

## *Some Observations about the Form and Settings of the Basilica of Bargala*

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Some years ago, in a survey about the barriers between nave and aisles, Urs Peschlow quoted the Basilica of Bargala as an example of a Church with side aisles screened from the nave (fig. 1). This article was, as stated by the author, the “first attempt to assemble the material evidence and to raise questions about the purpose of constructing barriers between the nave and aisles”<sup>1</sup>. In fact, as the author himself observes, despite the large number of basilicas keeping traces of these devices, such arrangements have never caught the attention of scholars, and these churches had never been analysed as a group<sup>2</sup>.

With respect to the first assertion, I would point out as in recent years, my researches about the form and settings of some Early Christian churches of Asia Minor led me to me to investigate similar arrangements of a wider area that has his barycentre in the Aegean sea; all these basilicas are included in a database<sup>3</sup>. So, afar from the examples advanced by Peschlow, the catalogue of basilicas provided with barriers can be greatly increased: of 469 churches recorded in database 71 had certainly such dividers.

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<sup>1</sup> Urs PESCHLOW, “Dividing Interior Space in Early Byzantine Churches: The Barriers between the Nave and Aisles”, in *Thresholds of the Sacred*, ed. Sharon E. J. Gerstel, (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2006), 54.

<sup>2</sup> PESCHLOW, “Dividing Interior Space,” 54.

<sup>3</sup> The database was created with the intention to define – as much as possible and collecting data on distributive aspects, furnishings, materials and decorations – the perception of the Aegean Early Christian basilicas in the various actors of the liturgy. This work is still under preparation by a group coordinated by the present writer.

The *transennae* dividing the interior of basilicas were assembled in two different ways: using insertion slots cut into the bases (fig. 2) or leaving an unfinished strip on the moulding<sup>4</sup>, and modelling thus the low angles of slabs. Occasionally, some chiselled strips are visible on the stylobate where the slabs are placed.

As underlined by Peschlow, the division of churches, by means of closure slabs, is the main evidence that the faithful within the church was set apart from one another<sup>5</sup>. But which kind of laypeople? Historical sources referred of many faithful categories kept separated, because of gender, initiation stage, ages and even more<sup>6</sup>. Other sources reported some troubles to orchestrate the move-

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<sup>4</sup> These two systems are both attested in the Beyazit basilica at Constantinople. PESCHLOW, "Dividing Interior Space," 54.

<sup>5</sup> PESCHLOW, "Dividing Interior Space," 54.

<sup>6</sup> *Constitutiones apostolorum*. II, 57, 3 ff: The lector shall stand in the middle, on an eminence, and read the books of Moses and Joshua, son of Nun, of the Judges and the Kings. [...] 10. The janitors shall stand guard at the entrances [reserved] for men, and the deacons at those [reserved] for women, in the guise of ship's stewards: indeed, the same order was observed at the Tabernacle of Witness. [...] 12. The church is likened not only to a ship, but also to a sheepfold (*mandra*). [...] Richard Hugh Connolly, trans., *Didascalia apostolorum* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), 119-20, quoted on: Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 24-25. *Testamentum Domini* I, 19: Let the church have a house for the catechumens, which shall also be a house of exorcists, but let it not be separated from the church, so that when they enter and are in it they may hear the readings and spiritual doxologies and psalms. Then let there be the throne towards the east; to the right and to left places of the presbyters, so that on the right those who are more exalted and more honoured may be seated, and those who toil in the word, but those of moderate stature on the left side. And let this place of the throne be raised three steps up, for the altar also ought to be there. Now let this house have two porticoes to right and to left, for men and for women. [...] And as for the Commemoration let a place be built so that a priest may sit, and the archdeacon with readers, and write the names of those who are offering-oblations, or of those on whose behalf they offer, so that when the holy things are being offered by the bishop, a reader or the archdeacon may name them in this commemoration which priests and people offer with supplication on their behalf. For this type is also in the heavens. And let the place of the priests be within a veil near the place of commemoration. Let the House

ments of so many groups<sup>7</sup>; and, in addition to that, we should remember that Church fathers firmly insisted on the careful development of the rites, against over-enthusiastic faithful attitudes<sup>8</sup>.

The diffusion of these screens appears extremely wide: only limited to the mentioned east Mediterranean areas, we can find evidence of intercolumnar screens in continental Greece<sup>9</sup> and in the Islands<sup>10</sup>, Asia Minor<sup>11</sup>, Cyprus<sup>12</sup>,

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of Oblation (chorbanas) and treasury all be near the diakonikon. And let the place of reading be a little outside the altar. And let the house of the bishop be near the place that is called the forecourt. Also that of those widows who are called first in standing. That of the priests and deacons also behind the baptistry. And let the deaconesses remain by the door of the Lord's house. Quoted on: MANGO, "Art of Byzantine Empire," 25.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Silentiarius in his description of the ambo S. Sofia (563 AD) offers an evocative parallel between the solea, against which presses the crowd trying to touch the book, and an isthmus, hit by the waves on every side. Paulus Silentiarius, "Descriptio ecclesiae sanctae Sophiae et ambonis", in Leontii Byzantini, Opera omnia. Accedit Evagrii Scholastici Historia ecclesiastica, vol. 86.2 of Patrologia Graeca, ed. Jacques Paul Migne (Paris: 1863), 250.

<sup>8</sup> Iohannes Chrysostomus, "In Matthaicum homilia", in Iohannis Chrysostomi opera, vol. 58 of Patrologia Graeca, ed. Jacques Paul Migne (Paris: 1862), 744-46; Iohannes Chrysostomus, "In epistolam I ad Corinthios homilia XXVIII", in Iohannis Chrysostomi opera, vol. 61 of Patrologia Graeca, ed. Jacques Paul Migne (Paris: 1859), 231.

<sup>9</sup> We find these arrangements in Attica at Athens (basilicas built in the Parthenon, Erechtheum, Olympeion, Asclepieion), Alimos, Brauron, Glyphada, Eleusis (Ay. Zacharias); in Corinthia in some basilicas of Corinth (St. Codratos, Lechaion) and neighbouring centres as Sycione; in Argolid at Argo (Aspis basilica), Nemea (basilica of sanctuary), Epidaurus, Hermione; in Thessaly at Demetrias (basilica A) and Nea Anchialos (basilicas A and G). In addition to these we must remember: in Laconia the basilica of Tigani; in Elis, at Olympia, the Basilica in the Pheidias' workshop.

