

THE EPISCOPAL PALACE AT POREČ - RESULTS OF RECENT EXPLORATION AND RESTORATION

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The author gives a brief account on the results of recent explorations of the episcopal palace in Poreč (identification of the original wall structures and subsequent adaptations), and the restoration project. He also deals with the function and dating of the building, comparing it to other reception halls in early Christian architecture.

Many scholars have written about the episcopal palace in Poreč during the last one hundred years, but it is still true that this is the least explored part of the early Christian complex of the Poreč cathedral.¹ The reason for this is the fact that this part of the complex, unlike the church, the atrium, the baptistery and the *cella trichora*, was not open to researchers or visitors. This building has always been (that is probably for 1,300 years) the permanent residence of the Poreč bishops, who performed all their official and private functions there. Previously unknown facts came to light when major interior adaptation works were undertaken at the beginning of this century and when D. Frey prepared schematic but very accurate documentation based on partial archeological excavations and removal of the wall plaster.² Most of Frey's conclusions were correct, especially those concerning the identification of the original, extremely well preserved basic architectural structure. A clear and simple architectural structure consisting of a rectangular wall system is easily recognised in this building, with chambers added to each other in a symmetrical order. Originally, the episcopal palace was a once-stored building with a representative spacious central hall on the first

floor. Smaller and lower chambers were located on both sides, and on the south side there was a one-storied narthex which led into the building. On the other, northern side, the chambers ended in semicircular apses. The central hall had a tribelon in front of the apse, of which one column with a capital and arches with stucco and marble decorations has been preserved (Fig. 1). The layouts of the ground floor and the first floor are the similar.

In 1989, an extensive and probably long-lasting conservation and restoration programme was introduced. It will be completed when the main parts of the building are restored, which means when the building regains, at least partly, its original architecture and sculpture. The crucial moment in the project was the decision to move the bishop and episcopal offices to a new residence built close by, at the edge of the episcopal gardens. The restoration project has been progressing in parallel with the programme of exploration of the building. The interpretation of the episcopal palace is becoming more accurate and better documented, with new elements revealed at each stage of the exploration, following the removal of the recent massive structures. Experts of the Regional Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments in Rijeka entered the building in 1990. Their accurate architectural drawings helped to solve some basic dilemmas, which was to be expected since until recently we only had schematic drawings to rely on (Fig. 2). Here are some of them. The window on the east wall of the central room on the ground floor led A. Šonje to hypothesize that the wall remained from an earlier building. According to this interpretation, the episcopal palace had been erected on parts, or on the remains, of an older building.³ When we entered the room, clear traces of a large door to the exterior were discovered (Fig. 3). Since this space was directly linked with the south side of the ground floor narthex, we can now say that the building originally had some sort of porches on the south and the west side, from which light penetrated through the windows to the central ground floor hall. Besides, explorations so far have failed to reveal traces which could prove the hypothesis of an earlier phase of the building. Correctly observed and documented, the sole remnant of the blind arcades enabled us to reconstruct the external apse surface (Fig. 4). Precisely focused, limited and carefully carried out removal of the wall plaster at fifty different points in the interior and the exterior yielded the most important results considering the understanding of the original structure of

