and West," *Archaeology* 2 (1949): 95-104.

<sup>102</sup> Yasin, "Reassessing Salona's Churches," 59-69; Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans*, 102-3; 128-9.

<sup>103</sup> Aleksova, *Loca Sanctorum Macedoniae*, 144.

<sup>104</sup> Truhelka, "Археолошке белешке," 79; Petrov, "Revidirana osnova," 171.

assumption, arguing convincingly that the tomb was not a martyr's based on comparison with other family tombs and martyria.<sup>105</sup> The arrangement of the tomb with three *arcosolia* indicates a family tomb and there is not the clustering of graves around the tomb which often accompanies the burial of martyrs.

Therefore, the Cemetery Basilica does not appear to have been constructed in association with the burial or cult of a martyr or saint. The large tomb was more likely constructed for a wealthy Christian citizen of Stobi, possibly a bishop. This is indicated by the gold cross painted upon its walls, which Petrović recorded.<sup>106</sup> That wealthy or high status community members were buried in and around the Cemetery Basilica is also demonstrated by two inscriptions. One, found associated with a vaulted tomb in the east end of the north aisle of the church, indicates a person of high rank.<sup>107</sup> While another, found near the church, states that an archdeacon named Theophilos was buried there.<sup>108</sup> Thus, it appears that the Cemetery Basilica's construction did not follow the cult of a martyr, but instead followed the wishes of the local community, both laypersons and members of the church.

By examining the Cemetery Basilica's relationship to the West Cemetery I have highlighted that the church was constructed upon a long-existing necropolis and designed in order to preserve preexisting graves at a time when burials at Stobi were shifting away from the city walls towards the terrace where the church is situated. These relationships have spurred unexamined conclusions about the Cemetery Basilica: that it was built in association with a martyr's burial in a preexisting Christian cemetery for the purpose of a Christian liturgy for the dead. However, much recent work on the commemoration of the dead in Late Antiquity

<sup>105</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 201-2.

<sup>106</sup> Petrović, "U Stobima danas," 490.

<sup>107</sup> Petrović recorded only the words "Ιουστινιανου," "πρεπεστατος," and "μαιου" in "U Stobima danas," 489-90.

<sup>108</sup> Number 281, reads: "α + ω Ἐνθά(δε) κῆτε Θε-όφιλος Ζ(ω)-πύρου ἀρχιδ(ιάκονος). Ἀγ(ιος) ὁ Θε(ός)ς" in Denis Feissel, "Stobi," in *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de Macédoine du IIIe au VIe siècle*, Bulletin de correspondance hellénique. Supplément 8 (Athens: École Française d'Athènes, 1983), 228-35.

problematizes these conclusions and there is no evidence to support the inclusion of a martyr's burial at the church. Instead, we find indications that the Cemetery Basilica served the needs or wishes of the local community at Stobi.

### **The Episcopal Basilica**

The second relationship between the Cemetery Basilica and Stobi concerns the Episcopal Basilica. As mentioned previously, the two churches share a nearly identical floor mosaic: one version in the nave of the Cemetery Basilica and the other in the south aisle of the Episcopal Basilica (See Figure 10).<sup>109</sup> In addition to this connection we may add their spatial proximity. The Episcopal Basilica was constructed on the road, named by excavators as the Via Sacra, which runs southwest through the Porta Heraclea and directly towards the Cemetery Basilica (See Figure 4). But the most interesting connection between the two churches is their inner concentric apse walls. This unique feature is also found in Stobi's other two extramural basilicas: the Palikura Basilica and the Extra Muros Basilica.<sup>110</sup> What does it mean that Stobi's extramural churches shared such a feature with the Episcopal Basilica? And what else can this reveal about the Cemetery Basilica in particular?

### ***The Apse-Presbyterium Arrangements***

First, we must consider the function of this feature and how it relates to the construction of each of the churches. In the Episcopal Basilica, the inner apse wall was built as part of the church's third main phase, circa 450-475 CE. At this time the existing church was dismantled and a four meter high artificial terrace erected, then a new, larger basilica was constructed

<sup>109</sup> Kolarik and Petrovski, "Technical Observations," 78-9.

<sup>110</sup> The excavation of the Extra Muros Basilica has not been published and it is only briefly described under the name "Basilica behind the viaduct" in Mikulčić, *Stobi: An Ancient City*, 142-3. Mikulčić seems to imply the inner apse wall is a later construction related to a later medieval chapel built in the church's east end, but without any information on the original excavations it is not possible to know if this is built upon earlier foundations. Therefore the details of the Extra Muros Basilica's apse construction cannot be compared to the other churches except superficially.



above (See Figure 11).<sup>111</sup> As it has been reconstructed, the inner wall reflects two floor levels in the apse (See Figure 12).<sup>112</sup> First, approximately 1.75 meters below the presbyterium floor level was what Snively has called a “sunken apsidal area.”<sup>113</sup> This consisted of a one meter wide corridor running around the inner apse wall which enclosed the apse space. The wall included two niches and an opening punctuated with three columns in the east, while in the west a central niche was accompanied on both sides by openings. Scholars have posited the existence of a grave or reliquary in the enclosed space.<sup>114</sup> The original excavators found a skull and later scholars inferred a martyr’s grave, however, later excavations only found two pier foundations with a trench dug between them. It is unclear in what stratigraphic context the skull was found and whether the trench is the result of previous excavations or not.

The second level of the apse has not been preserved, but has been hypothetically reconstructed as a stepped, semicircular *synthronos* 1.25 meters above the presbyterium floor. This apse arrangement was complemented in the presbyterium by a small altar and two lateral *synthronoi*. A corridor was left between the *synthronoi* and the north and south stylobates allowing access to the apse. A chancel screen with short, central *solea* delineated the presbyterium in the west, but did not run the entire width of the nave, instead it allowed for access to the corridor running behind the *synthronoi*. This corridor could also be accessed from the north and south aisles by gaps in the stylobates. Snively posited that access between the different floor levels in the presbyterium and the apse could have been facilitated by two short staircases (See Figure 13).<sup>115</sup> In short, the Episcopal Basilica enjoyed an elaborated eastern end with a two story

<sup>111</sup> Wiseman, “Stobi in Yugoslavian Macedonia,” 395-426.

<sup>112</sup> For discussion of the reconstruction: Snively, “Early Christian Basilicas,” 84-181; Aleksova, “Early Christian Basilicas,” 14-38. Original excavations reported in Rudolf Egger, “Die Städtische kirche von Stobi,” *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts* (1929): 42-87.

<sup>113</sup> Snively, “Early Christian Basilicas,” 125.

<sup>114</sup> Snively discusses this issue at length, “Early Christian Basilicas,” 170.

<sup>115</sup> Snively, “Early Christian Basilicas,” 126-8. Egger’s original excavation uncovered dirt ramps, but he remarked that they covered the remains of frescoes on the corridor walls and therefore were probably not the original means of access. Egger, “Die Städtische kirche,” 42-87.

apsidal space, where the second concentric apse wall formed the basis of an accessible area probably containing relics.