<sup>10</sup> In Spetses at Vrousti. At Delos in the basilica of St. Kyriakos. In Crete at Kolokythia, Olous-Spinalonga (Island basilica), Eleutherna. In Lesvos in the basilicas of Mesa, Skala Eressos (Ay. Andreas, Aphentelli), Ypselometopes. In Kos in the Gabriel basilica, and in the churches of Zipari, "of Stephanos" (basilica north) and Mastichari. At Paros in the basilicas of Ekatonrapyliani and Tris Ekklesies.

<sup>11</sup> In Constantinople in St. John of Studios, Beyazit (basilica A). In Ionia in the basilica of St. John in Ephesus and in Priene. In Phrygia in Laodicea (basilica behind the Temple A), and in the Bishop's church of Phrigan Hierapolis. In Lycia at

Balkans<sup>13</sup>; then adding – of course – some Macedonian examples that we will analyse in the following lines as well. Despite the lack of basilicas reliably dated, the number of attestations made some scholars believe that this practice was born in Greece<sup>14</sup>.

According to Peschlow, the bases intended for receiving the slabs were prefabricated; this clearly demonstrates that the division had been previously planned<sup>15</sup>. I would even say that in building then adapted as basilicas, we can find the same arrangements<sup>16</sup>.

Peschlow draws out that as these devices could make a distinction in the use of the interior space of a basilica, a very common plan indeed<sup>17</sup>; further-

Andriake (basilica B), Xanthos (basilica behind the agora), Alakilise. In Pamphylia at Perge. In Caria at Aphrodisia (cathedral), Iasos (agora basilica), Bargylia (basilica A and B), Knidos (basilica on the Dionysos temple, basilica A), Kaunos (domed basilica), Labraunda (west basilica). The last two had intercolumnar screens made with raw blocks. Jasper BLID, Olivier HENRY, Lars KARLSSON, “Labraunda 2010, preliminary report,” *Opuscula. Annual of the Swedish Institutes at Athens and Rome*, 4 (2011): 39.

<sup>12</sup> At Kourion (Cathedral) and in Marathovouno.

<sup>13</sup> In Dardania at Caricin Grad (Transept basilica) and a Bregovina. On these: Tamara OGNJEVIĆ, “Ikonografija i simbolizam podnog mozaika glavnog broda južne bazilike u Caričinom gradu,” *Leskovački zbornik*, 47 (2007): 49-72; Miroslav JEREMIĆ, “La sculpture architecturale de l’église de Bregovina (Vie s. ap. J.C.) en Serbie du Sud,” *Starinar* 53-54 (2004): 111-137.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas MATHEWS, *The Early Churches of Constantinople. Architecture and Liturgy* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971), 125; Peschlow, “Dividing Interior Space,” 56.

<sup>15</sup> PESCHLOW, “Dividing Interior Space,” 54. Later the same author gives an example with different mean with the basilica extra muros in Philippi. Here, the church of mid-fifth century allowed passages between nave and aisles, but during a reconstruction in early Justinianic times a stylobate (height 0.65 m) was built in the intercolumns. Something similar happen in museum basilica of the same city and in the Cathedral of Stobi. See: Peschlow, “Dividing Interior Space,” 68 and note 35; below note 56 and the corresponding text. Demetrios PALLAS, *Les monuments paléochrétiens de Grèce découverts de 1959 à 1973* (Roma: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1977), 110.

<sup>16</sup> For example the Athenian basilicas of Parthenon, Erechthieum, Olympeion, Asclepieion, and in Olympia in the basilica built in the Pheidias’ workshop.

<sup>17</sup> PESCHLOW, “Dividing Interior Space,” 54.

more, these barriers seem – along with others divisors – intended for characterizing some churches' interior spaces where floors, revetments, choices of materials, are very different<sup>18</sup>. Nevertheless, we should take into account that barriers, chancels and curtains, prevented people from clearly seeing, so their perception of the building could be quite different, as if there were different churches within the same basilica.

The use of barriers not only characterizes traditional basilicas but also those one provided with transept<sup>19</sup>, some central churches<sup>20</sup> or baptisteries<sup>21</sup>.

These divisors are not visible in the smaller Byzantine basilicas where the lack of space should limit the use of inner separations. In these devices, people could move from nave to aisles by an entrance placed in the stylobate; this latter had a greatly varied height but mainly form 0.2 and 0.3 meters<sup>22</sup>. These passages

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<sup>18</sup> The partial publication of excavations data and the poor state of conservation for many of these examples are the main obstacles to understanding these features. Nevertheless naves with large presence of marbles elements and aisles decorated with painted plaster are recognizable in Argolid at Hermione, at Kos (Mastichari), in Ionia at Priene, in Caria in the domed basilica of Kaunos, in the Agora basilica of Iasos, in the terrace basilica of Knidos, in Phrygia in the Cathedral of Hierapolis.

<sup>19</sup> In addition to side barriers amidst nave and aisles, here we find these separation also between the main sector and the sides of transept: see for examples the basilicas of St. John at Ephesus, A in Perge and A in Philippi.

<sup>20</sup> Maybe in the so-called "Rotunda" of Konjuh (Macedonia). On this: Reallexikon zur Byzantinische Kunst, s.v. "Makedonien", 1069-1071; Carolin S. SNIVELY, "Archaeological Investigation at Konjuh, Republic of Macedonia, in 2000", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56, (2003): 297-306, especially 302-305; Ljubinka DŽIDROVA, "Art, Form and Liturgy in the Rotunda at Konjuh", in Niš and Byzantium 5, ed. Miša Rakocija (Niš: 2007), 149-178. The last two contributors doesn't mention these separations.

<sup>21</sup> As in the church – former baptistery – of St. George in Kos. On this: Hermes BALDUCCI, *Basiliche protocristiane e bizantine a Coe (Egeo)*, (Pavia: 1936), 47-51 and fig. 40. Here these separations seems hinder the access to some of the radial niches. Two transennae were also provided in front of the pool in the Episcopal basilica of Kourion. On this: Arthur Stanley MEGAW, *Kourion. Excavation in the Episcopal Precinct*, (Washington D.C.: *Dumbarton Oaks Studies*, 2007), 110.

