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EXCAVATIONS ON THE NORTHERN TERRACE AT GOLEMO GRADIŠTE, KONJUH, 2007-2010¹

The archaeological site of Golemo Gradište at the village of Konjuh, Kratovo, has been known in archaeological circles already since the 1940s, when for the first time Nikola Vulić presented fragmentary inscriptions from the site.² Svetozar Radojčić visited the site in 1938 and published his report in 1952.³ Briefly, the site is a fortified, Late Antique, urban settlement, with an acropolis consisting of a long ridge, rising ca. 100 m above the Kriva river, and of terraces to north and south of the acropolis. According to Ivan Mikulčić, this city, whose overall size was ca. 17 hectares, was the second administrative center in the province of Dardania after Scupi.⁴ Its identification is still in the realm of theories, among which is that the city was Tranupara.⁵

In the first presentation of the site, Radojčić brought to public attention the Rotunda church, located ca. 200 m south of the city. This church and its sculpture were discussed in several articles, which described it as unique in the Balkan peninsula and as an architectural curiosity in the Roman world.⁶ In addition to the Rotunda, a second church, a three aisle basilica, was located somewhere in the central part of the northern terrace. Despite mention of its existence by both

¹ «Archaeological Investigation at Konjuh» is an international project conducted under the auspices of Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, USA, and the Museum of Macedonia in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia. The Co-Directors since 2007 are Goran Sanev and Carolyn S. Snively. Other staff members included Mihail Stojanoski and Miroslav Dimovski; in 2007 Elizabeth Hawksley, Randall Souza, Phyllis Graham, and Schuyler Null; Claire Cogar (2008), Katherine Haas (2008, 2009), Virginia Anderson-Stojanović (2009), Dejan Georgievski (2009), Anyisia Dumont (2009), Matt Nichol (2009, 2010), Charlotte Maxwell-Jones (2010). Funding in recent seasons has been provided by Gettysburg College through a series of Research and Professional Development grants, the Loeb Classical Library Foundation, Dumbarton Oaks, the Ministry of Culture of R. Macedonia, and an anonymous donor.

² Vulić N., 1941-48, 96-97.

³ Radojčić S., 1952.

⁴ Mikulčić I., 1975.

⁵ Lilčić V., 1994.

⁶ In addition to Radojčić S., 1952, see also Nikolajević-Stojković I., 1957, 49-50, 91; Petrov K., 1957-58; Petrov K., 1970; Hoddinott R. F., 1963, 220-226; Vincic Ž., 1988; Lilčić V., 2002, 569-589; Džidrova Lj., 2007; and Aleksovski D., 2007.

Radojčić and Mikulčić, no traces of the church were visible on the surface, a situation which led to the assumption that building material from the basilica had been removed by local villagers.⁷ The hope of discovering the basilica was one of the motives for continuation of the long-term project sponsored by the National Museum of Macedonia and Gettysburg College.⁸

Investigation of the acropolis (2000-2004) provided information about its history and organization. The construction of the fortress on a naturally fortified position can be dated to the second quarter of the 6th century.⁹

The hypothesis that an older Roman settlement had been located on the northern terrace (Sector II), perhaps near the river, was not confirmed by Trench 2 dug near the northern edge of the terrace in 2003.¹⁰ Excavation to bedrock in Trench 15 further south suggested that the Late Antique city had been established directly above levels of Neolithic habitation. We assume that the Roman town, to whose existence testify Early Roman burials excavated during the 1995 salvage excavations¹¹ and several inscriptions,¹² was located in the vicinity.

Scanty remains of structures above the main Late Antique building phases and streets and with different orientations, together with several graves, suggest that in the late 6th century the northern terrace was gradually deserted by its residents, probably after some disaster. They fled to the acropolis for safety, abandoning the terrace to sporadic habitation, grazing, and burials.

The first two years of systematic excavation on the terrace, in 2005 and 2006, were focused on the central part of the lower town, Sector II, where Mikulčić's plan showed a three aisle basilica. Toward the south, nearer to the foot of the acropolis, part of a block of small residences was investigated, while down the slope to the north streets and rooms of a large building came to light.¹³ Excavation in the northern complex continued through 2010, but in the southern one only through the 2008 season. In 2007 work began in Sektor IIA, near the eastern edge of the terrace, where on an aerial photograph from ca. 1970, the contours of an apsidal building were visible; some members of the staff hypothesized that the basilica might be located there. In all these areas, remains of probably residential structures were found, with floors of beaten earth or occasionally stone slabs and walls of stone bonded with mud mortar. The elusive basilica was, in fact, discovered in 2008, centrally positioned in the lower town.

The investigations provided significant information about the chronology of the site, the phases of building and rebuilding, and the layout of the city, which does not follow the principles of Roman urban planning. For the better understanding of the urban arrangement of the lower town, geophysical investigation of 7200 m² was carried out in 2008. Despite the difficulties caused by irregularities in the terrain,¹⁴ the results showed a complex organization of streets and buildings in the northern part of the terrace; they also suggested that a major street ran from the hypothetical east gate to a northwestern gate whose traces are visible on the surface.¹⁵

⁷ This hypothesis was strengthened by the fact that columns and other architectural blocks had been used in the construction of houses and other buildings near the site as well as by conversations with older villagers who had participated in the removal of material from the site before 1970.

⁸ Following the pilot project in 1998, the initial agreement covering the 2000-2004 seasons was extended as excavation began on the northern terrace; a new, three-year agreement signed in 2007 was followed in 2010 by a five-year one.

⁹ Snively C., 2006; Snively C., 2008.

¹⁰ Snively C., 2010, 376.

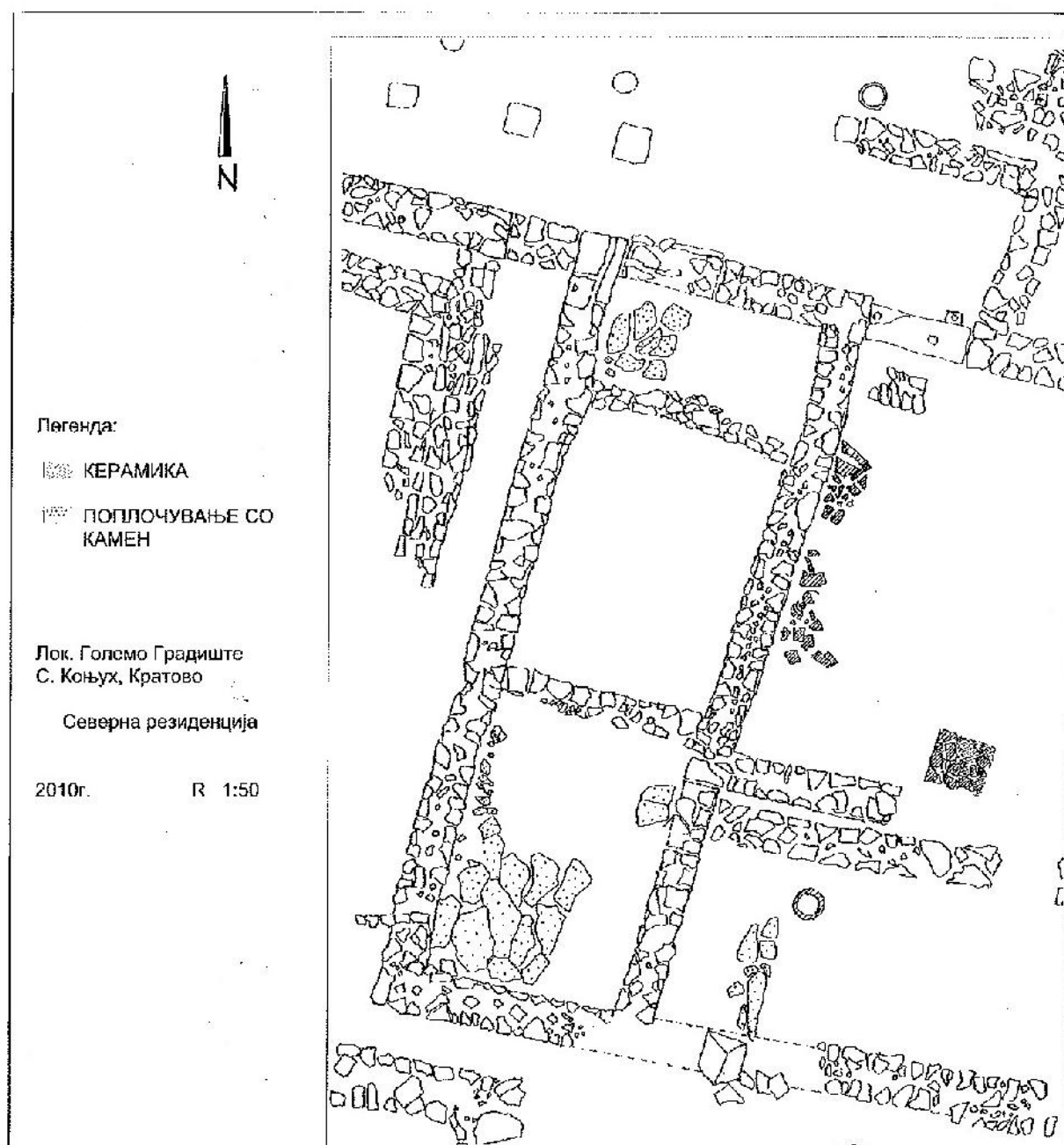
¹¹ Ivanovski M., 1996.

