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LIFE IN TRANSITION ON THE ROMAN BORDER: THE LOWER DANUBE, 4TH–7TH CENTURIES

СОФИЯ
2025

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ФОНД
НАУЧНИ
ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ
Министерство на образованието и науката

Този сборник е резултат от дейностите, осъществени в рамките на втория етан на научно-изследователски проект на тема: „Граници и културни модели: езичество *vs* християнство в контактната зона на дунавския лимес (Малка Скития и Втора Мизия през IV–VII в.)“, финансиран чрез „конкурс за финансиране на фундаментални научни изследвания – 2021“ от фонд „научни изследвания“ на МОН по договор № КП-06-Н60/10 от 17.11.2021 г. Фондът не носи отговорност за съдържанието на докладите, представени на научния форум, както и за съдържанието на рекламните и други материали за него.





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СЪДЪРЖАНИЕ
CONTENTS

Bilyana Torbatova/Биляна Торбатова, The End of the Pagan Cult Infrastructure in the Province of Scythia (according to Archaeological Data) // *За края на езическата култова инфраструктура в провинция Скития (по археологически данни)*..... 5

Alexander Ivanov/Александър Иванов, Aspects of Christian Urban Landscapes in Late Antique Thrace: Unanswered Questions // *Аспекти от християнизацията на градското пространство в късноантична Тракия: въпросите чакат отговор*..... 21

Георги Атанасов/Georgi Atanasov, Специфики на църквите от втората половина на IV и първата половина на V век в Скития и Втора Мизия // *Particularities of the Churches from the Second Half of the 4th and the First Half of the 5th Century in Scythia and Moesia Secunda*..... 39

Albena Milanova/Албена Миланова, On the Traces of Early Byzantine Basilicas in Balchik// *По следите на ранновизантийски базилики в Балчик*.... 61

Боян Тотев, Светлана Тодорова/Boyan Totev, Svetlana Todorova, Археологическият комплекс Шан кая в подножието на крепостта *Palmat(ae)* (Резултати от спасително археологическо проучване през 2023 г.) // *The Shan Kaya Archaeological Complex at the Foot of the Palmate Fortress (Results from the Rescue Archaeological Excavations in 2023)*..... 87

Sergey Torbatov, The Danubian *Praesidia* of the First Tetrarchs // *Дунавските* президии *на първите тетрарси*..... 99

Constantin Șova/Константин Шова, Altinum/Altina: Aspects of Fortification on the Danube *Limes // Алтинум/Алтина: аспекти на фортификацията по Дунавския* лимес..... 119

Cristina Paraschiv-Talmațchi/Кристина Параскив-Талмацки, Scythia at the End of Antiquity: the Effects of Avar-Slavic Attacks on the Border Territory // *Скития в края на Античността: отражението на аваро-славянските нападения върху граничната зона*..... 137

Gabriel Mircea Talmațchi/Габриел Мирча Талмацки, New Archaeological Research at Tropaeum Traiani (Sector C) and Histria (Sector Metaxa-Constanța) and the Situation of Monetary Landmarks Specific to the 6th–7th Centuries AD //

Новите археологически проучвания в Тропеум Траяни (сектор С) и Истрия (сектор Метакса-Констанца) и ситуацията със специфичните монетни маркери за VI–VII век 159

Николай Русев/Nikolay Russev, Икономическо развитие и търговски контакти на Залдапа в периода IV–VII век (по данни от керамиката) // *Economic Development and Trade Contacts of Zaldapa, 4th–7th Centuries (according to Ceramics' Data)* 179

Florin Curta/Флорин Курта, Deathscapes of Dobrudzha and Crimea: A Comparative Approach // *Погребалните пространства на Добруджа и Крим: сравнителен анализ*..... 193

Yuri Mogarichev, Pavel Kuzenkov/Юри Могаричов, Павел Кузенков, The Gothic Diocese in Crimea as an Example of Extraterritorial Church Region of Byzantium // *Диоцезът Готия в Крим като пример за екстратериториален църковен регион във Византия*..... 211

Erikson Nikolli, Elio Hobdari/Ериксон Николи, Елио Хобдари, Epirus Vetus and Epirus Nova – Defining Internal Borders // *Стар Епир и Нов Епир: дефиниране на вътрешни граници* 217

Цветелин Степанов/Tsvetelin Stepanov, Граничността в юга на днешна Испания (VI–VII в.): историографски обзор и теоретични подходи // *The Problem of Frontiers in the South of Modern Spain (6th–7th Centuries): Historiographic Overview and Theoretical Approaches* 237

Ивайла Попова/Ivayla Popova, През чужди очи: Западът оглежда Добруджа, XV–XVIII век // *Through Foreign Eyes: the West Looking at Dobrudja, 15th–18th Century* 255

Даниел Томов/Daniel Tomov, Езиковата ситуация в Югоизточна Румъния. Дистрибуцията на рум. *baltă* 'блато', 'локва' в Добруджанския ареал // *The Language Situation in Southeastern Romania (The Distribution of Romanian 'baltă', "swamp", "mud" in the Dobrudja Region)*..... 275

***Отговор на рецензия*: Tsvetelin Stepanov/ Цветелин Степанов,** On Writing Reviews, Once Again (and Particularly about One Such "Review" by A. Kraft) // *Отново за писането на рецензии (по повод на една такава „рецензия" от А. Крафт)* 281

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THE END OF THE PAGAN CULT INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE PROVINCE OF SCYTHIA (ACCORDING TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA)

BILYANA TORBATOVA

Abstract: На територията на провинция Скития досега са разпознати 130 езически културни обекта от римската епоха и късноримския период. От тях 112 се намират в пределите на Северна Добруджа, а останалите 18 са в Южна Добруджа, в съвременните географски граници на България. Обекти на езическа културна обредност са регистрирани във всички видове структурни единици на селищната система – градове, села, военни лагери, крайлагерни селища, вили, частни домакинства, а така също край пътища и на места с изолирано местоположение. Не всички от тях са съществували при организирането на провинцията. Една немалка част от тези обекти прекратяват своето съществуване по различни причини още преди това. Други продължават да функционират без прекъсване от предходния период. Възникналите и използвани само през IV в. са много малко. Регистрирани са и такива, наследени през следващата епоха от новоизградени християнски църкви или монашески обители. Макар и само с един пример, представена е и групата на т.нар. „вечни светилища“, с континуитет от предходния исторически период, на чието място по-късно възниква обект, свързан с практикуването на християнската религия.

***Keywords**:* pagan cult sites, pits, roman sanctuaries, temples, religion

Each historical period finds many sacred places from the past and partially uses the already established cult infrastructure, which in some cases is further developed and enriched. Roman civilization carries the cults of its religion and their imposition and affirmation is of great importance for the inclusion of the newly conquered lands into the socio-political and cultural structures of the Roman Empire. What happens to the pagan cult sites in the province of Scythia, which owes its emergence to the administrative reforms of Emperor Diocletian and inherits the eastern half of the territory of the former province of Moesia Inferior?

The borders of Scythia follow the right bank of the Danube, the western coast of the Black Sea and the valleys of the Batova and Suha Reka rivers from their sources to their debouchments into the Black Sea by the village of Kranevo and into the Danube through the riverside lake Oltina respectively (Торбатов 2002: 14-21 и цитираната там литература). So far 130 pagan cult sites from the Roman and the Late Roman period have been identified in the territory of the newly established province. One hundred and twelve of them are located within the borders of Northern Dobrudja, and the remaining 18 are in Southern Dobrudja within the modern geographical borders of Bulgaria. Sites of pagan cult ritual are registered in all types of structural units of the settlement system – cities, villages, military camps and *vici militares*, villas, private households, as well as along roads and in isolated position. Forty-nine of the registered sites are located in 7 urban centres. Those in rural areas are 56, including the civilian settlements near military camps, which are distinguished from the military camps themselves (5 cult sites of the kind are known for certain so far). Three sites belong to villas, and only one home sanctuary is registered within separate rural households. There are 15 sites with isolated positions, one of which is assumed to have been of definitely roadside nature. Since some cult sites built along roads were located in the immediate vicinity of settlements of various types and were permanently used by their inhabitants, they are attributed to the relevant unit of the settlement system in the presented statistics.

It should be borne in mind that not all these pagan cult sites existed when the province was organized. A significant part of them ceased to exist for various reasons before that. Others continued to function without interruption from the previous period. Those that came into being and functioned only in the 4th century are very few. There are also such that were inherited in the following period by newly built Christian churches or monasteries. The group of the so-called "eternal sanctuaries", with continuity or succession from older times, at whose place a Christian cult site appeared later, is also represented in the province, although by a single example.

It is difficult to present a material picture of the duration and the very end of the sites with pagan cult activity without conducting archaeological excavations. Unfortunately, the pagan cult sites in the territory under discussion that have been studied to one degree or another by the means of archaeology are very few. Even in those cases, the available evidence is often incomplete and devoid of stratigraphic observations, which makes it difficult, and sometimes even impossible, to clarify the chronological issues. The very existence of the majority of sites is inferred by finds of altars and monuments of votive sculpture and epigraphic information about cult construction, performance of annual sacrifices at a given place and the presence there of cult associations, priestly class or individual priests (Торбатова 2024: 29). Another piece of evidence is the appearance of specific iconographic types in the coinage of some of the cities. All above-mentioned sources of information are undoubtedly good chronological indicators, but they illustrate only one moment or a certain period in the development of a given cult site, very rarely establishing the time of its coming into being and never the end of its existence.

The identified pagan cult sites in urban centers and their immediate surroundings are 49 in number, but we have archaeological data for only five of them. Not only the chronology, but even the exact location of the rest are unknown.

The temple of the Pontic Mother of the Gods at *Dionysopolis* was built in the first half of the 3rd century BC (Лазаренко и др. 2013: 27). The latest coins from it date from the time of Valentinian I and Valens and they are considered a proof that it still existed and was visited at that time. Its destruction was preceded or accompanied by arson, and this is assumed to have taken place in 366/367-368/369 AD, as a result of an earthquake, or in 378 AD, during the Second Gothic War of Emperor Valens (Лазаренко, Мирчева, Енчева 2008: 46). Thereafter the collapsed building was dismantled to the level at which it is found today, and it is assumed that this may have happened as early as the end of the 4th century.

A part of an architectural complex has been studied in the southern urban area of *Callatis*, which is now defined as a city sanctuary (*Fig. 1*). It came into being in the Late Hellenistic period (2nd century BC) and continued to exist until a yet unspecified moment in the 3rd century AD (Alexandru, Constantin, Ionescu 2012: 446-447).

No less than 16 cult sites existed in *Tomis* and its immediate surroundings during the Roman period (Торбатова 2024: 626-643), but only one of them, identified with a nymphaeum, has been excavated (Toma 2004: 87; Toma 2010: 65). Its construction is dated to the second half of the 2nd – beginning of the 3rd century, but there is no information on how long it continued to function (Toma 2010: 65-66, 71). It is assumed that during the Gothic siege of Tomis in 269 AD several suburban cult sites were looted and destroyed. The remains of their cult inventory were later collected from the ruins and ritually buried in a pit dug intentionally for that purpose (Торбатова 2024: 643-645).

Except for the memorial complex of the same name, there is stratigraphic evidence for one more of identified pagan cult sites in *Tropaeum Traiani*. It is identified with a temple and its remains lie under the so-called Basilica B (*Fig. 2*), also known as the *Marble Basilica* (Bogdan Cătăniciu 2006: 235-254). The temple existed in the 2nd-3rd century; it was completely dismantled after that. A coin found in the layer of destructions determines 295-299 AD as a reliable *terminus post quem* for the time of its dismantling; which is directly related to the erection of the basilica. Its construction was previously attributed to Emperor Constantius II and dated around 350 AD. However, now it is considered the earliest Christian cult building in the city and its construction is dated to the period before the middle of the 4th century, being associated with the time of Constantine I (324-337) (Bogdan Cătăniciu 2006: 253). Since until the autumn of 324 AD *Tropaeum Traiani* was in the possession of Licinius, who is considered a supporter of paganism, the destruction of the pagan temple and the construction of the prototype of the so-called *Marble Basilica* could not have been carried out before Constantine I became the sole ruler of the Roman Empire. Another of the early Christian basilicas in *Tropaeum Traiani*, the so-called *Basilica Cistern* (*Fig. 3*), is now also considered to have been built at the same time. According

to an older conjecture, the massive structure from the Roman period underneath it might not be a water tank, as usually assumed, but a mithraeum (Barnea 1968: 469). If so, this would be another example of deliberate destruction of a pagan cult site in connection with the erection of a Christian church. The construction of the so-called *basilica coemeterialis* north of *Tropaeum Traiani* is also attributed to the time of Constantine I, after the death of Licinius (Barnea 1968: 471).

The existence of the so-called Temple "X" in *Histria* is established only by the preserved elements of its architectural decoration (Mărgineanu Cârstoiu 2006: 432). This is the only temple in the city from the pre-Roman period for which there is evidence that it continued functioning during the Roman period. It is assumed that the temple survived until the destruction of the city by the Goths in the middle of the 3rd century (Mărgineanu Cârstoiu 2006: 445).

The situation with the numerous extra-urban pagan cult sites in the territory of the province of Scythia is no different from an archaeological point of view. We have direct or indirect stratigraphic data for only 7 of them.

The sanctuary near Telerig is thoroughly studied (Торбамов 2005: 80-91; Oppermann 2006: 101-104; Alexandrov, Dana 2020: 14-30). It has been established that it was deliberately destroyed, plundered and burned down as early as the second quarter of the 4th century and part of its building material was reused in the fortress walls of Zaldapa, which were erected at that time. However, the place continued to be visited by adherents of the old religion even after that. It is possible that the small building that arose around the middle of the 4th century or a little bit later on the layer of destructions was a kind of successor to the destroyed sanctuary. The last actions of pagan ritual nature at this place are three large pits containing fragments of architectural details and votive monuments, as well as a variety of archaeological materials dating from the 3rd-2nd century BC to the last quarter of the 4th century AD. It is assumed that this is a ritual burial of all what the remained of the sanctuary and was possible to collect from the ground at that time. According to the latest coins from the pits, the burial was carried out by the end of the 4th century AD and this marks the definite end of the use of the place for pagan cult activities (Торбамов 2005: 85).

The pit sanctuary near Snyagovo came into being and operated in the second half of the 2nd and at the beginning of the 3rd century AD. By the middle of the 3rd century at the latest it was abandoned, although the life in the neighboring settlement, to which the pit sanctuary belonged, might well be traced until the last quarter of the 4th century (Торбамов 2001: 92; Торбамов 2007: 46-47).

A building that functioned during the 4th century AD, was studied within the territory of a settlement from the Roman period in the locality *Amza* near Telitsa. One of its premises is defined as a domestic sanctuary. The building was destroyed in the first half of the 4th century under unclear circumstances. It was restored shortly after, but had no longer pagan cult functions. At the same time – in the first half of the 4th century – a Christian church was built and began to function in its close proximity (Baumann 1990a: 118-119; Baumann 1990b: 8; Baumann 1995:

31-36; Baumann 2007: 191-192; Baumann 2010: 92). It is considered one of the earliest known so far monuments of Christian cult architecture in Roman Dobrudja and the first church in a rural environment in this region.

A complex of two adjacent rooms determined as a pagan domestic sanctuary was studied in the residential block of the Late Roman villa rustica in the locality *Valea Morilor* near Telitsa (Baumann 1995: 269-393). The registered archaeological context is dated generally within the 4th century, without further chronological precision (Baumann 1995: 276-282; Baumann 2013: 77-81).

The available data points out the Casian cave near the village of the same name as a possible location for the famous cult site in this region during the Roman period (Pârvan 1913: 534-537; Vulpe 1977: 121-129; Bărbulescu-Munteanu 1978: 132-135; Bărbulescu 2001: 44, 380; Tito 2012: 93, 98), known from inscriptions from the 2nd-3rd century as *Σπηλοῦχα* (Pippidi 1983: 369, 370, 372). Five normally deposited cultural layers, dating back to the Neolithic, Early Iron Age, Early Roman Age, Late Antiquity and the period of the First Bulgarian Tsardom, have been registered in the cave (Alexandrescu et al. 1986: 243-246). It certainly served as a monastic refuge in the 10th century (Chiriac 1988-1989: 259-264; Tygopue 2017: 23-45), but a number of scholars believe that it had similar functions already since the early-4th century (Mihăilescu-Bîrliba, Diaconescu 1991: 425, 429-431; Voinea, Szmoniewski 2011: 227-230; Voinea, Szmoniewski 2012: 43). If so, the use of the cave for pagan cult activities must have come to an end at least a few decades earlier.

Materials were found in the *La Adam* cave near Targuşor that testify to human presence at this place during the Middle and Late Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Roman period (Самсон, Рагулеску 1964: 156-164; Boroneanţ 2000: 54; Dobrescu 2008: 317; Tuffreau et al. 2013: 75-86; Торбатова 2024: 586-587). Five monuments related to the cult of Mithras (Vermaseren 1960: 365-366; Duţescu 1966: 390) were found thrown without order and buried in a pit in the inner part of the cave (Pippidi 1971: 145, n. 14). Most researchers are of the opinion that a cult place existed here during the Roman period, in which this god was worshipped (Vermaseren 1960: 364; Russu et al. 1969: 44; Bleahu et al. 1976: 22; Covacef 2000-2001: 384; Anghelinu, Boroneanț 2019: 512). According to some, the discovered cult inventory might have been transferred from somewhere else in a situation of sharp religious opposition, in order to be preserved from desecration and destruction by militant Christians and to be used for a while for its intended purpose by adherents of the already persecuted paganism (Pippidi 1971: 144-147; Pippidi 1975: 295-297; Pippidi 1983: 487). According to others, it is a hidden inventory from some village Mithraeum. According to others, a sanctuary related to this cult had functioned in the cave, which was abandoned as the process of Christianization progressed, and its cult inventory was ritually buried. The assumption that this sanctuary probably arose in the 4th century is based on the previously accepted dating of all votive material from it. Now some of the monuments are dated to the late 2nd – early 3rd century, and this suggests a drawing back in the time of the

beginning of sanctuary's establishment. However, the question remains open, how long did it continue to function?

Traces of ritual activities in the 2nd-3rd century were found during archaeological excavations in the central part of the *Chirakman* plateau, east of Kavarna (Mărculescu 1934: 158-160; Mărculescu 1935: 120-121; Mihailov 1970: no. 8, 9; Мирчев, Тончева, Димитров 1962: 24, 26-27, 48-52). The ancient settlement to *Bizone* was located here in the Classical and Hellenistic period, but during the Roman period it moved to the low coastal terrace next to the sea bay at the foot of the hill (Мирчев, Тончева, Димитров 1962: 21-23, 52-54; Торбатов 2002: 242-243; Ivanova 2012: 59). It is assumed that the most elevated central part of the plateau was used at that time as a kind of *zona sacra* for the synchronous settlement located below. It is not established how long this continued, but an early Christian basilica was built on the same place before the middle of the 5th century (Чанева-Дечевска 1999: 170-171), which illustrates the repeatedly attested practice of continuity of places with sacred significance.

It has long been noticed that a large amount of *spolia* in the form of altars and other votive monuments with pagan religious content were used in the construction of newly built fortifications of a number of military and civilian centers in the province of Scythia at the beginning of the Late Roman period. This is recorded in *Zaldapa*, *Tropaeum Traiani*, *Ulmetum*, *Sacidava*, *Capidava*, *Cius*, *Troesmis*, *Halmyris*, *Histria*. These monuments originate from various settlements in their vicinity and are the main evidence for the existence of 13 local sanctuaries and other cult sites in the rural settlements (*vici*) *Celeris*, *Classicorum*, *Clementianensis*, *Quintionis*, *Scenope*(*n*)*sis*, *Secundini* and *Ulmetum* (in *Ulmetum* 4 separate sites), as well as in the civilian settlements by the Roman camps of *Capidava* (2 separate sites) and *Sacidava* (Торбатова 2024: 597-600, 622-624, 657-659, 661-662, 665, 667-670). The construction of the listed Late Roman sites is usually attributed to the time of the emperors Diocletian and Constantine I, and this is a certain *terminus ante quem* for the time of the existence of those pagan cult sites that served as a source of building material for them. It is very likely that those were long-deserted sanctuaries, abandoned after the barbarian invasions of the middle and the second half of the 3rd century, but it is not to be excluded that some of them were purposefully destroyed in connection with the new military construction. If so, such an attitude towards pagan religious shrines would have hardly been possible before the triumph of Christianity, at least on a local level (Florescu 1954: 94). Indicative in this regard is the destruction of the large pagan cult centre near Telerig, which coincided in time with the construction of the new urban centre of *Zaldapa*. No less instructive is the situation in the nearby city of *Tropaeum Traiani*, where the construction of three Christian churches dates back to the second quarter of the 4th century, especially if taken into account that the construction of at least one (or even two) of them was associated with deliberate dismantling of a pagan cult site that had existed at the same place. It was exactly in the time of Emperor Constantine I, after 324, that the construction of the first

Christian basilica in *Halmyris* took place (*Fig. 4*). It was built over a crypt containing the relics of the martyrs Epictetus and Astion, who were martyred here in 290 AD (Zahariade 2001: 143-157; Zahariade 2009: 131-150) or in 304 AD (Holubeanu 2020: 69). It is important to note that at the time of basilica's construction *Halmyris* was an active military camp and such an act could not have been initiated without the explicit sanction of the highest military authorities, at least at the provincial level. An interesting situation is observed in the neighboring *Salsovia*, which is also a military camp. An official inscription from 322-323 AD originates from there, which tells about the erection of a statue of the god Sol. It was most likely placed in a specially designated cult place within the limits of the camp *principia*. This is the latest inscription with pagan religious content from the territory of the province of Scythia known to date (Popescu 1976: no. 271 = Doruţiu-Boilă 1980: no. 290). It is well known that the first state legal act against paganism in the Roman Empire was the law of Emperor Constantine I from the autumn of 324 AD, which forbade sacrifices and the erection of cult images (De vita Imperatoris Constantini 1902: II, 45). A little bit later, with a law of June 29th, 326 AD, the emperor locked up the construction of still unfinished pagan temples (Codex Theodosianus 1905: XV, 1, 3). Naturally, it was difficult to carry on an overall control over pagan cult practices in general, as evidenced by the repetition of the same provisions with anti-pagan content in many of the legislative acts of Constantine I's successors. However, this was hardly the case at least with regard to their manifestations in public places, especially in the presence of Christian zeal and lack of religious tolerance on the part of the local administrative and military authorities.

The situation in Scythia seems to have been exactly like that in the last part of the reign of Constantine I, after he became sole ruler of the Roman Empire. It is indicative that the latest known pagan cult image (Иванов 2006: 80-128) from the province dates back to the time shortly after the final battle between Constantine I and Licinius at *Chrysopolis* on September 18th, 324 AD. It is a representation of the Thracian Horseman on the tombstone (*Fig. 5*) of a non-commissioned officer from Licinius' army who died in that battle (Popescu 1976: 213-216, no. 206 = Hampartumian 1979: 76-77, no. 107). The same idea is also suggested by the noted cases of deliberate destruction of pagan sanctuaries, the markedly blasphemous attitude towards the remains of other such sanctuaries (if we assume that they had ceased existing before that time), as well as by the erection of Christian cult buildings in urban and military environments as attested in *Tropaeum Traiani* and *Halmyris*. It is not to be excluded that all of this was a series of deliberate demonstrative actions in the former possessions of the opponent and supporter of paganism Licinius, just in the spirit and coinciding in time with the campaign of Constantine I of "demolishing the idols" (Torbatov 2013: 535-542). The anti-pagan actions in the province of Scythia obviously did not aim at complete liquidation of the pagan cult infrastructure, but rather at giving an edifying lesson to the supporters of polytheism and paving the way for free spread and consolidation of Christianity, which had been suppressed in these lands until then. The example of the

settlement near Telitsa shows that its inhabitants quickly took advantage of the change in policy, replacing the previously functioning pagan sanctuary with a newly built Christian church. However, the owners of the nearby villa apparently continued to profess the old religion in their home sanctuary at least until the third quarter of the 4th century. The early construction of Christian churches in *Tropaeum Traiani* could be explained by two reasons: that Constantine I wanted to emphasize his priority in the complete reconstruction of this city, which began in 316 AD together with Licinius who was his ally then, as well as because of the imperial importance attributed to the city, implied by the grandiose memorial complex from the time of Emperor Trajan located nearby, which symbolized the victories and the might of the Roman Empire. The archaeological information about the situation in the other cities of the province is very scarce and does not give opportunity for more complete generalizations. The earliest known Christian churches there date back to the second half and end of the 4th century. As for the monuments of pagan cult architecture, only the temple of the Pontic Mother of the Gods in *Dionysopolis* is known to have existed until the third or the very beginning of the last quarter of the 4th century, but it is questionable whether it was active until then. As it is known from a law of 346 (or 354), Emperor Constantius II forbade the destruction and plundering of pagan temples, allowing their use not for performing cult acts, but only for the entertainment of citizens (Codex Theodosianus 1905: XVI, 10, 3-4; Codex Ivstinianvs 1877: I, 11, 1), which means that they were already officially desacralized from that time on.

The ritual burials of cult inventory near Telerig and the *La Adam* cave are the latest archaeological records of pagan ritual practices in the province of Scythia, in both cases marking the very end of the activity of the pagan cult sites registered there. In the case of Telerig, the coins of Valentinian II (375-392) and Theodosius I (379-395) found in two of the pits define the last quarter of the 4th century as a reliable *terminus post quem* for that, which reconciles well in time with the edict of February 27th, 380 AD, of Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius I, proclaiming Christianity the official and sole legal religion in the Roman Empire (Codex Theodosianus 1905: XVI, 1, 2).

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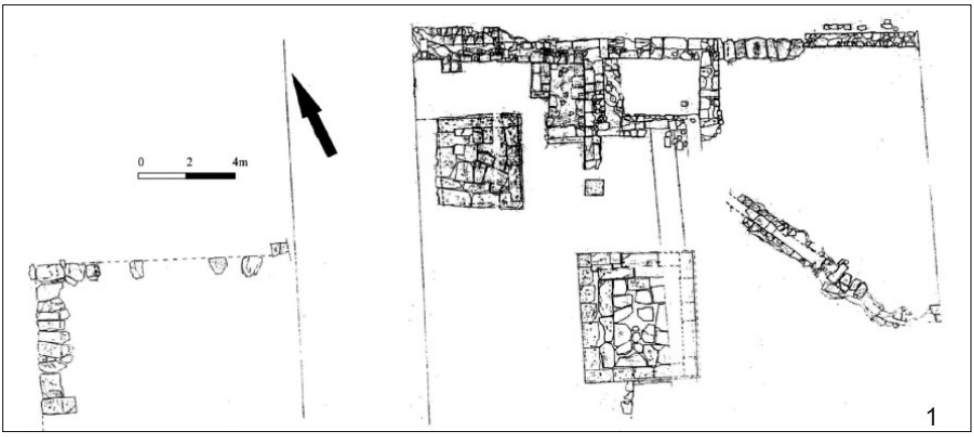


Fig. 1. *Callatis*. Plan of the architectural complex (after Alexandru et al. 2012: 461, Pl.12)

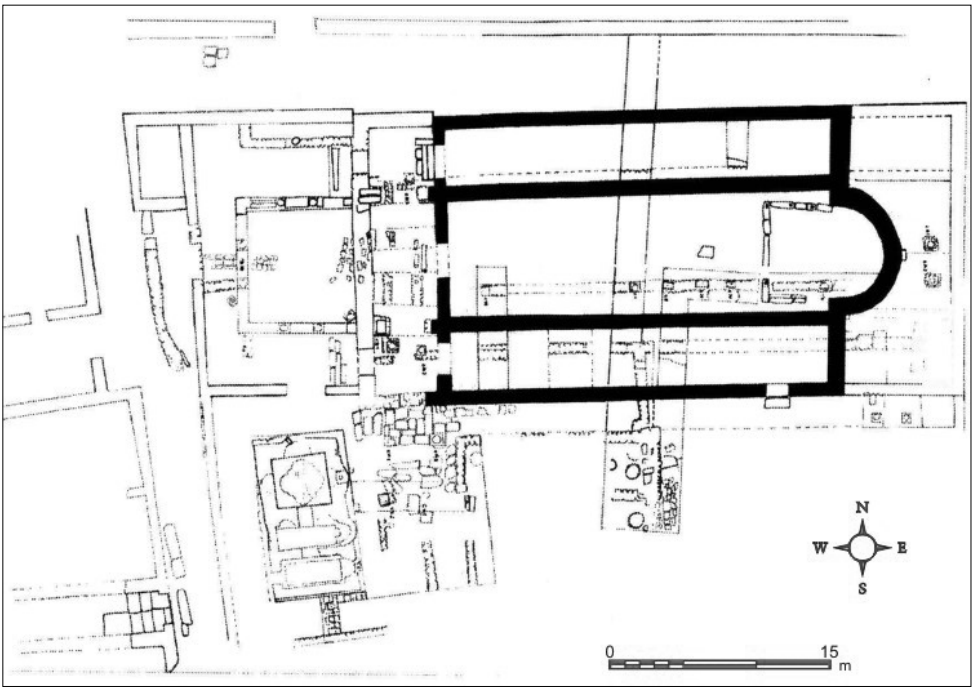


Fig. 2. *Tropaeum Traiani*. Plan of the *Marble Basilica* and the remains under it (after Bogdan-Cătăniciu 2006: 238, fig. 2)

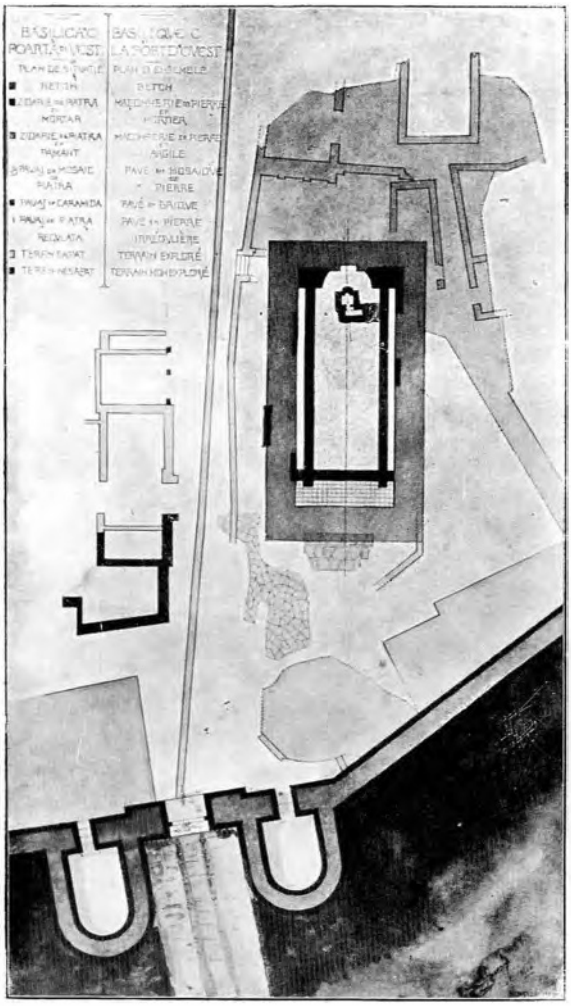


Fig. 3. *Tropaeum Traiani*. Plan of *Basilica-cisterna* (after Pârvan 1912, 91, fig. 13)

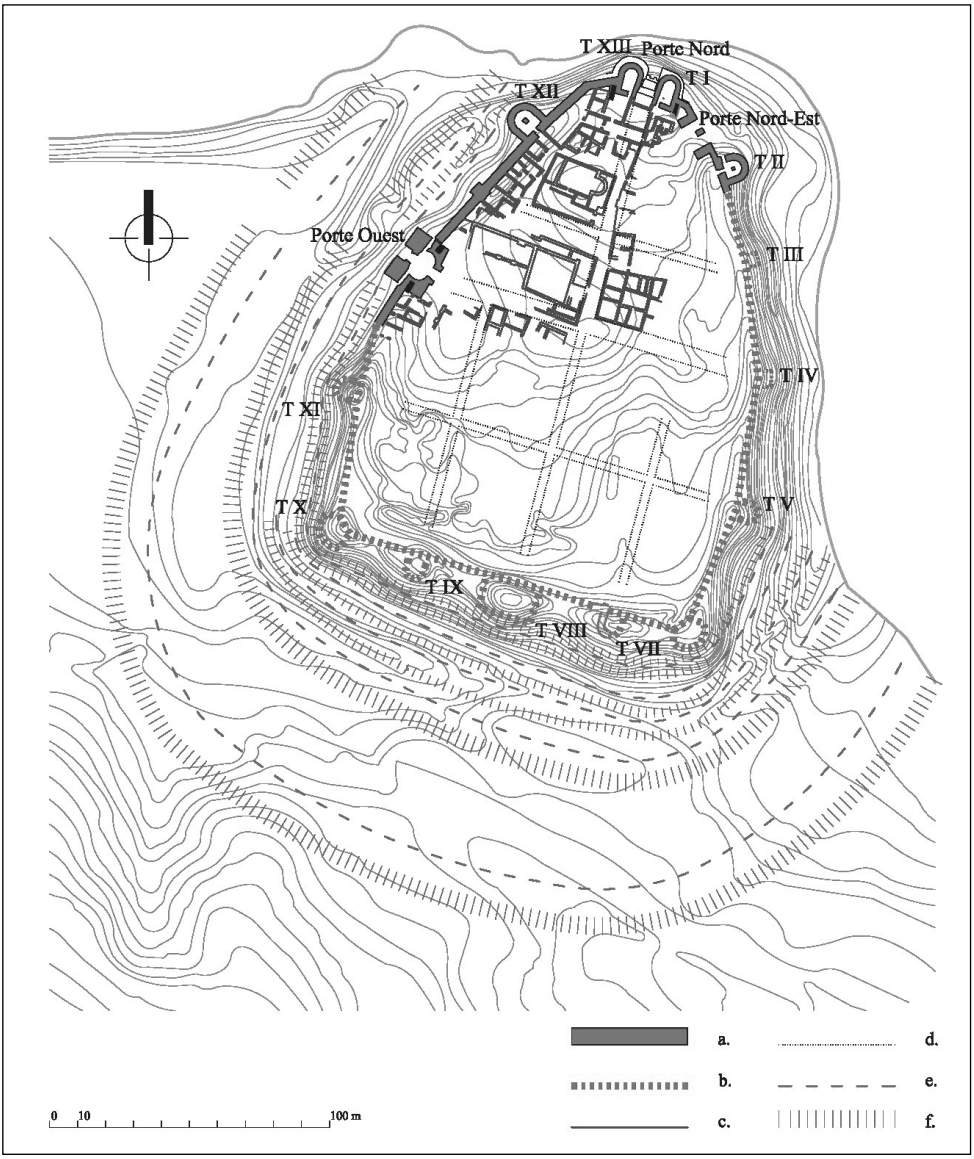


Fig. 4. *Halmyris*. Location of the *Episcopal Basilica*
(after Mărgineanu Cârstoiu, Apostol: 2015, 38, Fig. 1)

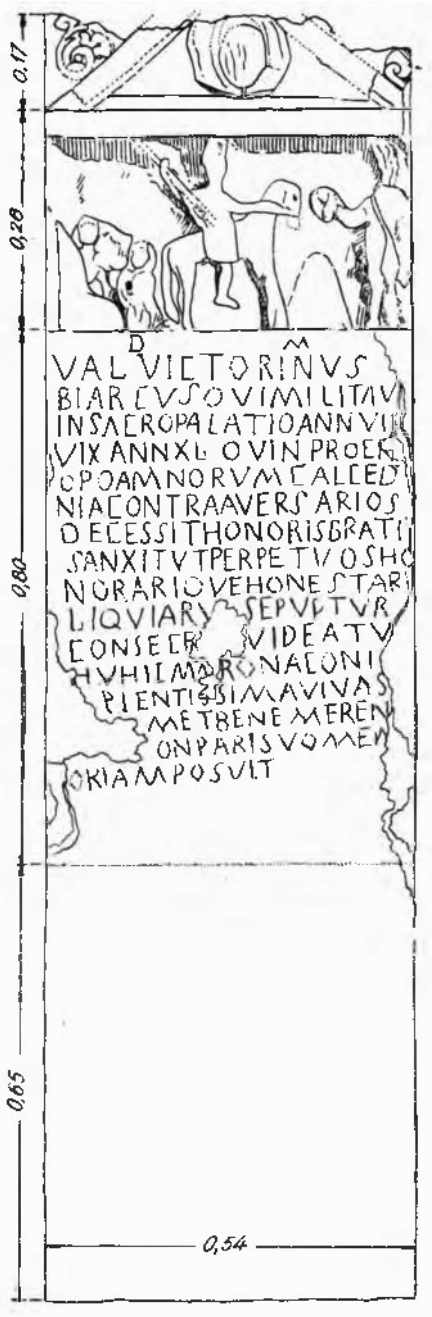


Fig. 5. Representation of the Thracian Horseman on the tombstone
(after Popescu 1976: 214, Anul 324)

ГОДИШНИК НА СОФИЙСКИЯ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“
ЦЕНТЪР ЗА СЛАВЯНО-ВИЗАНТИЙСКИ ПРОУЧВАНИЯ „ИВАН ДУЙЧЕВ“
Том 104 (23)

ANNUAIRE DE L'UNIVERSITE DE SOFIA "ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI"
CENTRE DE RECHERCHES SLAVO-BYZANTINES "IVAN DUJČEV"
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ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN URBAN LANDSCAPES IN LATE ANTIQUE THRACE: UNANSWERED QUESTIONS[1]

ALEXANDER IVANOV

Abstract: Статията представлява своеобразен синтез на различни проблеми, засягащи християнизацията на диоцез Тракия, на чиято територия попада частично и съвременна България. Към момента са открити повече от 230 раннохристиянски църкви, но при едва 21% от тях има данни за наличието на по-ранна антична сграда като част от представителния градски пейзаж. Един от основните проблеми, които се дискутират тук е датирането на късноантичните църкви предвид това, че изцяло публикуваните примери са единични.

Keywords: diocese of Thrace, Late Antique cityscape, (Re)Used / Christianized buildings

Theoretical aspects

Ancient cities and sanctuaries were known to host religious festivals, which often included athletic competitions. Religion and sport occupied central place in both athletic festivals and in everyday life, and this way the venues, organizers and spectators were exposed to the influence of ancient culture. These properties shape the characteristic appearance of the antique "center", which changes after the adoption of Christianity as an equal-to-others religion in AD 313. The center/ city/"Christianopolis", or Christian topography, proposes a cosmology in which the physical and temporal structure of the world is determined by the function of the cosmos as a means of the divine plan of salvation. This peculiar "universe"

[1] This article is a result of author's research lead for the project *Borders and cultural patterns: paganism vs Christianity in the contact zone of the Danube limes (Scythia Minor and Moesia Secunda in the 4th-7th century)* (Scientific Research fund, Bulgaria, № КП-06-Н60/10, from 17.11.2021). The author was supported by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science under the National Research Program "*Young scientists and postdoctoral students – 2*", approved by DCM 206 / 04 / 07 / 2022, as well as by the National Archaeological Institute with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

corresponds to two conditions of human existence – the earthly present and the heavenly future (Brown 1997[3]: 7-8; Kominko 2013: 1-2; Romano 2014: 176). From the conversion of Constantine (306-337) in AD 312 to the end of the reign of Theodosius II (408-450), contemporary Christian authors as St. Augustine, eyewitnesses to what was happening, testify to the clash between paganism and Christianity. In modern historiography this collision is often viewed in a similar way to what Eusebius wrote: "destruction of idol and temples and images everywhere" (*Vita Constantini* III, 54), which is connected with the end of paganism, the triumph of monotheism, as well as the decline of ancient civilization and culture (see among others Torbatov 2013: 531-547). This way, the narrative, understanding and feeling of Late Antiquity (which will be distinguished as "something different" from Antiquity and the Middle Ages), is reduced to the eyewitnesses accounts of what was happening then. The understanding of the processus of Christianization requires to choose the way of interpreting something that happened hundreds of years ago, but refracted through the prism of modern perceptions, on one hand, and of the physical and mental environment of the ancient people, on the other. The main questions raised by this topic that need to be addressed are: What is the scale of the urban transformation of the ancient city in Late Antiquity and especially in Thrace? What exactly is Christianization? The focus of this study is on the scale of the transformation of public architecture and urban landscape in Late Antique Thrace.

For clarity of these issues, I will use the following definition proposed by O. Nicholson:

"Conversion and Christianization – The rejection of one religion and the embrace of a new one was accompanied by the broader process by which individuals and communities were evangelized and made Christian. Christianization, although far from uniform or inexorable, gradually transformed the social, political, and physical landscape of the later Roman Empire. (…) Christianization can refer both to the evangelical mission to convert individuals and groups, and to the transformation of society, politics, and landscape effected by such conversion. The Christianization of the Empire was achieved by varied means, including legislation, persuasion and education, and coercion. From Constantine onwards, Christian emperors used Roman law to ban pagan rituals and close temples; the reiteration of such measures suggests that their effectiveness was not total. Christian bishops, intellectuals, and holy men preached the message of Christianity within churches, in public forums, and through the circulation of written treatises. The use of force or the threat of force to convert is attested by regular pagan complaints about the violence directed against the apparatus of pagan cult: temples, altars, and statues. However, the demise of paganism can be ascribed to decline and abandonment as much as to vicious persecution. The Christianization of politics and society was visible in subtle shifts of power in relationships between emperors and secular aristocracies on

the one hand, and bishops and monks, on the other. The rise of asceticism changed patterns of social and sexual life within the city, and the growth of monasticism colonized previously marginal areas beyond cities. The landscape of the Empire was itself Christianized with the construction of church buildings, martyr-shrines, and monasteries, and the sacred geography of the landscape was transformed by the practice of pilgrimage to the holy dead, the Holy Land, and living saints." (Nicholson 2018: 410-411).

Late Antique Thrace[2] – available data

Towards the end of the 3rd century AD, the administrative organization of the Empire is subject to a reform that would lead to the transformation of the former provinces of Thrace into the Diocese of Thrace (Велков 1959: 55-57; Velkov 1977: 61-64; Николов 1994: 195; Иванов 1999: 27-28; Иванов 2000: 132-133). It contains six new provinces. The new territorial division is evidenced by the *Notitia Dignitatum*[3]*, which was compiled from Laterculus Veronensis*[4] *and Laterculus Polemii Silvii*[5]*. Other important sources for the period are Ιεροκλέους's Συνέκδημος*[6] *and*

[2] For different aspects of the history and archaeology of Late Antique Thrace in the recent research, see Dumanov 2015: 91-101; Динчев 2021a: 273-281; Dintchev 2021: 17-27.

[3] It was a list of official ranks in the Late Roman Empire and was compiled in the period AD 390-427/437. Changes had been made to the list in due time, and in some cases the information had been supplemented or completely replaced, while in others these had not been included. Because of this the source is not reliable, but is important because it reports on the administrative and military positions, as well as the settlements: *Thraciae – Europa*, *Thracia*, *Haemimontus*, *Rhodopa*, *Moesia Secunda*, *Scythia* – see ЛИБИ I: 224-239.

[4] A 7th-century manuscript in the library of the cathedral of Verona (ЛИБИ I: 225, 254-255; Barnes 1982: 201-208). It contains a list of the dioceses and provinces in Roman empire, the part for Eastern Roman empire being compiled in AD 314/315-324. In the diocese of *tracoae* (*Thracia*, note A. I.) the provinces are listed: *europa* (*Europa*), *rodo* (*Rhodope*), *petracia* (*Thracia*), *emossanus* (*Haemimontus*), *scitia* (*Scythia*), *misia inferior[i]* (*Moesia Inferior*).

[5] The catalogue is believed to have been compiled around AD 385 (ЛИБИ I: 225), where the names of the provinces in *Thracia* are included: Prima: *Thracia* (*prima*); *Secunda*: *item Thracia* (*secunda*); *Quinta*: *Misia* (*inferior*) *superior*; *Sexta*: *Scithia* (*inferior*) *superior*; *Tertia*: *Europa*, *in qua est Constantinopolis prius Licus dicta sive Bizantium*; *Quarta*: *Rodopa*. It is important to note that *Haemimontus* and *Scithia* are incorrectly included in *Illyrico*, as *Haemimontus* does not appear in *Thracia* at all, but is replaced by another (second) *Thracia*. It is also important to clarify that Constantinople is placed in the province of *Europa*, but such a claim has not been confirmed by any other source (ЛИБИ I: 255-256).

[6] The text of the „companion" was composed at the beginning of Justinian's reign, between 1st of August AD 527 and the autumn of AD 528. The author probably used a similar text from the time of Theodosius II (408-450) or Marcianus (450-457). In *Συνέκδημος*, along with the names of the cities, the provincial capitals of Eastern Roman empire appear, which were the seats of provincial power and administration, and they bear the title of „metropolis": Εὐρώπης – Εὐδοξιούπολις, Ἡράκλεια, Ἀρκαδιούπολις, Βιζύη, Πανόνιον, Ὄρνοι, Γάνος, Καλλίπολις, Μόριζος, Σιλτική, Σαναδία, Ἀφροδισία, Ἄπρος, Κοιλία; Ῥοδόπης – Αἶνος, Μαξιμιανούπολις, Τραϊανούπολις, Μαρώνεια, Τόπιρος, Νικόπολις, Κερεοπύργος; Θρᾴκης – Φιλιππούπολις,

Notitiae episcopatuum[7]. Some of the last reliable documents is related to the establishment of *Quaestura Iustiniana exercitus* (AD 536) that was created to help the border provinces of *Moesia Secunda* and *Scythia* to fulfill their most important role: to pay their taxes and to control/protect the most direct route from the steppe to Constantinople (Torbatov 1997: 78-85; Gkoutzioukostas 2008: 109-118; Curta 2016a: 51-104; Curta 2016b: 307-321; Destephen 2019: 9-17; Sarantis 2019: 329-365).

Apart from the written sources, we have at our disposal several epigraphic sources which are of major importance for our understanding of the implementation of Christianity in Thrace. It is known that in the middle of the 2nd century, *Apollonia* and *Deultum* shared the same bishop (a situation that lasted at least until the middle of the 5th century) (Fedalto 1988: 316, 319-320, 323; Балабановъ, Петрова 2002: 247; Дражева 2006: 79; TIR K-35/2: 94). During the last year's excavations of the southern necropolis of *Deultum*, in which I had the opportunity to participate, an amulet was discovered[8]. It may be the earliest Christian inscription from Thrace discovered so far with a similar combination of names. Thus, there are two independent testimonies about early Christians in the city of *Deultum*, although no church building has been discovered so far.

Another inscription, this time from *Philippopolis*, speaks of one Tatian, without explicitly stating that he was of Christian faith[9]. However, it should be emphasized that some of the phrases, as well as the combination of numbers and letters, testify to his religious preferences.

Βερόη, Διοκλητιανούπ λις, Σεβαστούπολις, Διόσπολις; Ἡμιμόντου – Ἀδριανούπολις, Ἀχίαλος, Δερβέτιος, Πλουτινούπολις, Τζοΐδης; Μυσίας – Μαρκιανούπολις, Ὀδυσσύς, Δωρόστολος, Νικόπολις, Νόβαι, Ἀππιάρια, Ἑβραιττός Σκυθίας – Τόμης, Διονυσσόπολις, Ἄκραι, Καλατίς, Ἴστρος, Κωνσταντιναί, Ζελδέπα, Τρόπεος, Ἀξιούπολις, Καπίδαβα, Κάρσος, Τρόσμις, Νοβιοοδοῦνος, Αἴγισσος, Ἅλμυρις (ГИБИ II: 87-94; Дракулис 2009: 41-42).

[7] The *Notitiae episcopatuum* is a collection of eparchial lists that present the hierarchy of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. It is assumed that such a list already existed at the time of Theodosius I (379-395). The Pseudo-Epiphanian list and the one of the Isaurian dynasty list named the metropolitan sees, subordinate bishoprics and autocephalous archbishoprics.and probably reflect the situation during the Late Antiquity (ГИБИ III: 184-196) as these from the 9th – mid-10th century, which repeat earlier lists (ГИБИ IV: 146-165).

[8] The amulet dates from the late 2nd–early 3rd century. See https://www.archaeologia-bulgarica.com/%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%B5-%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%B9-%D0%B4%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%85%D0%B5%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%BA/?fbclid=IwAR3G1PIpDFN0H (accessed 08.07.2025).

[9] The second earliest Christian inscription from Bulgaria, placed on a marble stele discovered on the territory of the southern necropolis of *Philippopolis* and dated to the first quarter of the 3rd century – see Laurent 1938: 1-16; SIBulg. 207; https://telamon.uni-sofia.bg/epi/view_ins/SIBulg_207 (accessed 08.07.2025). I thank the Assoc. Prof. Nikolai Sharankov, PhD, who pointed this text out to me, as well as for sharing with me the published literature on the issue. Regarding the first bishop of *Philippopolis*, see Топалилов, Чобановъ 2025: 219-220.

Unfortunately, there is no evidence of *domus ecclesiae* in Thrace so far nor its evolution into another type of building could be traced. One possibility that could explain the inability to recognize it is that such a private *domus*, used for Christian worship, may have been donated later, for a church to be built in its place. It is certainly possible. However, without the presence of explicit written data, it remains pure speculation.

Regarding the available archaeological evidences, more than 230 Late Antique churches have been discovered so far on the territory of the diocese of Thrace, both in the cities and the countryside (Иванов 2019: 235). It is interesting to note that there are quite a few examples that date back to the 4th century. For comparison, in the rest of the Empire the certain examples of churches built in the 4th century are few; their dating is mainly based on the written sources and it is not clear how and why they appeared at these particular locations. Similar sources are missing for Thrace. This fact is also accompanied by the disproportion in the publication of the sites.

Different types of functional conversion of Roman public buildings

The analysis of the presented data allows the identification of three types of public buildings that underwent functional transformation in order to be used for Christian religious practices.

The first group concerns buildings for spectacles. A well know example of a building of entertainment turned into a church from the diocese of Thrace is from *Marcianopolis*. What is actually known about early Christianity in *Marcianopolis* is that the city was the seat of a bishop in the period AD 325-431, and the legends about several martyrs, namely Maximus, Asclepiodota and Theodotus[10] who were tortured in the local theater (amphitheater) (Велков 1964: 383 = Velkov 1980: 140; ГИБИ VI: V.4-5, 21; Ангелов 1999: 45; Вагалински 2000: 56; Ангелов 2002: 113; Vagalinski 2002: 279; Шаранков 2014: 281-283, 291; Martinova-Kyutova, Sharankov 2018: 73; Иванов 2022а; Иванов 2022в). The building discovered above the amphitheater was interpreted as a "church", but in fact it does not bear the characteristics of one. Therefore, it can hardly be considered as a certain example of spectacle building conversion into a church. In general, the examples from across the Empire of such turnings are not numerous, but this probably reflects the current state of research (Иванов 2022б). It is important to stress that there are examples of conversion after the Late Antiquity too. Last but not least, the buildings for entertainment have been reused for many different purposes, among which turning them into churches is not predominant (Underwood 2019: 164-165).

The second group concerns the baths and the situation is similar. There are very few cases of conversion into churches during the Late Antiquity as in *Augusta Traiana*. At the same time there are numerous examples of baths that are still func-

[10] Regarding the hypothetical place where the martyrs were buried – Atanasov 2024: 76-80.

tional or even newly constructed, as for example in *Sozopolis, Acre, Odessos, Novae* etc. (Ivanov 2024: 209-216).

The third group concerns temples and sanctuaries. Firstly, the structures/locations suspected of having been used for religious purposes must meet several criteria[11]. Often due to the lack of a complete set of necessary components, recognition is primarily based on single findings. In practice, the discovered findings define and date the structure. In some cases there is no convincible arguments proving the existence of any pagan architecture at all. In this context, the earlier materials discovered in Christian context often lead to the speculative assumption that there must have been a destroyed pagan building (Иванов 2019: 235-237; Иванов 2020: 449). Consequently, not all of the places identified as "temples" and "shrines" are such; some of them need to be reconsidered and revised (Иванов, под печат).

Votive reliefs are the most common objects found in Thracian sanctuaries. However, is it possible to recognize which of them were deliberately damaged by Christians? Usually, most of them are found with significant damage. However, it is not clear if these were done intentionally. Another question is weather there are concrete parts of the pagan images that were specifically targeted? If the answer to these questions is unsure, then could it be stated that there was ever a triumphant Christianity over paganism? Another question is whether the votive reliefs were still produced after AD 313?

The results show that 79% (*Chart 1*) of all known urban and extra-urban early Christian churches from the diocese of Thrace were built on unused places, or there is no reliable information on reuse so far[12] (*Fig. 1*). As for the narrower chronology of the sites (*Chart 2*), it is impossible to clarify it not only for the territory of Thrace, but the examples from the whole Empire suffer from similar problems, e.g. lack of publications, leading role of historical information over the archaeological situation[13]. It is important to emphasize that in the study of the sites themselves, the attitude towards Christianization of the urban landscape is reduced only to when the church was built and when it was destroyed. Many other additional questions that could shed more light on this issue are disregarded[14]. In addition, the degree of

[11] Written sources, location, monumental architecture, overall layout, structure (Вълчев 2015: 10-16).

[12] On the reuse of materials and buildings from the territory of the Western Roman Empire during Late Antiquity, see Underwood 2019.

[13] The presented "chronology" of the sites is not correct, because it does not show reliable published information, but preliminary unconfirmed results, which rather reflect attitudes and preferences in dating and, accordingly, interpreting the reason why the building has such a date.

[14] Does the place of its construction matter; who needed it built; who commissioned it and how was the construction financed; who was the builder; who was the architect; under which provincial governor was it started, under which was it completed; where were the materials for its construction supplied from; what were the materials for its construction; what construction techniques were used; were there any reconstructions; was it continuously functioning; what other objects have been found in it and do they help to understand its history; are there burials in it and if so – why; what is its subsequent history?

research of the cities is not the same, which further complicates the possibility of answering more questions.

Chronology

The chronology of destruction of temples shows that they ceased to function for different reasons and in different historic moments (Иванов 2020: 449-450). More specifically, the end of use of these buildings is often being associated with certain historical events, namely the first Gothic invasions from the middle of the 3rd century; the Edict of Mediolanum and the imposition of Christianity as an equal religion during the rule of Constantine the Great and [his?] successors; the Council of Philippopolis; the second Gothic invasions of AD 378; the Edict of Thessalonica from AD 380 issued by Theodosius I, which established Christianity as the official religion, stigmatizing other cults and imposing a prohibition on visiting pagan temples. The presented chronological landmarks are usually considered relevant to the upper limit of existence of the various cults. In fact, we do not have enough stratigraphy observations for the temporal coincidence between the end of the pagan and the beginning of the Christian cult on the same place.

The Edict of Mediolanum did not prohibit paganism. In fact, it was not an edict but a rescript, which was a written response given by the emperor to officials' inquiry (Иванов, под печат с цит. мат лит.). This is the Emperor's opinion or decision on a given legal issue. Nowhere in the text is the word "edict" mentioned, which is a general legal norm that applies to both officials and ordinary citizens. It is issued for specific provinces and cities. Also, if the edict had gone into effect immediately, since it was the "word" of the emperor, then a whole constellation of laws introducing clarifications and additions would not have followed. Between AD 437 and 439, the *Codex Theodosianus* (Pharr 1952: xvii) was issued, aiming at the collection of all laws from Constantine onwards. Thus, we understand that there are only 25 laws against paganism compared to the 66 laws persecuting heresies. In these 25 laws the main thing that is prohibited is the performance of sacrifices (in 19 of them), not so much the use of temples. In this situation, the view that the legislation represents a widespread "anti-pagan" campaign needs to be revised. The legislation could be seen as a framework that was not necessarily implemented uniformly throughout the Empire due to regional differences. In this sense, what is happening in Thrace is not necessarily the same as the situation in Egypt, Syria or Palestine. It is not necessary to have the same picture for the entire territory of a given province. However, this does not mean that there were no destroyed temples. An important source for Thrace tells us about St. Emilianus of *Durostorum* who was burned at the stake for destroying idols with a hammer in a city's pagan temple (Boschius 1725: 370-377; Halkin 1972: 27-35; Аманасов 2011: 18). Another source concerning destruction of the sanctuaries is the '*Life*' of Hypatius, telling about the soldier Jonas, who became a monastic leader. He "liberated" Bithynia

from the idols and did the same in Thrace; also, he made the people there Christians (Bartelink 1971: 200-201 = *Vita Hypatii* 30.1; Caseau 2004: 133; Lavan 2011: xli; Mulryan 2011: 57, 59; Sharankov 2019: 62-63, n. 107). The record refers to AD 383 onwards. The archaeological picture shows that the sanctuaries continued their existence even beyond the 4th century – the last coins found in them belong to the emperors Theodosius I, Arcadius and Honorius. In fact, the "decline" of the sanctuaries may often have begun earlier, and their actual disappearance must be sought as a consequence of a lack of financial support.

In addition, the upper limits of the existence of the Late Antique city (respectively the various public buildings of the ancient world, including the ancient churches) from the territory of the diocese of Thrace (but also those in the rest of the Empire), are often connected with the presence or absence of coins[15]. The upper limit of existence of the cities and public buildings of Thrace, in almost all cases, is the end of the 6th – the first decades of the 7th century, and more specifically the end of the reign of Phocas (602-610) and the first years of the reign of Heraclius (610-641), as the analysis of the known coins from this time shows that they did not disappear, but their production was greatly reduced (Gandila 2024: 169-171). An identical decrease in coin circulation was observed not only in Thrace, but also in Syria and Palestine, the Greek islands, Asia Minor, but also in Constantinople itself. Coins are also found outside the territory of the Empire. A relevant question that could be asked is whether the disappearance / reduced production of coins and their absence in some particular locations, but their presence in others, mark decline and depopulation?

Despite the widespread burned layers dating from around AD 610-615, historical information about attacks in Thrace is missing. If there is no information about catastrophes in Thrace during the time of Heraclius, then there were probably none. Over the years, various tribes settled in the territory of the Lower Danube and some of them became federates and probably many were Christianized. The discovery of even single coins shows that the Empire remained active in the territory, even after AD 610, like *Tomis*, *Mesambria*, *Agatopolis* and *Durostorum* (Gandila 2024: 140-141)[16]. This is inextricably linked, as already indicated, with the functioning of various representative buildings in the urban landscape.

Conclusion

It can be emphasized that after the missions of the holy apostles, apart from written sources and single material evidence, early Christianity in Thrace remains difficult to recognize. After the adoption of Christianity as an equal religion, church construction began, including in Thrace, but this activity also remains unclear due

[15] More on the topic of the reuse of Late Antique coins, their discovery and hoarding outside the borders of the Empire, as well as the use of the metal for making jewelry in a „barbarian" environment, see in Fagerlie 1967; Hammarberg et al. 1989; Gandila 2018: 282-286.

[16] For another opinion, see the article of Talmatchi in this volume.

to the lack of enough sources, as well as of published sites. On the other hand, the effect of Christianity on earlier ancient architecture, as shown by examples from the Empire, and particularly by those from Thrace, is also not clear: the conversion of characteristic buildings from the cityscape into churches did not happen in a specific historical moment. There are examples of Late Antique conversion, but there are also examples of conversion in much later periods. Finally, yet importantly, the end of Late Antiquity in Thrace / end of Christianization in Thrace is marked by the lack of coins, which is interpreted as the decline and eventual fall of possession of the Eastern Roman Empire on the Lower Danube. Later, new, but this time Medieval Christianization, will happen two and a half centuries later on the very same territory, for which is known from *Anastasius Bibliothecarius* about *Sancta synodus octava generalis* that there are still operational churches in which is preached in Greek (Шивачев 1926: 89, бел. 4; ЛИБИ 1960/II, 189-190; Чанева-Дечевска 1999: 19; Николова 2002: 22).

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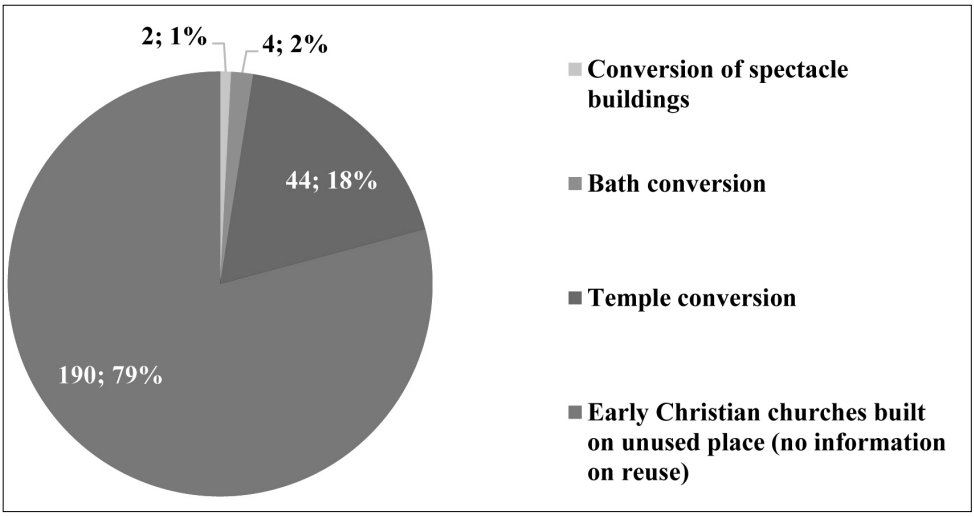


Chart 1. Distribution of (Re)Used / Christianized buildings from Diocese of Thrace

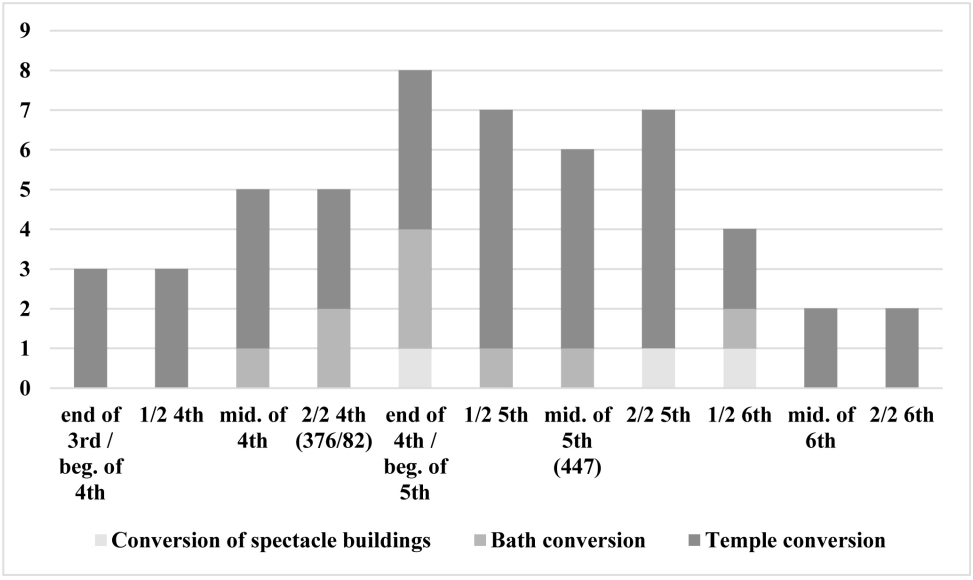


Chart 2. Chronology of (Re)Used / Christianized buildings from Diocese of Thrace

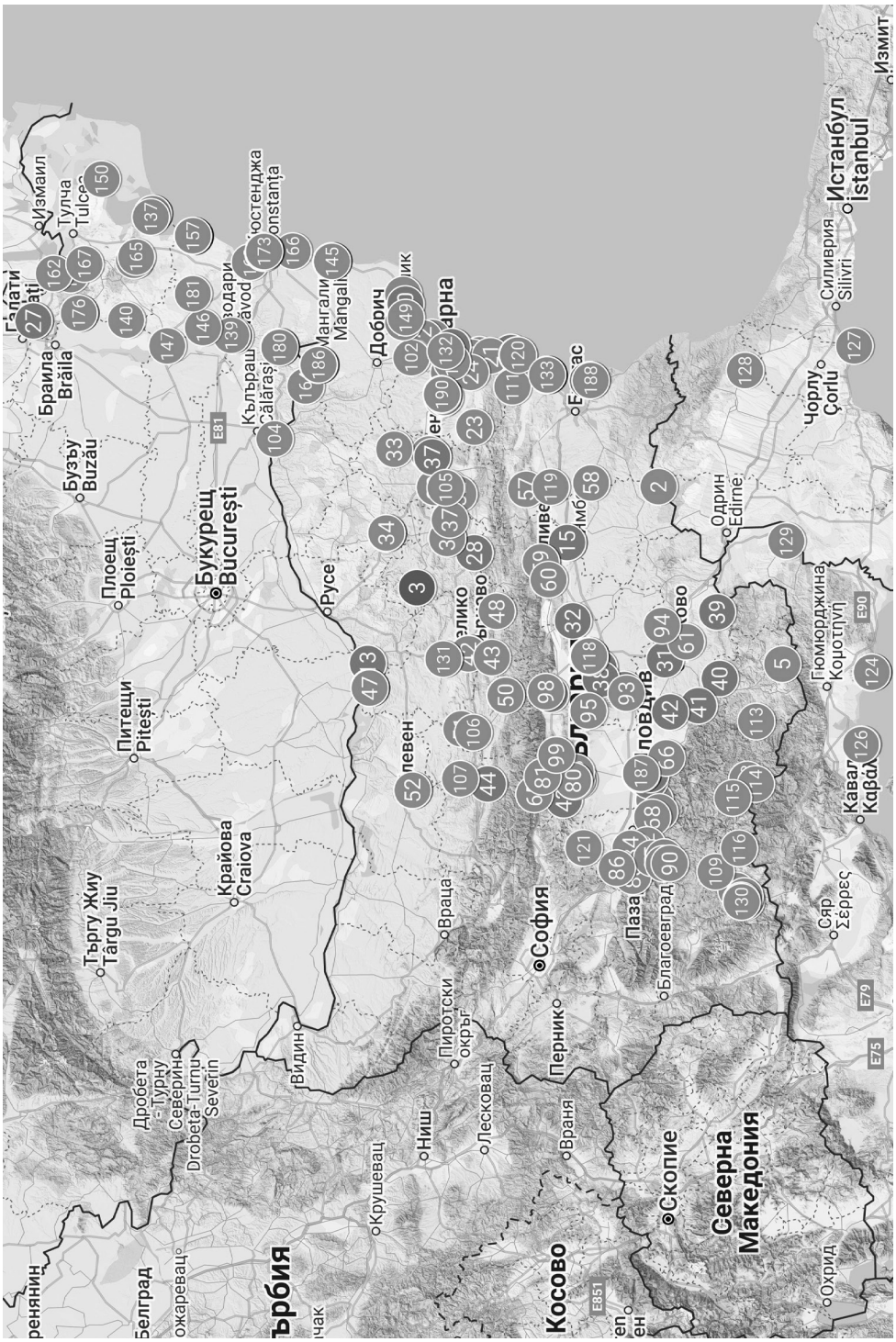

Измаил
Тулча
Tulcea
Брăила
Brăila
Бузъу
Buzău
Плоещ
Ploiești
Букурещ
București
Питещи
Pitești
Крайова
Craiova
Търгу Жиу
Târgu Jiu
Дробета-Турну Северин
Drobeta-Turnu Severin
Белград
Костенджа
Constanța
Мангали
Mangalia
Добрич
Русе
Видин
Враца
София
Перник
Ниш
Пиротски окръг
Лесковац
Крушевац
Враня
Скопие
Северна Македония
Косово
Благоевград
Пазарджик
Одрин
Edirne
Силиврия
Silivri
Истанбул
İstanbul
Измит
Чорлу
Çorlu
Гюмюрджина
Komotini
Кавала
Καβάλα
Сяр
Σέρρες
Охрид
E79
E75
E90
E85

Fig. 1. (Re)Used / Christianized buildings from Diocese of Thrace.