<sup>22</sup> Anastasios ORLANDOS, *E xylostegos palaiochristianike. Basilike tes mesogliakes lekanes: melete peri tes genescos, tes katagoges, tes architektonikes morphes*

were usually limited in the west and east extreme of colonnade. These latter spaces seem to be connected to Communion administration. In fact, in the biggest churches, where the *bema* frequently assumes the “Π” shape detaching from stylobates, these passages correspond to the chancel placed on the presbytery’s sides; as we can see in many basilicas in different areas: Greece<sup>23</sup>, Asia Minor<sup>24</sup>, Cyprus<sup>25</sup>, but also in Macedonia. In the following passages we will analyse these last examples.

These devices were also sometimes supported by different pavement levels giving a sort of naves’ hierarchy. By comparing the side aisles, Peschlow noted that – in terms of both floor height and decorative treatment – it was often given great attention to the north aisle<sup>26</sup>; this despite the common believe that the this latter was only for women and, thus, less important: among these examples we can find the Basilica of Bargala that we see better later<sup>27</sup>. What I’d rather want to point out is that north aisle was not only intended for women; in the Phrygian Hierapolis bishop church – where I’ve been working since 2002 up to 2008 – there was an asymmetric disposition with barriers placed only between nave and south aisle (fig. 3-4). So everybody could move from the nave to the north aisle. This had some consequence on the dispositions of the *bema*, presenting the “Π” shape, quite common among medium-large dimension basilicas indeed: while the south side had a chancel allowing the administration of Communion, the north side keeps a round hollow that seems to be related to a table foot.

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kai tes diakosmeseos ton christianikon oikon latreias apo ton apostolikon chronon mechris Iustinianon (Athen: Archaiologikes Etaireias, 1952-1956) 264. Orlandos remarks how the height of these varied from as low as 0.06 m in the Acheiropoietos in Thessaloniki to 0.60 m in the church in the workshop of Pheidias at Olympia. This last for others authors measures 0.85 m height. C. J. A. C. PEETERS, *De liturgische dispositie van het vroegchristelijk kerkgebouw* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1969), 131.

<sup>23</sup> In the basilicas A, C and probably “of Martyrs” in Nea Anchialos, and in the Aphen-telle basilica of Skala Eressos in Lesbos.

<sup>24</sup> In Constantinople in St. John of Studios and in S. Euphemia. At Bishop’s church of Phrygian Hierapolis. In Lycia in the cathedrals of Lymira and Xanthos.

<sup>25</sup> At Salamina in the Campanopetra basilica. On this: Georges ROUX, *La basilique de la Campanopetra* (Paris: De Boccard, 1998).

<sup>26</sup> PESCHLOW, “Dividing Interior Space,” 66.

<sup>27</sup> PESCHLOW, “Dividing Interior Space,” 66.

According to Pallas<sup>28</sup> the presence of secondary altars seems related to the existence of entrances in the east wall of the church: from there, before the mass, the male faithful could have delivered the Eucharistic offerings to presbyters<sup>29</sup> (fig. 4). So, the north aisle and the nave seem to be intended for male faithful. Anyway, this is a very particular, the only one I noticed, where the separation between nave and aisles is asymmetrical, at least in its first phase<sup>30</sup>.

Yet, in the Bargala basilica Aleksova and Mango tried to interpret the presence of an ambo on the south side of the nave with the following explanation: "The position of the ambo indicates that the lections and sermons were addressed more to the men than to the women."<sup>31</sup> We should also highlight that, as if usual, they are equally attested ambos placed on the north side<sup>32</sup>. Consequently, it seems that the disposition for male and female faithful was quite variable and related to local tradition.

We can observe the most impressive use of different pavement levels in the St. Demetrios church at Thessalonike, where the north aisle lies 0.47 m under the nave, but settlements like this are widely attested<sup>33</sup>. In St. Demetrios apparently lack barriers between columns but, as asserted by Peschlow the column's

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<sup>28</sup> Dimitrios PALLAS, "L'édifice culturel chrétien et la liturgie dans l'Illyricum oriental", in *Actes du Xe Congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne* (Città del Vaticano: 1984), 141. See also: Euthychia Kourkoutidou-Nikolaidou, Euterpi Marki, "Des innovations liturgiques et architecturales dans la basilique du Musée de Philippes," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum Ergänzungsband* 20 (1995-97), 954.

<sup>29</sup> We find similar arrangements, always as circular cavities, on both sides of the Nikopolis basilica B and that of Léchainon at Korinth; as bases in Epidaurus.

<sup>30</sup> See note 56 and related text.

<sup>31</sup> Blaga ALEKSOVA and Cyril MANGO, "Bargala: A Preliminary Report," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 25 (1971): 268. The same authors points out how particular was also the disposition to west of stairs. Sodini compares this disposition to another Macedonian example, those of the Rotunda of Thessalonica. Jean Pierre SODINI, "L'ambon de la rotonde Saint Georges remarques sur la typologie et le décor," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 100 (1976): 497.

<sup>32</sup> In Attica in Alimos and Lavreotic Olimpous; in Elis in Olympia and Philiatra; in Crete in Halmyrida and Eleutherna; in Korinthia at Sicyone; in Argolid at Hermione; in Delos (Hagios Kyriakos) and in Caria in the basilica A of Bargyilia.

<sup>33</sup> We find the same phenomenon in the Lechainon church near Corinth, at Brauron in Attica, in Asia Minor at the Cathedral of Hierapolis and others.

pedestal “were parts of a low, stone-built wall that gave the impression of a stylobate at a height of ca. 0.80 m when seen from the perspective of the aisle<sup>34</sup>”. This, along with different floor’s height gave an apparent height of 1.30 m for the stylobate observed by the north aisle<sup>35</sup>.

Even without similar variations, the displacement of different floors levels between the naves is a quite common feature, obviously emphasizing the appearance of these barriers<sup>36</sup>.

Nevertheless, St. Demetrios Basilica is not the only church where lofty stylobates built up with stone blocks seem replacing the sides’ barriers. These devices are also attested in Elis, in the church built in the workshop of Pheidias at Olympia (0.85 m); in some Cretan or Lesbian basilicas as Knossos Sanatorio (0.93 m<sup>37</sup>), Aphetelli (0.70 m), Skala Eressos (0.65 m), Halidanos (0.60 m), Argala (0.60 m), Ypselometopes (0.51 m), Vyzari (0.55 m); in Agios Kyrikos at Delos (0.98 m<sup>38</sup>); in Kos at Mastichari (0.62 m); in Caria at the basilica D of Knidos (0.50 m). Other attestations can be also found in Greek area, in Thessaly within the basilicas C and D of Nea Anchialos (each 0.50 m); in Attica in the Erechtheum basilica in Athens (0.50 m); in Laconia in Ayos Petros at Kainepolis-Kyparissos (0.56 m); in Kodratos basilica at Corinth (0.50 m). In Asia Minor in the cathedral of Carian Aphrodisia (0.50 m).