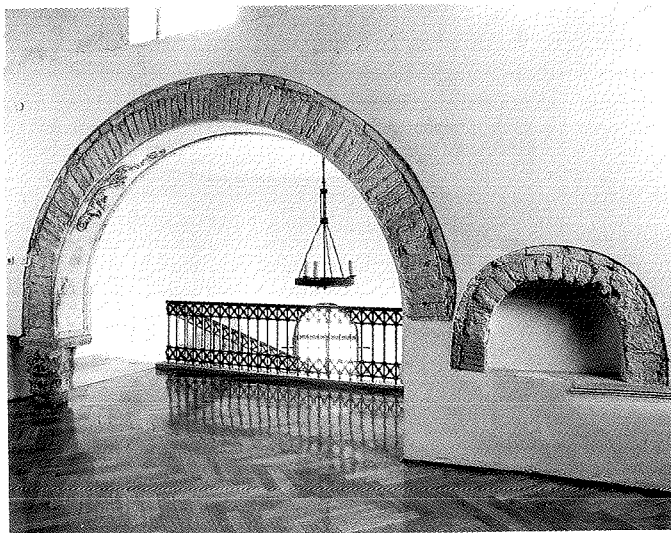


Fig. 1., Poreč, Episcopal Palace, remains of the tribelon

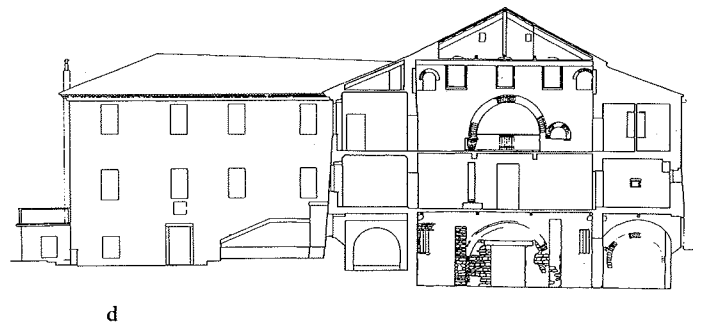
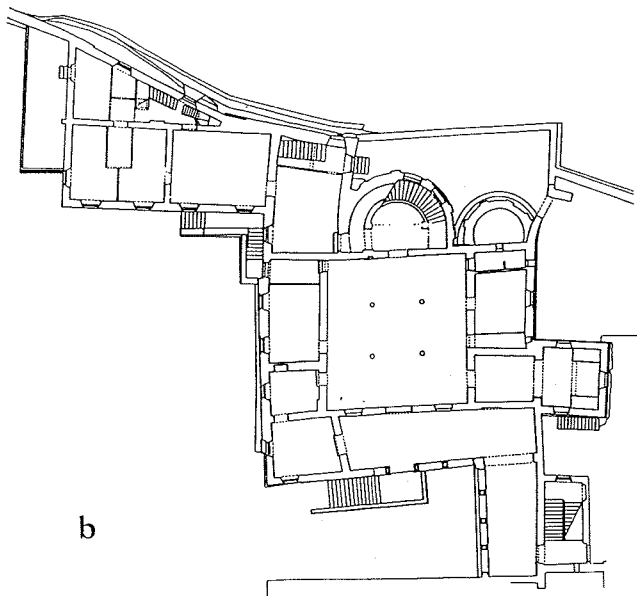
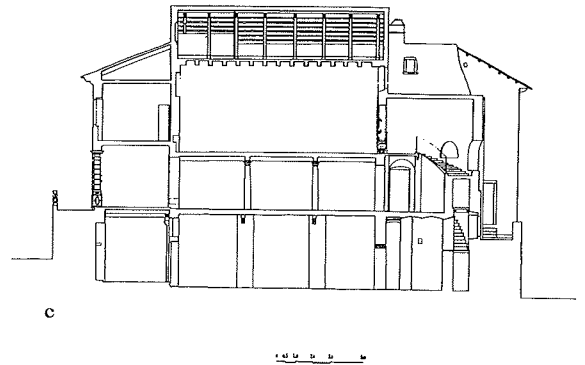
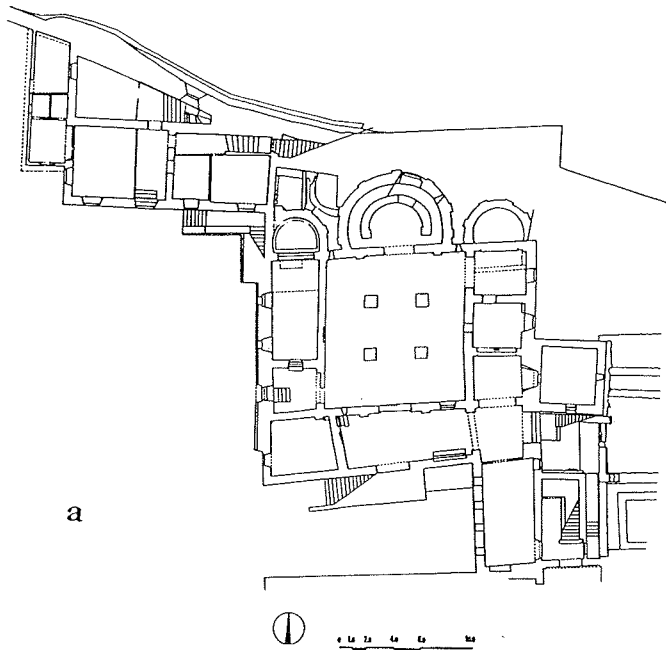


Fig. 2., Poreč, Episcopal Palace, a) ground plan; b) first floor plan; c) longitudinal section; d) transverse section

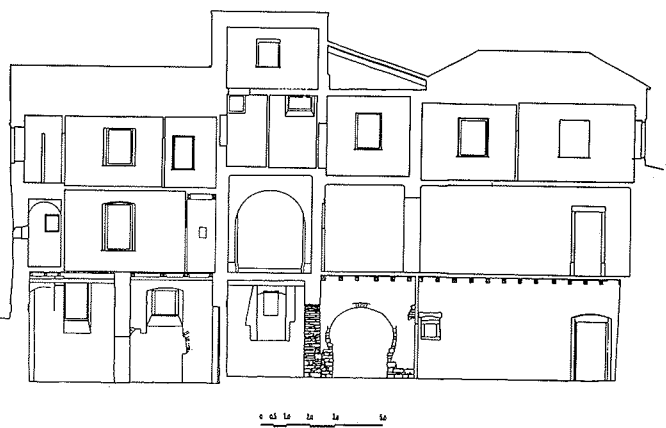


Fig. 3., Poreč, Episcopal Palace, longitudinal section, view of the inner face of the east wall