Conversion of spectacle buildings (yellow) – **1.** *Marcianopolis* (in the amphitheater); **2.** *Tomis* (above the amphitheater / theatre).

Bath conversion (green) – **1.** *Augista Traiana*'s *thermae*; **2.** *Novae* (below the episcopal complex); **3.** Kovachevsko kale; **4.** *Dinogetia*.

Temple conversion (blue) – **1.** Episcopal basilica in *Philippopolis*; **2.** *Augusta Traiana*; **3.** *Diocletianopolis* basilica 4a; **4.** *Messambria Pontica* (temple of Zeus?); **5.** *Apollonia Pontica,* St. Cyricus Island; **6.** *Apollonia Pontica*, Skamny cape; **7.** *Apollonia Pontica*, St. John Island; **8.** *Odessos*, temple of Apollo; **9.** Byala, St. Athanasius cape; **10.** *Histria Pontica*; **11.** *Tropeum Traiani*, basilica Forensis; **12.** *Cabyle* 2; **13.** *Iatrus*; **14.** *Tropeum Traiani*, basilica C; **15.** *Cabyle* 1; **16.** *Philippopolis*, Dzhendem tepe; **17.** *Abritus*; **18.** *Tomis*; **19.** *Nicopolis ad Nestum* 1; **20.** *Karassura*; **21.** *Toyda*; **22.** *Messambria Pontica* (temple of Demeter?); **23.** *Messambria Pontica* (temple of Apollo 1?); **24.** *Messambria Pontica* (temple of Apollo 2?); **25.** *Messambria Pontica* (temple of Zeus and Hera?); **26.** *Strogosia*; **27.** *Dinogetia*; **28.** Draganovets; **29.** Galata; **30.** Topola; **31.** Krepost; **32.** Karanovo; **33.** Kran (Antemov orex); **34.** Trite chuchura; **35.** Komatevo; **36.** Branipole; **37.** Madara; **38.** Yavorovo; **39.** Malko Gradishte; **40.** Gorna krepost; **41.** Angel voyvoda; **42.** Dragoynovo; **43.** Kozi gramadi peak; **44.** Gyrgeva cherkva.

Early Christian churches built on unused place (no information on reuse) (red) – **1.** *Diocletianopolis*, basilica 4b; **2.** Voden; **3.** Perushtitsa; **4.** *Abritus* 1; **5.** Ruchey; **6.** *Odessos*, San Stefano str. and Chernorizets str.; **7.** *Bizone*; **8.** *Odessos*, Khan Krum str.; **9.** *Odessos*, 18 St. Kliment str.; **10.** *Odessos*, Tzaribord str. and Tzar Simeon str.; **11.** *Odessos*, Pop Bogomil str.; **12.** *Odessos*, Tzar Simeon str. and Kozloduy; **13.** *Odessos*, Trar Kaloyan str. and Knyaz Dondukov str.; **14.** Pirinch tepe; **15.** Dzhanavar tepe; **16.** Galata, St. Elija monastery; **17.** 14 km Southwest of Varna; **18.** Aladzha monastery; **19.** Next to Kamchia river mouth; **20.** Bliznatsi; **21.** Shkorpilovtsi; **22.** Osenovo; **23.** Dalgopol; **24.** Two churches around Dobri dol; **25.** *Marcianopolis*, on the right river bank; **26.** *Marcianopolis*, outside the fortress in the Egreka locality; **27.** Shumen fortress A; **28.** Shumen fortress G; **29.** Two churches next to Khan Krum; **30.** Madara; **31.** Kalugeritsa, Kirika locality; **32.** Veliki Preslav, Delidushka locality; **33.** Tsarkvitsa; **34.** *Abritus* 2; **35.** Krumovo kale 1; **36.** Krumovo kale 2; **37.** Ovcharovo; **38.** Veliko Tarnovo, Early Byzantine buildings on Tsarevets; **39.** Veliko Tarnovo, single-apse churchon on Tsarevets; **40.** Veliko Tarnovo, Episcopal Church on Tsarevets; **41.** Veliko Tarnovo, under the medieval patriarchy on Tsarevets; **42.** Veliko Tarnovo, next to the main Western gate on Tsarevets; **43.** Two churches in Kiliferski monastery; **44.** *Nicopolis ad Istrum* 1; **45.** *Novae*, next to Eastern gate (sector XII); **46.** *Novae*, sector VIIIa; **47.** *Novae*, one on top of the other; **48.** Mariyan; **49.** Gabrovo, Gradishte 1; **50.** Gabrovo, Gradishte 2; **51.** Kramolin; **52.** *Strogosia*, at the foot of the hill; **53.** *Messambria Pontica*, the old metropolis; **54.** *Messambria Pontica*, St. Virgin Eleusa; **55.** *Messambria Pontica*, St., st. apostles Peter and Paul; **56.** *Messambria Pontica*, next to St. George; **57.** Two churches in Lozarevo; **58.** Pravdino; **59.** *Toyda*, Novo selo district; **60.** Malko Chochovene; **61.** Lyubenovo; **62.** *Philippopolis*, next to the αγορά; **63.** *Philippopolis*, Saborna str.; **64.** *Philippopolis*, next to the church St. Parasceva; **65.** Hristo Danovo; **66.** Dolni Voden; **67.** Krichim, Gergevets locality; **68.** Isperihovo; **69.** *Diocletianopolis* 1; **70.** *Diocletianopolis* 2; **71.** *Diocletianopolis*, 3; **72.** *Diocletianopolis* 5; **73.** *Diocletianopolis* 6; **74.** *Diocletianopolis* 7; **75.** *Diocletianopolis* 8; **76.** *Diocletianopolis* 9; **77.** *Diocletianopolis*, chapel next to the Eastern city wall; **78.** *Diocletianopolis*, Yurta locality; **79.** Verigovo; **80.** Verigovo, Manastirishte locality; **81.** Anevsko kale; **82.** Tsrancha; **83.** Golyamo Belovo; **84.** Kovachevo; **85.** Tsepina; **86.** Vetren; **87.** Kostandovo, Grobishten locality; **88.** Kostandovo, Cherkovishte locality; **89.** Kostandovo, Rangela locality; **90.** Rakitovo; **91.** Oreshe; **92.** Debren; **93.** *Karassura*; **94.** Simeonovgrad; **95.** Gorno novo selo; **96.** In to a *villa suburban* outside of *Augusta Traiana* 1; **97.** In to a *villa suburban* outside of *Augusta Traiana* 2; **98.** Kran; **99.** Vasil

Levski; **100.** Varna Lake, Peynerjik; **101.** Obzor 1; **102.** Debrene; **103.** *Marcianopolis*, Tabiya locality; **104.** *Durostorum*; **105.** Khan Krum; **106.** Sevlievo; **107.** Lovech; **108.** Smolyan, Mogilata locality; **109.** Sarnitsa; **110.** Dabnitsa; **111.** Panitsevo; **112.** *Augusta Traiana*, courthouse?; **113.** Garnati, Alada peak; **114.** Kishnitsa; **115.** Gela; **116.** Barutin; **117.** *Nicopolis ad Nestum* 2; **118.** *Augusta Traiana*, tetraconch church; **119.** *Markeli*; **120.** Obzor 2; **121.** Krasen fortress 2; **122.** *Maroneia*, on the port; **123.** *Maroneia*, Paliochora; **124.** *Maroneia*, North of Paliochora; **125.** *Abdera*, in the fortress; **126.** *Abdera*, in the necropolis; **127.** *Perint / Herakleia*; **128.** *Byzie*; **129.** *Plotinopolis*; **130.** *Nicopolis ad Nestum* 3; **131.** *Nicopolis ad Istrum* 2; **132.** *Odessos*, Sheynovo str. and Dragoman str.; **133.** *Messambria Pontica,* St. John the Baptist; **134.** *Argamum* 1; **135.** *Argamum* 2; **136.** *Argamum* 3; **137.** *Argamum* 4; **138.** *Axiopolis*, funeral church; **139.** *Axiopolis*, inside the town; **140.** *Beroe*; **141.** *Callatis*, the protochristian church?; **142.** *Callatis*, church into the cliffs; **143.** *Callatis*, Mihai Eminescu str.; **144.** *Callatis*, hotel President; **145.** *Callatis*, cemetery church; **146.** *Capidava*; **147.** *Carsium*; **148.** *Dionisopolis*, 4 km North of the city; **149.** *Dionisopolis*; **150.** *Halmyris*; **151.** *Histria Pontica*, *extra muros* church; **152.** *Histria Pontica*, church with crypt on the central square; **153.** *Histria Pontica*, church in Southwestern corner of the fortress; **154.** *Histria Pontica*, basilical building on the central square (*horreum* ?); **155.** *Histria Pontica*, basilica C; **156.** *Histria Pontica*, Episcopal basilica; **157.** *Histria Pontica*, sector *domus*; **158.** (*L*)*Ibida*, into the city; **159.** (*L*)*Ibida*, *extra muros*; **160.** Niculițel; **161.** *Noviodunum*, basilica 1; **162.** *Noviodunum*, basilica 2; **163.** Ovidiu; **164.** Golesh; **165.** Slava Rusă; **166.** Tuzla; **167.** Telitsa; **168.** *Tomis*, the small basilica; **169.** *Tomis*, in the high school Mihai Eminescu' yard; **170.** *Tomis*, at the port gate; **171.** *Tomis*, church on Revolution of December 1989 str. and 9 May str.; **172.** *Tomis*, located 25 m southwest of the Palace hotel; **173.** *Tomis*, with a Christian character; **174.** *Troesmis*, the big basilica; **175.** *Troesmis* 2; **176.** *Troesmis*, the small basilica; **177.** *Tropeum Traiani* A; **178.** *Tropeum Traiani* D; **179.** *Tropeum Traiani*, funeral church; **180.** *Tropeum Traiani*, *extra muros*; **181.** *Ulmetum*; **182.** *Zaldapa* 1; **183.** *Zaldapa* 2; **184.** *Zaldapa* 3-4; **185.** *Zaldapa* 5; **186.** *Zaldapa*, tetraconch church; **187.** *Philippopolis*, the small basilica; **188.** *Apollonia Pontica*, in front of the fortress wall; **189.** *Marcianopolis*, Episcopal basilica; **190.** *Marcianopolis*, the small church.

ГОДИШНИК НА СОФИЙСКИЯ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“
ЦЕНТЪР ЗА СЛАВЯНО-ВИЗАНТИЙСКИ ПРОУЧВАНИЯ „ИВАН ДУЙЧЕВ“
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СПЕЦИФИКИ НА ЦЪРКВИТЕ ОТ ВТОРАТА ПОЛОВИНА НА IV И ПЪРВАТА ПОЛОВИНА НА V В. В СКИТИЯ И ВТОРА МИЗИЯ[1]

ГЕОРГИ АТАНСОВ

Abstract: This study discusses the criteria for identifying the earliest churches in the provinces of *Scythia* and *Moesia Secunda*. The focus is on early churches found underneath the large 6th-century basilicas, as those in the episcopal centers of Zaldapa (*Figs. 1; 2*), Histria (*Figs. 7; 8*), and Odessos (*Fig. 9*), but also the churches in Shumen (*Fig. 11*), Iatrus (*Fig. 12*), and the fortress near the village of Khan Krum (*Fig. 9*). Archaeological evidence – such as coins, seals, ceramics, and architectural features – confirms their erection at the end of the 4th c. to the beginning of the 5th c. and their destruction around the mid-5th c., likely due to the Hunnic invasions. The churches from the end of the 4th and beginning of the 5th c. are relatively small single-nave or shortened three-nave basilicas with a single and always semicircular apse. All narthexes are undivided, and some churches even lack a narthex. Their modest dimensions range from 9.85 × 4.60 m in the Shumen fortress to a maximum of 29 × 14 m in Zaldapa. These structures were predominantly built of rubble stone with mud mortar, narrow foundations, and walls about 0.60-0.70 m thick. There are no galleries, no marble decoration or furnishings, and the overall construction is rather modest. This is indirect evidence that, although Christianity became the favored religion within the empire after 313 AD, Christian churches and communities in the provincial cities had limited resources – especially before the Edict of 391.

Keywords: Early Christian architecture, Zaldapa, Histria, Odessos, Scythia, Moesia Secunda.

Тази тема интригува отдавна специалистите по раннохристиянска археология, история и архитектура, но за точни хронологии рядко се посочват сигурни маркери. Причините са различни, но стремежът за ранно датиране не винаги е достатъчно обоснован – било поради недостатъчна

[1] Настоящият текст е резултат от научните изследвания на автора по проект „Граници и културни модели: езичество *vs* християнство в контактната зона на Дунавския *лимес* (Малка Скития и Втора Мизия през IV–VII в.)“, финансиран от Фонд „Научни изследвания“ на МОН по договор № КП-06-Н60/10 от 17.11.2021 г.

прецизност на археологическото проучване, особено в миналото, било поради липса на сигурни податки по време на разкопките. Най-общо към ранните раннохристиянски църкви в Скития и Втора Мизия причисляваме храмове датирани между средата на IV и средата на V в., т.е. до хунските нашествия. Тогава, между 434 г. и 447 г., почти всички по-значителни центрове на Скития и Втора Мизия са разрушени, включително мнозинството църкви (Miteva 1989: 143–151; Велков 2011: 328). След това към края на V в. започва ускорено строителство на базилики, което достига истински връх по времето на император Юстиниан I (527–565). Акцент на настоящата статия са църквите от преди хунските нашествия. Те спадат към три групи, но тук ще коментирам първата и най-отчетливата група – тази на църквите, разкрити под по-късни базилики.

На някои от тези църкви вече е обръщано специално внимание, но фокусът е предимно върху базилики в провинциални селища и крепости в Южна България (Борисов 2020: 283–303). Наблюденията тук ще бъдат съсредоточени върху църквите в провинциите на север от Стара планина и специално в късноримските провинции Скития и Втора Мизия, където такава суперпозиция на християнски храмове е регистрирана предимно в големи градски центрове и епископски резиденции. На първо място ще посочим ранните църкви под базилики от началото на VI в. в епископските центрове Одесос (Minchev 2006: 231–234, fig. 1–6; Минчев 2023: 241–243), Истрия (Băjenaru 2006:149–165) и Залдапа (Атанасов, Валериев 2018: 246–248, фиг. 1; Atanasov, Milanova 2025). Такова наслагване се констатира при базиликите в Ятрус, Шумен, крепостта до с. Хан Крум край Шумен. Към тях може да добавим условно църкви от втората половина на V в. под базилики от VI в. в Аргамум и хълма Царевец във Велико Търново. Тази суперпозиция е водеща, но не винаги решаваща в определяне на датата на по-ранната църква.

1. Случаят Залдапа. Приблизително в центъра на един от най-големите римо-византийски укрепени градове в провинция Скития (*Обр. 1*), с епископска катедра от около средата на VI в., е проучена внушителната базилика № 3 (*Обр. 2*). Тя е трикорабна с една петстенна апсида, с триделен притвор, с издължен асиметричен атриум, с крипта под олтара и с обща дължина 62 м и ширина 21 м. Датира се след началото на VI в., а около средата на века до южната стена е апликиран триделен анекс, който се приема за епископска резиденция. Под пода на базиликата е разкопана по-ранна църква под № 4, която е едноапсидна трикорабна елинистична базилика с едноделен притвор и анекс (*Обр. 2; 3*). Максималната ѝ външна дължина е 29 м, а максималната ширина е 14 м. Апсидата е просторна и подковообразна (Ω-образна) с максимална ширина 6,10 м и дълбочина 3,40 м, т.е. съразмерно голяма спрямо централния кораб (*Обр. 3; 4*). Под апсидата е вкопана голяма триделна крипта за свети мощи с коридор от юг. Със своите три помещения и обща площ около 20 м^2 в интериор и около 34 м^2 в екстериор,

това е най-голямата крипта-хипогей в днешните български земи (Atanasov, Milanova 2025: sous presse). Основите ѝ са широки 0,70 м и дълбоки 1,30–1,40 м, иззидани от ломени камъни на землена спойка. Има податки, че на по-късен етап е добавен асиметричен атриум (*Обр. 2*). Суперструкцията не е запазена с изключение на много малък участък при връзката на петата на апсидата със северното рамо на кораба. Съхраненият ред е от полуобработени камъни на кална спойка (*Обр. 3*).

Относно датата на изграждане на базилика № 4. Единствените маркери за началната дата на базилика № 4 в Залдапа са структурите и находките от сондажите под подовото ниво. В четири от тях бяха документирани рушевини на по-ранни сгради. В тази насока е важно да се отбележи регистрираният силен пожар на пет места под пода на базилика № 4 (*Обр. 5*), който има отношение към разрушаване на по-ранни структури. По-сигурен репер в тази насока са монетите. В сондаж № 12 има силно горял хоризонт и пет късноримски монети на следните владетели: Константин I, Константин II (2 бр.), Констант и най-късната – на Валент от 364–365 г. В сондажа, попадащ в нартекса, бе проследен компактен пласт жълта глина, за която са били залепени тухлите, покриващи пода. Под тази глинена подложка на кота 172,40–172,45 м (*Обр. 5)* бяха открити 6 късноримски бронзови монети: една на Лициний I от 321–324 г.; една от типа „Gloria exercitus“ от 336–340 г.; една на Констант от 336–337 г.; две на Констанций II от 351–361 г.; една на Юлиан II като цезар от 355–361 г. Тук монетата на Юлиан дава добър хронологически маркер за датиране на изграждането на базилика № 4 най-рано след 355 г. Особено важна в това отношение е една оловна пломба на град Тралис (Западна Мала Азия) (*Обр. 6*), открита отново под подовото ниво в притвора на базилика № 4 (*Обр. 5*) с датировка в 60-те години на IV в. (Chiriac, Munteanu 2014: 299–300). Едноделният притвор и Ω-образната апсида също сочат ранна дата. Освен църквите с такива апсиди в Кападокия, Задкавказието и Адриатика (Restle 1978: 892–897, Abb. 3, 5, 9, 11; Restle 1979: 6–27, 271; Хрушкова 2002: 353; Chevalier et al. 1995: 143, fig. 3, pl. XLII-1; Чанева-Дечевска 1999: 69–70), като паралели тук специално ще посочим базилики № 2 при с. Карановo, Новозагорско и при с. Полски Градец, Новозагорско, чието построяване се отнася след средата на IV – началото на V в. (Борисов 2020: 287–288, обр. 2–4). Тези аналогии и преди всичко откритите монети и печата в голяма степен ни дават основание да датираме изграждането на ранната базилика № 4 в Залдапа в последната трета на IV в. и по-точно след 360 г. Това вероятно се случва след повсеместно опожаряване и разрушаване на по-ранни сгради в централната част на града, което евентуално може да се свърже с нахлуването на визиготите в Скития и на Балканите през 377 г. (Wolfram 1990: 84–86), когато се датират пожари и разрушения под базиликата в близкия Дуросторум (Атанасов 2007: 97–98).

Относно датата на разрушаване на базилика № 4. На няколко места е документирано, че подовата настилка на църква № 4 е само на около 0,40–0,50 м под подовото ниво на по-късната базилика № 3 (*Обр. 5*). Това предполага, че няма голяма дистанция във времето между разрушаването на по-ранната и изграждането на по-късната базилика. За прецизиране датата на разрушаването на базилика № 4 отново гласуваме по-голямо доверие на монетите. На първо място ще акцентираме на откритите монети в негатива на северния зид, където най-късните са емисии на Аркадий (395–408) и на Теодосий II (тип „кръст във венец“ 425–435 г.). Под тухлите на подовото ниво в северозападната част на наоса на базилика № 3 и над подовото ниво на базилика № 4 са открити четири бронзови монети: една на Константин, една на Констанций II, една е от типа „Victoria aug.“ (вариант 4), отсечена в Солун през 383-392 г. и една на Теодосий II от типа „кръст във венец“ от 425–450 г. Тук хронологически маркер е отново монетата на Теодосий II, която се явява относителен *terminus post quem* за построяването на базилика № 3 и *terminus ante quem* за края на използването на базилика № 4. Особено важни за проучването на историята на Залдапа в края на IV – първата половина на V в. се явяват две колективни находки с бронзови монети. Първата беше намерена в границите на анекса на базилика № 4, като най-късната монета е на император Марциан (450–457). Втората находка се състои от 80 бр. монети от дребни номинали и беше намерена в горял пласт под подовото ниво на атриума на базилика № 3. Най-късните и масови монети в находката са на Теодосий II от типа „кръст във венец“ от 425–450 г. Откриването на колективна монетна находка в опожарен пласт и наличието на най-късни монети от годините 425–450 г. позволяват разрушаването на ранната базилика да бъде свързано с някое от хунските нападения в Скития през 30-те или 40-те години на V в. Добре известни от писмените извори са мащабите на продължилите половин век хунски нашествия на Балканския полуостров. Не била пощадена и провинция Скития. Хунските нападения били особено силни в 441–442 г. (Miteva 1989: 143–151; Велков 2011: 328).

2. Случаят Истрия. Около средата на VI в. Истрия е забележителен раннохристиянски епископски център в провинция Скития. Приблизително в центъра на укрепената територия е разкрита голяма трикорабна базилика с една петстенна апсида, с трансепт, триделен притвор и атриум с обща дължина 58 м, ширина на наоса 18 м (Suceveanu 2007: 19–57, pl. I, VII, VIII) (*Обр. 7; 8*). Според стратиграфията и монетните находки изграждането на базиликата се отнася към времето на император Юстиниан след началото на VI в. Под нея, в югозападната част, е разкрита по-ранна и по-малка едноапсидна трикорабна базилика с дължина 25 м и ширина 16 м (Băjenaru 2006: 149–165, fig. 1) (*Фиг. 7; 8*). Апсидата е сравнително голяма и полукръгла. Наосът е асиметричен. Не е ясно дали е имало притвор, защото западната половина е недопроучена. Основите с ширина 0,70 м са плитко фундирани

на около 0,80 м. Иззидани са от полуобработени и необработени камъни и шисти с глинено-землена спойка, като само при апсидата е регистриран хоросан. Проучвателите предполагат, че ранната базилика е построена след средата на IV в., дори насочват към управлението на император Теодосий I (379–395), защото в долните хоризонти са открити две негови монети. Археологически са регистрирани две фази III–A и III–B. Краят на първата фаза се отнася към средата на V в. и се свързва с хунските нашествия в Скития. Приема се, че след това базиликата е възстановена (фаза III–B). Горната граница на функционирането ѝ се отнася до началото на VI в., когато върху нея е издигната голямата катедрална базилика с трансепт.

3. Случаят Одесос. Големият късноантичен град е епископски център в провинция Втора Мизия още през IV в., а през VI в. последователно е издигнат като архиепископия и митрополитска катедра. Сред девет градски базилики най-голяма и представителна е катедралата на ул. „Хан Крум“ – трикорабна едноапсидна базилика с триделен притвор с дължина 40 м и ширина 16 м (Minchev 2006: 231–234, fig. 1–6; Минчев 2023: 241–243) (*Обр. 9*). Вероятно има и атриум, но разкопките в западна посока не са възможни. Има две (или три?) фази на строителство. В източната половина на централния кораб под подовото ниво е проучена ранна трикорабна едноапсидна базилика с обща дължина около 13 м и предполагаема ширина 8 м. Апсидата е полукръгла, а притворът е неразчленен. Запазена е само в субструкция. Зидана е от полуобработени камъни на слаб хоросан с много жълт пясък. В рушевините са открити разноцветни фрагменти от стенописи и от стенни и подови мозайки, както и множество тесери, някои от които изработени от златна смалта (Минчев 1986: 34; Minchev 2006: 231; Oppermann 2010: 130; Минчев 2023: 241–243). Построяването ѝ се датира в края на IV в., а разрушаването ѝ се свързва със силно земетресение около втората четвърт на V в., защото апсидата е пропукана.

4. Случаят Хан Крум. Суперпозицията малка, по-ранна църква, под голяма базилика от VI в. е позната и от проучванията на т.нар. „Аул на хан Омуртаг“, недалеч от гр. Шумен (*Обр. 10*). Базиликата е едноапсидна трикорабна с триделен нартекс, с дължина 23,50 м и ширина 15,10 м. Наличието на синтрон, деамбулаторий и размерите предполагат, че това е централната църква на този любопитен раннохристиянски център. Някои го свързват с готите на Вулфила, а аз допускам и присъствието в него на готския епископ Селена. Триделният нартекс насочва към изграждане след края на V – началото на VI в. Под нея е разкрита по-ранна църква, означена с № III. Тя е трикорабна едноапсидна базилика с несигурен нартекс. Нейната дължина с апсидата е 16,20 м, а ширината – 9 м (Антонова 1968: 57; Антонова, Дремсизова-Нелчинова 1981: 15; Чанева-Дечевска 1999: 188; Балабанов 2006: 71–77; Балабанов 2010: 351; Oppermann 2010: 117; Борисов 2020: 287–288, обр. 6). Основите са положени на дълбочина до 0,80 м и са изградени

от ломени камъни на кална спойка. В суперструкция градежът на стените, запазени на височина до 1,20 м, е от грубо обработени варовикови камъни на бял хоросан. Дебелината на стените е 0,70 м. Апсидата на базиликата е несъразмерно голяма, полукръгла, с диаметър 4,60 м, дълбочина 3,20 м. В целия насип под църква № III и над пода на църква № II е регистриран пласт с дебелина 0,60 м с множество фрагменти от нападали стенописи. В. Антонова и Ц. Дремсизова–Нелчинова датират изграждането в първата половина на IV в., а разрушаването се свързва с готските нашествия около 70-те години на IV в. (Антонова 1968: 65; Антонова, Дремсизова-Нелчинова 1981: 20; Балабанов 2010: 351). Според Т. Иванов базиликата е изградена в средата или края на IV в., а е разрушена в края на първата четвърт на V в. при някое (вероятно хунско?) нашествие (Иванов 1976: 16; Чанева-Дечевска 1999: 189) – едно мнение, което е по-приемливо. Т. Балабанов обединява периодите на изграждане, функциониране и унищожаване на четирите раннохристиянски храма и октогоналната сграда в една обща хронология на развитие на готския епископски център (Балабанов 2006: 71–77; Балабанов 2010: 353, 354). Тази теза, обаче, е спорна и подлежи на преоценка.

4. Случаят Шумен. Централната базилика, известна като № 2 в крепостта е трикорабна, с една полукръгла апсида и с неразчленен нартекс. Дължината ѝ е 30 м, а ширината 13 м (Антонова 1973: 151; Антонова 1987: 65; Антонова 1995: 21; Дончева 2002: 84; Аладжова 2003: 156, 159; Oppermann 2010: 115). До южния кораб на апсидата е долепен баптистерий (*Обр. 11*). В. Антонова я отнася към края на V – началото на VI в. (Антонова 1987: 66; Антонова 1995: 25). Под руините на базиликата от VI в. е разкрита църква № 1. Тя е еднокорабна, едноапсидна без притвор. Дължината на църквата, заедно с апсидата, е 9,85 м, а ширината – 4,60 м (Антонова 1973: 141; Петрова 1977: 61; Антонова 1987: 65; Чанева-Дечевска 1999: 184; Дончева 2002: 84; Аладжова 2003: 158: Борисов 2020: 288, обр. 7). Основите ѝ са с дебелина 0,65 м, изградени от ломени камъни, споени с глина. Подът ѝ е покрит с настилка от каменни плочи. Въз основа на еднопространственото решение на църквата и формата на апсидата, както и на монета на император Хонорий (395–423), открита в насипа, В. Антонова датира църквата в IV в. (Антонова 1973: 141; Чанева-Дечевска 1999: 184–185; Дончева 2002: 83). В. Динчев сочи като *terminus post quem* началото на V в. (Динчев 2006: 16). Според M. Oppermann монетата на Хонорий позволява изграждането на църква № 1 да се отнесе в началото на V в. (Oppermann 2010: 114). Впечатлява формата и размерите на обширната тип цирковa апсида, рядко явление в църковната архитектура, характерно за ранните църкви от втора половина на IV – началото на V в. С такива апсиди са църквите от края на IV в. до с. Попрусаново край Силистра (*Обр. 15*), Телица и Аргамум в Северна Добруджа (Атанасов 2015: 15–24).

5. Случаят Ятрус. Тук са разкрити една над друга 3 базилики (*Обр. 12*). Най-късната *базилика D* е и най-голяма. Тя е трикорабна с една полукръгла апсида и неразчленен притвор. Външните ѝ размери са: дължина с апсидата – 30,30 м, ширина – 16,25 м и се датира след началото на VI в. (Иванов 1976: 8–14, 17). Подът е тухлен, а на 1,77 м под него е разкрита *базилика C*. Според Т. Иванов тази разлика показва, че между разрушаването на първата и изграждането на втората е минало известно време (Иванов 1963: 18). *Базилика C* е трикорабна, с едноделен нартекс и една полукръгла апсида (Иванов 1976: 8; Чанева-Дечевска 1999: 199; Von Bülow 2008: 67). Външните ѝ размери са: дължина 22,2 м и ширина 12,2 м. В апсидата има едностъпален синтрон и деамбулаторий. Т. Иванов приема, че е построена около средата на V в. (след хунското нашествие през 447 г.) и е разрушена в края на столетието, докато според G. von Bülow е съществувала много кратко време и е унищожена при хунското нашествие от 447 г. (Von Bülow 2008: 67). За нас по-специално внимание заслужава *базиликата B*, разкрита под базилика *C*. Тя е с едноделен нартекс, трикорабна и едноапсидна. Нейните външни размери са: дължина с апсидата 16,40 м и ширина 10,40 м (Иванов 1976: 6, 13; Чанева-Дечевска 1999: 198; Борисов 2020: 288, обр. 8). Базиликата е открита запазена предимно в основи, изградени от ломени камъни, споени с хоросан, съдържащ много жълт пясък. Дебелината на вътрешните и външните ѝ стени е 0,60 м, нартексът има отстъп навътре на 0,60 м. Страничните кораби са отделени от централния чрез два реда от по три самостоятелно зидани основи, без стилобат, с правоъгълен план и размери 1,40 х 1,50 м. Според Т. Иванов върху базите са стояли зидани стълбове с правоъгълно сечение. Полукръглата апсида на базиликата е открита изцяло разрушена, но има следи от стенописи (Иванов 1976: 12; Чанева-Дечевска 1999: 199). Керамичните фрагменти се отнасят към втората половина на IV – първата половина на V в. Въз основа на откритите монети, от които най-ранните са на император Аврелиан (270–275), най-многобройните на Констанций II (324–361), Константин II (337–346) и Констант (335–346), а най-късните на Хонорий (408–423) и Теодосий II (408–423), Т. Иванов датира изграждането на базиликата около средата или началото на третата четвърт на IV в., при управлението на Констанций II. Според него базиликата е използвана до края на първата четвърт на V в. или 423 г., когато е опожарена, както показва откритият горял черен пласт върху пода. Т. Иванов допуска, че опожаряването е резултат от хунските нашествия във Втора Мизия след края на първата четвърт на V в. или след 423 г.

6. Случаят Зикидева/Царевец. В тази епископска резиденция регистрираме поредния случай на наслагване на две базилики (*Обр. 13*). Горната е едноапсидна трикорабна с едноделен притвор с обща дължина 35 м и ширина 18,50 м. Основателно се датира около началото на VI в. Под нея е проучена еднокорабна едноапсидна базилика с притвор от втора половина на V в. (Ан-

гелов 1973: 271, 274–319, 332-336; Чанева-Дечевска 1999: 201–203; Dintchev 1997: 58-60; Динчев 2001: 233–234; Динчев 2003: 393–395). Действително многостенната апсида изключва по-ранна датировка и затова този случай излиза извън темата на настоящото изследване. Водещи специалисти по християнска археология и архитектура приемат, че най-ранната поява на тристенната апсида е в базиликата-католикон на манастира „Св. Йоан Студит" в Константинопол, построена около 463 г. (453 г.?) (Millingen 1912: 35–49, figs. 12, 16, 17; Mathews 1971: 19–20, fig. 5, 10; Mango 1978: 115–122), докато петстенните апсиди се налагат масово след втората половина на V в. и особено през VI в. (Delvoye 1962: 305–308; Mathews 1971: 82–84; Restle 1978: 892–897, Abb. 3, 5, 9, 11; Restle 1979: 6–27, 271).

Подобни суперпозиции с по-малки и по-ранни църкви в рамките и под основите на по-късни и по-големи (включително катедрални) базилики са ни добре познати в раннохристиянските центрове. Списъкът може да бъде продължен с аналогични суперпозиции в Сердика/София, Караново и Полски Градец (Новозагорско) (Чанева-Дечевска 1999: 184–187, 198–199, 246, фиг. 11, 12, 23, 60; Борисов 2020: 285–291, обр. 5–10). Показателен е и примерът с катедралната базилика на Стоби, където под голямата и разкошна епископска базилика от VI в. са регистрирани две по-ранни едноапсидни базилики без нартекс от края на IV (?) и V в. Те са трикратно по-малки по размери и с по-неглижиран градеж и украса (Wiseman 2006: 796–797; Dimitrova et al. 2012: 12–13).

От тези случаи могат да се направят по-аргументирани наблюдения за най-ранните църкви в Скития и Втора Мизия, т.е. базилики от втората половина на IV – началото на V в. Първо, суперпозицията на базилики не предполага обезателно долната да е от края на IV в. Случаят Зикидева/Царевец е показателен. Потвърждава го случаят Аргамум в Скития, където под трикорабната базилика № 2 с тристенна апсида е регистрирана по-ранна църква също с тристенна апсида (Iaţcu 2012: 45–47, fig. 3, 4) (*Обр. 14*). По-горе се уточни, че най-ранните църкви с тристенната апсида се датират най-рано след средата на V в. На този фон не може да приемем, че трикорабната църква с петстенна апсида в аула при с. Хан Крум е построена през втората половина на IV в. (Балабанов 2010: 353), а по-скоро след средата на V в. Идеи за църкви от първата половина на IV в. (Антонова 1968: 57–58) не са доказани и не се приемат от мнозинството познавачи на раннохристиянската археология и архитектура. Спорно е и предположението на Б. Борисов, че „… тази група малки ранни базилики и еднокорабни храмове загиват най-късно по време на готските бунтове през 376–378 г., а върху много от тях по-късно са издигнати нови, значително по-големи и масивни храмове" (Борисов 2020: 290–291). Той гради изводите си главно от църквите в Южна България (Караново, Полски градец, Чаталка, Старозагорско), разкрити предимно в провинциални селища. В Скития и Втора Мизия оба-

че най-ранните църкви са регистрирани под катедрални базилики на епископските центрове Одесос, Истрия и Залдапа и големи градове-крепости като Ятрус, Шумен и Хан Крум. При тях има сигурни данни, че най-долните църкви може да се датират едва към края на IV в., т.е. след 376–378 г. На първо място това се отнася за базиликите под катедралите на Истрия и Залдапа. Прецизните стратиграфски проучвания, съпроводени с разкритите монети, пломби и керамика подкрепят тази датировка. При останалите ранни църкви под базиликите в Одесос, Хан Крум, Шумен, Ятрус има данни за по-ранна дата, но прецизирането на датировките не е така безспорно. И все пак има белези, които могат да се привлекат. Църквите в Одесос, Хан Крум, Ятрус са много по-малки от базиликите над тях, всички са еднокорабни без притвори или с малки, неразчленени притвори и с обширни апсиди. Без да е представена прецизна стратиграфска позиция, монетите насочват издигането им към последната трета на IV в., а разрушаването им преди средата на V в.

Има още две групи ранни църкви в двете провинции, над които обаче не са изградени по-късни базилики и за които има податки, че са от края или от втората половина на IV в. Към първата група спадат еднокорабни църкви с кратък живот като посочените по-горе в Телица и Попрусаново (*Обр. 15*) (Атанасов 2015: 15–24).

Към втората група могат да се причислят базилики отнасяни към втората половина на IV в., които, с промени и допълнения към първоначалния план, доживяват до втората половина на VI в. На първо място тук може да се посочат мартириалните базилики в Никулицел (Bauman 1972: 189–202) и Халмирис (Zachariade, Bounegru 2003: 115–132). Дискусионни предположения за първи етап на строителство от втората половина на IV в. има още за катедралните базилики на Марцианопол (Чанева-Дечевска 1999: 183, 184; Ангелов 1999: 46), Нове (Biernacki 2005: 56; Biernacki 2012: 92; Biernacki 2013: 33), базилика В (т.нар. мраморна) в Тропеум Траяни (Barnea 1979: 160–163; Lungu 2000: 73; Iaţcu 2012: 95–96) и още няколко други, но със спорна хронология. Те обаче ще бъдат обект на друга публикация.

В заключение може да направим няколко извода, касаещи се до ранни църкви в суперпозиция с по-късни базилики. Църквите от края на IV – началото на V в. са сравнително малки еднокорабни или трикорабни скъсени едноапсидни базилики. Апсидите винаги са полукръгли и никога полигонални (тристенни или петстенни в екстериор). Те са сравнително обширни, в два случая Ω-образни (Залдапа и църква № 1 в Хан Крум). Притворите са едноделни и липсва вътрешно разделение, а някои дори са без притвори. Скромните им размери варират от 9,85 х 4,60 м в Шуменска крепост до максималните 29 х 14 м в Залдапа. Преимуществено са градени от ломени камъни на кална спойка, с тесни основи и стени широки около 0,60–0,70 м. Липсва богата архитектурна декорация. На този фон изненадват стенописите в църквите

в Одесос, Залдапа, Хан Крум и Шуменска крепост. Липсват галерии, богата мраморна украса и литургичен мобилияр. Най-сетне, градежът им е по-посредствен. Това е косвено указание, че макар и фаворизирано вероизповедание в границите на Империята след 313 г. (дори единствено легитимно след едиктите на Теодосий I от 391 и 392 г.) (Stein 1959: 203–213), християнските църкви, респективно християнските общини в провинциалните градове, не разполагат с големи ресурси; особено до издаването на едикта от 391 г., когато им се предоставя собствеността и средствата на езическите храмове. Ако след края на V в. в Залдапа и съседните градове Томис, Одесос, Истрия, Тропеум Траяни, Марцианопол, Дуросторум, Абритус, Аргамум и Закидава са регистрирани между три и девет църкви, то около средата – втората половина на IV в. със сигурност е документирана само по една. Тази ситуация контрастира с положението в Йерусалим, Рим, Константинопол, Трир, Антиохия, Светите земи, провинциалните столици и големите градове, свързани с апостолски деяния, подвизи на мъченици и пр., където има повече храмове през IV – началото на V в. Същевременно, в отдалечените гранични провинции, дори в техните градски центрове, броят на църквите е силно редуциран, размерите по-скромни, строителството по-неглижирано, а украсата по-семпла. Показателен е случаят със столицата Константинопол, където според *Descriptio urbis Constantinopolitanea* от 430 г. има само 14 църкви до 425 г. (Dagron 1989: 1073). След средата на V в. броят се увеличава, като според Прокопий Кесарийски само Юстиниан Велики (527-565) построил и реконструирал над 20 столични църкви, за да достигнат около 500 през XIV в. (Dagron 1989: 1073; Janin 1964: XII). Редом с останалото, това е свидетелство за позакъсняла масова християнизация, за отсъствие на явни административни, социални и финансови привилегии, респективно за по-ограничените ресурси, с които разполагат раннохристиянските общини тук и изобщо до началото на V в. Ако имаше решителна доминация на християните, това трябваше да има материален израз – повече и по-големи църкви, в които да се черкуват, като това е факт след края на V в. и особено през VI в. Най-ранните църкви в тези две провинции дават началото на християнския култов център на градовете и крепостите, като сакрализират мястото, върху което са построени. Показателен е фактът, че върху техните разрушения се изграждат главните базилики след средата на V в. и основно през VI в. Забележително е, че в Одесос, Истрия, Залдапа, Хан Крум през VI в. се строят множество църкви, но катедралните базилики се издигат на мястото, където са били първите, най-ранните църкви от втората половина на IV – началото на V в.

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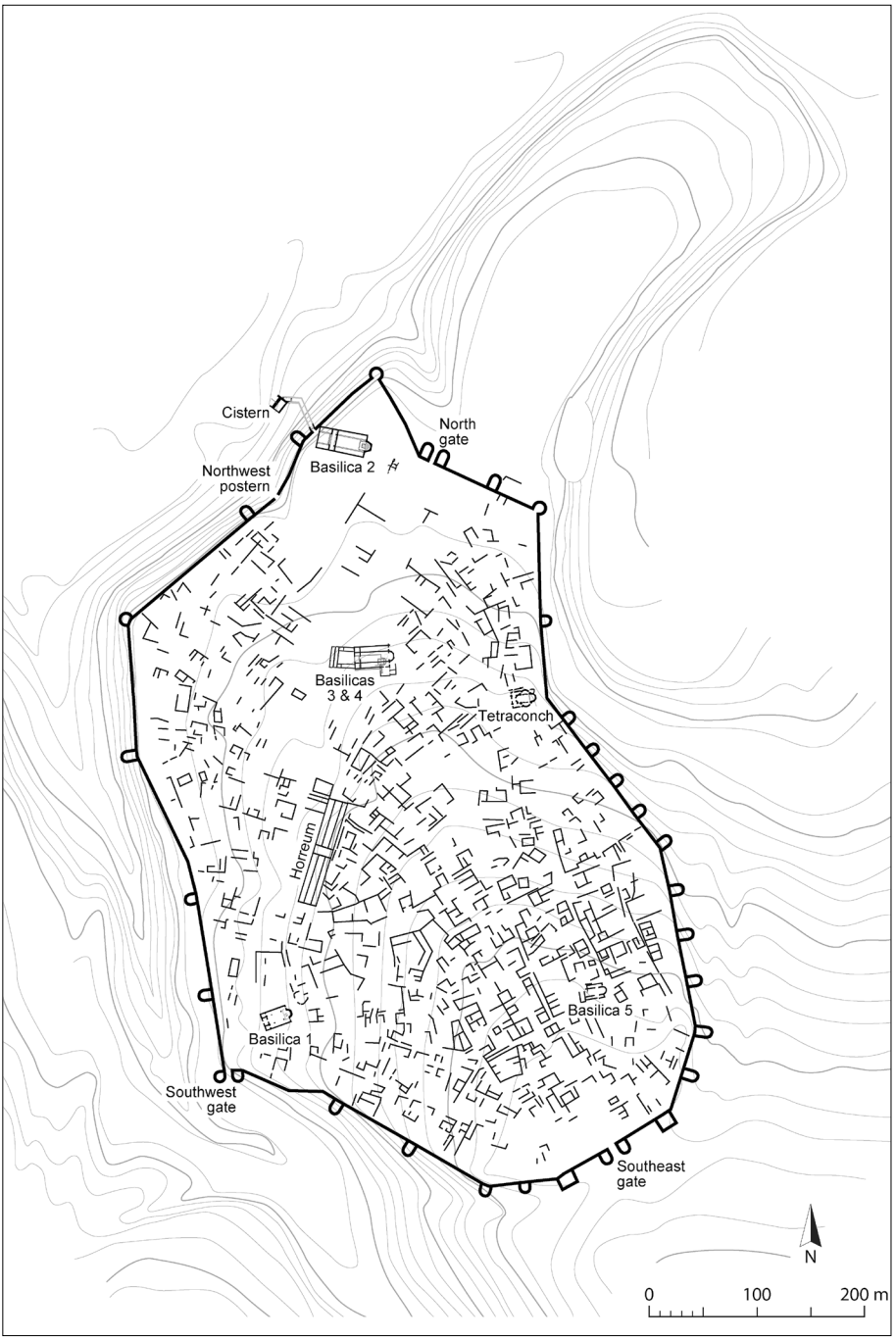
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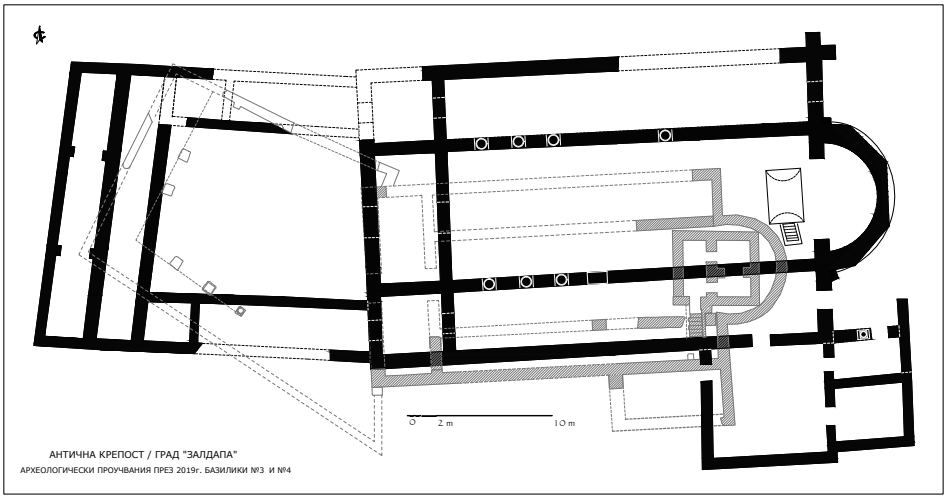
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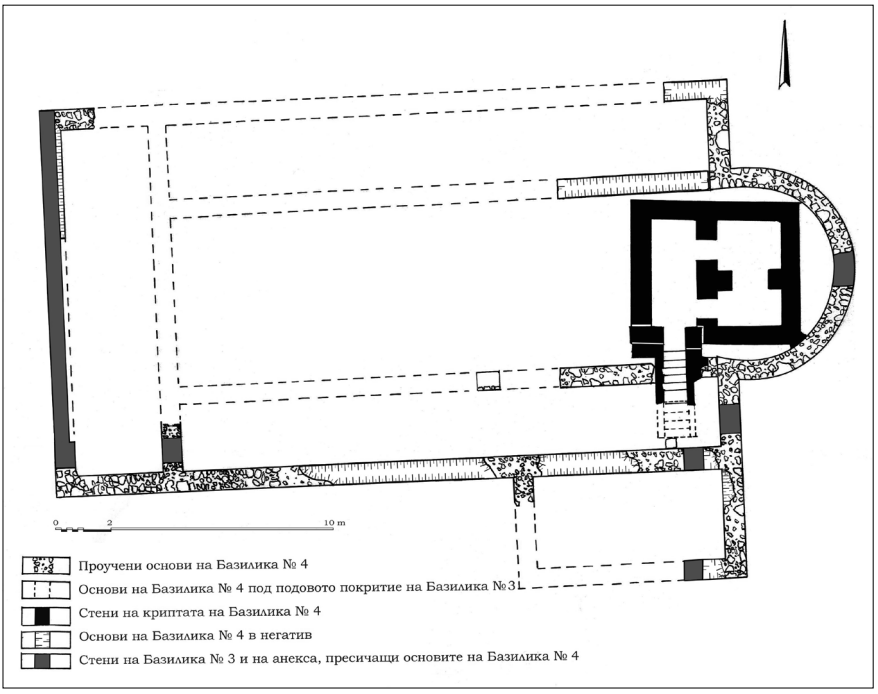
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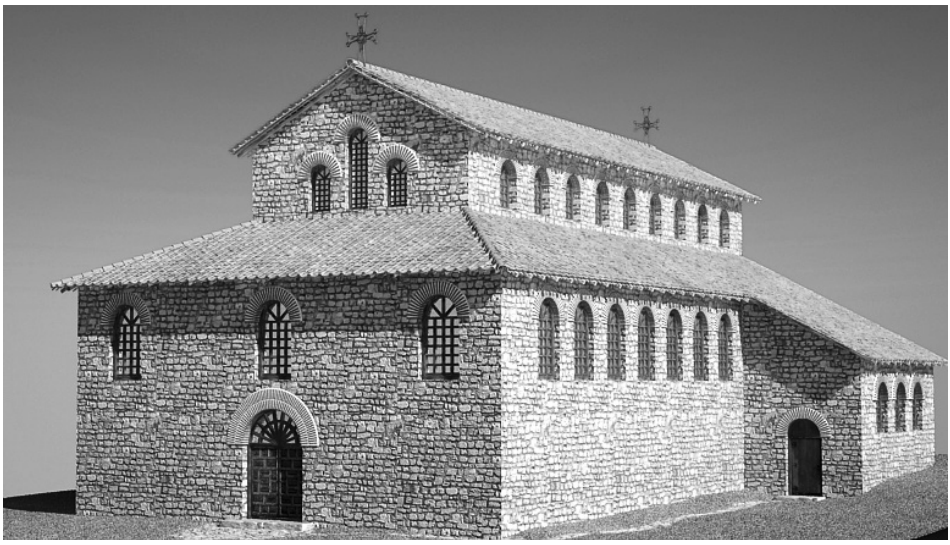
Обр. 1. План на Залдапа (B. M'Barek със съдействието на D. Moreau, N. Beaudry и публикации на К. Шкорпил, С. Торбатов, Г. Атанасов, М. Мирчев, Й. Валериев и сателитни снимки от *Google earth*)



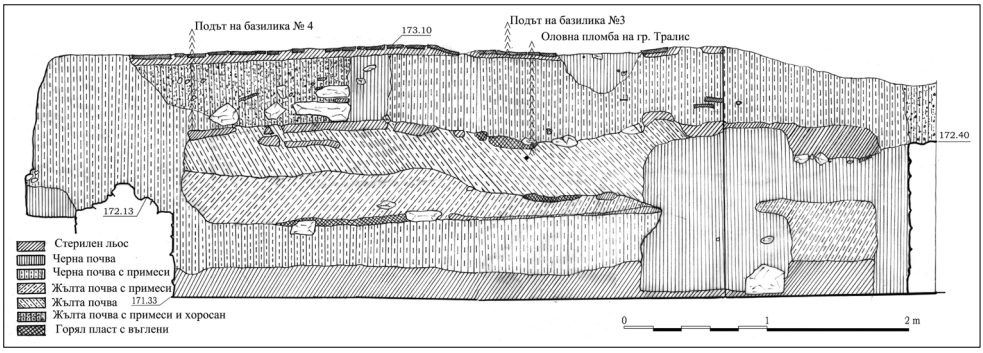
Обр. 2. План на базилики № 3 и 4 (М. Маринов и Г. Атанасов)



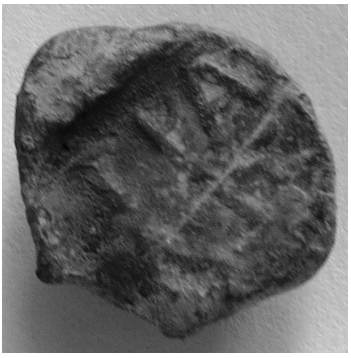
Обр. 3. План на базилика № 4 (Г. Атанасов)



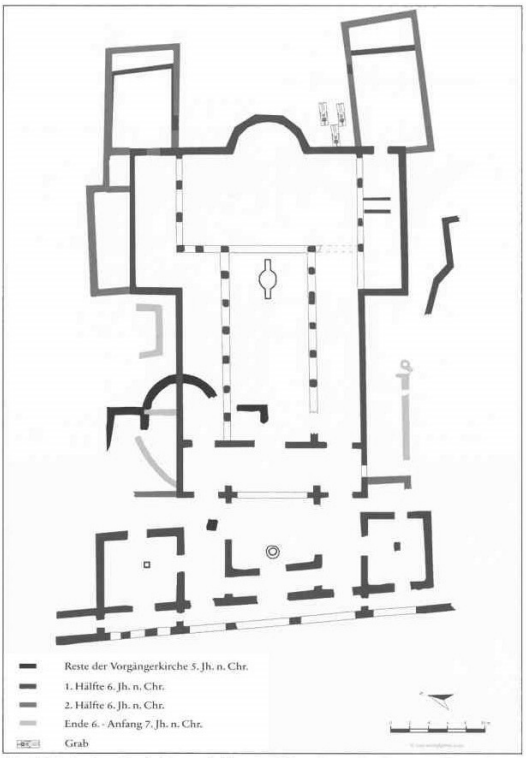
Обр. 4. Идейна реконструкция на интериора на базилика № 4 (Г. Атанасов и Св. Русев)



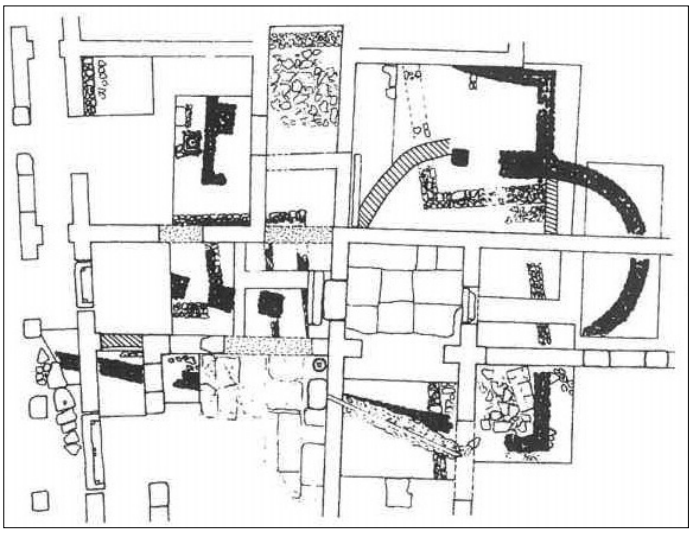
Обр. 5. Източен профил на сондаж в нартекса на базилики № 3 и 4 с техните подови нива (Г. Атанасов)



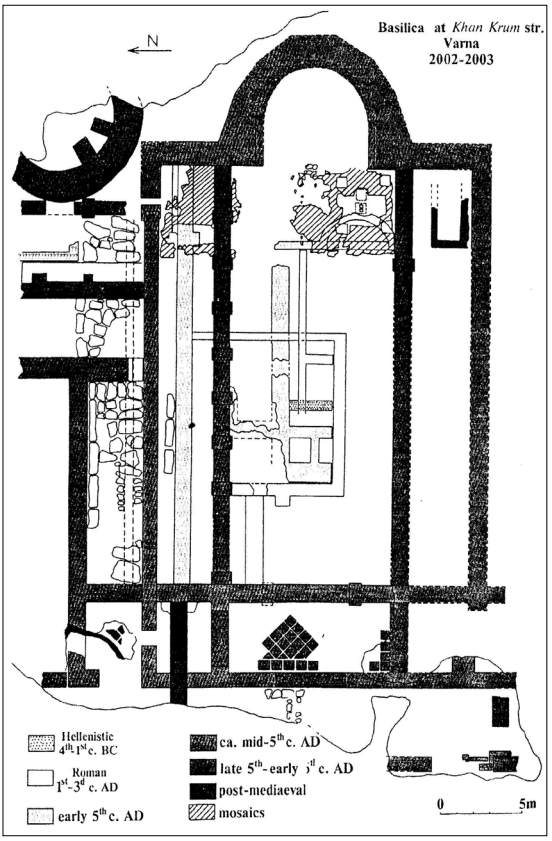
Обр. 6. Оловна търговска пломба от 60-те години на VI в. на малоазийския град Тралис (сн. Й. Валериев)



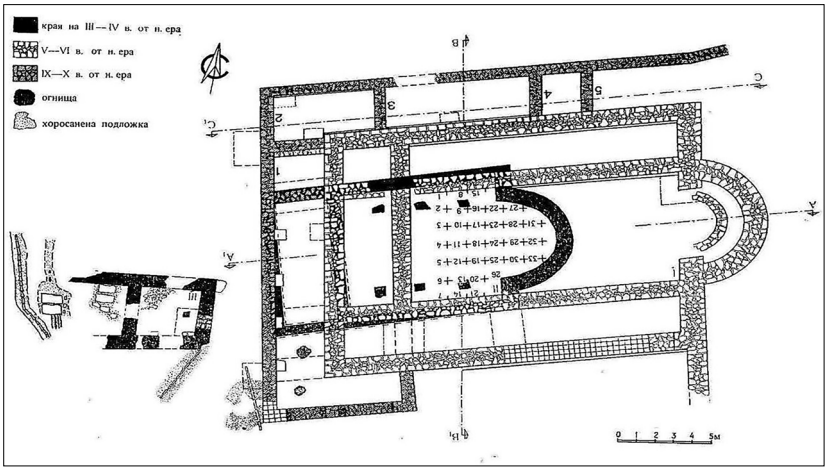
Обр. 7. План на катедралната базилика в Истрия от VI в. и ранната църква от края на IV в. в северозападния ъгъл (Suceveanu 2007)



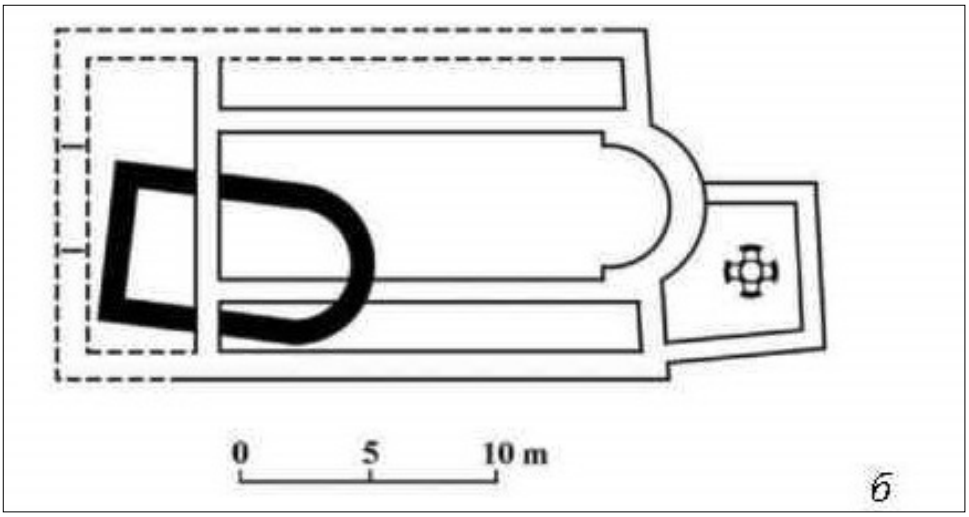
Обр. 8. План на ранната църква от края на IV в. в северозападния ъгъл на катедралната базилика (Băjenaru 2003-2005)



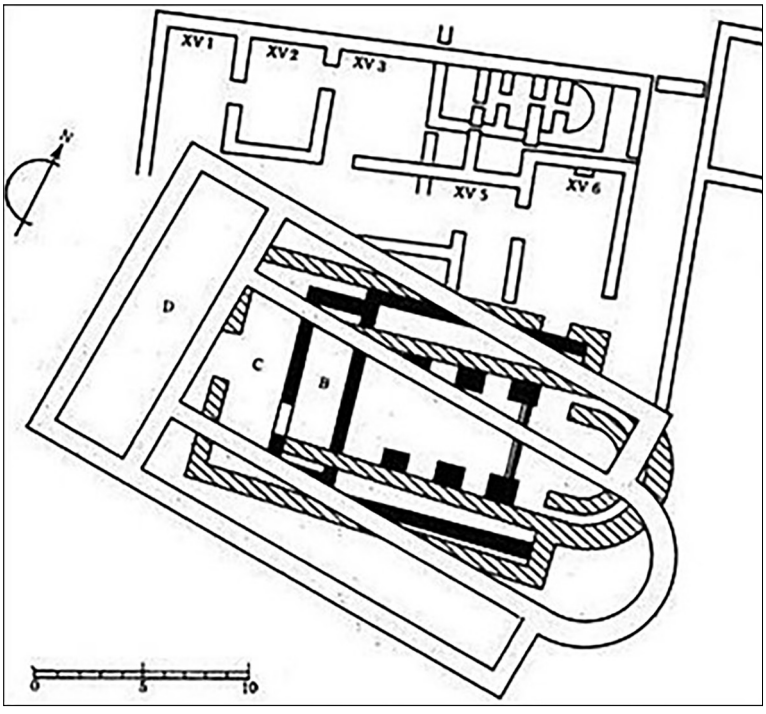
Обр. 9. План на катедралната базилика на Одесос от VI в.
и ранната църква от края на IV в. под южния ѝ кораб (Минчев 2023)



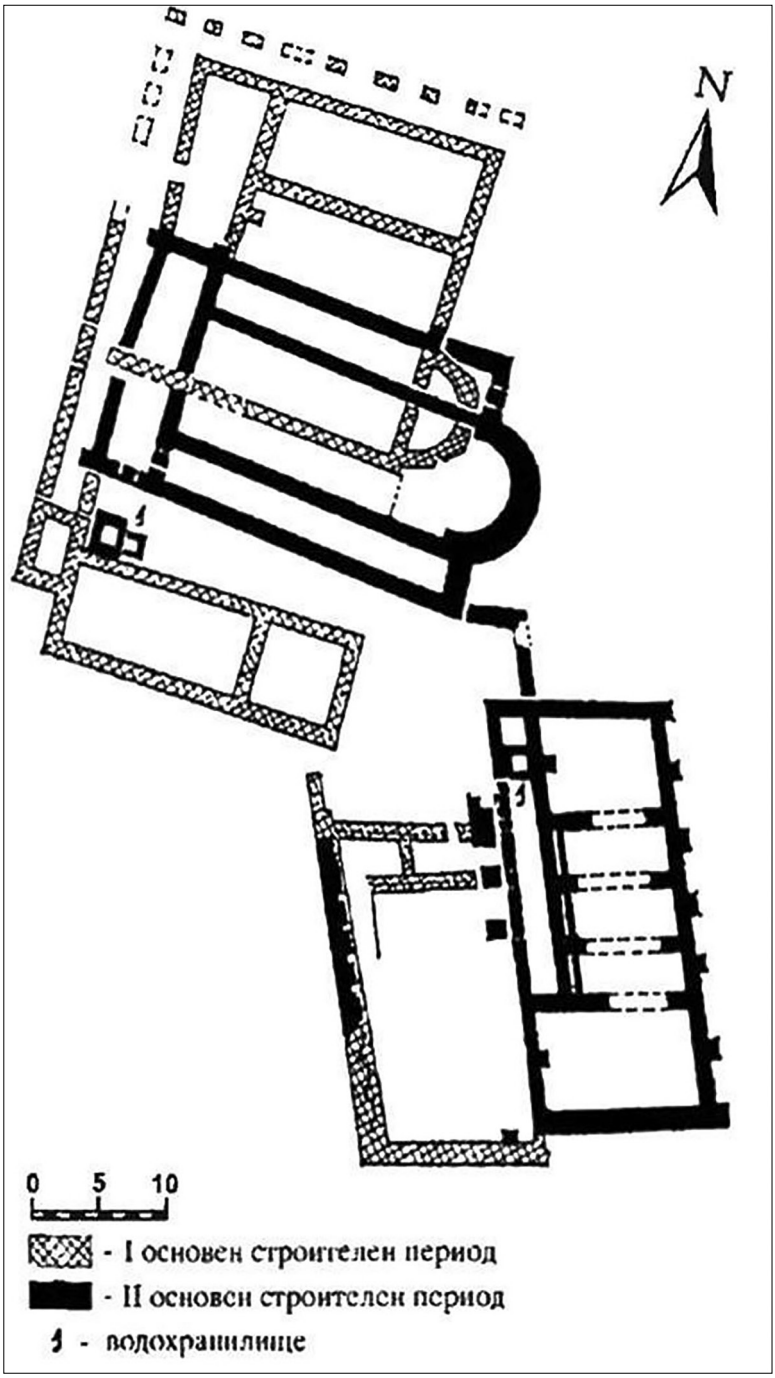
Обр. 10. План на базиликата от VI в. и ранната църква от края на IV в.
в крепостта до с. Хан Крум, обл. Шумен (Антонова 1968)



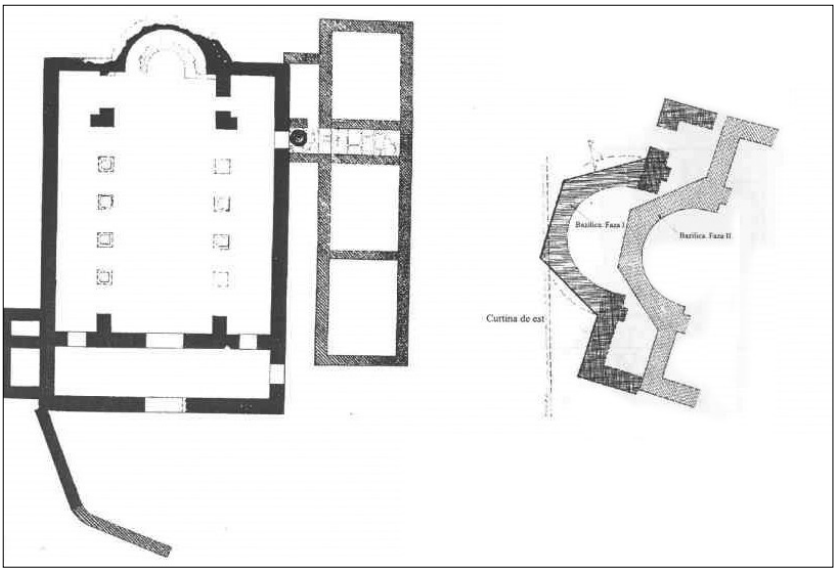
Обр. 11. План на базиликата от VI в. и ранната църква от края на IV в. под нея в крепостта до гр. Шумен (Антонова 1995)



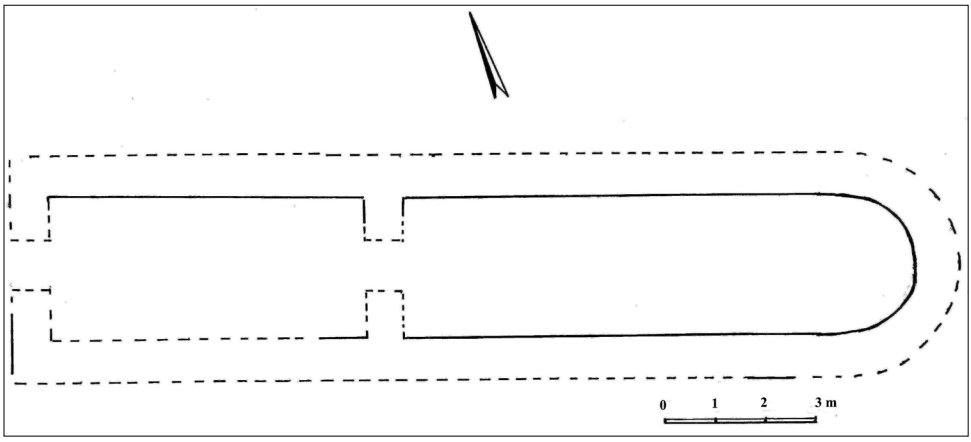
Обр. 12. План на базиликите от V и VI в. и на ранната църква от края на IV в. под тях в крепостта Ятрус до с. Кривина, Русенско (Иванов 1976)



Обр. 13. План на базиликата VI в. в крепостта Зикидева на хълма Царевец във В. Търново и по-ранна църква от края на V в. под нея (Ангелов 1973)



Обр. 14. План на базиликата от VI в. в Аргамум и по-ранна църква от края на V в. под нея (план по I. Iaţcu 2012 според публикации на P. Nicolescu и G. Mănucu-Adameşteanu)



Обр. 15. План на еднокорабната църква с цирковa апсида над трако-римското скално светилище до с. Попрусаново, Силистренско (Атанасов 2015)

ГОДИШНИК НА СОФИЙСКИЯ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“
ЦЕНТЪР ЗА СЛАВЯНО-ВИЗАНТИЙСКИ ПРОУЧВАНИЯ „ИВАН ДУЙЧЕВ“
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ANNUAIRE DE L'UNIVERSITE DE SOFIA "ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI"
CENTRE DE RECHERCHES SLAVO-BYZANTINES "IVAN DUJČEV"
Tome 104 (23)

ON THE TRACES OF EARLY BYZANTINE BASILICAS IN BALCHIK[1]

ALBENA MILANOVA

Abstract: Статията разглежда непубликувани ранновизантийски каменно-пластични детайли от архитектурната и литургична украса на църквони сгради от територията на дн. гр. Балчик. Те съставляват малък като обем корпус от силно фрагментиран материал, представен в съпътстващ каталог. Всички са изработени от мрамор. Някои са недовършени, което предполага (до)изработването им на място. Повечето са открити при археологически разкопки през 70-те и 80-те години на XX в. на укрепения хълм Хоризонт, но има и единични находки от Джени баир и Акропола на гръко-римския град. Въз основа на архивна информация (Архивът на К. Шкорпил в БАН и археологическата документация от разкопките в Балчик до 1990 г., съхранявана в Научния архив на НАИМ-БАН), съотнесена към беглите сведения от проучвания на румънски археолози от 30-те години на XX в. е направен първи опит за частично очертаване на ранно-християнската топография на един от големите градове в провинция Скития в края на Античността. Заключенията относно украсата и разположението на тези базилики надхвърлят частния проблем за ранновизантийската църквона архитектура в града. Те дават нови посоки за размисъл върху спорни въпроси, каквито са името и функциите на обширната късноантична крепост в кв. Хоризонт. Предполагаме, че в нея резидира не само военна, но и църковна администрация (епископът на Дионисопол), както и цивилно население.