¹² Dragojević-Josifovska B., 1983, 177-180.

¹³ Snively C., 2010.

¹⁴ Mostly the pits and heaps of stones and earth resulting from illegal excavations at the site.

¹⁵ Geophysical survey was undertaken by members of the NGO Cultural Heritage and Archaeological Resource Management (CHARM), on 31 May and 26 July 2008, by Andriana Dragovic and Niki Korubin, assisted by Goran Tintovski, and in consultation with Reuben Thorpe.



1. Plan of the northern residence. North is at the top of the plan.

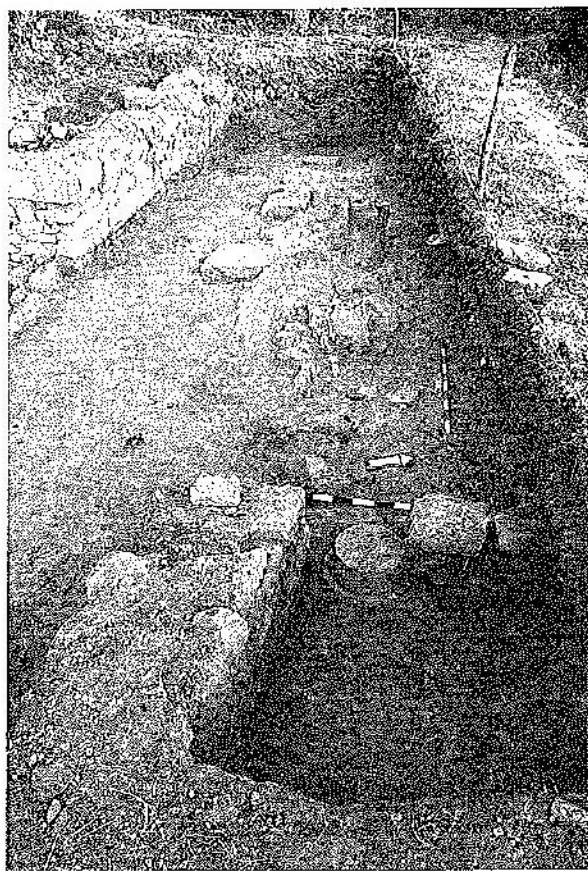
The Northern Residence

Already in 2005, Wall 3 in this area stood out, for its notably higher quality of construction, of worked stone divided by two leveling courses of tile, bonded in part with lime mortar. Ca. 0.60 m wide, its greatest preserved height was at the southeast corner of the residence, from which it ran 16.5 m to the north, forming the west edge of a street. Three walls extended from the west face of Wall 3: Wall 10, with which it formed the southeast corner of the building, and Walls 4 and 12, which divided rooms. (Fig 1)

In 2007 Trench 27 was placed 10 m west of Trench 13 (2006) in order to investigate the continuation of the building to the west and to investigate the extent and function of largest structure



2. Grave of a child,
in levels above residence.



3. The northern residence, from south, showing
several smashed ceramic vessels (2010).

known in Sector II. Above the expected walls of the residence, appeared two more recent levels, with poorly built walls of which only one course was preserved. In the first level, many small fragments of stone, mortar, and tile suggested a destruction, above a floor level of beaten earth, Floor 1. Small sherds of locally produced pottery date the deposit to the 6th century and associate it with the final phase of habitation on the terrace. In the northern part of the trench was found a rectangular tile with an inscribed cross on one side. Continued excavation in this area indicated that the tile had been in the immediate vicinity of a grave construction (Grave 4), a rectangular cist of stone slabs and tiles, of small dimensions, in which was found the skeleton of a child. The grave was oriented east-west; the deceased lay with head at the west. The skeleton was that of a male child, 4-6 years old. (Fig. 2) It is impossible to say with certainty whether the tile with cross served as the cover slab or marker for the burial. There were no grave goods.

Ca. 0.20 m below the previous level, a second floor level appeared, on which, in the west part of the trench, stood a row of irregularly arranged stones, which resembled a wall and were oriented southwest-northeast.¹⁶ "Wall 4" was preserved only ca. 0.10 m high. The floor toward the north rested on a soft, loose earth, while in the south it covered fill with small stones. Wall 5 appeared in the middle of the trench, parallel with Wall 4; ca. 0.60 m wide, it showed significantly better construction, with stones in courses, and it continued below the level of Floor 2. Wall 5, running southwest-northeast, was traced across the whole trench, and belongs to the residence. In the

¹⁶ It is interesting to note that probably because of the configuration of the terrain, which drops steeply toward the north, in the following extensions of the trench toward the north, only one later phase was observed above the residence.

northeast quadrant of the trench, it intersected at an acute angle with Wall 6, which continued to the southeast. Before the end of the 2007 season, Wall 7 came to light in the southeast corner of the trench; of high quality construction, it was similar to and parallel with Wall 5.

The discovery of these three walls directed the future investigation of the building. Thus, in 2008, Trench 27 was extended to the south and east, and provided useful results. In the south extension was uncovered the end of Wall 5 at the southwest, where it formed a corner with Wall 9, thus defining the size of the southwest room (Room 1) as well as the southwest corner of the residence. Wall 7 toward the northeast ends as the jamb of the doorway (Door 1) into the neighboring room and continues to the north as a new Wall 8, parallel with Wall 5. The doorway has a standard width of 0.60 m. To the height of the threshold, a deposit of broken pan and cover tiles filled the entire area of Room 1, having collapsed into the interior of the room. Traces of a hard beaten earth above the deposit of tiles, and especially the damage to Wall 7 and traces of burning in the northwest corner, provide evidence of a catastrophe in which the building was destroyed. The deposit of debris was simply leveled, and the rooms, indeed the building, continued in use, with small interventions, e.g., partitions, for reasons of safety. After the removal of the tiles, the floor was seen to consist of stone slabs, unfortunately preserved only in the southwest half of the room. This discovery supports the view of the residence as important and significant at the time of its construction. Taking into account its nearness to the basilica, its position in the town, the quality of construction, and the size (still undetermined to north and west), it is possible that the building once served as the episcopal residence.