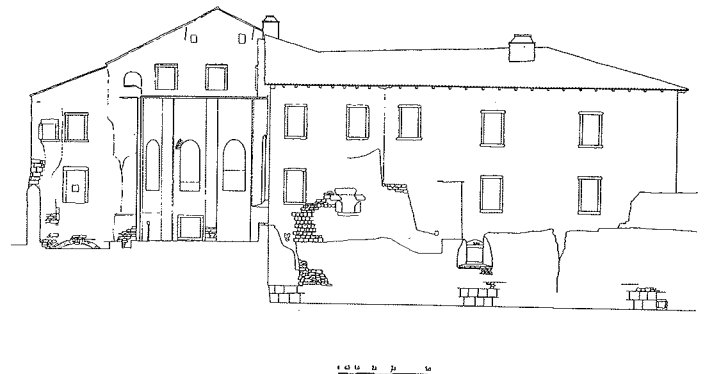


Fig. 4., Poreč, Episcopal Palace, north facade



Fig. 5., Poreč, Episcopal Palace, transverse section, view to the south (the original position of the floor is marked)

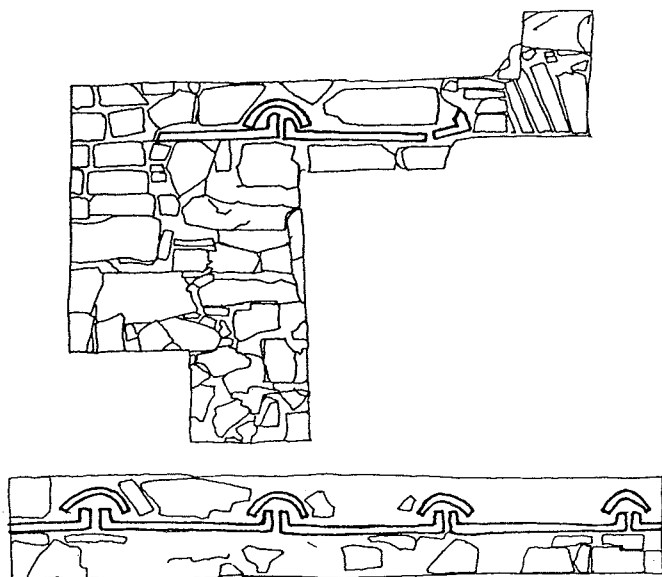


Fig. 6., Poreč, Episcopal Palace, remains of the antique eaves

the building. I shall describe some of the results, but it is necessary to say first that they mostly prove, or provide physical evidence for the reconstructions suggested by earlier researches, notably by Frey.

The removal of the plaster from the base of the *tribelon* column and the opposite wall at the bottom of the door-post at the main entrance to the first floor gave us the exact information about the original floor levels. It also proved that most of the stone corbels supporting the wooden beams of the ground floor are original, from the time of the construction (Fig. 5).

The question concerning the level of the roofs over the lower side rooms was also answered after the removal of the plaster. The remains of an ancient roof are preserved on three sides of the building continuously and on the same level (Fig. 6). The line of the *tegulae* and the *imbrex* embedded into the walls and forming continuous eaves was broken when the side rooms were elevated. Part of the roman eaves inside the wall are fully preserved and will be presented.

Our analyses led to a fairly accurate identification of the original wall structures and subsequent adaptations (Fig. 7). The suggestions for the architectural restoration of the building were based on research conclusions and architectural analyses. The aim was to reveal the original structures and spaces, but we also had to take into account all the valuable elements of the episcopal palace that were added over the centuries. All parts of the restoration and integration project had to be based on exact evidence, leaving no room for imaginative speculation or "creation" (Fig. 8).

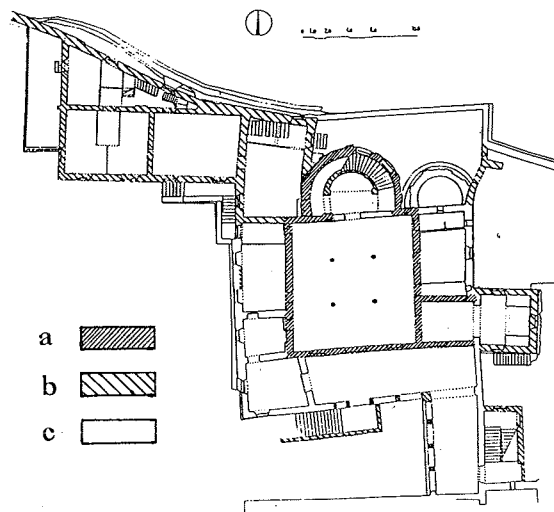
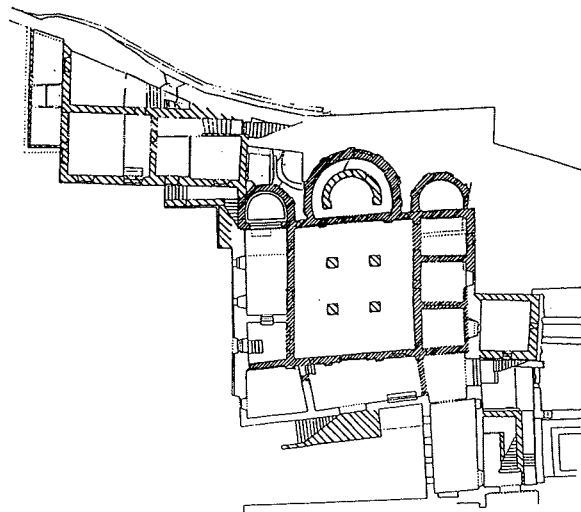
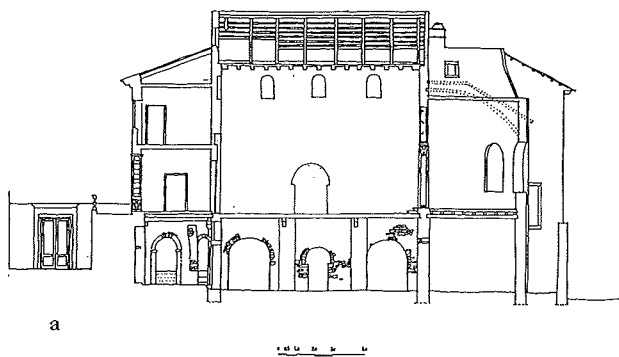