Keywords: Early Byzantine sculpture, Dionysopolis, liturgical furnishing, openwork

In 2016, when I made a brief research trip to the Northtern Black Sea coast of Bulgaria, I came across interesting openwork marble fragments kept in the Historical Museum of Balchik; they were, however, not an object of my direct interest at that time. My memory of them was revived after I have joint the team excavat-

[1] This text is a result of the author's research lead as a member of the project „Borders and cultural patterns: Paganism *vs* Christianity in the contact zone of the Danube *limes* (Scythia Minor and Moesia Secunda in the 4th -7th century)", funded by the National Research Fund of the Ministry of Education and Science of Republic of Bulgaria under contract № КП-06-Н60/10 / 17.11.2021.

ing the nearby Late antique city of Zaldapa, where identical openwork details are found in the basilicas 1, 2 and 3 (Аманасов, Йомов, Валериев 2015: 423). A few years later, in 2022, as part of the activities of the Project entitled *Borders and cultural patterns: Paganism vs Christianity in the contact zone of the Danube limes (Scythia Minor and Moesia Secunda in the 4th–7th century)* funded by the Bulgarian National Research Fund (contract № КП-06/10-60/17.11.2021), I had the opportunity to work again with Balchik Museum's collection. This time I purposefully searched for and documented all architectural pieces that can be attributed to the early Byzantine period and a descriptive catalogue of them is added in an appendix here below[2]. The catalogue is completed by the information that I have found in K. Škorpil's archives and the archaeological documentation from the excavations conducted between 1972 and 1989 and kept in the Scientific archives of the National Institute with Museum of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. According to these sources, the most of the architectural fragments were found during the archaeological research conducted in the 1970s and the 1980s on the Late antique fortification of the hill now named Horizont. Few of them were found in the Acropolis of the ancient city and in the settlement on another, lower hill, named Dzheni bair. All are produced of marble and come mostly from Early Christian liturgical furnishing.

Thus, a series of subjective circumstances directed my interest to this modest in quantity and highly fragmented material, which however raises a key problem, namely that of the early Christian landscape of Dionysopolis. There exists an abundant literature dedicated to this significant urban center on the western Black Sea coast whose origins go back to the time of the Greek colonization in the 6th century BC[3]. Scholars deal mainly with the fortification facilities and their circuit, the ancient tomb-mausoleum, the temples, the religious life, the epigraphic and numismatic material from the Graeco-Roman classical antiquity. Nowadays its Christianizated cityscape remained totally unstudied, despite the fact that Dionysopolis was a major center which probably, in the 6th century, became a seat of a bishop, listed at the first place as a suffragant of the metropolite of Tomis in the Third *Notitia Episcopatuum* (according to the numeration of J. Darrouzès)[4]. The question of its

[2] It is my pleasure to express my deep gratitude to our colleagues from the Museum of History in Balchik, and personally to its director Mrs. Radostina Encheva, for the full cooperation to work with the museum documentation and materials.

[3] The main bibliography can be found in Димитров 2001, with some updates in Шаранков 2024: 18-29.

[4] This is a very problematic mediaeval source from the late 8th – mid-9th century, whose archetype was a Late antique source, attesting the creation of 14 bishoprics in Scythia after a long period of the so-called "Scythian exception" with the bishop of Tomis alone (Darrouzès 1981: 230-245, 653; Holubeanu 2021: 165-166). There is no consensus among the scholars on the character of the paragraph on the province of Scythia in this *Notitia* – civil or ecclesiastical, neither about the Church organization of the province. Some authors consider that the episcopal network with 14 suffragants and a metropolite in Tomis was established ca. 519-520 (Торбатов 2004: 24 and the studies cited there). Other propose this event to be dated in the period between 534 and the middle of

early Christian topography has not been addrressed, probably because of the lack of sufficient data. Here I will argue, that the unpublished marble architectural details coming from different zones of today Balchik's territory, most of them stored in the town's Historical Museum, as well as the cursory information in publications, mainly by Romanian authors during the time of the Romanian rule over Dobrudja (1913-1940), allow us to make some assumptions in this regard.

When it comes to Christian topography of Dionysopolis, the first question is where the early Byzantine city with this name was located, a problem that is still debatable. The Graeco-Roman city was founded on the second coastal terrace, where is the modern city center (Шкорпил 1912: 47-52; Tafrali 1927: 29, 31, pl. IV; Димитров 1986: 90-94; Димитров 1990: 26-29). At the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century it expanded to the north, and in the 4th century to the south (*Fig.*1) (Димитров 2001: 61, 63-64, 69-73, 81-82). Its fortified territory in Late Antiquity is not securely established. According to M. Dimitrov (Димитров 1986: 95-97; Димитров 2001: 88-133), who directed the most intensive archaeological excavations in the 20th century, after the great deluge during the reign of the Emperor Justinian I (527-565) caused by an underwater earthquake in A.D. 544/45, which was reported by Theophan the Confessor (ГИБИ IV: 239) and later Byzantine authors (ГИБИ XI: 205), the coastal site was abandoned and the population shifted to the high plateau north of the old town (today's Horizont neighborhood). In this new location, the construction of a huge fortress had already begun around the end of the 5th – the beginning of the 6th century under the Emperor Anastasius I (491-518) (according to the earliest discovered coins and to the similarity of its masonry to that of the Long Wall in front of Constantinople)[5]. It seems that this was the largest known fortification for the whole territory of today's Bulgaria. Its dimensions vary between 36 ha (Димитров 1990: 31) and no more than 15 ha (Торбатов 2002: 265). Its construction was accelerated and finalized during the reign of Justinian I (527-565) in relation to the tsunami of A.D. 544-545, which pushed the urban population to move on the highest plateau nearby. Thus, a kind of twin city was created – Dionysopolis-2 (*Fig. 1*). So, according to M. Dimitrov and other researchers, after the sea disaster, the early Byzantine city of Dionysopolis was relocated on Horizont district (Димитров 2001: 88-133; Енчева 2021: 51), where, previously, one of the ancient city's necropolis developped[6].

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the 6th century (Holubeanu 2021: 178), or the middle of the 6th century (Atanasov, Valeriev 2020:47). Recently D. Moreau strongly insists on a provincial Christian administration based only on one bishop in the provincial capital Tomis (Moreau, in print).

[5] The discovery of non-funeral materials dating from the 4th centuary AD during the latest archaeological campaigns raises the question of the existence of earlier settlement there or of an earlier construction phase of the fortification – see Кирилов 2021: 39.

[6] Tumuli and graves with cremation or inhumation dating back from 4th–3rd c. B.C. and 2nd–4th c. A.D. have been discovered beneath the Early Byzantine layer (Димитров 2001: 66-67, 79-80, 120; Овчаров, Меламед, Димитров и др. 1986: 150; Колева, Кирилов, Енчева 2010: 530) testifying for the location of a necropolis of the Hellenistic and Roman city.

Nowadays, this thesis does not enjoy popularity anymore. Firstly, because there is no reliable archaeological data for a sudden cessation of life on the seaside terraces (Торбатов 2002: 261-263). Thus, in the last decade, during rescue excavations on the area of Temelkov Inn/Han in 2014, which is on the Acropolis[7], a vaulted early Byzantine building of careless construction, but housing a marble cladding and destroyed by a fire, was discovered. It dates back to the 6th–early 7th centuries according to household ceramics and amphorae (Томев, Добрев, Енчева 2015: 269) and testifies for the continuity of life there posteriorly of the sinistrous event. In addition, the sea storm and the rising of the sea level was of temporary effect as it is explicitly mentioned in the texts telling us that the sea soon receded. It can be expected that the population has returned to the vicinity of the sea and the harbour, which were fundamental for its economic activities.

The prevailing opinion among the scholars today seems to be that of the existence of two parallel and not consecutive early Byzantine settlements with different characteristics, and also, most probably, with different names and functions: the one on Horizont plateau being initialy planned as a strict military garrison fortress, while Dionysopolis on the sea line continued to be inhabited by civilians (Торбатов 2002: 261-270; Кирилов 2021: 37-38; Шаранков 2024: 23, бел. 12). Probably soon after the construction of the new fortified site on Horizont, especially after the flood in 540s, its initial functions and aspect changed and, during the second half of the 6th and the early 7th century, its urban transformation was achieved (Торбатов 2002: 268-269, 449-450; Торбатов 2004: 24-25)[8]. The coins from Horizont and the vicinity of Balchik, publishe by Prof. Ivan Yordanov, confirm the economic expansion of the city from the mid-6th century on, showing the greatest monetary inflow and circulation precisely in the period 550-580, that is after the large-scale flood (Йорданов 1990: 52). The most numerous ceramics findings also date back to the second half of the 6th and the 7th centuries (Меламед 1990: 91-93).

Accepting this thesis of coexistence of two sites from at least the beginning of the 6th century on, we face a new problem: how were they named? This tricky question is quite important for our study because if we know which one was named at that time Dionysopolis, we will be able to localize at that place the cathedral church of the cited bishop of Dionysopolis. The proposed transfer of the toponym Dionysopolis around the middle of the 6th century from the ancient coastal city to the early

[7] A century ago, at this place, Škorpil brothers discovered the tomb of an antique physician (Шкорпил 1912: 52-62), re-excavated by O. Taflrali in 1920. Later, other built structures were found and identified as a precinct's sector with U-shaped and round towers (Димитров 1986: 95-96), with critical precision of their dating after the 4th century (Торбатов 2002: 263).

[8] Chavdar Kirilov does not accept this urban transformation of Hoziont site, which, he believes, doesn't accommodate civilian population but only a huge Byzantine military garrison until as late as the 9th century (Кирилов 2021: 37). Such a thesis is not enough convincing for me. Horizont, whose construction started by Emperor Anasthasius, would be the only exception in this emperor's fortification program which targeted only civilian settlements contrary to the military ones from the time of Justinian I (Торбатов 2002: 448).

Byzantine fortified settlement in Horizont (Dimitrov 2001, 84) is presumed, but it is logical and cannot be entirely rejected for now (Торбатов 2002: 270, 450). An opinion has been expressed that after the flood of A.D. 544/545 Dionysopolis was renamed Matiopol/Ματιόπολις – an unique toponym mentioned in the anonymous „*Periplus Ponti Euxini*" compiled in the second half of the 6th century[9]. This tentative hypothesis was recently rejected by the epigraphist Nikolay Sharankov, who pointed out the chronological sequence of toponyms in the source: first Crouni, then Matiopolis and finally Dionysopolis (see below, note 9). Consequently, the name Matiopolis is earlier than Dionysopolis and cannot be attributed to city of the later period. In his reading Sharankov follows the old opinions (Tafrali 1927: 11). In addition, the same author adds that the adjective *μάταιος* as „empty" has a strongly negative meaning and is used only in a figurative sense, never for space or surface qualifications. There is still no conclusive assumption, but he suggests that Matiopolis should be thought of as ματ(ρ)ιπολις, i.e. a misunderstood by the compiler of a common name for a metropolis or for a city named after the (Pontic) Mother of the Gods (Шаранков 2024: 287-289), whose temple is situated in the coastal city (Лазаренко и др. 2013). Whatever the meaning of the toponym of Ματιόπολις, both authors recently concerned by its interpretation, connect it with the ancient settlement near the port. Thus, the old and well-established in the administrative and everyday vocabulary toponym of Dionysopolis remains "vacant" and could be "applied" to the new center on Horizont. The latter became the dominant urban nucleus even if the zone of the earlier harbourg city was partially revived after the tsumani. Thus, it is not excuded that this new urban center began to be identified from the second half of the 6th century onwards with Dionysopolis (Торбатов 2002: 450). However, we cannot neglect two facts contesting this assumption. Firstly, in the time of established Christianity, it was hardly appropriate to name a newly created settelement after a pagan deity. Secondly, the archaeology suggests a huge building activity on Horizont during the regn of Justinian I, but Procopius doesn't cite Dionysopolis among Emperor's fortification works that means the place had another name. In my opinion, the fragments of liturgical sculpture that I will present help to clarify the apparent contradiction. They testify to the existence of a probable cathedral church in Horizont which could accommodate the bishop of Dionysopolis cited in the *Third Notitia* and the lack of the toponym in Procopius' book might be an author's ommison.

[9] This assumption rejects the largely accepted before opinion about Ματιόπολις as an author's mistake. The new idea of flooded Dionysopolis becoming Ματιόπολις is based on two arguments: first, the information in this text precising that: „This Dionysopolis was first called Crouni because of the waters pouring out nearby, and then it was renamed Matiopolis. Later, after a statue of Dionysus was thrown out of the sea at this place, they say that it was renamed Dionysopolis..."; and secondly, the meaning of the adjective *μάταιος* in Greek as ‚desolate, abandoned city', as the ancient harbor city must have been looking after the flood of A.D. 544-45 (Торбатов 2004).

Let's turn now to the scarce data on early Christian architecture from the territory of modern Balchik that give some new directions of reflexion in terms of both the connection between the Graeco-Roman Dionysopolis and the early Byzantine fortification of the Horizont plateau, as well as the name and the functions of the latter. What do we know about the early Byzantine churches in Balchik?

In his recent book on early Christian architecture in the province of Scythia, Ioan Iaţu repeats in an abbreviated version the information available in Romanian literature about two basilicas in Balchik, without, however, any photos and plans, which makes it insufficiently useful (Iaţu 2021: 56-57). In the 1930s, Balchik's municipality planned and funded archaeological excavations in the city centre where many ruins appeared or were supposed to exist[10]. The Romanian archaeologist Vladimir Dimistrescu, deputy-director of the National Museum of the Antiquities, found monumental remains on the Acropolis, near the church of "St. George" (then renamed the Romanian church „St. Trinity") and the eastern Hellenistic prescint (Димитров 1986: 94). He discovered parallel walls with an orientation E-W, 1.20 m thick, preserved at a height of 3.00 m, carefully built with stones and mortar. This gave grounds to Prof. Paul Nicorescu to identify it as a Christian basilica. Easternmost, its walls continue to the end of the plateau of the Acropolis. A Byzantine Corinthian capital was also found there (Vulpe 1935: 188-190; Vulpe 1938: 47-51). Although there is no mention of an apse, the location on the Acropolis, in close proximity to previous (Dionysos' temple?) and later (a Christian church and an Ottoman mosque) religious buildings, and the widespread phenomenon of inheriting the sacred places, give additional arguments to the existence of an early Christian basilica in this place.

From this or another basilica in the city originates another early Byzantine Corinthian capital, which K. Shkorpil has transferred from Balchik to the Varna Museum (*Cat. 1, Fig. 2*). It belongs to the category of rather simple, small and widely produced Proconnesean capitals between the end of the 5th and the middle of the 6th century[11]. They have a single row of four acanthus leaves at the edges, and a widely open "V-shaped" volutes. These capitals fit in the type V, according to Kautzsch (1938: 59-61), whose classification was further refined (Betsch 1977: 217 f.; Pralong 2000: 83-89)[12]. The cylindric shape calathus, the highly stylized acanthus leaves reproduced in decidedly graphic taste with a deeply undercut geometric spaces between the touching lobes of contiguous leaves illusory creating the

[10] A few years earlier, O. Tafrali outlined the area of expected important archaeological discoveries namely around the St. Trinity/St. George church, Sulak Mosque, the Queen Mary square and the Temelkov Inn (Tafrali 1927: 31).

[11] The earliest dated capitals of this type are those of San Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, erected as palatine church by King Theoderic, most probably at the beginning of his reign ca. 495-500 (Betsch 1977: 219).

[12] Both authors do not accept the separation between V-shaped and lyra-shaped capitals (types V and VI of Kautzsch) and use other criteria for types subdivisions as the inner helices and their relation to the acanthus raw and the abacus.

effect of the so-called "mask of acanthus" are all elements pointing to the 6th, rather the 5th, century date. The four "teeth" of the mask instead of the characteristic two of the 5th century confirms its attribution to the next century (Betsch 1977: 219). Because of its visually deduced small dimensions, it belongs to the ciborium or an altar screen of a basilica.

A small fragment of a transenna from the same area (*Cat. 14*, *Fig. 4*) may be associated also with the religious building. Its almost twice the thickness of all similar details indicates that it may be a part of a church window. An identical example could be found in Zaldapa (*Fig. 5*).

An early Christian temple on the territory of the ancient Dionysopolis[13] is evidenced also by the marble reliquary in the shape of a sarcophagus, discovered in 2003 (*Fig. 6*), which is one of the only four known boxes for holy relics from the whole province[14]. It is also dated to the 6th century and belongs to a widespread type in the Black Sea region and Syria. Although it has the most common form for reliquaries throughout the East (type I, according to Comte 2012: 64-65, 71), the specimen shows several peculiarities. Firstly, the molding of the face sides is clumsy and its scheme is poorly understood (*Cat.* 25). If we compare it with similar reliquaries (Minchev 2003: 27), the compromise quality in the execution is even more visible and points to local imitative production. Secondly, in sarcophagus-like reliquaries, the usual form of veneration of the relics stored in them is by contact through a small opening or by circulating liquid, for which two openings are carved (Comte 2012: 64, 71, 73). In the specimen from Balchik, such openings are missing. There is not even a pseudo-opening, as in the example from Varna. The absence of openings seems to be a characteristic of the reliquaries of this form from Bulgaria. This shows that they were not accessible for veneration through contact, but were placed in reliquary niches (*loculi*), crypts or altars. Such would have been the function of the specimen from Balchik. Although this type of object is movable and could be transferred from anywhere, the commented features indicate that it was made and used in a local environment.

Therefore, all these marble pieces and architectural ruins strongly suggest the existence of at least one basilica in the Acropolis of Dionysopolis. This conclusion could be further supported by the historical memory of the local population for the existence of an old monastery (Иречек 1974: 900). According to the architectural sculpture, the church might be dated before the middle of the 6th century and consequently before the flood of 544/5.

I suppose that a second basilica was built in the 6th century, on the territory of the fortress on the surmounting plateau, although Ch. Kirilov, who in the last 15

[13] This provenance is registered in the Inventory book of Historical museum in Balchik, but in the publication of Al. Minchev it appears as finding on Horizont (Minchev 2003: 27).

[14] The others are the glass reliquary from Tomis' basilica on the Street of the Revolution in Constanţa, a fragment of marble one from the same town found out of context, and a silver one from Sucidava (Iatçu 2012: 117-118; Achim 2025: 69, note 45).

years has resumed the research in Horizont, claims that there is no evidence of the presence of a church and only sparse traces of civilian life are detectable thus underling the strong military caracter of the occupation (Kirilov 2021: 37). Contrary to this assumption, M. Dimitrov mentioned, although quite vaguely and without any context or images, a "church or a basilica building" inside the fortress. His interpretation is based upon the "mortars, marble and stone (limestone?*, A.M.*) columns, a column decorated with an „ovoid" ornament, used as a cornice on the window of a religious building" (Димитров 2001:118). The latter piece in fact underwent an opposite transformation – a Roman window (?) cornich from the 2nd century was recut to become a biforian window column with integrated base and capital for an early Christian basilica (*Cat. 3, Fig.* 7) (Досева 2026: 97-98, 103 f.).

The existence of a church is further supported by the unpublished architectural pieces collected in the present catalogue. Quite a few of them are elements of a sanctuary screen. Among them there is a part of a marble pillar with a base for a small column carring a high altar screen (*Cat. 4, Fig. 8*), a chancel type developed after the mid-5th century. A fragment of a double side ornamented plaque (*Cat. 7, Fig. 11*) and nine fragments of floral (*Cat. 8-13, Figs. 12-17*) and geometric motifs (*Cat. 15-17, Figs. 18-20*) belong to openwork marble slabs set between these pillar-columns. Their state of conservation doesn't allow any reconstruction of the exact decorative composition. But the four- or five-leaf palmettes combined with crosses inscribed in circular or polygonal moulded strips is quite a common pattern for this type of furnishure during the 5th–6th centuries. The back side of the plaques, which was turned to the sanctuary, is quite rude, in some pieces almost unarticulated hardy worked mass (*Figs*. 12-16). In one palmette (*Fig. 14*), the material between two contingent leaves is not even completely removed, demonstrating some carelessness or business. At the same time, this, and the non-finished pillar (*Cat. 5, Fig. 9*) evince localy finishing of the decoration made by imported Proconnesean marble.

Probably fragments of door and window lintels (*Cat. 18-19*; *Figs. 25-26)*, as well as elements of marble wall cladding (*Cat. 20-24*; *Fig. 27)* belong to the same building[15]. Most of these pieces seem to have been found in the southwestern edge of the fortress and within the big enclosed complex along the main street easternward of the western gate toward the city-center. They are not in their original context, as one could conclude from the excavations' diaries. A bottom of a polycandilon glass among the findings of this area witnesses also the existence of a Christian temple[16].

Althought the archaeological research of the last 53 years doesn't present any evident architectural remains that could be identified as a church, the location of a nicely decorated basilica in Horizont hill is furhter suggested by the scare information concerning the Romanian excavations done shortly before 1940, whose

[15] There are much more fragments of marble wall veneer (inv. # 3132, 3138, 3139, 3266-3269, 3286) some of them with traces of mortar on one side (M. Dimitrov, Report on the archaeological excavations in the early Bulgarian fortress in Balckik, 1978 – Scientific Archives – NAIM-BAS).

[16] Field diary for the excavations in 1980, small finding number 14.

results were not really published. At that time, Paul Nicorescu and D. V. Rosetti discovered, almost entirely, a basilica situated 4 km north of Balchik (Barnea 1948: 230, note 5). It is described as one of the rare single-nave churches in Scythia (Barnea 1977: 122-123, 179-180; Achim 2025: 55-56, figs. 5.4a-4b). Its polygonal apse was first three-sided and then was reconstructed as pentagonal. Of particular importance to us is that the Romanian archaeologists unearthed openwork chancel plaques, as we did in the Museum stockage room. A plan of the building was prepared by the architect Ștefan Balș, but it is not published, neither are any images of the *transennae*. However, it is unusual for small single-nave churches to receive expensive openwork decorations and to have polygonal apses. There are two possible explanations for this paradox. First possibility: the single-nave plan is the result of medieval reconstruction, mentioned by I. Barnea, of an originally usual three-nave basilica. Second one: the sigle-nave basilica is an earlier church (see Аманасоß in this volume) enlarged and embellished in the 6th century. Latter explation seems more acceptable since Barnea's argument for the mediaeval rework lays on the existence of buttresses outside to the apse. But similar efforts for reinforcing the apse vault and the galleries have analogies in other early Byzantine churches, as a.e. basilica 3 in Zaldapa. The lack of published material and the inaccessibility to the Romanian archival documents don't allow any founded conclusion[17], if not that with its polygonal apse and openwork decoration the church follows prototypes from the capital Constantinople. It might be erected on an important site and not within a small fortification or a rural settlement. The only one in the immidiate northern vicinity of Dionysopolis is the large, fortified settlement in Horizont (the 4 km mentioned by the Romanian archeologists must be given by road distance because directly it is only 1-1,2 km away). I suppose it is the same basilica from which the marble decorative elements found during the excavations on Horizont in the 1970s and 1980s were originated, or, less logical, an extramuros basilica.

The openwork plaques give us important information for this church. They are among the most luxurious and relatively rare objects, typical for the decoration of the liturgical installations mainly in the 5th and especially in the first half of the 6th century. The zenith of their distribution is the second quarter of the 6th century and the decline of their production comes with the plague pandemy of 542 (Russo 2023: 53 f.). They found exact parallels in the church decoration known from other sites in Scythia, such as Tomis (Radulescu 1966: 69-70, figs. 45-46), Histria (Bounegru, Iaţcu 2007: 58-63, pl. XXXI-XLII) and Zaldapa (Торбамоß 2000: 55-56, обр. $30_{,5}$; Atanasov, Valeriev 2021: 61, fig. 25a-c) (*Figs 21-24*). The materials from Balchik show greater similarities with those from Tomi and especially from Zaldapa than with those from Istria. In the latter, only 3-leaf palmettes are found, and the crosses have a different form. In Scythia, similar slabs are known only from episcopal

[17] We were not given access to the documentation in the Archives of the Archaeological Institut "Vasile Pârvan" in Bucarest, despite our two official demands.

basilicas. Zaldapa is a kind of exception because *transennae* have been found also in the non-episcopal basilica 1. The reasons for this is the simultaneous erection of both churches – the bishopric basilica 3 and the smaller basilica 1 situated near the south-western gate of the town[18]. Consequently, one could assume that in Balchik too, the *transennae* were used in the decoration of the episcopal basilica of the Late antique city, and the bishop's residence must therefore be in Horizont.

Since the bishop mentioned in the third *Notitia* as the bishop of Dionysopolis seated in the newly built fortress on the plateau, the latter seems to use the old city name, even if the life continue in some neighborhoods on the sea terraces. If my hypothesis is correct, it gives more arguments to Marin Dimitrov's thesis concerning the name of the new settlement.

Furthemore, the presence of an episcopal seat with a basilica displaying luxury furnished interior and the scale of the huge early Byzantine fortress in Horizon makes unacceptable the identification of the site as a strict military fortification without a civilian population. By the middle of the 6th century, the site concentrated and attracted the attention, the construction activities and the material efforts of the provincial and perhaps central government (Димитров 2001: 88-120; Торбатов 2002: 24, 263-270). The quarters not only of the military but also the eccleastical administration were settled there.

In general, in the early Byzantine world, openwork slabs are of extremely variety. As Claudia Barsanti points out, there are no two identical ones, contrary to the relief slabs, which often display a highly standardized pattern (Barsanti 2004). In this respect, the situation in Scythia is an exception. The materials from the four centers in which they were found demonstrate a striking similarity between them. This coherent architectural and decorative program seems to confirm that the main liturgical sculptures for the interior furnishing of the episcopal basilicas were commissioned to a special workshop from the imperial marble quarries at Proconnesus and were executed during a huge and common building campaign. When did this enterprise take place?

Romanian colleagues traditionally refer the openwork elements to the time of Justinian and offer such a dating for the ensembles in Tomi, Istria and Balchik. For Zaldapa it has been suggested that they were built on the initiative of Emperor Anastasius I (Popova, Atanasov 2017: 187). Similar is the opinion of Al. Minchev, as regards the basilicas in the nearby Odessos and its region, which are generally dated to the end of the 5th–6th century (Минчев 1986: 41-42). A large part of their architectural sculpture is imported from the Proconnesos workshops, and some of them were finished on the sites. The openwork elements were undoubtedly worked at constructions sites under the supervision of traveling teams of Constantinopolitan carvers. Similar metropolitan influences can be seen in the polygonal apses, which

[18] The publication of these two churches in Zaldapa and their decoration is expected soon as a part of the same research project of the National Research Fund, Republic of Bulgaria.

are rare for Scythia, but which we find in the entire group of the monuments with openwork decoration, with the exception of the episcopal basilica of Tomi. Conditions for such close ties with the capital, guaranteeing active artistic exchange, were created mostly within the established by Justinian I in 536 *quaestura Iustiniana exercitus*. Within this new institution, sustainable financial and transport mechanisms are being established and operated between the capital and the individual fortified posts along the coast (Torbatov 1997, esp. 85). The relations between Scythia and Constantinople, which were then placed on a regular basis, are also evidenced by the fact that of the thirteen seals from the office of *quaestor Iustinianus exercitus*, nine, i.e. 2/3, are from the time of Emperor Justinian. These developed channels facilitated the supply of artistic products, even more so when they are related to the affirmation of the prestige of imperial power, projected in marble details – symbols of power and wealth. It has been pointed out that the standardized church architecture and the shipment by sea of close in style partially finished architectural members were the testimony of Justinian's attempt to promote religious unity within the Empire (van Doorninck 2002: 899).

We can thus conclude on the existence of at least two basilicas – one, probably earlier, 5th – beginning of the 6th centuary, on the ancient Acropolis, and a second one in the early Byzantine fortified center in Horizont. The latter was build as cathedral church in relation with the establishment of an episcopal seat in Dionysopolis between 536 and 542.

Catalogue of the sculptures

Cat. 1. Corinthian capital with soft acanthus from ciborium or altar screen – marble (*Fig. 2*)
Storage: AM-Varna, inv. No III 689[19]
Origin: the ancient Dionysopolis, discovered and brought to Varna by K. Škorpil
Dimensions: unknown[20]
A small one-crowned capital, cylindrical body and broken upper corners. The four acanthus leaves are placed in the corners of the basket. They have 5 lobes with three points each. Their tips are touching each other at the center of the sides of the capital, where they form an „acanthus mask" of rhombus, below it – a trapezoid flanked by two ellipses, and at the bottom – a filled rhombus. The inner helices are missing. The outer helices take the form of relief continuous band, contigious to the point of contact of the middle leaves of the two adjacent acanthus. A small triangular protruding zone is formed under the abacus flower, decorated with stretches. Concave abacus. The capital belongs to the so-called „lyre type" (type V) by R. Kautzsch or IVB by A. Pralong.

Cat. 2. Corinthian capital – fragment, white marble with bluish veins (*Fig. 3*)
Storage: HM - Balchik, inv. No 3220
Origin: Dzheni Bair, sector VIII, sq. 8, discovered during archaeological excavations on 27.09.1978 at a depth of 2.00 m.
A small fragment of acanthus leaves with maximum preserved dimensions: H – 4,8 cm; 13 x 19,5 cm. Traces of drill.

[19] K. Škorpil's Archive in NA-BAS, F.165K, op. 1, a.e. 509, l.1
[20] Colleagues from Varna Museum could not find information about this monument.

Cat. 3. Double column with base and capital (biforium) – white marble, spolia (*Fig. 7*)

Storage: HM - Balchik – exposition hall, where it was transferred on 10.11.2022 from a private home, inv. No 4219.

Origin: The fortress in Horizont district, sector VII-97, discovered during archaeological excavations on 17.06.1982.

Dimensions: H – 110 cm; h abacus 24 cm ; length 28 cm; diam. 20 cm;

Reworked and reused antique cornice (from a window?) from the middle – second half of the 2nd century. Frieze with Ionic cimmation executed in high relief and excellent volumetric modeling of the motifs. At one edge an acantized leaf and at the other a scroll with an ivy leaf. The form and the function of the block changed in the early Byzantine period, when it was reworked as a window's biforium column. To do this, the two long sides of the cornice were rounded like semi-columns, and part of the width of the block is shaped as a smooth central vertical strip to attach the glasses. In the low part, a base with a plinth is dressed, and in the upper – a capital with acanthus leaves and an abacus slab. In the initially unornamented part (the left of the drawing), the elements (base, shaft and capital) are cut without difficulty, when in the right part, where the Ionic cimmation is preserved, they are rather marked: the base moldings are only incised without sculpturing them, and the acanthus leaf of the capital is inserted into the narrow free space. Traces of recuting are visible all over the surface.

The information about the find is provided by the Field Diary and graphic documentation from the excavations in the district Horizont in 1982, as well as from the archive of St. Boyadzhiev, kept at the Institute for Arts Studies[21].

Bibliography:

Досева 2026: 97-98, 103 f., figs. 5 and 6.

Cat. 4. Pillar with a column base from a high altar screen – fragment, marble (*Fig. 8*)

Storage: HM - Balchik, inv. No 3138

Origin: the fortress in district Horizont, sector VII, sq. 79, discovered during archaeological excavations on 26.06.1984.

Dimension: preserved total H – 15,2 cm; pillar: h 7,8 cm and section max. preserved 7,4 x 8 cm; preserved H of the base – 6 cm, preserved diam. 13 cm which could be reconstructed ca. 16 cm

Broken off at the top, bottom and side with a partially preserved upper corner of the pillar; cut from the same block as the base for the small column. The state of preservation does not make clear if the column was cut from the same block or was a separate piece fixed on the base. The detail is incorrectly defined as a capital in the museum's Inventory Book.

Cat. 5. Pillar (?) – fragment, marble (*Fig. 9*)

Storage: HM - Balchik, inv. No 3139

Origin: the fortress in Horizont district, sector VII, sq. 79, discovered during archaeological excavations on 26.06.1984.

Preserved dimensions: H – 6.7 cm; sides 7.8 x 11 cm

A polished side is preserved, on which two parallel irregular lines are traced and small parts of the two adjacent sides are also polished. A portion of the base (?), which is perpendicular to them, is roughly worked. Probably an unfinished pillar.

[21] A IIIzk.III.3-5, a.e. 20,1.41, 42 and 43, where its origin is incorrectly indicated as Kaliakra. The three photographs of this detail, made by Prof. St. Boyadzhiev, are digitized on the site *Europeana* – Kaliakra fortress, Balgarevo village | Europeana (19.04.2026), where it is erroneously dated as a late Byzantine cornice from 1300-1399.

Cat. 6. Pillar (?) – fragment, marble (*Fig. 10*)

Storage: HM-Balchik, inv. No 3310

Origin: Dzheni Bair, Sector III, discovered during archaeological excavations in 1978.

Dimensions: preserved H – 6.6 cm; sides 7.3 x 7.3 cm

Broken horizontally at the upper and low side, the square pillar has three smoothly polished sides and the fourth presents a 4.5 cm wide protruding strip. The marble has been eroded by a strong fire, traces of which can be seen on the surface. The small size and the lack of mounting grooves exclude the possibility of it being part of the sanctuary screen supports. It may be a support of some furniture/table.

Cat. 7. Two-sides ornamented plaque – fragment, marble (*Fig. 11*)

Storage: HM - Balchik, inv. No 3222

Origin: the fortress in Horizont, sector XXII, sq. 2, found in the surface layer at 0.25 m a deep during archaeological excavations on 02.10.1978.

Dimensions: max. preserved H – 10 cm; length 11,1; thickness from 2.8 to 5 cm

Part of the frame and the adjacent decor on a double-sided decorated plate, broken off on all sides. On the front side, the frame is molded, while on the back it is in the form of a wide flat strip in low relief. A flat embossed disc inscribed in a thin relief circular frame usually marks the center of the sides of plaques with compositions of rhombuses or squares inscribed in each other.

Cat. 8. Openwork plaque – fragment, white-grayish marble (*Fig.12*)

Storage: HM - Balchik, inv. No 3129.

Origin: The fortress in Horizont district, sector IX, sq 126, discovered during archaeological excavations on 05.07.1980.

Dimensions: preserved H – 9 cm; thickness 1.8 cm

Partially preserved 5-leaf slightly curved palmette with broken tops (defined as an oak leaf in the museum Inventory Book). On the obverse side, the central vein of each leaf is outlined with a shallow groove, and on the back it is barely hinted.

Cat. 9. Openwork plaque – fragment, white-grayish marble (*Fig. 13*)

Storage: HM – Balchik, inv. No 3130

Origin: The fortress in Horizont district, sector IX, sq. 142, found during archaeological excavations in 1980 at a depth. from 0.80-1.00 m in a large residential complex.

Dimensions: prereserved H – 9.5 cm; max. width 8.1 cm; thickness 2.3 cm

Partially preserved 5-leaves upright palmette. The small embossed disc preserved at the base of the leaves and the breakaway in the lower right part suggest that this is a fragment of a kind of rosette, formed by four palmettes cross-arranged, as those found in basilicas 1 (*Fig. 21*) and 3 in Zaldapa (*Fig. 22*). On the front side, the central lobe of each leaf is outlined with a shallow groove, and on the back it is barely suggested; compared to that of the previous fragment, it is even more roughly made.

Cat. 10. Openwork plaque – fragment, white-grayish marble (*Fig. 14*)

Storage: HM - Balchik, inv. No 3312

Origin: missing data in the Inventory book

Dimensions: H – 7 cm; max. width 5.8 cm; thickness 1.4 cm

Five-leaf palmette with broken tops. The front side of the leaves is modeled with a triangular groove, the material between the individual leaves has not been entirely taken away and the openwork shaping between the lower and middle leaves is unfinished. This shows that the production of the openwork slabs took place on site in Balchik. The reverse side is roughly carved and eroded by fire.

Cat. 11. Openwork plaque – leaf fragment, white-grayish marble (*Fig. 15*)

Storage: HM - Balchik, inv. No 3215

Origin: Dzheni Bair, sq. 1, discovered during archaeological excavations in 1978.

Dimensions: maximum preserved H - 7.2, width 5 cm, thickness 1.9 cm

Partially preserved two leaves of a palmette motif, whose face and back are shaped similarly to the other more complete preserved examples.

Cat. 12. Openwork plaque – palmette fragment, white-grayish marble (*Fig. 16*)

Storage: HM - Balchik, inv. No 3217

Origin: the fortress in Horizont district, sq. 67, discovered during archaeological excavations on 16.08.1976, at a depth of 0.80 cm.

Dimensions: max. reserved H – 12.5 cm; width 8 cm; thickness 1.9 cm

Palmette, the five leaves of which on the obverse are polished and modeled with a shallow triangular groove, while their back is barely shaped, unpolished and without details. At the lower right end, one can notice the starting point of a profiled strip framing the leaf element.

Cat. 13. Openwork plaque – fragment, white-grayish marble (*Fig. 17*)

Storage: HM - Balchik (?), Field inv. No 1191

Origin: the fortress in Horizont district, sq. 67, discovered during archaeological excavations on 16.08.1976 at a depth of 0,80 m.

Dimensions: unknown. The information about the finding is from the Field Inventory Book – Archives of the NAIM-BAS, not known *de viso*.

Cross-shaped floral motif.

Cat. 14. Transenna – fragment, white-grayish marble[22] (*Fig. 4*)

Storage: HM - Balchik, inv. No 92

Origin: accidental finding in 1964 in front of the N. Boev enterprise, i.e. from the Acropolis area, near the Temelkov Inn and not far from the modern church „St. George"; found together with two fragments of thin marble slabs (3 cm) with acanthus decoration.

Dimensions: preserved H – 8.5 cm; width 10 cm and thickness 4 cm

Traces of fire on the surface. The greater thickness and different processing of the back indicate that this detail is part of a slab different from those previously described, perhaps from a window transenna.

Cat. 15. Openwork plaque – fragment, white-grayish marble (*Fig. 18*)

Storage: HM-Balchik, inv. No 3216

Origin: the fortress in Horizont, sq. 102, discovered during archaeological excavations on 25.07.1972 at a depth of 0.74 m. At the time of the discovery there were 2 fragments as can be seen at the drawing[23].

Dimensions: max. preserved 8 x 8.1 cm, thickness 1.9 cm.

A cross-shaped motif, probably from a profiled ribbon forming a geometric (square?) frame, in which plant motifs were inscribed, as suggested by the broken tip of a sheet. On the obverse side, the ribbon is profiled with a flat groove, and on the back side – roughly cut.

[22] Erroneously identified as limestone in the Inventory Book.

[23] Field inventory book (No 32) of the archaeological research carried out in Balchik during the 1972 – NAIM-BAS.

Cat. 16. Openwork plaque – fragment, white-grayish marble (*Fig. 19*)

Storage: NM - Balchik, inv. No 3135

Origin: the fortress in Horizont district, discovered on 28.09.1982 in a layer at a depth of 1.40 to 1.60 m, in a dwelling in the area of the western fortress wall.

Dimensions: thickness 1.9 cm

Profiled with a thin shallow groove curved ribbon, forming circular frame in which plant motifs were inscribed, the tops of which touched the belt encircling them, as evidenced by the fractures.

Cat. 17. Openwork plaque – fragment, white-grayish marble (*Fig. 20*)

Storage: HM - Balchik (?)[24], Field inv. No 93

Origin: the fortress in Horizont district, sq. 207, discovered during archaeological excavations on 03.08.1979 at depth 0.60-0.80 m.

Dimensions: H – 8.1 cm; width 6.4 cm; thickness 1.3 cm

Part of a frame – a „knot" of two intertwined double-profiled strips. Another similar fragment is described as a field inv. No 3292. Not seen by the author.

Cat. 18. Door lintel (or cornice) – fragment, white marble (*Fig. 25*)

Storage: HM-Balchik, inv. No 3136

Origin: the fortress in Horizont district, sector VII, sq. 97, found during archaeological excavations on 17.06.1982 near the surface (layer from 0.20 to 0.40 cm).

Dimensions: H – 10 cm; cons. length 13.7 and width 8.4 cm.

Broken off on both sides and back. Polished molded face by two fascia flanking a S-shaped lysis (scotia, *throat*). The upper side and lower surfaces, which were inserted into the masonry, are roughly carved with a pointed chisel. The profile is characteristic of a door frame rather than of that of a cornice.

Cat. 19. Door frame – fragment, white marble (*Fig. 26*)

Storage: HM - Balchik, no inv. No

Origin: the fortress in Horizont district (?)

Dimensions: H – 8.5 cm; cons. length 21 and width 25 cm.

Broken off on both sides and back. Complex modeling and polished face with roughly chopped base.

Cat. 20. Veneer slab – fragment, white-bluish marble (*Fig. 27a*)

Storage: HM - Balchik, inv. No 3131

Origin: the fortress in Horizont district, southern section of the western fortress wall, sector I, sq. 62, found on 26.07.1982 at a depth of 1.50 m.

Dimensions: 8,9 x 5,2 cm; thickness 1,9 cm

One vertical side is preserved, which is slightly obliquely cut; one face is polished and the other is smoothly cut. Traces of rose mortar on the reverse side.

Cat. 21.Veneer slab – fragment, white marble with thick blue stripes (*Fig. 27b*)

Storage: HM - Balchik, inv. No 3133

Origin: the fortress in Horizont district, southern section of the western fortress wall, sector I, sq. 63, found on 28.07.1982 at a depth of 1.25 m, in a dwelling.

Cons. dimensions: 13.2 x 9.8 cm; thickness 3 cm

Preserved one side, which is slightly obliquely cut; one face is polished and the other is smoothly cut.

[24] I have not worked with the fragment *de viso* in the Storage rooms of HM-Balchik. The information is taken from the Field Diary kept in the Archives of NAIM-BAS.

Cat. 22. Veneer slab – 2 fragments, white- bluish medium-grained marble (*Fig. 27c*)
Storage: HM - Balchik, inv. No 3134
Origin: the fortress in Horizont district, southern section of the western fortress wall, sector I, sq. 68, found on 16.08.1982 at depth. 1.95 m.
Dimensions: 16.4 x 10.6 cm; thickness 2.6 cm
One side preserved, slightly obliquely cut; one face is polished and the other only smoothed.

Cat. 23. Veneer slab – fragment, white-bluish medium-grained marble (*Fig. 27d*)
Storage: HM - Balchik, inv. No 3134 bis
Origin: the fortress in Horizont district, southern section of the western fortress wall, sector I, sq. 68, found on 16.08.1982 at depth 1.95 m.
Cons. dimensions: 5,6 x 6,2 cm; thickness 1,9 cm
One face is polished, and the other is only smoothed.

Cat. 24. Veneer slab – fragment, white-bluish medium-grained marble (*Fig. 27e*)
Storage: HM - Balchik, inv. No 3124
Origin: the fortress in Horizont district, southern section of the western fortress wall, sector I, sq. 62, found on 26.07.1982 at depth 1,70 m.
Cons. dimensions: 9,9 x 9,9 cm; thickness 2 cm
One face is polished and the other is smoothly cut.

Cat. 25. Reliquary – marble (*Fig. 6*)
Storage: HM - Balchik, inv. No 3572
Origin: Ancient city of Dionysopolis (according to the Museum's Inventory book) or Horizont fortress (according to Minchev's publicayion).
Dimensions: H – 15,5 cm; h body: 7,3 cm; length 19,5 cm; width 9,9 cm; depth 3 cm
Perfectly preserved sarcophagus-shaped reliquary (type I, according to Comte 2012: 64-65, 71). Two-side slopping roof with four triangular acroteria at the corners. Like most examples of this type, the inside of the lid is carved (Comte 2012: 68). The base and the interior are roughly processed, and the moldings of the body's faces with a cornice and a plinth are poorly rendered as two parallel grooves and a too narrowed central zone between them.
Bibliography: Minchev 2003: 27, cat. 15, fig. 15a, b.

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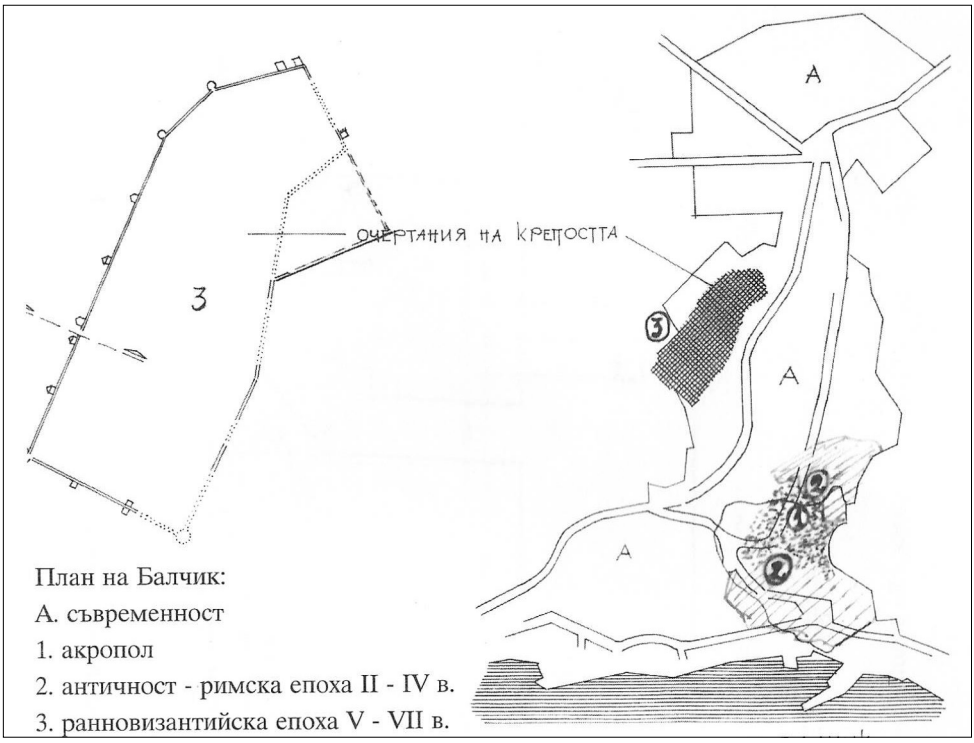


Fig. 1. Plan of Balchik (Dimitrov 2001)



Fig. 2. Small Corinthian capital, cat. 1
(Archives BAS – 165K, a. e. 509, f. 1)



Fig. 3. Corinthian capital, fragment, cat. 2
(photo: the author)

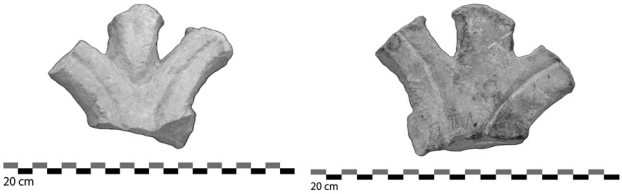


Fig. 4 Fragment of window transenna: face and reverse, cat. 14 (photo: the author)



Fig. 5. Fragment of transenna, Zaldapa (photo: M. Vaklinov)



Fig. 6. Sarcophagus-shaped reliquary, cat. 25 (photo: A. Ivanov)



Fig. 7. Double window column, cat. 3 (drawing M. Dimitrov; photo: S. Boyadzhiev)



Fig. 8. Pillar with column base, cat. 4 (photo: the author)



Fig. 9. Pillar (?), fragment, cat. 5 (photo: the author)



Fig. 10. Small pilar (?), fragment, cat. 6 (photo: the author)



Fig. 11. Two-side ornamented relief plaque, cat. 7 (photo: the author)

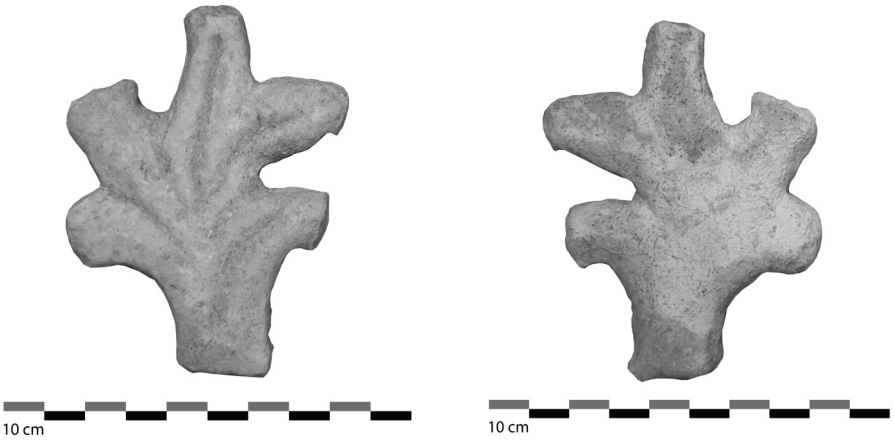


Fig. 12. Palmette, fragment of an openwork slab, cat. 8 (photo: the author)



Fig. 13. Palmette, fragment of an openwork slab, cat. 9 (photo: the author)

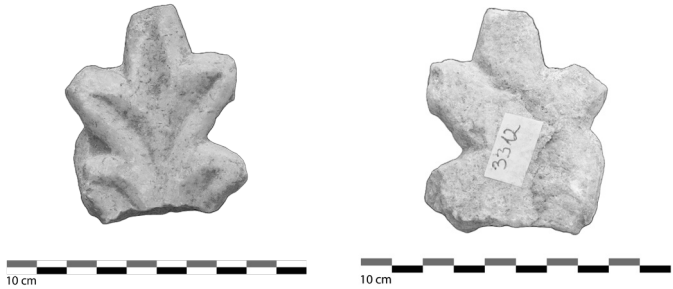


Fig. 14. Palmette, fragment of an openwork slab, cat. 10 (photo: the author)

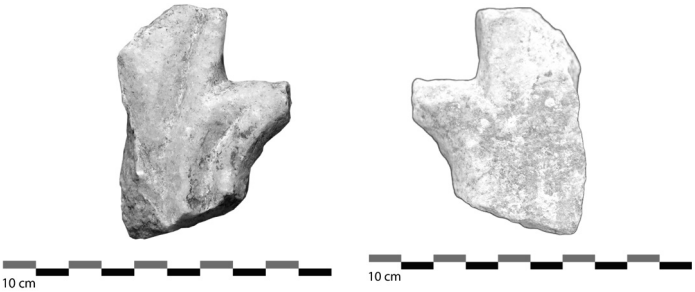


Fig. 15. Palmette, fragment of an openwork slab, cat. 11 (photo: the author)



Fig. 16. Palmette of an openwork slab, cat. 12 (photo: the author)

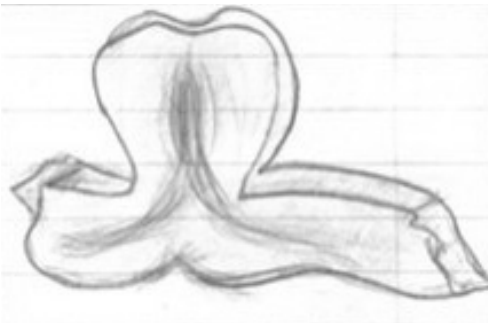


Fig. 17. Floral cross-shape motif of an openwork slab, cat. 13 (drawing: M. Dimitrov)

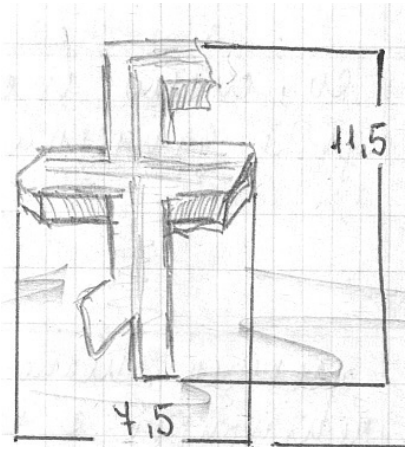








Fig. 19. Strip framing motif of an openwork slab, cat. 16 (photo: the author)



Fig. 18. Cross-shape motif (framing?) of an openwork slab, cat. 15 (drawing: M. Dimitrov photo: the author)



Fig. 20. Strip motif (frame?) of an openwork slab, cat. 17 (drawing: M. Dimitrov)

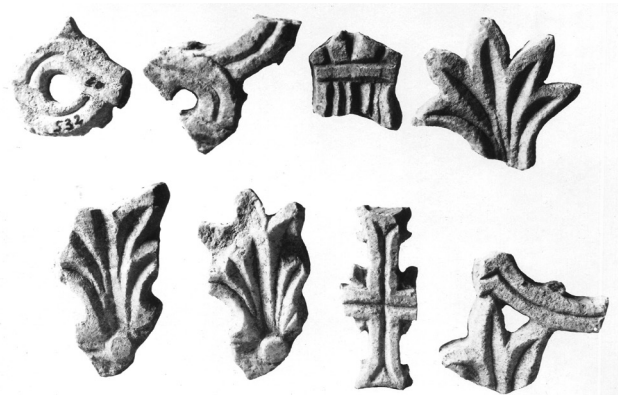


Fig. 21. Fragments of a marble open work cancel plaque, basilica 1, Zaldapa (K. Škorpil's Archives)





Fig. 22. Fragments of a marble open work cancel plaques, basilica 3, Zaldapa (photo: M. Vaklinov)

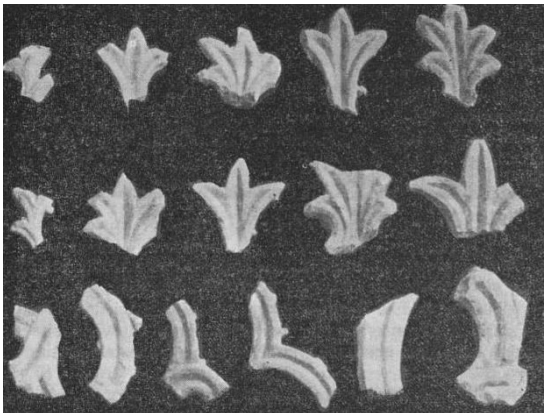


Fig. 23. Marble fragments from the chancel screen, episcopal basilica in Tomis/Constanţa (Radulescu 1966)

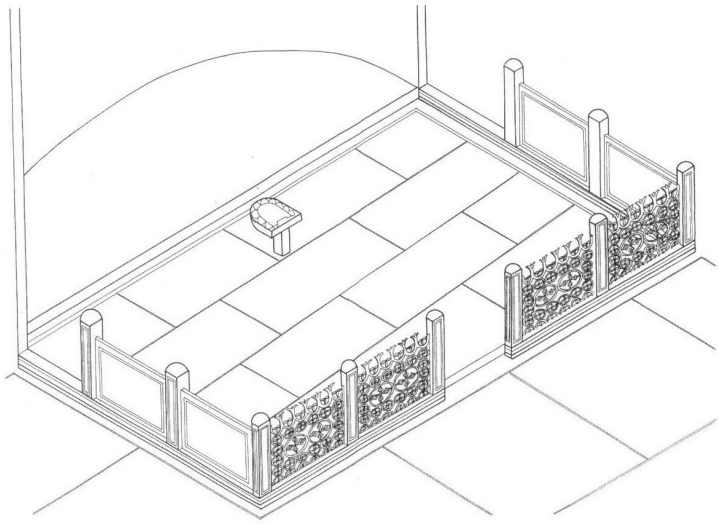


Fig. 24. Openwork cancel screen of the episcopal basilica in Histria (reconstruction Bounegru, Iaţcu 2007)



Fig. 25. Door lintel (or corniche?), cat. 18 (photo: the author)

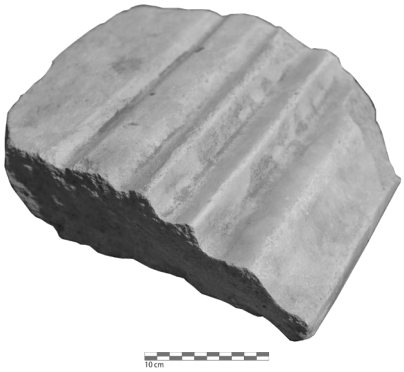




Fig. 26. Door lintel, cat. 19 (photo: the author)

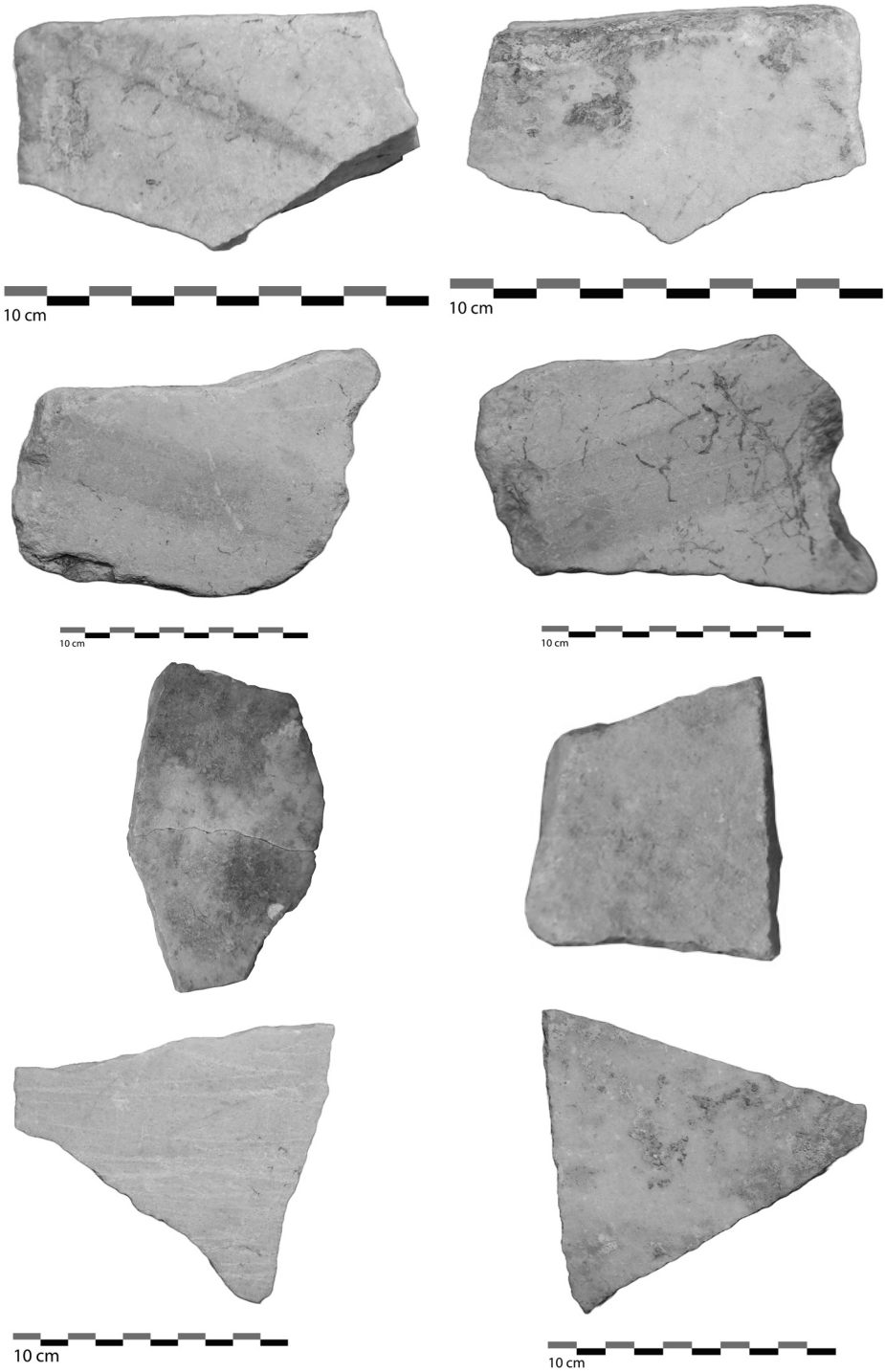


Fig. 27. Fragments of marble veneer: a. cat. 20; b. cat. 21; c. cat. 22; d. cat. 23; e. cat. 24

ГОДИШНИК НА СОФИЙСКИЯ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“
ЦЕНТЪР ЗА СЛАВЯНО-ВИЗАНТИЙСКИ ПРОУЧВАНИЯ „ИВАН ДУЙЧЕВ“
Том 104 (23)

ANNUAIRE DE L'UNIVERSITE DE SOFIA "ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI"
CENTRE DE RECHERCHES SLAVO-BYZANTINES "IVAN DUJČEV"
Tome 104 (23)

АРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИЯТ КОМПЛЕКС ШАН КАЯ В ПОДНОЖИЕТО НА КРЕПОСТТА *PALMAT(AE)* (РЕЗУЛТАТИ ОТ СПАСИТЕЛНО АРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКО ПРОУЧВАНЕ ПРЕЗ 2023 Г.)