These devices, at least the loftiest, had to replace the traditional separations with closure slabs.

Anyway, besides the height reached by lofty stylobate, we have also to take into account the presence of second separation level preventing communication between nave and aisles; these devices were made up wooden lattice works or closure slabs which left grooves on columns. This kind of arrangement

<sup>34</sup> PESCHLOW, “Dividing Interior Space,” 60.

<sup>35</sup> PESCHLOW, “Dividing Interior Space,” 60.

<sup>36</sup> See for example the Cathedral of Phrygian Hierapolis where from an height of ca 0.80 m of slabs, was added to these the quote of stylobate, reaching the elevation of 1.08 m. This quote became quite impressive from the nave, 0.12-0.15 m lower than the south aisle. This arrangement should hinders the view of faithfuls in the aisle from the nave.

<sup>37</sup> Rebecca J. SWEETMAN, “Late Antique Knossos. Understanding the City: Evidence of Mosaics and Religious Architecture,” *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, 99 (2004), 345.

<sup>38</sup> Anastasios ORLANDOS, “Delos Chrétienne,” *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 60 (1936): 73-74.



can be found in Asia Minor in the cathedral of Aphrodisia in Caria<sup>39</sup>, in the great church in Priene<sup>40</sup>, probably also in the St. John of Ephesus<sup>41</sup> and in the Virgin Kyriotissa church in Constantinople (now Kalendarhane Camii)<sup>42</sup>; surely in Crete in the Eleutherna basilica<sup>43</sup>. While in the first two examples, the whole system reaches a height of almost 1.60-1.80 m<sup>44</sup>, in the last one, as highlighted by Themelis<sup>45</sup>, the *transennae* arrangement reaching capital's height. According to Peschlow this type of barriers prevents both physical and visual contact between people staying in the nave and aisles<sup>46</sup>.

Consequently some of the basilicas which adopted these devices appear divided quite strongly. To this we must add the different choice of materials as said above: Phrygian Hierapolis cathedral had the nave clad with marble pavements and wall as well, while in the aisle there were brick tiles for the floor and fresco panels on the walls. Something similar can be found within the Agora basilica of Carian Iasos where I worked in the 2010, even though the material used there was less lavish; anyway these examples are quite common<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Laura HEBERT, "The Temple-Church at Aphrodisias" (PhD diss., New York University 2000), 165-172; quoted in PESCHLOW, "Dividing Interior Space," 61.

<sup>40</sup> Stephan WESTPHALEN, "Die Basilika von Priene. Architektur und liturgische Ausstattung," *Istanbuler Mitteilungen*, 48 (1998): 313; Peschlow, "Dividing Interior Space," 62.

<sup>41</sup> PESCHLOW, "Dividing Interior Space," 62. It is not clear if the plug holes today visible on the columns, above those referable to *transennae*, belonged to fixed arrangements or to curtains.

<sup>42</sup> PESCHLOW, "Dividing Interior Space," 62.

<sup>43</sup> Petros THEMELIS, "Eleutherna. The Protobyzantine City", in *Mélanges Jean-Pierre Sodini*, (Paris: Centre de recherche d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2005), 347.

<sup>44</sup> PESCHLOW, "Dividing Interior Space," 61 and further references. WESTPHALEN, "Die Basilika von Priene," 313.

<sup>45</sup> THEMELIS, "Eleutherna," 347.

<sup>46</sup> Again, these uses resembles some devices used to conceal to men looks the women in the gallery. This use is attested in an episode of life of John Chrysostom: Symeon Metaphrastes, "Vita et conversio S. Ioannis Chrysostomi", in *Symeonis Logothetae Metaphrasteae opera omnia*, vol. 114 of *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. Jacques Paul MIGNE (Paris: 1864), 1113.

<sup>47</sup> The database ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΗ (see note 3) shows how, from the 71 basilicas where are attested sides barriers, 15 had surely differentiations in the floors of the naves.

Peschlow wonders about what kind of liturgy held within specific churches could necessitate of barriers between the naves<sup>48</sup>; besides the basilicas where it was necessary to divide the religious procession from laypeople, the given example - the memorial churches- appears quite persuasive.

Also within bigger churches, faithful community and pilgrims can move from aisle reaching the relics under the altar or elsewhere<sup>49</sup> and then walking out without disturbing worship at all. Some examples of this type of structure can be the St. John at Ephesus and the St. Demetrius at Thessalonike.

Apart from the fact that some memorial churches haven't any traces of barriers<sup>50</sup>, the articulated paths created within them were not, however, applicable in the smaller basilicas. So, we must agree with Peschlow when stating that "neither the type of community that used the church nor the rank of the celebrant necessarily influenced the division of the building's internal space<sup>51</sup>".

## The use of dividers in Macedonian basilicas

Side barriers were common features in Macedonian basilicas; we can find such arrangements in Macedonia Prima at Thessalonica (*Acheiropoietos*), Philippi (basilicas A and C), Edessa (*Longos* basilica) and in Thassos island (in the church of city agora<sup>52</sup> and in the north and south Aliki basilicas<sup>53</sup>) and again in Macedonia Secunda in the Episcopal basilica at Stobi (fig. 5), in the church of

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Obviously these data must deal with the lost of pavements or of part of these. In addition to the quoted examples had these differentiations the following basilicas: in Argolid Epidauros and Hermione; in Attica Brauron; in Caria the churches of Kaunos (domed basilica) and Knidos (basilica A); in Crete Eleutherna; in Elis Olympia; in Lesvos Skala Eressos (*Ay. Andreas*); in Macedonia Prima the basilica A of Amphipolis and in Phrygia at Laodicea (basilica behind the Temple A). To these we must add the second phase of the Bargala basilica.

<sup>48</sup> PESCHLOW, "Dividing Interior Space," 69.

<sup>49</sup> In the St. Demetrius at Thessalonike the ciborium, the focal point of the cult was in the mid of nave, toward the north aisle. Charalambos Bakirtzis, "Pilgrimage to Thessalonike: The Tomb of St. Demetrius" *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002): 176.

<sup>50</sup> See the examples quoted by Peschlow: PESCHLOW, "Dividing Interior Space," 69.

<sup>51</sup> PESCHLOW, "Dividing Interior Space," 69.