In the Palikura Basilica, located two kilometers south of Stobi and also along the ancient road running from the Porta Heraclea, an inner concentric apse wall fills the apse but does not fully enclose the space (See Figure 14).<sup>116</sup> There is no western wall running straight across the width of the apse, instead the wall forms an open semicircle. A large altar sits centered immediately in front of the apse with a small arched space in its eastern side.<sup>117</sup> Two *synthronoi* are tucked into the northeast and southeast corners of the presbyterium where the walls of the eastern *antae* meet the exterior apse wall. This arrangement does not allow for any access to the corridor between the two apse walls. Instead, the lateral *synthronoi* continue uninterrupted into the apse space using the inner wall as a base.<sup>118</sup> The presbyterium of the Palikura Basilica extended deep into the nave, terminated by a chancel screen running the entire width of the nave and forming a short *solea* in the center. The Palikura Basilica only had one phase of construction dated around the end of the fifth century or the beginning of the sixth century CE.<sup>119</sup> Its inner apse wall does not seem to indicate multiple floors or any accessible underground space, only a continuous *synthronos*.

In the Cemetery Basilica the apse solution is similar to the Palikura Basilica, although the situation is less clear (See Figures 8 and 9). Again there is no western wall running straight

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<sup>116</sup> This church was originally excavated during WWI and reported on in Hald, *Auf den Trümmern Stobis*, 29-41 and Dragendorff, “Archäologische und kunstwissenschaftliche Arbeit,” 161-2. Further excavations by Aleksova in 1981 reported in “Early Christian Basilicas,” 70-81 and “Стоби: Паликура Базилика” [Stobi: Palikura Basilica], *Godišen zbornik na Filozofski fakultet vo Skopje* 10 (1983): 135-92. Snively discusses its form in “Early Christian Basilicas,” 217-42.

<sup>117</sup> Aleksova was the first to reveal the presbyterium and apse arrangements, “Early Christian Basilicas,” 73-5.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>119</sup> Due to some inconsistencies in the original excavation publication, there is some confusion concerning the phases of the Palikura Basilica. Based on Hald’s plan Snively interpreted two phases in the presbyterium, but Aleksova’s excavations did not confirm this. Therefore, only one phase is supported by the evidence and it is dated based on architectural sculpture. [Ivanka Nikolajević-Stojković] Иванка Николајевић-Стојковић, *Рановизантијска архитектонска декоративна пластика у Македонији Србији и Српској Гори* [Early Byzantine Decorative Architectural Sculpture in Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro] (Belgrade, 1957).

across the width of the apse, instead the inner apse wall forms an open semicircle. Snively describes it as preserved in situ up to the presumed floor level of the presbyterium.<sup>120</sup> She also associates it with the church's second phase repairs, which have only a *terminus post quem* of circa 450-475 CE. Aleksova sees it as the foundation for a semicircular *synthronos* within the apse, as she observed at the Palikura Basilica.<sup>121</sup> The corridor between the two apse walls was excavated to the level of the graves found there, but we have no information beyond that the two graves discovered were "cist graves."<sup>122</sup> Like the Palikura Basilica, an altar is situated immediately in front of the apse and *synthronoi* are tucked into the northeast and southeast corners of the presbyterium. However, because the eastern *antae* of the Cemetery Basilica are offset to the north and south and do not run continuously from the exterior apse wall, the *synthronoi* do not completely block access to the corridor between the two apse walls. The presbyterium is also terminated by a chancel screen running the width of the nave and forming a short *solea*, although it is not as deep as at the Palikura and Episcopal basilicas. While the Cemetery Basilica's presbyterium is nearly identical to the Palikura Basilica's in plan, its inner apse wall reflects a secondary construction and access to the corridor between the apse walls was theoretically possible, although the floor levels in the apse are unknown.

### ***The Meaning of Shared Apse-Presbyterium Arrangements***

The similarities between the apse arrangements of these three churches have been noted before and studies have compared the general apse forms of Late Antique Macedonia, but this is the first detailed comparison.<sup>123</sup> When viewed together, I find the three apse arrangements and

<sup>120</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 192.

<sup>121</sup> Aleksova, "Early Christian Basilicas," 66.

<sup>122</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 202; Petrović, "U Stobima danas," 490.

<sup>123</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 205 and Aleksova, "Early Christian Basilicas," 74-5. Snively has also briefly compared the Episcopal Basilica's apse arrangement to those known at Thessaloniki, "Apsidal Crypts in Macedonia: Possible Places of Pilgrimage," in *Akten des XII. Internationalen Kongresses für christliche Archäologie (Bonn 22.-28. September 1991)*, *Jahrbuch für antike und christentum Ergänzungsband* 20, no. 2 (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1995), 1179-84. For comparisons of architectural forms from

presbyteria demonstrate similarities in plan, but differences in possible function. The Episcopal Basilica was the most elaborate and clearly designed so that there could be access to the sunken apsidal area without disturbing the presbyterium. In the Palikura and Cemetery basilicas there is little evidence to suggest the apse contained multiple, accessible floor levels. At the Palikura Basilica a continuous *synthronos* filled the apse and a niche for relics in the east side of the altar would have been visible to those seated there. The Cemetery Basilica exhibits a possible combination of the other two churches' apse solutions. The corridor between the apse walls was theoretically accessible, allowing continued access to the preexisting graves located there. However access required entering the presbyterium, and was therefore probably limited. The surviving evidence at the Cemetery Basilica neither excludes nor necessitates the existence of a *synthronos* in the apse. Thus, it seems the same concept, an inner apse wall, facilitated multiple solutions and was appropriated for different needs: a separate space for the veneration of relics, a support structure for a semicircular *synthronos*, and a possible continued access point for preexisting graves.

While relatively rare, internal apse features do occur elsewhere. In fact, the construction of a subterranean corridor in the apse, known as a *kyklion* (κύκλιον), can be found in other churches in the region. For instance, at the Third September Street basilica in Thessaloniki and two churches at Golemo Gradište at Konjuh.<sup>124</sup> Additionally some other examples are known on Cyprus at the basilica of Campanopetra at Salamis/Constantia and the basilica of Saint

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churches in Macedonia, see Filipova, "Influence of Eastern and Western Architectural Models," 425-30 and Ochał-Czarnowicz, "Between East and West," 189-206.

<sup>124</sup> For the Third September Street basilica, [E. Marki-Angelkou] E. Μαρκή-Αγγέλκου, "Το σταυρικό μαρτύριο και οι χριστιανικοί τάφοι της οδού Γ' Σεπτεμβρίου στη Θεσσαλονίκη," *Archaiologikē ephēmeris* (1981): 53-69 and [Despina Makropoulou] Δέσποινα Μακροπούλου, "Ο παλαιοχριστιανικός ναός έξω από τα ανατολικά τείχη της Θεσσαλονίκης," *Makedonika* 23 (1983): 25-46. Snively briefly compares this church to the Episcopal Basilica of Stobi in "Apsidal Crypts in Macedonia," 1179-84. For Konjuh, Carolyn S. Snively, "Archaeological Investigation at Konjuh, Republic of Macedonia, in 2000," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002): 297-306 and "Golemo Gradište at Konjuh: The Basilica, 2009," Project Grant 2009–2010 Report, *Dumbarton Oaks*, last accessed 4 May 2018, <http://www.doaks.org/research/support-for-research/project-grants/reports/2009-2010/snively>.