БОЯН ТОТЕВ, СВЕТЛАНА ТОДОРОВА

Abstract: Partly under the Bulgarian village of Onogur, Tervel municipality, is situated the Late Antique fortress *Palmat(ae)*. South/southeast of it one can visit the well-known Shan kaya locality. In 2023, at its west foot archeological survey took place. The earliest layer is represented by necropolis with cremations and is dated 4th–3rd c. BC. The building structures are related to three periods. The Roman one ended by fire in the middle/end of the 3rd c. The Late Antique one (4th/5th c.) was also destroyed by fire during the time of the emperors Arcadius and Honorius. Connected with the Early Byzantine time (6th c.) are a building attached to the west wall of Shan kaya, a precinct wall in *opus emplectum* and two entrances along the wall. The excavated area is most probably a ground floor of an early Christian rock monastery. Connected to the latter are few cave structures (on an upper terrace) on both sides of Shan kaya.

Keywords: The Suha Reka River, rock-cut monasteries, Palmatis

Късноантичната крепост Палмате (*Фиг. 1.1.1*) е разположена върху високо плато, защитено от изток от р. Суха река, а от юг и север – от два странични дола. Днес част от укреплението се намира под днешното село Оногур, община Тервел. Обектът е регистриран в края на XIX в. от К. Шкорпил. Идентифицирането му като споменаваната в различни писмени източници *Palmat(ae)* е извършено в края на миналия век (Torbatov 2000). Акумулираният археологически материал свидетелства за обитаване от II до VI в. (Torbatov 2000: 60–62).

С изкопни дейности на територията на с. Оногур през 1967 г. се свързва частичното проучване на базилика и сграда в *opus mixtum* (Бобчева 1974: 52–53), а на няколко стотин метра южно е разкрито изградено от тухли водохранилище. Впоследствие структурите са засипани и попадат под ас-

фалтовия път и различни съвременни постройки. Редовни археологически разкопки са проведени през периода 2016–2020 г., когато поетапно е разкрита голяма трикорабна базилика (Попконстантинов и др. 2021: 779-782 и цит. там лит.). Наблюденията свидетелстват за преустройство на сградата, което се свързва с „придобиването на епископски статут от Палмате по времето на император Юстиниан I (527–565)" (Попконстантинов и др. 2017: 396).

Скалистият нос Шан кая (или Шанан Кая/„Почитана скала") се намира югоизточно спрямо *Palmat(ae)*, от която е отделен със стръмен склон и малка рекичка. В разположения под крепостта скален отвес са подредени в една линия пещерни помещения. Такива се намират и на срещуположния рид, от всички страни на скалния отвес Шан кая (*Фиг. 1.1.3*). Днес западната му част е обрасла плътно с ниска растителност. Според местното население през предходния век в участъка северозападно от Шан кая са били видими градежи. Вероятно същите са отбелязани под номер 7 върху картата на Л. Бобчева (Бобчева 1974: 86, обр. 9). През 1975 г., при насипване стената на микроязовир до с. Оногур е била вградена антична стена, а намиращата се в непосредствена близост малка порта е била частично разрушена. По-късно язовирът е изоставен и пресъхва, а граничещият с Шан кая склон обраства с нискостеблена растителност. Именно там (*Фиг. 1.1.2)*, през пролетта на 2023 г., археолози при РИМ Добрич фиксираха многобройни разрушения от активна иманярска дейност. Нелегалните „разкопки" бяха засегнали, граничеща със скалния отвес масивна тухлена арка, а по протежението на висока и широка над 2,0 м стена надлъжно бе изкопан тунел (с дължина над 4 м). Спасителните археологически проучвания бяха извършени в продължение на 10 дни (Тотев 2024). След зачистването на някои от храсталаците, макар и твърде неясно, се обособи издигната над коритото на микроязовира територия, ограничена между скалния отвес на платото и обрасъл с дървета земен вал. Първоначалното впечатление бе за огромна сграда или по-вероятно за верижни помещения. Впоследствие стана ясно, че оградената площ граничи със западната стена на скалния венец Шан кая и е защитена с дебела стена, която на места е с запазена до 4,0 м височина. Основните иманярски изкопи бяха във вътрешността на оградената площ или непосредствено под западната стена. В тях бяха открити множество фрагменти строителна и битова керамика, а също и нумизматичен материал.

Проведеното спасително проучване беше съобразено със силно лимитираните ресурси (на хора, време и средства). Основна задача пред екипа бе укрепването и запазването на разрушените градежи, съпроводено с изясняването на утилитарните функции, хронологията и стратиграфията им. Основните иманярски изкопи бяха зачистени и оформени като сондажи. Работата бе съсредоточена в пет участъка (*Фиг. 1.2*). Цел на настоящата статия е представянето на резултатите от разкопките.

Сондаж 1 е разположен на склон в централната част на оградената площ. (*Фиг. 1.2.1; Фиг. 2*) Той бе оформен след изчерпването от насипни материали на дълбок иманярски изкоп и предостави възможност за по-цялостни наблюдения върху културните пластове. Сондажът е с правоъгълна форма. Ориентиран е изток-запад по дългата си ос и има размери 2 х 5 м. В центъра му открихме разрушен зид с дълбока основа. На дъното (дълбочина 3 м от съвременното ниво), в западната му част, пластът бе все още насипен. В разположената по-високо на склона източна половина е достигнато до естествен терен – терасовидно оформена скална основа. Регистрирани са няколко периода на обитаване, като най-ранният се датира през IV–III в. пр. Хр. и се свързва с некропол, от който е открито едно разбито при по-късни строежи погребение – дъно от урна с кремирани останки. Аргумент в подкрепа на солиден, но разрушен от по-късните градежи културен хоризонт са намерените в насипите многобройни керамични фрагменти от желязната епоха.

Разрушеният зид в централната част на сондажа е с посока север-юг (*Фиг. 2*). Основата му е регистрирана на дълбочина 1,70 м от съвременното ниво. Градена е върху добре заравнена скала. Ползвани са еднолицеви ломени камъни със спойка от кал или слаб хоросан. Широчината на основата е 0,85/0,90 м. Разрушаването на зида се датира със силно горели антониани на Гордиан III (238–244) и Клавдий II Готски (268–272) и се свързва с нашествията от средата и/или края на III в. Събраният нумизматичен материал кореспондира с колективна монетна находка от 39 монети, която постъпва през 1987 г. в Исторически музей – Добрич. Тя е била открита в м. Шан кая при с. Оногур „в развалини от антични постройки“. Укриването на монетите се свързва с нашествието от 269 г. по времето на Клавдий II Готски, а видът им „дава основание да се допусне опожаряването…., ако не на цялото селище (Палмате – бел. авт.), то поне на намиращите се вън от крепостните стени постройки“ (Торбатов 1990: 53).

Гореописаната стена е възседната от по-широк зид (1,45 м; *Фиг. 2*). Последният е граден от еднолицеви камъни, споени с розов хоросан и едър чакъл като пълнеж. Датировката и се отнася към Късната античност. Нумизматичният материал свидетелства за разрушения (и опожарявания) по времето на императорите Хонорий (395–423) и Аркадий (395-408).

Последният период на обитаване се отнася към V-VI в. Свързаните с него останки, засега са интерпретирани като градежи, принадлежащи на ранновизантийски манастир. Те се проследяват в сондажи 2, 3, 4 и 5 (*Фиг. 1*).

Сондаж 2 се намира в оградената площ, непосредствено под западния скален отвес на Шан кая (*Фиг. 1.2.2; Фиг. 3*). За основа е използван съществуващ иманярски изкоп, който след подравняване доби следните размери: 1,80 х 1,20/1,40 м. Ориентиран е по оста изток-запад. На дълбочина 0,80 м от съвременното ниво, още от иманярите е бил частично разкрит свод на сграда. Фасадата е обърната на север. От изток скалата е подравнена

и допълнително огладена и в този вид се проследява в посока юг (*Фиг. 3.2*). Вероятно последната е приспособена за източна стена на постройката (западният край не е фиксиран в рамките на сондажа (*Фиг. 3.3*). Общата (видима) запазена височина на сградата е 1,72 м, а мази на арката е 1,42 м. За изграждането на арката са използвани правоъгълни тухли (два размера: 0,32 х 0,16 м и 0,32 х 0,19 м; дебелина 4 см). Запазени са 29 реда тухли, подреждани надлъжно и напречно. За спойка е използван хоросан, който в най-високата част на свода е с най-голяма дебелина (до 4–5 см). Над свода, от източната страна, следват нивелирани редове от средни и големи по размер лицеви блокчета, обилно измазани отвън с розов хоросан, примесен с пясък и ситни камъчета. В насипите край сондажа се откриха голямо количество кирпичи (цели и фрагментирани), строителна керамика (тегули и имбрици) и големи, силно корозирали пирони, които вероятно са свързвали масивни греди от покривната конструкция. Общата дълбочина на сондажа е 2,60 м, като е достигнат солиден пласт от строителни деструкции, който не е изчерпан и съответно не са достигнати основите на постройката. Вероятната причина за унищожението ѝ е масивен пожар, като от юг и запад се наблюдават сериозни нарушения в целостта на арката (*Фиг. 3.4*). Направените проучвания не позволяват уверена интерпретация на сградата, но със сигурност можем да предположим нейната запазеност в дълбочина. Много е вероятна, конструктивна връзка на разкритите структури с разположения в непосредствена близост ограден зид (*Фиг 1.2*). Възможно е покривът на съоръжението да е бил едноскатен, насочен на запад от скалния масив. Според съществуващите данни, съоръжението се е развивало в южна посока, като не е изключено то да е включвало и други елементи.

Сондажи 3, 4 и 5 (*Фиг. 1.2.3-5*) са разположени по протежението на оградната стена. Разкритият ъгъл в сондаж 3 (*Фиг. 4.1*) отстои на около 20 м северозападно от разгледания по-горе сондаж 2. Разположен е успоредно на скалния венец. Градежът е в техника *opus emplectum*, като лицето е от средно големи, грубо одялани квадри, споени с розов хоросан (с едър пясък и натрошена строителна керамика). Емплектонът се състои от ломени камъни, обилно залети с хоросан. Отвън зидът е обмазан с бял разтвор на варова основа. Съвременната намеса се изразява в разбиване на лицевата част, проникване във вътрешността и прокопаване в *емплектума* на дълъг над 4 м тунел (надлъжно на стената). Благодарение на това нарушение, можеха да се направят наблюдения по конструкцията: в *емплектума* са запазени следи от две разположени успоредно и надлъжно на стената дървени греди (*Фиг. 4.2*), с квадратно сечение и размери 0,13 м и 0,15 м. Те отстоят една от друга на разстояние 0,25 м, а от лицето на зида – на 0,30 м. Наблюденията на терен и съпоставката на различните участъци дават основание структурата в сондаж 3 да се интерпретира като вход към укрепеното пространство.

В сондаж 4 (който отстои на отстояние 26 м от структурата в сондаж 3; *Фиг. 1.2.4; Фиг. 4.3*) е разкрита стена с ориентация север-юг. Проучено е само западното лице. Измерената височина е 4,50 м. Почти цялата лицева зидария липсва, а в основата е видимо нарушение с размери 1,0 х 1,60 м. Използваната техника е о*pus emplectum*. Разрушенията позволяват да се направи наблюдение за формирането на *емплектона* – всеки ред съдържа пласт чакъл, покрит с по-дебел пласт хоросан, върху който са наредени камъните. Общата дебелина е 0,20 м. Вероятно с тази височина е бил лицевият градеж.

На отстояние 2,0 м е разкрита втора стена (*Фиг. 4.4*), успоредна на описаната. Нейната ширина е 1,80 м, а височината ѝ е 1,70 м. Градежът вероятно е о*pus quadratum* от добре одялани блокове, споени с бял хоросан, покрити с тънък пласт хоросанова замазка.

В най-северния край на проучваното пространство е разположен сондаж 5 (*Фиг. 1.2.5; Фиг. 4.5*), който е в непосредствена близост до дигата на микроязовира. Разкрити са полуразрушени зидове с максимална височина от 0,80 м и ширина 1,70 м. Те фланкират порта с ширина 1,55/1,60 м. Използвана е същата техника на градеж. Лицата са от грубо обработени камъни, споени с хоросан. *Емплектумът* е от чакъл, обилно залят с хоросан. Портата е ориентирана изток-запад.

По време на работата в последните три участъка (3, 4 и 5) в изкопите също се откри значително количество строителна керамика. Масовият материал от обекта представлява късноантична керамика, но са налични предримски фрагменти и такива от IX в. (при северната порта). За разлика от епископската базилика в Палмате, то тук-ранновизантийската керамика от VI в. не е доминираща.

Стратиграфските наблюдения са подкрепени от събраните нумизматични находки. На този етап има известна яснота за хронологията на обитаване: некропол, датиран през IV–III в. пр. Хр.; Римски период – до втора половина на III в.; Късноантичен период – IV/ V в.; Ранновизантийски период – VI в. Не е ясен статутът на регистрираните градежи, но явно те са синхронни на късноантичната крепост. Нещо повече, явно между *Palmat(ae),* епископската базилика и проучвания комплекс е съществувала директна връзка през намиращата се на по-малко от километър източна порта на крепостта. Скорошно изследване утвърждава, че колониите скални манастири по протежението на р. Суха река са концентрирани „в непосредствена близост до големите късноантични крепости при селата Балик, Оногур и Голеш“ (Атанасов 2023: 72). Тази хипотеза има стабилна археологическа основа. На североизточната страна на скалния нос на Шан кая е разположен скален комплекс, който включва галерия и няколко отделни килии (*Фиг. 1.1.3*). Входът на галерията е с пирамидално сечение. Пространството е оформено като дълъг коридор с няколко ‘помещения’ с малки ниши, като

източната страна на първото от тях има изрязани в стената „прозорци“. Върху пода е издълбан канал за оттичане на вода. На две места по външната страна на коридора има оформени врати (Атанасов 2023: 195, обр. 39, 54, 58). Те водят към унищожени (поне наполовина) тераси с верижно подредени скални платформи с частично запазени археологически структури (камък за пресоване на грозде и др.). Скалният коридор завършва рязко над стръмна урва. Реконструкцията на това съоръжение е несигурна, но явно към него са били изградени дървени парапети и паянтови градежи. В скалния венец над него има податки за още един ред, недостъпни и непроучвани пещерни структури. Важно е да се отбележи, че участъкът преди галерията, т.е. северозападната част на Шан кая, е бил повреден в неясна степен при изграждането на втори язовир, при което активно е използвана тежка земекопна техника и са разбивани участъци от скалния венец. Съществени са били разрушенията при построяването на микроязовира, които са засегнали частично западната част от комплекса, унищожавайки намиращи се в района късноантични погребения.

Наблюденията върху оградената площ в западното подножие на м. Шан кая насочват към идейна и функционална връзка със съществуващите по склоновете ѝ пещерни съоръжения и монашески килии. Най-добре оформена е тази, разположена непосредствено над разкритата в сондаж № 2 арка. На върха на платото, над тези съоръжения, личат останки от сграда с ориентация изток-запад (неголяма църква?). В развалините ѝ са откривани фрагменти строителна керамика, както и единични такива от стъкло и стопилки от оловна ламарина. Легенда гласи, че тук се е издигала църква с камбанария за наблюдение. Звънът от нейните чановете е предупреждавал жителите на крепостта за приближаващата ги опасност, което е дало името Чан или Шан кая. Разбира се, подобни предания, пораждат исторически и археологически оправдан скептицизъм. Все пак е твърде вероятно проучваният от нас обект, да е асоцииран към съществувал на мястото скален манастир. В този случай, участъкът може да представлява основа или първи етаж, в който са били изградени различни помещения. На разположението на междинна скална тераса второ ниво са се намирали монашески килии и други пещерни съоръжения, а на върха на платото е бил изграден храм (?). Тези предварителни предположения се нуждаят от допълнителни проучвания, като за сигурна може да се приема пряката връзка на комплекса с разположената в непосредствена близост крепост Палмате.

Имайки предвид аварийния характер на разкопките, бъдещо поетапно и цялостно разкриване на структурите ще внесе допълнителна яснота за хронологията и стратиграфията, а това ще допринесе и за изясняване на характера на обекта. Едва тогава изказаната хипотеза ще бъде потвърдена или отхвърлена.

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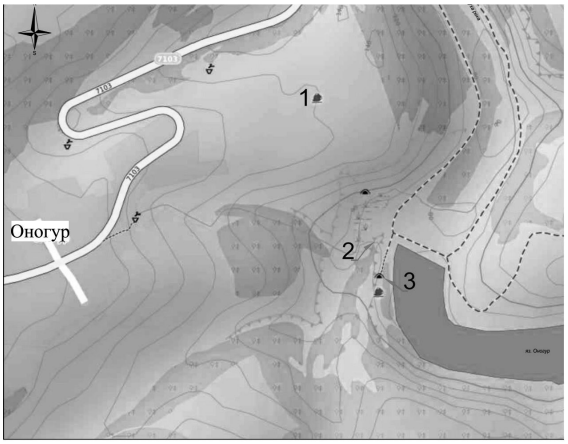
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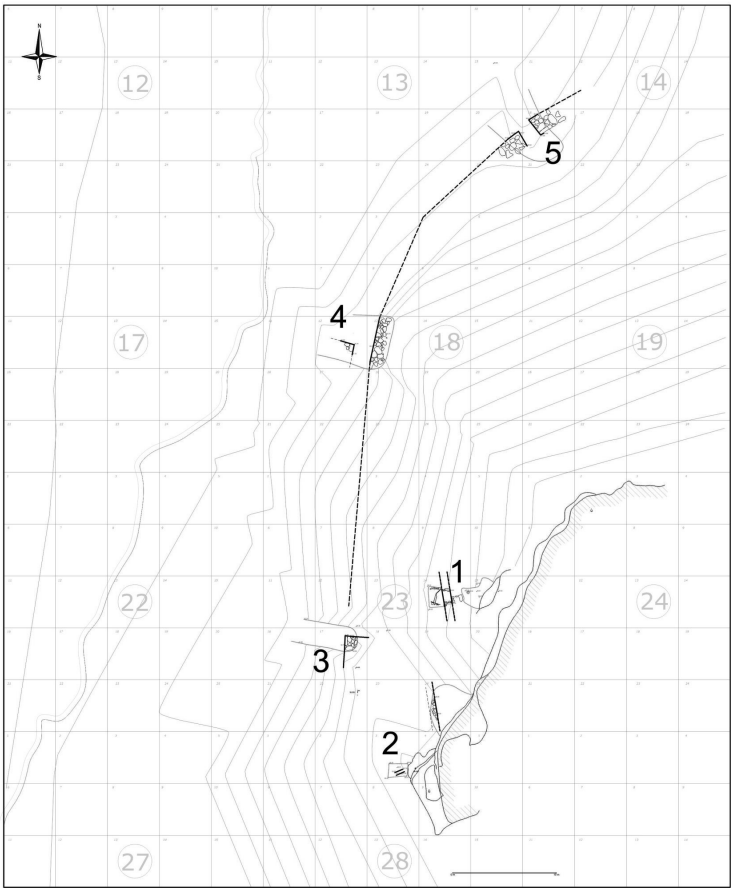
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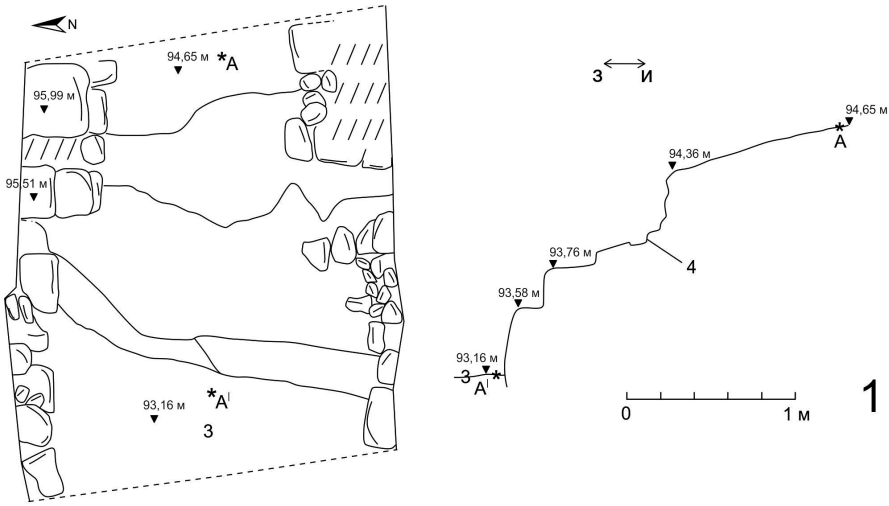
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Фиг. 1. Локализация и геодезическо заснемане на археологически обект „Шан Кая“ в землището на с. Оногур, общ. Тервел: 1.1 Археологически обект „Палматис“; 1.2 Местоположение на обекта в м. „Шан Кая“; 1.3. Скален манастир; 2. Геодезическо заснемане (автор М. Вълчев)



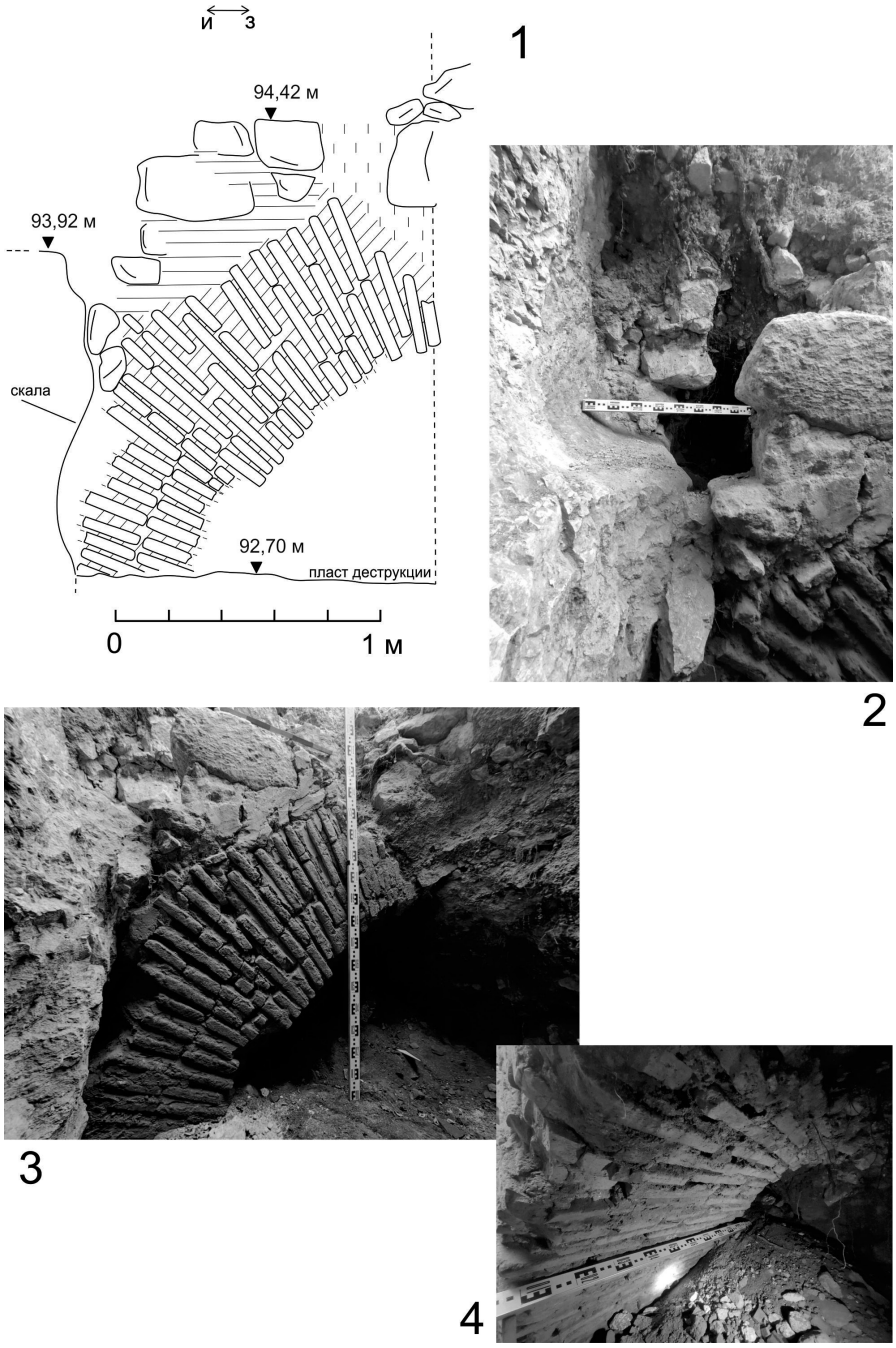


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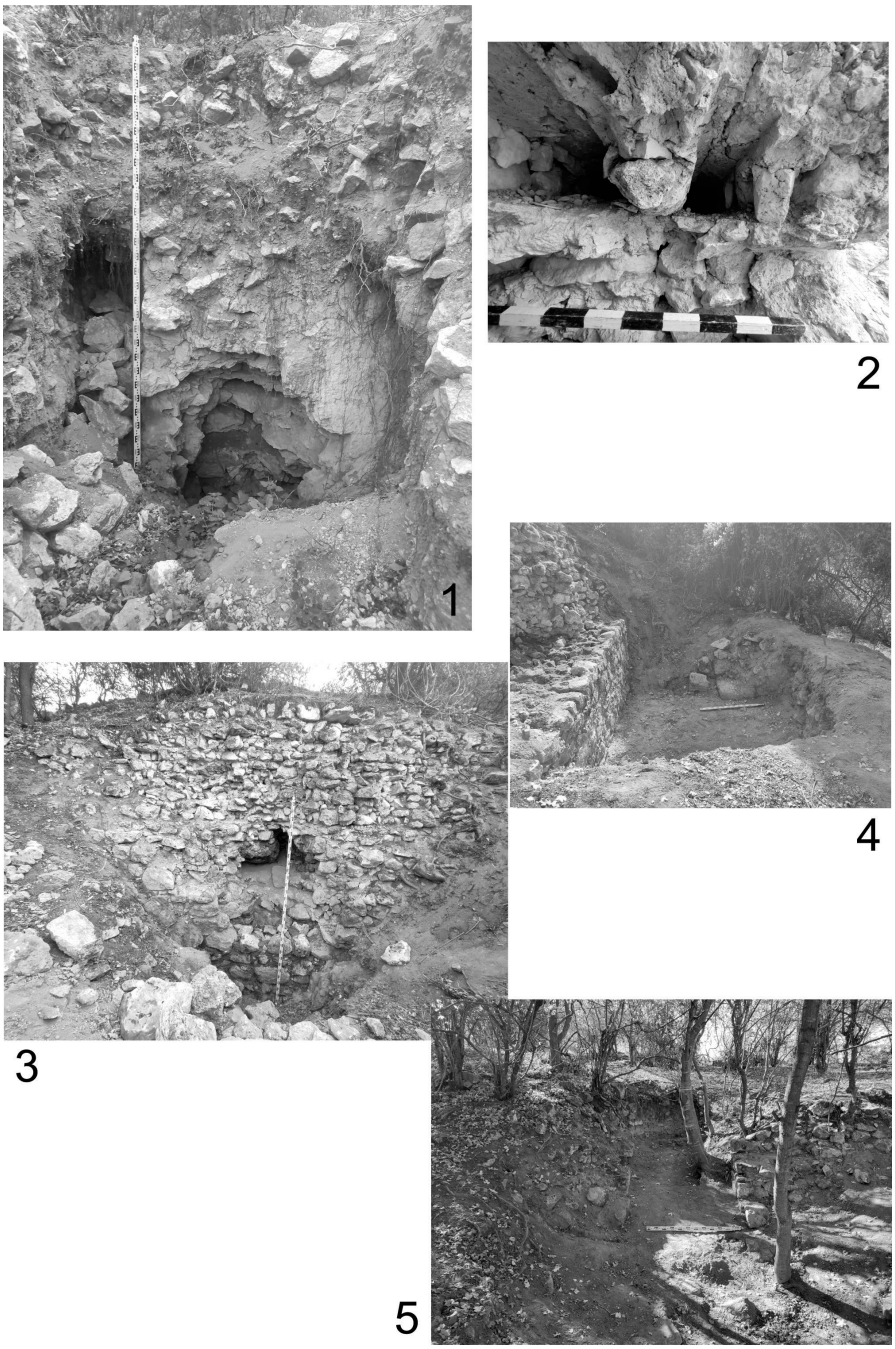


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Фиг. 2. Сондаж 1: 1. Графично заснемане (рис. С. Тодорова);
2. Финален етап на проучването, поглед от юг;
3. Финален етап на проучването, поглед от запад (сн. Б. Тотев)



Фиг. 3. Сондаж 3: Графично заснемане (рис. С. Тодорова);
2–3. Финален етап на проучването, поглед от север; 4. Заснемане на свода (сн. Б. Тотев)



Фиг. 4. Сондажи 3 – 5: 1. Сондаж 3, поглед от запад; 2. Сондаж 3, детайл на конструкцията; 3. Сондаж 4, нарушенията в преградната стена, поглед от запад; 4. Сондаж 4, участък от втора стена, успоредна на преградната; 5. Сондаж 5, портата след почистване на тревната растителност, поглед от запад (сн. Б. Тотев)

ГОДИШНИК НА СОФИЙСКИЯ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“
ЦЕНТЪР ЗА СЛАВЯНО-ВИЗАНТИЙСКИ ПРОУЧВАНИЯ „ИВАН ДУЙЧЕВ“
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THE DANUBIAN *PRAESIDIA* OF THE FIRST TETRARCHS

SERGEY TORBATOV

Abstract: Досега от земите по Долни Дунав са известни 9 строителни надписа от времето на Първата тетрархия, които са пряко свързани с осъществената по това време фортификационна дейност по северната граница на Римската империя в този участък. Изцяло запазен сега, макар и със следи от *damnatio memoriae* във втория ред, е само един от тях – този от Donje Butorke. Други два (от Тутракан и околностите на Русе) също са били напълно съхранени по време на тяхното намиране. От останалите (от Сейменци, Силистра, Халмирис и Ветрен) до нас са достигнали само фрагменти. Според наложилото се в научната книжнина мнение, изградено без отчитане на техния контекст, те почти единодушно се приемат като сигурно указание, че късноримските крепости на *Sexaginta Prista, Transmarisca, Durostorum* и *Halmyris* са възникнали именно по време на Първата тетрархия и са тъждествени на споменатите в надписите *praesidia*. Целта на настоящата работа е възможно най-точното изясняване на обстоятелствата около намирането на всеки от тях и разглеждането им в адекватен археологически контекст. Става ясно, че нито един от тях не може да се свърже с голям фортификационен обект по Долнодунавския лимес, за който има експлицитни археологически данни, че е бил изграден *a fundamentis* именно по това време. Напротив, поне за три от споменатите в надписите *praesidia* има достатъчно сигурни данни, че това всъщност са били големи стражеви кули от типа *burgus*. Такива, при това със същата датировка, са регистрирани на още редица места по течението на р. Дунав в съвременната територия на Сърбия и България. Според автора, надписите за президиите на първите тетрарси отразяват кампания от палиативни мерки, целящи временно подобряване на контрола по дунавската граница на Империята в навечерието на вероятно вече планираната, но все още предстояща цялостна реорганизация на лимеса според новите късноримски военни стандарти. Наличните данни показват, че осъществяването на самата реорганизация е било осъществена по-късно – по време на управлението на Лициний и Константин I.

Keywords: *praesidium*, Tetrarchy, Lower Danube, *limes*, fortifications

So far, nine building inscriptions are known from the Lower Danubian lands, which date back to the time of the First Tetrarchy and are directly related to the

fortification activity carried out at that time along the northern border of the Roman Empire in this area. Only one of the them – from Donje Butorke, is now completely preserved, although with traces of *damnatio memoriae* in the second line. Two other (from Tutrakan and the vicinity of Ruse, Bulgaria) were also completely preserved at the time of their discovery. As for the rest (from Seimenii mari, Silistra, *Halmyris* and Vetren), only fragments of the them have survived. However, due to the very characteristic arrangement and phraseology, all the researchers are of the opinion that the text, although with certain deviations, reproduces an official form that was prepared for similar cases in one of the central state offices (Kolendo 1966a: 146; Kolendo 1966b: 567). Most likely, that was the office of the Praetorian Prefect of the eastern half of the Roman Empire (Sarnowski 1990: 857). Such a conclusion is based on the fact that the inscriptions originate from three provinces – *Scythia*, *Moesia Secunda* and *Dacia Ripensis*, which belonged administratively to two different dioeceses of that time – *Thraciae* and *Moesiarum*, and those in turn – to the prefectures *Orientis* and *per Illyricum*, both of which fell under the supreme jurisdiction of Diocletian (284-305).

Various assumptions have been made about the dating of each of the monuments, which generally fit into the chronological range of 293-305 AD. A possibility of chronological precision is provided by the ruler's victory titles, but they are usually written in abbreviated form, and in most of the fragments that have survived they are preserved only partially, or are missing at all. The situation stands best with the inscription from Tutrakan, which, according to the current state of prosopographic studies, should be dated to after 299/300.[1] Those from Ruse, Silistra and Vetren surely date back to after 296/297 AD,[2] the *Halmyris* inscriptions – to not earlier than 295 AD,[3] while those from Seimenii mari and Donje Butorke should generally be attributed to the period 293-305 AD in lack of grounds for closer dating[4].

The text of the form reproduced in the inscriptions ends with the phrase *praesidium constituerunt*, which lacks sufficient clarity in itself. The problem is that the

[1] The defining item in this particular case is the honorific title *Sarmat(icus) maximus IIII*. Diocletian is attested to have received it in 299 or 300 AD and (overlooking the inscription from Tutrakan) is considered to be the only one among the Imperial college who held this title (Kienast, Eck, Heil 2017: 258-259, 264-265, 270, 274).

[2] The inscriptions mention or are supposed to have contained the title *Britannicus maximus*, received by the first Tetrarchs in 297 or perhaps already in 296 AD (Kienast, Eck, Heil 2017: 259, 264, 270, 274).

[3] Parts of honorific titles are preserved only in the first inscription from *Halmyris* (Zahariade 1997: 228-236; Zahariade, Alexandrescu 2011: 21-24, no. 1), and only *[Goth]hicis max(imis)* and *Persicis [max(imis)]* can certainly be recovered of them. The former one is considered to have been received by the Tetrarchs about 293 or later (after 296/297 AD), and the latter – most likely in 295 AD for the first time, and in 298 AD for the second time (Kienast, Eck, Heil 2017: 259, 264, 270, 274).

[4] No honorific titles have survived in the first one, while the second mentions only *Germanici maximi* and *Sarmatici maximi* without numerals.

word *praesidium* has many meanings in the Latin language, which in a generalized form can be reduced to three major ones: 1. defence, protection; 2. guard, garrison; 3. any type of fortification (Georges 1869: 1020; Lewis, Short 1891: 1429; Gaffiot 1934: 1226; Forcellini et al. 1965: 831-832; Oxford Latin Dictionary 1968: 1441-1442; Дворецкий 1976: 802; Ramminger 1980-1995: 883-892).

According to their understanding and preferences, some modern authors interpret the phrase as "*[they] established defense/guards*" (Zahariade 2007: 294; Zahariade, Alexandrescu 2011: 24). The majority of researchers who have dealt with this problem, however, are of the opinion that each of the inscriptions refers to the construction of a particular fortification. Judging by the prevailing view in the scientific literature about the finding place of four of the inscriptions, they are almost unanimously accepted as a sure indication that the Late Roman fortresses of *Sexaginta Prista*, *Transmarisca*, *Durostorum* and *Halmyris* came into being precisely during the First Tetrarchy and are identical to the *praesidia* mentioned in the inscriptions.

Surprisingly, very few authors have paid serious attention to the context from which the inscriptions about the Danubian *praesidia* from the time of the First Tetrarchy originate, and even in those cases only individual monuments have been discussed in the publications. The aim of this paper is to clarify, as accurately as possible at present, the circumstances concerning the discovery of each of the inscriptions and to consider them in adequate archaeological context corresponding to the current state of research at the respective site. In my view, this will move forward the resolution of the question about the Danubian *praesidia* of the first Tetrarchs and will reject some postulates that have gained popularity in the scientific literature over the years.

From a purely fortification aspect, *praesidium* is one of the most obscure Latin terms, although it is widely attested in the ancient and late antique written and epigraphic tradition from the 1st to the beginning of the 4th century. Pliny the Elder designated by this name some of the stations on the road from *Alexandria* to the Red Sea through the Eastern Desert of Egypt (Plin. Nat. Hist. VI, XXVI, 103 – ed. Rackham). It is not clear whether they were already fortified posts in his time, but there is reliable archaeological and epigraphic evidence for this from the end of the 1st and the first half of the 2nd century (Bagnall, Bülow-Jacobsen, Cuvigny 2001: 325-333). In the form they have survived, the greater part of them are fortifications of medium size (from 47 × 37 to 60 × 60 m) but this is most likely due to later reconstructions from the Late Roman period (Băjenaru 2010: 62).

Montana in the province of Lower Moesia, which was a camp of an auxiliary unit (*cohors equitata*) and an important centre for control and protection of the intensive mining of precious metals in the region (Велков 1971: 105-110; Rankov 1985: 40-73; Бинев 2003: 160-165, 170-174; Ivanov, Luka 2015: 197-220), is designated as a *praesidium* in an inscription from Phrygia from 134 AD (AE 1927: 95; Велков, Александров 1994: no. 151). In scientific literature, well-known and repeatedly commented on are the inscriptions from the middle of the 2nd century

from the province of Thrace, which mention the construction of a large number of *praesidia*, *burgi* and *phruri* in different areas (*regiones*) of the urban territories of *Serdica*, *Augusta Traiana*, *Marcianopolis*, *Deultum* and *Byzia* (Бешевлиев 1952: 33-36; Буюклиев, Гемов 1964: 29-30; Мирчев 1961: 15-16; Кацаров 1926-1927: 107-112; Velkov 1978: 176, Anm. 18). According to the prevailing opinion in the scientific literature, they are considered to have been fortifications with prominent police functions, closely related to the road system and aimed at maintaining internal order and actively supporting the state administrative and financial apparatus. The insignificant number of *praesidia* in comparison with the other two types of fortified sites betrays their higher status and more special position in the system of provincial internal security (Cociş 2016-2017: 44). It is assumed that they were significantly larger in size and were located at the most important places from a strategic point of view. It is very possible that the auxiliary fort of *Sostra*, which appeared at that time on the road from *Oescus* to *Philippopolis*, was one of the *praesidia* mentioned in these inscriptions (Торбамов 2012: 140-141). The same is assumed for the Roman fortification near present-day Mezdra, built around the middle of the 2nd century along the road from *Oescus* to *Serdica* (Торбамов 2009: 42-43; Torbatov 2015: 154).

Three decades later, in 184-185 AD, the term *praesidium* appears in a series of building inscriptions from Pannonia (Kovács 2008: 126-128). They refer to new fortification construction along the eastern limes of the province between *Aquincum* and *Intercisa*, carried out during the reign of Emperor Commodus (177-192). The inscriptions report the construction of *burgi* and *praesidia*, explicitly stating that the former were built along the entire coast (*ripam omnem*), and the latter only in places suitable for secret passage of bands of robbers (*latrunculi*) from the other side (*per loca opportuna ad clandestinos latrunculorum transitus oppositis*). It is evident from the text that the number of *burgi* was much greater than that of *praesidia*, which suggests a significant difference in the complexity and cost of their construction, as well as in their size respectively (Kovács 2008: 128-134). The *burgi* are definitely identified with the border watchtowers of that time, although there is undisputed information about only one of them, which measures 5,8 × 5,8 m in the interior (Kovács 2008: 131; Nagy, Szilas, Biller 2017: 60-66). As for the *praesidia*, none of them have been identified in the field so far.

An inscription from 198 AD, found near Si Aioun in present-day Tunisia, notes the construction of a *praesidium* on the *Limes Tripolitanus* in the province of Africa Proconsularis. The structure itself is a stone fortification measuring 30 × 40 m (Trousset 1974: 118-120, no. 130; Krimi 2007: 140; Mackensen 2024: 128).

Two building inscriptions from Severan time orriginate from the Qasr El-Uweinid fortress, located on the *Limes Arabiae et Palaestinae* in the province of Arabia. The earlier one, dating back to 201 AD, mentions the construction of a military bath for the needs of *castellum et s(uum) praesidium Severianum* (AE 2001, 01978). It has been suggested that the *castellum* should be identified with the fortification

itself, which has an irregular trapezoidal plan and maximum dimensions of 65 × 44 m, and "its *praesidium*" – with the free-standing tower measuring 9,5 × 9,5 m in the southern part of the protected area (Kennedy 1982: 113-128; Lander 1984: 136-138; Kennedy 2004: 62-66; Kovács 2008: 134). However, it seems more acceptable to me that the *praesidium* in question is the massively built, independent tower measuring 12 x 12 m, rising about 300 m west of the *castellum*, on the opposite bank of the dry valley separating them (Kennedy 1982: 121; Kennedy 2004: 62). In any case, the *praesidium* is certainly something different from the *castellum*, both existing alternatives pointing to its identification with a larger tower.

The examples given show that the word *praesidium* seems never to have obtained sufficient clarity and some strict terminological definiteness (Торбамов 2000: 19; Торбамов 2004: 37). As it has been rightly noted, we are witnessing an evolution of the meaning of words over time. It is assumed that initially *praesidium* was used in the sense of garrison, and later the concept acquired the notion of a place where the garrison was stationed (Jouffroy 1997: 383-384). It is also evident that *praesidia* are found equally frequently both on the borders and in the interior of the Roman Empire, along particularly important lines of communication. As for the size, they widely vary – from a standard cohort's camp to a larger tower, but the examples of the first kind are only from the second quarter and possibly from shortly after the mid-2nd century (*Montana* and perhaps *Sostra*).

The inscriptions about the Danubian *praesidia* from the time of the First Tetrarchy have been repeatedly commented on in the scientific literature, a certain stereotype being imposed in their interpretation, which is still strictly followed by many researchers. This interpretation is based on the firm conviction that the finding place of the monuments is a sure indication of the location of the *praesidia* mentioned in the inscriptions. Therefore, a thesis is rather popular that the Late Roman fortresses *Sexaginta Prista*, *Transmarisca*, *Durostorum* and *Halmyris* owe their emergence precisely to the fortification activity during the years of the First Tetrarchy and are identical to the *praesidia* in question[5]. The mentioned sites are important benchmarks for postulating the idea of a grandiose and comprehensive regional military building program, which was initiated and implemented by Emperor Diocletian and lead to a radical change in the appearance of the Lower Danube Limes, resulting in its almost complete reconstruction *a fundamentis* (Velkov 1977: 23-25; Sarnowski 1988: 125-130; Sarnowski 1990: 855-860; Zahariade 2007: 293-304). The actual scope, and even the very existence of such a program has often been questioned, due to the absence of reliable archaeological evidence for many, if not for the most of the discussed sites[6].

The inscription from the vicinity of Ruse was the first one to be introduced into scientific circulation. This happened in 1820, in the Viennese magazine "Conversa-

[5] The thesis was introduced in scientific circulation by Jerzy Kolendo in 1966, but the inscriptions from *Halmyris* were still unknown by that time (Kolendo 1966a; Kolendo 1966b).

[6] Last on this issue: Dürr, Băjenaru, Teichner 2022: 152-153.

tionsblatt. Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Unterhaltung". The contributor's name is typed as J. von K***bel (K***bel 1820: 573-574), but it is believed that he was the Polish historian Joachim Lelewel (Kolendo 1966a: 139; Kolendo 1966b: 559-562). In 1821 the same text was published in Polish translation in the Lviv newspaper "Rozmaitości" (B – i 1821: 14-15). The inscription itself was later lost and only a copy of the text survived, which is probably incomplete. The information had been overlooked by specialists for a century and a half and was rediscovered only in 1966 by Jerzy Kolendo, who attributed the monument without hesitation to *Sexaginta Prista* (Kolendo 1966a: 141; Kolendo 1966b: 563). But what do the facts speak for?

The monument was acquired as a war trophy by Lieutenant General Louis Alexandre Andrault, comte de Langéron in 1810, when during the Russo-Turkish war of that time the army corps commanded by him was stationed "*in der Gegend bei Rusczuk in Bulgarien an der Donau*" (K***bel 1820: 573). That was the siege of the important fortified Turkish city Ruschuk (now Ruse), which began on June 14th and ended with surrender of the garrison on September 15th, 1810 (Михайловский-Данилевский 1843: 38-69, 77-89; Петров 1887: 71-76, 87-114, 125-149). Langéron's corps joined the siege operations after August 4th (Петров 1887: 127). There is no information in the military-historical literature on where it was stationed until the fall of Ruschuk, but immediately after that and until its final departure from this area on October 9th, 1810, the corps occupied an area east of the town, guarding the road to Turtukay (now Tutrakan) (Петров 1887: 150). The camp positions of the besieging Russian troops were located 2 and more kilometers from the outlines of the Turkish fortress (Михайловский-Данилевский 1843: 54, № 19: Планъ осады Рущука и Журжи), while the remains of the Late Roman and Early Byzantine *Sexaginta Prista* are located in its northwestern corner. That means that Count Langéron's troops never approached the Roman fortress closer than 4 km, and the inscription certainly do not originate from its ruins. It was found „*in einem Stalle unter Schutthaufen*" (K***bel 1820: 573). The text was inscribed on a huge monolithic limestone block measuring 3,35 × 0,76 × 0,56 m[7]. The impressive dimensions and the complete preservation of the block with the inscription exclude the possibility for it to have been transferred to the place of its finding in later times from the territory of the *castellum* in the central part of modern Ruse, in order to be reused there as *spolium* in some kind of monumental structure. The pile of rubble under which it was discovered should in all likelihood be identified with the remains of the *praesidium* mentioned in the inscription. More than 10 years ago it was convincingly identified with the Late Roman fortification erected on the Ruse prehistoric settlement mound (Драгоев 2012: 264-269). The mound is located on the Danube bank in the northeastern part of the city, 4,5 km north-

[7] Or 3,28 × 0,74 × 0,54 m, in view of the values of the units of measurement used (Kolendo 1966a: 140; Kolendo 1966b: 563).

east of the Late Roman *castellum Sexaginta Prista* (Шкорпил 1914: 59; Георгиев, Ангелов 1952: 119; Чернаков 2009: 5). Now, as well as in the past, immediately south of the mound runs the road from Ruse to Tutrakan, which was guarded by the corps of Count Langéron in 1810, after the capitulation of the Turkish fortress of Ruschuk. The Roman Danubian Road followed approximately the same route (Шкорпил 1914: Карта IV). The fortification on the settlement mound had external dimensions of some 27 × 17 m and its walls were over 2 m thick. In terms of plan and construction features, it is typologically identified with a *burgus* (Драгоев 2012: 266-267). As for the Late Roman *castellum Sexaginta Prista*, the new archaeological research categorically proves that it has nothing to do with the fortification activity during the First Tetrarchy. During archaeological excavations in 2015 along the southeastern fortress wall and the gate with *propugnaculum* located there, a coin hoard of 6 *folles* was found in a layer of mortar related to the time of construction. Four of the coins were issued in 313 AD and this is a certain *terminus post quem* for the time of construction *a fundamentis* of the new Late Roman *castellum* in *Sexaginta Prista* (Русев и др. 2015: 178, 188-190; Върбанов и др. 2016: 450). It is not superfluous to recall that *Sexaginta Prista* arose as a naval base of the *classis Moesica* immediately or very soon after 45/46 AD, and probably as early as the late-Flavian period a permanent military camp was established there, in which various auxiliary units, all of them of the *cohors equitata* category, resided in the 2nd-3rd centuries. Its use is traced by epigraphic data to the time of Emperor Aurelian (270-275). So far, the location of the early Roman military camp in *Sexaginta Prista* has not been archaeologically established, but it is certain that its remains do not lie below those of the Late Roman *castellum*. There are serious arguments that it was located about 1 km south-southeast of the latter, on the elevated flat terrain east of the former mouth of the Rusenski Lom River (Varbanov, Dragoev 2007: 232; Върбанов 2012: 209-210; Русев 2011: 258; Торбатов 2012: 111-125).

The inscription from Tutrakan was also a war trophy and again of a general, but this time from the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-1829, and the general was the Romanian of Greek origin Nicolae Mavros. The monument was first published by Antoine Émile Ernest Desjardins in 1868, with the missing text being restored according to the personal memories of the discoverer Nicolae Mavros shared with the author (Desjardins 1868: 29-31, no. 22). It was later republished by Grigore Tocilescu (Tocilescu 1902: 173-179, no. 21) and included in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (CIL III, 6151). The inscription had been carved on a monolithic limestone slab 3,33 m long and 0,15 m thick (Kolendo 1966a: 143; Kolendo 1966b: 565),[8] which was much later embedded as decoration in the main town fountain of Tutrakan. By order of the general, the slab with the inscription was dismantled and transported to his estate near Bucharest. During these actions it was broken, with

[8] According to E. Desjardins, its length is "*pas moins de*" 3 m, and the height 0,80 m (Desjardins 1868: 29). G. Tocilescu points other measurements – length of 3,50 m, and thickness of 0,40 m (Tocilescu 1902: 173).

its lower part remaining in place and for a long time crowning the mutilated facade of the fountain, before being completely removed from there. The lower part of the slab contained the entire last and most of the penultimate line of the inscription[9].

Despite the diligent attempts, I have not succeeded yet in establishing which was the main town fountain of Tutrakan in the late 1820s[10]. Judging by the finding place in the 1930s of a fragment from the part of the inscription that remained in place (Christescu 1938: 452), it must have been located somewhere in the area of the public garden (*jardin public*) of that time, but I have not found reliable data about its location, too. Similar to the case with the inscription from the vicinity of Ruse, the large dimensions and overall preservation of the monument at the time of its discovery indicate that it had hardly been transported from somewhere far away, in order to be incorporated into the Turkish fountain[11]. But where from?

It has been persistently argued in a number of scientific publications over the past 35 years that the *presidium* in the inscription from Tutrakan is identical to the fortification remains discovered during archaeological excavations in the central northern part of the modern town (Vagalinski 1999: 235; Vagalinski, Petkov 2006: 106; Paunov 2007: 141-142; Пемков 2010a: 49; Трайкова 2024: 10). According to this thesis, both partially studied fortress walls, referred to as "North" and "South" in the literature, belong to one and the same fortification – the Late Roman *Transmarisca*, the area of which is estimated at 55-65 ha. It is also claimed that this fortification, "according to reliable stratigraphic data", was built in the period between 292 and 309/310 AD, and that no remains of an early Roman military camp have been found in Tutrakan so far (Vagalinski, Petkov 2006: 109; Paunov 2007: 146). However, the latest research works within the scope of the so-called South fortress wall decisively refute these assertions. Moreover, upon careful reading of the publications and comparison of what is written in them with the attached graphic documentation and photos, one does not find any confirmation of the suggested dating, but just on the contrary – the stratigraphic realities drastically contradict it. In fact, in Tutrakan there are remains of two fortresses from different time. The so-called South fortress wall belongs to an early Roman military camp, built by the end of the 1st or in the very beginning of the 2nd century. In the first half of the 4th century it underwent a significant reconstruction, which brought it up to the standards of the fortification art of that time. The North fortress wall, as well as the western and

[9] Its preserved height now is 0,59 m, but the original one is estimated at about 0,80 m (Kolendo 1966a: 143; Kolendo 1966b: 565).

[10] There was no water main in Tutrakan until 1940. By that time the local population was supplied with water from 18 fountains and 3 wells, scattered throughout the town, whose water sources were located in the city itself (Тодоров, Пенчиков, Бойчев 2007: 418).

[11] However, there are also examples of the opposite, and just in connection with the construction of monumental fountains during the Ottoman era. To those mentioned in the works of J. Kolendo (Kolendo 1966a: 142; Kolendo 1966b: 564), one should add the information about elements of the architectural decoration of *Tropeum Trajani* by Adamklisi, found in modern time in Southern Dobrudja (Florescu, Bobtscheff 1965).

eastern ones, are completely new constructions *a fundamentis*, due to which a large fortified annex was added to the already existing camp from the north. However, this construction took place not during the time of the First Tetrarchy, as is claimed, but after 325/326 AD according to really reliable stratigraphic evidence[12]. It is clear from the above-said that the Late Roman and Early Byzantine *Transmarisca* has nothing to do with the *praesidium* mentioned in the inscription from the main town fountain of Tutrakan from the late-1820s. To date, it is impossible to establish where this praesidium was located and how it looked like.

In 1887 Grigore Tocilescu published a fragment of a marble slab with a partially preserved inscription from the time of the First Tetrarchy, which was found „*in den Ruinen eines römischen Lagers am Ufer der Donau, in der Nähe des Dorfes Seimeni mari*" (Točilescu 1887: 29, no. 21). When the inscription was republished in 1976, it was noted that the 0,07 m thick slab is a part of a monumental building inscription, which must have been embedded over a fortress gate (Popescu 1976, no. 205). Despite the difference in material and size, the monument is now generally considered to belong to the discussed group of Tetrarchic building inscriptions, albeit with an element of some uncertainty. It was found in the *La cetate* locality, some 0,5 km south of Seimenii mari. An extensive settlement from the Late Iron Age, Roman period, Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages is registered here (Russu et al. 1969: 65). At the end of the 19th century Pamfil Polonic mapped a rampart with a ditch 2 km long, which surrounded the Danube terrace with the settlement remains from the north and east (Opriș 2019: 274-275, 283). The dating of the rampart has not been archaeologically established, but it is assumed to belong to the time of the First Bulgarian Tsardom (Шкорпил 1940: 530-531; Торбатов 2002: 101-102). The same researcher brings stories from local residents about the existence in the past in the western part of the terrace of a square fortress measuring about 80 × 80 m, with walls 2 m thick, built of stones and mortar. However, what he saw and mapped at the site significantly differs from the information received from the locals. The fortification remains registered by him are part of a large tower measuring some 20 × 20 m, the western half of which had already been completely destroyed by the erosion of the coastline (Russu et al. 1969: 65; Scorpan 1980: 7; Zahariade, Gudea 1997: 78-79; Opriș 2019: 275-276; Opriș, Ţentea, Călina 2020: 15). This information was confirmed during the field surveys in the 1920s, with the important explanation that the tower is not from the Roman period, but from a later time, and that the construction technique used reveals great similarity with the fortress walls of *Capidava* (Florescu 1924: 88; Florescu, Florescu, Diaconu 1958: 25). All that gives reason to confidently date it to the Late Roman period, while its plan and dimensions unambiguously define it as a *burgus*. Given the archaeological context in the *La cetate* locality near Seimenii mari, the building inscription from the time of the First Tetrarchy discovered here should be put in connection with the

[12] A thorough discussion on this topic, see in Torbatov 2025.

construction of exactly this *burgus*, which must be with no doubt the *praesidium* mentioned in the text.

In 1936 another inscription of the kind became known (Russu 1933-1935: 210-212, no. 1). It was kept in the private collection of Pericle Papahagi, the then headmaster of the boys' high school in Silistra. There is no information about the exact provenance of the specimens in his collection, but it is believed that they have been found either in the town, or in its close vicinity (Russu 1933-1935: 210). Only a fragment of the inscription is preserved. It had been engraved on a limestone block 0,35 m thick, whose original length is estimated at about 2,10 m. The text was restored by Ion. I. Russu based on the Tutrakan inscription, but his assumption that the name of *Durostorum* stood before the closing formula *praesidium constituerunt* is rejected by the subsequent researchers, because the *praesidia* in all the inscriptions of this group are anonymous.

Durostorum came into being as an important military centre probably already in the Flavian period. After the end of the Dacian Wars of Emperor Trajan (98-117), about 106 AD, *legio XI Claudia* was relocated and remained here until the end of Late Antiquity (Иванов, Аманасов, Доневски 2006: 62, 114-115; Trumm 2008: 19; Matei-Popescu 2010: 134). The legionary fortress from the Principate is precisely localized and partially studied through archaeological excavations. It was built of stone in the early-2nd century and continued to function without interruption until the end of the 6th century. Later repairs and reconstructions have been recorded along the fortress walls, some of which are attributed to the time after the mid-3rd century, and others to the 5th-6th century. Among them is the thickening of the fortress wall and the complete reconstruction of the southwestern corner of the camp, expressed in the erection initially of a smaller, and later – of a large rectangular tower with internal pylons, both of which protrude in front of the fortress wall. There is evidence of additional external towers being added along the western and southern fortress walls (Доневски 1988: 84-91; Donevski 1990: 931-933; Доневски 1995: 259-267; Donevski 2004; Donevski 2009: 105-106).

Despite the constant care for the legionary fortress, two other fortification structures appeared in *Durostorum* during the Late Roman period. One of them is considered a city wall, and the other – a fortress with a pronounced military function, which is why it is defined as a *castellum*.

The detected sections of the city wall are generally dated to the end of the 3rd – the beginning of the 4th century, but without firm stratigraphic and chronological references and only on the basis of ceramic finds from the surrounding area. Of paramount importance is however the ascertainment that sherds of Late Roman light-coloured sandy pottery, characteristic exactly of that time, were found "under the foundations" of the fortress wall. The only conclusion to be drawn from this is that the end of the 3rd – the beginning of the 4th century marks a mere *terminus post quem* for the time of construction (Atanasov, Mihaylov 2018: 84-93; Atanasov, Gancheva 2018: 252-253; Аманасов, Михайлов 2019: 57-73).

The so-called *castellum* was built on the Danube bank, 700-800 m northwest of the legionary fortress. Only two sections of its north and a small stretch of the south fortress wall have been revealed until now. Nevertheless, it is assumed that the fort must have had a rectangular plan, with area hypothetically estimated at 3,5 to 7 ha (Atanasov, Mihaylov 2018: 94-95; Atanasov, Gancheva 2018: 253-255; Аманасов, Михайлов 2019: 74-76; Аманасов, Михайлов 2023: 118). In the 6th century a new, significantly larger Early Byzantine fortress was erected on its leveled remains (Аманасов 2013а; Аманасов 2013б; Atanasov 2015: 496-526). There is no stratigraphic documentation from the excavations carried out in this area in the late-1960s and early-1970s. Due to the fact that the wall of the earlier fortification overlapped walls from the 2nd-3rd century, its construction was hesitantly placed in the first publication "at the earliest in the 3rd or 4th century" (Ангелова 1973: 89). Subsequently, in view of the historical information about Diocletian's passage through *Durostorum* in 294 and 303 AD, and not without the influence of the Tetrarchic building inscription from the collection of Pericle Papahagi, a dating "at the very end of the 3rd – beginning of the 4th c." has been imposed in the literature (Angelova, Buchvarov 2007: 68). It is adopted in the most recent publications on the same issue as well, although the evasive phrase that this happened "under Diocletian and at the opening of the reign of Constantine I" sneaks into some of the texts (Atanasov, Mihaylov 2018: 101). An interesting new hypothesis was launched a few years ago, according to which the coming into being of the Danube *castellum* in *Durostorum* might be related to the deployment here in the 4th century of one more military unit – *milites IIII Constantiani* (Atanasov, Mihaylov 2018: 102-104; Atanasov, Gancheva 2018: 255-260; Аманасов, Михайлов 2019: 87-88). If so, the erection of the *castellum* should be attributed to not earlier than the reign of Emperor Constantius II (337-361). Unfortunately, the circulation pool from the presumable territory of the fortification cannot be used as an argument in support of either the traditional or the new dating, since all the coins are devoid of adequate archaeological context (Ганчева 2015: 445-459; Atanasov, Gancheva 2018: 257-260). The question about the nature and chronology, and respectively – of the possible identity of the Late Roman fortification on the Danube bank in *Durostorum* with the *presidium* in the inscription from Pericle Papahagi's collection, cannot be resolved at the present state of research.

During earthworks in 1972 another inscription with similar content was found in the Donje Butorke locality, about 1 km northwest of Kladovo (AE 1979, 0519). During the excavations that followed a 6th-century *quadriburgium* was studied here, with remains of an earlier *burgus* in the middle of it (Цермановић-Кузмановић 1977-1978: 127-134; Petrović 1977: 263-264; Kondić 1984: 144, 146-147). The *burgus* is approximately square in plan, with dimensions of 19 × 18,5 m and four L-shaped pillars in the interior. The excavator and almost all the subsequent re-

searchers identify this *burgus* with the *praesidium* mentioned in the inscription[13]. The inscription itself was inscribed on a limestone slab with a length of 1,84 m, 0,91 m high and 0,28 m thick. The text reproduces an abbreviated version of the official form. The names of Diocletian's co-Augustus – Maximian, were later erased from the second line of the inscription due to the *damnatio memoriae* imposed on him by Constantine I (306-337) in 311 AD.

In 1997 two new fragments were published from one and the same Tetrarchic inscription, very similar by content to those from Tutrakan and the vicinity of Ruse. The fragments were found during regular archaeological excavations in *Halmyris* in 1986 and 1987, in two different places, in layers from the 6th century. They originate from a marble slab 0,08 m thick (Zahariade 1997: 228-236; Zahariade, Alexandrescu 2011: 21-24, no. 1). During the excavations in 2003 and 2009 two more small fragments of marble slabs with remains of similar inscriptions were found in *Halmyris*. The first of them was a *spolium* in the construction of a barracks No. 1 from the 6th century, located southwest of the north gate (Zahariade 2009a: 107-108, no. 1; Zahariade, Alexandrescu 2011: 25-26, no. 2), and the second one was found in the area of the ancient port, which had been located on the old Danube bank northeast of the fortress (Zahariade, Alexandrescu 2011: 26-27, no. 3). It is interesting to note that the line above the preserved text in the second fragment was secondarily chiseled, similar to the monument from Donje Butorke. The four fragments are believed to originate from three different inscriptions with almost the same content, set above each gate (Zahariade, Karavas 2015: 581). When the first two fragments were published in 1997, it was suggested that they are parts of a monumental foundation inscription placed above the western gate of the fortress, marking "the finishing of the building work in the Halmyris fortress" (Zahariade 1997: 234). The other two inscriptions are believed to have similarly decorated the northern and eastern gates of *Halmyris* respectively, contributing to the endorsement of the imperial propaganda (Zahariade 2007: 294, 300; Zahariade 2009b: 83; Zahariade, Alexandrescu 2011: 23).

At first glance the things seem quite clear, but it is explicitly stated in volume 1 of the monographic series "Halmyris", which was published in 2003 and contains a detailed chapter on the stratigraphy of the site, that the Late Roman fortress above the leveled remains of the Early Roman military camp was built *a fundamentis* in the period between 270/275 and possibly 295 AD, when it may have suffered during an enemy attack. This corresponds to the registered "level 5". The Tetrarchic inscriptions are associated with restoration work carried out in the following "level 6". The latter is considered an organic continuation of the previous one and the time of maximum flourishing in the history of the fortress, when, in addition to partial repairs to the wall and the rearrangement of the streets, a number of new buildings

[13] In my knowledge, M. Vasić is the only one, who claims that the *burgus* dates back to the time of Valentinian I (364-375) (Vasić 2003: 18), while M. Zahariade and N. Gudea consider both fortifications Tetrarchic (Zahariade 2014-2015: 127; Gudea, Zahariade 2016: 13, 31).

were erected inside the fortified area. However, reliable stratigraphic data firmly places the dating of this level between 308-309 and 341-348 AD, while its possible beginning after 297-298 AD is considered only an unproven possibility (Suceveanu et al. 2003: 33-35, 112). If the discussed Tetrarchic inscriptions are indeed of local provenance, and not mere *spolia*, a huge number of which are registered in the fortifications and the internal buildings of *Halmyris*, then the phrase *praesidium constituerunt* in this particular case obviously has a purely propagandistic sense, aiming to give greater weight to the work actually done.