Fig. 7., Poreč, Episcopal Palace, a) original early christian structure; b) later additions and repairs; c) not yet explored

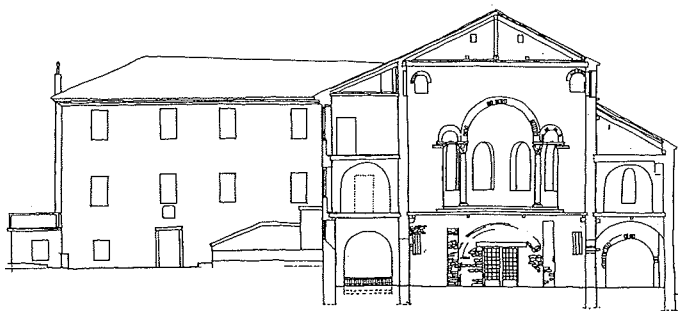
It will be possible to restore the authentic atmosphere of the architectural space of the central hall almost completely. We are planning to reopen the original high windows in the west and north walls of the hall to produce the typical "basilica-type illumination" (Fig. 9). The *tribelon*, as well as the original door, will have to be dismantled in order to restore the missing parts. As for the exterior, the east facade will partly regain its authentic outlook when the second and the third floor of the side chambers are pulled down. The complete ground floor facade surface will be revealed then, but there still remains the problem of reconstruction of the side apse (Fig. 10).

The partial reconstruction of the main halls of the episcopal palace, especially the central first floor hall will raise the question of the authentic function of the building. The richly illuminated central hall was probably appropriately decorated, as the remains of the marble and stucco work on the *tribelon* suggest. We can easily imagine a bishop on the *cathedra* inside the apse opening towards the hall through a ceremonial triple arch. That is the *fastigia* - a scenic frame set to stress the extreme importance of the person bearing a distinctive honour and function. The analogy with the architectural elements on well-known Late Antiquity buildings, such as the *protiron* of the *Peristyle* of Diocletian's palace or the prospect of Theodoric's *palatium*, does not imply exactly the same significance, but the resemblance is indicative (Fig. 11). Thanks to Picard's anthology of literary works about reception halls in early Christian cathedral complexes, there is no doubt about the name of such a hall.⁴ It is a *salutatorium* or *segretarium* (in the late 6th century the two expressions were almost synonyms). The



a

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



b

Fig. 8., Poreč, Episcopal Palace, reconstruction project a) longitudinal section; b) transverse section

name denoted a hall in which the bishop met the clergy, guests and congregation for non-liturgical ceremonies. In such halls religious councils and meetings of the clergy were held, it was the scene for the *audientia episcopalis*, but also a place where the bishop exercised his magistrate functions according to the right ceded to him by the emperor. It is well known that in Late Antiquity bishops frequently arbitrated in secular cases. So it is easy to imagine Bishop Euphrasius, the exponent and symbol of the Justinian reconquest, seated underneath the *tribelon* and giving instructions on the running of the diocese and the *municipium*.

This brings us to the question of the time when the episcopal palace was built. The simplest and most attractive answer offered by some scholars is that Bishop Euphrasius had it built in the mid-6th century.⁵ Some of the details support this view, as does also the analogy with St. Agnes's church at Muntajana near Poreč, dated to the same period. Differences in the construction technology used to build the episcopal palace and Euphrasius's adaptation of the basilica provide clear evidence that the buildings were not built in the same time. One of the ways to solve the problem of the chronology is based on morphological analysis and the analysis of the type of work, as well as comparisons with similar examples. The closest and basically related in type are the episcopal buildings erected in the High Justinian period at Stobi and Caričin Grad, as well as *Comes Pierus's* palace at Polače on the island of Mljet. The latter can be dated to the beginning or first half of the 6th century, judging by Odoakar's deed of donation from the end of the 5th century (Fig. 12).