Auxibius at Soloi.<sup>125</sup> The Cypriot churches date to the sixth century CE, while those of Thessaloniki and Konjuh are roughly contemporaneous with the churches at Stobi, i.e. late fifth century CE.<sup>126</sup> In general, the function of the *kyklion* does not seem well-understood or fixed.<sup>127</sup> In the examples cited, the exact form and proposed function varies, just as at Stobi.

The fact that the same apse solution was used in the Episcopal, Cemetery, and Palikura basilicas, albeit in different ways, indicates a direct relationship. This relationship could be the result of local builders and craftsmen shared between the churches. However, this apse arrangement is not just a structural phenomenon. It has a direct impact on the liturgical function of the churches and it is part of a larger presbyterium design in which all three churches demonstrate a similar division of church space. The existence of *synthronoi* in all three churches allows for the presence of numerous clergy and facilitates the presence of a bishop. This is in contrast to the other churches at Stobi, the North Basilica and the Central or Synagogue Basilica, which do not share these features despite being contemporaneous. The Central Basilica included an underground reliquary crypt and a short presbyterium divided from the nave by a chancel screen, but did not include any *synthronoi*.<sup>128</sup> At the North Basilica there was no indication of any liturgical furniture or architectural division of space, although the church did include a quatrefoil baptistery.<sup>129</sup>

These differing liturgical patterns support a direct relationship between the Episcopal, Palikura, and Cemetery basilicas. This idea is further supported by the use of the same mosaic decoration

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<sup>125</sup> Doria Nicolaou, "Liturgical Structures of the Early Christian Basilicas of Cyprus: A Spatial Analysis," in *Church Building in Cyprus (Fourth to Seventh Centuries): A Mirror of Intercultural Contacts in the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Marietta Horster, Doria Nicolaou, and Sabine Rogge (Münster: Waxmann, 2018), 119-52.

<sup>126</sup> Nicolaou, "Liturgical Structures," 138-41; Makropoulou, "Ο παλαιοχριστιανικός ναός," 25-46; Snively, "Golemo Gradište at Konjuh," <http://www.doaks.org/research/support-for-research/project-grants/reports/2009-2010/snively>.

<sup>127</sup> Some cite the *kyklion* as originating in structural requirements then being adapted for liturgical use, E. Kourkoutidou-Nikolaïdou and A. Tourta, *Wandering in Byzantine Thessaloniki* (Athens: Kapon Editions, 1997).

<sup>128</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 48-83 and Aleksova, "Early Christian Basilicas," 53-60.

<sup>129</sup> Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 20-47 and Aleksova, "Early Christian Basilicas," 39-50.

in the Cemetery and Episcopal basilicas. Moreover, all three churches are located along the same road running south towards Heraclea Lyncestis. While the dating of the Cemetery, Palikura, and Episcopal basilicas is too close and too relative to determine any kind of sequence, I believe this shared apse feature is evidence for a direct relationship. What this relationship means exactly is still open for debate. It could represent a shared Episcopal patronage between the three churches or it could simply reflect the same community fulfilling different needs with the same liturgical arrangements.

## Conclusions

Refocusing on the Cemetery Basilica, its relationships have revealed a church constructed in a preexisting cemetery, designed to preserve existing graves, for the benefit of the local community of Stobi without any known association to a martyr's burial. Additionally, the Cemetery Basilica's shared apse and presbyteria arrangements with the Episcopal and Palikura basilicas suggests a direct relationship between the churches. Taken together, these relationships between the Cemetery Basilica and its context highlight the role of the city of Stobi and the needs of its citizens in the extramural landscape. These relationships also spotlight the question of function: why would one need or want to build a fully functioning church in the cemetery?

In this regard, the Cemetery Basilica offers an alternate example of what is expected from a cemetery church. It problematizes the idea that the existence of a martyr's cult and the desire for *ad sanctos* burial is what dictates the construction of a church in the cemetery. But, the existence of a liturgically functional church in the cemetery does suggest the local community wanted to commemorate some individuals, even if they were not known saints or martyrs. Éric Rebillard has argued that no formal Christian liturgy existed for this purpose at this time, but he has also acknowledged a distinction between the authority of the church as an ecclesiastical

institution and the expectations of the lay people.<sup>130</sup> The decision at Stobi to place and carefully construct a church in a contemporaneous cemetery indicates a community-led desire for some kind of Christian commemoration regardless of its official approval. In this sense, Ann Marie Yasin has argued that cemetery churches could be social, community-defined spaces, where there was “a conflation of ecclesiastical space and physical memorials commemorating the dead,” which served to promote a community identity.<sup>131</sup> Therefore, the Cemetery Basilica presents a possible example of a church where a cult emerged based on the needs of the community to commemorate their own, including both laypersons and members of the church.

The evidence for the Cemetery Basilica at Stobi, especially when viewed in context, complicates current assumptions and reflects the complexity of the church’s relationship with society at this time, especially concerning the commemoration of the dead. It also provides an example of an extramural church and its complex intra- and extramural relationships which can be compared to examples elsewhere in the region in the next chapter.

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<sup>130</sup> Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 139.

<sup>131</sup> Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces*, 70.

## Chapter 4: Extramural Churches in Context

As an example, the Cemetery Basilica at Stobi highlights the possible relationships between an extramural church and its city, in particular those between a church, its city's cemetery, and its episcopal church. These relationships complicate some of the predominate narratives about extramural churches and raise questions about the nature of extramural development. How do extramural churches relate to their surrounding cemeteries? How do they relate to their respective episcopal churches? Is the example at Stobi unique or does it follow any recognizable pattern in the region? In order to explore these questions, I will briefly compare the relationships exhibited at Stobi to those found elsewhere in the late antique province of Macedonia. This comparison will not be exhaustive, but hopes to examine more closely the context of some extramural churches in the region, thereby exploring their role in the landscape and suggesting future directions for research.

There is a remarkable number of known extramural churches in the late antique province of Macedonia.<sup>132</sup> Most of these churches are assumed to have had a funerary purpose, but frequently the nature of the relationship between the church and cemetery is taken for granted. In fact, there are important distinctions to be made, such as: is the church built on a preexisting cemetery or simply in an area adjacent to the cemetery? Or does the development of the cemetery postdate the construction of the church?

At Stobi, the Cemetery Basilica is not only built within an area long established as a cemetery, but upon preexisting graves. While the decision at Stobi to design the church in order to preserve these graves is unique, there are other examples of churches built on preexisting

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<sup>132</sup> Snively surveyed some of them in "Churches and Cemeteries," 62-7. Others have also been noted in broader architectural studies, such as Filipova, "Influence of Eastern and Western Architectural Models," 425-30 and Ochał-Czarnowicz, "Between East and West," 189-206.



graves in late antique Macedonia.<sup>133</sup> For instance, the first extramural church found at Philippi and the Cemetery Basilica at Dion were both constructed over preexisting graves.<sup>134</sup> At Stobi, at least fifteen of the forty-seven known burials within the Cemetery Basilica predate the church and the cemetery itself was in use from early Roman period through to the sixth century CE.<sup>135</sup> At Philippi, most of the known graves are contemporary or postdate the church, but the church exists within the larger context of a cemetery in use from the Roman period through the ninth century CE.<sup>136</sup> At Dion, there is at least one preexisting grave and the church was built at the eastern edge of a cemetery in use from the Roman period.<sup>137</sup>

Elsewhere, at Heraclea Lyncestis, an extramural church was built in the area of a preexisting necropolis dating from the late fourth century CE, but not directly upon any graves. Burials then continued in and around the church into the early medieval period.<sup>138</sup> At Bargala, there is an extramural church which is as of yet not associated with any cemetery context, but which is situated next to a single tomb.<sup>139</sup> At Thessaloniki, the eastern end of an extramural church was uncovered during road works. Known as the Third September Street Basilica, it sits just north of an earlier martyrium and both buildings are surrounded by contemporaneous and later tombs.<sup>140</sup> To compare, at Stobi, Philippi, Dion, and Heraclea Lyncestis, the extramural

<sup>133</sup> There are two other extramural churches known at Stobi, but our knowledge of them and their relationships is too fragmentary and/or unpublished to allow for any comparison.