During the 2009 season the entire 11.5 m length of Wall 5 was revealed. It defined the west or, more precisely, the southwest side of the building, which ended with a doorway (Door 2) at the north side. The space between Walls 5 and 7 was partitioned into three rooms, by two small walls, 4 and 6. Obviously these walls do not belong to the first phase of the residence but were added later, as protection for Wall 5, which had been damaged, probably by an earthquake. Thus it follows that Room 1 in the first phase was the southern end of a long hallway, from which one could enter Room 2. East of the north end of Wall 8 a second entrance to the residence was found (Door 3), which led to its eastern rooms (Rooms 2 and 3), whose investigation was achieved in 2010. The immediate conclusion is that, except for the partitioning of the hallway to support Wall 5, the structural interventions were carried out above the floor level, which was raised significantly, as may be seen in the height of the thresholds in the two doorways in the northern part (Doors 2 and 3). Also in the hallway near the door the remains of the pavement, whose height is ca. 0.40 m below the threshold, provides additional evidence. This is the level also of the second entrance. Two walls were discovered below the floor levels in Rooms 2 and 3. Both were found immediately next to thresholds, the first at the entrance to Room 1, the second to Room 3 at its northern entrance, Door 3. These walls probably belong to an older building, although they are preserved only to a height of ca. 0.30 m and have no foundations. Their relation with the residence remains unknown.

A more detailed examination of the space in front, i.e., north, of the doorways showed that at the height of the thresholds, the floor level was covered with mortar, preserved in several places, in front of Door 3, in front of Door 2 and west of it, where three square blocks were discovered, probably used as bases for columns. To this phase, east of Door 3, belongs a new wall that continues to the northeast. It has not been investigated in its entirety, and the depth of its foundation has not yet been determined. This new situation confirms the identification as a large residential complex, with an interior courtyard, as indicated by the bases of columns.

Among the small finds in this complex were a pithos covered by a round stone slab, dug into the floor of Room 2, and fragments of four smaller pithoi in Room 3, of which three were found beside Wall 8 and a fourth above slabs (hearth?) with much burning, uncovered in front of the passage to Room 2. (Fig. 3) It is interesting that these are the only finds connected with any of the phases of the actual building. The remaining finds, e.g., a great deal of pottery, pieces of window glass, and a few metal objects, are without context, discovered mostly in deposits under the floor levels. Some fragments of prehistoric, Eneolithic

pottery are an exception; they were found at the level of the foundation of Wall 10, in Room 2. Prehistoric pottery and other finds were discovered also in the middle part of the hallway, divided by two partition walls; there also were found a floor level with traces of posts, and a shallow channel in the middle, with ash and animal bones, which we assume belong to prehistoric times.

Investigation of the northern residence is continuing.

The Southern Residential Complex

Excavation in 2005 and 2006 had revealed the northern end of an irregularly shaped city block defined by streets on three sides, i.e., Street R running north-south along the east side, Street T at the north, and Street S running along the west side. The complex is located on a terrace that slopes down from south to north, near the foot of the acropolis. A terrace wall marks the north side of Street T and a steep drop to the next terrace on which the basilica complex stood. (Fig. 4)

The four northern rooms within the block were identified as a single residence, with an entrance directly into Room B from Street R; an entrance corridor provided access to Room A, also from Street R. It is possible, however, that in the first of the two major phases Room A formed a separate entity, not connected with the other spaces.

In 2006 an area excavated south of Room D was interpreted as part of a second residence. From a vestibule (Room G), one threshold block led into Room F to the south, and a second threshold provided access to Room E to the west. The relatively large number of finds, e.g., pithoi, architectural blocks, iron nails and clamps, and carved bone objects, indicated a well furnished house, which had not been plundered before or after its destruction.

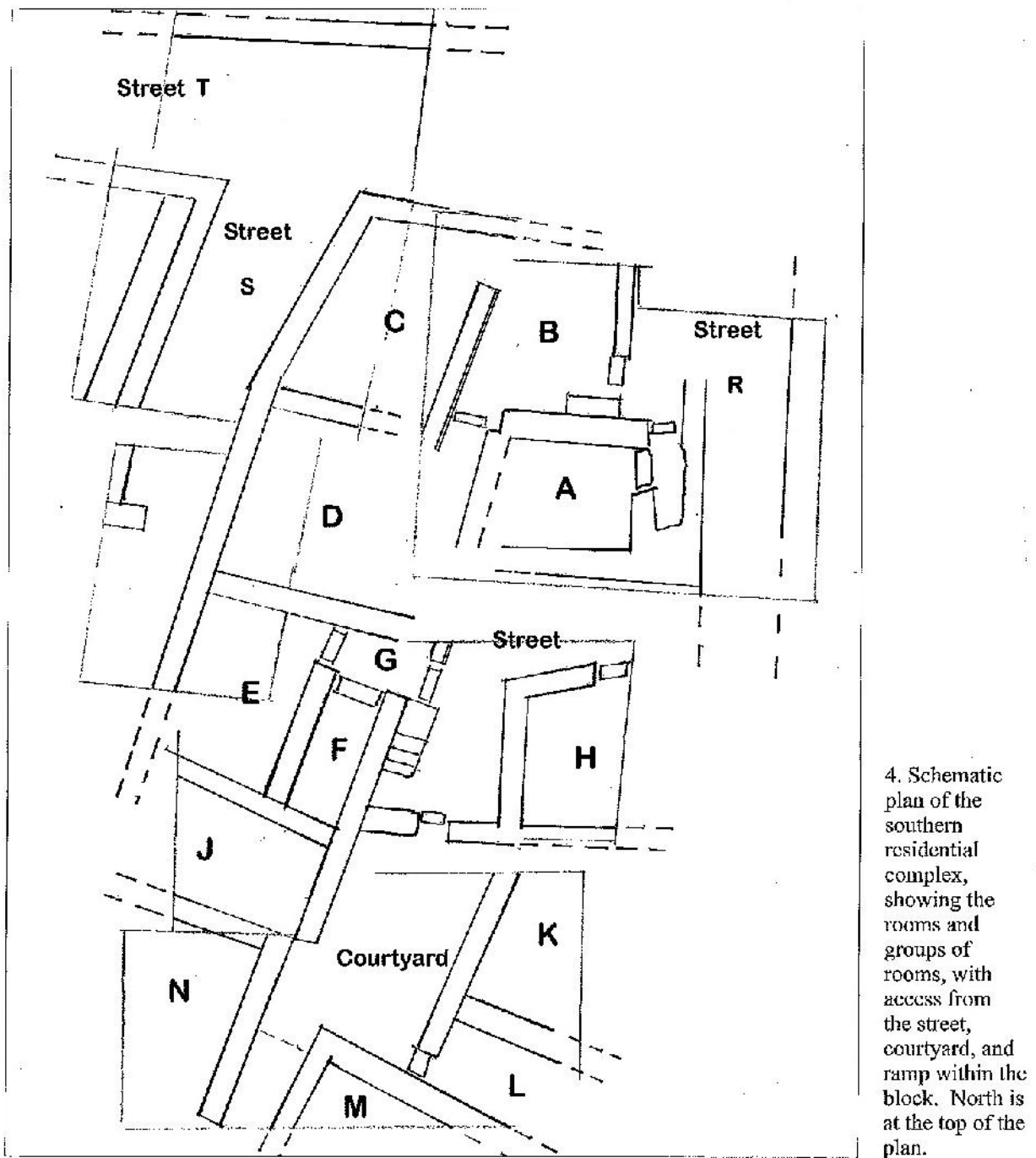
The investigation of the residences in the city block bounded by Streets R, S, and T continued to the south in 2007 and 2008, with the expectation that the southern limit of the complex would be found and perhaps also a terrace wall, since the ground level was rising steeply toward the foot of the acropolis. Floor levels in rooms at the north end of the block appeared at ca. 351.7 and 352.1 masl, while the possible floor level in Room M lay at 354.73 and the pavement of the alley at the south end of the investigated area at 355.40. Investigation of the complex was not completed; it continues to the south and up the slope.

