

Noël Duval and Vladislav Popović (edd.), *Caričin Grad I*. Collection de l'École française de Rome 75. Institut archéologique de Belgrade – École française de Rome, Belgrade–Rome 1984. XI, 193 pages, 193 illustrations, 5 plates.

This volume is the first of an anticipated series containing the results of the current collaborative investigations of French and Yugoslav scholars at Caričin Grad in Illyricum. Though still not confirmed with certainty, the site is generally identified as the city of Justiniana Prima, established on virgin soil by Justinian near his birthplace. It is of major significance as one of the latest urban foundations of antiquity. Moreover, since its entire lifespan can hardly have lasted more than 80 years, its remains provide a rare opportunity to study an early Christian city unencumbered by the accumulation of any earlier phases in its history. Exploration of the site dates back to the early years of the century, but the work has been intermittent. With the establishment of the joint programme of French and Yugoslav teams currently in progress, however, we may at last expect a detailed and comprehensive account of the city's physical appearance and its short-lived existence.

It will no doubt be some time before the results of the present excavations are fully published, but this volume devoted in some measure to the unfinished business of earlier research on the site marks an excellent beginning. Though somewhat heterogeneous in content, the largest part of the work, amounting to three quarters of the total length, consists of a description of two of the city's eight churches. The remainder of the work contains essays by various scholars on interesting objects of early Byzantine date found at or near Caričin Grad (chapter 3). C. METZGER discusses two items, the first a Eulogia flask of a type associated with an as yet unidentified sanctuary in Asia Minor; this example from Caričin Grad being the most

northerly penetration of this object hitherto recorded. The second is an ivory cover for a box, possibly a reliquary of some sort. It is decorated in relief with a scene which Metzger interprets as the miracle of the woman with the issue of blood. Starting from a humble decorated bone comb-case V. POPOVIĆ reviews in detail the complex spread of certain 'barbaric' motifs in the everyday objects of Caričin Grad and elsewhere. Equally stimulating is J. WERNER'S far-ranging essay on an iron stirrup that traces the development of this simple but revolutionary artefact across Europe and central Asia to China and Japan. A discussion by V. KONDIĆ of the important hoard of early Byzantine gold coins found in the limes fort of Hajdučka Vodenica forms the brief concluding chapter.

Clearly the major significance of the work lies in the account of the two churches, the so-called Cruciform Church (B) by J. GUYON and G. CARDI in Chapter 1 and the so-called Single-Nave Church (J) by N. DUVAL and M. JEREMIĆ in Chapter 2. Neither structure compares in size or complexity with the more familiar churches of the city such as the Cathedral (A) or the so-called Transept Church (D), but each provides its share of interesting features. The careful presentation of their plans and structures, as well as individual architectural elements should contribute much to a clearer understanding of the ecclesiastical architecture not only of Caričin Grad, but of the entire region. Unquestionably the study of the Cruciform Church (B) posed the greater problems. The building, once mistaken for a *villa urbana*, was originally excavated by Petković in 1938, with further investigation in 1952, none of which seems to have been conducted with particular care or reported in any detail. This fact, together with the considerable deterioration that the building has suffered in the interval, presented Guyon and Cardi with the daunting task, all too common in archaeological research, of correcting the inadequate work of the past. They were fortunate, however, in being able to carry out a series of supplementary sondages in 1980 and 1981 that has aided much in completing the picture. The reward of their labours appears in the very detailed plan and cross-section of the building provided in plate III which form the basis for the copious if somewhat diffuse account of its surprisingly complicated building history and proposed restoration. The text is fully reinforced by numerous photographs and drawings of individual and stratigraphic sections. The most interesting feature reported by Guyon und Cardi is surely the monumental approach to the church from the west, which required a major modification in the already existing east portico of the main south street of the Upper City. This involved replacing the pilasters adjacent to the west face of the church to accommodate a colonnaded porch leading to a broad staircase which descended to a landing in front of the west wall of the atrium. The atrium itself presents problems, having a distinctly foreshortened appearance, with its western portico omitted in favour of the monumental staircase and its eastern portico subsumed, as Guyon believes, by the narthex. The most probable explanation for these anomalies, however, lies in the awkward constraints of the site with its steep eastward slope rather than in any liturgical concern. The same mundane consideration probably also accounts for the adoption for the church itself of a cruciform plan, more suited to the limited space available for its length than the more common basilical plan. The degree of confidence with which the building can be restored diminishes sharply from west to east. There are reasonable grounds for accepting the restored elevations of the entrance portico, staircase and atrium, as proposed in figs. 66 and 67. The same cannot be said for narthex and church, however. There are, to be sure, parallels elsewhere at Caričin Grad and at other sites in the Balkans to support a narthex flanked by towers, but the evidence for these features in this church is unconvincing. The existence of a staircase in the northern annexe is highly questionable and the strength of the bearing walls of the annexes for instance is by no means as substantial as in other examples where a similar design has been proposed. As for the church, the authors frankly concede the impossibility, given the deficient condition of the remains, of restoring any of the building's superstructure and illustrate (figs. 66 and 67) purely *exempli causa* an arrangement in which each arm of the cruciform has a roof of equal height. The reservations expressed in the text unfortunately do not extend to the drawings. Consequently, if experience from other sites is any guide, these drawings are likely to bestow authority on all elements of the restoration without distinction.