<sup>134</sup> [Stylianios Pelekanides] Στυλιανός Πελεκανίδης, “Ἡ ἐξω τῶν τειχῶν παλαιοχριστιανικὴ βασιλικὴ τῶν Φιλίππων,” *Archaiologikḗ ephēmeris* (1955): 114-79. [A. Mentzos] Α. Μέντζος, “Ἡ κοιμητηριακὴ ἢ ἐξω τῶν τειχῶν Βασιλικὴ τοῦ Δίου,” *To archaiologiko ergo stē Makedonia kai Thrakē* 4 (1990): 231-40 and “Ἡ κοιμητηριακὴ βασιλικὴ τοῦ Δίου. Τα προσκτίσματα,” *To archaiologiko ergo stē Makedonia kai Thrakē* 6 (1992): 235-43.

<sup>135</sup> Snively, “Early Christian Basilicas,” 195; Mikulčić, “The West Cemetery,” 92; Wesolowsky, “Burial Customs,” 98.

<sup>136</sup> Hattersley-Smith, *Byzantine Public Architecture*, 80-1.

<sup>137</sup> Mentzos, “Ἡ κοιμητηριακὴ βασιλική,” 235-43.

<sup>138</sup> [Elica Maneva] Елица Манева, “Резултати од заштитните ископувања extra muros во Хераклеја” [The Results of the Protective Excavations Extra Muros in Heraclea], *Macedoniae Acta Archaeologica* 7-8 (1987): 125-42 and “Heraclea Lyncestis – Basilica ‘Extra Muros,’ Early Christian and Slavic Cemetery,” *Archeološki Pregled* 26 (1985-6): 139-40.

<sup>139</sup> The dating of both buildings is too broad and relative to determine any chronological relationship, Trajche Nacev, *Bargala: The most significant values of the cultural and natural heritage* (Skopje: Cultural Heritage Protection Office, 2016).

<sup>140</sup> [E. Marki-Angelkou] Ε. Μαρκή-Αγγέλκου, “Το σταυρικό μαρτύριο και οι χριστιανικοί τάφοι της οδού Γ' Σεπτεμβρίου στη Θεσσαλονίκη,” *Archaiologikḗ ephēmeris* (1981): 53-69 and [Despina Makropoulou] Δέσποινα

churches are built in the general vicinity of long preexisting cemeteries, even if they are not all constructed directly upon burials. While at Thessaloniki there is an earlier martyrium, and even at Bargala there is a nearby tomb. This comparison suggests a general correlation between extramural churches and preexisting cemeteries.

Interestingly, some of these churches were part of larger, long-term extramural developments. At Heraclea Lyncestis, the extramural church is situated near the remains of a Roman villa dating to the third to early fourth centuries CE and a suburb dating to the late fourth century CE.<sup>141</sup> The suburb was then used as a cemetery, with graves being built over the previous buildings' foundations at the end of the fourth century CE. However, the adjacent extramural church is dated roughly to the early sixth century CE based upon mosaic and fresco fragments found in the presbyterium.<sup>142</sup> At Philippi, a second extramural church was found approximately 400 meters south of the first alongside an underground complex of tombs upon which the remains of a building were found. The church has only been partially excavated, but contained at least one burial which had been inserted into the floor and included a mosaic epitaph.<sup>143</sup> The church has a *terminus post quem* in the late fourth-early fifth century CE, while the buildings and underground complex are broadly dated between the fourth and seventh centuries CE.<sup>144</sup> The first extramural church has been dated to the mid-fifth century CE.<sup>145</sup> Therefore, at Heraclea Lyncestis and Philippi, the evidence indicates a more complicated picture of long-term development in the area outside the city walls. At Heraclea Lyncestis, the area was residential and industrial before being used as cemetery and then becoming home to a church,

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Μακροπούλου, “Ο παλαιοχριστιανικός ναός έξω από τα ανατολικά τείχη της Θεσσαλονίκης,” *Makedonika* 23 (1983): 25-46.

<sup>141</sup> Maneva, “Heraclea Lyncestis,” 139-40.

<sup>142</sup> Maneva, ““Ресултати,” 141-2.

<sup>143</sup> Hattersley-Smith, *Byzantine Public Architecture*, 82-3.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. Both dates are based upon coin finds.

<sup>145</sup> This is a revised dating, for discussion see Ibid, 81.

while at Philippi there appears to have been an extensive infrastructure in the necropolis, including two churches.

The examples discussed indicate a variety of relationships between extramural churches and nearby burials. Although, regardless of whether the extramural church was built over preexisting graves or not, it appears the majority of these churches were associated with local cemeteries, most of which had already been in use for generations. Indeed, the context for these extramural churches was not limited to the burials in their immediate surroundings. Instead, as exhibited at Philippi and Heraclea Lyncestis, they could be part of larger, long-term extramural developments. Of all the examples discussed so far, only the Third September Street Basilica at Thessaloniki is associated with a martyr and constructed alongside a martyrium. In fact, while it has been assumed that the extramural churches at Stobi, Heraclea Lyncestis, and Bargala had an association with a martyr, there is no evidence for such an association.<sup>146</sup> However, there was definitely an association between burial and ecclesiastical architecture.

At Stobi we see indications of a relationship between the extramural churches and the intramural Episcopal Basilica. How does this compare to the examples already discussed? In the cities where an episcopal church has been identified there does not appear to be any parallel examples to Stobi. None of the churches have any particular features or liturgical patterns which might indicate a direct relationship. However, the extramural churches at Philippi and Dion both feature evidence for a presbyterium equipped for the regular liturgy. At Philippi, the first extramural church included a chancel screen and a semicircular *synthronos* in the apse.<sup>147</sup> While at Dion, the presbyterium was arranged similarly to the churches at Stobi, with an altar centered in front of the apse, lateral *synthronoi* tucked in the northeast and southeast corners of

<sup>146</sup> Aleksova, *Loca Sanctorum Macedoniae*, 143-5, 166, 239.