Trenches 29 and 31 were located south of the areas excavated in 2006. In Trench 29, just under the modern surface, traces were again found of very poorly preserved buildings that post-dated the destruction of the major phase of construction in this area. The south end of Wall 51 had been rebuilt and functioned together with another wall, which rested on roof tile debris and which was preserved only one or two courses high, and with a piece of apparent floor or surface. These remains are insufficient to provide any idea of the structure to which they belonged.

By the end of the 2007 season, it appeared that the second residence consisted, at least in its final phase, only of the one large Room B (partly investigated in 2006 and bounded on the south by Wall 71), the small Room F immediately to its east, in which a pithos was found deeply set into the floor (Walls 16, 71, and 51), and the vestibule (Room G) found in 2006 north of Room F.

Room J to the south (bounded by Walls 51, 70, and 71, and occupying a large part of Trench 29) in an earlier phase may have communicated with Room F with the pithos. A blocked doorway in Wall 51 indicates that Room J certainly communicated with the courtyard to the east in an earlier phase. Room J was excavated to the floor level of beaten earth at elevation 352.70. A large pithos was also found in this room, in the northeast corner; its location indicates that it belongs to the last phase of the room, after the closing of the door in Wall 51 and the possible doorway in Wall 71. How one could enter the southern room in its final phase is not known at present.

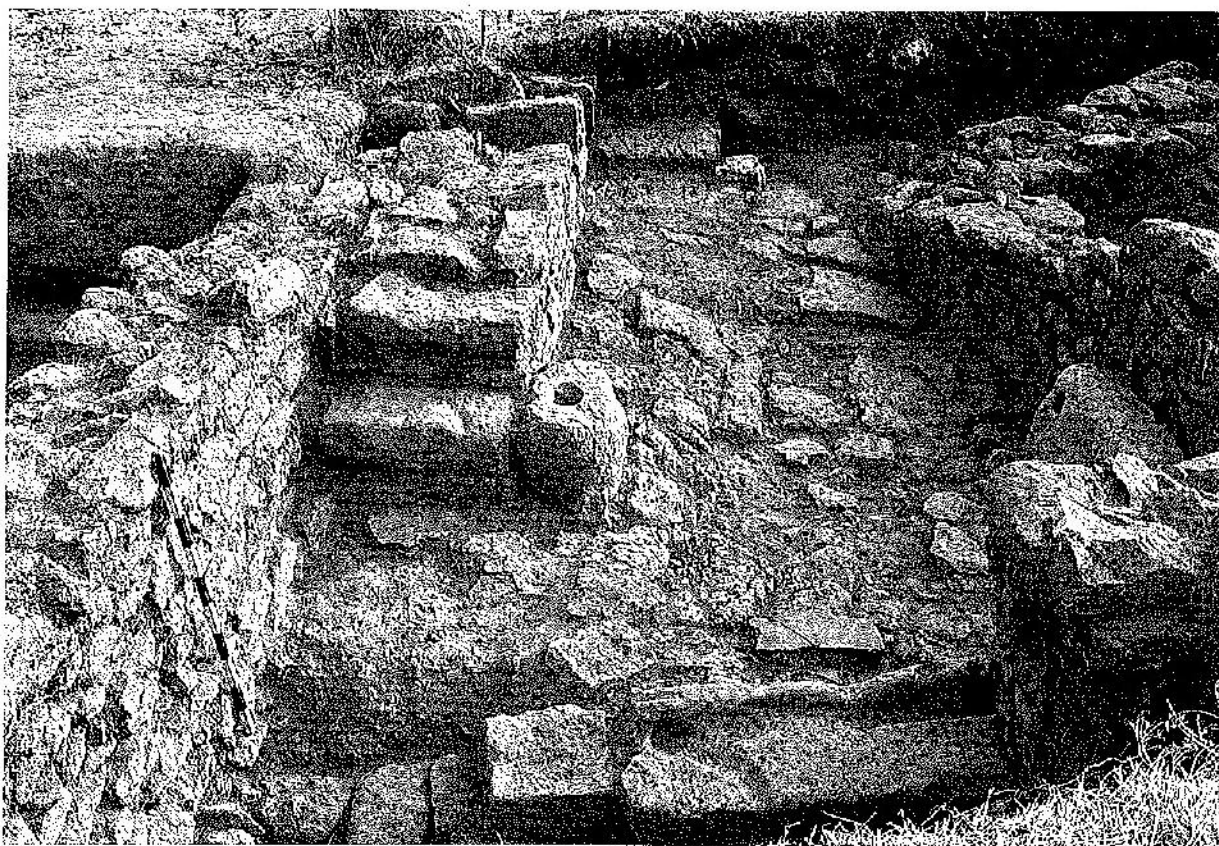
In Trench 31, located northeast of Trench 29, Room H at the east was bounded by Walls 76, 75, and 80. Remains of a tile floor were found in the northwest corner of the room, which held the remains of



4. Schematic plan of the southern residential complex, showing the rooms and groups of rooms, with access from the street, courtyard, and ramp within the block. North is at the top of the plan.

three, small, smashed pithoi. A doorway in Wall 80 at the north side of the room communicated with a stone-paved street. The street ran to the west and then turned to the south. From this street it was possible to enter Room H, the vestibule (Room G) of the second residence discovered in 2006, and an unexcavated space to the south of Wall 76. In addition, three steps of a staircase are preserved against the east face of Wall 51 and presumably led to an upper story. (Fig. 5)

The overall stratigraphy in these trenches was relatively straightforward. In Trench 29, below the traces of a late phase, fallen roofiles appeared over most of the trench. Beneath them was heavy stone debris in dark earth, which in turn revealed yellowish earth mixed with stones. This deposit continued down to the floor in Room J and down nearly to the bottom of the pithos deeply set into Room F.



5. Southern residential complex, Trench 31, 2007, from south. The staircase beside Wall 51 and the paved street; in foreground the doorway into the courtyard, at left Room F, at right Room H.

In Trench 31 heavy stone debris in dark earth was found over most of the trench; it included a piece of a column and a stone tub, along with a number of large worked blocks. Over the street, both at the north and west sides of the trench, yellowish earth similar to that found in Trench 29 covered the street pavement. In Room H, a black, ashy, deposit of earth with some stones and roof tiles covered the floor (elevation 352.60), which was of packed yellow earth except for the fragments of tile in the northwest corner.

Trenches 34 and 36, dug in 2008, lay south of Trenches 29 and 31 respectively. A doorway in Wall 76, at the south end of the paved street or alley, led into a courtyard, bounded by Walls 51, 76, 78, and 87. To the east of the courtyard lay Rooms K and L, the former (Walls 87, 88) once roughly paved with stone and tile, the latter (Walls 78, 87, 88) showing a hollow from which a pithos had been removed. The investigation of Room M to the southeast was not completed because of the limited space within the trench.

From the southwest corner of the courtyard, a second internal street or ramp ran up a slope to the south; the level of the street rose 0.70 m in the 4 m long stretch excavated. A floor level was found in Room N (Walls 70, 85), west of the street, at 353.79; after a destruction, however, in a final phase the room was filled with a heavy stone packing to support Wall 85, whose upper parts had been shifted to the west, possibly by earthquake. (Fig. 6)

The excavation of these four trenches changed our view of the southern residential complex. Instead of a city block consisting of a few residences of three or four rooms, it included several groups of one or two rooms, for housing or storage or workshops. The rooms were clustered around and were accessible from a small courtyard and two narrow streets or alleys within the complex.