<sup>52</sup> *Reallexikon zur Byzantinische Kunst*, s.v. "Makedonien", 1036.

<sup>53</sup> On these: Jean Pierre SODINI and Kostas KOLOKOTSAS, *Aliki II. La basilique double* (Paris: 1984).

Bargala and maybe in Kamenica and Konjuh<sup>54</sup>.

Comparing the two areas we can realise there's a reduced use of these elements in the Macedonia Secunda; but, except for Stobi, probably due to decreased dimension dimensions of local basilicas compared to those of Thessalonike or Philippi.

Peschlow recognizes in these examples, as a common feature, to prevent the view from the aisle into the nave<sup>55</sup>; he refers mainly to Macedonia Prima, particularly to Thessalonike and Philippi. We can find a similar arrangement in the second phase of Museum Basilica of Philippi, where – on the north side – it was built a second stylobate carrying a templon-like barrier; this latter was probably kept closed with curtains. This particular arrangement, according to Kourkoutidou-Nikolaidou and Marki was temporary and was used – in place of the narthex – to host catechumens or penitents<sup>56</sup>. However, both stylobates and slabs reach 1.50 meters height, so preventing the vision through the aisles. Also the Episcopal basilica of Stobi had similar adjunct barriers<sup>57</sup>, but the pre-existence of high type stylobate (0.77 meters height), of the type that replaced the same *transennae*, leaves some doubts about the purpose of this device<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> On Kamenica: Ivan MIKULČIĆ, “Frühchristlicher Kirchenbaum in der S. R. Makedonien,” in Corsi di cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina 33 (Ravenna: 1986), abb. 9. On Konjuh see note 20.

<sup>55</sup> PESCHLOW, “Dividing Interior Space,” 61.

<sup>56</sup> KOURKOUTIDOU-NIKOLAIDOU, Marki, “Des innovations liturgiques,” 954-957; PESCHLOW, “Dividing Interior Space,” 65. Also the basilica A had an analogous second stylobate carrying however low type barriers; this unusual feature was explained by Lemerle with the need of places to sit. Paul LEMERLE, *Philippe et la Macédoine Orientale à l'époque chrétienne et byzantine. Recherches d'histoire et d'archéologie* (Paris: De Brocard, 1945), 351-352. Here, however, the north stylobate is the only kept in satisfactory manner.

<sup>57</sup> Carolyn SNIVELY, “Transepts in the Ecclesiastical Architecture of Eastern Illyricum and the Episcopal Basilica at Stobi,” in *Niš and Byzantium* 6, ed. Miša Rakocija (Niš: 2008), 70; Carolyn SNIVELY, “Dacia mediterranea and Macedonia Secunda in the Sixth Century: A Question of Influence on Church Architecture,” in *Niš and Byzantium* 3, ed. Miša Rakocija (Niš: 2005), 219; Carolyn SNIVELY, “Articulation of Space in the Episcopal Basilica: the Colonnades,” in *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi* 3, ed. Blaga Aleksova and James Wiseman, (Titov Veles: 1981) 163-170.

<sup>58</sup> PESCHLOW, “Dividing Interior Space,” 65.

## The basilica of Bargala and its liturgical feature

Built at the turn of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century<sup>59</sup>, the basilica of Bargala has two main phases of construction. The partition inside it was made up using *transennae* placed between the two rows of seven columns each one dividing nave from aisles. Every pair of slabs was connected by a square post embedded on a massive stone support substituting the stylobate. It is not clear if these devices were intended to allow the passage of clergy or faithful during celebrations, there are also some visible interruptions corresponding quite always to lacunas in the floor.

As we have seen, these intercolumnar screens had usually two passages frequently placed at both east and west end of each stylobate, in order to permit some movements and participation of the faithful to the Eucharist. The presence of passages in the east end of basilicas is related to particular kind of *bema*, that was not coterminous with colonnade, assuming the II shape; this can be considered a feature of basilicas with medium or great dimension. Here the two doors are situated on the sides of *bema* chancel, each one corresponding to the openings in the intercolumnar barriers: local examples can be found in Macedonia Prima in the basilica A in Amphipolis<sup>60</sup>, in the double basilica of Alikí<sup>61</sup> and the cross-church in Thasos<sup>62</sup>, but a similar example is also inside the Macedonia Secunda at Stobi<sup>63</sup>.

Anyway, the basilica of Bargala had no great dimensions. As reported the *bema* shows two building stages: the first one was less extended to west than

<sup>59</sup> ALEKSOVA and MANGO, "Bargala preliminary report," 273, Florin CURTA, *The making of the slavs: history and archaeology of the Lower Danube Region* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 135.

<sup>60</sup> Alessandro TADDEI, "I monumenti protobizantini dell'acropoli di Amphipolis," *Annuario della Scuola Archeologica Italiana ad Atene*, 8 (2008): 273

<sup>61</sup> Openings in the north and south sides of the *bema* are attested each in the two basilicas, at least in their last phases. *Reallexikon zur Byzantinische Kunst*, s.v. "Makedonien", abb. 15-16; on the phases of these enclosures: SODINI and KOLOKOTSAS, *Alikí II*, 26-34, 151-156.

<sup>62</sup> ORLANDOS, *Basilike*, 527-528.

<sup>63</sup> At least in the second phase of presbyterium. See: James WISEMAN and Djordje MANO-ZISSI, "Excavations at Stobi, 1973-1974," *Journal of Field Archaeology*, 3-3, (1976), 291-293.

the second one and detached from the colonnades<sup>64</sup>, which, only in a second time, became the presbytery barriers<sup>65</sup>. A small passage retrieved in the last side of south colonnade can be related to first phase: from there faithful situated in the south aisle can get Eucharist; nothing similar is visible on the opposite side, which characterizes an access asymmetry between the two places. In the following passages I'll try to debate about this uncommon feature.

In the second phase, in the basilica of Bargala the side barriers of *bema* correspond to intercolumnar ones; at that moment the lateral openings could be not useful: as in other medium sized basilicas the communion could be still directly administered through the side devices indeed. The remodelling of *synthronon* was connected to this variation. As reported by excavators, the first stage of this furniture was a flight of stairs leading to a platform, where stayed the bishop; the west wall of this structure was plastered and frescoed imitating the veined marble<sup>66</sup>. The platform was flanked on both its north and south side by two seats. These were removed together with the podium.