During restoration work in 2005 on the church in the village of Vetren (Silistra region) a part of a marble slab with preserved length of 1,10 m, width of 0,76 m and thickness of 0,23 m was found, which served as a step in the church. This is the lower half of a tombstone with a partially preserved Latin inscription from the 2nd-3rd century. Subsequently, the slab was reused to carve on its reverse side another inscription, orientated along the longitudinal axis. According to what is preserved from the text, it certainly belongs to the discussed group of inscriptions (Герасимова 2009). When and where from the fragment of the slab was brought to the village church is unknown, but it must have happened already during its construction some 200 years ago.

The presented overview makes it clear that none of the commented Tetrarchic building inscriptions can be related to a large fortification on the Lower Danube *limes*, for which there is explicit archaeological data that it had been built *a fundamentis* precisely at that time. On the contrary, for at least three of the *praesidia* mentioned in the inscriptions there is sufficiently reliable evidence that they were in fact large watchtowers of the *burgus* type. Such *burgi* with the same dating have been registered at a number of other places along the Danube in the modern territory of Serbia[14] and Bulgaria[15]. It is also noteworthy that the *praesidia* in the inscriptions are anonymous, which would hardly be possible in case that the newly built fortifications were of significant size, let alone complete reconstructions of large military bases functioning and rather well known ever since the Early Principate.

In my opinion, the inscriptions about the *praesidia* of the first Tetrarchs on the Danube River reflect a campaign of palliative measures aimed at temporary stabilizing of the control on the Empire's Danubian frontier on the eve of the probably already planned, but still pending comprehensive reorganization of the *limes* according to the newly introduced Late Roman military standards. However, the available evidence suggests that the implementation of the bulk of the fortification component of this reorganization was carried out later, during the reigns of Licinius (308-324) and Constantine I (Торбатов 2002: 412-421).

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[14] Vasić, Kondić 1986: 550-555; Jęczmienowski 2012: 46-51; Jęczmienowski 2017: 103, 106; Kopaћ 2018: 33-55, 147-159.

[15] Batin (Stančev 1999; Dragoev 2012); Oryahovo (Димитрова 1985: 32, no. 141); Kozloduy (Торбатов: под печат).

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ГОДИШНИК НА СОФИЙСКИЯ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“
ЦЕНТЪР ЗА СЛАВЯНО-ВИЗАНТИЙСКИ ПРОУЧВАНИЯ „ИВАН ДУЙЧЕВ“
Том 104 (23)

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CENTRE DE RECHERCHES SLAVO-BYZANTINES "IVAN DUJČEV"
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ALTINUM/ALTINA: ASPECTS OF FORTIFICATION ON THE DANUBE *LIMES*

CONSTANTIN ȘOVA

Abstract: В множество специализирани изследвания през годините, римският *кастел* (селище) Altinum/Altina, разположен в източния край на дунавския *лимес*, е поставен в югозападната част на Добруджа, в местността Олтина (окръг Констанца). Една от причините за това е много близкото сходство между двата топонима. Античната крепост е спомената в *Notitia Dignitatum* като пост на военния флот на *Moesia Secunda* ('milites nauclarii Altinenses'). Прокопий Кесарийски (*De aedificiis*, средата на VI в.) включва Altina в списъка с многото градове и крепости, възстановени в този сектор на *лимеса* при управлението на император Юстиниан I (527-565). Важен фактор за локализирането на античното селище Oltina е регистрирането в края на XIX в. от военния топограф инж. Pamfil Polonic на *castellum* върху хълм на североизток от селото. Укреплението, разположено на 2,5 км северно от Олтина, има правоъгълна форма със заоблени североизточни и югоизточни ъгли, адаптирани към релефа на терена. Размерите на кастела са 190 x 80 м. Отбранителните елементи включват земен вал с височина 2,5 м, пред който е имало ров с дълбочина 2 м.

Keywords: *castellum*, Roman period, *limes*, Oltina, Dobruja

Introduction

Located in the southwestern part of the Istro-Pontic territory, the commune of Oltina (Constanța County, Romania) is known to the historical and archaeological community due to the significant number of sites it contains, with 81 points mapped so far. In the last half a century, several of these have benefited from archaeological research of greater or lesser extent, the data obtained contributing to the reconstruction of the history of the Lower Danube for: 1) pre-Roman period – two necropolises from the 5th–4th centuries BC at Satu Nou (Irimia, Conovici, Ganciu 2011: 5); the fortified settlement at Satu Nou-"Valea lui Voicu", with two phases of existence, the first from the 3rd century BC and the second from the 1st century BC until the first decades of the 1st century AD (Irimia, Conovici 1989: 115-154;

Irimia, Conovici 1990: 81-96; Conovici, Ganciu, Irimia 2004: 290-292; Șova 2015: 135); the settlement at Satu Nou-"Vadu Vacilor", which developed at the end of the 3rd century and in the 2nd century BC (Conovici, Ganciu, Irimia 2004: 290-292; Irimia, Ganciu, Dobrinescu 2006: 311-314; Irimia 2009: 71-115; Irimia 2010: 257-268; Irimia, Conovici, Ganciu 2011: 158-162); 2) Roman period – the fortress known under the designation Sucidava-Izvoarele/Calé-Gherghi and the immediate surrounding area, comprising occupations ranging from the Latène period to the Ottoman era, which stands out especially through finds dated to the 4th–6th centuries AD, located at the territorial limit of Satu Nou, towards the village of Izvoarele (Polonic 1935: 19; Culică 1965: 419-423; Vulpe 1972: 218; Rădulescu, Cliante 1986: 127-158; Irimia, Conovici 1990: 95; Diaconu 1996: 280; Irimia, Conovici, Ganciu 2011: 216, fig. 2, point 5); three pottery kilns, mainly for building materials and possibly also for vessels, which operated in the 5th–6th centuries AD, at Oltina (Irimia 1968: 379-408); 3) medieval period – three necropolises and a settlement from the 8th–10th centuries at Satu Nou (Mitrea 1949: 146-151; Mitrea, Anghelescu 1959: 535-542; Mitrea 1959: 579-592; Mitrea 1961: 551-560; Mitrea 1962: 643-647; Barnea, Ștefănescu 1971: 38-43; Fiedler 1992: 420-422; Paraschiv-Talmațchi, Șova 2023: 306-307); the fortified settlement at Oltina-"Capul dealului", late 8th century – late 11th century (Polonic 1935: 19; Chiriac, Custurea 2002: 222; Chiriac et al. 2003: 220; Custurea et al. 2010: 131; Custurea, Talmațchi, Șova 2011: 87; Talmațchi, Custurea, Șova 2015: 108; Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2016: 27-41; Paraschiv-Talmațchi, Șova 2018: 163-176; Paraschiv-Talmațchi, Șova 2019: 413-431; Șova 2024: 123-142), etc.

Geographical framework

The commune of Oltina is located in an area that is part of the subdivision of the Southern Dobruja Plateau, formed of Cretaceous and Sarmatian-aged limestones. Within this subdivision, the Oltina Plateau stands out for its elevated relief, arranged in two steps (with altitudes ranging between 100-140 m and 150-200 m respectively), featuring deep valleys with canyon-like aspects, where forests and silvosteppe groves grow on the slopes (Rădulescu et al. 1980: 7-10). At Oltina, the right bank of the Danube appears as a wide, hilly valley overlooking Lake Oltina. Higher towards the northeast, descending in steps towards the southwest and almost open towards the Danube, it has in its upper part and in the terrace areas lands suitable for agriculture, viticulture, and fruit growing, as well as extensive pastures, with carbonatic chernozems and chestnut soils occurring over large surfaces (Badea, Gâștescu, Velcea 1983: 642-643). The slopes facing the Danube are covered with forests or shrubs, the riverbanks have favored the development of the floodplain, and reed patches are found along the lakeshore.

These facilities offered by the landscape have, over time, been among the factors that made the area attractive for habitation. The high degree of occupation is owed

mainly to its proximity to the Danube, whose valley represented an attraction for the establishment of settlements due to the favorable conditions it offered. On the elevated zones overlooking it, delimited by deep valleys, numerous naturally protected spaces or ones easily enclosed with defensive systems can be found, which ensured communities safety and durability.

Altina/Altinium – a fortification of the Danubian *limes*

In numerous specialized works, the Roman *castellum* (settlement) of Altinum/Altina, mentioned in ancient sources among the fortifications at the eastern end of the Danubian *limes*, has often been located in southwestern Dobruja, at Oltina (Constanța County) (*Fig. 1.1*) (Vulpe 1938: 162-165; Irimia 1968: 406; Aricescu 1972: 218-220; Aricescu 1977: 138; Zahariade 1988: 119; Barnea 1994: 60; Popescu 1996: 195-196; Zahariade, Gudea 1997: 78, no. 34; Țentea et al. 2019: 15-16; Opriș, Matei-Popescu, Țentea 2024: 174-177; for a slightly different opinion, but still on the territory of the commune, see Torbatov 2000: 70-71), one of the factors being the very close similarity between the contemporary toponym and the ancient one.

The ancient fortification of Altinum is mentioned in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, an important historical-geographical source compiled gradually and probably completed in the first quarter of the 5th century (Barnea 2000: 199), as a station of the military fleet from Moesia Secunda ('milites nauclarii Altinenses'), which at that time defended the Danubian frontier (Zahariade 1988: 119; Opriș, Matei-Popescu, Țentea 2024: 176).

In the 6th century, Procopius of Caesarea, in his *De aedificiis*, lists Altina among the numerous towns and fortresses rebuilt in this sector of the limes during the reign of Emperor Justinian (527-565), noting a territorial reorganization that had taken place in the meantime, now placing the fortress in the province of Scythia (Irimia 1968: 407; Țentea et al. 2019: 15; Opriș, Matei-Popescu, Țentea 2024: 176).

Probably the most important factor that contributed to placing the ancient settlement at Oltina was the recording made at the end of the 19th century by the military topographic engineer Pamfil Polonic, of a castellum on the hill located to the northeast of the village (*Fig. 1.2*). According to his notes from 1898, it was located 2.5 km north of the settlement, on the western slope of the "Măciuca" hill (today Macuca). The fortification had a rectangular shape, with the northeast and northwest corners rounded and adapted to the undulation of the terrain. The eastern side measured 190 m and was protected by an earth rampart 2.5 m high and a ditch 2 m deep (Polonic 1935: 19; Zahariade 1988: 119). The southern side was 80 m long and was protected by a rampart that preserved a height of less than 1 m, while the defensive ditch extended down the slope, entering a natural small valley. The western side was 180 m long and, due to deposits brought by rainwater, the rampart and ditch were barely visible. The northern side was equal in length to the southern

side. "Inside the *castellum* traces of house walls and Roman bricks can be seen; likewise, around the fortress there are traces of buildings, showing us that alongside the fortress there was also a small ancient town" (*Fig. 2*) (Polonic 1898: 32).

A few discoveries can be added to the ancient written sources and the modern records mentioned above, which may, to some extent, support the localization of an ancient fortification at Oltina. The earliest is a military diploma granted in 99 AD to a former soldier of Cohors II Gallorum (whose prefect was Visulanius Crescens), found in the vineyards of the inhabitant Batul and now kept at the Museum of Antiquities (the "Vasile Pârvan" Institute of Archaeology in Bucharest) (Polonic 1898: 32; Barnea 1994: 60; Țentea et al. 2019: 15; Opriș, Matei-Popescu, Țentea 2024: 174).

The discovery of the military diploma at Oltina makes it likely that the *castellum* of Altinum was located here and that it served as the headquarters of that Roman infantry unit during a certain time span (Aricescu 1977: 64; Suceveanu 2010: 330). The beneficiary of the diploma found at Oltina was an infantryman, M. Antonius Rufus, originally from Abrittus (Aricescu 1977: 66).

Another archaeological discovery, which preserves the name Altina, was made at the site of Dinogetia (Garvăn, Tulcea County), located in the north-west of the Istro-Pontic territory. During the excavations in the summer of 1966, in an area that preserved the upper paving of the central nave of the basilica in the south-western part of the fortress, a brick was found, measuring 0.355 m in length and 0.065 m in thickness, on the edge of which there was a stamp preserved almost in its entirety (*Fig. 3.1*). Inside the simple relief cartouche, the following stamp was rendered in relief letters:

+ PIUS INPE[ra]TOR ANASTASIUS +. In smaller, more widely spaced relief letters, the inscription AΛTINA was repeated above and below the cartouche, in which, under the influence of the Greek alphabet, the letter L was replaced by Λ. It is also noteworthy that in the word imperator, the letter M was replaced by N, as has been observed on other fragmentary bricks found at Dinogetia, in contrast to the stamps present on bricks found at Histria, where the word is rendered with M alongside the name of Emperor Anastasius (491-518) (Barnea 1967: 355-356; Irimia 1968: 406-407; Popescu 1996: 260-262). These construction materials date from the end of the 5th century and the beginning of the 6th century. Starting from the similarity in size and fabric between some of the bricks found at Dinogetia and bricks discovered at Oltina, in the context of research on kilns for firing pottery dated to the 5th–6th centuries, a connection was made between the two sites (Barnea 1967: 356; Irimia 1968: 407).

To elaborate, in 1964, during clay excavation for the village brickyard at Oltina, a pottery kiln was discovered on the northeastern edge of the locality (*Fig. 3.2*). It was investigated in 1967 (*Fig. 4*), along with two other similar newly identified kilns, located 40 m northwest and 30 m south of the 1964 kiln. On this occasion, the archaeologist learned about other similar discoveries that had been destroyed over

time: one kiln located about 70 m southwest of Kiln II, destroyed when the road to the pier was built; one kiln about 100 m southeast of Kiln II, destroyed by the landowner, who reused its bricks; another kiln located approximately 20 m east of Kiln II; and two other ancient kilns mentioned in 1886 (Irimia 1968: 379, 404-405). Unfortunately, neither the total number of installations or their exact chronological framework is known, but the presence of good-quality clay made the area suitable for workshops and facilities in which construction materials, possibly also pottery, were produced from antiquity through the modern period.

In the three large ancient kilns, located relatively close to the place where Pamfil Polonic recorded the *castellum*, it is presumed that bricks and adobe molded in forms, tiles, and possibly also vessels were fired. The strength of the platforms allowed for the firing of a considerable quantity of materials without collapsing. In fact, by comparing them with contemporary kilns still in use at the time of the archaeological investigation, but applying the dimensions of ancient construction materials, it was estimated that Kiln I could fire about 1,600 bricks in a single batch. Considering the number of ancient kilns grouped within a relatively small area, as well as the possibility of their simultaneous operation, a high output can be assumed over a relatively short period of time (Irimia 1968: 405-406).

As mentioned above, based on certain shared characteristics, it has been considered possible that the stamped bricks discovered at Dinogetia were produced in the ceramic-firing kilns at Oltina, then transported downstream by water to the fortification in northwestern Dobruja (Irimia 1968: 407; Popescu 1996: 260). Another hypothesis takes into account the relocation to Dinogetia of a detachment from the military unit stationed at Oltina, bringing its own molds, where it manufactured similar bricks (Barnea 1967: 356). In this context, it should not be overlooked that the investigation of the ceramic-firing kilns at Oltina revealed that bricks were produced there, but during the excavation and afterward, not a single stamped brick was found. However, the settlement near the kilns, with abundant ceramic material visible on the ground surface, has not been archaeologically investigated and could, in the future, provide evidence in this regard.

The situation in the field

Having carried out a large part of our archaeological research activity at Oltina, over the past decade we have attempted to identify in the field the *castellum* recorded by engineer Pamfil Polonic in 1898. To this end, we resorted to non-intrusive research, such as field surveys and aerial photography. Over the course of several years, several visits in different seasons were made to the slope of the hill where the *castellum* was mentioned, located east of Lake Oltina. However, our attempts were not successful. The terracing of the land, carried out in the second half of the last century for the planting of vineyards, followed by agricultural work in recent

decades, has made it difficult to identify and locate the fortification that was visible more than a century ago.

In an aerial photograph taken in 2017, a rectangular outline can be seen, with a slightly lighter shade than the background, which could be considered the "imprint" of the ancient fortification (*Fig. 3.2*). However, during the field trip to the marked area, only a few early medieval fragments were collected from the surface. Human interventions have caused changes to the situation that existed almost a hundred years ago; today, the traces of the defensive system (earth rampart and ditch) and of the Roman habitation are no longer visible. After several visits to the same area, the conclusion was that the "castellum" recorded by Grigore Tocilescu and Pamfil Polonic is not located here.

During the field investigations, at the foot of the hill where the *castellum* was recorded, relatively nearby and along the route of some ancient roads, two large civilian settlements were identified, containing abundant Roman-period material that indicates significant habitation of the area during this era. One is located in the northeastern part of the village of Oltina, behind the "Agroselect" grain collection center/mill (*Fig. 5.1*). The site, covering an area of about 9 hectares, contains traces of habitation from the Roman period and the Early Middle Ages (9^{th}–10^{th} centuries). In its northern part are located the ceramic firing kilns mentioned above (Irimia 1968), while to their east and southeast lie the remains of Roman habitation (Paraschiv-Talmațchi, Șova 2023: 301). From the surface of the settlement, ceramic fragments dating to the 5^{th}–6^{th} centuries were collected, similar to those found in the kilns and in their vicinity.

The second is located at the eastern edge of the village of Oltina, on both sides of the road to the village of Viile, at the point known as "La cișmea" (*Fig. 5.2*). From its surface, which appears to exceed 10 hectares, late Roman ceramic fragments were collected, and in the eroded banks the remains of several features were observed, for example, the section of a dwelling with a floor and baked earth. The distance between the two settlements is about 1 km.

This latter settlement likely indicates the existence of a route coming from the south, from the valley of the Suha River, in the direction of Odessus (Teodor 2010). The first seems to be connected to river trade as well as to the production of construction materials. Near one of them, the fortification recorded by P. Polonic probably once stood. The absence of Roman materials from the area marked by P. Polonic and the lack of any defensive system have raised questions and led us to search for Altinum/Altina in other areas of the hill located to the east of the present-day village.

Taking into account the need to monitor traffic on the Danube, two areas were checked toward the end facing the river. One, located about 850 m north of the supposed position marked by P. Polonic, yielded only a few Early Medieval fragments, and the other, the high promontory on the riverbank, a position with good visibility, were, also produced no conclusive results.

About 4.3 km to the west in a straight line (6 km by the access road) from the area where the *castellum* was marked, a "large Roman stone fortress", described as "after the fortresses of Hinog (Axiopolis) and Igliţa (Troesmis), the largest and most beautiful fortress on the Danube bank" (Polonic *Manuscript*: 33-35), and also as "one of the best-preserved Roman stone fortresses," was likewise recorded by the engineer P. Polonic. At the time the notes were made, its defensive system consisted of an earth rampart, a wall 4 m thick (visible at the northwest corner), and a ditch (Polonic 1935: 19). It was marked on a hill flanked to the north by the waters of the Danube and to the south by Lake Oltina, lying opposite the hill where the *castellum* had been marked, and known in local toponymy as "Capul dealului".

The Oltina "Capul dealului" site began to be systematically investigated in 2001 (*Fig. 6.1*), with the notes of P. Polonic and the fortuitous discoveries being decisive for initiating its exploration (Paraschiv-Talmaţchi, Şova 2019: 414-415). Over the two decades of archaeological research, it was found that in the century between P. Polonic's notes and our investigations, significant changes had occurred in the state of the terrain. Today, the earth rampart can still be observed only on the western side of the site (where it is well preserved in the section facing Lake Oltina) and in the southwest corner, while elsewhere it can rather only be inferred. The defensive ditch is filled in, and only a slight lowering of the ground immediately west of the earth rampart betrays its existence. The only traces of the wall mentioned by P. Polonic are the occasional worked stone blocks, found rarely in dwellings and pits or fallen among the trees on the slopes of the hill. Human interventions (dismantling and agricultural exploitation up to the steep edges) have meant that so far, attempts to identify the wall's location (its footprint) have yielded no results, remaining an objective to be pursued.

From the very beginning of the research, the preserved portion of the defensive system was targeted. A new section was opened in 2018, where investigations are still underway. Until the research in the area of the earth rampart is completed and a thorough analysis of the materials found in its layers is carried out, important reference points for determining the time of the construction of the defensive system are provided by radiocarbon analyses (the analyses were carried out at the "Horia Hulubei" National Institute for Nuclear Physics and Engineering, Romania, by Dr. Tiberiu Sava and Dr. Mirela Mihon, to whom we also express our thanks) on bones discovered within and in the immediate vicinity of the fortification. Thus, a sample taken from a layer located on the crest of the earth rampart, which preserves traces of a wooden obstacle, was dated to the period between 760 and 880 AD. A second sample, coming from a deepened dwelling (Cpl. 3/2018) excavated at the base of the earth rampart, within the settlement, was dated to between 860 and 980 AD, while a third sample, collected from the fill of the ditch, indicated a period between 1800 and 1940. Based on the above data, we can outline a possible sequence of events as follows: the construction of the settlement's defensive system most likely took place in the 9th century; its defensive role declined in the first half, or middle,

of the 10th century, when dwellings could be built right at its base (such as Cpl. 3/2018); and the ditch was filled in during the modern period (Paraschiv-Talmațchi, Șova 2024: 390-394).

At the Oltina "Capul dealului" site, systematic archaeological research is currently being carried out in three sectors (A, B, and C), targeting the western, eastern, and northern parts of the site. So far, over an area of approximately 700 sq m, more than 35 dwellings have been recorded, along with two complexes featuring mechanical grinding installations, two workshops for metalworking (iron and bronze), and numerous pits with various uses.

In Sector B, the relative chronology has been established, revealing that the early medieval occupation began sometime in the second half of the 8th century, over the remains of a Roman settlement (a level in the form of limited areas preserved between early medieval complexes, currently without complexes, only specific artifacts – *Fig. 6.2-6*), two complexes with Getic material, and traces from the beginning of the Bronze Age (a skeleton radiocarbon-dated to 2782-2580 BC). The early medieval occupation shows several levels, which succeeded one another until the end of the 11th century, with partial overlaps or intersections of up to five complexes being recorded. Some of these were cut by pits containing mixed materials, among which, sporadically, were also fragments from the 19th century, indicating later anthropic interventions that recall a remark made by P. Polonic concerning the dismantling of the walls and the sale of the stone to Călărași, where it was transported by the Danube (Polonic *Manuscript*: 33-35; Paraschiv-Talmațchi, Șova 2019: 413-431).

Conclusions

The existence of the Altinum/Altina fortification within the alignment of the Danubian *limes* is a fact proven by ancient written sources. It is assumed to have been either a *castellum*, in which troops were stationed to protect the border, or a fortress/town rebuilt during the reign of Emperor Justinian. Based on the very close resemblance between the contemporary toponym and the ancient one, it has often been placed in the specialized literature at Oltina, in the southwest of the Istro-Pontic territory. Here, at the end of the 19th century, the topographic engineer Pamfil Polonic, together with the archaeologist Grigore Tocilescu, recorded a *castellum* (with an earth rampart and a defensive ditch) on a hill east of Lake Oltina, and a "Roman" fortress (with an earth rampart, a 4 m thick wall, and a defensive ditch) on a hill north of Lake Oltina. For the first location, surface surveys and aerial photographs have not provided sufficient data for an exact location, as anthropic interventions have destroyed the features visible on the ground almost a hundred years ago. For the second location, Oltina "Capul dealului," the state of investigations does not currently support the existence of a Roman-period fortification with all its distinctive elements, suggesting instead only a possible Roman settlement, through

the identification of limited areas with specific materials, but not of complexes, which remain among the early medieval dwellings.

In conclusion, although it has not yet benefited from an exact identification on the ground, its mention in ancient written sources and the clues provided over time by archaeological investigations make the goal of locating the Altinum/Altina fortification, on the eastern Danubian *limes*, remain an ongoing priority.

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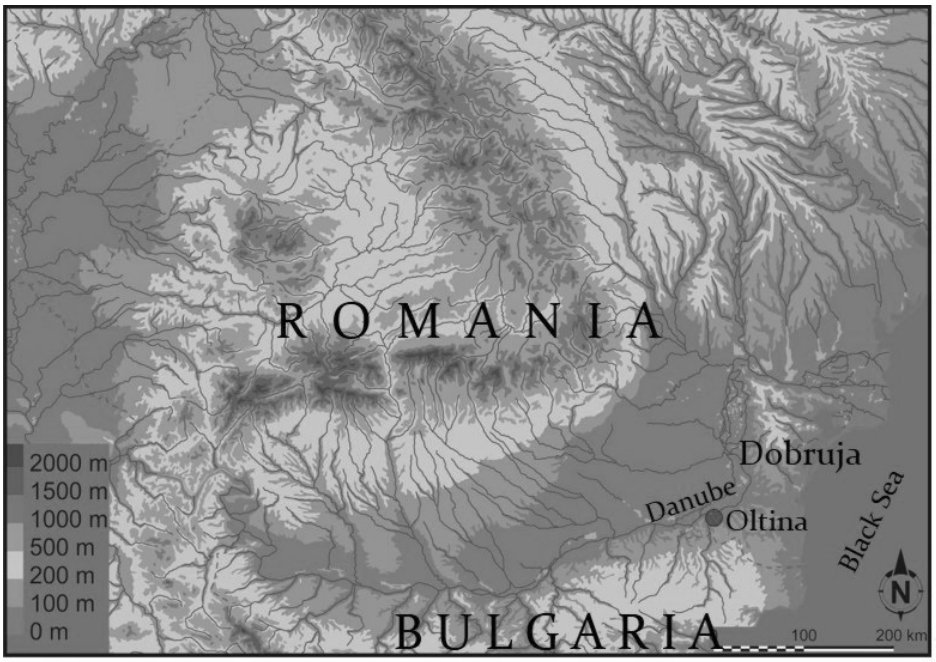
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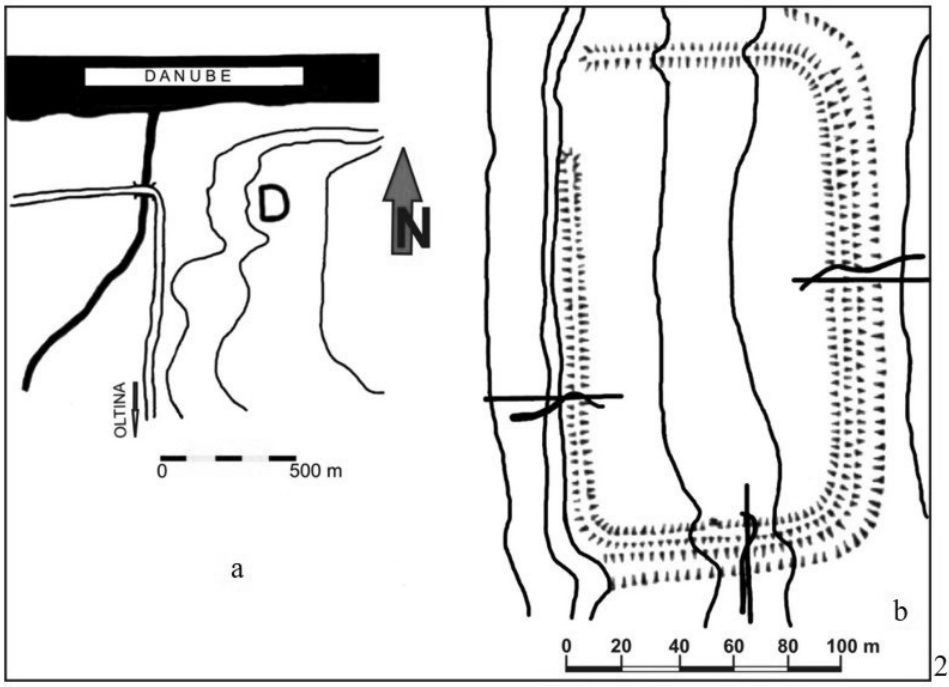


Fig. 1. The administrative localization of Oltina (Constanța County) (1); Altinum drawing P. Polonic and Gr. Tocilescu (after Zahariade 1988: 119, fig. 16) (2a. location north of the village of Oltina; 2b. castellum plan)

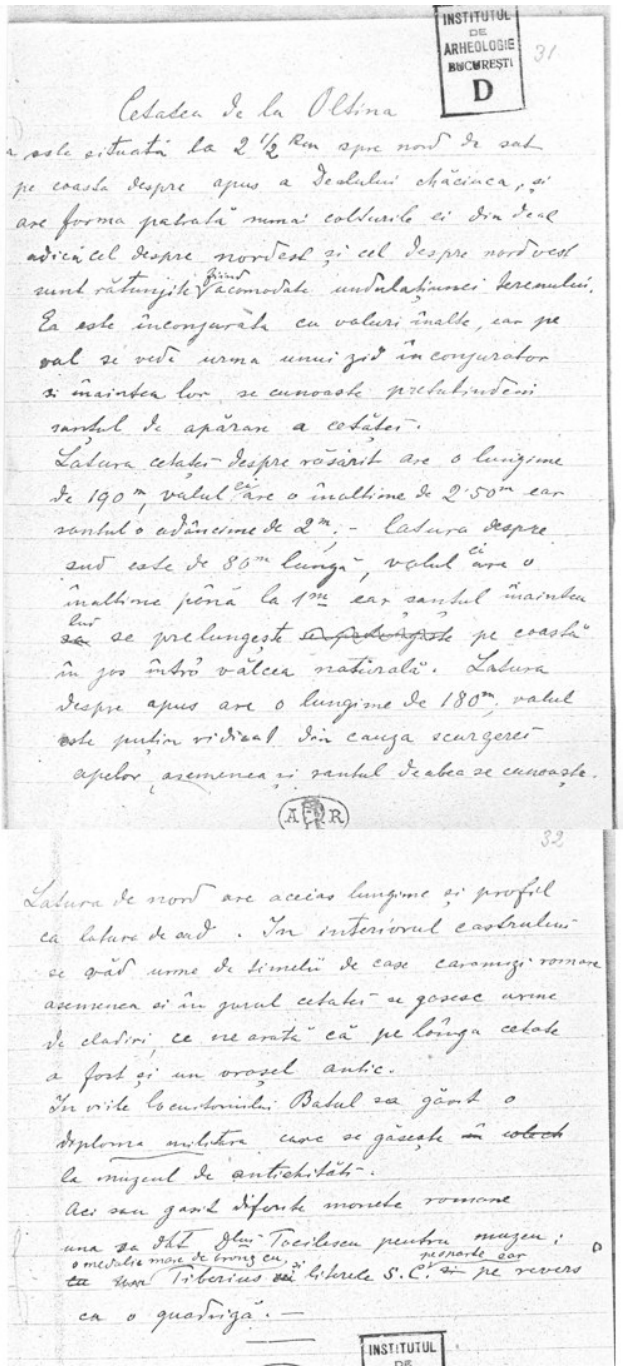
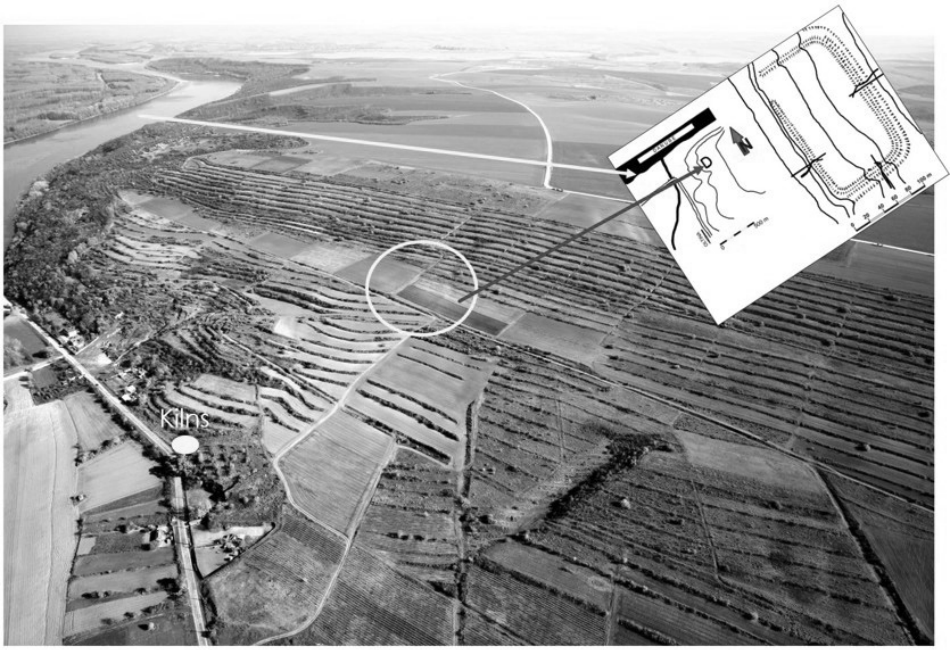


Fig. 2. Manuscript Pamfil Polonic (1898) with the description of the castellum from Oltina (the original is at the Library of the Romanian Academy)



1



2

Fig. 3. Brick with the names of Emperor Anastasius and Altina discovered at Dinogetia (after Barnea 1967: 356) (1); Aerial photograph (2017) of the hill northeast of the village of Oltina, on which I marked the place where a rectangular outline is visible and the point where the ceramic kilns were investigated (2)

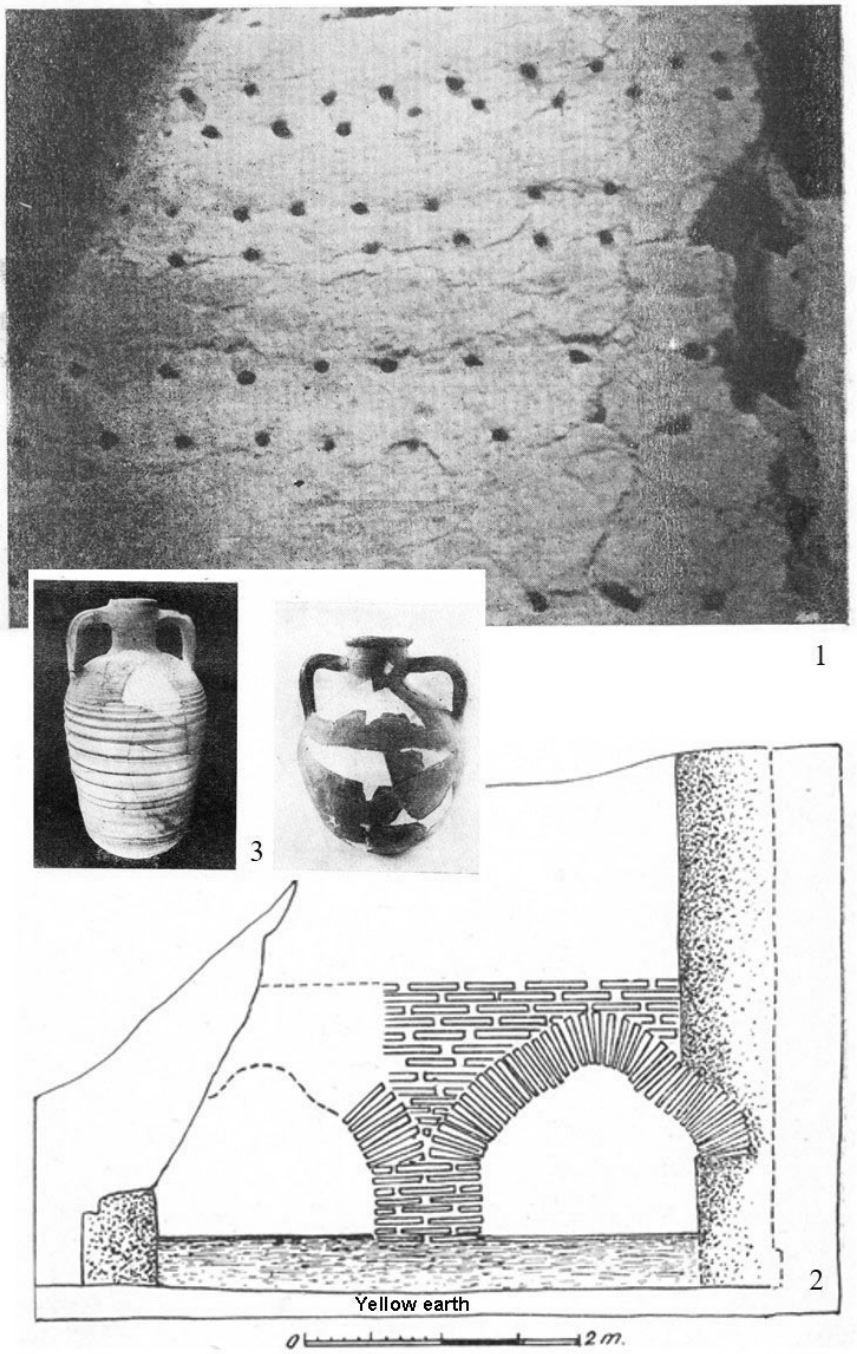


Fig. 4. Ceramic kiln I from Oltina: firing platform (1); vertical cross-section through the hearth, platform and firing chamber (2); amphorae discovered in the kiln (3) (after Irimia 1968)

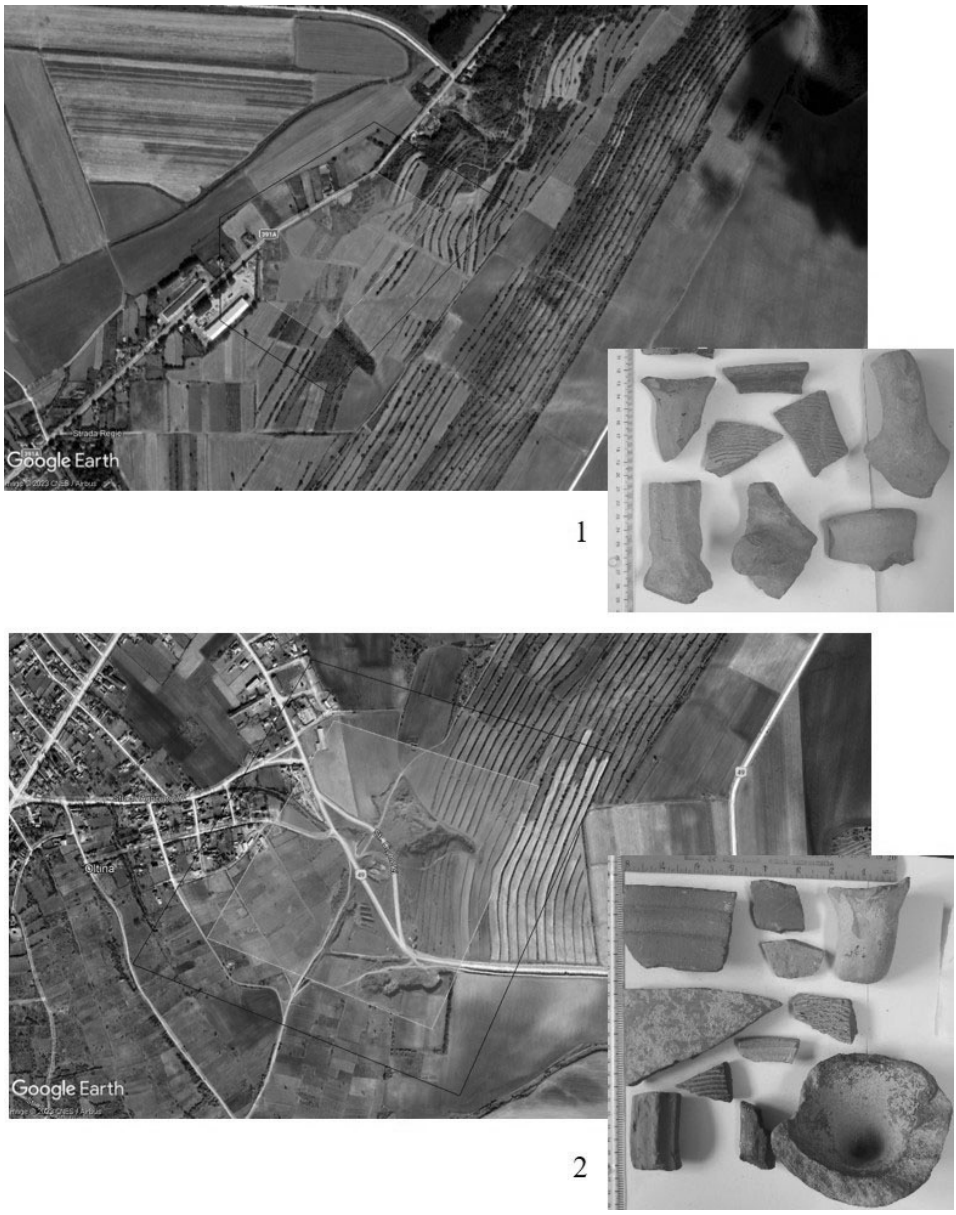


Fig. 5. Civil settlement northeast of Oltina village and ceramics collected from its surface (1); Civil settlement located at the eastern limit of Oltina village and ceramics collected from its surface (2)

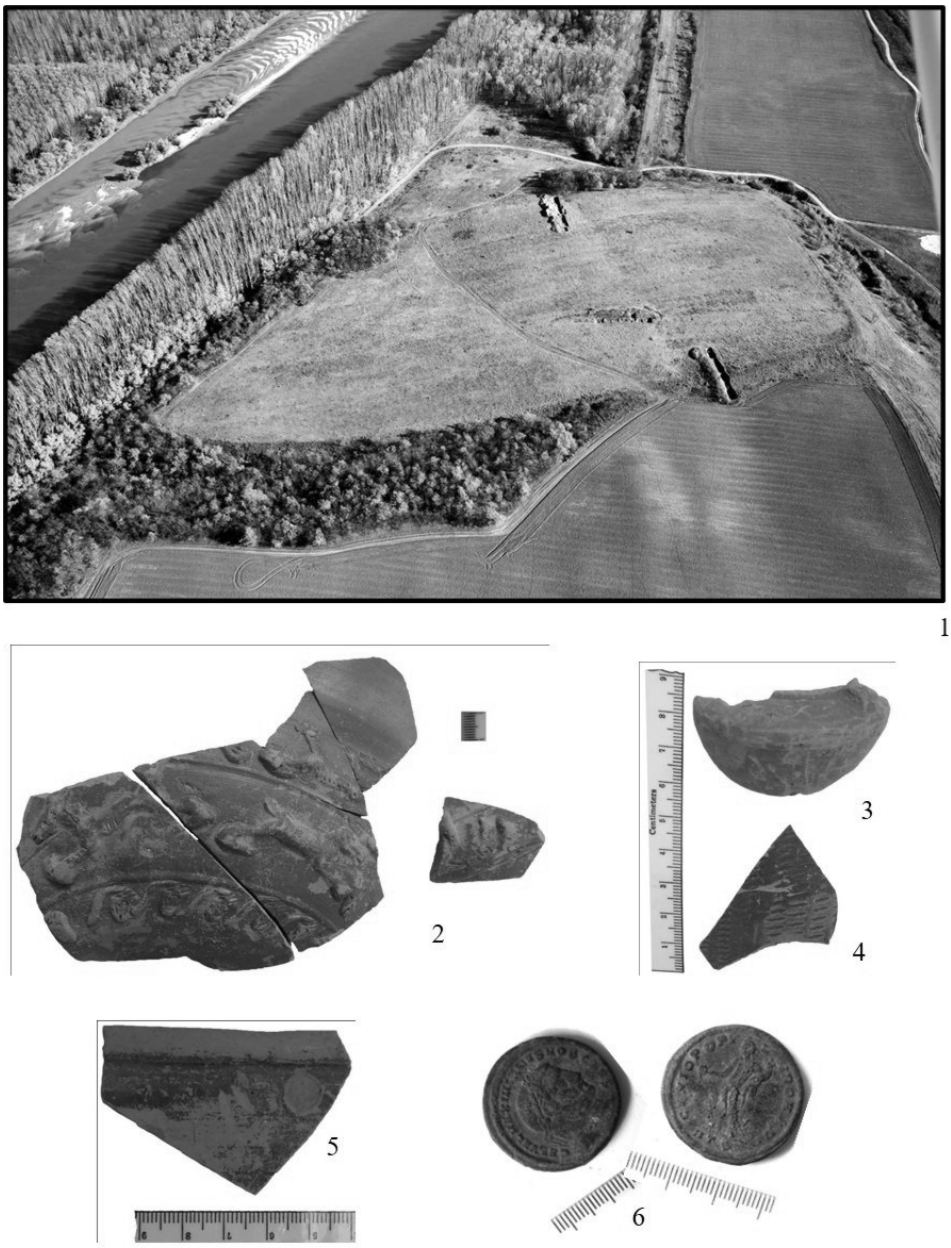


Fig. 6. Aerial photograph of the site at "Capul dealului", 2017 (1); Roman pottery and coin from Galerius Valerius Maximianus found during archaeological research (2-6)

ГОДИШНИК НА СОФИЙСКИЯ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“
ЦЕНТЪР ЗА СЛАВЯНО-ВИЗАНТИЙСКИ ПРОУЧВАНИЯ „ИВАН ДУЙЧЕВ“
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SCYTHIA AT THE END OF ANTIQUITY: THE EFFECTS OF AVAR-SLAVIC ATTACKS ON THE BORDER TERRITORY

CRISTINA PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI

Abstract: Като част от Византийската империя, Истропонтийският район (Добруджа) е обект на нападения на аварите, славяните, българите и техните съюзници. Тези драматични събития бележат последния век от Античността на Долния Дунав. Процесите се ускоряват след средата на VI век и се усложняват от необходимостта византийската армия да действа едновременно на няколко фронта и от общия икономически упадък, който засяга периферните провинции на империята през последните десетилетия на столетието. В крайна сметка те довеждат до изоставянето на границата от Византийската империя и разпадането на дунавския лимес – процес, който се развива постепенно в продължение на около половин век. Крайдунавските крепости (сред тях Аксиополис, Капидава, Карсиум, Берое, Троемсис, Диногеция, Новиодунум и Халмирис) са сред първите, засегнати от аваро-славянските нападения. Но пробивът на границата позволява достъп и към вътрешността, и към крайбрежната зона, засягайки важни градски центрове на провинцията (като (Л)Ибида, Тропеум Траяни, Истрия, Томис и Калатис). Началната фаза на контакт между славяните и аварите с Добруджа е засвидетелствана от слоевете с разрушения и опожарявания в крепостите, от нумизматичния материал от периода и от артефакти, свързани със славянската и авърска културна среда (керамика, аксесоари за облекло).

Keywords: Avars, Slavs, border territory, 6th–7th centuries AD, Dobrudja, Romania

Introduction

The series of Avar-Byzantine conflicts, with the turning point in the history of the Balkan Peninsula in the year 582, when the Avars captured Sirmium, the movements of the Slavs, with devastating effects on the provinces of the Lower Danube region, and the Kutrigur raids of the sixth and seventh decades of the 6th century were the dramatic events that marked, at the Lower Danube, the end of Antiquity. The scale and repetition of the actions of these "barbarians" and their allies led to the abandonment of the frontier by the Byzantine Empire and to the disintegration

of the Danubian limes, a process that unfolded gradually over the course of about half a century, between 576 and 626, at the latest (Comșa 1974: 303; Comșa 1987: 222-223; Madgearu 1997: 138-143).

As part of the Byzantine Empire, the Istro-Pontic territory also came under the attention of populations in search of new lands or areas to plunder. After the mid-6th century, the Avar-Slavic attacks targeted both the fortifications on the right bank of the Danube and the settlements within the province (Fig. 1). Their effects meant that by the end of the century, Scythia found itself with the Troesmis-Dinogetia sector of the limes unprotected, with towns in which the raids of migratory populations had put an end to urban life, or which were on the verge of collapse (Comșa 1987: 222-223; Madgearu 1997: 141). Even though the analysis of the numismatic record indicates that only the eastern part of the limes in the Lower Danube sector survived after 598 (Madgearu 2006: 154), in the Istro-Pontic territory, overall, the situation had significantly changed compared to the middle of the century. Based on artifacts and discoveries of different kind (different kinds), it is believed that the existence of several towns and fortifications along the Danube and in the interior of the province came to an end in the last quarter of the 6th century. Nevertheless, some fortresses found the necessary resources to overcome these disastrous times, with habitation continuing in various forms for several decades into the 7th century. Only the peace treaty of 598, through which the Avars recognized the Danube as the frontier line between themselves and the Empire, still gave hope for a period of calm at the end of the 6th century (Madgearu 2006: 154).

From its very first decade, the following century would record new conflicts between the early Byzantine Empire and the Avar and Slavic populations. The administration in Constantinople would suffer the loss of the limes sector between Novae and Iatrus, but would manage to retain large portions of the regions of Scythia and Moesia Secunda, east of Iatrus (Madgearu 1997: 142). Against the backdrop of disorder along the frontier, and prior to the Byzantine-Avar treaty of 604, the first raids of the 7th century took place reaching the Istro-Pontic territory, while the Avar invasion of 609 carved its way into the Balkan Peninsula through regions already lost by the Empire (Empire) (Madgearu 1997: 142).

Archaeological background

Based on monetary discoveries, in almost every fortified settlement investigated, destruction layers have been observed dated between 559 and 619. In some of these sites, the series of destructions began with the attack of the Kutrigurs and their allies, the Slavs and the Bulgars (Teodor 2010: 862).

We will now outline the situation in Scythia at the end of Antiquity, showing the effects of Avar-Slavic attacks on several fortifications in this region located along the imperial frontier. The presentation will follow a west-east sequence, according

to their placement along the limes, followed by cases from the interior of the province, and will depend on the current state of research.

Although Axiopolis (Cernavodă, Dealul Hinog site, Constanța County) is one of the first fortresses excavated in Dobrudja (Tocilescu 1903: 267-275),) (Tocilescu 1903: 267–275), it has remained little known to this day. A recent comprehensive study by Opriș not only systematized the available information and outlined the key moments in the site's history, but has restored the fortress to its rightful scholarly attention (Opriș 2024: 143-177). The site, located about 3 km south of the train station of the modern town, encompasses the ruins of two Roman fortresses, and a third one, from the Byzantine period (10th–11th centuries), extending the fortification complex to the south (Fig. 2.1). The oldest of them, located in the central part, appears to have been built at the end of the 3rd, or in the beginning of the next 4th century (at the beginning of the 4th century). The second, which encloses the northern part of the triangular plateau on the bank of the Danube, is believed to have been constructed in the 6th century, when the walls of the old fortress were also repaired. Field notes indicate that habitation levels were recorded only inside the old fortress, while in the second one a church and several graves were identified.

Regarding the period under our consideration, based on a hoard consisting of six gold coins (1 semissis and 5 tremisses) discovered in a burnt room located near the northern gate of the old fortress (here other rooms were also found preserving traces of a violent fire), it is believed that Axiopolis experienced a dramatic event in the second half of the 6th century. Since the hoard ends with coins of Tiberius II (578-582), the burn layer has been attributed to the Slavic attacks around the year 580, which preceded the major raid of 586-587 on the Tropaeum Traiani-Marcianopolis route (Poenaru-Bordea, Ocheșeanu 1983-1985: 177-180, 184; Opriș 2024: 151, 167).

The unfortunate events of the 6th century did not bring an end to habitation at Axiopolis. The discovery of two hemifolles (½ folles) of Phocas and two of Heraclius (bronze folles dated 613-614 and 614-615, respectively), isolated find (isolated finds), support the conclusion that urban-type habitation here continued until the Avar-Slavic attacks of 614-619, or possibly even later (Petac, Ionescu 2013: 355-361; Vîlcu 2009: 36, 67; Custurea 2019: 27; Opriș 2024: 167-168).

The Roman fortification at Capidava (Constanța County) is located along the alignment of the limes between the fortresses of Axiopolis and Carsium, at an equal distance from both of them. Its beginnings are linked to the broad strategic effort to consolidate the frontier during Trajan's bellum Dacicum or, according to a recent hypothesis, a few decades earlier, under the Flavian emperors, with the site undergoing several construction phases over time (Rațiu, Opriș 2023: 651-668; Rațiu, Opriș, Angheluță 2024: 469-470). The last phase, known as Phase IV, which begins in the 6th century and ends in the early decades of the 7th century, has been associated with several massive burn layers linked to the attacks of the Slavs and Kutrigurs, which took place between the fifth and ninth decades of the 6th century

(Covacef 1988-1989: 191-195; Gândilă 2006-2007: 102-107; Opriș, Rațiu 2017: 17). For the conclusion of these events, the discovery of a hoard consisting of 51 bronze coins – issues from Anastasius to Tiberius II – in an archaeological context rich in artifacts, on the floor of a building whose use ended in a fire, was conclusive (Gândilă 2009: 89-92). It seems that repeated destructions made a general reconstruction of the fortress difficult. The imperial administration, unwilling to abandon this strategic point of the limes, chose instead to fortify only a quarter of the former enclosure, raising a castellum in the southern corner (Fig. 2.2), protected by an earth rampart. This happened somewhere around the turn of the century (Opriș 2003: 22-23; Madgearu 2006: 154). The civilian settlement was relocated to the rest of the former fortress perimeter (Covacef 1988-1989: 196).

At Capidava, the military function of the fortification was maintained until the beginning of Heraclius's reign. The most recent coin discovered at the site is a follis from 612-613, representing clear evidence of Capidava's inclusion among the fortifications destroyed by the Avars and Slavs in 614-616 (Gândilă 2006-2007: 107; Opriș, Rațiu 2017: 17-18; Rațiu, Opriș, Angheluță 2024: 470-471).

The fortress of Carsium (Hârșova, Constanța County) also came to the attention of the populations targeting the frontier of the Byzantine Empire. The beginnings of the fortification (castellum) are attributed to the second half of the 1st century or the beginning of the following one, during the reign of Emperor Vespasian (69-79) or by order of Trajan (98-117). During the reign of Emperor Constantine the Great (306-337), a fortress with a much-expanded surface was built, which would later be rebuilt under Emperor Justinian (527-565) (Aricescu 1971: 354; Aricescu 1977: 55-56, 80, 98, 117, 135, 174-175; Zahariade, Mușețeanu, Chiriac 1981: 259; Barnea 1994a: 258).

Nearly two decades after the death of Emperor Justinian, daily life in the fortress of Carsium would enter a new phase marked by the political situation of the region at the turn of the 6th century, during which, for about two to four decades, it experienced successive upward and downward trends. Sporadic monetary discoveries seem to indicate that it was affected by the Avar-Slavic attacks of 593-594. Carsium's daily life later found the necessary resources to recover (Custurea 2019: 29), due most likely to the treaties of 598 and 604, as well as other factors (Madgearu 1997: 142; Madgearu 2006: 154; Параскив-Талмацку 2020: 253-254). The discovery of two hemifolles (½ folles) of Phocas indicates this recovery of the fortress and a certain continuity of economic life, which likely lasted until the period of 609-619. Somehow overcoming all the disorder along the frontier in the early decades of the 7th century (Параскив-Талмацку 2020), habitation at Carsium appears to have survived until the end of the third decade, as evidenced by the finding of a ½ follis from the year 629-630, also indicating continued contact with the Byzantine Empire (Custurea 2019: 29; Stănică, Nicolae, Ciobanu 2021: 10; Paraschiv-Talmațchi, Șova 2024: 287).

The Roman fortification located 2.5 km south of the village of Ostrov, at the site known as "Piatra Frecăței" (Tulcea County), identified with Beroe, is situated along the Danubian frontier line between the fortresses of Carsium and Troesmis, in an area where the Băroi branch joins the Old Danube. Archaeological investigations conducted here revealed a Roman settlement and necropolis, dated from the 2nd to the 7th centuries. The fortification had both a military, e.g. functioning as (i.e., functioning as) a fleet station and garrison for the small Roman military units along the limes ('cneus equitum stablesianorum'), and an economic role, e.g. connected to its port function, as a stop along the land route that followed the river, an agricultural zone, and the nearby schist quarries (Barnea 2000a: 312-314; Stănică 2004: 357-358).

During archaeological excavations in the settlement, three habitation levels were recorded (without reaching the loess), two of which belong to the 10th–11th centuries and one to the Late Roman period. The latter consists of a thick layer of ash and debris, which inside the dwellings sometimes exceeds a thickness of 1 m, revealing thus (thus revealing) a dramatic moment in the settlement's history in the second half of the 6th century, according to the artifacts it contains. The discovery of 13 coins in this layer, the latest one dating to 575-576, places the moment of the intense fire sometime after that date. In the areas investigated, no reconstruction of the fortification or resumption of habitation was observed following the violent attack, attributed to the Slavs and their allies. However, the dating of several graves to the 7th century suggests a possible habitation after the catastrophic event, although the extent of this occupation remains unknown (Vîlceanu, Barnea 1975: 209, n. 4, 215-217; Paraschiv-Talmațchi, Stănică 2007: 313-314; Custurea 2019: 42).

The site of Troesmis (located approximately 4 km north of the village of Turcoaia, Tulcea County) includes several Roman structures that functioned successively from the 1st century until the early decades of the 7th century, as well as a Middle-Byzantine (Middle Byzantine) fortification dating to the 10th–12th centuries (Alexandrescu, Gugl 2016: 9-22; Țentea et al. 2019: 41-43; Opriș, Matei-Popescu, Țentea 2024: 319-323). At Troesmis, the moment of destruction was dated based on a coin from the reign of Justin II (565-578), discovered in a leveling layer of blackish-grey soil between two habitation levels, postdating its issue, i.e., after 571-573. The final phase of habitation here, at the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century, has sporadic character (is sporadic). In this context, it is worth mentioning the record of a bronze coin of Emperor Mauricius Tiberius, dating from 591-592, which comes from Troesmis and reached the museum in Tulcea following the acquisition of a private collection (Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1980: 253, 274, no. 177). Moreover, the absence of coins for several time intervals (558-561, 578-580, 591-592) is thought to be attributable to the Kutrigur raids of 559, and to the Slavic ones – for the latter two gaps (Custurea 2019: 31).

At Dinogetia (Garvăn, Tulcea County), located in the northwestern corner of Dobrudja (at the center of the arc described by the Danube between the fortresses

of Arrubium – Măcin, Tulcea County – and Noviodunum – Isaccea, Tulcea County), it is believed that as early as the 1st century AD there existed an earth-and-wood castrum, which housed a permanent guard post for constant surveillance of the wetland area between the mouths of the Siret and Prut rivers. It also served as a statio for the river fleet ('Classis Flavia Moesica'), which had its base at Noviodunum. Based on several tegula finds bearing the stamps of military units, it is assumed that in the second half of the 2nd century there was a stone-walled fortress here (if not, then it was erected under Emperor Diocletian); it underwent several construction phases or restorations over time (Fig. 3.1), remaining in use until the early decades of the 7th century (Ștefan 1967: 15; Barnea, Panaite 2022: 39-40; Opriș, Matei-Popescu, Țentea 2024: 342-344).

At Dinogetia, a violent destruction was recorded for the year 559, archaeologically marked by the most substantial burn layer in the settlement's stratigraphy. This event is considered a decisive blow to the settlement and has been attributed to the raids of the Kutrigurs and their allies. Above the layer with traces of fire, a thin, slightly leveled stratum represents evidence of habitation in a decaying fortress left in ruin, dating to the end of the 6th century and the early decades of the 7th century (Barnea 1984: 342-343; Chiriac 1993: 200). So far, archaeological discoveries at this site do not show any destruction of the fortress after the year 559. Interpretations based on the analysis of a coin hoard (comprising 72 pieces), which suggest Avar-Slavic attacks on the settlement around 591-592, have not been confirmed stratigraphically (Mitrea 1974: 61-62; Madgearu 1997: 141). A recent study points out that the coin on which the destruction of Dinogetia was suggested presents a state of preservation inadequate for clarifying chronological implications (Popescu 2012: 17). In the absence of evidence for a violent end, the early decades of the 7th century merely mark the abandonment of the settlement (Comșa 1967: 30; Barnea, Panaite 2022: 40; Opriș, Matei-Popescu, Țentea 2024: 344).

One of the important fortresses of the Danubian limes was Noviodunum (at the "Old Pontoon" site, located about 2.5 km northeast of the town of Isaccea, Tulcea County), situated in the northern part of the province, between Dinogetia and Aegyssus, across from one of the major fords of the river, where the Danube narrows to less than 1 km in width. Its Roman military and urban development began during the reign of Emperor Vespasian, as a base for the newly established Roman fleet on the Lower Danube and as the headquarters of several military units. Noviodunum was also the terminus of the Dobrudjan continental road, both military and commercial, which started from Marcianopolis, passed through Tropaeum Traiani, Ulmetum, (L)Ibida, and intersected here with the road along the Danubian limes (Barnea 1991: 81). Moreover, the size of the archaeological complex reflects the gradual development of the town, with a walled enclosure protecting 16 hectares, and a civilian settlement located to the south and east of the fortress, circumscribed by a defensive system composed of earth ramparts and ditches, extending over a

much larger area. The town became a municipium during the Severan dynasty or possibly earlier, during the joint reign of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus (177-180) (Barnea 2000b: 204-205; Baumann 2010: 7-9 and 114, where an earthen fort built in the 1st century AD is mentioned; Matei-Popescu 2016: 220; Custurea 2019: 31-32). Among its construction phases based on archaeological excavations, we know the Late Roman fortification, with the northern enclosure now submerged under the waters of the Danube and the southern enclosure still clearly visible (Opriș, Matei-Popescu, Țentea 2024: 390-394).

The Kutrigur raids targeted the fortress of Noviodunum in 599 as well, as revealed by excavations in the area of the large tower, which was damaged during this event and was never rebuilt, being used in a deteriorated state probably until the end of the 6th century, when the towers were abandoned. A thick burn layer, dated to the 6th century based on amphoric material, was also recorded on the floor of a grain storage building (Baumann 2010: 111, 117). At Noviodunum, it is believed that the monetary hiatus during several short intervals in the second half of the 6th century may be the result of Avar-Slavic raids (Custurea 2019: 32). During the reign of Phocas, an increase in the monetary economy is observed, which collapses abruptly at the beginning of Heraclius's reign. The final phases of Roman habitation are stratigraphically marked by a massive destruction level of adobe, almost entirely burned red, caused by the attacks of 614-619 (Baumann 2010: 133-134). Nonetheless, the discovery of coins from the reign of Emperor Constans II indicates the Byzantines' continued interest in the Danubian naval point during a period following this critical moment (Custurea 2019: 32).

At Aegyssus (Tulcea, Tulcea County), it is believed that during the Principate, an auxiliary castrum operated here, which hosted a statio classis. The settlement experienced significant development during the Roman period, being heavily fortified at the end of the 3rd century and the beginning of the 4th century, and undergoing several construction phases (Țentea et al. 2019: 61-62; Opriș, Matei-Popescu, Țentea 2024: 402-404). Although it fell victim to some of the raids carried out in the 6th century, it survived until the end of the century or into the early decades of the 7th century, when it is presumed to have been abandoned during the reign of Emperor Heraclius, from whom three coins were discovered at the site, including two issues from 613-614. A precious coin issued during the reign of Emperor Constantine IV (668-685) and dated to 668-673, appears to indicate the continued interest of the Byzantine Empire in the northern area of the province, up until the end of the 7th century (Barnea 1994b: 35; Custurea 2019: 38, 202).

Located near the eastern end of the Danubian limes, 2–5 km from the mouth (Stoma) of the Peuce branch, the fortress of Halmyris (Murighiol, Tulcea County) was the last major fortification (Fig. 3.2-3) before the southern branch of the river flowed into the Black Sea, also serving as a statio for the Moesian fleet. Its Roman beginnings are hypothetically attributed to the time of Trajan (a wooden and earth

castrum, followed by a stone phase), with a reconstruction a fundamentis initiated during the reigns of Emperors Aurelian and Probus. The fortress underwent several repairs and lasted until the beginning of the 7th century (Suceveanu, Zahariade, Topoleanu 2003: 29-41; Opriș, Matei-Popescu, Țentea 2024: 428-431).

During archaeological excavations, traces of a strong fire were observed across the entire investigated area, sometimes accompanied by massive rubble attributed to significant destruction belonging to stratigraphic level 10, dated mainly to the first half of the 6th century. It is therefore considered possible that the fortress was affected by the Kutrigur raid of 559 (Topoleanu 2000: 249). Two coins from 552-553, found in secure contexts within this level, allow their use for dating the habitation layer and support the assumption that it ended at the time of the Kutrigur-Bulgar-Slav attack (Suceveanu, Zahariade, Topoleanu 2003: 37-38). After the attack, the fortress was rapidly rebuilt, maintaining both its urban and strategic functions.

Stratigraphic level 11 was also identified across the entire excavated surface of the fortress. According to the finds, including two monetary hoards (one composed of 9 pieces datable between 522-527 and 569-570; the other consisting of 39 coins datable between 512-517 and 565-578, respectively), this level is placed between the years 568-569 and after 588-589 (possibly 602). Its interruption is attributed to a violent attack, probably carried out by the Avars and Slavs at the end of the 580s or in 602, as evidenced by the burned dwellings and the substantial layer of debris. As an earlier possible outcome of this action, the blocking of the main gate may also be attributed to this level (Suceveanu, Zahariade, Topoleanu 2003: 38-39, 113).