6. Central area of Trenches 34 and 36, 2008, from northwest. The street or ramp continuing up the hill within the block; Room N in lower left, part of the courtyard and Rooms I. and M in background.

Finds in these trenches included a number of architectural blocks, e.g., pieces of column, a broken column base, and a stone tub. Iron nails and knife blades were found, along with millstones, loom weights, and the remains of several pithoi. The assemblage of small finds confirms our hypothesis that these structures were residential, in a broad sense; they probably included small workshops, facilities for grinding grain, and pantries for storage of foodstuffs.

Sector IIA (Figs. 7, 8, 9)

As noted above, work began in 2007 in Sector IIA, ca. 50 m east of the main area of excavation, in hopes of finding the basilica. In Trench 1, 5 x 10 m in size, the first discovery beneath the surface layer was a threshold block, re-used as building material at the preserved top of Wall 2. From the southeast corner of the trench, this wall ran northwest into the west scarp. Built of carefully worked stones and with traces of mortar, Wall 2 bonded with Wall 5 of similar construction; the latter wall ran northeast from its intersection with Wall 2 into the east profile. These two walls formed the first, i.e., earliest, phase of construction in this area.

A second phase of construction and use is represented by Walls 1, 3, 4, and 4a. Wall 4 abuts the north face of Wall 2 and runs northeast and, after being interrupted by a doorway, becomes Wall 4a. Wall 1 abuts the east face of 4a near its north end and runs west into the scarp. A somewhat amorphous Wall 3 abuts its south face near the scarp. These walls were less well built than those of the first phase and

without mortar. Wall 1 appeared to have been pushed to the north by a large pithos located against its south face. These walls form a room with an entrance on the east side and a pithos at the north, Room 1.

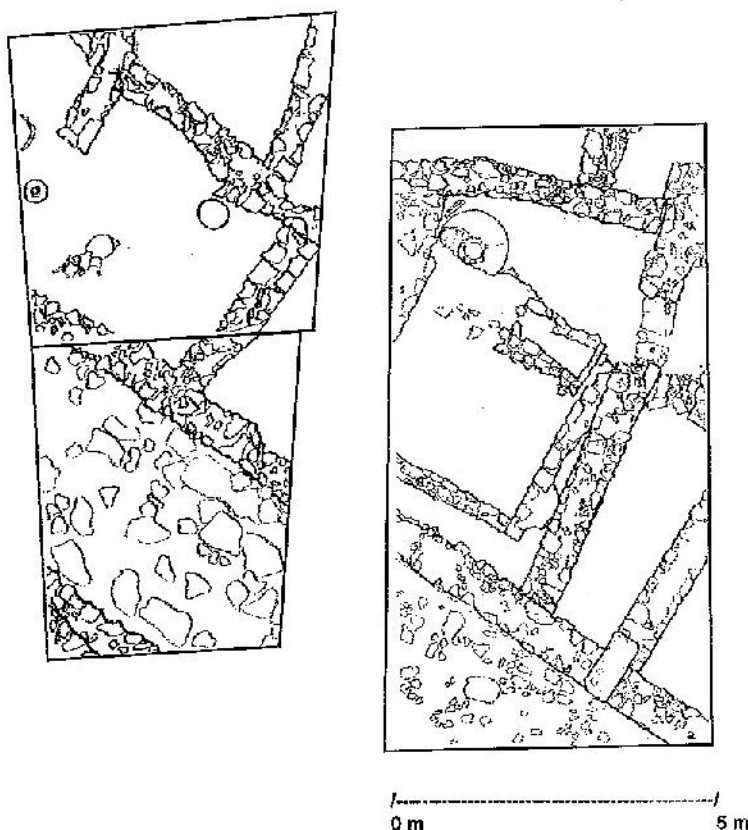
The third and last phase consists of a small room within Room 1. Only one course of stones is preserved from its walls, one of which ran across the pithos. It appears that this room was constructed to enclose the cist tomb, built of stone slabs, located within it.

Excavation continued in 2008 in Trenches 2 and 3, located immediately to the west of Trench 1, i.e., in the west half of a 10 x 10 grid square. In Trench 2 Wall 2 continued to the northwest, although its construction was observed to be of lower quality than in Trench 1 and without mortar. With the discovery in the southwest corner of Trench 2 of a short stretch of wall parallel to and ca. 3 m south of Wall 2, the space between the two walls was identified as a street running southeast-northwest. A hard packed earthen surface covered an irregular pavement of stone slabs. A deposit of fallen roof tiles was found above the surface. This is the widest and most imposing street found on the northern terrace and was certainly among the main streets of the lower town. Its direction suggests that it ran from the east gate to a second gate located near the northwest corner of the city.

In Trench 3 almost one entire rectangular room was uncovered, with parts of other rooms to east, north, and west. In the southwest part of Room 1 (2007) two floor levels were noted, one of hard packed earth and a second of stone slabs.

The central room was located immediately north of the street, separated only by Wall 2; its floor level lay below the level of the street surface. Perhaps two-storey buildings stood beside the street, and only the basement level is preserved. Possibly only the lower part of the walls, i.e., the socle, was built of stone and another type of building material was used for the upper walls; on the other hand, no traces of mud brick or of burned wood were observed.

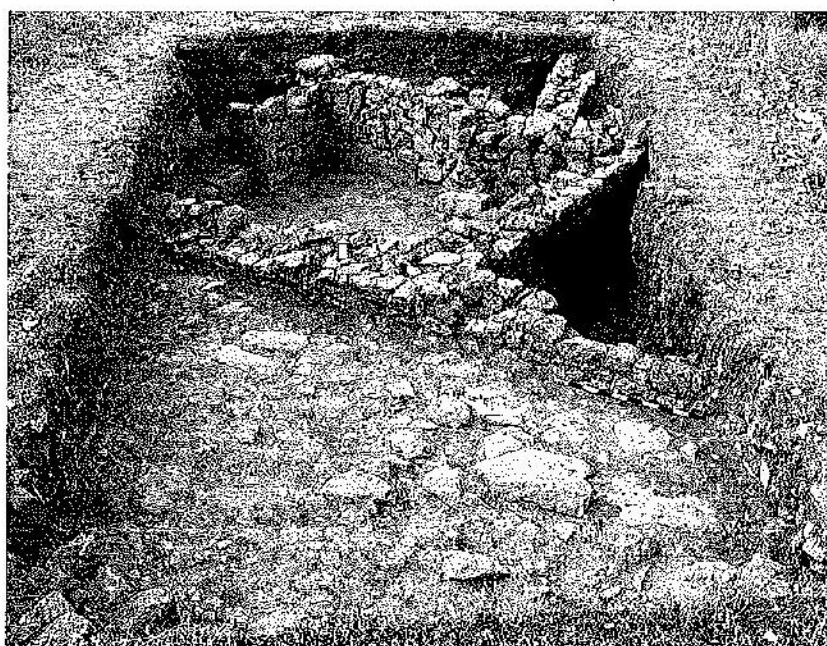
The floor of the central room was of hard packed earth. Only the northern part of the entrance at the west side of the central room was uncovered, along with the northern door jamb, preserved 1.10 m high. Part of a threshold block, perhaps in secondary use, was also found. The fact that a pithos was found at the west



7. Sector IIA, plan of Trenches 1 (right), 2, and 3 (left).



8. Sector IIA, Trench 1 (2007), from north. The two walls of the first phase are in the background, the tomb of the third phase in the foreground.



9. Sector IIA, Trenches 2 and 3, from south. The street is in the foreground, the central room in the background.

scarp, literally in front of the entrance to the room, suggests that changes were made in a later phase. In the northwest corner of the trench, a floor of beaten earth with small stones and fragments of tile appeared at a higher level than that of the central room; it may correspond to a later phase in the central room.