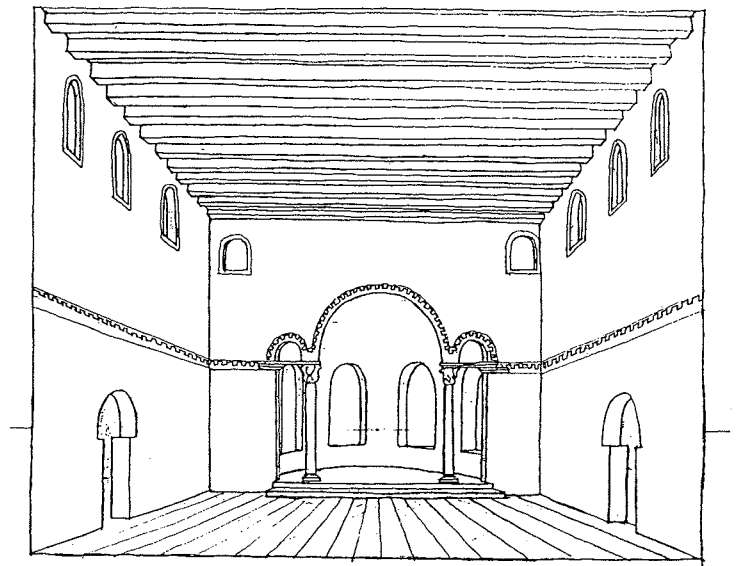


Fig. 9., Poreč, Episcopal Palace, project for the reconstruction of the central hall

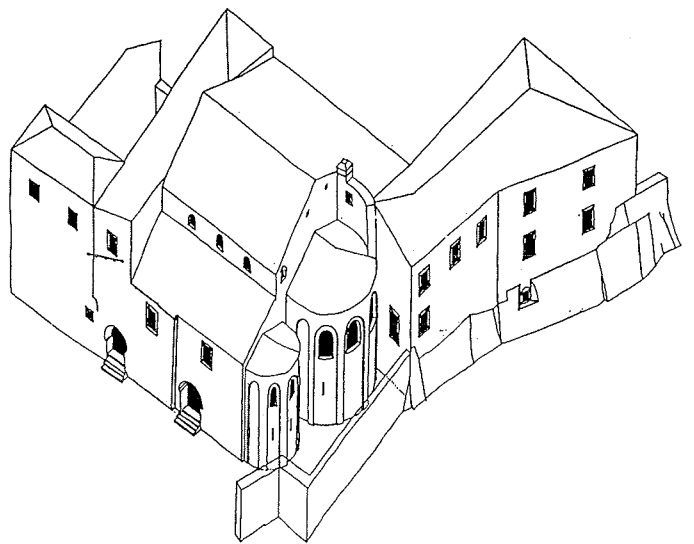


Fig. 10., Poreč, Episcopal Palace, reconstruction project

It should be noted that the main episcopal building at Caričin Grad (*Justiniana Prima*), like the one at Poreč, was originally also one-storied. The researchers suggest that the official ceremonial area (hall) was on the ground floor, while the first floor served as the bishop's residential premises.⁶ The Poreč palace had the ceremonial hall on the first floor. *Pierus's* palace on Mljet shows that the episcopal palaces were built in the form of a *palatium*, which is understandable since they were primarily used for official functions. The main difference between the *palatium* and the *villa* is the presence of space for public functions (*audientia*).⁷

Current research and plans for the next few years envisage archaeological excavations in parts of the building not yet explored. It is hoped in this way to define the actual stratigraphy and thus settle the chronological issue of the construction of parts of the cathedral complex. In 1994, the annex chapel built in 1884 on the east side of the episcopal palace was pulled down. Underneath the annex, the layers of two or three paved streets were discovered. One of them certainly dates from the period of the pre-Euphrasian basilica. We did not detect the layer that would match the floor level of Euphrasius's adaptation of the cathedral. Further research will extend to the passage situated between the episcopal palace and the north cult buildings (so-called pre-Euphrasian "basilica B"). The passage is actually a street—an extension of the roman *Cardo*, so it requires no hypothesizing.