<sup>147</sup> The arrangement of the presbyterium was not preserved, only fragments of the chancel screen and *synthronos*, Pelekanides, “Ἡ ἔξω τῶν τειχῶν παλαιοχριστιανικὴ βασιλική,” 115-21.

presbyterium, a semicircular *synthronos* in the apse, and a Π-shaped chancel screen with short, central *solea* demarcating the space in the west.<sup>148</sup> Although the extramural churches at Philippi and Dion do not necessarily match their respective episcopal churches in form, their presbyteria include elements typical to episcopal churches, such as *synthronoi*. Additionally, as at Stobi, the burials associated with the first extramural church found at Philippi included multiple inscriptions which show priests as well as laypeople were buried there.<sup>149</sup> Unfortunately the evidence from the other examples do not allow for the reconstruction of their presbyteria arrangements.

This survey, while not exhaustive, sought to explore the nature of extramural development in late antique Macedonia by comparing the relationships identified at Stobi to elsewhere in the region. There is no exact parallel to the example provided by the Cemetery Basilica at Stobi, but the small number of examples examined here do suggest that it is not entirely unique. There is an observable lack of extramural churches associated with a martyr's or saint's burial. This suggests that the community-led cult posited at Stobi may be part of a larger phenomenon and further problematizes the narrative which presumes cemetery churches follow martyr's cults. Further supporting this are the examples of Philippi and Dion, where the presbyteria arrangements, and at Philippi the inscriptions, indicate the participation of local clergy. This brief survey also confirms that these churches do represent an association between burial and ecclesiastical space. In fact, in most of the examples discussed, the churches are constructed in areas long associated with burial. However, there are a variety of specific cemetery-church relationships which reflects the complexity of this kind of extramural development. This further

<sup>148</sup> Mentzos, "Η κοιμητηριακή βασιλική," 235-43.

<sup>149</sup> Denis Feissel, "Philippi," in *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de Macédoine du III<sup>e</sup> au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Bulletin de correspondance hellénique, Supplément 8, (Athens: École Française d'Athènes, 1983), 185-211.

stresses the need for continued reexamination of these extramural churches and their relationships.

## Conclusions

In this thesis I have sought to explore the role of extramural churches in the late antique landscape through the case study of the Cemetery Basilica at Stobi, Macedonia. I began my exploration by discussing the status of the scholarship on extramural churches in Late Antiquity. I demonstrated how there is a need for more context driven research concerning these understudied churches. I also discussed my approach to these churches and my purposeful use of the term extramural as a lens which can facilitate contextual research. I then set out to answer a series of questions: how does the Cemetery Basilica relate to the city of Stobi? What relationships can be identified between it and the city of Stobi? How do these relationships compare to ones which can be identified elsewhere in the late antique province of Macedonia? Finally, what can this tell us about landscape development in the region?

Before examining the Cemetery Basilica in context I needed to reexamine our understanding of it. By revisiting and reconciling the sources on the Cemetery Basilica, I produced an updated reconstruction of the church. This reconstruction allowed me to identify two important relationships between the Cemetery Basilica and its context: its relationship with the city's Western Cemetery and Episcopal Basilica. I explored the nature of these relationships, illustrating how the Cemetery Basilica was built in a preexisting cemetery, designed to preserve existing burials, did not include a martyr's or saint's grave, and shared a distinct presbyterium arrangement with the Episcopal Basilica. Based upon these relationships, I proposed that the Cemetery Basilica could represent what Ann Marie Yasin has called "a conflation of ecclesiastical space and physical memorials commemorating the dead," which served to promote a community identity.<sup>150</sup> In this sense, the Cemetery Basilica could signify a different

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<sup>150</sup> Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces*, 70.

kind of cult development, one emerging from the needs of the community to commemorate their own, including both laypersons and members of the church.

This example of the Cemetery Basilica at Stobi reflects a more complex relationship between city and extramural church, and between the church and society, which does not fit seamlessly into the typical narrative of cemetery churches. In order to understand the wider implications of this I compared what I found at Stobi to other extramural churches in the region of late antique Macedonia. Although brief, my comparison showed that the Cemetery Basilica is not entirely unique. While there are no direct parallels to the careful design and construction of the Cemetery Basilica at Stobi, the majority of the region's extramural churches are built in or adjacent to long preexisting cemeteries. Additionally, only one of the churches examined had any indication of a martyr's or saint's cult. This indicates an association between burials and extramural churches in the region which is not dictated by the existence of martyrs' or saints' cults, but instead by the needs of the community to commemorate their own, including both laypersons and members of the church.

Ultimately, my exploration of the role of extramural churches in the late antique landscape has highlighted these understudied buildings and revealed the importance of understanding them in context. When viewed in context, they point towards a more nuanced understanding of the development of the late antique landscape, especially with regards to Christian commemoration of the dead and how it relates to ecclesiastical space. My case study and comparison have also demonstrated the need to continue examining extramural churches in context, in particular their relationships to cemeteries and individual graves. In the future, a comprehensive and context driven study of extramural churches throughout the region or even the entire Mediterranean could continue to question traditional models of extramural church development and contribute to a more complex understanding of Christian commemoration of the dead. Furthermore, a

future comprehensive study of extramural churches could also contribute greatly to our knowledge of the transformation processes occurring throughout Late Antiquity by providing a new perspective on the landscape.



## Figures



Figure 4: Map of excavated Stobi.

(James Wiseman and Djordje Mano-Zissi, "Stobi: A City of Ancient Macedonia," *Journal of Field Archaeology* 3, no. 1 (1976): 272-3)