In the fortress of Halmyris, two additional habitation levels were recorded following the attacks at the end of the 6th century or in 602. Level 12, attributed to the early 7th century and dated by two coins of Emperor Heraclius from 613 and 613-614, shows that the fortress continued to function at least until this period, with all its essential elements: the enclosure, streets, interior buildings, and a minimal extra muros defensive system. This level displays the last phase of use for the tower on the southern side, as well as rebuilt streets or areas with heavy debris, sometimes including traces of fire. The blocking of the main gate may also be attributed to this later phase (Suceveanu, Zahariade, Topoleanu 2003: 39-40, 73).

Level 13, broadly datable to the 7th century, possibly until the appearance of the Bulgars of Asparoukh in 679-680, represents the last habitation level at Halmyris. It is not present throughout the entire surface of the fortress and reflects a strong decline of the town and its transformation into a settlement undergoing a process of ruralization. The enclosure is heavily deteriorated, the towers no longer had any strategic function (some were converted into dwellings), the streets were abandoned, and semi-subterranean dwellings (pit-houses) appear, built using materials from previous periods and containing inventories that also include Slavic-type pottery (Suceveanu, Zahariade, Topoleanu 2003: 40-41, 74, 114).

Breaking through the limes line, the Kutrigur raids and the Avar-Slavic attacks turned toward the towns of Scythia, reaching all the way to the shores of the Black Sea. In the inland area of the province, in the northern half, at (L)Ibida (Slava Rusă, Tulcea County), a town located on the military and commercial road connecting Marcianopolis and Noviodunum, archaeological excavations revealed destruction caused in the area of the western gate in 559 by the Kutrigurs, a fact also supported by the presence of monetary hoards. Based on coin finds from the ancient town, during the following period and between 566 and 593-594 in particular, Avar-Slavic attacks are also presumed. For example, a small hoard discovered near the fortress, toward the monastic complex, is attributed to the attacks of 591-592 (Iacob 2009: 72-74).

At (L)Ibida, the collapse of the Roman-type market economy seems to have occurred in the early decades of the 7th century, during the reigns of emperors Phocas and Heraclius, a phenomenon marked by a scarcity of coinage (Custurea 2019: 37-38).

In the southern half of the province, for the urban-type settlement of Tropaeum Traiani (Adamclisi, Constanța County), it is presumed that the Kutrigur raid on the territory of Scythia in 559 had negative consequences on the town's development and its connections with other centers. In 566, it was affected by an Avar raid (Poenaru Bordea, Nicolae 1998: 539; Custurea 2019: 25), but a strong blow was delivered by Avars and Slavs in the last quarter of the century, in 586-587, 593-595, or in 602 (Cătăniciu Bogdan, Mărgineanu Cârstoiu 1975: 60; Ocheșeanu, Papuc 1973: 376). In almost all investigated areas, archaeological excavations have revealed the consequences of a violent fire, consisting of a thick layer of powdery, yellowish-reddish soil, sometimes reaching up to 1 m in thickness. This comes from the collapse of wattle-and-daub walls, and at its base lie remains of burned beams, iron nails, tiles, and pipes, while above it is debris from the walls of buildings (Barnea 1979: 230; Talmațchi, Șova 2015: 166).

The discovery of coin issues from Mauricius Tiberius, dated to 594-595, during excavations in the southern sector in the last decade, reveals the existence of habitation during this period (Talmațchi, Custurea 2025: 208). The latest coin known from Tropaeum Traiani is a hemifollis from the end of Phocas's reign, dated 608/9-610 (Vertan, Custurea 1982: 281; Talmațchi, Custurea 2025: 208), allowing us to estimate that Tropaeum Traiani continued to function until this period (it remains to be analyzed – through correlation of the data obtained in the investigated sectors – how many of the urban functions were still maintained and to what extent the defensive wall was still serving its purpose) (Bogdan Cătăniciu 1979: 63, n. 71), and was likely destroyed only in the second decade of the 7th century, during the attacks of 614-619. Moreover, the settlement's functioning in the first two decades of the 7th century is also supported by minor finds, including ceramic material (Bogdan Cătăniciu, Barnea 1979: 226), as well as by some structural modifications of older

buildings (blocking of access points, repartitioning, etc.) using walls of modest quality (Barnea 1979: 88).

On the eastern side of the province, at Histria (Istria, Constanța County), the attack of the Kutrigurs and their allies in 599 is evidenced by a burn layer observed in the central sector, supported by numismatic analysis. The town's level of development allowed it to recover relatively easily from this unfortunate event, with a swift economic revival. Recently, in the Metaxa sector, a thick layer of about 0.15 m of ash and burnt construction debris was identified, within which a coin hoard composed of 6 bronze coins was found, ending with an issue from 565-578. This confirms, for this area as well, the Avar attacks on the town during the reign of Emperor Justinus II (565-578) (for more, see Gabriel Talmațchi's article in the present volume). The identification of a layer with strong traces of fire in the central sector and the reduction of monetary circulation toward the end of the 6th century appear to indicate another violent attack on the town, caused by Avars and Slavs sometime between 597-598 and 601-602 (Nubar 1973: 82-84; Custurea 2019: 30). During the reigns of Emperors Phocas and Heraclius (from the latter several coin finds dated between 612-616 were discovered in the Metaxa sector), a ruralization of the settlement is observed at Histria, which persisted, in this form, until the end of the second decade of the 7th century, or even later (Custurea 2019: 30, 38; for more details, see also the article by Gabriel Talmațchi in this volume).

In the coastal area, for the town of Tomis (Constanța, Constanța County), based on the decrease in coin circulation, Avaro-Slavic attacks have been assumed to have occurred in the year 602, but especially between 614-619. By correlating sigillographic finds with numismatic ones (the latter showing continuous but not abundant presence up to the 680s), the continued existence of Tomis, in a modest form, has been accepted until the beginning of the ninth decade of the 7th century, as well as the Byzantine Empire's sustained interest in the old port settlement (Buzoianu, Bărbulescu 2012: 78-99; Damian 2015: 19; Custurea 2019: 28-29).

At Callatis, the destruction caused by the Avar raid in 598 led to the end of urban-type habitation. The presence of six coins from the reigns of Phocas and Heraclius (the latest dated between 620-630) indicates the Byzantines' continued interest in this point, as well as the continuation of habitation, probably in a ruralized form (Custurea 2019: 36).

Archaeological dossier

The presence of the newcomers is also suggested by various artifacts discovered during archaeological excavations or by chance, whose broad chronological framing begins in the mid-6th century and continues into the 7th century. In general, attributing an ethnic identity to certain material goods is difficult, especially when we are dealing with items of functional use, since they could have been used by

other ethnic groups as well, might have been acquired through plunder, reciprocal influence, or as gifts. However, given that they are present over a limited time span, contemporary with specific historical events, it can be assumed that at least some of them reflect particular ethnic presences within a defined territory.

In the Istro-Pontic territory, a first group of artifacts is represented by pottery, with the presence of a hand-made category, produced from coarse, undecorated clay and incompletely fired, being associated with the migratory populations, such as the Antes or Slavs. This type of pottery is mentioned in several fortifications along the limes: Capidava (Opriș 2003: 109-110), Carsium (Opriș 2003: 104), Beroe (Vâlceanu, Barnea 1975: 209-210, fig. 1, 2), Dinogetia (Comșa 1970: 322-330), Noviodunum (Barnea, Barnea 1984: 102, pl. 14.1), Aegyssus (Vasiliu 1980: 447-448, pl. 8.1-5), and Halmyris (Suceveanu, Zahariade, Topoleanu 2003: 41). In some cases, the pottery appeared in contexts alongside Romano-Byzantine military material, in layers dated to the second half of the 6th century, which led to the assumption that it may have belonged to foreign foederati (Slavs or Antes) or to limitanei communities undergoing ruralization (Madgearu 1997: 171; Opriș 2003: 102-110; Teodor 1993: 212; Teodor 2010: 867). At Halmyris, the pottery associated with the presence of the Slavic population belongs to the post-614 occupation (Level 13), that is, the rural settlement with semi-subterranean dwellings (Suceveanu, Zahariade, Topoleanu 2003: 41). Foreign pottery was also reported at Dunavățu de Jos (Murighiol, Tulcea County) during surface surveys (Barnea 1990: 318, no. 11). In the interior territory, the pottery from this category found in 6th-century layers is generally attributed to the Antes (Teodor 2010: 867), while that from the following century is believed to possibly belong to the Slavs as well. Such material has been noted at Tomis, Histria, (L)Ibida, and Tropaeum Traiani (Pippidi, Bordenache, Eftimie 1961: 232-233; Cîrjan 1971: 339-341; Comșa 1970: 322-330; Comșa 1975: 173; Teodor 1994: 229; Opriș 2003: 105). Slavic-made pottery (belonging to the Korceak or Penkovka cultural aspects), present in small quantities in some settlements from the second half of the 6th century and the early decades of the 7th century (Fig. 4.1-3), is attributed to the early phase of the Slavic migration (Teodor 2010: 868). A second phase of migration, probably due to the Khazar Khaganate's expansionist ambitions and the westward movement of the Asparukh's Bulgars, occurred in the 670s. Archaeologically, this phase is identified with the Hlincea culture pottery, present in the necropolis at Nalbant, Tulcea County (Comșa 1972: 23-24; Teodor 2010: 871).

Some clothing items have also been attributed to the presence of the Slavs, such as bronze fibulae of the Pastyrsk or anthropozoomorphic types, as well as certain categories of digitated bronze fibulae (Teodor 2010: 869). In the territory of Dobrudja, we have recorded 19 digitated fibulae, broadly dated to the 6th–7th centuries (Custurea, Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2018: 121-122). Almost all come from the area of fortified settlements (from habitation layers and graves) or from their immediate

vicinity. Such discoveries were made at: Beroe (Petre 1962: 579, 581, fig. 18:1), Dinogetia (Ștefan et al. 1959: 632-633, fig. 7), Aegyssus (Simion 2009: 412-413, 417, fig. 1:4), Tropaeum Traiani (Papuc 1987: 207-209, fig. 1: a, b), Histria (Petre 1965b: 275-277, fig. 1), between the localities of Saraiu and Stejaru (Custurea, Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2018: 119, pl. 1:2), (L)Ibida (Opaiț 1991: 45, 48, fig. 19: 37, 38), Somova (Simion 2009: 413-416, 418, fig. 1, 2, 3), Valea Teilor, Căprioara, Luncavița (Teodor, Chiriac 2005-2006: 242-243, 250, fig. 2, 3: a, 3: b), Enisala (Ailincăi et al. 2014: 65-84), and Dunavăț (Custurea, Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2018: 119-120, pl. 1:3), in Tulcea County.

Among these, the specimen discovered between the localities of Saraiu and Stejaru (Fig. 4.4) shows certain similarities with a fragmentary fibula found at Pastyrske (Curta, Dupoi 1994-1995: 223, 235, fig. 3:5), in Ukraine. The geometric decoration on the terminal lobe of the fibula contains features that might suggest a schematically rendered human mask. Analogies for this piece can be found in Dobrudja at (L)Ibida, where two fragmentary specimens with a zoomorphic figure on the terminal lobe of the foot plate were discovered (Teodor 1992: 138, 149, fig. 8:4, 7; Curta, Dupoi 1994-1995: 224, 235, fig. 4:5), and at Somova, where four specimens were found inside an amphora (Simion 2009: 413-418, fig. 1, 2, 3). Of particular interest is the fibula discovered near the fortress of Halmyris, at Dunavăț (Fig. 4.5). This zoo-anthropomorphic (zooanthropomorphic) fibula is, as far as we know, the only one of its kind found in Dobrudja. The fibula, for which we have not found an identical analogy, appears to exhibit characteristics of the later specimens discovered at the Pastyrske settlement. Typologically, they represent a derivation of the main groups of digitated fibulae (Teodor 1994: 233). Most pieces of this type were produced in the Middle Dnieper region, at Pastyrske or nearby (Corman 1998: 46; Приходнюк 1997-1999: 74-97; Скиба 2011: 137), possibly also in workshops in Crimea, and were likely brought to the Lower Danube area by nomadic populations, Antae or others (Teodor 1994: 233-234; Corman 1998: 47; Teodor 2003: 403).

In the Istro-Pontic territory, objects associated with Avar military equipment have also been discovered. These include belt buckles of the Pápa and Nagyharsány types, common items worn at the waist by both cavalrymen and infantry. Pápa-type buckles were specifically used for the pouch attached to the rider's belt (Madgearu 1997: 151, 154). So far, all the items falling into these two types have been discovered in sites located in the coastal zone or near ports, and they are dated to the first half of the 7th century (Madgearu 2004: 169). Pápa-type buckles are recorded at Histria, near Argamum, and at Halmyris. The buckle from Histria (Fig. 4.7) originates from a complex of rooms excavated in Sector T, where several Slavic-style vessels and a coin dated to 613-614 were also discovered (Pippidi, Bordenache, Eftimie 1961: 233, fig. 5: 2a, 2b; Teodor 1991: 126, fig. 5: 9). The item near Argamum (Fig. 4.6) comes from a partially preserved inhumation grave (only the lower part) uncovered during a rescue excavation, located 4 km west of the fortress.

The preserved inventory of the grave includes two bronze fibulae[,] (,) one with eagle heads, a Pápa-type buckle, a knife, and a three-bladed arrowhead (Coja 1977: 167, pl. IX; Teodor 1991: 126, fig. 5: 11). At Halmyris, the Pápa-type buckle (Fig. 4.9) was found in the topsoil layer during the investigation of a building situated behind the northern gate (Madgearu 2004: 169, fig. 2). The Nagyharsány-type buckle was discovered at Histria (Fig. 4.8), in a grave (Petre 1965a: 74-75, fig. 5: 1; Teodor 1991: 132, fig. 6: 5).

Conclusions

Gradually organized after the annexation of the Istro-Pontic territory to Moesia in 46 AD, the line of fortifications that reinforced the natural barrier of the Danube – with strongly fortified points located in areas difficult to access from the right bank – fulfilled its defensive role, in some segments until the end of the 6th century, and in others – until the early decades of the 7th century. Positioned on the frontier of the Byzantine Empire, the Istro-Pontic territory became a target of Avaro-Slavic raids and attacks, along with those of their allies, which intensified after the mid-6th century. These actions, combined with the division of the Byzantine army across multiple fronts and the general economic decline that affected the empire's peripheral provinces in the final decades of the 6th century, led to the abandonment of the frontier by the Byzantine Empire and to the disintegration of the Danubian limes. The process unfolded gradually over, roughly, half a century, i.e., between 576 and 626, at the latest, and was followed by the Slavs' movement south of the Danube. In most archaeologically investigated fortresses and towns of Dobrudja, this period of almost half a century is reflected in destruction layers accompanied by traces of fire, sometimes reaching up to 1 m in thickness. In the absence of other evidence, numismatic finds have been the key element in proposing hypotheses regarding possible raids and attacks, as well as their effects; further investigations are needed to bring clarification. The end of this period marked the decline of urban life in Scythia and the opening of the Istro-Pontic territory to the passage or settlement of people that had contributed to the breakdown of this segment of the Empire's frontier. The presence of objects associated with Slavic and Avar cultural spheres, sometimes found in contexts alongside local materials, suggests the existence of ethnic, or multiethnic, communities in certain areas of Dobrudja, more distinctly outlined in the first half of the 7th century.

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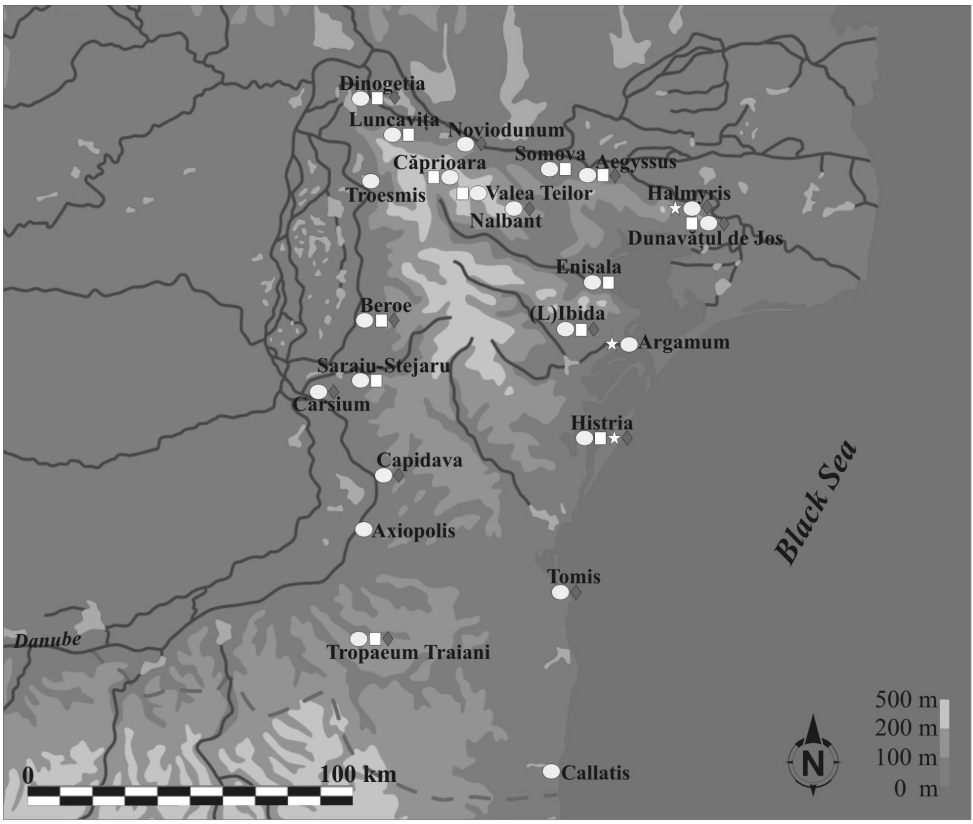
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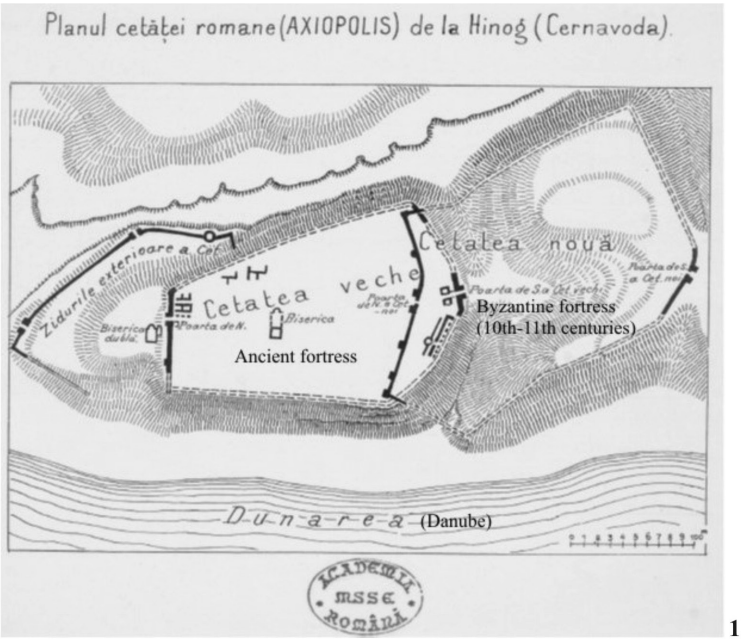
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Legend: ⬭ **Fortifications and discovery points;** ♦ **Ceramics;** □ **Fibulae;** ☆ **Belt pieces.**

Fig. 1. The distribution of the fortifications and of the discoveries mentioned in the Istro-Pontic territory (mid-6th century – 7th century)



1

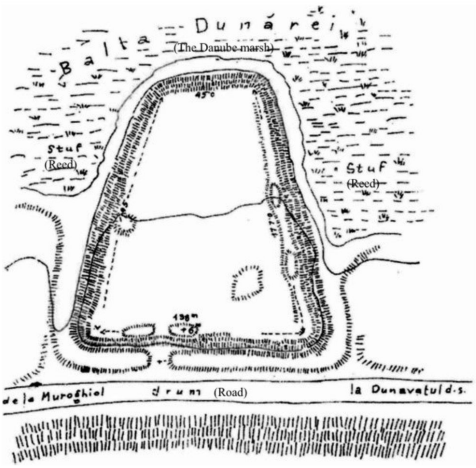


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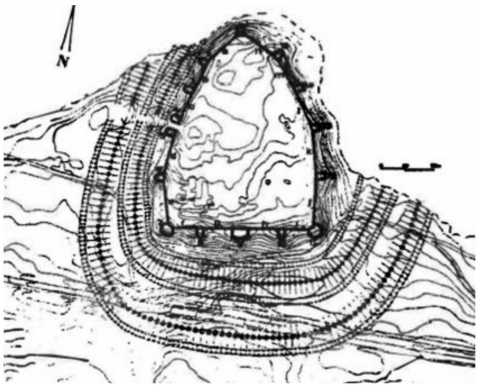
Fig. 2. Plan of the Axiopolis fortress. Library of the Romanian Academy, Section of Manuscripts and Rare Books. Pamfil Polonic Varia I Map, drawing 81 (after Opriș 2024: 146, fig. 2) (1); Plan of Capidava Fort during 4th–7th centuries (after Rațiu, Opriș, Angheluță 2024: 470, fig. 2)



Dinogetia fortress 1



2



3

Halmyris fortress

Fig. 3. Aerial photograph of Bisericuța Island (Archives of the „Vasile Pârvan" Institute of Archaeology) (after Barnea, Panaite 2022: 14, fig. 3) (1); Halmyris. Plan sketch from 1898 made by P. Polonic (2) and Stereo restitution Al. S. Ștefan after aerial photograph from 1981 (3) (after Suceveanu, Zahariade, Topoleanu 2003: figs. 6 and 8)

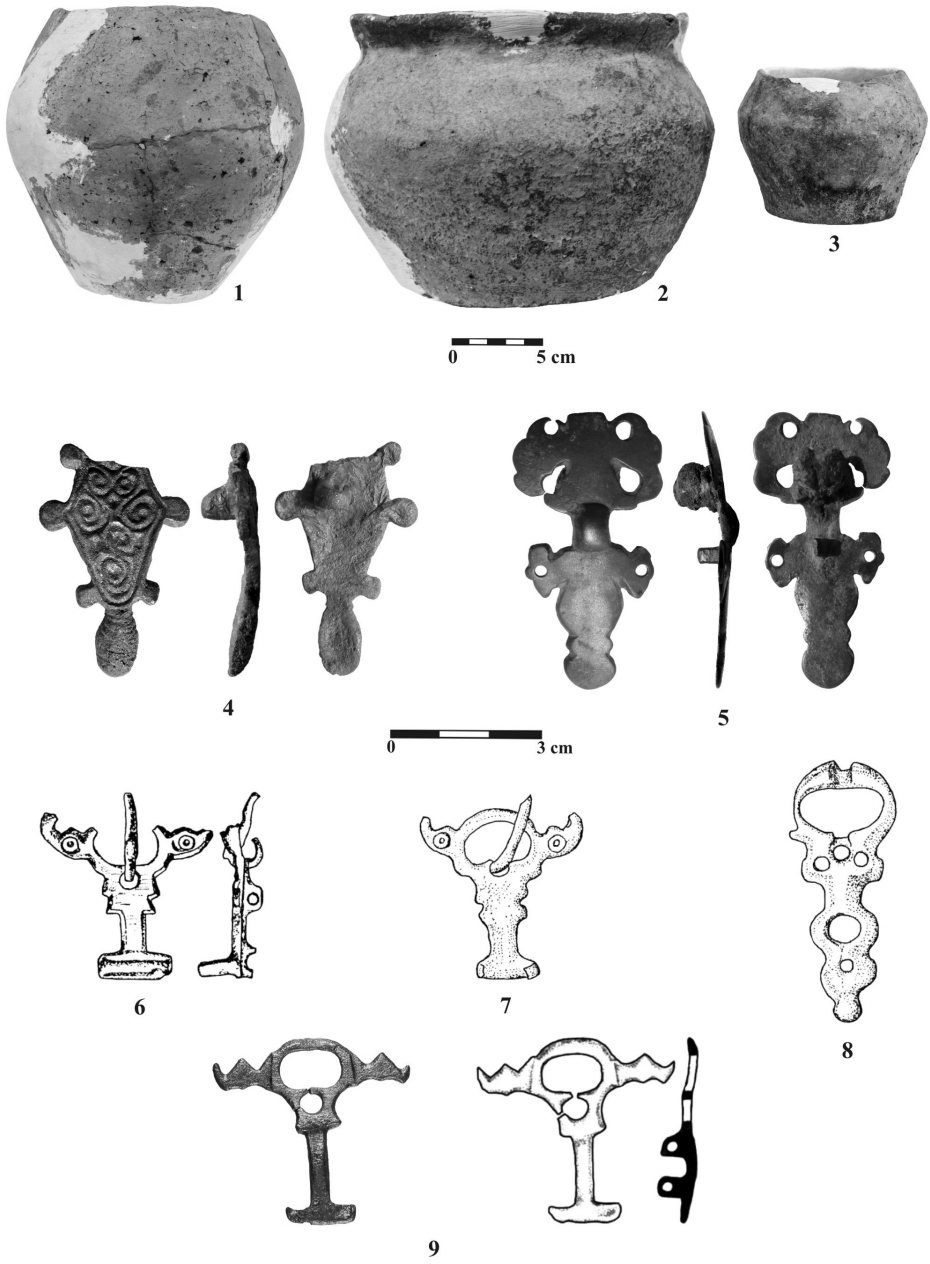


Fig. 4. Slavic type pottery (belonging to the Penkovka cultural aspect) discovered at Halmyris (after Mocanu, Ailincăi 2020: 79-80) (1-3); Fibulae associated with the Slavic cultural environment found at Saraiu-Stejaru (4) and Dunavăț (5) (after Custurea, Paraschiv-Talmațchi 2018: 126, fig. 2-3); Buckles associated with the Avar cultural environment found at Argamum (6), Histria (7-8) and Halmyris (9) (6-8 after Teodor 1991: 126, 132; 9 after Nuțu, Ailincăi, Mocanu 2020: 77 and Madgearu 2004: 169, fig. 2)

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NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AT TROPAEUM TRAIANI (SECTOR C) AND HISTRIA (SECTOR METAXA-CONSTANȚA) AND THE SITUATION OF MONETARY LANDMARKS SPECIFIC TO THE 6th–7th CENTURIES AD[1]

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Abstract: Теренните проучвания в последните десетилетия в южната част на Тропеум Траяни и в сектора Метакса в Истрия предоставиха нови археологически и нумизматични данни, които уточняват аспекти, свързани с непрекъснатостта на обитаването до първите десетилетия на VII в. От една страна, тази непрекъснатост на обитаването се потвърждава от керамичните открития. От друга страна, тя е подкрепена от серия монетни находки от края на VI в. и особено от началото на VII в. С други думи, доставката на стоки и пари директно по море или чрез все още функциониращи континентални пътища свидетелства за съществуването на консумиращо квази-градско население до първите десетилетия на VII в. Това е наблюдение, което вече е добре утвърдено от археологията днес в сравнение с онова, което се е подозирало и което е можело да бъде доказано до преди десетилетие.

Keywords: coins, hoards, Tropaeum Traiani, Histria, Scythia

1. Introduction

Speaking of the 6th–7th centuries AD, the archaeological research conducted over the last 20 years at Tropaeum Traiani (in the southern quarter sector) and those at Histria (Metaxa-Constanța sector) over the last ten years (in six campaigns only!) made it possible to reveal several important aspects of the evolution of the

[1] This text is a result of the author's research lead as a foreign member of the project "Borders and cultural patterns: Paganism vs Christianity in the contact zone of the Danube limes (Scythia Minor and Moesia Secunda in the 4th -7th century)", funded by the National Research Fund of the Ministry of Education and Science of Republic of Bulgaria under contract № КП-06-Н60/10 / 17.11.2021.

above-mentioned two centers in the Roman province of Scythia. In this regard, we turned to the numismatic record, with particular attention to the recent discoveries which, from a scientific standpoint, are still unpublished.

2. Tropaeum Traiani (comm. Adamclisi, Constanța county)

The fortress at Tropaeum Traiani, situated to the west of the village of Adamclisi (Constanța County), on the plateau in the Urluia Valley, is one of the most important economic, political, and religious centers of Roman Dobrudja and the eastern part of the Empire (within the provinces of Moesia Inferior and Scythia). Specialized research carried out for over 120 years has revealed a wealth of historical, archaeological, and architectural information, disseminated in scientific and popular publications. The systematic archaeological research at Tropaeum Traiani, initiated by Grigore Tocilescu in 1891 (through 12 campaigns in the years 1891-1893, 1895-1897, 1904-1909), had major objectives including establishing the layout and character of the fortress, uncovering towers, gates, walls, etc., determining the topography and street grid of the late Roman and early Byzantine city, investigating Christian basilicas, and exploring various other components. Systematic investigations were resumed in 1968, yielding new and continuous discoveries up to the present day in fields such as urban planning, religion, economy, trade, coinage, and more. In recent decades, several areas within the fortress have been and are currently under investigation (for example, sector C — southern quarter), focusing on areas corresponding to important elements for the history of the ancient town (*Fig. 1*). The main objectives are the understanding of representative monuments, the topography and the general layout of the late Roman town, the complete discovery of the basilicas, and the investigation of the urban quarters. Archaeological excavations have shown that the 5th–6th centuries represent the last significant stage in terms of urban, economic, commercial, and religious development for Tropaeum Traiani. The research carried out in the "Southern Quarter Sector" has only reinforced this perception, adding numerous stratigraphic and historical elements that significantly refine the general data previously known.

Archaeological research in sector C was resumed at the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century, continuing over time earlier excavations carried out in the 1970s and 1980s by specialists from the Museum of National History and Archaeology Constanța (Scorpan 1972: 349-372; Scorpan 1974: 339-362; Panaitescu 1979a: 197-204; Panaitescu 1979b: 247-253; Panaitescu 1983: 230-238). Speaking strictly for this sector, the purpose of the actions was to obtain new information on the overall image of the late Roman dwelling complexes and existing road system in the area, mainly *via forensis* (or *cardo*), descending toward and ascending from the south gate.

In the researched area, from a stratigraphic point of view, after a first vegetal layer (0.20-0.30 m), there was recorded a large layer of debris, in the edifices present to the east and west of the cardo. This layer is composed of stones (fragments or whole pieces), fragments of tiles, olans, bricks, pieces of adobe (burnt or not), up to -1.05/1.10 m. At its base, the circulation level is defined by the traces of a strong fire, the high temperatures melting, as we have observed during the excavations, metal elements, glass and fragments or blocks of bare bricks, the whole archaeological deposition having a reddish color (Talmațchi, Șova 2016: 178). Its depth is variable as the architectural structures of the buildings produce important variations, and the differences caused by the slope of the terrain. Generally, it reaches, randomly, up to a depth of 1.45 and 1.50 m (Talmațchi 2021: 501-502).

In the C sector, no clear leveling has been found so far, with fragmented materials chaotic up to the vegetal level, up to the area of the atrium and vestibule, respectively up to the yellow-gray clay floors in the rooms. It is very likely that the constructions in this area were out of use earlier than in some other parts of the town, but this is an exception. The reuse of column bases, as it may have been in the C sector, is a phenomenon attested in the fortress for the N 5 level, that corresponds to the period from the end of the 5th century and the beginning of the 6th century to the end of the same century (586 AD) (Barnea et al. 1979: 101, 104-105; Sâmpetru 1994: 37). For comparison, in the rest of the town, VI A level is the final stage of habitation (Sâmpetru 1971: 218-219).

In sector C, as architectural discoveries, from an urban planning point of view, identified so far were four possible edifices, conventionally called 1, 2, 3 and 4 of civil character (private), initially with plenty of free space available (Talmațchi 2021: 501). From the Romano-Byzantine building no. 1, only the south and west sides have been identified, heavily dismantled and built of limestone fragments of various sizes, bonded with soil. The existence of a possible portico and entrance-exit thresholds was noted (Talmațchi, Șova 2015: 146). Other investigations revealed data regarding building no. 3, in the form of an entrance flanking the cardo to the east, shaped as a portico, with two column bases (measuring 0.56 x 0.48 m). Also, inside the building, a quadrangular room and the remains of a pavement made of worked stone fragments were discovered (Talmațchi, Șova 2015: 169-170). Furthermore, the 2023 archaeological research carried out north of building no. 2, revealed the existence of a new structure or a possible annex of the basilica forensis (conventionally labeled by us as no. 4) (Talmațchi et al. 2024: 27-28).

The most imposing is no. 2, which lies west of *via forensis*. It is a Roman house of the domus type, slightly adapted to the constructible space from the district (*Fig. 2*). At this stage of the research, we specify that we face a large and important building oriented north-south, with a width of around 24 m and a length of 50 m (Talmațchi, Șova 2016: 175; Talmațchi 2021: 501-510). The nature of the small archaeological findings from this edifice suggests its civilian character, initially with

a lot of available space. In this stage of research, it seems to be rectangular and organized on length. Also, it should be arranged, on both sides of the central axis, in a symmetric way.

Several compartments were uncovered inside the Domus building. The clearest are an atrium (7 x 5 m) and a vestibulum (11 x 4 m) (Talmațchi, Șova 2013, 276; Talmațchi, Șova 2015: 147; Talmațchi, Șova 2016: 175; Talmațchi 2021: 502). The atrium, the focal point of the building, features a pavement made of large and medium-size limestone slabs, generally processed, bonded with mortar (*Fig. 3*). Some tiles have a very flat surface, showing a long use of the complex. Near the western side and parallel to it appears a possible channel (0.45 m wide), bounded to the yard by a border about 5 m long (parallel to the west side). It may have been designed to drain water or be a small pool of water that delimits inside the central surface of the atrium. This discovery should be accompanied by a possible hypothesis of the presence in the roof of an empty space (compluvium), where rainwater flowed to a possible impluvium (at least in the initial phase of the building's existence) and that let in the light as well, respectively clean air. Inside the atrium were discovered two limestone column bases (one found in situ, the second semi-inverted and slightly displaced), a limestone capital and four broken column shafts, all made of limestone. Its presence and dimensions correspond to the available space in the neighborhood as well as to the overall number of rooms on both sides of the building. Subsequent interventions were altered according to the way of accommodating and changes of habits and preferences of those who lived there. We mention the possibility of two porticos, on the northern and southern sides of the atrium, which delimited its edges (Talmațchi, Șova 2015: 147). A long vestibulum seems to link the atrium to the side or exit/entrance on the northern side, offering, as with other similar constructions, a long axis inside the building, creating the illusion of spatiality (*Fig. 4*). The corridor features a pavement made of small and large processed limestone pieces (resembling a small surface slab), very well joined and bonded with mortar. At the same time, it is delimited on both sides by two "curbs" or thresholds for the entrances of the chambers on the eastern side. The presence of the vestibule in the architectural structure at Tropaeum Traiani is also found in the edifices no. 2 and 3 in the via principalis B-C sector. A cause of the lack of rich stratigraphical deposits is the use of the atrium area and the vestibule floor, continually, with perhaps little repairs almost impossible to notice. Hence the difficulty of a stratigraphic association with successively modified interior structures. It should also be mentioned that this vestibulum intersects at a right angle with another, shorter vestibulum oriented west-east, intended to create entrances to the rooms located on the southern and northern sides of the building.

The building seems to have almost seven external entries: four on the eastern side, two on the western side, and one on the northern side, to which are added others in the interior, some of which were blocked during the second habitation phase

(Talmațchi 2021: 505) (*Fig. 5*). Apart from the southern and the northern (providing communication between different parts of the edifice), the other entrances have stairs and thresholds to the outside communicating with the streets. They are preserved in the form of limestone slabs, grouped by two or three (Talmațchi, Șova 2016: 176). Judging by their size, all of them seem to serve only pedestrian access.

In the second phase of use, some chambers received new internal organization consisting of the emergence of new walls that multiplied the rooms to the detriment of their generous initial space.

During the archaeological investigations inside the building, numerous stone fragments of the spolia type were discovered (remains of friezes with vegetal motifs, column shafts, column bases, fragments of capitals, etc.). They are present in the new partition walls of the building or originate from the actual rubble layer observed throughout the entire area of the building (including from the upper floor). Among these stone fragments used as spolia, one sculptural piece stands out, depicting the head of a female figure (Talmațchi, Șova 2015: 164). The hairstyle of the figure can be associated with the fashion of portraits of Faustina the Elder, especially those from the provinces of the Empire. This detail, along with other artistic considerations reflecting the Asia Minor stylistic tradition, allows the fragment to be dated to the second half of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd century (Talmațchi, Alexandrescu 2025). Inside the buildings and in the street (*cardo*) were discovered many fragments of identifiable pieces, whole or fragmented. An appreciable quantity of late Roman pottery, numerous fragments of glasses, metal items (nails, spikes, staples, knife blades, rings, coins, fibulae, buckles, keys, medical instruments etc.) and bone objects. Monetary finds specific to the Late Roman and Early Byzantine periods are very well represented among the other mentioned discoveries (Talmațchi 2023: 122-123; Talmațchi, Custurea 2025: 192-203).

In my opinion, its initial construction belongs to the era of Constantine the Great, or not long after, e.g., up to the mid-4th century AD. The destruction of some rooms through their compartmentation by walls closing smaller surfaces, the possible dismantling from the end of the 6th century and the beginning of the 7th century, and the later ones, have affected the internal composition of the house (Talmațchi, Șova 2016: 177; Talmațchi 2021: 506).

The second objective of the research is the discovery of a portion of the second primary street of the town, *cardo*/*via forensis*, with all the details of construction and repairs. Archaeological excavations in the sector identified a portion of approximately 20 meters of the cardo, which has a variable width between 2.20 and 2.30 m, an orientation north-south, and descends on a slope toward the southern gate of Tropaeum Traiani, which allowed only pedestrian traffic. In general, the street appears as a compact, grayish-yellow earth platform, tamped down, composed of small fragments of brick, pottery, and gravel. Based on the recorded data, two stages of repairs were identified: the first in the second half of the 4th century, and

the second – in the first half of the next century (Talmațchi, Șova 2015: 170-171; Talmațchi, Șova 2016: 178-179). In the 6th century, the cardo remained the second vital internal transport route for the fortress.

Archaeological excavations in 2023 conducted to the north of the domus-type building revealed the existence of a new structure or a possible annex of the basilica forensis (?) (no. 4). The western side uncovered so far is oriented slightly northwest and is built on a continuous stone socle laid out west-east. This socle consists of very well-fitted flagstones, wider than the mentioned wall itself, which reaches a width of approximately 2.50 m. Two monumental entrances were also identified, oriented toward two spacious interior areas separated by a narrow wall aligned north-south (*Fig. 6*). The two entrances, facing south and approximately 1.50 m long, are fitted with several steps descending into the building's interior. In this early stage of the excavations, a limestone column base fragment and a stone trough used for water collection were found in secondary positions (*Fig. 7*). At the western end of the room, near the junction of the two parts of the building's side, the imprint of a wooden post with a diameter of 0.25 m was discovered. This post intersected a hard, yellow-colored floor at this corner, which was completely broken in the post (*Fig. 8*). Additionally, at the base of the post, at its foundation level, small stone fragments and remnants of roof tiles appeared, intentionally concentrated-likely as an added reinforcement solution to support the roof pressure sustained by the post during a final habitation stage. In the middle section of the western wall (from what has been preserved today), a depression made of loose soil was identified, sloping diagonally "through" the wall. At that spot, two adjoining stones were missing from the inner façade of the wall, forming a relatively circular area. In this "pocket" of soil, where in Antiquity a special niche was created, dug diagonally into the body of the wall and directly behind the wooden post, a coin hoard was discovered, consisting of 35 folles and their subdivisions from the 6th century, which can be considered a market sum for everyday use (*Fig. 9*). Its composition is as follows:

Catalog of hoard:

1. Four (Five) coins from Justin I: 2 coins of 40 nummia from Constantinople and Nicomedia dated to 518-522, 2 coins of 20 nummia from Constantinople from the same period, and 1 coin of 5 nummia from Constantinople dated to 522-527;

2. Three coins from Justin I or Justinian I: 2 coins of 40 nummia from Constantinople dated to 522-537, and 1 coin of 20 nummia from Nicomedia from the years 518-537;

3. Seven coins from Justinian I: 2 coins of 40 nummia from Constantinople from 522-537, 1 coin of 20 nummia from Constantinople dated to 527-537, 1 coin of 10 nummia from Constantinople dated to 546-565, 2 coins of 40 nummia from Nicomedia dated to 543/544 and 546/547, and 1 coin of 16 nummia from Thessaloniki dated to 538-562;

4. Seventeen coins from Justin II: 1 coin of 40 nummia from Constantinople dated to 565-575, and 16 coins of 20 nummia, of which: 5 from Constantinople dated to 569/570, 571-572, 567/568-578, and 565-578; 3 from Nicomedia dated to 569-570, 571-572, and 574-575; and 8 from Thessaloniki dated to 567-568, 569-570, 571-572, 574-575, 575-576, and 568/569-578;

5. Three coins from Mauricius Tiberius: 3 coins of 20 nummia from Constantinople and Thessaloniki dated to 582-583 and 591-592 (Talmațchi et al. 2024: 27).

*

Beyond other observations, for this deposit we note the presence of small coins in a significant percentage within it, as a sign of a still monetized daily market.

Discoveries of isolated coins specific to the Late Roman and Early Byzantine periods are very well represented as a result of the archaeological excavations. Proportionally, those belonging to the Late Roman period are the most numerous (approximately 40% of the total finds) and were found in secondary contexts. Coins specific to the Early Byzantine period represent about 30-35% of the total discovered, with the last issuer being Emperor Mauricius Tiberius (Talmațchi 2018: 405-430).

It was recently proposed, referring to the situation at Tropaeum Traiani, that after 598 or 602 the town had ended its socio-economic role (Custurea 2019: 55), being grouped with other towns that suffered heavily following the Avar attack of 598 (Axiopolis-Cernavodă, Noviodunum-Isaccea, Histria, Ibida-Slava Rusă, Callatis, Kaliakra), the provincial capital Tomis being only besieged (Madgearu 2011: 219-220). And the few specimens of folles struck at the beginning of the 7th century, in the years 603/604 and 609/610, would be mere evidence of a transient human presence in the area of the former town, where the urban settlement is believed to have ceased to exist before the great Avar-Slavic incursion of 614-619 (Custurea 2019: 65). From our point of view, it is possible that the town's end may have occurred rather later, during the period 614-619. We do not know whether the presence of coins from the beginning of the 7th century is solely linked to a simple transient human presence in the area. And we say this because many coins – possibly even hoards – have been discovered in isolation during the archaeological research conducted over nearly the last 70 years at Tropaeum Traiani, which have not yet been published or presented at symposia, conferences, congresses, etc. Only after their scientific publication will we be able to understand and have a monetary situation much closer to historical and archaeological reality, allowing us to be definitive one way or the other – whether the end occurred by 602 or by 619. Finally, archaeological research in the Tropaeum Traiani fortress would indicate, through the ceramic forms and small discoveries found in the last level of habitation, a dating of the habitation to the first part of the 7th century (Barnea et al. 1979: 88, 107, 226).

3. Histria (comm. Istria, Constanța county)

The second point of interest for the present article is both the fortress of Histria located on the shore of the Black Sea and the results of archaeological research in the Metaxa sector from a monetary perspective. The Metaxa sector is situated in the northwestern corner of the Romano-Byzantine fortress of Histria (*Fig. 10*), and the first excavations were initiated during the campaigns to uncover the late enclosure wall led by Vasile Pârvan. These were carried out in the intra muros area corresponding to the northwestern zone of the fortress by Harilau Metaxa (from whom the sector takes its current name), who was also head of the numismatic department of the National Museum of Antiquities.

In 1972-1973, alongside the restoration works on the late enclosure, investigations were resumed in the northwestern sector, especially in the area adjacent to its interior zone. On this occasion, a summary of the stratigraphy was established, as well as a plan of the structures discovered there. The archaeological excavations revealed four habitation levels corresponding to phases B and B1 of the enclosure: one from the beginning of the 7th century, two from the 6th century, and one from the 4th century AD (Nubar, Sion 1980: 29-31). During the 1973 cleaning and arrangement excavations in an area adjacent to Curtain A, which had been investigated prior to 1949, several buildings were brought back to light, for which we lack archaeological observations. This sector with dwellings may belong, for the most part, to the 6th century AD, with its two identifiable habitation levels, and to the beginning of the 7th century (Nubar, Sion 1980: 29-30).

The year 2016 was the starting point for the new investigations, carried out by specialists from the Museum of National History and Archaeology Constanța, with a total of five research campaigns conducted up to the present. The goal of the systematic archaeological research is to verify older hypotheses regarding the organization of this northern quarter in the 4th century AD, similar to the situation on the southern side of the late fortress – the economic quarter annexed to the fortress in the 4th century. Other objectives of the research in the Metaxa Sector include: the urban planning of the area in the same century; its evolution toward the end of urban habitation in the investigated space; the street network and its correlation with the one already studied in the center and south of the fortress, as well as with the exterior network and the access routes into the fortified space in the various phases of the enclosure's usage; the existence of a specialized demarcation of the northwestern area, etc. So far, two main sections have been opened (SI and SII), parallel, oriented north-south (*Fig. 11*).

Section SI, perpendicular to the northern wall of the enclosure, currently measures 69 x 3 m and revealed a series of walls belonging to several buildings, the first two (in C1, C2, C3, and C4) oriented east-west, probably aligned with the axes of symmetry corresponding to the northern extension of the Romano-Byzantine en-

closure, a development that took place in the 4th century. Both were built of stone blocks bonded with soil. From this point southward, the urban layout changes, as the structures follow a northeast/southwest orientation, maintained up to the southern end of the section. Four streets have been identified: one 5 meters wide running east-west, and three others 3 meters wide (with rainwater drainage channels and several curbstones) running northeast/southwest (*Fig. 12*).

Section SII, also perpendicular to the northern wall of the enclosure, currently measures 20 x 3 m. It has so far revealed two walls corresponding to two buildings, a possible pedestrian area, and two large storage vessels of the dolia type. The most impressive is the wall located in the southern part of the section, of which no fewer than 17 assizes have been preserved (*Fig. 13*). It appears to have had at least two phases: one construction phase of the opus mixtum type, and a second restoration phase in its current upper portion. The construction phase of this building belongs to the time of Emperor Justinian (527-565), as at the base of the building's foundation plinth a small "foundation" coin hoard was discovered, composed of 7 bronze coins according to the catalog below:

Catalog of hoard (I):

1. Anastasius I, 1 Follis, 40 nummia, Constantinople mint, years 512-517;

2. Justinus I, 2 folles, 40 nummia, Constantinople mint, officinae A and E, years 522-527;

3. Justinus I - Justinianus I, 1 follis, 40 nummia, Nikomedia (Nicomedia) mint, years 522-538;

4. Justinianus I, 2 folles, 40 nummia, Constantinople mint, officinae B and delta, years 527-537;

5. Justinianus I, ½ follis 20 nummia (½ follis, 20 nummia), Constantinople mint, year 537.

This hoard appears to be a sum of money gathered from the commercial market of the town, relatively soon after the year 537 AD, whose sole purpose was to be buried at the foundation of the building, as a foundation deposit.

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Also, in the same section, within a layer approximately 15 cm thick and composed of a large amount of ash and burned construction debris (a layer identified throughout the entire fortress), a second coin hoard was discovered, composed of 6 bronze coins with various issuers (*Fig. 14*), according to the following catalog:

Catalog of hoard (II):

1. Justinus I - Justinianus I, 20 nummia, ½ folis (½ follis), Constantinople mint, years 522-538;

2. Justinianus I, 40 nummia, follis, Constantinople mint, years 527-537;

3. Justinus II, 20 nummia, ½ follis, Constantinople, years 568-569;

4-5. Justinus II, 20 nummia, ½ foliis (½ folles), Thessalonika (Thessalonica) mint, years 567/568, 569/570;

6. Justinus II, 10 nummia, 1/8 follis, Constantinople mint, years 565-578.

This hoard is inextricably linked to the known attacks on the town of Histria by the Avars during the reign of Justin II, with the destructive effects observed in excavations across several archaeological sectors.

*

The same issue of interpreting the monetary situation of the 6th century and the beginning of the 7th century observed at Tropaeum Traiani, is also encountered at Histria. There are relatively few published coins from all sectors investigated archaeologically in the second half of the 20th century (Nubar 1960: 183-195; Nubar 1966: 605-607; Nubar 1973: 78-83, 199-233; Poenaru Bordea 1982: 149-166), and fewer coins, among those discovered archaeologically, published in the last two decades of the 21st century, despite all the laudable efforts, especially of the researchers Gh. Poenaru Bordea and Theodor Isvoranu (Poenaru Bordea, Ocheșeanu, Popeea 2004; Poenaru Bordea, Dima 2007: 153-193; Isvoranu, Dăbîca 2014: 157-171; Isvoranu, Dăbîca 2018: 211-230) – a fact that affects the ability to formulate substantial observations and conclusions.

In a volume dedicated to the Byzantine monetary circulation in the province of Scythia during the 6th–7th centuries, we observed that there was a stagnation corresponding to the years 570-578, followed by an actual decrease in the value of the folles/year coefficient – this trend also appears in the two subsequent stages during the reign of Tiberius II Constantine. Finally, the stage 582-602 AD places Histria alongside other centers that suffered during the raids of the 590s.

Nevertheless, in my opinion, and considering for example the archaeological discoveries made so far in the Metaxa sector (ceramic, amphorae, etc.), we can speak of a decline in the urban character of Histria, but it is still far from being fully correct to use the term "ruralization" as early as the end of the 6th century. It was found that the ceramics resulting from recent research in the Metaxa sector, and later thoroughly examined, can be divided into two chronological levels belonging to the 6th and 7th centuries. On the other hand, the presence of several ceramic categories was found, namely table, kitchen, and drinking ceramics, as well as lighting and amphorae used for the transport of olive oil and fish products. In terms of provenance, the ceramic material was imported from several geographical areas, such as Oriental (the Orient/ Eastern regions), Aegean, Pontic and North African. From the discussed lot, the ceramics produced locally, either on the wheel – kitchen ceramics – or worked by hand, are notable, the latter can be chronologically placed in the 7th century (Honcu, Talmațchi, Sodoleanu 2024).

Also from a monetary point of view, in the Metaxa sector we mention the isolated discovery of a follis issued for Emperor Heraclius, overstruck on a follis struck for Justin II, at the Constantinople mint, in the years 612/613 - 615/616. To these discoveries, we add a series of coins found during archaeological excavations and also as isolated finds – four folles issued for Emperor Heraclius in the years 612-

613, overstruck on coins of Justin II, all originating from Constantinople. These latest coin specimens were discovered in the northeastern area of the late town, adjacent to the Metaxa sector. While we cannot yet be certain, we may consider whether it is possible that only the northwestern and northeastern areas of the former town remained inhabited during the time of Heraclius, possibly witnessing a contraction of the inhabited area due to a sharp decline in population.

As indicated by current archaeological research in the Metaxa sector, a definitive end to habitation in the area of the former town (more precisely in the northwestern and northeastern parts) should likely be sought beyond the first two or even three decades of the 7th century.

Instead of a conclusion

Stratigraphic, archaeological and monetary observations, together with the exceptional discoveries, can complement each other harmoniously thus contributing to the identification of important sequences in the life of the local community during the 6th–7th centuries AD in Tropaeum Traiani and Histria, two of the most important provincial centers in the Roman province of Scythia.

The fortress of Tropaeum Traiani, in all its current complexity, together with the numerous discoveries mentioned throughout this article, represents a remarkable historical and archaeological site, of primary importance among the Roman-era sites in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. Based on currently published monetary discoveries, it is possible to conclude that the end of urban habitation began as early as the last decades of the 6th century AD, but there still remain several important aspects to clarify, hopefully in the near future, before we can be fully conclusive in this regard.

Unlike Tropaeum Traiani, Histria was a city located on the shore of the Black Sea, with a history spanning 12 centuries. It was a place where merchant ships arrived with a wide variety of goods much more easily than was possible in the interior of the province in the early 7th century. We consider that during the early rule of Emperor Heraclius, the term ruralization seems forced in the case of Histria, at least at this stage of research. Rather, on a case-by-case basis, we can speak of a reduction in the inhabited area and, from the perspective of our topic, a reduction in monetary flow – merely with fewer specimens physically present – while the connection with the Empire had not yet been completely severed.

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Fig. 1. Drone view of the ancient town of Tropaeum Traiani (2024)

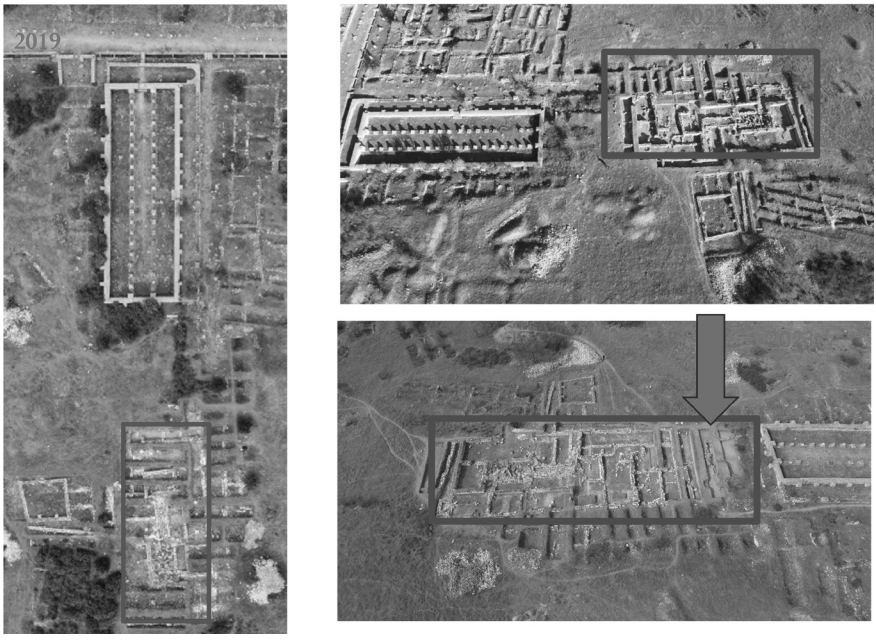


Fig. 2. Stages of the archaeological research of the *Domus*-type building no. 2 in sector C (situations in 2019, 2022, 2023)



Fig. 3. The atrium of the *Domus*-type building in sector C

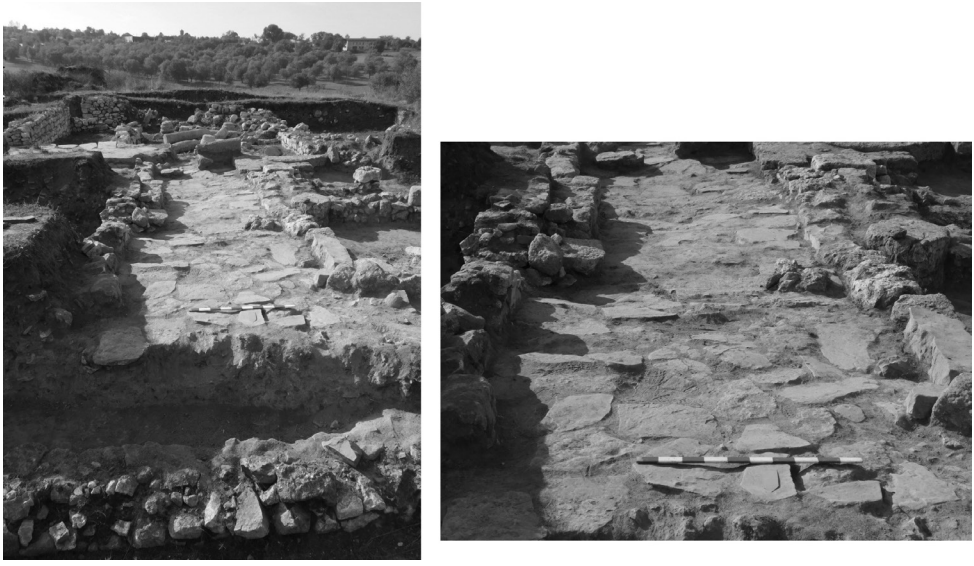


Fig. 4. The central hall of the *Domus*-type building in sector C

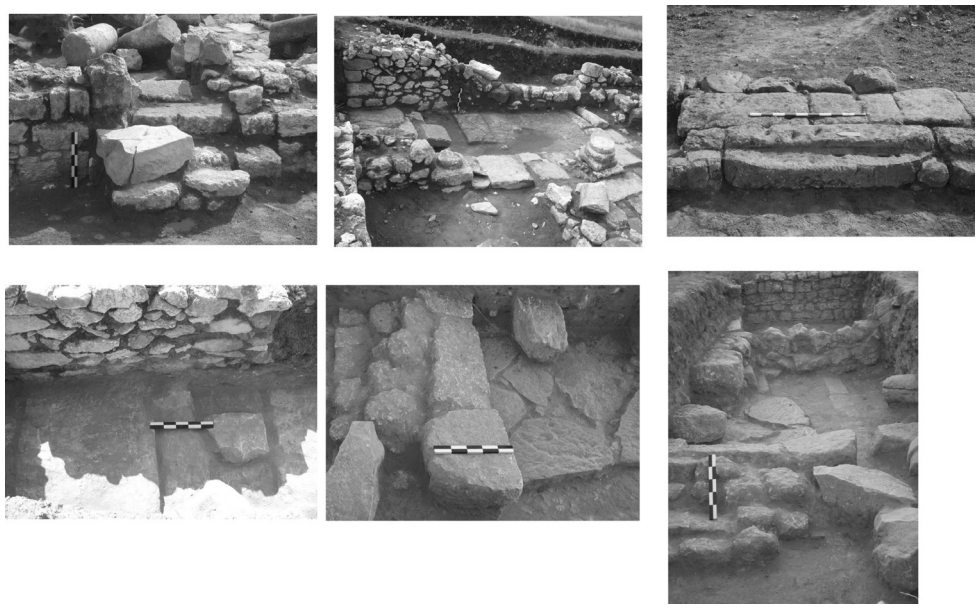


Fig. 5. Side and interior entrances of the *Domus*-type building in sector C

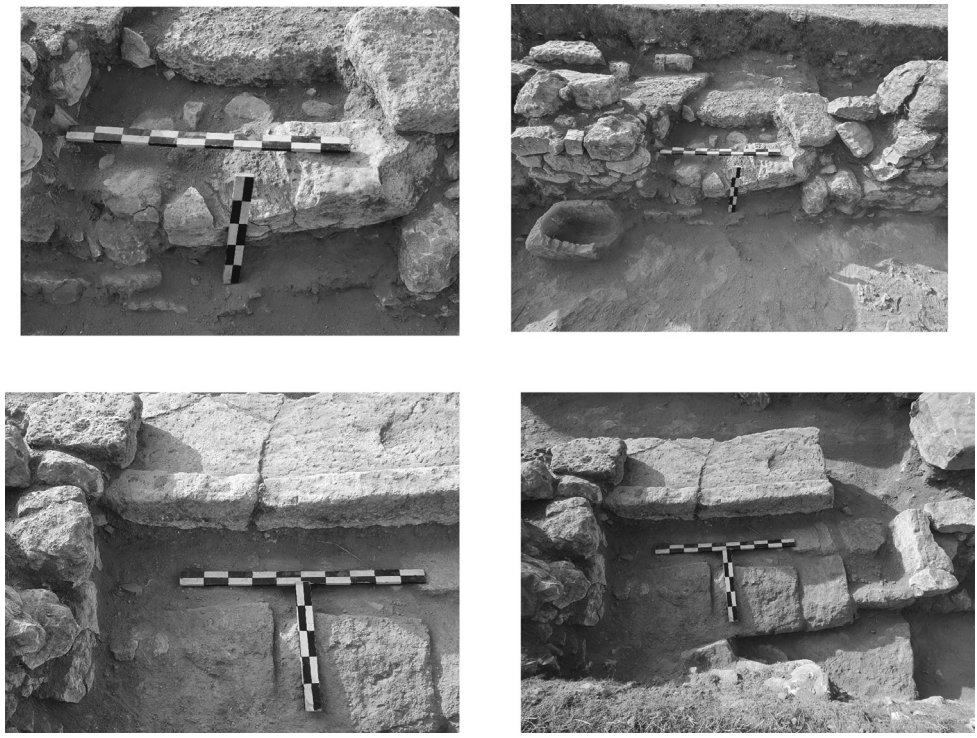


Fig. 6. The entrances to the annex building no. 4 discovered in 2023 north of the *Domus*-type building



Fig. 7. Detail from the archaeological research in the southwest corner of annex building no. 4

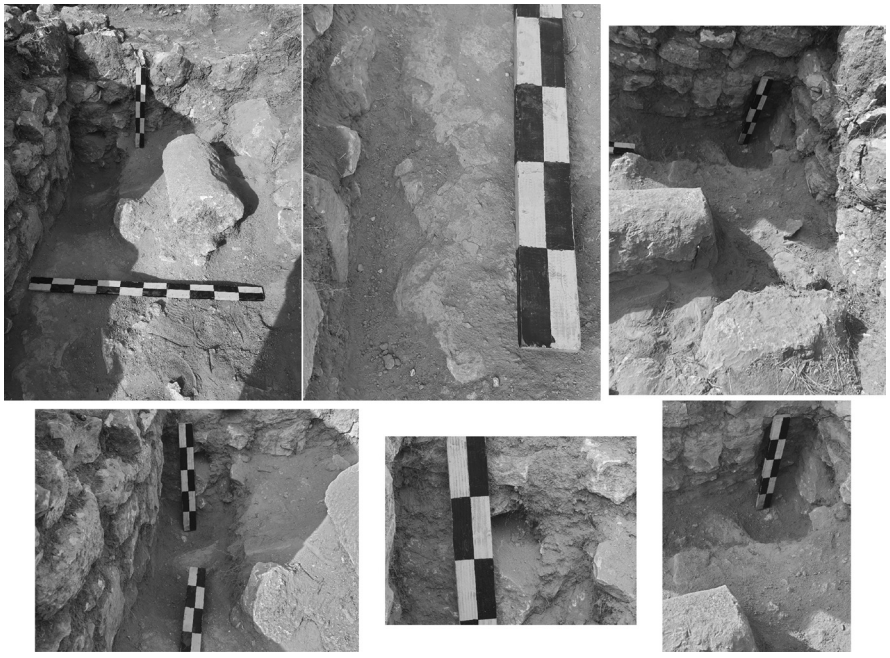


Fig. 8. The southwest corner of annex building no. 4 with the wooden roof pillar

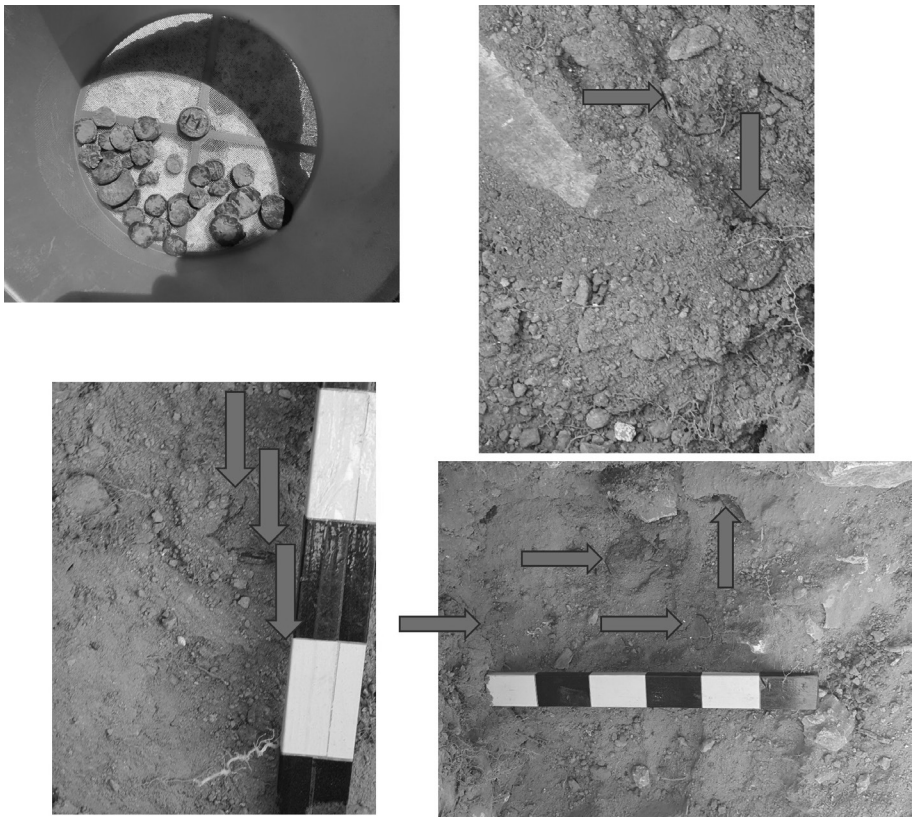


Fig. 9. The monetary hoard dated to the 6th century discovered in the annex building (2023)



Fig. 10. Location of the Metaxa-Constanța sector in the citadel of Histria



Fig. 11. Sections SI and SII of the Metaxa-Constanța district of Histria (situation in 2024)

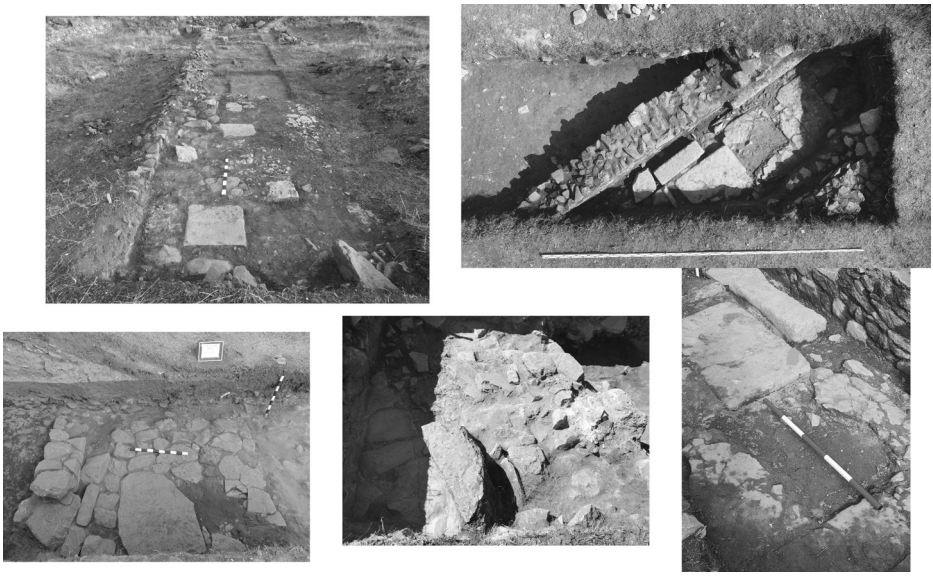


Fig. 12. Late Roman and early Byzantine streets discovered in SI (Histria)



Fig. 13. North side of an imposing edifice discovered in SII (6th–7th centuries AD) (Histria)



Fig. 14. Discovery of the monetary hoard (II) from SII (Histria)

ГОДИШНИК НА СОФИЙСКИЯ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“
ЦЕНТЪР ЗА СЛАВЯНО-ВИЗАНТИЙСКИ ПРОУЧВАНИЯ „ИВАН ДУЙЧЕВ“
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ИКОНОМИЧЕСКО РАЗВИТИЕ И ТЪРГОВСКИ КОНТАКТИ НА ЗАЛДАПА В ПЕРИОДА IV–VII ВЕК (ПО ДАННИ ОТ КЕРАМИКАТА)[1]

НИКОЛАЙ РУСЕВ

Abstract: For several seasons of research, the ancient city of Zaldapa has yielded significant quantity of pottery. The ceramic material dates mainly from the Late Roman period. From the mid-4th to the mid-5th century, the only findings are Pontic slipped wares; they disappeared after this period. After the mid-5th century, Late Roman C and African Red Slipped Wares are discovered, the first one significantly prevailing. As for the amphorae, for the period of the 4th and the first half of 5th century, vessels from the Pontic area predominated. Wine was the main product transported from the Pontic region. n this period, trade and different kind of contacts with the Eastern Mediterranean were developed intensively. Mainly olive oil and wine were transported. During the period up to the mid-5th century, mainly amphorae of type LRA2 were registered. After this period contacts with Aegean, Levant and Palestine regions intensified. Regarding the contacts with North Africa, and in the early period of Late antiquity in particular, one can say they were insignificant. The number or amphorae increases after the mid-5th and especially in the 6th century.