It seems quite probable that this second arrangement of *synthronon* was higher than the first one. The excavators noted how the entrance to *bema* had a westward projection, and they supposed that was completed by two columns supporting an arch<sup>67</sup>. This structure, surely made in order to monumentalize the Entrance of clerics in the *bema*, would have hidden the bishop place, unless the *synthronon* would have been raised up too. These trends can be found also in Greek and Constantinopolitan areas<sup>68</sup>.

How were these barriers made up? The researchers have found some

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<sup>64</sup> On these changes: ALEKSOVA and MANGO, "Bargala preliminary report," 269-270. See also: Blaga ALEKSOVA, "The Presbyterium of the Episcopal Basilica at Stobi and Episcopal Basilica of Bargala," in *Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi III*, Blaga ALEKSOVA and James WISEMAN, eds., (Titov Veles: 1981) 29-46. We found the same trend in the Episcopal basilica of Stobi. Blaga ALEKSOVA, "The early Christian basilicas at Stobi," in *Corsi di cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina* 33 (Ravenna: 1986), 14.

<sup>65</sup> Aleksova and Mango tried to explain these change suggesting that the original shape of the *bema* was not conforming to the changing liturgical requirements and was thus modified. Blaga ALEKSOVA and Cyril MANGO, "Bargala preliminary report," 270.

<sup>66</sup> ALEKSOVA and MANGO, "Bargala preliminary report," 270.

<sup>67</sup> ALEKSOVA and MANGO, "Bargala preliminary report," 269.

<sup>68</sup> ORLANDOS, *Basilike*, 526 ff.

parapet slabs and some stone grilles<sup>69</sup>; this establishes the problem of the mutual arrangement of these kinds of separations. Looking at a wider context, we can observe how the open works *transennae*, in the hierarchy typical of these buildings, were placed in the *bema* enclosure<sup>70</sup>.

If the choice to use barriers between the aisles is quite common, it appears even more particular to set some different floor types among the corridors. If the south aisle had the same slabs flooring of the nave, the north one was paved with a mosaic made up of large *tesserae* representing some crosses and different geometric shapes.

It seems that the division created by side barriers could have some consequence on the decoration: in fact Aleksova and Mango remember how the lower parts of the walls were decorated with frescos simulating marble panning<sup>71</sup>; while the nave seems characterized by the “accumulation” of marble elements as *synthronon*<sup>72</sup>, slabs, ambo and pavements of the *bema*.

Aleksova and Mango stated that the north aisle was reserved to women<sup>73</sup>, but probably in the last phase<sup>74</sup> it was intended – sometimes – for some particular office, maybe baptism. This hypothesis can be strengthened observing the position of nave (fig. 1), directly connected to the baptistery and the inner narthex. Through the latter, the aisle was then connected to the first of the two rooms that preceded from the west the sacred pool. This room, accessible from

<sup>69</sup> ALEKSOVA and MANGO, “Bargala preliminary report,” 268.

<sup>70</sup> Attested in Daphnousia, Olympia, Eleutherna. On these: ORLANDOS, *Basilike*, 526, fig. 490; Friedrich ALDER and Ernst CURTIUS, *Olympia II*, (Berlin: A. Asher & co., 1892): 93-105; THEMELIS, *Eleutherna*, 351. The excavators had a different opinion and put here a figurative parapet slab consisted of three panels on basis of more elaborate character respect to those between nave and aisles. ALEKSOVA and MANGO, “Bargala preliminary report,” 271.

<sup>71</sup> ALEKSOVA and MANGO, “Bargala preliminary report,” 272.

<sup>72</sup> ALEKSOVA and MANGO, “Bargala preliminary report,” 270, note 34.

<sup>73</sup> ALEKSOVA and MANGO, “Bargala preliminary report,” 268.

<sup>74</sup> According to excavators the Baptistery was constructed shortly after the basilica. ALEKSOVA and MANGO, “Bargala preliminary report,” 271. At Bargala the second phase of the baptistery may be one of the latest features of the Episcopal complex. Located at the northeast corner of the basilica, it replaced an earlier and smaller baptistery with a font located further to the west. On this see also: Blaga ALEKSOVA, “Novi istraživanja na baptisteriumot vo Bargala”, in *Zbornik posveten na Boško Babić*, (Prilep: 1986), 29-38.

the outside towards the north facade, seems to have had a distributive role: it was linked to the narthex on south, to the vestibule of the baptistery on the east side and to a room for the offerings of congregation to the west wall<sup>75</sup>. So, the catechumens can enter there from outside, leaving their clothes in the vestibule, receiving the exorcisms and then the baptism, so dressing the new garment, and finally entering the church by the north aisle. To a closer look another detail can support this hypothesis: apparently the ambo was taken out of the axis of the church but, if we make abstraction of the north aisle, the pulpit results perfectly in axis.

Out of the baptism liturgy the north aisle was probably for women, as suggested by Aleksova and Mango<sup>76</sup>, or for other groups of faithful like the catechumens; they were asked to leave at the end of the Liturgy of the Word with no disturbance: they can move away right from that way, without mingling with other groups. The same can be done from the galleries, whose existence is attested by the discovery of column shafts of two different sizes<sup>77</sup>. So, the question were was the place of catechumens is open.

Concerning other liturgical features we could observe how the basilica shares with other Macedonian examples the out-of-axis placement of the ambo<sup>78</sup>; according to Sodini, this characteristic is probably intended right to facilitate the procession entry into *bema*<sup>79</sup>. But that's not the only reason: the mentioned passage of Aleksova and Mango, for lections and sermons addressed more to men than women<sup>80</sup>, finds in this area a lot of references: here the ambos

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<sup>75</sup> On the room and his furniture: ALEKSOVA and MANGO, "Bargala preliminary report," 271; Eugenia CHALKIA, *Le mense paleocristiane. Tipologia e funzioni delle mense secondarie nel culto paleocristiano* (Roma: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana 1991), 85; Jean-Pierre SODINI, Jean SERVAIS, "Les carrières de marbre", in *Études Thasiennes IX, Aliki I: les deux sanctuaires*, (Paris: 1980), 144.

<sup>76</sup> ALEKSOVA and MANGO, "Bargala preliminary report," 268.

<sup>77</sup> ALEKSOVA and MANGO, "Bargala preliminary report," 268.

<sup>78</sup> Of 16 Macedonian examples found in the database ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΗ 11 had their position determined; of these 9 are out of axis.