In dealing with the so-called Single-Nave Church (J) Duval and Jeremić fared somewhat easier. This building, located some distance outside the city-wall, was exposed in a series of well-planned excavations from 1975 to 1978. Though much of the building is reduced to little more than ground-level it presents no great difficulty in its plan. The basic features are readily identifiable – atrium with three porticoes (a single opening on the west, triple openings on the north and south), tripartite narthex comprising a cruciform central hall flanked by north and south annexe respectively and the single-nave church, with semicircular apse encased in a polygonal wall with three facets on the exterior. The building in fact closely resembles another

extra-mural church, the so-called Triconch Church (E) in many of its details. Two features of special note are the remains of an ambo with oval pulpit flanked by symmetrical staircases situated near the centre of the nave and the arrangement of the pavement in the nave suggesting a processional passage towards the Sanctuary. This church too presents difficulties in the restoration of its elevation, though the authors have in this case supplied a cautionary note in the captions of their illustrations. Nevertheless, despite their reservations I find the massive walls of the annexes of the narthex more convincing as supports for towers than in Church B.

Apart from the architecture of these buildings the question of their function arises. The presence of carefully constructed burials in the Cruciform church, two in the narthex floor and one in the south annexe certainly suggest a funerary role. An alternative theory proposed by Popović identifies the same church as one in a series of stages in a processional liturgy during Holy Week that would have traversed several of the city's churches (Church J would hardly qualify because of its distant location). Attractive though such theories might be, it is preferable to acknowledge that the archaeological evidence from both buildings does not warrant an unequivocal answer to such questions. This holds true also for attempts to define the function of individual elements within each church, such as the south annexe of the Single-Nave Church (J) with its small apse in the thickness of the east wall which Kondić and Popović have identified as a diaconicon.

More fruitful scope for the archaeologist seems to lie in reconstructing the actual operation of individual churches from the bric à brac that tends to accumulate in their various levels. The catalogue of finds from the Single-Nave Church (J) illustrates this well, especially the numerous fragments of equipment associated with the lighting of the building, polycandela and the hooks, chains, pierced crosses, and brackets employed to suspend them and the fragments of glass lamps that sat in the polycandela. This attention to *instrumenta domestica* from the Single-Nave Church contrasts markedly with the complete neglect of such material in the account of the Cruciform Church. With the exception of two coins no finds of any sort are reported. Indeed it is difficult to reconcile the attention to detail shown by the authors in describing the distinct levels of the stratigraphy encountered in their sondages with their failure to document any of the contents of these same levels. Yet pottery and bones are alluded to en passant in the accounts of these levels, and we know of at least one significant group of fragments of glass lamps from Church B which appears as comparanda to illustrate similar material from Church J (p. 141 n. 39, fig. 146). The same lack of curiosity is reflected also in the failure to provide a scientific report on the skeletons from the three graves of Church B. Even a hasty examination by a physical anthropologist could readily have defined the sex, age at death and any major lesions, information which might have shed some light on the status of the deceased (the presence of females would certainly dispose of the possibility that the graves were exclusively for clergy).

It would be unfair, however, to dwell unduly on such shortcomings. Apart from the intrinsic interest of the various essays in the closing chapters for experts in the various fields represented, this volume constitutes a major stage in providing the documentation necessary for a thorough understanding of the ecclesiastical life of Caričin Grad. The enormous scope of what we may expect from future study of this quality is already to hand in N. DUVAL's recent synthesis of the religious architecture of the city (*L'architecture religieuse de Tsaritchin Grad dans le cadre de l'Illyricum oriental au VI^e siècle*, in: *Villes et Peuplements dans l'Illyricum oriental. Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome*, Suppl. 77 [1984] 399–481).