Translation: Snježana Matejčić

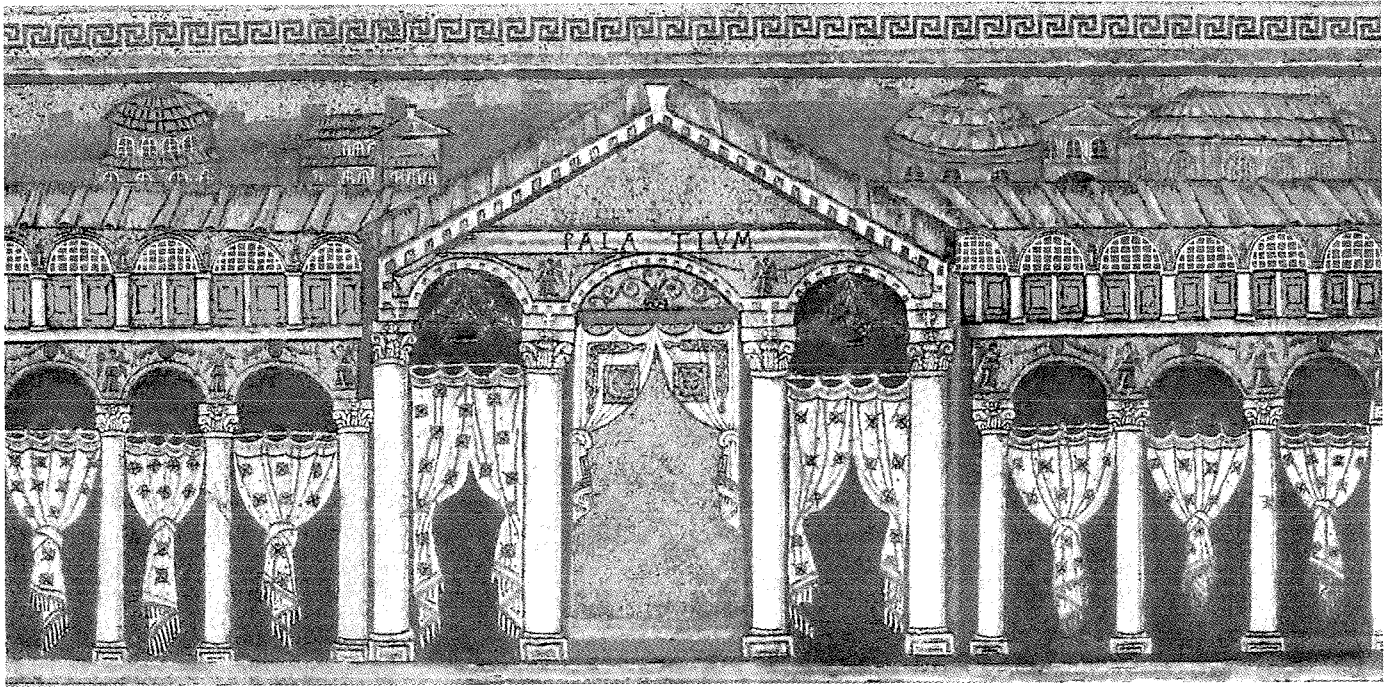


Fig. 11., Ravenna, S. Apolinare Nuovo, mosaic showing a palatium

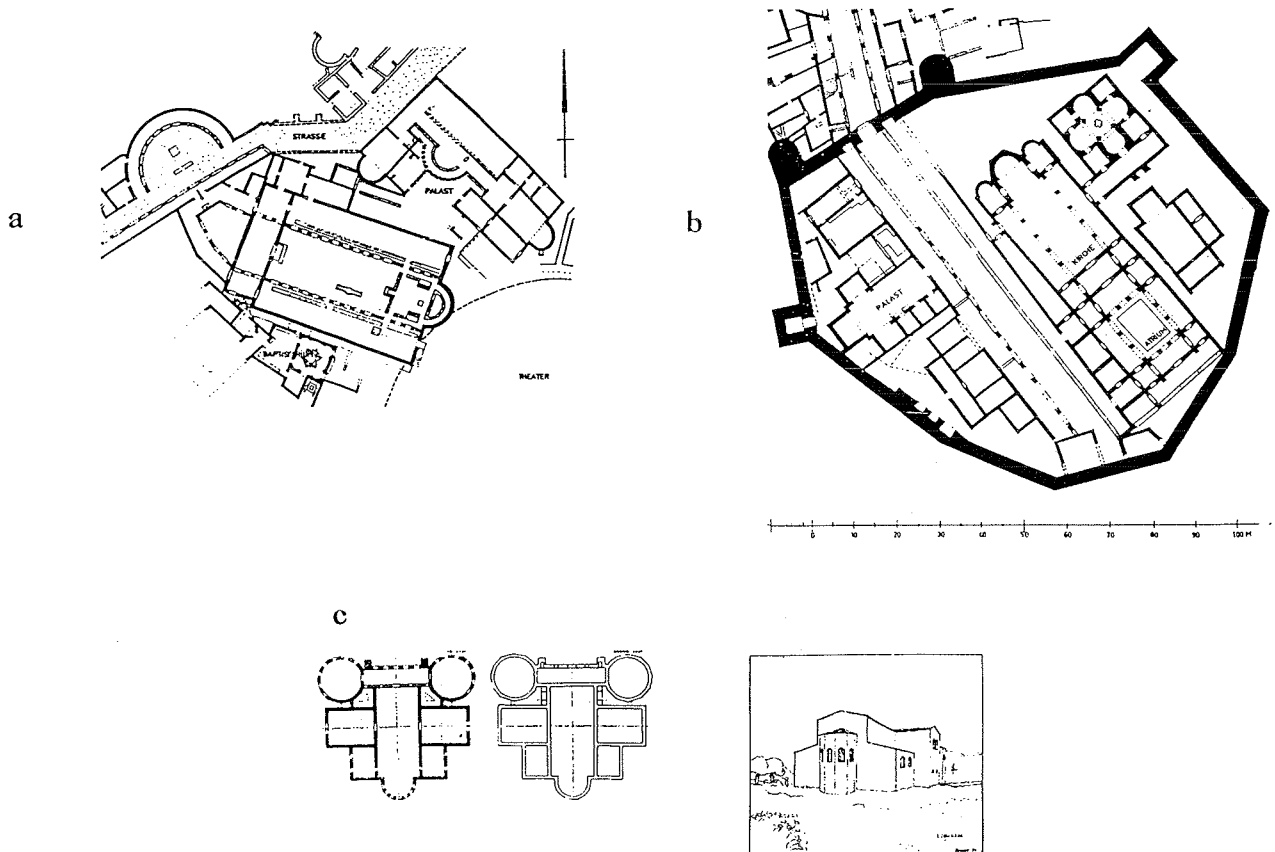


Fig. 12., a) Stobi, b) Caričin Grad, c) Polače on Mljet

¹ The episcopal palace is often mentioned in articles about the cathedral complex in Poreč. Among recent works, the most complete bibliography on the Euphrasiana is to be found in A. TERRY, *The architecture and architectural sculpture of the sixth-century Euphrasius cathedral at Poreč* (Ph.D., University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign) 1984., pp. 533-553; E. RUSSO, *Sculture del complesso eufrasiano di Parenzo*, Napoli 1991., pp. 297-306. Before them, A. Šonje's bibliography was the richest (*Biskupski dvor gradevinskog sklopa Eufrazijeve bazilike u Poreču*, *Peristil*, 25, Zagreb 1982., pp. 5-32).

² D. FREY, *Neue Untersuchungen und Grabungen in Parenzo*, *Mitteilungen der KK Zentralkommission für Denkmalpflege*, 13, Wien 1914.

³ A. ŠONJE, *Biskupski...* p. 26.

⁴ J.-C. PICARD, *La fonction des salles de réception dans le groupe épiscopal de Genève*, *Rivista di archeologia cristiana*, 1-2, Roma 1989., pp. 87-104.

⁵ Different opinions on the time of the construction of the episcopal palace are reviewed by E. RUSSO, *Sculture...* p. 195.

⁶ V. KONDIĆ - V. POPOVIĆ, *Caričin Grad, utvrđeno naselje u vizantijskom Iliriku*, Beograd 1977, pp. 37-41; W. MÜLLER-WIENER, *Riflessioni sulle caratteristiche dei palazzi episcopali*, *Felix Ravenna*, 1982, p. 129.