Keywords: Zaldapa, late Roman pottery, late Roman slipped wares, amphorae

Залдапа е разположена в местността Калето, между селата Добрин и Абрит, на обширен полуостров с дължина 1200 м и ширина 500 м (Торбатов 2000: 5). До първото десетилетие на XXI век там не са провеждани системни разкопки. От този период са известни спорадични публикации на укрепителната система на града. Системни археологически проучвания започват през 2014 г. под ръководството на проф. Георги Атанасов, в резул-

[1] Настоящият текст е резултат от научните изследвания на автора по проект „Граници и културни модели: езичество *vs* християнство в контактната зона на Дунавския *лимес* (Малка Скития и Втора Мизия през IV-VII в.)“, финансиран от Фонд „Научни изследвания“ на МОН по договор № КП-06-Н60/10 от 17.11.2021 г.

тат на което е проучена основно с църковната архитектура (Atanassov, Valeriev 2020: 33–58; Atanassov, Valeriev 2021: 45–80).

В хода на проучванията е открит значително количество керамичен материал. До момента статистически са обработени 6700 керамични фрагмента. Графично и фотографски са документирани 658 от тях, разделени в следните хронологични групи: предримска епоха, римска епоха и Късна античност (*Диаг. 1*)[2].

Целта на настоящата работа е проследяване на търговските взаимоотношения и икономическото състояние на Залдапа в периода IV – началото на VII век на база на обработената до момента керамика[3]. От това време са засвидетелствани следните технологични групи: импортна керамика, битова керамика, излъскана керамика, керамика на ръка, амфори, лампи и питоси (*Диаг. 2*). От тях най-важна информация за търговските контакти и икономическото състояние на Залдапа може да се получи от импортната керамика и амфорите. Затова тези категории ще бъдат разгледани в детайли.

А. Импортна керамика

Засвидетелствани са съдове от Понтийската зона, Северна Африка и Мала Азия.

Понтийска зона

Опаиц, тип IV (*Табл. 1, 1*)

Големи паници с широко устие и плоско дъно. Изработени са от глина с червен оттенък и покритие от червен лак. Диаметърът на устието е над 38 см, което е характерно за много големите съдове от типа (Arsen'eva, Domżalski 2002: 426). Върху перваза на съдовете се регистрира украса от вълнообразни линии. Датировката на типа е в границите на края на IV – първата половина на V в. (Opaiţ 2004: 75).

Опаиц, тип II (*Табл. 1, 2*)

Паници със завито навън устие. Изработени са от оранжева глина и покритие от червен лак. Диаметърът на устието е над 28 см, което е по-нехарактерно за повечето съдове от типа (Arsen'eva, Domżalski 2002: 425). Датировката на типа е основно в първата половина на V в. (Opaiţ 2004: 75).

Малоазийска керамика

Представената група е наречена с термина „Late Roman C" – т. нар. „Фокейска" керамика (Waagé, 1933: 51–52).

2 Изказвам благодарност на проф. Георги Атанасов и неговия екип за възможността да обработя и публикувам керамичния материал.

3 Настоящата статия е с предварителен характер. Керамичният комплекс ще бъде обект на цялостно изследване в отделно издание.

Хейс, форма 2А (*Табл.* 1, 3)

Паници със слабо извито тяло, наклонено навътре устие и плоско дъно, в много случаи украсено с щампована декорация. Червена глина с покритие от червено-кафяв лак. Датировката е в границите началото–средата на V в. (Hayes 1972: 329).

Хейс, форма 3 (*Табл.* 1, 4–6)

Най-разпространеният тип съдове. Характеризират се с вертикално устие – в повечето случаи по-тъмно, понякога и до черно в резултат на горенето (Hayes 1972: 329). Изработени са от червена или червено-кафява глина и покритие от червен или кафяв лак с различни цветови нюанси. Датировката е след втората половина на V–VI в. (Hayes 1972: 337–338).

Хейс, форма 8 (*Табл.* 2, **7**)

Конични купи с увиснало навън, набраздено в основата устие. Изработени са от червена или червено-кафява глина с покритие от червен лак. Датировката е след средата на V и до началото на VI в. (Hayes 1972: 342).

Северноафриканска керамика

Хейс, форма 99 С (*Табл.* 2, 8)

Купи с полусферична форма. Почти вертикално, изправено устие, разделено от тялото с остра релефна линия. Изработени са от червено-кафява глина с покритие от кафяв лак. Диаметърът на устието е 18 см. Датировката е в рамките на VI в. (Hayes 1972: 155).

Хейс, форма 105 (*Табл.* 2, 9)

Големи плата с плитък, наклонен навътре, до квадратен ръб на устието. Изработени са от кафява глина и покритие от кафяв лак. Разграничени са няколко варианта, всичките с датировка след 580 г. (Hayes 1972:169).

Б. Амфори

Понтийска зона

От ареала на Понтийската зона са засвидетелствани основно амфори от Синопе и Хераклея. Значително по-малко са съдовете от Западния Понт и Долен Дунав.

Тип Синопе (*Табл.* 2, 10–11)

В своята работа, посветена на керамичния материал в периода IV – началото на VII в., Г. Кузманов разделя вариантите на два отделни типа – X и XI (Кузманов 1985:16–17). В по-ново време се налага определянето на един тип с различни варианти (Kassab Tezgör 2009: 121–140). Амфорите имат най-общо издължено конично или крушовидно тяло, добили след изпичането червен, тухленочервен или сиво-бежов цвят. Съдовете са покрити с червеникава, в редки случаи до оранжева ангоба. Съдовете от типа са използвани за транс-

порт и съхранение на вино с различен капацитет на вместимост и основно се датират в периода IV до първата половина на V в. (Opaiţ 2010: 373–389).

Шелов, тип Е (*Табл.* 3, 12)

Амфорите от района на Хераклея Понтика, произвеждани за транспорт и съхранение на вино са едни от най-широко разпространените през римската епоха (Borislavova 2018: 47). Ясна отличителна черта на съдовете е характерната висока тясна шия. Изработени са от бежова глина и покритие от светло-бежова ангоба. Много точни аналогии на фрагментите от Залдапа се откриват в Тиритаке с датировка в първата половина на V в. (Smokotina 2016: 715).

Кузманов, тип XV (*Табл.* 3, 13)

Амфори с издължено цилиндрично, в редки случаи конично тяло, покрито с плитки, широки бразди и добили след изпичането тъмен червено-кафяв или тухленочервен цвят. Като примес в глиненото тесто са добавяни кварцови частици, пясък, слюда и ситни камъчета. Всички съдове са покрити с белезникава до жълто-бяла ангоба. Устието е масивно, заоблено навън, слабо удебелено. Цилиндрична, набраздена шия. Дръжките са дъговидни, масивни, канелирани. Заоблено или конично дъно с масивен израстък в центъра. Тялото на някои екземпляри е покрито с дипинти или графити (Кузманов 1985: 20).

Основната част от амфорите е с датировка в VI до началото на VII в. (Кузманов 1985: 21).

Късна версия на Зеест, тип 80 (*Табл.* 3, 14–15)

Големи крушовидни амфори, добили след изпичането тъмнокафяв или в редки случаи, сив цвят. Глината е много груба, с примеси от кварцови частици, ситни или едри камъчета, непречистен пясък и слюда. Масивно устие с хоризонтално срязан или наклонен навътре ръб. Масивна шия, слабо разширяваща се към устието и тялото. Масивни, разперени дръжки с елипсовидно сечение или няколко остри канелюри. По тялото на някои амфори – щамповани кръстове с надписи или графити. Масивно, заоблено дъно, понякога с груби релефни линии в основата (Кузманов 1985: 13).

Съдържанието на съдовете е неизвестно (Swan 2009: 112). Капацитетът варира между 78,1 и 86,9 литра (Swan 2009: 113) Произходът на типа е неизвестен, като на база примесите в глиненото тесто се предполага, че трябва да се търси в западната част на Понтийската зона (Swan 2009: 114).

Източно Средиземноморие

Тип Late Roman Amphorae 1 (*Табл.* 4, 16)

В литературата амфорите са известни като LRA 1, название, дадено от Дж. Райли (Riley 1979). У нас за пръв път са описани от Г. Кузманов (Кузманов 1985: 18). Разграничени са четири основни варианта на типа (Pieri 1998: 98–99).

Яйцевидни или леко цилиндрични амфори с белезникав, светло-бежов, бежово-кафяв или розов цвят. Като примес в тестото са добавяни пясък, слюда, кварцови частици и каолин. В съдовете е транспортирано и съхранявано вино. Материалите от по-ранния вариант LRA1A от края на IV – първата половина на V в. са незначителни. Почти всички документирани примери са от вариант LRA1B от VI–VII век (Pieri 1998: 99).

Тип Late Roman Amphora 2 (*Табл.* 4, 17)

Най-разпространеният тип амфори. Типът е един от най-широко засвидетелстваните на Балканския полуостров в периода на Късната античност (Karagiorgou 1999: 133). Съдовете са с най-общо форма на два конуса, съединени в най-тясната си част при шията и устието. Изработени са от червено-кафява глина със съответните цветови оттенъци, с покритие от белезникава ангоба. Контейнерите са предназначение за транспорт и съхранение основно на зехтин (Karagiorgou 1999: 146).

Тип Late Roman Amphorae 3 (*Табл.* 5, 18)

Съдовете са изработени от глина с тъмнокафяв цвят. Като примес в тестото са добавяни пясък и слюда. Последната е умишлено прибавяна при нанасянето на ангобата, полепнала по повърхността на много от амфорите. Ангобата е плътна, тъмнокафява. Устието е извито навън, удебелено, отделено от шията с релефна линия. Шия – цилиндрична, с или без бразди, разширяваща се към тялото. Малки S-видни дръжки с елипсовидно напречно сечение или надлъжни канелюри. Дъното най-често е заоблено, завършващо с кухо столче, по-рядко равно. Амфорите от типа са служели са пренос и съхранение на вино (Parachiv 2006: 85–86). Документираните съдове от Залдапа принадлежат към вариант А по типологията на Доминик Пиери с датировка в IV – първа половина на V в. и капацитет от 6–7 литра (Pieri 1998: 100-101).

Левант и Палестина

Тип Газа (*Табл.* 5, 19)

Типът е известен като Gaza, по името на района, в който е произвеждан (Zemer 1977: 61). Високи цилиндрично-конични съдове, добили след изпичането кафяв (тъмен или светъл) и сив цвят. Като примес в тестото са добавяни основно пясък, по-рядко слюда. Всички амфори имат под устието грубо долепен релефен пояс. Като цяло общата цилиндрично-конична форма е спазена, но има съществени различия при оформянето на устието, което от своя страна води до изменения, основно в горната половина на съдовете, при някои и различия (предимно издължаване или закръгляне) в цялостната форма. Това води до разделянето на типа на няколко варианта (Majcherek 1995: 163–178). Засвидетелстваните в Залдапа амфори са от периода след средата на V и VI в.

Северна Африка

Тип Африкана IIC (*Табл.* 5, 20)

Това е най-многобройната част от групата "Africana Grande". В повечето случаи, устието е широко, заоблено – рядко с гребени в самата основа. Глината е предимно с кафяв, светъл цвят, рядко – кафяво-червена. Като примес в тестото са добавяни кварцови частици и пясък. При всичките съдове, ангобата е измита с белезникаво-бял до светлокафяв цвят. Устието е широко, масивно, заоблено. Шията – цилиндрична. Произходът на амфорите е от Северна Африка, като съдовете са служили за транспорт и съхранение на риба и рибен сос (Keay 1984: 119) с датировка в края на III – началото на IV в. (Bonifay 2004: 115).

Кий, тип VIII (*Табл.* 5, 21)

Амфори с най-общо цилиндрично устие и тяло, добили след изпичането светло до бледокафяв цвят. Като примес в глината са добавяни ситни камъчета. В изследваните примери, ангобата е силно измита със светлокафяв до кафяво-жълт цвят. Устието е цилиндрично, рядко наклонено. Характерен белег на типа е ясното разграничение между шията и устието, посредством силно изразена остра релефна линия. Амфорите имат тунизийски произход (Keay 1984: 129) с датировка във втората половина на V – началото на VI в. (Bonifay 2004: 132).

Тип spatheion (*Табл.* 5, 22)

Амфори с издължено гладко тяло, с тухлено или кафяво-червен цвят. Съдовете са покрити с белезникава ангоба. Устието може да бъде оформено по различен начин, което позволява разделянето на няколко варианта. Дръжките са малки, гладки, прикрепени за шията. При всички, тялото е гладко, дъното – конично, дълго, тясно, завършващо с конично краче. Всичките съдове са с датировка в края на VI и VII в. (Bonifay 2004: 129).

Кий, тип 62Q (*Табл.* 5, 23)

Един от разнообразните и широко разпространени северноафрикански типове. Глината е червено-кафява, червеникава, жълто-бежова на цвят или с розов оттенък. Като примес в тестото е добавян пясък, ситни кварцови частици, ситни камъчета или стриди. Ангобата е белезникава в различни оттенъци. Съдовете са с произход от района на Тунис и са предназначени за транспорт и съхранение на зехтин (Keay 1984: 347). Датировката е в края на V – началото на VI в. (Bonifay 2004: 137).

Изследваният материал позволява да се направят следните изводи за икономическото развитие и най-вече за търговските контакти на Залдапа в периода на Късната античност.

1. От средата на IV до средата на V в. са регистрирани само Понтийски червенолакови изделия, които липсват след средата на V в. След средата на

V в. са регистрирани импортни изделия от Мала Азия и Северна Африка, като тези от Мала Азия преобладават значително.

2. Що се отнася до амфорите от периода IV – първата половина на V в., преобладават съдовете от Понтийската зона – след средата на V в. се увеличава броят на амфори от Западния Понт и Долен Дунав. От района на Понтика е транспортирано основно вино.

3. Най-интензивни и значими са търговските контакти с Източното Средиземноморие. Доставяни са основно зехтин и вино. В периода до средата на V в. са регистрирани основно амфори от тип LRA2 – за транспорт на зехтин. След средата на V в. се засилват контактите с района на Егея, Левант и Палестина.

4. Относно контактите със Северна Африка, в началния период на Късната античност (края на III – първата половина на IV в.), те са незначителни. Броят на амфорите се увеличава след средата на V и особено през VI в. От Северна Африка са доставяни основно риба, рибни продукти и вино.

На основа на изследваните материали могат ясно да се разграничат два периода в икономическото развитие и търговските връзки на Залдапа – до и след средата на V в. В първия период превес имат търговските контакти с Понтийската зона, докато след средата на V в. се засилват контактите със Северна Африка и Източното Средиземноморие.

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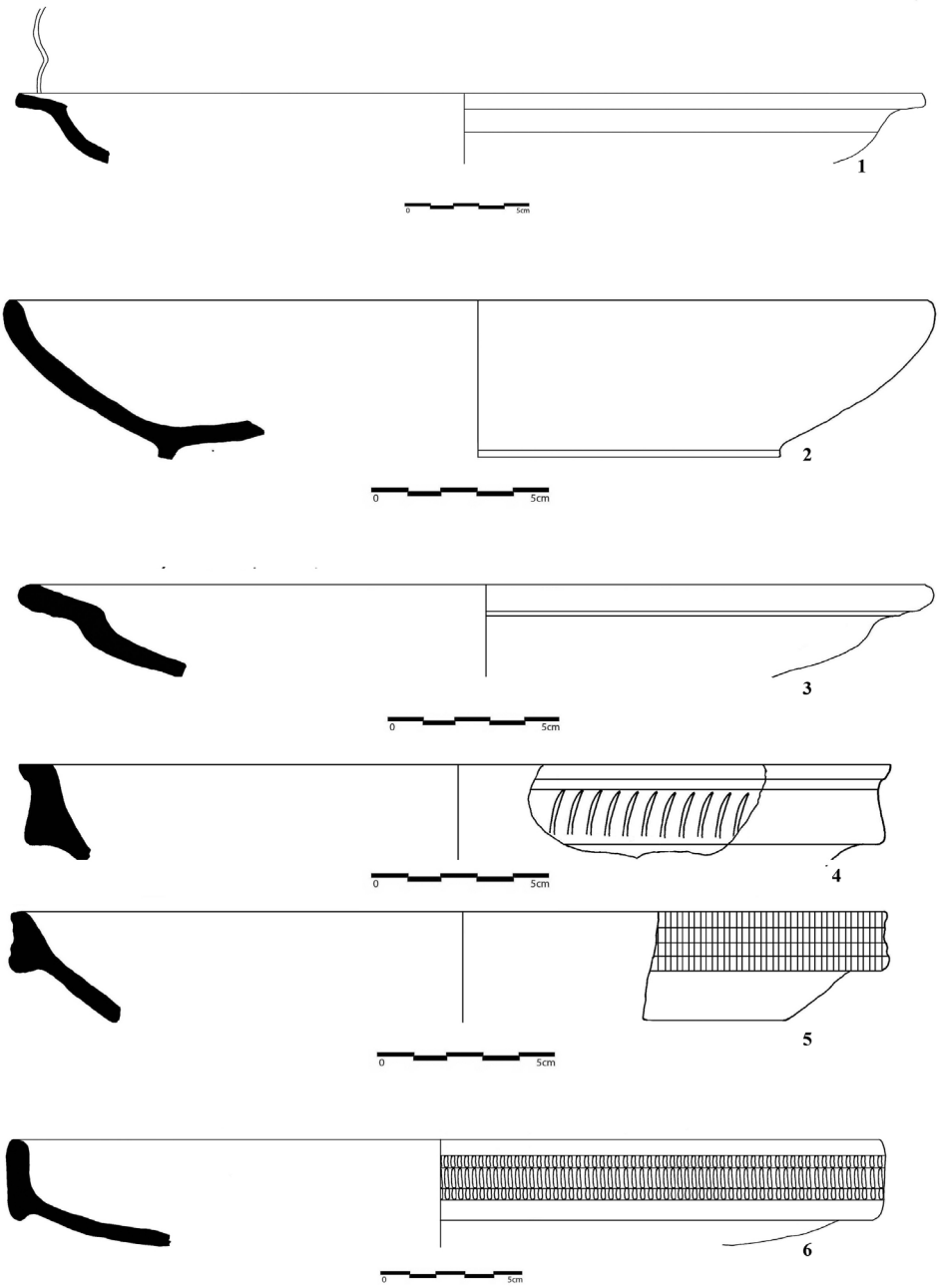
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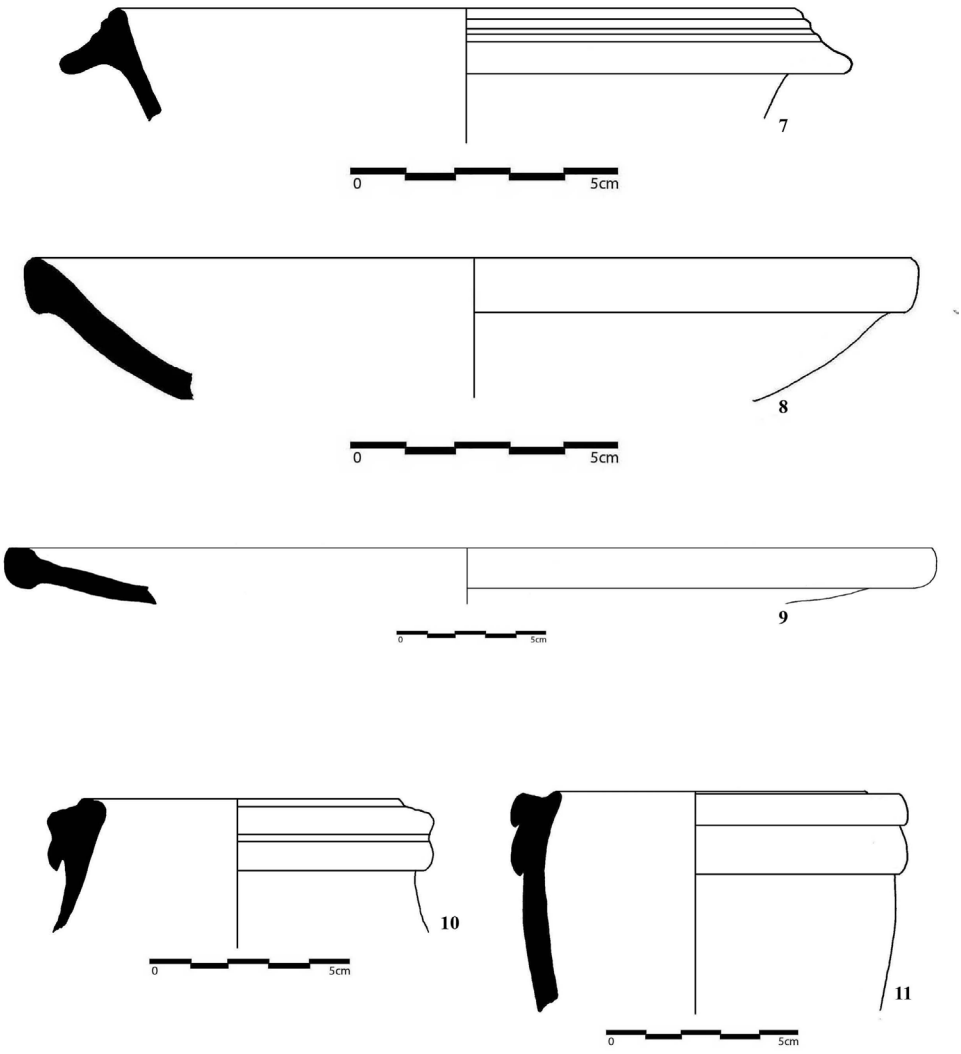
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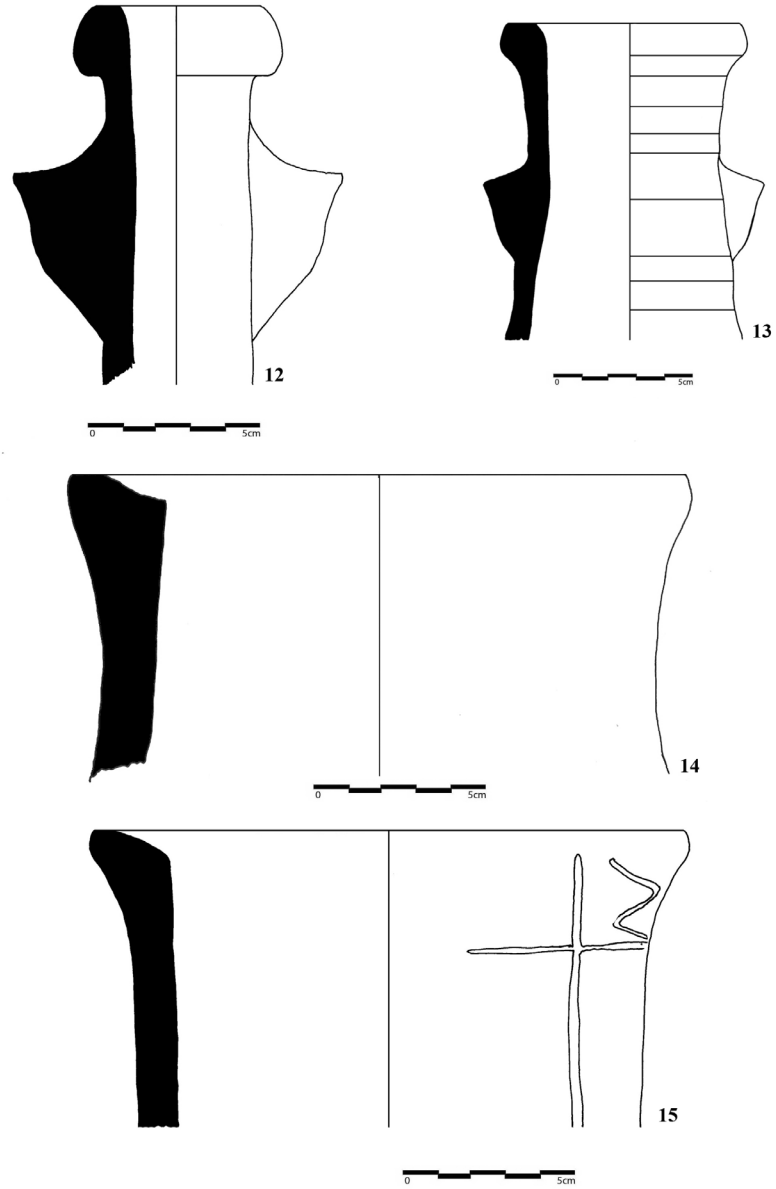
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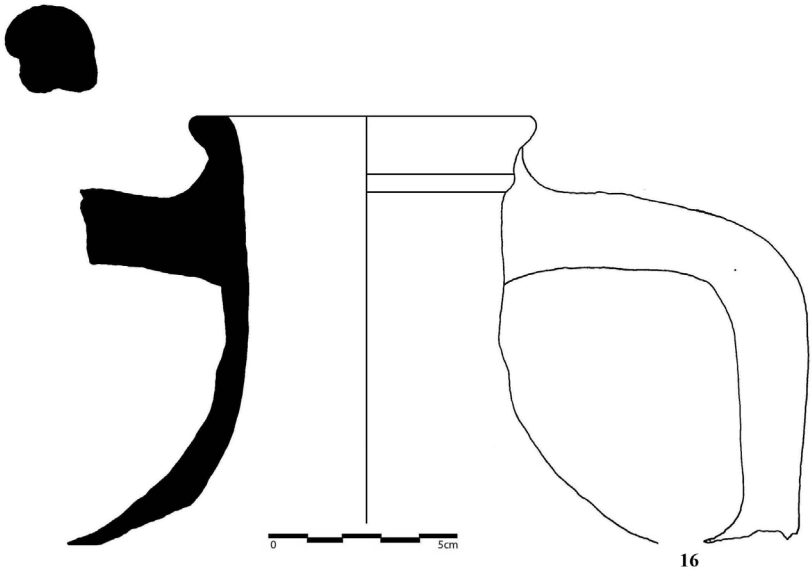
Табло 1. **1.** Опаиц, тип IV; **2.** Опаиц, тип II; **3.** Хейс, форма 2А; **4-6.** Хейс, форма 3

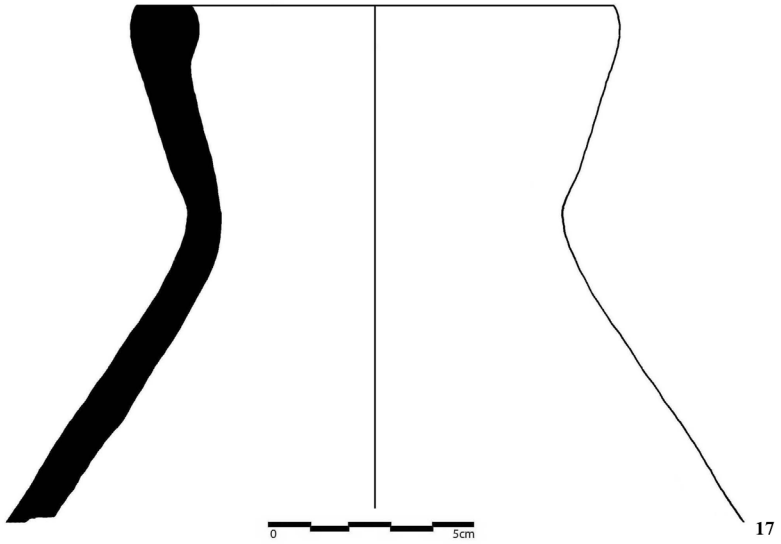


Табло 2. **7.** Хейс, форма 8; **8.** Хейс, форма 99C; **9.** Хейс, форма 105; 1**0-11.** Амфори тип Синопе

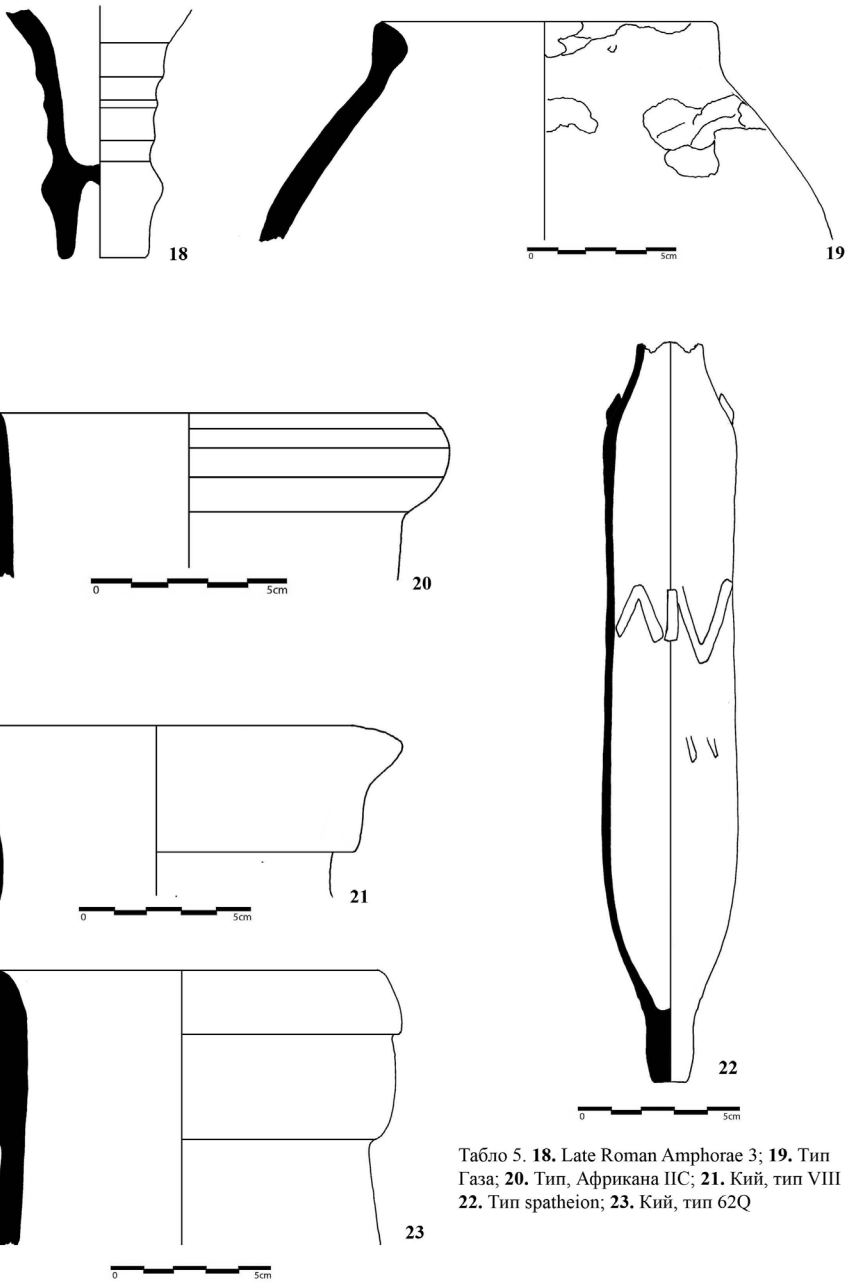


Табло 3. **12.** Шелов, тип E; **13.** Кузманов, тип XV; **14-15.** Късна версия на Зеест, тип 80

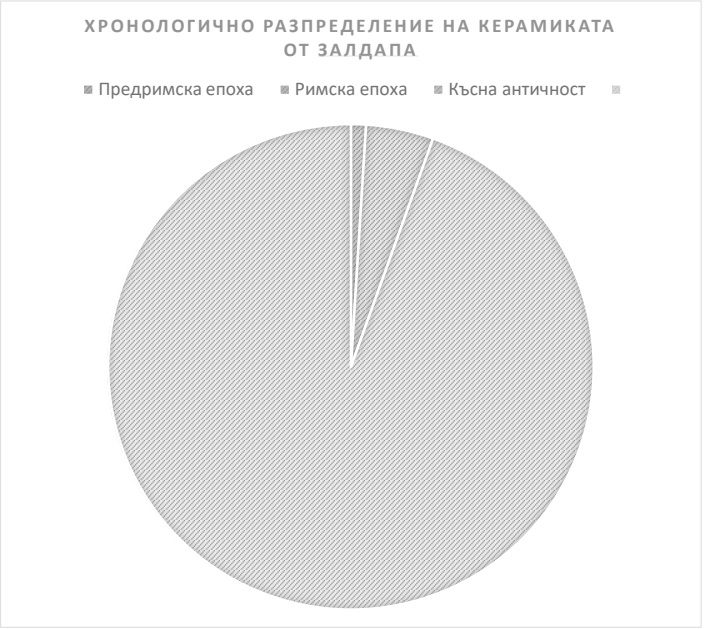




Табло 4. **16.** Late Roman Amphorae 1; **17.** Late Roman Amphorae 2



Табло 5. **18.** Late Roman Amphorae 3; **19.** Тип Газа; **20.** Тип, Африкана IIC; **21.** Кий, тип VIII **22.** Тип spatheion; **23.** Кий, тип 62Q


ХРОНОЛОГИЧНО РАЗПРЕДЕЛЕНИЕ НА КЕРАМИКАТА ОТ ЗАЛДАПА
Предримска епоха
Римска епоха
Късна античност


РАЗПРЕДЕЛЕНИЕ НА КЪСНОАНТИЧНАТА КЕРАМИКА ОТ ЗАЛДАПА
импортна керамика
битова керамика
излъскана керамика
керамика на ръка
амфори
питоси
лампи
1
0,6
10
37
50
1
1

ГОДИШНИК НА СОФИЙСКИЯ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“
ЦЕНТЪР ЗА СЛАВЯНО-ВИЗАНТИЙСКИ ПРОУЧВАНИЯ „ИВАН ДУЙЧЕВ“
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ANNUAIRE DE L'UNIVERSITE DE SOFIA "ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI"
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DEATHSCAPES OF DOBRUDJA AND CRIMEA: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

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Abstract: Погребалните пространства на Добруджа и Кримския полуостров през Късната античност твърде рядко – ако изобщо – са били съпоставяни едни с други. Погребалните камери, използвани като семейни гробници, са налице и в двата региона, но такива с изрисувани кръстове и надписи от периода на VI в. не са известни от Крим. Обратното, изобилието от погребални находки, особено оръжия, типични за Крим, не намира паралели в гробните камери от Добруджа. Нещо повече, изсечените цистови гробове и вторичните погребения в праисторически могили не се откриват в района между Черно море и Долен Дунав. Същевременно катакомби като онези, разкрити в Констанца, не се срещат в Крим. Нито пък некрополът около базиликата в Истрия, разположена извън крепостните стени, има свои паралели на Кримския полуостров. И докато погребалните пространства в Добруджа и Крим от VI в. са белязани от стабилна християнизация на погребалните практики, Добруджа – на фона на Кримския полуостров – е била отворена в по-голяма степен към нови тенденции и влияния.

Keywords: funerary chamber, cist, niche grave, barrow, catacomb.

Few scholars have ventured to compare the northwestern and northern coasts of the Black Sea in Late Antiquity. Those who did typically focused on artifacts – fine pottery and lamps – or architecture, not practices (Domżalski 2021; Chrzanovski, Zhuravlev, Topoleanu 2019; Barsanti 1985; Аманасов 2020; see also Barnea 1965; Могаричев 2013). By contrast, a great deal of interest has recently been manifested regarding the funeral landscapes of the late antique Balkans, with comparisons drawn at a local or regional level (Ivanišević, Bugarski 2017-2018; Kurilić, Serventi 2018; Marano 2021; Soficaru, Sofaer 2021; Creţu 2022; Pavletič 2023; Ott 2023; Creţu, Soficaru 2024; Rife 2024). The deathscapes of late antique Dobrudja and Crimea have never received any comparable attention (For the concept of 'deathscape', see Maddrell, Sidaway 2010: 4-5). This is particularly surprising, given that the two regions of comparable size (23,154 square kilometers for Dobrudja; 27,000 square

kilometers for Crimea) are currently in the focus of research on the economic and social aspects of the transition from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages (Curta 2021). In this paper, I will explore comparatively the funeral landscapes of the northwestern and northern Black Sea regions, to draw some conclusions linking mortuary practices to the social and political organization on the northern frontier of the Empire.

The urban deathscapes of the two regions are alike. In Constanța (ancient Tomis), the cemetery believed to have been in the downtown area was explored in a patchwork fashion (Cheluță-Georgescu 1977: 258, 255 pl. II).[1] A group of four pit graves accidentally found under the present-day postal office no. 1, across the Tomis Boulevard from the Theater Park, has been tentatively dated to the 6th century (Cîrjan 1970: 383). The area was definitely used for burial during the first half of the 7th century, as indicated by the belt buckle of Schulze-Dörrlamm's class D 22 from a destroyed grave (Chera-Mărgineanu, Lungu 1983: 221 and 222 fig.; Rădulescu, Lungu 1989: 2576, 2578, 2577 fig. 8; Schulze-Dörrlamm 2002: 193-197). A larger group of 47 graves was excavated at the intersection of the Ion Gheorghe Duca and Constantin Brătescu Streets (Bucovală, Pașca 1992). Only one of them, a catacomb, was dated to the late 6th or early 7th century because of belt fittings with open-work decoration (Bucovală, Pașca 1992: 249, pls. 6 and 11; Трайкова 2017: 136, 150-154). More catacombs were found next to the intersection of the Ferdinand and I. C. Brătianu boulevards (Lungu, Chera-Mărgineanu 1992; Chera-Mărgineanu, Lungu 1983). In one of them, four skeletons were found together with a belt buckle of Traykova's class VIIIa, dated to the late 6th or early 7th century (Chera-Mărgineanu, Lungu 1983: 218 and 222 fig.; Трайкова 2017: 85-86). A similar buckle was found in Mangalia (ancient Callatis), in a singular grave of a large cemetery with 367 graves (most of them dated to the 4th century), excavated on both sides of the Oituz Street (Preda 1980). Grave 132 was covered with a tent of pitched tiles. Besides the silver buckle, there was also a gold coin struck for Justinian between 538 and 545 AD (Preda 1980: 95 and pl. LXV). A funerary chamber was later found on the territory of that cemetery (Pillinger 1992). Inside the chamber, the remains of 11 skeletons had been pushed to the corners, to make room for later burials (Pillinger 1992: 101). Built in stone, the chamber's walls were painted in red with crosses, short prayers ("Lord, help me", "Redeem me") and a quote from Psalm 22: 4 ("I will fear no evil, for you are with me") (Pillinger 1992: 99-100; Georgescu, Ionescu 1995-1996: 198 and 192 fig. 3a-b).

[1] The underground chambers excavated in the area of the Griviția Market, by the intersection of the Mircea cel Bătrân Street and Cuza Vodă streets, and across the former street from its intersection with the Sarmizegetusa Street have all been tentatively dated to the 6th century (Cheluță-Georgescu 1977: 254-256 and figs. 1-2). Such claims are based on two buckles with embossed ornament (Cheluță-Georgescu 1974: 363-368, 367 pl. I and pl. III/3; Cheluță-Georgescu 1977: 254, pl. I/1; Kazanski 1994: 159-161). However, such buckles can only be dated to the second half of the 5th century (Schulze-Dörrlamm 2002: 59).

Walls painted in red also appear in several underground chambers in the cemetery outside the western wall of Chersonesus (modern Sevastopol), but none can be dated later than ca. 450 AD (Зубар 2009; Зубарь 2002; see also Хрушкова 2008). However, the cemetery was still in use after 650 AD, as indicated by the buckle of the Corinth type from chamber 1095 (Косцюшко-Валюжинич 1902: 100-101; Schulze-Dörrlamm 2009: 23). More chambers were dug into the ground next to the Karantinnaya Bay, to the east from the ancientcity, and farther to the northeast, near the village of Verkhn'osadove, on the eastern outskirts of Sevastopol (Zubar, Pillinger 2000-2001; Ушаков, Филиппенко 2001: 20; Фомин 2011: 135-136; Ушаков 2024). The metal mounts for a box and the horse tack found in one chamber were gold plated (Ушаков, Филиппенко 2001: 22-23). In Kerch (ancient Bosporus), excavations on the northern (First Esplanade Street), eastern (Ribakova Street), and southern (Second Mithridates Street) slopes of Mount Mitridat brought to light sections of what is believed, as in Constanța, to be one and the same large cemetery. Some of the 118 graves known so far may be dated to the late 6th and the first half of the 7th-century date (Айбабин и др. 2023: 26, 27 ил. 25/4; Якобсон 1959: 275; Зинько, Пономарев 2016: 124). Recent excavations along the Second Bosphorus Lane, between its intersection with the First Mithridates and Sverdlova streets, brought to light 98 graves of a similar date (Айбабин, Хайрединова 2018; Айбабин и др. 2023: 63-69, 224, 271-274, 291 рис. 15/М5.7, 480 рис. 204/М91.44). More than half of those graves are in simple pit graves, with the rest divided almost equally between cists and pits with stone lining (Айбабин, Хайрединова 2018: 40; different proportions in Айбабин и др. 2023: 33-37, 43 ил. 29). Stone slabs with carved crosses appear in both cists and pits with stone lining (Айбабин и др. 2023: 231, 239, 249, 271, 334 рис. 58, 335 рис. 59, 367 рис. 91, 406 рис. 130, 481 рис. 205/М91.35, 482 рис. 206). There is only one double burial, with two children (Айбабин и др. 2023: 232). About a quarter of all burials have no grave goods whatsoever. Most other graves have modest goods, often just a belt buckle or a few glass beads. One of the most interesting graves is that of man buried together with a folded sword, a bow, and 12 arrowheads in a quiver (Айбабин и др. 2023: 226-228, 303 рис. 27, 312 рис. 36, 313 рис. 37, 314 рис. 38, 315 рис. 39, 316 рис. 40, 317 fig. 41). In Kerch, none of the chambers with walls covered in inscriptions and crosses painted in red, as in Mangalia, may be dated before 500 AD (Завадская 2009: 112-116). However, some underground chambers discovered in the early 20th century along the Hospital Street, to the northwest from Mount Mitridat, are of a 7th-century date. Chamber 52 had 11 skeletons, all in coffins, of which some were made of carved tree trunks (Шкорпил 1913: 18-21). Chamber 180 had benches along the walls, on which three skeletons were placed, in addition to another four on the floor (Засецкая 1997: 433).). There were 14 skeletons in chamber 78, eight of them in side niches. There were weapons next to one of them – a lancehead, a scramasax in wooden scabbard, and a shield boss (Засецкая 1997: 430, 471 табл. XV/4, 7-9). Arrowheads were also found in chamber 152 (Засецкая 1997: 434, 473

табл. XVII). Most impressive is the assemblage associated with a double chamber discovered in 1891: two swords, 24 arrowheads, two helmets, a lancehead, and two sets of lamellar armor (Кубарев, Ахмедов, Журавлев 2003: 204-205, 214-215, 207 рис. 2, 208 рис. 3, 209 рис. 4, 215 рис. 5, 216 рис. 6; see also Кубарев, Журавлев 2012). Judging by the golden strap end and belt mount found together with those weapons, this must have been the resting place of well-to-do person (Кубарев, Ахмедов, Журавлев 2003: 217 рис. 7 /1, 2). Golden earrings and pendants have also been found in other chambers (Засецкая 1997: 472 табл. XVI/4, 473 табл. XVII/1, 2).

In Dobrudja, funerary chambers also appear in non-urban contexts. Across the district road 223 from the Vinex Murfatlar vineyard near Cernavodă, a chamber was discovered at about 1 km from the early Byzantine fort at Axiopolis (Opriș 2024: 159-160). The chamber was made of stones, with a brick vault. Its entrance was blocked by a marble slab from a chancel. Crosses and stylized trees were painted in red on the walls. There were five skeletons on the floor – two men, two women, and a child. A golden cross like that in Mangalia and a pair of golden earrings bespeak the high status of those who were buried inside the chamber (Rădulescu, Lungu 1989: 2578, 2582, 2584-2587, 2583 figs. 15-17). Another chamber was found immediately outside the northern wall of the early Byzantine fort near Golesh (province of Silistra, Bulgaria). The chamber was made of stone, and its walls were decorated with crosses, some engraved into the plaster, others painted in red. There was only one skeleton in the chamber, placed in a pit dug into the floor and covered with six stone slabs. The entrance was blocked by a carved slab showing the Virgin Mary flanked by two angels (Atanasov 1997: 129; Atanasov 2004: 410).

In Crimea, no chamber was found isolated, as in Cernavodă and Golesh, but within larger cemeteries, as in Mangalia.[2] Moreover, all funerary chambers were carved into the ground or into the rock, not of masonry. In some cases, traces may be seen on the walls from the tools used to carve the chamber into the rock (Репников 1932: 156-157, 161-163, 166-167; Лобода, Чореф 1974: 100). At Adym Chokrak, crosses were carved on the walls or above the entrance (Bemmann et al. 2013a: 52, 55-57, 58-59). The largest number of chambers per cemetery site is from Skalistoe – 619 (Веймарн, Айбабин 1993: 25-26). Only chambers have been found on such sites as Adym Chokrak, Bol'shoe Sadovoe, Maloe Sadovoe, and Aromat (Bemmann et al. 2013a: 3, 2 fig. 1, 4 fig. 2a; see also Bemmann et al. 2013b: 147-148, 148 fig. 1; Лобода, Чореф 1974: 100; Омелькова 1990; Лобода 1976: 137).[3] Chambers predominate at Iuzhnyi I and II, Verkhoreche, Chufut Kale, Skalistoe, Bakla, Uzen Bash, and Luchistoe (Bemmann et al. 2013a: 9; Bemmann et al. 2013b: 150-151; Душенко, Манаев 2019; Кропоткин 1965; Айбабин, Юрочкин 1995; Айбабина 1993; Aibabin, Khairedinova 2009; Айбабин, Хайрединова

[2] A single funerary chamber was discovered in Bashtanovka, but it remains unclear whether it belonged to a larger cemetery (Пиоро 1990: 135, 111 рис. 31).

[3] For another cemetery located to the east from the Mangup stronghold, see Mączyńska et al. 2016.

2014). Only in Sakharnaia Golovka, Yalta, and Suuk Su did cists or niche graves outnumber chambers (Борисова 1959; Турова, Черныш 2015; Репников 1906; Репников 1909). Some chambers had between one and 30 skeletons, others had none (Репников 1906: 12, 15, 17, 21; Репников 1909: 113-114; Веймарн 1963: 52, 53, 57-59, 61; Кропоткин 1965: 210; Омелькова 1990: 81; Веймарн, Айбабин 1993: 34; Bemmann et al. 2013a: 87; Турова, Черныш 2015: 141). In Luchistoe, there were 13 skeletons in five levels in chamber 39, 21 skeletons in four levels in chamber 59, 5 skeletons in three levels in chamber 73, and 15 skeletons in two levels in chamber 65, in each case the levels being separated by layers of soil, which points to separate phases of interment (Aibabin, Khairedinova 2009: 85-91, 10 fig. 9, and pls. 27-31; Айбабин, Хайрединова 2014: 81-89, 94-107, 110-111). In chamber 54, there were 24 skeletons in five levels, the earliest dated to the second half of the 5th, and the most recent to the second half of the 7th century, a unique case of a very long use of one and the same burial place (Айбабин, Хайрединова 2014: 65-77). Multiple levels of skeletons have also been identified in funerary chambers at Sakharnaia Golovka, Eski Kermen, Iuzhnyi I, and Verkhoreche (Борисова 1959: 185-186; Веймарн 1963: 54-55; Репников 1932: 156, 164-165, 168-169; Bemmann et al. 2013a: 88; Душенко, Манаев 2019: 45). Remains of coffins carved out of tree trunks appear sometimes in Crimean chambers (Репников 1906: 6, 8-9, 12, 17, 19-28; Веймарн 1963: 56). In Skalistoe, ten skeletons in coffins carved out of tree trunks were laid on the floor of chamber 772 in two levels, a stratigraphic situation that appears in other chambers as well (Веймарн, Айбабин 1993: 29-30, 36-37, 49-50, 55-56, 107-108, 162-163). In some cemeteries, however, coffins carved out of tree trunks appear in pit graves, but not in chambers (Репников 1932: 154-156, 164-166). Elsewhere, there are no traces of carved tree trunks, only of planking (Репников 1907: 111-112, 116-118). In Skalistoe, stone steles were planted inside some funerary chambers, many with incised crosses.

Besides funerary chambers, a few cemeteries in the Crimea include cists (Кропоткин 1965: 210-211; Репников 1909: 113; Айбабина 1993: 360). In Suuk Su, cists predominate, but no cists were found either in Skalistoe or in Luchistoe (Репников 1906: 1-3). In Uzen-Bash, one of the cists contained a coffin (Репников 1909: 116). In Chufut Kale, a cist superposed a funerary chamber, which suggests that at least some cists may be assigned to a later phase of the cemetery (Кропоткин 1965: 210). Several cists in Suuk Su are multiple burials, with as many as three, four, or even six skeletons, some on top of each other (Репников 1906: 7, 10, 11, 14, 20). Slabs used for the building of cists are occasionally decorated with crosses (Репников 1906: 4, 6). In Suuk Su, several cists are without any grave goods, and one of them had no skeleton either. Niche graves have also been found in Crimean cemeteries, but never along with cists (Турова, Черныш 2015: 133). In Sakharnaia Golovka, the number of niche graves (49) is larger than that of funerary chambers (23; Веймарн 1963: 43-49). Small numbers of niche graves are known from Verkhoreche, Luchistoe and Skalistoe (Душенко, Манаев 2019: 44; Aibabin

2013; Веймарн, Айбабин 1993: 4). Only one niche grave is known from Iuzhnyi I and Eski Kermen, respectively (Bemmann et al. 2013a: 9; Bemmann et al. 2013b: 150-151). In some cemeteries, niche graves may well be earlier than chambers (Борисова 1959: 182-183, 180 табл. VI/). In Skalistoe, most niche graves cluster in the western part of the cemetery, but half of them had no grave goods. Elsewhere, there were traces of planking in some niche graves (Турова, Черныш 2015: 139, 141). Simple pit graves are also present in some cemeteries, often with coffins carved out of tree trunks (Репников 1932: 154-156, 164-166). In Skalistoe, three graves in simple, rectangular pits had covers of stone slabs, one was lined with stones, and the pit bottom of another was paved with stone slabs (Веймарн, Айбабин 1993: 16, 59-60). Pit graves were individual tombs, but a few are double burials of children (Репников 1932: 156). Some graves were lined with stones, others covered with slabs (Репников 1906: 13; Репников 1909: 105). Coffins carved out of tree trunks appear in some pit graves (Репников 1909: 106-108; Турова, Черныш 2015: 143). In Sakharnaia Golovka, one pit grave had a tombstone with Greek inscription and a cross carved onto it (Веймарн 1963: 51).

In Dobrudja, funerary chambers and cists do not appear together in cemeteries. Three cists, two of which were cut into the rock at Rusalka Beach, near Kavarna (province of Dobrich, Bulgaria) have been found next to an early Byzantine stronghold (Гамев 1998; Кумов 1971). In Histria, ten graves were dug into a barrow built in the Hellenistic age on a promontory on the northeastern shore of Lake Istria (Constanța County, Romania) (Alexandrescu, Vîlceanu1962: 384 pl. I; Pippidi, Bordenache, Eftimie 1961: 257 and fig. 22). Some graves contained remains of planking, others had markers made of tiles (Pippidi, Bordenache, Eftimie 1961: 258, 259 fig. 24). In grave 8, the skeleton was covered with four large slabs of stone (Pippidi, Bordenache, Eftimie 1961: 260 fig. 25b). Another cemetery was discovered in the 1960s during the excavation of the so-called extramural basilica situated by the main gate at Histria. Out of 178 graves so far known, only twelve may be dated to the 6th and early 7th century (Nubar 1971a: 209; Rusu-Bolindeț, Bădescu 2003-2005: 111; Rusu-Bolindeț et al. 2014: 205; Crețu, Dabîca, Soficaru 2020: 156; Crețu 2022: 177, 232-233). They are located to the north, northeast, south, and east of the basilica, which was built at some point in the late 5th or early 6th century and enlarged in the middle or during the second half of the 6th century (Rusu-Bolindeț, Bădescu 2003-2005: 111).[4] Two graves are double burials, in both cases of an old male and a child (Rusu-Bolindeț et al. 2014: 205; Crețu 2022: 177). Four simple pits had no grave goods (Rusu-Bolindeț et al. 2014: 205; Crețu, Dabîca, Soficaru 2020: 156; Crețu 2022: 315, 340, 346). Four cists were made of large slabs (Crețu, Dabîca, Soficaru 2020: 155-156; Crețu 2022: 350). One cist had a tent of pitched tiles and pantiles, another was a brick cist (Crețu, Dabîca, Soficaru 2020:

[4] The graves located to the east of the basilica are within an enclosure built at some point during the second half of the 6th century (Rusu-Bolindeț, Bădescu 2003-2005: 111 and 110 fig. 4).

156; Crețu 2022, 342, 349-350). Most interesting of all is a cist with brick pavement and brick cover located next to the apse of the basilica. Traces of planking suggest a rare case of coffin inside a cist, as in Uzen-Bash. A complete footwear set made of gold has no analogies anywhere in the Balkans or in the Crimea. Moreover, fragments of golden threads from the neck and sleeve embroidery bespeak the high status of the individual buried in such elegant clothes (Nubar 1971b; Crețu 2022: 348-349; Crețu, Soficaru 2022).

A much larger cemetery was excavated underneath and next to the hamlet of Piatra, which is across the Măcin branch of the Danube from the village of Frecăței (Brăila County, Romania) (Mănucu-Adameşteanu 2010: 121-122). This was the cemetery of a late Roman and early Byzantine hillfort located nearby, on the right bank of the Măcin branch (Vîlceanu, Barnea 1975). Only 61 graves have been dated to the 6th and 7th centuries on the basis of the associated artifacts—coins, belt fittings, and fibulae (Пемре 1962: 215-216, figs.2-3; Petre 1987: 6-9, 67-68, 76, 79, plate 1b, pl. 122 fig. 187f, 122 fig. 188c, 122 bis pl. 190b, pl. 139 fig. 228c, pl. 145 fig. 239d; Miriţoiu 2011: 540-541). All graves are in simple pits, some with traces of planking, others with iron nails, presumably from coffins. A few boulders have been found in two graves together with scattered human bones, which indicate the reopening of the tomb (Petre 1987: 56, 68, pl. 97 fig. 143a, pl. 123 fig. 92a). No sexing or aging of the skeletons has ever been done, but judging from size, at least eight child burials were buried in Piatra Frecăței in the 6th and 7th centuries (Petre 1987: 73-79, pl. 133 fig. 214a, pl. 135 fig. 217a, pl. 136 fig. 221a, pl. 137 fig. 224a, pl. 142 fig. 235a, pl. 143 fig. 237a, pl. 145 fig. 239a, pl. 146 fig. 240a). One of them was buried together with a horse with severed limbs, an association without any parallels in the Balkans (Petre 1987: 80, pl. 147 fig. 242a). Equally unique are seven golden mounts with cabochons of carnelian from grave B39, a clear indication of elevated social status (Petre 1987: 55-56, pl. 96 fig. 142b). Most other grave goods are rather modest, but the deposition of a lamp with spatulate nozzle (Miltner's type X) in grave E127 has no parallel in Dobrudja, although lamps are commonly found in 6th-century graves of Greece (Petre 1987: 80, pl. 148 fig. 243a-b; Ott 2023: 292).[5]

Besides cemeteries and small groups of burials, Dobrudja offers several examples of isolated graves. One of them was found in 1958 just outside the early Byzantine fortification at Voinikovo (province of Dobrich, Bulgaria). Judging by the silver bow fibula of the Udine-Planis class found on the left-side ribs, this is a 6th-century assemblage (Димитров 1961: 57, обр. 1; Гавритухин 2011; Станев 2012: 105-111). A very similar situation is known from Adamclisi (Constanța County,

[5] Two lamps of Miltner's type X are known from the neighboring stronghold (Vîlceanu, Barnea 1975: 210, 211 fig. 1/3-4). Judging by numerous other specimens found in Capidava, Constanța, Histria, Mangalia, and Murighiol, this was a popular type of lamp in late 6th-century Dobrudja. Some of those lamps may have been produced in Murighiol, as indicated by several miscasts found there. For lamps of Miltner's type X, see Curta 2016: 68-75, who suggests that the lamp in grave E127 placed in the right hand was a symbolic gesture of bringing light into the darkness of death.

Romania). The niche grave of a woman found next to the gate tower of Tropaeum Traiani may be dated to the last decades of the 6th or the first half of the 7th century because of a "Slavic" bow fibula of Werner's class II C found on the right shoulder (Papuc 1987; Курма 2011; Curta 2012: 269). Another isolated burial of a woman with a pair of "Slavic" bow fibulae of Werner's class I G was accidentally found in Enisala (Tulcea County, Romania). This may have been part of a Roman-age cemetery excavated in the neighborhood, but the associated bracelets and fibulae point to an early 7th-century date (Ailincăi et al. 2014). A fourth isolated grave was found next to the early Byzantine fort at Cape Doloșman (near Jurilovca, Tulcea County). The body of an adult (possibly a man) was laid inside an abandoned kiln together with an arrowhead and a belt buckle of the Pápa type (Coja 1977: 167, 179 pl. IX; Schulze-Dörrlamm 2002: 224-225). Finally, an isolated grave found outside the walls of Histria was a double burial of an adult and a child (or teenager), covered by three large stone slabs (Alexandrescu, Vîlceanu1962: 401, 399 pl. VI). The grave may be dated to the second half of the 6th or the first half of the 7th century because of a bronze buckle of Traykova's class A XV and a fragment of a belt mount of her class B XV (Alexandrescu, Vîlceanu1962: 402 fig. 5/1; Трайкова 2017: 53, 134).

Isolated graves are also known from the Crimean Peninsula. In eastern Crimea, at Novopokrovka, a woman was buried in a niche grave together with golden pendants of the Mezőszilas type indicating a date around 600 (Gavrilov 2000: 109-113, 110 fig. 1, 111 fig. 2/3, 4; Balogh 2012; Curta 2019: 52-53). There were traces of planking and of red ochre underneath the skeleton, and bones of sheep or goat were found next to the right hand. A 7th-century child burial was discovered less than 15 km to the southwest, at Aivazovskoe (Рашев 2000: 17). The simple pit grave found in 1891 at Koreiz (near Gaspra), on the southern coast, was dated to the late 6th or early 7th century because of a coin struck for Emperor Maurice (Репников 1909: 37-38). In addition, a few graves were dug into the prehistoric mounds of western (Natashino) and northern Crimea (Portovoe, Krilovka, Rysove, Mamai, Bogachevka, and Izobil'noe). Some are in simple pits, others are niche graves. Traces of timber planks and a shroud were found above the male skeleton in Bogachevka (Рашев 2000: 18-19). A sword was found along the left side of the man in one of the two graves in Rysove, and a gold earring in the Krilovka grave (Когонашвили 1969: 314, 315 рис. 32/17; Рашев 2000: 23). In the niche of the Portovoe grave was a horse skeleton, an archaeological situation with Crimean analogies dated at least a century earlier (Рашев 2000: 24, 137 обр. 31/1; Храпунов, Казанский 2015).

In both Dobrudja and Crimea, funerary chambers were used as family vaults, in some cases for multiple generations of one and the same kin group (Chera-Mărgineanu, Lungu 1992: 96). In both regions, burial in multi-generational family vaults had long traditions (Creţu, Soficaru 2024: 771; Фомин 2011: 38-120; Aibabin 2013: 379). In Crimea, those traditions continued well into the 7th century, as demonstrated by chamber 1095 in Chersonesus. However, except for Mangalia,

no evidence exists in Dobrudja of large numbers of individuals buried in one and the same chamber, as in Uzen-Bash, or over a very long period, as in Luchistoe. Conversely, catacombs like those found in Constanța are not known from Crimea. Nor is there any 6th- or 7th-century chamber in Crimea with painted crosses and inscriptions on the walls, as in the Dobrudja. All parallels for the funerary chamber in Mangalia are in Greece (e.g., Marki 1997; Kiourtzian 1997: 31-32). Whether the ritual destruction of chambers, which is richly documented archaeologically in Crimea, had anything to do with the social and political demise of certain families, remains unclear (Радочин 2022). Be that as it may, even though family or clan affiliation seems therefore to have been a paramount concern, there are clear and sharp differences between individuals buried in different vaults or even between those buried within and the same vault. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the social differentiation apparent in the archaeological record of the 6th- to 7th-century cemeteries in Crimea is that rare dress accessories, such as golden earrings and pendants, typically appear in female burials, as well as with children (presumably girls), upon whom a status was bestowed in death by the surviving members of the family. Such distinctions are also apparent in Dobrudja, albeit on a smaller scale. By contrast, no weapons have been found in Dobrudja, either in funerary chambers or in cemeteries.[6] This is surprising, given the high level of militarization in Scythia Minor, most apparent from inscriptions (Barnea 1990: 402). In Crimea, which had a smaller number of Roman troops stationed on its territory, a few men were buried in family vaults together with weapons. Swords also appear in simple pit graves (as opposed to funerary chambers) in Kerch, where the tradition of high-status male burials with weapons goes back to the 4th century (Казанский 2018: 83).

In the Balkans, stone-lined graves and burials with pitched tile covers are typically grouped around a cemeterial church or chapel (Marin 1989; Snively 2003; Rusev 2012: 385). In Dobrudja, the only such cemetery was discovered around the extramural basilica at Histria. The general appearance of those graves is rather modest, except the one by the apse of the basilica, which has rightly been interpreted as a privileged burial (Crețu, Soficaru 2022). In Greece, such burials are usually inside, not outside churches; in Dobrudja, there are no graves inside churches (Marano 2021; Achim 2015: 313). In Crimea, burial around urban churches appears at a much later date, after ca. 800 (Фомин 2011: 165).