The small finds from Sektor IIA include much pottery from the 6th century and possibly even later, as well as 4th and 5th century material. Several pithoi and a number of millstones were found,

as well as a stone vessel¹⁷ from Room 1. In general two phases of construction and habitation may be seen in Sector IIA; following the destruction of the first phase, various renovations and reconstructions were carried out. Excavation in this area has raised a number of questions, e.g., about the direction and purpose of the paved street, that will be addressed in future investigations.

The Basilica

A major focus of investigation, since its chance discovery in 2008, has been the basilica church, located on a sub-terrace, between the northern and southern residential complexes.¹⁸ (Figs. 10,11) This is the three aisle basilica seen in outline by Radojčić and Mikulčić but not visible on the surface by the 1990s. It is clear in retrospect that the church was located in the most disturbed area of the northern terrace, where the pits and heaps of earth and stones left by generations of local inhabitants searching for brick, tiles, and usable architectural pieces made the area extremely unattractive for investigation.

In 2008 the space just east of the church was investigated (Trenches 35, 38, and 41), as well as the east end of the north aisle (Trench 37), the apse (Trench 39), and a section of the south aisle (Trench 40). The north wall of the church had been built over earlier, unidentified structures. The east end of the aisle was filled with heavy stone debris or possibly a deliberate stone packing, down to the only floor level of beaten earth, ca. 0.70 m below the floor level in the presbyterium and south aisle.

The arrangement of the apse is relatively simple but shows unusual features. Within the apse, at a distance of ca. 0.70 m from the inner face of the apse wall, a stone and mortar construction was built, thus creating a ca. 0.70 m wide corridor, a *kyklion*, between the apse wall and the inner construction. At the middle of the west face of the construction, two stone steps give access from the presbyterium into the construction in the apse. On axis with the steps and just east of them, a small rectangular chamber, 2.10 x 0.80 x 0.90 m high, is located within the construction in the apse. This tomb or crypt opens into the corridor.

The floor of the presbyterium consisted of a hard gray-white mortar with pebbles.

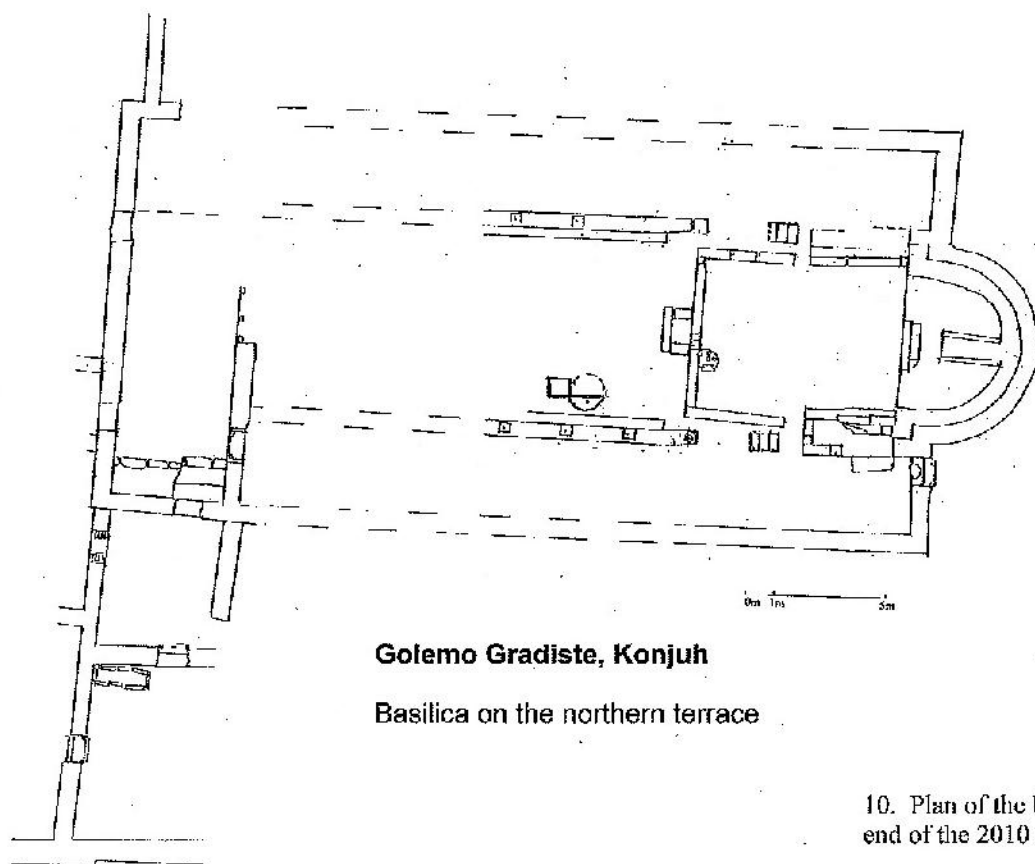
Lateral clergy benches constructed of stone blocks demarcate the north and south sides of the presbyterium. The southern one is better preserved, at least at the east end, where three steps remain *in situ*. Because they blocked the entrance to the apsidal corridor, it appears that the clergy benches belonged to a second phase or a renovation when the corridor had ceased to function.

Determining the length of the basilica and its overall plan was among the primary goals of excavation in summer 2009; although the 15 m wide structure appeared to be divided into a nave and two lateral aisles, the arrangement of the colonnades and their supporting stylobates was not clear. The clearance of the presbyterium and determination of its layout was a second major goal. Given the apparent importance of the building and thus the need for its eventual complete investigation, the third goal was to excavate as much of the nave and south aisle as possible in a scientific and responsible fashion. Therefore three areas of the church were investigated in 2009: the narthex and annex rooms at the southwest corner of the building (Trenches 44 and 48); the south aisle (Trenches 46 and 47), and the presbyterium (Trench 45).

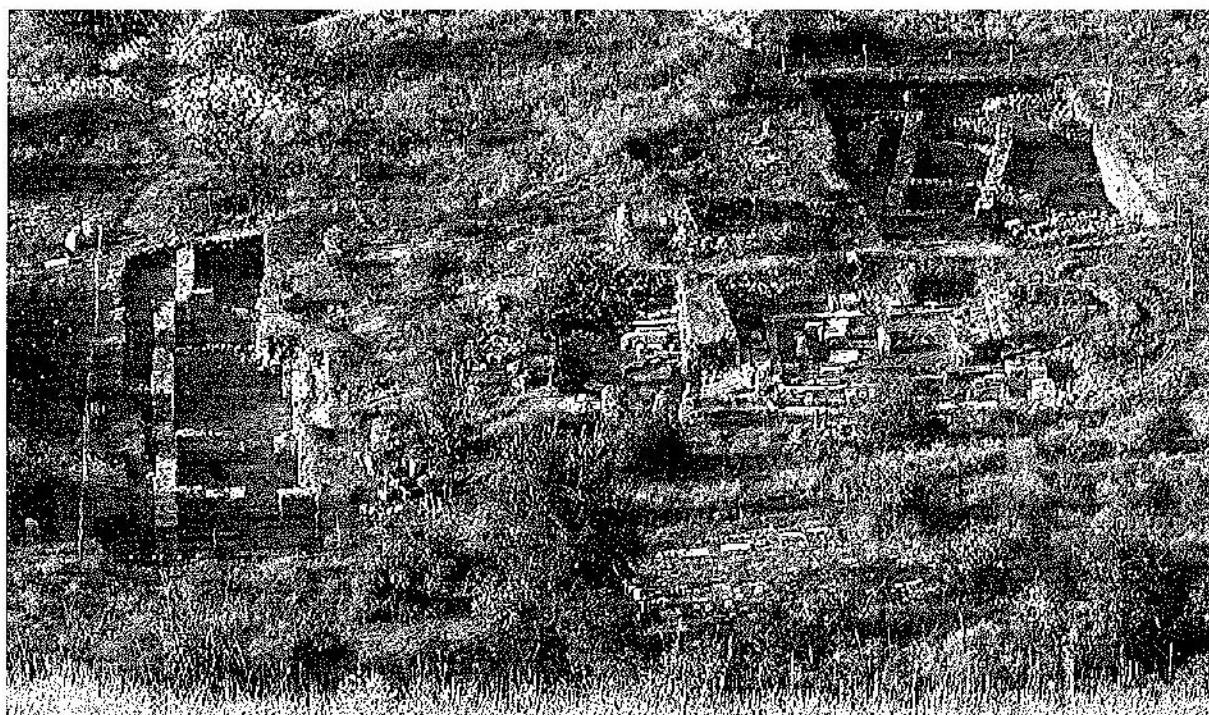
Trenches 44 and 48 were excavated in order to define the west end of the church complex. The initial test trench placed in this area came down directly on top of a north-south wall that turned out to be the west wall of the first annex room (Room 1) to the south of the narthex. After it became clear that Trench 44 lay to the south of the basilica proper, Trench 48 was opened to the north. The two trenches together revealed a) the southern end of the narthex; b) the entire interior space of