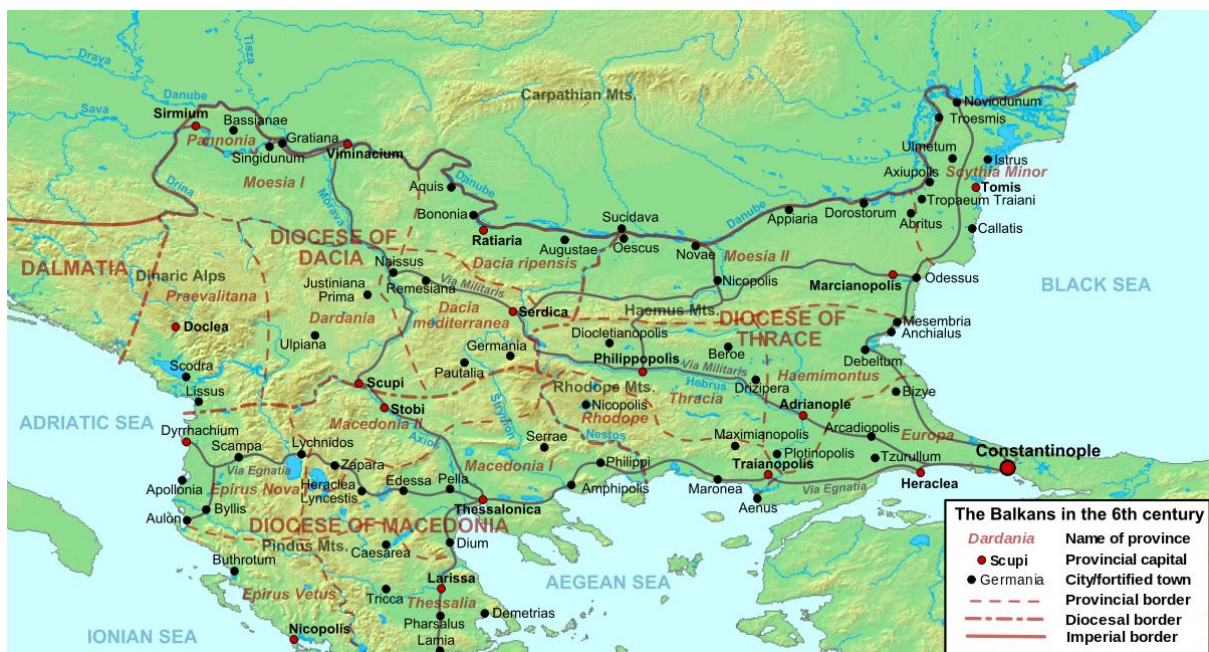
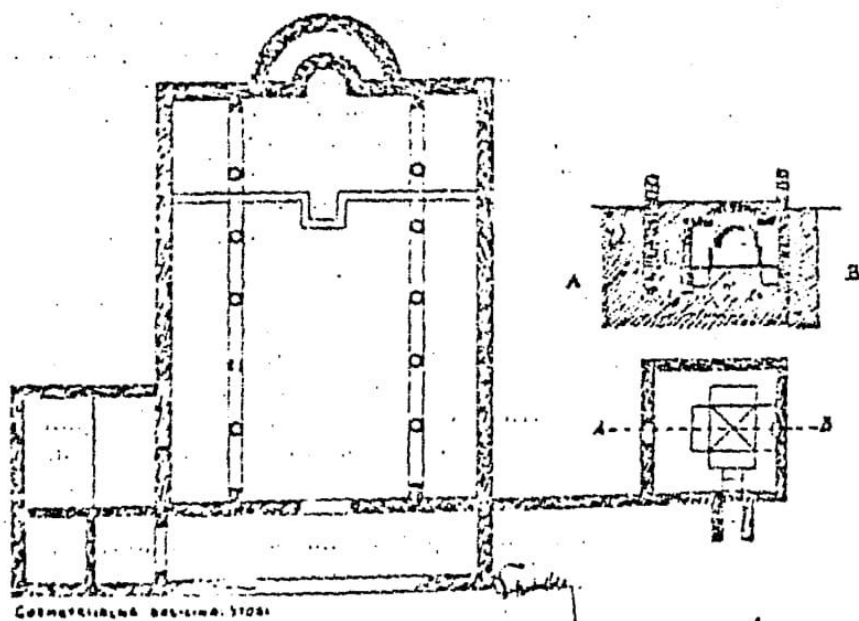


Figure 5: Regional map of the Balkans.

(By Cplakidas CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9614051>)



Сл. 5. Гробљанска базилика у Стобима са меморијом.

Figure 6: Truhelka's 1928 plan of the Cemetery Basilica

(Truhelka, "Археолошке белешке," 78)

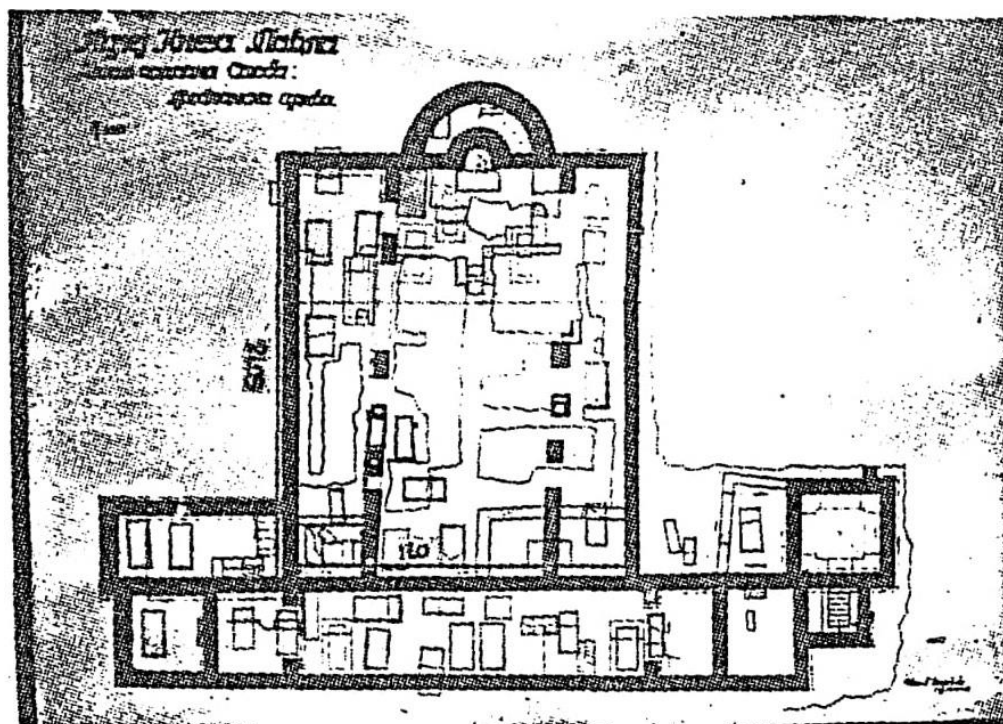


Figure 7: The 1936 plan of the Cemetery Basilica.

(Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 379)

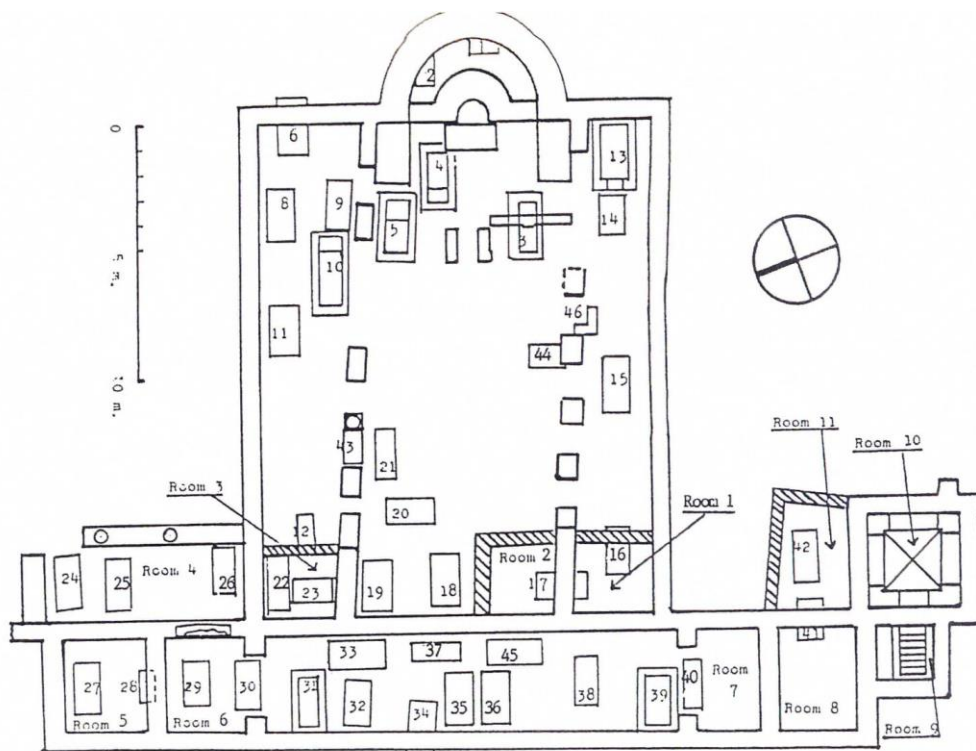


Figure 8: Snively's plan of the Cemetery Basilica.