<sup>79</sup> Jean-Pierre SODINI, *Les dispositifs liturgiques des basiliques paleochretiennes en Grece et dans les Balkans*, in *Corsi di Cultura sull'Arte Ravennate e Bizantina* 31 (Ravenna: 1984), 453

<sup>80</sup> ALEKSOVA and MANGO, "Bargala preliminary report," 268.

out-of-axis are always on the right side<sup>81</sup>. The pulpit of Bargala is the only accessible from west side, a feature that has no other references in Macedonia, where, anyway, ambos with a single flight of steps are quite unusual<sup>82</sup>.

The presence of an inner and an outer narthex is a quite uncommon feature<sup>83</sup> that can be explained with the necessity to conceal the sacred mysteries from outside; that's the same also for the misalignment of the entrances from outer to inner narthex.

## Some provisional conclusions

As highlighted in this paper, the use of side barriers is widespread in a large area around the Aegean and his leading Episcopal sees, Thessalonica and Corinth moreover, which occupies a great role in the definition of some liturgical features<sup>84</sup>. On the other hand, in Constantinople these separations are scarcely attested. As concerning the influences of these and others centres, we should underline the various distribution of this kind of churches in the different areas. While, the coexistence of coeval large basilicas adopting or not these devices in the same city, signifies that this choice was connected to community needs.

These barriers seem to define functional areas where many activities took place. Their main functions are the separation of clerics and laypeople, and between the different kinds of faithful; all these divisions were related to the orderly development of the rite. Except for this, it is not clear the role of side barriers in some examples, especially where these latter were doubled in time. The

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<sup>81</sup> Examples in Filippi (basilicas A, Octagon), Amphipolis (basilicas A and D, Exagon), Thasos (cross shaped basilica and Alike south), Stobi (Cathedral).

<sup>82</sup> The arrangement closer to this one is that of Eleutherna (Crete) where a single stair ambo, accessible from west, lie near the stylobate, even though the north one. See THEMELIS, "Eleutherna," 351. Ambo with a single stair ladder are attested in Thessalonica at the basilicas of Acheiropoietos, St. Sophia, St. Mena. Orlandos, *Basilike*, 545-548.

<sup>83</sup> Of the quoted 469 churches inserted in database, 40 had exonarthex; of these 24 are without any atrium. These data suggests that for the littler, or lesser monumental basilicas, the exonarthex was considered alternative to atrium.

<sup>84</sup> Jean-Pierre SODINI, "Note sur deux variantes régionales dans la basilique Grèce et des Balkans. Le tribèlon et l'emplacement de l'ambon," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 99 (1975): 581-588, especially 587.



structure of the basilica of Bargala, and the similar of the Museum basilica of Philippi, seem to introduce a time factor in the use of some separations. In the first one the same barrier could divide different kind of faithful in ordinary and special rite (i.e. Baptism), while in the second new enclosures were probably built for temporary necessity and then removed.

For a great amount of the example mentioned above, it seems quite worthy to note how the barriers prevented the faithful – or part of them – to clearly look at celebration rites and the building that hosted them. So, particular surfaces treatment, i.e. the use of marble and others lavish materials on the nave and their imitation with painted plaster on the aisles were specifically related to the presence of some categories. At the moment we can say nothing more about, except this last aspect seems crucial in order to understand the perception of the basilicas by various actors moving inside it. This, beyond the typological classifications we made extensive use here, can be a development and a purpose for these researches.

## Illustrations:

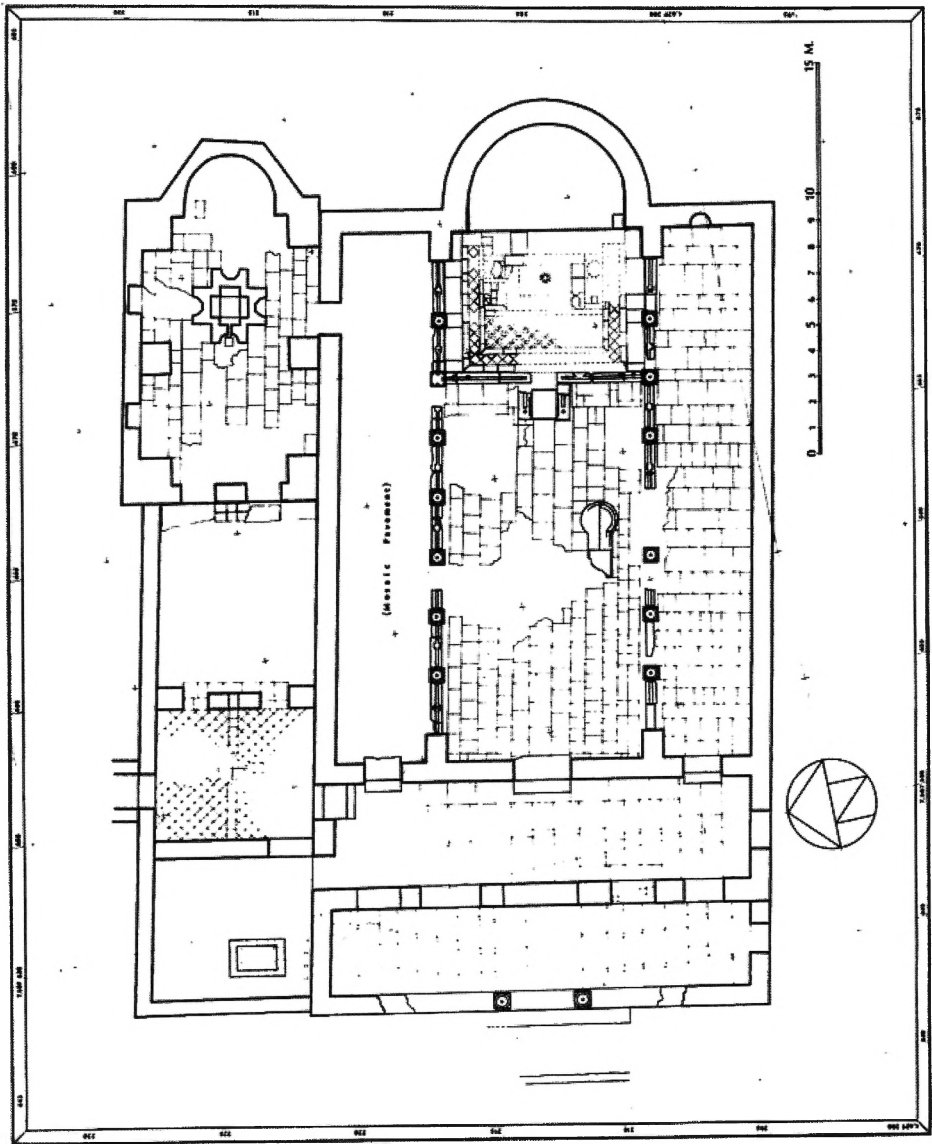
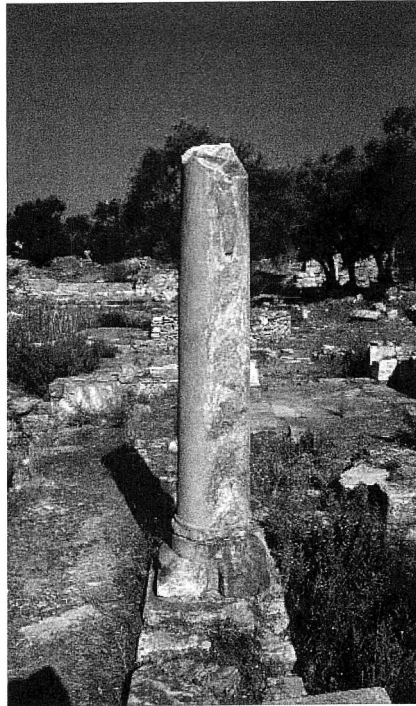
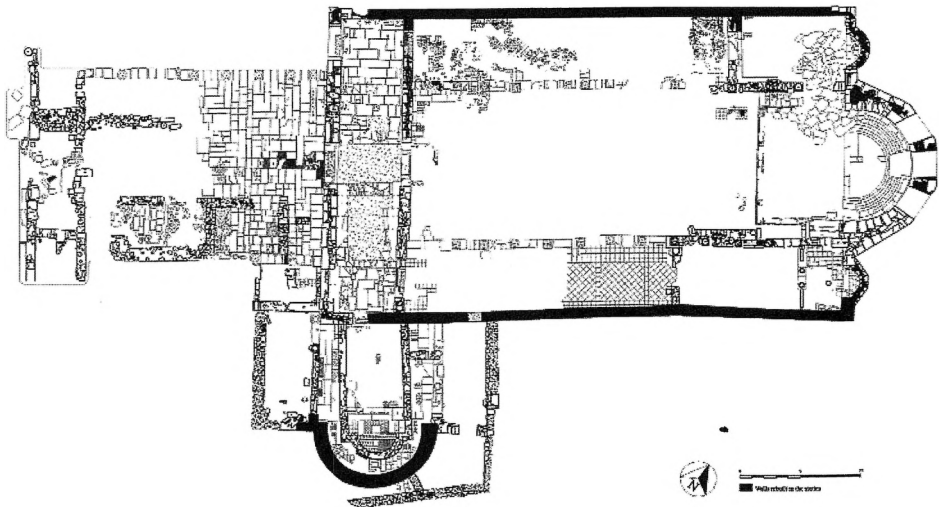