¹⁷ The stone vessel is now at the Museum in Kratovo.

¹⁸ An account of the discoveries in the church through the 2009 season is in press; see Snively C., forthcoming. For the situation at the end of the 2010 season, see Snively C., 2011.



10. Plan of the basilica, as of the end of the 2010 season.



11. View of the central part of the site from the acropolis, from south, at the end of the 2010 season. The narthex and annexes of the basilica are visible at left, the northern residence at upper right.

annex Room 1; c) the northern end of a second annex room (Room 2) located south of Room 1, including a grave; d) walls running west from the narthex and annex rooms, probably belonging to an atrium; and e) earlier walls and features below the floor level of Room 1. In Trench 44, below the surface layers, two deposits of debris and two separate layers of roof tiles showed the sequence of collapse of the building, above an accumulation of silty earth representing a period of abandonment. A mortar floor was preserved only in the southwest corner of Room 1 (at elevation 349.94 masl).

The basilica measures 33 m in length, from the east face of the apse wall to the west face of the west wall of the narthex. Given the intramural location of the church, the possibility of an atrium is not surprising.

The purpose of Trench 46 was to define the east end of the south aisle. Disturbed areas were noted, especially along the line of the south wall of the aisle (Wall C6), where the layer of mortar on the preserved top of the wall shows impressions of bricks; it seems likely that the upper part of the wall was dismantled and the bricks removed in relatively recent times. A number of large cut blocks were noted within the mortary debris that filled the aisle, down to a compact, darker brown deposit with ashy intrusions and no debris, interpreted as the floor level, at elevation ca. 349.07 masl. A doorway was located in the east wall of the basilica, in an unusual position, at the north end of the east wall, immediately south of the *anta*. A bench appeared at the north side of the aisle and a feature, possibly a disturbed grave, in the southeast corner.

In contrast to the earthen floor at the east end of the south aisle, a smooth white mortar floor was found further west in Trench 47. Approximately 4 m west of the *anta* beside the apse stands the base of a built pier, 1.00 x 0.60 m; ca. 2 m further west a column base marks the beginning of a colonnade. A similar pier was found at the north side as well.

Despite numerous pits dug by illegal excavators, Trench 45 in the presbyterium showed that the chancel screen base was entirely preserved together with at least the foundations for the lateral clergy benches. (Fig. 12) A large hole marked the location of the altar, of whose foundation only the northern part was preserved; no trace remains of a space for a reliquary. An entirely unexpected discovery was the base of a small ambo within the presbyterium; a stone slab carved with a peacock in relief probably formed the side of the staircase of this ambo.

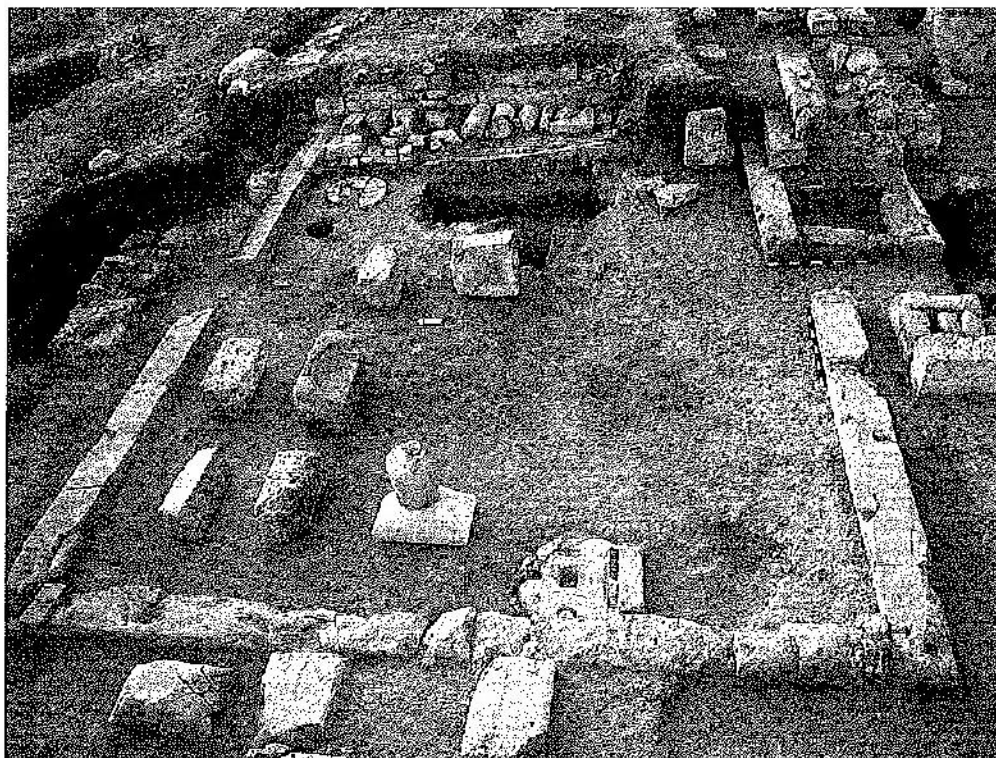
In 2010 excavation continued at the west end of the church and in the nave and aisles. Trenches 54 and 55 revealed the northern part of the narthex and an annex room to the north. A patch of mortar floor with pebbles came to light in the central part of the narthex, in front of the main doorway into the nave. A number of architectural blocks were found, including an impost block and a column base on a pedestal.

Trench 50, located south of Trench 44 (2009), revealed a massive terrace wall running east-west ca. 12 m south of the narthex; this wall marks the southern extent of the ecclesiastical complex. Parts of three rooms have now been investigated in the space between the basilica and the terrace wall. A narrow section at the north side of Room 2, with a cist grave, had been investigated in 2009; continued excavation showed that its north-south width was ca. 6 m, while the eastern end of the compartment has not yet been located. A cache of iron tools came to light when a large stone block in the western wall was removed.

A doorway in the middle of the west wall of Room 2 led into room 3, of which only a narrow strip along the east side has been investigated. A solidly built bench ran along the east wall, and an unidentified feature occupied the southeast corner. The dimensions of the compartment, ca. 7.5 north-south, west of the line of the narthex wall, lead to speculation about its purpose.