(Snively, "Churches and Cemeteries," 71)

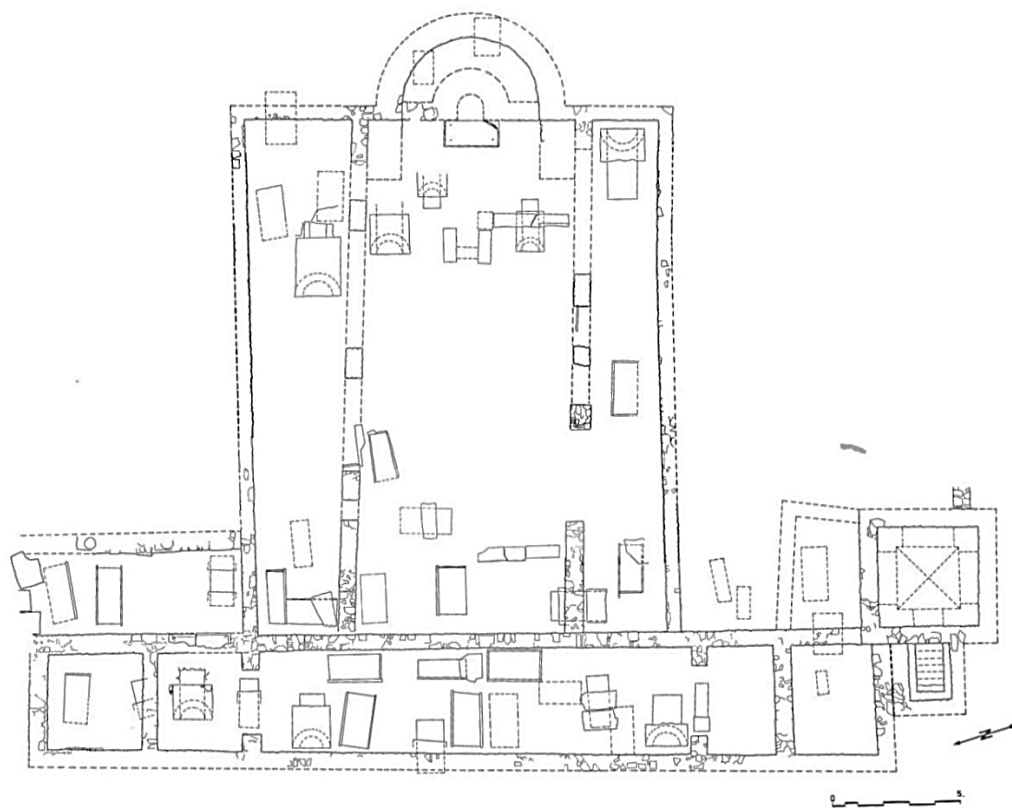


Figure 9: Aleksova's plan of the Cemetery Basilica.

(Aleksova, "Early Christian Basilicas," 62)



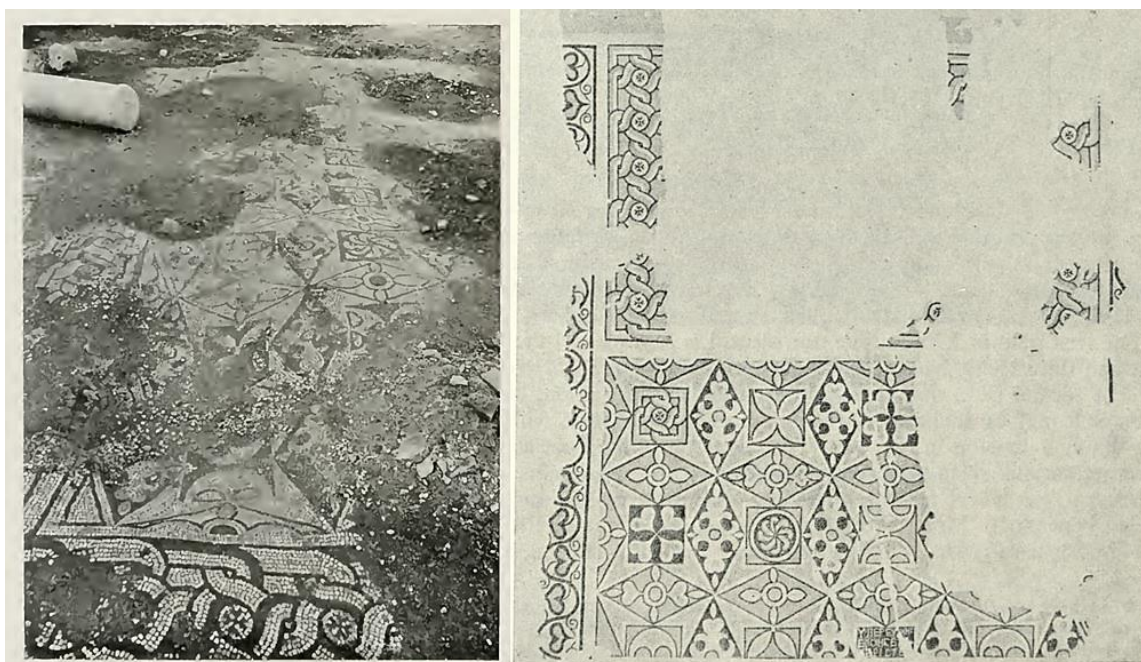


Figure 10: Comparison of the Cemetery Basilica's nave mosaic (left) and the Episcopal Basilica's south aisle mosaic (right).

(Dragendorff "Archäologische und kunstwissenschaftliche Arbeit," 158 and Kolarik and Petrovski, "Technical Observations," 77)

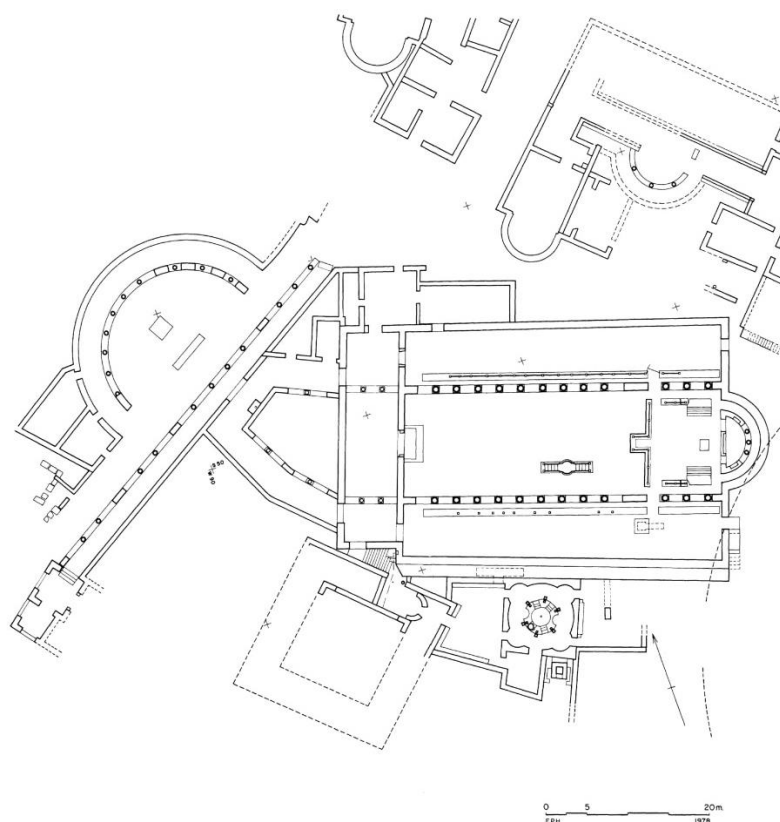


Figure 11: The Episcopal Basilica.