⁷ N. DUVAL will say: "...L'episcopium ne difère guère d'une résidence aristocratique de l'époque". (*L'ecclēsia - espace de la communauté chrétienne dans la cité*, in: *Naissance des arts chrétiens, Atlas des monuments paléochrétiens de la France*, Paris 1991., p. 67) It would be correct to say that the episcopium is not different from other residences belonging to office holders of official (state) authority in Late Antiquity. On the functions of individual chambers in Late Antiquity palaces especially those with an official character, cf. S. ELLIS, *The "Palace of the Dux" at Apollonia and Related Houses*, in: *Cyrenaica in Antiquity*, Oxford 1985., pp. 15-25.

BISKUPIJA EUFRAZIJANE U POREČU - REKAPITULACIJA PROBLEMA PRED NOVOM FAZOM ISTRAŽIVANJA

SAŽETAK

Zgrada Biskupije u Poreču prisutna je u znanstvenoj literaturi duže od sto godina, ali predstavlja najmanje istraženi dio ranokršćanskog katedralnog sklopa u Poreču. D. Frey je početkom našeg stoljeća iskoristio prigodu velike adaptacije unutrašnjosti zgrade i izradio shematsku, ali vrlo točnu dokumentaciju temeljenu na djelomičnim arheološkim istraživanjima i sondiranju žbuke na zidovima. Veći broj njegovih podataka i zaključaka i danas se može smatrati točnima, naročito što se tiče identifikacije izvorne, iznenađujuće dobro sačuvane arhitektonske jezgre. Razabire se gradevina jasne i vrlo jednostavne arhitektonske strukture ortogonalnog sistema zidova, te za ranokršćansku arhitekturu tipičnih linearno adiranih prostorija. Izvorno je zgrada Biskupije bila jednokatno zdanje s reprezentativnom, visokom središnjom dvoranom na katu. Sa strana bile su niže i manje prostorije, a s južne strane narteks na kat iz kojega se ulazilo u unutrašnjost. Na suprotnoj, sjevernoj strani prostorije su bile upotpunjene polukružnim apsidama. Glavna dvorana na katu imala je pred apsidom *tribelon* od kojega je sačuvan jedan stup s kapitelom i lukovi na kojima su još vidljivi ostaci štuko i mramorne dekoracije. Tlocrt prizemlja ponavlja oblike na katu.