Excavation also continued in the nave and side aisles, west of the area investigated in 2009, in Trenches 51 and 52. The floors in both aisles and in the nave were of gray-white mortar, damaged or destroyed in places. Two column bases were found *in situ* on the north stylobate, while three bases in addition to the one found in 2009 came to light on the south stylobate. The intercolumniation is ca. 2.20 m. The present condition of the stylobates that supported the colonnades dividing nave from aisles suggests that a low wall may have been constructed between the columns at some point;

12. The presbyterium of the basilica, from the west, 2009. The base of the small ambo is visible toward the lower right.



possibly screen slabs stood on top of the wall. An unexpected feature was a row of nicely worked limestone blocks running along the inner side of each stylobate.

The most significant discovery in the nave so far is the partly preserved base of a large ambo, beside the south stylobate, together with many pieces of the round stone slab that served as the floor of the platform, and fragments of the sculptural decoration of the ambo, whose closest parallels are from the ambo of the Rotunda. The evidence suggests that the large ambo had only one staircase, on the west side.

The construction of this church can be dated to the 6th century, and probably to the middle of the century, although because of the small number of coins and the extremely sparse ceramic material, that date is based on architectural sculpture and on the place of the basilica within the phases of building in the lower city. Evidence for changes and renovation can be seen in the church; possibly this basilica was constructed above an earlier and smaller church. The central location on the terrace suggests that the basilica is the main church of the city; the size of the city and the existence of at least two substantial and unusual churches at the site point to it having been the seat of a bishop.

Conclusion

The investigations carried out at the site of Golemo Gradište, Konjuh, from 2007 to 2010, have provided a more detailed view of the anonymous, Late Antique city, although only a small part of the settlement has been excavated and future results could significantly change our present assumptions. The possibility of a small 4th century settlement on the terrace remains a possibility, but the city probably experienced its greatest growth during the first half and middle of the 6th century, when buildings covered the entire northern terrace, which was surrounded by a fortification wall and was also protected by the fortress on the acropolis, perhaps with a garrison. The evidence of destruction and rebuilding points to disasters, natural or manmade, and after a major catastrophe, the inhabitants abandoned the terrace for the safety of the acropolis.

ГОРАН САНЕВ

НУ Музеј на Македонија - Скопје

КАРОЛИН С. СНАЈВЛИ

Гетисбург Колеџ - Гетисбург

МИХАИЛ СТОЈАНОСКИ

НУ Музеј на Македонија - Скопје

ИСКОПУВАЊА НА СЕВЕРНАТА ТЕРАСА НА ГОЛЕМО ГРАДИШТЕ, КОЊУХ, 2007-2010 г.

р е з и м е

Археолошкиот локалитет Големо Градиште, во близина на кратовското село Коњух е познат во археолошката јавност од 40-тите години на минатиот век. Станува збор за утврдена, доцноантичка градска населба со акропола на висок долг рид кој се издига сса 100 м над Крива Река, и две тераси на северната и јужната страна од ридот. Според И. Микулчиќ, овој град, кој се простирал на околу 17 хектари, бил вториот по големина административен центар во провинција Дардапија, по Скупи. Неговата идентификација с сè уште во доменот на теориите, а според една од пив - се работи за градот Транушара.

Во непосредна близина на локалитетот, на околу 200 м јужно од градот, се наоѓа базиликата ротонда, откриена во 1938 година. Нејзината форма и декоративна архитектонска пластика се претставувани во повеќе наврати, како уникатни на Балканскиот Полуостров и вистински архитектонски куриозитет на римскиот свет. Во извештајот од споменатото истражување и подоцна, порај ротондата се споменува постоење на уште една базилика, лоцирана некаде во средишниот дел на северната тераса. Непостоењето на било какви траги од базилика на северната тераса наведуваа на претпоставка дека нејзините остатоци биле разнесени како градежен материјал од локалното населенис. Сепак, нејзиното откривање беше еден од мотивите на Музејот на Македонија и колеџот „Гетисбург“, за продолжување на заедничкиот долгорочен истражувачки проект на овој локалитет.

Пробните истражувања на северната тераса во 2003 година дадоа мошне интересен податок со кој напите претпоставки за хронологијата, односно континуитетот на развојот на градот од римското време - не беа потврдени. Имено, во пробните сонди 2 и 15 во северниот дел на платото, веднаш под доцноантичкиот културен слој беа откриени остатоци од неолитска населба. Локацијата на римската населба, за чие постоење сведочат гробови и натписи откриени при заштитните истражувања во 1995 година, не е позната но несомнено е во блиската околина на локалитетот. Скромните архитектонски остатоци, делови од улици и неколку гробови во слоевите над доцноантичката населба на северното плато сугерираат нејзино постепено напуштање во доцниот VI век и засолнување на жителите во безбедноста на акрополата.

Првите две години од систематските истражувања на северната тераса, во 2005 и 2006 г., беа фокусирани на нејзиниот средишен дел. На најјужната страна, на самото подножје на ридот откриен е дел од станбена четврт со помали градби, која беше истражувана до 2008 година. Организацијата на малите простории е во групи по две или само една, пристапот им е од поширок простор на северната страна и две тесни улочки. Мноштвото железни клинови, тегови за разбој, питоси, мелници и друго ја потврдуваат хипотезата дека станува збор за станбени и складишни градби кои веројатно вклучувале и мали работилници и простории за чување на храна. Северно од овој комплекс градби беа откриени сегменти од улици и елементи

од голем објект – Северна резиденција, со опус на градбата од видно повисок квалитет, од обработен камен врзуван со варов малтер. Источниот ѕид на овој објект е фатен во должина од 16.5 метри кон север, додека јужниот е со должина од 11.5 метри. Откриените влезови на северната страна се свртени кон внатрешен двор со колонади, чие истражување е во тек. Големината на Северната резиденција, опусот, остатоците од поплочување со камени плочи во просториите, и мноштвото движни наоди, меѓу кои особено фрагментите од прозорско стакло, ја вообличуваат претставата за важноста на овој објект.

Истражувања беа започнати и кон источната страна на терасата (Сектор II-a) каде што, според една стара авионска снимка на теренот видливи се контури на апсидална градба. Во текот на 2007 и 2008 година овде беше откриен дел од резиденцијален објект со две простории и дел од улица од неговата јужна страна. Во просторијата 1 вниманието го привлече заграден дел од просторот, во рамки на кој е гробна конструкција од правоаголни плочи. Истата припаѓа на последната фаза на објектот. Наодите од овој сектор, меѓу кои неколку питоси и мелници датираат од IV до VI век.

Сите откриени градби во наведените сектори се од резиденцијален карактер, со подови од набиена земја и многу ретко поплочени со камени плочи. Во конструкцијата на ѕидовите е користен варов малтер. Истражувањата дадоа значајни податоци за хронологијата на локалитетот, за градежните фази и доградбите, но и за урбанизацијата на градот која не ги следи принципите на Римската урбанизациона шема.

Во 2008 година, токму помеѓу јужниот резиденцијален комплекс и северната резиденција, конечно беше откриена мистериозната трикорабна базилика. До 2010 година беа утврдени нејзините димензии, кои изнесуваат 15 x 33 м. Од самиот почеток истражувањата покажаа дека станува збор за исклучителен објект со вонстандардни архитектонски решенија. Така, апсидата е со внатрешен коридор – киклеон и полукружна конструкција во која е правоаголна гробница или крипта отворена кон коридорот. Корабите се издвоени со колонади со парапетни плочи помеѓу столбовите, но најзначајно откриен се секако сочуваните остатоци од амвон покрај јужниот стилобат. Елементите од амвонот и, пред сè, вивната декорација имаат најблиска аналогија со амвонот од Ротондата.

Оваа базилика е датирана во средината на VI век. Видливите реновирања и др. градежни интервенции сведочат дека била подигната врз постара црква, а нејзината централна позиција на терасата сугерира дека станува збор за главната црква во градот. Имајќи ја предвид неговата големина и постоењето две репрезентативни цркви во рамките на неговите граници не е исклучено дека овој непознат град бил и седиште на епископ.

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