(Wiseman, "Stobi in Yugoslavian Macedonia," 396)

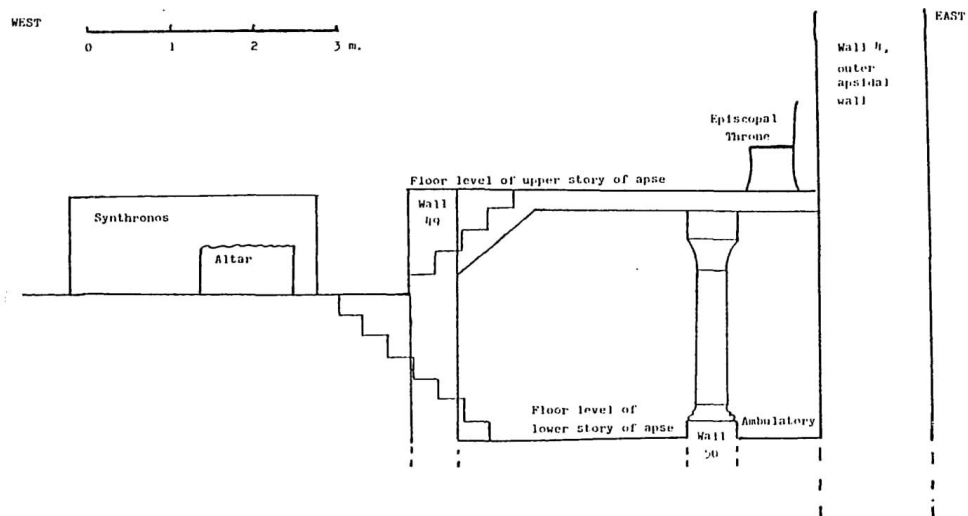


Figure 12: Snively's reconstructed elevation of the Episcopal Basilica's apse.

(Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 374)

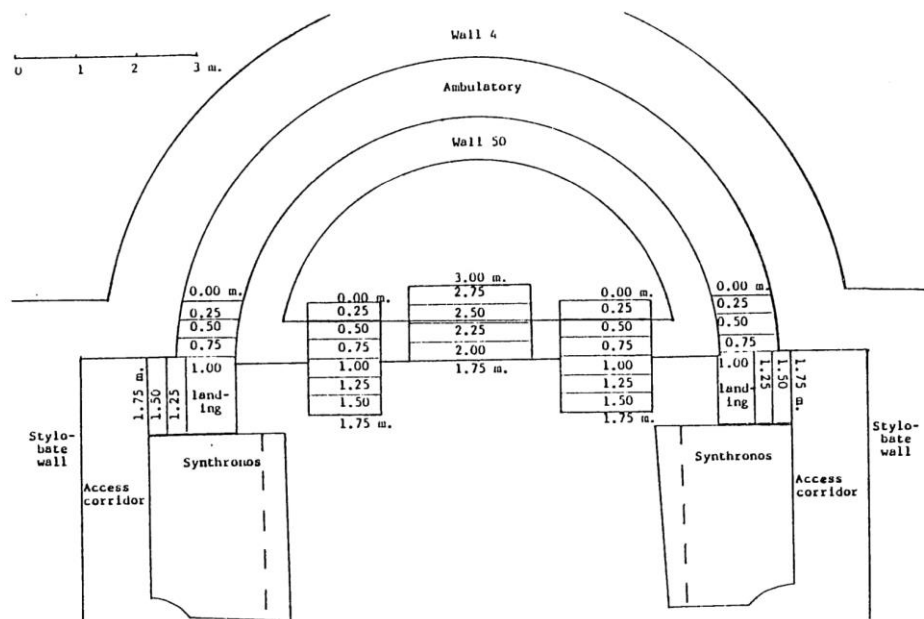
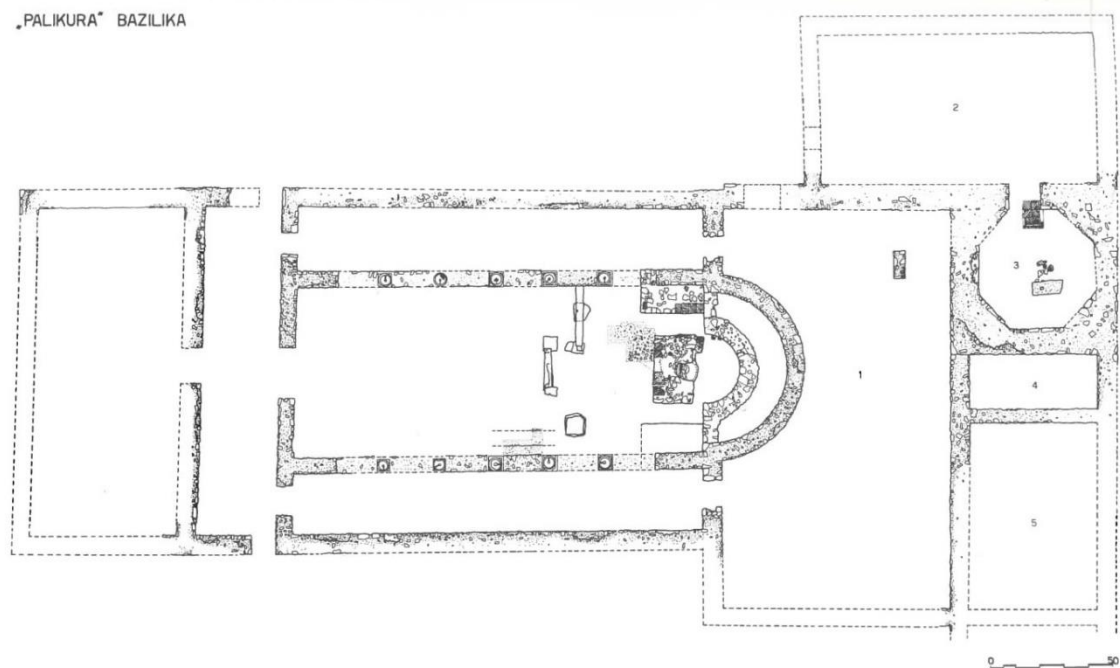


Figure 13: Snively's reconstructed floor levels and access points of the Episcopal Basilica's apse.

(Snively, "Early Christian Basilicas," 375)



*Figure 14: The Palikura Basilica.*

*(Aleksova, "Early Christian Basilicas," 71)*

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