Godine 1989. započeo se odvijati restauratorsko-konzervatorski program obnove Biskupije čime će joj djelomično biti vraćen izvorni izgled i prostornost. Izrada projekata restauriranja odvija se paralelno s istraživačkim programima na zgradi. Već sam arhitektonski snimak razriješio je određene dileme. Navodim samo neke: pojava prozora na istočnom zidu glavne središnje prostorije u prizemlju navela je A. Šonju na pretpostavku kako je ovaj zid ostatak neke starije faze građevine, na što pojava prozora u interijeru svakako može asocirati. Po toj interpretaciji zgrada Biskupije nastala je na dijelovima ili ostacima neke starije zgrade. Kada se prodrlo u prostoriju istočno od zida s prozorom, otkriveni su jasni ostaci velikih vratiju prema eksterijeru. Budući da je taj prostor bio neposredno povezan s prostorom prizemnog narteksa na južnoj strani, možemo reći da je građevina izvorno imala poluzatvorene prostore i na južnoj i na zapadnoj strani, neku vrstu trijema. L-tlocrt kroz kojega je kroz prozore dolazilo svjetlo u središnju dvoranu prizemlja. Cjelokupna istraživanja provedena u prizemlju zgrade nisu pokazala tragove koji bi potvrdili hipotezu o starijoj fazi građevine. Nadalje, točno opažanje i dokumentiranje jedinog ostatka luka slijepe arkature omogućilo je rekonstrukciju izgleda vanjskog plašta apsida. No za sada najvažnije rezultate, bitne za shvaćanje izvorne strukture građevine, dalo je sondiranje zidova na pedesetak mjesta u unutrašnjosti i na vanjskoj strani zgrade. Napominjem da su rezultati sondiranja potvrdili ili bolje

rečeno fizički dokazali rekonstrukcije koje su dali raniji istraživači, ponajprije Frey.

Otvaranje žbuke u zoni podanka stupa *tribelona* i nasuprot njemu uz dno dovratnika glavnog ulaza na prvom katu dalo je egzaktnije podatke o izvornim visinama podova.

Jedan od problema koji je riješen podacima sondiranja jest i pitanje visine krovova nižih, bočnih prostora. Na tri strane zgrade u konstantnoj visini i kontinuirano pronađeni su ostaci antičkog krova. Niz tegula usadenih u zid tako da čine kontinuiranu strehu u jednom je trenutku bio polomljen kada su bočni prostori dobili još jedan kat.

Prmatranje zidnih struktura rezultiralo je poprilično točnom identifikacijom izvornih, prvotnih struktura i razlučilo ih od kasnijih pregradnji. Slijedom takvih i sličnih nalaza i na osnovu arhitektonske analize bilo je moguće izraditi prijedlog arhitektonske obnove zgrade.

U unutrašnjosti zgrade bit će moguće skoro u potpunosti obnoviti izvorni ugođaj arhitektonskog prostora središnje dvorane. Čak će sa zapadne i sjeverne strane biti otvoreni visoki prozori "bazilikalne rasvjete". U vanjštini će biskupija izvorni izgled djelomično povratiti na istočnom pročelju. Tu će biti demontirani drugi i treći kat bočnih prostora; potpuno će se otvoriti fasadno lice prizemlja, a rekonstrukciju bočne apsida još treba raspraviti.

Izgled rekonstruiranih glavnih dijelova Biskupije, a naročito središnje glavne dvorane na prvom katu potiče pitanje o izvornoj namjeni tih prostora. Zahvaljujući Picardovoj antologiji literarnih izvora u dvoranama za primanje unutar sklopa ranokršćanske katedrale, nema više dilema o tome kako se takova dvorana nazivala. To je *salutatorium* ili *segretarium* (krajem 6. st. ta su dva izraza praktično sinonimi). Naziv označava dvoranu u kojoj biskup prima kler, uzvanike i vjernike u izvanliturgijskim ceremonijama.

Postavlja se i pitanje kada je sagrađena biskupija. Najprivlačniji odgovor kojega zastupaju određeni istraživači govori da je podignuta u doba i od biskupa Eufrazija, sredinom 6. st. Na to upućuju i određeni detalji te analogije s crkvom svete Agneze u Muntajani u blizini Poreča, koja se datira u isto doba. Razlika u tehnici zidanja Biskupije i zidova Eufrazijeve adaptacije velike bazilike govore, pak, da Biskupija i crkva nisu sagrađene u isto vrijeme. Tipološka i morfološka analiza te sravnjivanje s analognim primjerima vodi k razriješenoj kronologiji. Zemljopisno najbliže i tipološki bitno srodne građevine jesu zgrade episkopija nastale upravo u punoj justinijanskoj epohi u Stobima i Caričinom gradu, te palača *Commesa Pieriusa* u Polačama na otoku Mljetu, koju na osnovu Odoakrove darovnice s kraja 5. st. možemo datirati u početak ili prvu polovicu 6. st.