Fig. 1: Basilica of Bargala (after B. Aleksova, C. Mango)



*Fig. 2: Agora basilica of Carian Iasos, base and column of north colonnade (photo by author)*



*Fig. 3: Hierapolis, Bishop's Church (drawing by E. Garberoglio, D. Peirano)*

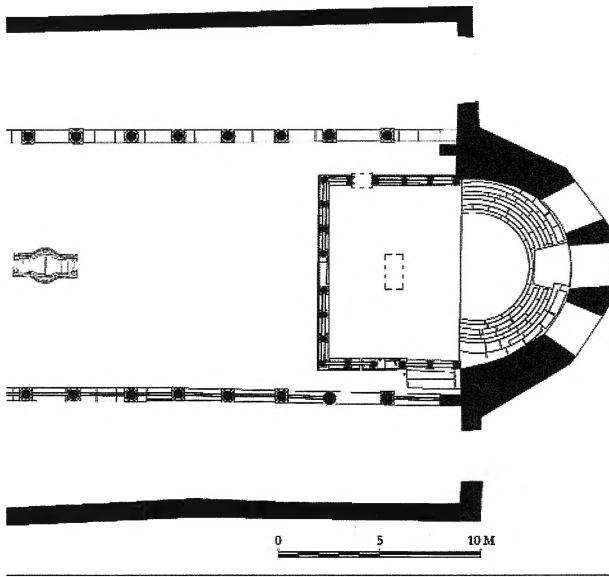


Fig. 4: Hierapolis, Bishop's Church, reconstruction of the first phase of the bema (drawing by D. Peirano)

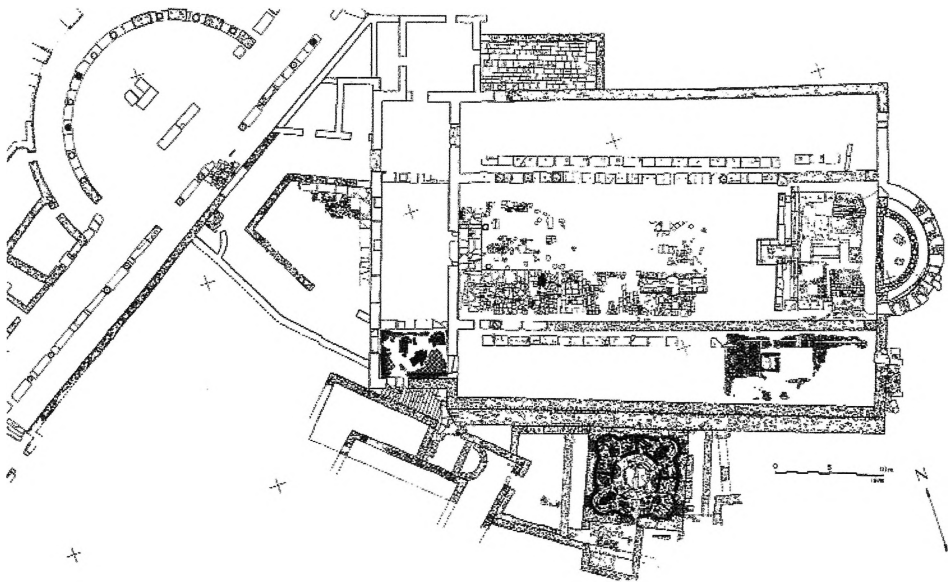


Fig. 5: Stobi, Episcopal basilica (after J. R. Wiseman, D. Mano-Zissi).arberoglio, D. Peirano)