The privileged burial in Histria is a cist and a few other cists in the same cemetery and in Rusalka Beach are the only such graves in Dobrudja. Cists predominate in the deathscape of Greece, where they were typically covered with rubble, a layer of slabs, or a tent of pitched tiles (Rife 2024: 783; for cists in Athens and Attica, see Breytenbach, Tzavella 2022: 206). Rock-cut cists like those in Rusalka Beach are known from Corinth (Ott 2023: 297). In Crimea, the largest number is in Suuk

[6] The only sword known from 6th- and 7th-century Dobrudja was found in Capidava without any archaeological context (Pinter 2021).

Su, followed by Kerch and Chufut Kale. In Suuk Su, where 16 out of 82 cists had no grave goods whatsoever, there are several examples of multiple burials in cists. In Chufut Kale, one of the 21 cists superposed the chamber that produced a gold coin struck for Justinian, an indication that cists may have been adopted later by people who buried their dead in that cemetery (Кропоткин 1965: 210). One of the two cists in Uzen-Bash had a coffin inside, a situation directly comparable to that in Histria, probably reflecting the desire to treat cists as funerary chambers. Conversely, there is a relatively large number in Skalistoe of pits with covers and pavements of stone slabs or with stone lining. Even though cists do not appear in that cemetery, those arrangements seem to imitate them.

The Adamclisi grave is the only niche grave in the 6th- or early 7th-century Balkans. Such graves have not been found either to the north and or to the west of the Lower Danube.[7] By contrast, niche graves are quite common in Crimea, where they continued burial practices going back to the first three centuries AD (Gulyás, Strokov 2022: 205). Niche graves predominate in such cemeteries as Sakharnaia Golovka and Yalta. In Sakharnaia Golovka, the body is typically laid in the niche, which is blocked with a stone slab. The pit itself is devoid of any bones or finds. In Yalta and in Skalistoe, the body is laid in the pit, while the niche is empty. That easily explains a rare example in Yalta of a multiple burial in a niche grave. In Skalistoe, niche graves cluster in a particular area of the cemetery, but half of them have no grave goods, in sharp contrast to most chamber graves. There are also bits of planking in niche graves from Yalta, Bogachevka, and Novopokrovka. The most remarkable case is Portovoe, because of the horse placed in the niche. This includes Portovoe in a small group of late 6th- and early 7th-century burials with whole horse skeletons, which appear in the steppe lands north of the Black Sea and have been interpreted as burials of high-status men (Гуяш, Леринци, Строков 2021). Whether or not the niche burial in Adamclisi may be regarded as indicating an eastern influence, possibly from Crimea, the child buried with a horse in Piatra Frecăței must be interpreted, like Portovoe, as an elite burial.

All burials in Piatra Frecăței, as well as in the Hellenistic barrow at Histria are in simple pits. While more than half of those in Kerch are without any constructions, only a third of all burials around the extramural basilica in Histria are in simple pits. Only a few Crimean cemeteries have simple pit graves, and in small numbers. It would be tempting to interpret simple pit burials as the tombs of commoners, but some of the graves in Piatra Frecăței – such as B39 with the golden mounts with carnelian cabochons or B67 with a horse skeleton – are far from ordinary. Coffins carved out of tree trunks are also common in pit graves from the Suuk Su cemetery, while traces of planking have been recorded for the cemetery planted in the Hellenistic barrow at Histria. The latter is perhaps the most remarkable phenomenon in the deathscape of Dobrudja around the year 600 AD. Graves

[7] A cremation grave with a niche is mentioned in Nestor, Zaharia 1961: 514.

dug into prehistoric, primarily Bronze Age mounds are known from northern and western Crimea, but many more are known from the steppe lands between the Volga and the river Inhul. The practice started in the 6th century, but not all prehistoric mounds were reused for early medieval burial. Of the many thousands of prehistoric barrows in the steppe lands north of the Black Sea, only some were selected for re-use. Within one and the same group of barrows, for example at Bogachevka, only a few, often one or two received new burials. Most prehistoric mounds have no more than one early medieval, secondary burial, often placed in the center of the barrow. This is most likely an expression of the social aspirations of elite aspirations, so burial in prehistoric mounds may have been a way to claim the ancestors supposedly buried underneath the mounds. In the steppe lands north of the Black Sea, including northern Crimea, burial within prehistoric mounds was probably meant to conjure the (imagined) past in order to re-invent traditions. Such practices are also documented in the Balkans in the 6th century. Burials in prehistoric mounds have been documented in central Albania, while a cemetery in southwestern Bosnia was planted in the middle a Bronze-Age hillfort (Kurti 1971; Marić 1969). Closer to Dobrudja, at Madara (province of Shumen, Bulgaria), a man was buried around 600 AD, together with a horse, in a prehistoric mound (Mukoв 1934; Fiedler 1997).

While the funerary landscapes of Dobrudja and Crimea in the 6th century are marked by a thorough Christianization of mortuary practices, the deathscape of Dobrudja was much more open towards new trends and influences than that of Crimea. If the difference may be blamed on the massive presence in Dobrudja of a military population, with fewer, if any local roots than the inhabitants of Chersonesus, Bosporus, and the forts of the mountains of Crimea, then that is also the way to explain the lack of any continuity in 7th- to 8th-century Dobrudja, in sharp contrast to Crimea.

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ГОДИШНИК НА СОФИЙСКИЯ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“
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THE GOTHIC DIOCESE IN CRIMEA AS AN EXAMPLE OF EXTRATERRITORIAL CHURCH REGION OF BYZANTIUM

YURI MOGARICHEV, PAVEL KUZENKOV

Abstract: Предстоятелят на Готската епархия в Крим е бил титулуван не по името на града (както е било прието във Византия), а по това на областта. Последният факт може да бъде обяснен по следния начин. В момента на своето създаване Готската епархия се явявала екстериториална епархия, подчинена на Константинополския патриарх, но намираща се извън пределите на Византия. Създаването на епархията се свързва с експанзията на Хазарския хаганат в Таврика, чиято кулминация се явява въстанието на Йоан Готски (784-786 г.). След неговото потушаване и специално за подчиненото на хазарите християнско тамошно население била учредена специална Готска епархия. Според *Житието* на Йоан Готски предишният херсонски епископ, заради подкрепата си на иконопочитанието, бил преместен в Хераклея Тракийска, а местните жители предложили на Йоан да стане духовен предстоятел на християнска Готия. След като пътешествал в рамките на три години в Йерусалим, Йоан Готски се отправил към Грузия и там бил въздигнат в епископски сан. Последното означавало, че de jure Йоан вече бил извън юрисдикцията на Константинополския патриарх и ставал подопечен на патриарха на Антиохия. Вече след реорганизацията на Херсонската епархия и отделянето от нея на нова такава, последната била назована Готска по нареждане на Константинополската патриаршия. Този факт отразявал екстериториалността на новата структура, но указвал и на историческата ѝ принадлежност към патриаршията на Константинопол.

Keywords: Crimean Gothia, Byzantine Church, Doros/Mangup, dioceses of Patriarchate of Constantinople.

From the early imperial period, the Crimean Peninsula was, directly or indirectly, part of the periphery of the Roman Empire. As early as the 4th century AD, the formation of church administrative structures began there.

In Byzantine times, five Church administrative-territorial units (dioceses) functioned on the Crimean Peninsula: Cherson, Bosporus, Gothia, Sugdaea, and Phul(l)i. In four of these, the *primates* – at first as autocephalous archbishops, and from the end of the 13th century as metropolitans – bore, according to established

tradition, the title of the cathedral city, and **only one was named after the territory**. This was the bishop of **Gothia**, who arose in the 8th century.

The time of creation of the Gothic diocese is under discussion. In the final act of the Quinisext (Trullian) Council (692 AD), and according to the oldest uncial manuscript *Patmiensis 172*, there is the signature of certain George, bishop of ΧΕΡΣΟΝΗΣΟΥ ΤΗ ΔΟΡΑΝΤΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥΖΤΑΡΔΥΝΩΝ (Concilium Quinisextum 2013: 68; Flogaus 2009: 41-45, fig. 2). No matter how this mysterious designation may be interpreted, it is clear that the title of bishop unites the name of the cathedral city – Chersonesos/Cherson – and the region, which can be confidently identified with the 'city of Dory' of Priscianus of Caesarea and the 'country of Dory' of Procopius of Caesarea, both of them authors from the 6th century (Procopius 1964: 101; Priscianus 1855: 195, 283). This titular formula finds analogies in the neighboring signatures: 'John, bishop of Kios in the province of Bithynia' and 'Theodore, bishop of Kotradon of the country of Isauri' (Concilium Quinisextum 2013: 68).

Then, in the *Life* of John of Gothia in a story about the events of the mid-8th century we already find the title 'bishop of Gothia' (ἐπίσκοπος Γοτθίας). The same title is borne by one of the participants of the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787 AD. **Titling by region** is a very rare phenomenon in Byzantine church practice. Especially when it comes to a system, and not to one-time uses. And it needs an explanation.

Having analyzed the circumstances, we noted that in most cases the absence of the cathedral city in the title of the bishop is explained by the fact that this diocese is not included in the administrative structure of the Empire and is an **extraterritorial**. And in this case, the *episkopos* is perceived not just as the bishop of the city, but as the primate of the entire country. We have put forward a hypothesis that at the time of the creation of the "Bishopric of Gothia", which separated from the Diocese of Kherson, it was most likely an extraterritorial diocese, subordinate to the Patriarch of Constantinople but located outside the borders of the Byzantine Empire, on the territory that was part of the Khazar Khaganate (Кузенков, Могаричев 2024). As evidenced by the Jewish-Khazar correspondence, up until the 10th century, the Khazar rulers considered the Mountainous South-Western Crimea as part of their possessions. And one of the toponyms in the list of the Khazars' places in the Letter of King Joseph sounds like *Kut/Kot* – that is very close to the Byzantine name of the diocese, *Gothia* (Еврейско-хазарская переписка 1932: 31).

The Gothic diocese was formed in the 8th century during the period when Byzantium did not politically control the Mountainous South-Western Crimea. Its creation, as Alexander Gerzen and Yuri Mogarichev assumed, was connected with the expansion of the Khazar Khaganate, the culmination of which was the so-called uprising of John the Gothic around 785 AD (Герцен, Могаричев 1999). For the Christian population of Southwestern Taurica, controlled by the Khazars, a special diocese was allocated, directly subordinate to Constantinople in the status of a so-called autocephalous

archbishopric, i. e. direct subordination bishop. Subsequently, when the territory of Crimean Gothia was included in the State of Byzantium (apparently, this happened with the formation of the *Klimata* theme, θέμα Κλιμάτων, around 841 AD), the name of this church region and the title of its archbishop remained the same, which is recorded in the lists of sees under Patriarchate of Constantinople – beginning with the notice Darrouzès #7 (Notitiae episcopatuum 1981: 274), dated around 920 AD (Цукерман 2010: 428) (one needs to take into account that the lists of archbishoprics of the second half of the 9th century have not survived).

The extraterritorial, that is, missionary nature of the Gothic diocese is confirmed by the so-called *Notitia Parisina*, or Darrouzès #3 (Notitiae episcopatuum 1981: 241, 245). This obvious compilation, combining data as of the 6th and of the 8th century, is in many ways similar to the bishops' lists of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787 AD). It is of special interest due to the presence in it of a mention of the see of Gotthia, headed by the metropolitan of Doros (Δορός). This is the unique example of the use of **a city** in the title of the bishop of Gotthia. In addition, this see in the *notitia* has the status of a **metropolitan**, the only one in Crimea, and stands in a rather high place, between Hierapolis of Phrygia (apostolic see, place of martyrdom of the holy apostle Philip) and Syracuse (the famous metropolis of Sicily). In the same document, in the lists revealing the internal composition of the dioceses, under the metropolitan of Doros are indicated the bishoprics of Chotziroi, of Astil, of Xwalis, of Onoguri, of Reteg, of Unni, and of Tymatarcha (Τυμάταρχα). Not all of these toponyms are clear, but it is obvious that the metropolitan of Doros received the entire territory of the Khazar Khaganate under his jurisdiction. For some reason, this project remained unimplemented. Although it should be noted that at the Seventh Ecumenical Council the representative of Niketas, the Bishop of Gotthia, is mentioned next to the bishops of Adrianople in Thrace, Reggio di Calabria and Phasis in Lazica – all these sees at that time had the status of metropolises (Concilium Nicaenum Secundum 2008, 2012, 2016: 20, 200, 278, 496, 796, 832). In the Latin version, the Bishop of Gotthia is mentioned in the top of archbishops (Sacrorum Conciliorum 1767: 498, 542, 564, 625, 723, 731). These facts indirectly attest that Niketas was either a junior metropolitan or a senior archbishop in Taurica/Crimea.

In the council acts the title of Niketas is always of **Gotthia**, and never of Doros. Here we have, obviously, a transitional phase: the missionary project of the all-Khazar metropolis has failed, but the Bishop of Gotthia still retains the high status. But, it remains to explain why the special extraterritorial name of the church-administrative unit was not changed to the normative of Doros later, after the entry of Crimean Gothia into Byzantium.

In this regard, attention should be paid to the *Life* of John of Gothia, an important document of Byzantine hagiography of the 9th century. It narrates how, after the previous bishop was transferred by Emperor Constantine V (741-775) to the metropolitanate of Heraclia of Thrace for his active support of iconoclasm, the

Orthodox community of Gothia offered monk John from Parthenitae to become their spiritual head. John went to Jerusalem, where he stayed for three years. And upon returning to his homeland, he went to Iberia, where he was ordained a bishop by the Georgian Catholicos. As the *Synaxarion* of the Church of Constantinople explains, this was caused by the fact that the iconoclast heresy prevailed in the regions of the Romans (Details, see in Auzépy 2006; Могаричев, Сазанов, Шапошников 2007).

The plot under consideration was also reflected in Georgian church historiography. In a polemic with the Antiochian Patriarch, who claimed supreme authority over the Catholicos of Iberia, Saint George *Mtazmindeli*, or the Athonite (d. 1065), recalled that there was a time when Orthodoxy was not to be found in all of Greece, and John, the Gothic bishop, was ordained in Mtskheta (Peeters 1917-1919: 117).

De jure, the ordination of John the Gothic in Iberia meant that he and his flock found themselves outside the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. This could not help but create a certain tension, given that the Church of Iberia had been since ancient times under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Antioch and the entire East.

We are unaware of any sources that would testify to the competition between the patriarchs of Constantinople and Antioch for the Crimean Mountains. Already at the beginning of the 9th century, in the letters of Theodore the Studite, the clergy of Gothia is closely involved in the events in the Patriarchate of Constantinople – the Michian schism and the second wave of iconoclasm (Theodorus Studita 1991: 87, 131). By this time, the issue of the Gothic diocese should be considered finally resolved. But why was it possible that for more than thirty years, from 754 to the mid-780s, Constantinople calmly looked at the presence in Gothia of a bishop subordinate to the Mtskheta Catholicosate? And why did the patriarch and the emperor not send their bishop to Gothia? It is difficult to admit open opposition of the Georgian Church to Constantinople under powerful Isaurian dynasty. It is easier to assume that John became the first bishop of Gotthia, which thus separated from the iconoclastic church of Cherson. Legally, it turned out that a new church-administrative unit arose on the territory of the Khazar Khaganate, which wanted to enter the bosom of the Georgian Church.

When, after the arrest of John by the Khazars, the Gothic diocese became widowed, and it was included in the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Perhaps it was at this time that a project emerged to transform it into a large missionary metropolitanate on the territory of Khazaria. At this point, the title of Metropolitan Doros even appeared, perhaps only on paper.

But then the head of the diocese, which had been reduced to the borders of the Southwestern Mountainous Crimea, was deliberately called Gothic, and not Doros. On the one hand, this reflected the extraterritoriality of the see, which was located on a territory whose legal status remained unsettled until the fall of the Khazar Khaganate in the 960s. However, another reason for such a specific naming cannot be ruled out. It should be noted here that this title finds an exact match in the lists

of the fathers of the First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in 325 AD. These lists have been preserved in different editions in many languages. In the Greek list of Theodore the Reader, the name of the representative of Gothia, Theophilus, is given without a title; but in the versions we already encounter the title: in Latin – *Gothiae* (*Gottiae, Gutthias, Gutthiae*), in Syriac – *d-Gôṭîâ*, in Armenian – *i Gt'ac'* (Patrum Nicaenorum 1898: 56, 70, 117, 141, 215). So, the byzantine title of Bishop of Gothia exactly corresponds to the title used during the era of the Christianization of the Goths in the 4th century. It is well known that the first Gothic bishops were ordained in **Constantinople**, and the church organization of the Goths was traditionally considered to be connected with the Patriarchate of Constantinople. So, the title of *archiepiscopos Gotthias* closed all possible questions about his subordination.

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EPIRUS VETUS AND EPIRUS NOVA – DEFINING INTERNAL BORDERS

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Abstract: Това изследване преразглежда възгледа за вътрешната граница между провинциите *Epirus Vetus* и *Epirus Nova* през Късната античност като статичен феномен. Вместо това, то защитава идеята, че тази граница, установена по време на провинциалната реорганизация на император Диоклециан, е била гъвкава административна и военна зона, особено през V–VI в. Позовавайки се на антични текстове и археологически доказателства, статията доказва, че *Виа Егнатия*, заедно с други ключови комуникационни маршрути и природни географски особености, ефективно очертава тази граница, улеснявайки управлението и отбраната. Имперската военна доктрина от V в. превръща границата в милитаризирано пространство с многобройни укрепления, служещи като убежища и крепости. Църковни сгради, често включени в крепостните стени или разположени върху укрепени хълмове, също допринасят за градската или селска трансформация в този период. Статията подчертава, че тази граница е била непрекъснато адаптирана, „предизвикайки“ традиционно установените модели и разглежда провинциалната система в Късната античност с оглед на наличните свидетелства.

***Keywords*:** Late Antique borders, Epirus Nova, Epirus Vetus, military frontier

Historical Context and Sources

The reorganization of Roman provincial boundaries under Emperor Diocletian (284-305) led to the division of the former Roman province of Macedonia into two administrative entities (or the creation of a new entity): *Epirus Vetus* and *Epirus Nova,* included in the Diocese of Moesia, soon after under Constantine rule both included the Diocese of Macedonia. Previous studies have often presented this division as static, with the border presumed to have remained unchanged through Late Antiquity. This article challenges that view, arguing that the internal border between *Epirus Vetus* and *Epirus Nova* was not a rigid demarcation. Still, a fluctuating administrative and military zone shaped by regional instability, population movements, linguistic shifts, previous historic context, Byzantine restructuring, and,

most probably for the wider population, it was not even perceived as a border. What provoked our interest in addressing this topic was the fact that the border between the two provinces corresponds closely to the earlier distinctions found in Classical and Hellenistic sources regarding the territorial distribution of Illyrian population and cities, as well as the geographical extent of Epirus. The surviving document detailing Diocletian's new territorial administration, the *Laterculus Veronensis*, lists the newly established provinces, but it does not specify the precise boundaries of their territories (Barnes 1982: 201-208). Only the later sources, mainly the ones dealing with ecclesiastical correspondences, give us at least the information on the bishopric seats included in the two provinces. On the other hand, the distribution of bishopric seats, primarily situated in major urban centers, reveals a discernible alignment along the presumed boundary between *Epirus Vetus* and *Epirus Nova*. However, the expansive eastern territory of *Epirus Nova*, except for Lychnidos, remains largely undocumented in this regard in ancient sources, but also archaeologically, where bishops are mentioned only in the medieval period.

While detailed cultural or terrain-based criteria for the definition of the boundaries are not mentioned in the sources, the divisions seem to have been designed to improve imperial communication and defence across these regions. The territorial reform of Diocletian, as widely accepted in historiography, was practical, attempting to create an efficient system that could respond to the challenges that the Roman empire was facing, including military and economic concerns like tax collecting, transport of goods, land use, etc. (Fratantuono 2023: 20-21). Based on this, it may be suggested that the road networks played a central role in the determination of the borders between the two provinces. The western part of *Via Egnatia*, along with the secondary branches that connected the coastal towns and the inner settlements, appears to have been entirely included within the territory of *Epirus Nova*. Given this fact, the emperor might have aimed to concentrate key communication routes within a single province, ensuring more effective control, defence, and management. At the same time, based on recent scholarly arguments, it is possible that the population living in the area of *Epirus Nova* was considered more Romanized than in *Epirus Vetus*. This may have made the region more loyal to Rome and efficient to administer, facilitating economic control as well as addressing potential military crisis.

In favour of this argument, the selection of metropolitan sees for these provinces appears to reflect a tendency to favor towns not only large and important, but also deeply Romanized; in the case of Nicopolis, we are dealing with an explicitly Roman foundation. Such a choice may have aimed at reinforcing administrative cohesion and ideological ties with the imperial center by privileging urban identities rooted in Roman models.

It must be emphasized that the geographical features of these two regions have always served and continue to serve as the fundamental framework shaping their distinct characteristics in politics, society, or economy, as well as the formation of provinces or later states. This observation holds true for much of the Balkan Penin-

sula. In a broader perspective, we propose that historical, cultural, and geographical factors constituted the principal basis for the establishment of the boundary between the two provinces. Even if geography served as the primary reference point, it inherently carried with it a distinct cultural background; these two elements, as previously noted, were always interlinked.

Between the 4th and 7th centuries, Southeast Europe faced a major crisis due to waves of invasions and the separation of the empire. Epirus Nova and Epirus Vetus, positioned at the crossroads between the Western and Eastern Roman Empires, were deeply impacted by these occurrences, with towns and rural settlements devastated by the numerous invaders. It must be mentioned that throughout these centuries the Adriatic coast remained the main point of contact of the south-western Balkan and the Western Roman Empire, transforming the region into a cultural and political bridge. Historical sources dated at this period, even when viewed critically, such as the *Notitia Dignitatum*, Procopius of Caesarea's *De Aedificiis*, and Hierocles' *Synecdemus*, offer important information into territorial administration, military organization, and urban transformation in response to the new challenges. Moreover, archaeological findings, inscriptions, and coin hoards enrich our understanding in favour of social unrest and border defence in practical terms. The linguistic landscape of the two provinces, with a predominant presence of Latin in *Epirus Nova* and Greek in *Epirus Vetus*[1], as witnessed in inscriptions and literary sources, correlates with the cultural changes and shifting politics that took place.

Instead of viewing the internal border between the provinces as a fixed geographic line drawn by imperial administration, we try to investigate how it was continuously reinterpreted on the ground, shaped by military needs, local topography, and settlement patterns. What follows is a closer look at how changing borders took shape on the ground, through shifting fortification strategies, the placement of major towns, and the way provincial spaces were reshaped to meet the new challenges of Late Antiquity.

Most fortifications (*Fig. 1*) identified within the two provinces, based on current archaeological evidence, date to the period following Diocletian's administrative reforms. Mainly, these structures are built along major communication arteries such as the *Via Egnatia* and the coastal corridor, underscoring their strategic function. The transformation of *Scampis* (*Fig. 2*) from a vicus under the jurisdiction of *Dyrrachium* into a Roman castrum is an example of the militarization of previously unfortified, open settlements that had thrived in relative security during the *Pax Romana*. Whether the same strategic idea applies to the fortification at Grazhdan (Peshkopi) (*Fig. 3*), notable for having the second-largest wall perimeter after Dyrrachium, remains a matter of debate (Bunguri 2007: 100-107; Përzhita 2013b: 431-434; Përzhita 2013a: 250-260). From our perspective, the fortified terrace of Grazhdan, especially when considering its large dimensions, was likely constructed

1 Should be mentioned that the majority of the latin inscriptions come from Dyrrachium

as a strategic centralizing stronghold in the meeting point of four provinces (*Epirus Nova, Dardania, Prevalitana* and *Macedonia Secunda*), intended to accommodate both local military units and populations dispersed across the surrounding mountainous and lowland settlements along the Black Drin River. At this stage, the empire appears to have prioritized the consolidation of its defenses in previously less defensible geographic zones, particularly in lowland areas and river valleys.

Byzantine military strategy from the 5th century onward increasingly was more focused on improving the fortification networks rather than holding to rigid internal provincial boundaries (probably the Danube frontier represents a different situation). The rise of *praesidia* (fortified settlements) along the *Via Egnatia* and in inland territories suggests a flexible approach to defence. The issue of dating the small fortifications scattered across the territory remains unresolved, yet certain evidence indicates that this phenomenon cannot be attributed solely to the building activities of Justinian's era. Rather than the archaeological material, which is limited in quantity due to the absence of systematic excavations, it is the construction technique that suggests an earlier chronology, likely predating the 6th century. Specific architectural features and the building technique may serve as valuable indicators for refining the dating of these structures, raising the possibility that their construction belongs to an earlier phase in the organization of territorial defence. On the other hand, even when construction techniques can be identified, certainty remains elusive, particularly in the case of hilltop fortifications that were built after the 4th century AD, which often exhibit irregular planimetry and suggest locally conceived solutions rather than standardized imperial designs. An insightful approach to the patterns of militarization in the provinces during these centuries is offered by John Wilkes, whose interpretations we generally support (Wilkes 2013).

After the 5th century, available archaeological evidence suggests that the concept of the provincial border in the interior may have evolved from a mere administrative-geographical demarcation to a militarized landscape, marked by a dense network of fortifications along river valleys, roads, and natural transit corridors that were perceived as potential invasion routes. One of the sources from this period is the Malchus *Fragmenta*, which recounts the Gothic invasions led by Theodoric the Amal and provides valuable details relevant to our topic (Blockley 1983: 402-456). According to the account, when Theodoric arrived in *Heraclea Lyncestis*, he found the town abandoned, as its inhabitants had taken refuge in a nearby fortified site. A similar situation appears to have occurred in *Scampis*, where the population had fled the castrum before his arrival. These instances provide valuable insight into the practical functioning of the fortification network, not only as a system of refuge during times of external threat, but also as evidence that warning systems or signalling networks were in place, allowing urban populations to evacuate before the arrival of invading forces. It is also worth noting that Malchus, when recounting Theodoric's itinerary after passing through *Heraclea Lyncestis*, states that he proceeded along a road (probably he refers to *Via Egnatia* or a secondary branch)

leading to the 'so-called *Epirus Nova*'. This expression might suggest a changing perception of provincial identities and boundaries in Late Antiquity, no longer viewed with the same administrative rigidity as in earlier Roman periods, or were probably considered artificial, merely bureaucratic. However, it is also possible that the phrase reflects simply a narrative convention or geographical imprecision on the part of the author.

Even though ancient sources predominantly emphasize the military investments of the empire during Late Antiquity, archaeological evidence reveals a significant wave of ecclesiastical constructions, with numerous churches dated from the 5th, with a growing intensity by the 6th century. However, despite written accounts, such as the attestation of Bishop Eulalius of Amantia in 344 AD (Sufflay, Jireček and Thallóczy 1918: 1), no church structures dated to the 4th century have yet been discovered in the region. That being said, ecclesiastical construction appears to have followed a similar tendency to that of military fortifications, both adapting to the new demographic and geopolitical realities of Late Antiquity (*Fig. 4*). Additionally, the gradual movement and resettlement of populations, whether toward urban centers (e.g., Scampis, Dyrrachium (*Fig. 5*), Byllis (*Fig. 6*), etc.) or newly fortified sites (Peca, Paleokastra, Zaradishta, etc.) contributed to the emergence of churches as central elements of communal life. In many cases, churches were not only spiritual centers but also played a symbolic role in reinforcing civic identity and divine protection, for sure much needed during this time. We might also suggest that their presence within small fortified settlements reflects a growing belief in divine safeguarding, with sacred space integrated into defensive infrastructure as both a physical and metaphysical shield against external threats. The trend toward locally organized hilltop defenses suggests that, by this time, the official border between Epirus Vetus and Epirus Nova had lost much of its practical meaning, as communities focused instead on their immediate security needs.

The Roman centuries witnessed an expansion of settlements into lowland or gently hilly terrains, systematically located near rivers, in contrast to the more elevated or defensible locations typical of Hellenistic settlements (*Fig. 7*). Hellenistic towns, even when regarded as "Romanized", seem to hold a secondary role, with limited public constructions and a spatial expansion toward agricultural areas (*castramentationes*). This phenomenon has been observed throughout the western part of both provinces, from Butrint *(Fig. 8*), Phoinike, and Hadrianopolis – in *Epirus Vetus*, to Dyrrachium, Lissus, and other sites in *Epirus Nova*. Other towns need more investigations, but preliminary results suggest the same model of development (e.g., Ballsh as an extension of Byllis).

This trend reversed during the Late Antique centuries. Often, former Hellenistic settlements were re-established as central places, with cathedrals and episcopal residences constructed within the framework of the "old" Hellenistic towns (Byllis, Phoinike, Kanina, Lissus, etc.) (*Fig. 9*). More broadly, both towns and secondary settlements came to occupy formerly fortified sites, with exceptionally built for-

tification systems during Late Antiquity, starting from 4th century (e.g., Scampis (Karaiskaj 1971: 62-70; Cerova 1997: 285-300), Paleokastra (Baçe 1981: 170-176), and Onchesmos (Lako 1984: 190-192; Lako 1986: 273-279).

In territories apparently lacking fortified Hellenistic or Roman towns, even earlier Iron Age fortifications were repurposed, Lubonjë, Orenjë, and possibly Zaradishta (Damko 1993: 259; Nallbani 2023: 170). In the case of Lubonjë, the Late Antique fortification is characterized by a well-executed construction technique, unlike that observed in structures dated to Justinian's building campaign (Hoxha, E. et al. 2025: 12-18). All these fortified settlements are located in an area between *Epirus Nova* and *Epirus Vetus*, without it being clearly established to which province they belonged. Other fortified sites dated to Late Antiquity may require further research to determine whether they were built *ex novo* or superimposed on older fortifications (e.g., Pogradec (Anamali 1980: 211-214), Pecë (Përzhita 1990).

Rural settlements established during the Roman imperial period that continued to exist into the 5th and 6th centuries seem to be rare. For a variety of reasons, life in these sites was either interrupted or significantly reduced, and they generally do not appear to have continued beyond the mid-6th century.

In some instances, monasteries may have emerged and some survived probably into the Middle Ages. The case of the basilica at Arapaj, for which we know only the early Christian phase, supposed to be the 11th century monastery of Saint Michael (mentioned by Anna Komnena) (Hidri, Hidri 2011: 18), requires further investigation, as does the case of the monastery at Ballsh.

The settlement landscape reveals a concentration of large, developed urban centers with considerable surface areas and robust fortification systems, located in specific parts of the two Epirus provinces, notably in the western part, in contrast to simpler, smaller settlements situated mainly in interior territories. Evidence from historical sources for episcopal seats supports this dichotomy.

The distribution of episcopal centres mentioned in the sources, mainly from the ecumenical councils, apart from some exceptions with identification issues, confirms the absence of bishopric seats in the deep interior of both provinces. It is also a fact that until now, no early Christian basilica-type church has been found in the north-eastern part of *Epirus Nova*.

Apart from isolated cases such as Durrës, which received important urban investment under Emperor Anastasius, the towns within the territory under consideration appear to have experienced little to no civic development, and very little is known about their internal organization during the 4th and 5th centuries, especially regarding church construction in the latter. Notable ecclesiastical examples from this period come primarily from suburban and extra-urban contexts. Their re-fortification under Justinian was accompanied by intensive church-building activity within the city walls. Byllis represents the most prominent case, but the phenomenon is also observed in Amantia, Butrint (in this case, the reconstruction of 5th-cen-

tury basilicas), Phoinike, Hadrianopolis (Melan), Dimal, Scampis (reconstruction of pre-existing basilicas), Zaradishtë, and others.

In the best-known examples, the fortified inner space of these towns appears to be dominated by ecclesiastical architecture, while there is a notable absence of residential structures. A comparable situation is observed in a small mountainous fortification (although outside the boundaries of *Epirus Nova*, to its northeast). Peca (*Fig. 10*), possibly Procopius's *Pentza*, presents the same pattern on a more modest scale. A small church, together with annexed spaces, occupies most of the interior area of the fortification, possibly located within a secondary enclosure (Përzhita 1990: 203-211).

This brings us to the character of 6th-century churches. While most of the 5th-century churches in the territory (except two examples in Butrint and possibly a few others) are located in open, extra-urban areas or associated with open settlements (though further research is needed in most cases), in the 6th century, the constructions are clearly positioned within fortified enclosures. In *Scampis*, two funerary basilicas outside the walls are reconstructed, but for now, this appears to be an exception.

The distribution of known 6th-century churches, and even more so, that of the sculptural material, offers not only a picture of the intensity of ecclesiastical building activity by region but also a reflection of the architectural level achieved. These constructions are primarily concentrated in episcopal centers (though not exclusively) located in the western part of the territory, as well as in the Ohrid Basin (around *Lychnidos*), extending into the Korça Basin, where only a single example, Zaradishtë, is known (Damko 1993: 260-265). The latter group all share architectural features seemingly inspired by the tetraconch design of Ohrid.

In the remaining parts of the territory, which are characterized by small mountainous fortifications, current research suggests that churches are generally absent. However, occasional sculptural elements attest to their existence even in these areas.

Via Egnatia as a Structuring Axis

An exception to the general pattern may be observed along the *Via Egnatia*, where a previous Roman open settlement evolved into a *castrum*, established in the early 4th century, later becoming an episcopal center. This is the case of *Scampis* (Karaiskaj 1971: 61-77; Cerova 1997: 285-303), located quite exactly halfway along the road connecting *Dyrrachium* to *Lychnidos*. It is the most inland advanced castrum of the *Epirus Nova* territory and represents a key point where the western lowlands extended deeper into the interior.

The high concentration of small Late Antique fortifications observed along the route, particularly along the upper course of the *Genusus* (Ceka 1974: 71-86; Baçe 1976), is clearly intended to protect the road. However, the need to establish a major and well-fortified center at the most advanced point of the lowland within the interior of the territory suggests a turning point beyond which, deeper inland, the

security dynamics appear to change. This seems to render *Scampis* a significant marker or boundary between the eastern and western parts of the province.

When examining episcopal centers within the territory of *Epirus Nova*, *Lychnidos* emerges as the only confirmed episcopal seat in the interior, likely the only element marking the eastern boundary of the province.

Via Egnatia as a Linguistic Boundary

The *Via Egnatia*, corresponding with the valley of the *Genessus* (Shkumbin) also represents a clear linguistic division. During the Roman centuries, Latin became the dominant written language throughout the region, in the 4th century (e.g., under Licinius), although Greek remained in use in specific locations such as Apollonia during the first centuries of the empire.

However, in the 5th and 6th centuries, Greek fully replaced Latin up to the boundary marked by the *Via Egnatia*/Genesus Valley (Walker, Wilkes 2010: 212). A bilingual environment is observed in Scampis (on the *Via Egnatia*), where both languages coexisted notably in the Tepe (Meksi, Ceka 1971: 185) and in the extra-mural basilica. In the latter, a particularly significant example is a Latin funerary inscription from the first half of the 6th century, belonging to a deacon from Ancona, Italy, a fact strongly related to *Via Egnatia* (Antolini, Hobdari, Marano 2022: 126-132; Hobdari, Nikolli, Pambuku 2022: 225-226; Antolini, Hobdari, Marano 2024: 400-403). Another example from north of *Via Egnatia* is again a funerary inscription from a destroyed and not well documented basilica of the 6th century found in Prush, near Tirana (Komata 1975: 182-183).

It is also important to emphasize that inscriptions in floor mosaics and some surviving inscriptions on frescos are always in Greek, whereas Latin appears primarily on movable objects, particularly funerary inscriptions. Graffiti, found in marble elements from the furniture of the churches, are also in Greek (Onchesmos, Byllis, etc.). This linguistic border tends to remain roughly unchanged until the end of the Middle Ages and corresponds to the so-called Jireček Line, the division line of the two main groups of dialects of the Albanian language.

Conclusion

The investigation into the border between *Epirus Vetus* and *Epirus Nova* during Late Antiquity reveals a frontier defined mostly by dynamic factors like administrative pragmatism, military strategy, ecclesiastical organization, and cultural identity. The border separating these two provinces appears to have been a zone shaped continuously in response to evolving political realities and local conditions. In the beginning, this internal border that separated these two provinces, not just from each other but also from the other neighboring ones, must have been put in place having

in mind the geographical context. Still, the cultural and historical background of the two provinces for us is also a factor.

Archaeological data, including the spatial distribution and chronology of fortifications, episcopal seats, and urban settlements, provide important clues into how the border functioned on the ground. The concentration of military installations and fortified sites along key communication routes, especially the *Via Egnatia*, reflects an imperial strategy aimed at securing vital transit corridors rather than enforcing a rigid provincial divide. This infrastructural axis simultaneously served as a cultural and linguistic boundary, demarcating zones of Latin and Greek influence, thereby reinforcing the multifaceted character of the frontier. Clearly, there is no attempt to build a line of fortifications along the border between the two provinces,

Moreover, the evolution of ecclesiastical centers and their spatial arrangement within the two provinces illustrates how religious infrastructure intersected with political and military imperatives. The emergence of episcopal seats predominantly in major urban centers situated near or along the border suggests an ecclesiastical awareness of regional identities that both mirrored and mediated provincial distinctions. The integration of churches within fortified sites built during a time outlined by insecurity speaks to the central role they had in the divine legitimization of this mission against the pagans.

This study argues that the boundary between *Epirus Vetus* and *Epirus Nova* was far from a rigid administrative line drawn by imperial decree. Instead, it functioned as a lived, evolving frontier shaped through ongoing negotiations between central authorities and the communities on the ground. Shifts in military needs, such as responding to invasions or managing internal resettlements, along with changes in language use, settlement distribution, and local governance, all contributed to the constant reshaping of this zone. For the emperor, the borders were strategic notions to exert his power politically, economically, and militarily in order to maintain the vast territory. Through time, the perception of the internal borders in the South-West Balkans seems to fade into just a historical determination. Generally, all the civic, military, and ecumenical agendas implemented in the two provinces seem to lead to a main goal: to ensure control over the Adriatic and the Ionian coastal corridor. As a result, communication between Constantinople with the provinces or with the Western Roman Empire was always possible.

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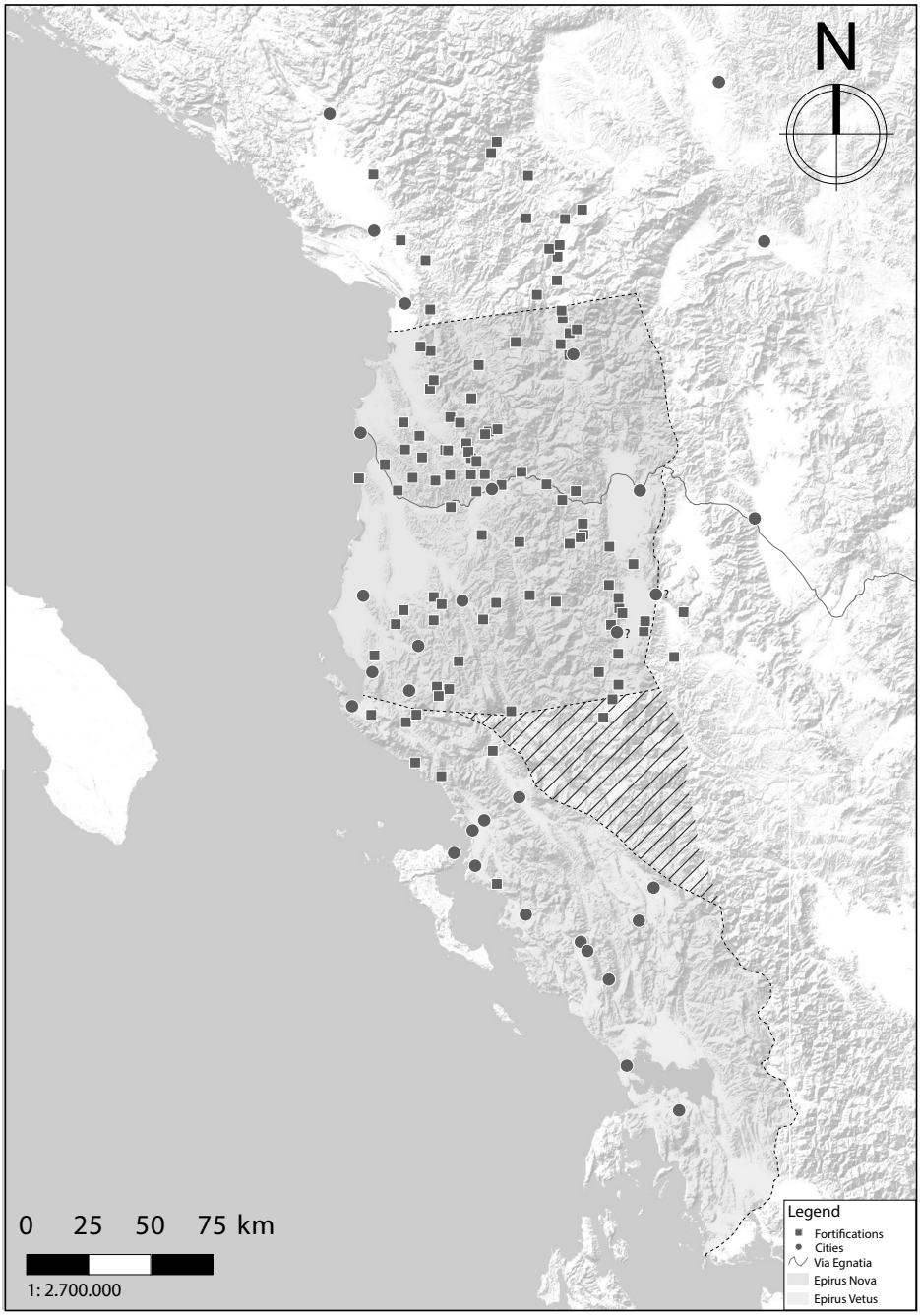
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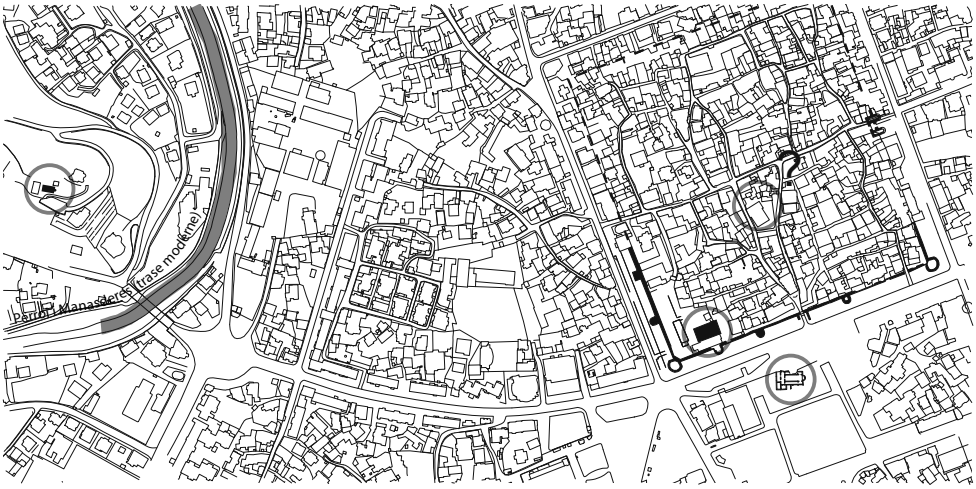
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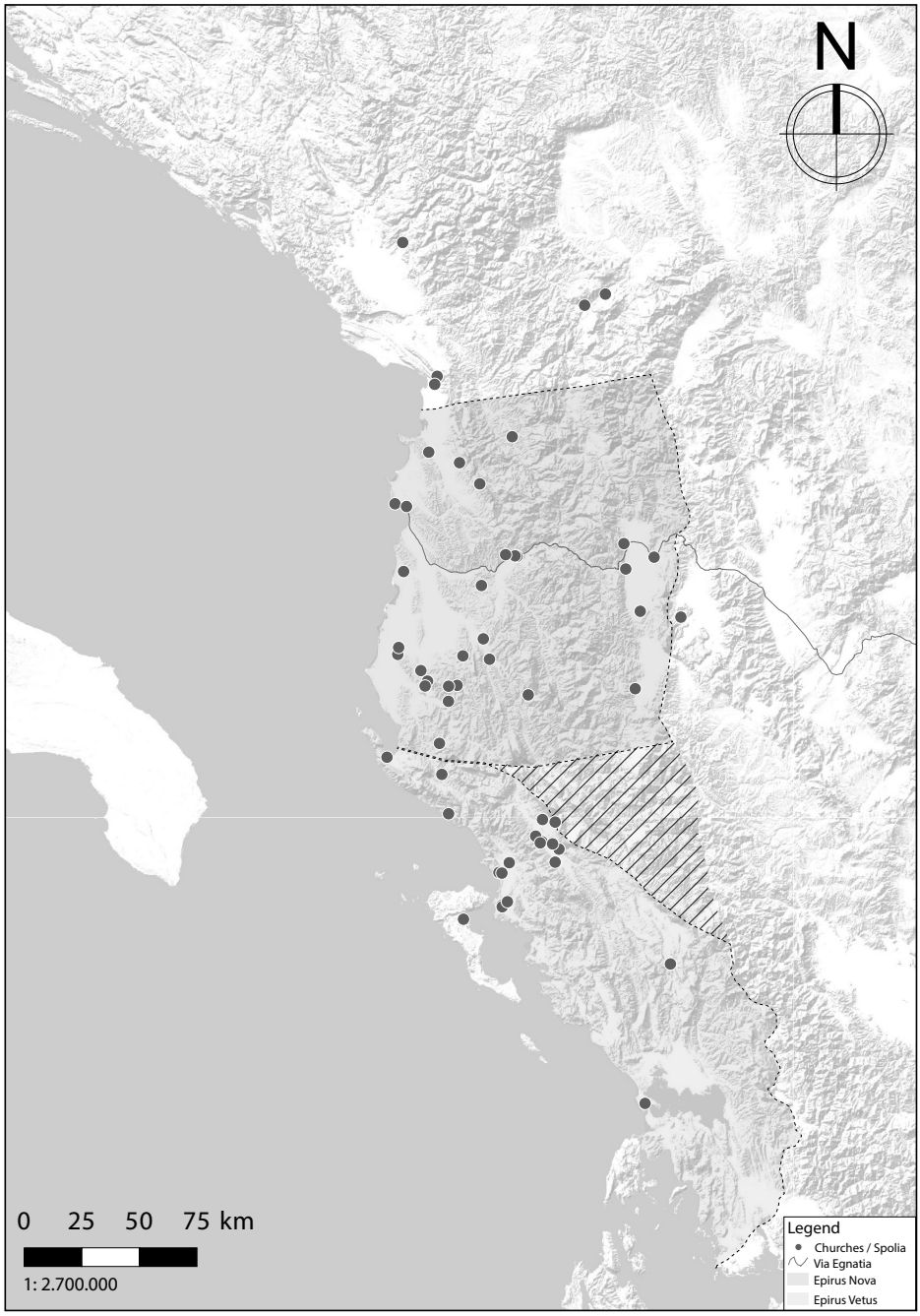
1. Map of fortified settlements in *Epirus Vetus* and *Epirus Nova* (Andrea Pambuku)



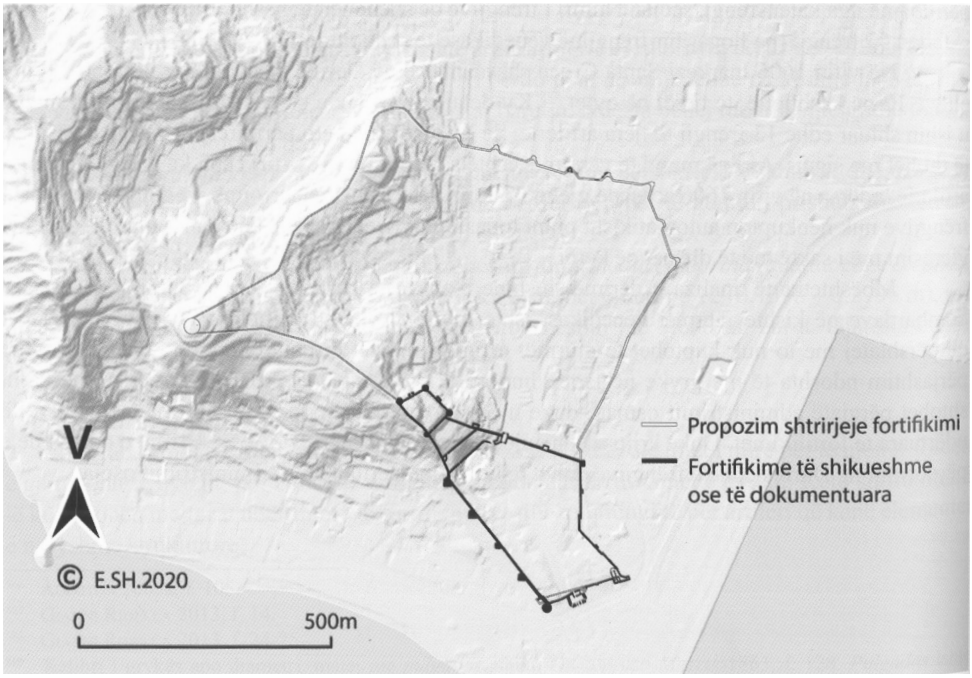
2. Plan of Scampis with Early Christian churches discovered and supposed



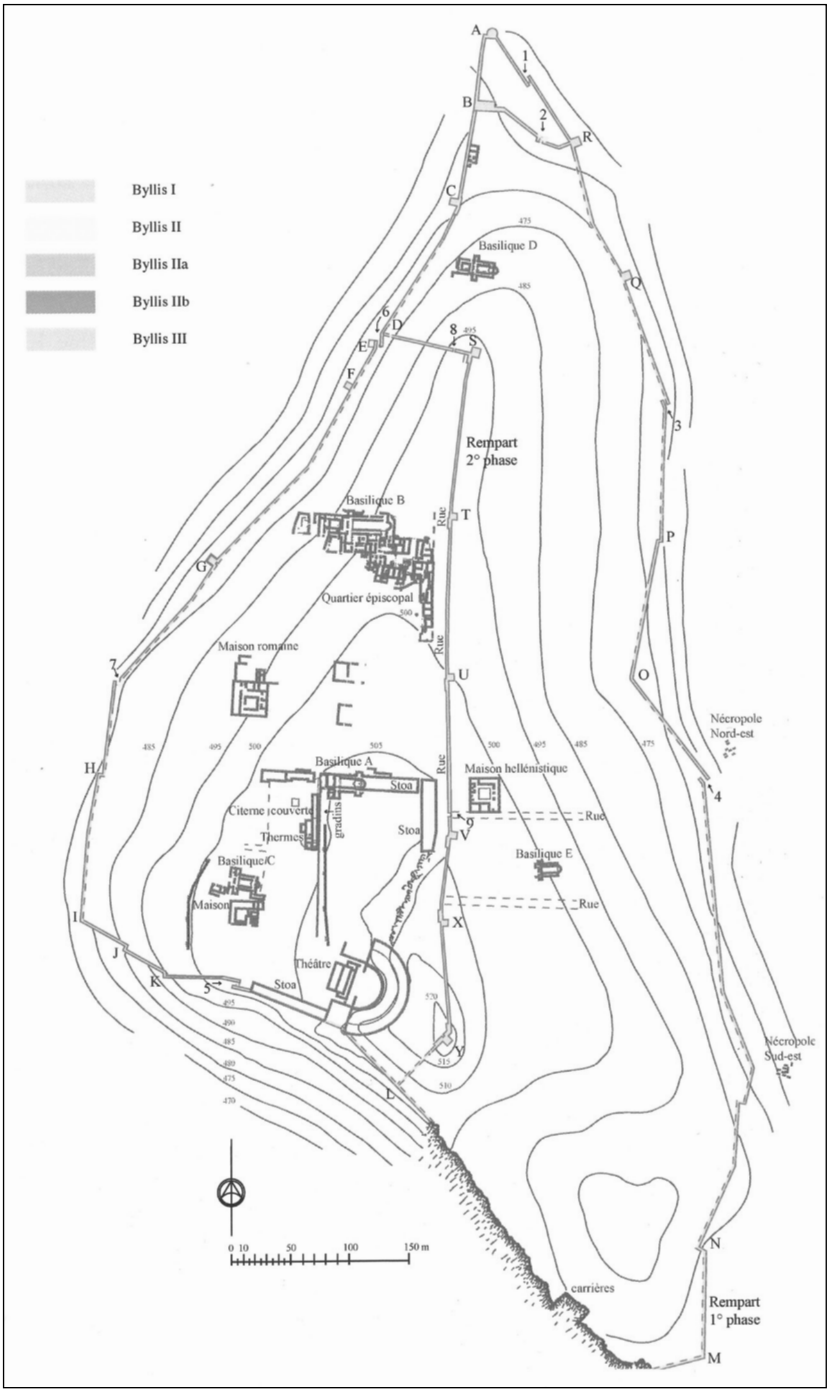
3. Plan of Grazhdan (Përzhita 2013a)



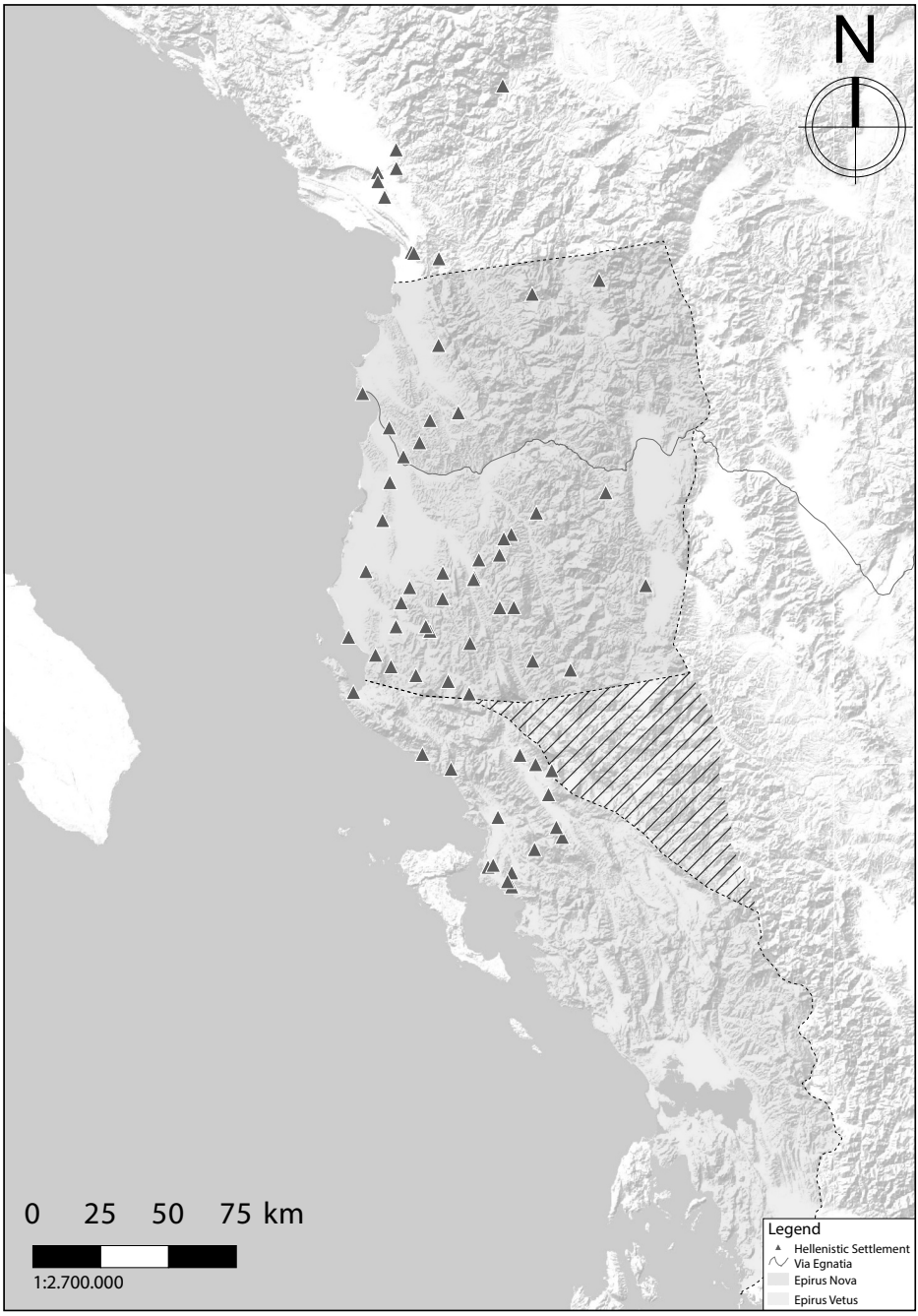
4. Distribution of Early Christian churches in the two provinces (isolated objects from unknown churches are not presented) (Andrea Pambuku)



5. Plan of Dyrrachium showing the Roman and the Late Antique fortifications (Shehi 2022)



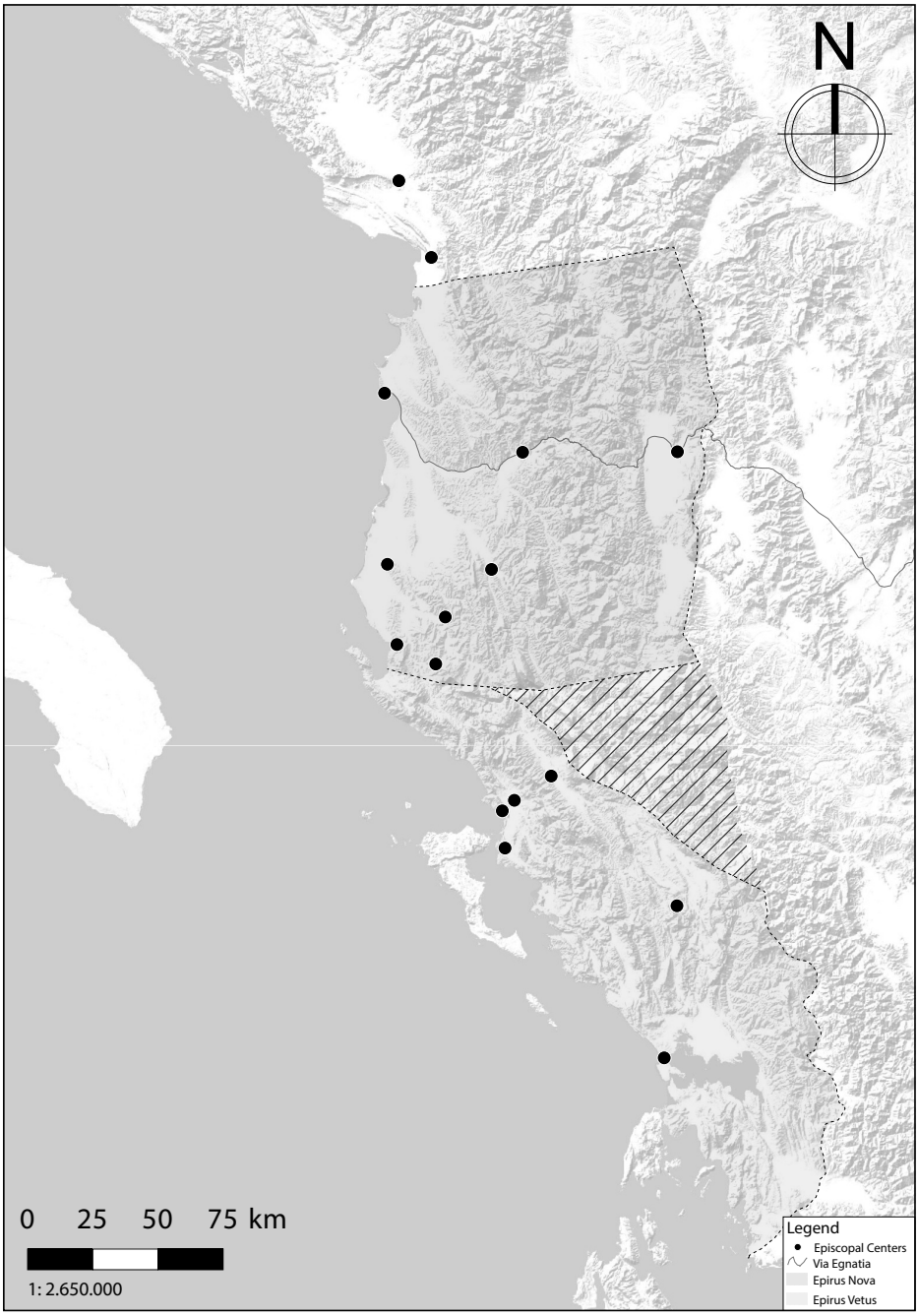
6. Plan of Byllis showing Hellenistic and Late antique walls as well excavated churches (Muçaj et al. 2019)



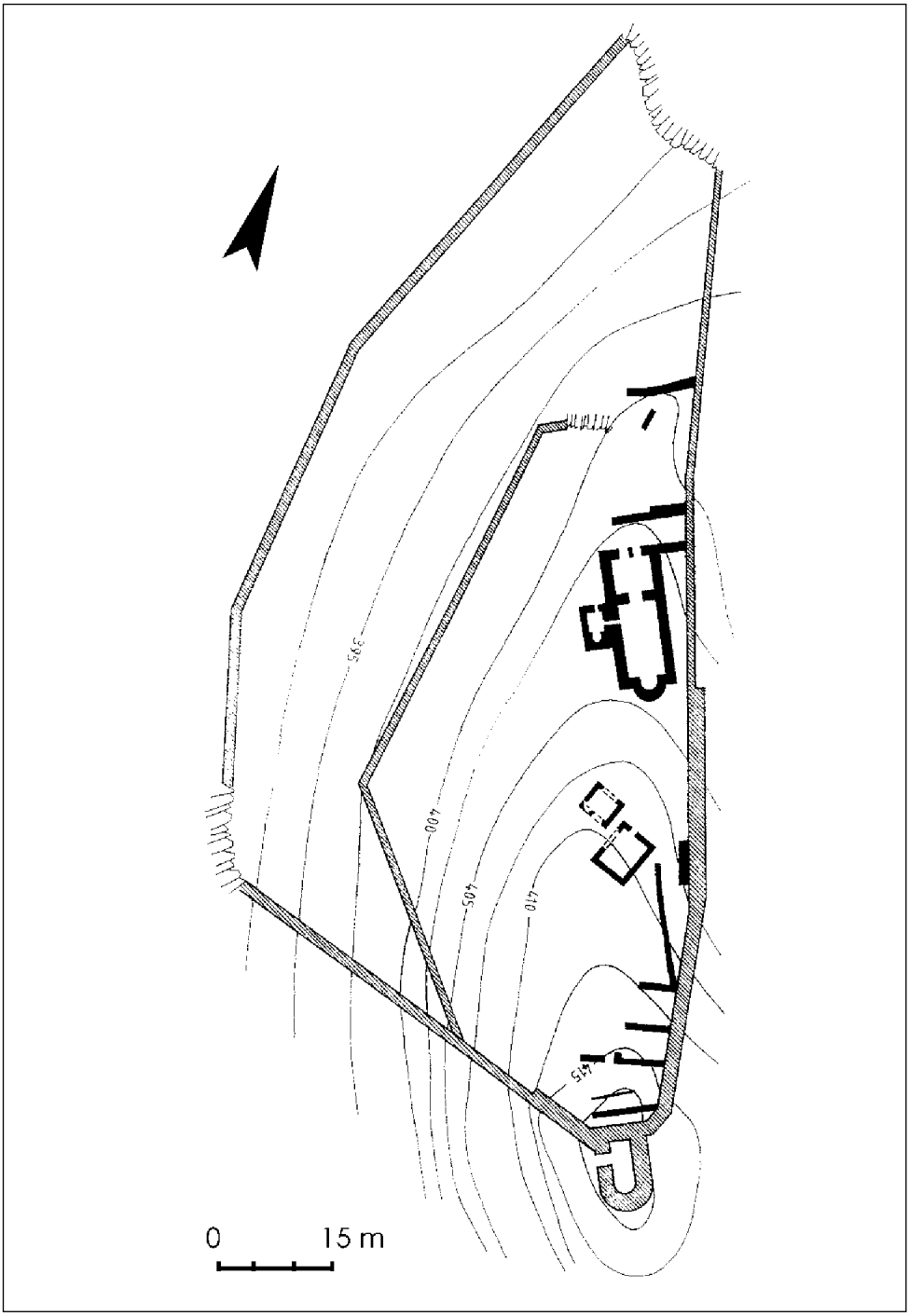
7. Map of known Hellenistic cities in *Epirus Vetus* and *Epirus Nova* (Andrea Pambuku)



8. General view of Hellenistic Butrint (in the background) and the Roman settlement in Vrina Plain (in the foreground) (Alket Islami)



9. Map of known bishopric sees in *Epirus Vetus* and *Epirus Nova* (Andrea Pambuku)



10. Plan of the settlement of Peca (Përzhita 1990)

ГОДИШНИК НА СОФИЙСКИЯ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“
ЦЕНТЪР ЗА СЛАВЯНО-ВИЗАНТИЙСКИ ПРОУЧВАНИЯ „ИВАН ДУЙЧЕВ“
Том 104 (23)

ANNUAIRE DE L'UNIVERSITE DE SOFIA "ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI"
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ГРАНИЧНОСТТА В ЮГА НА ДНЕШНА ИСПАНИЯ (VI–VII В.): ИСТОРИОГРАФСКИ ОБЗОР И ТЕОРЕТИЧНИ ПОДХОДИ[1]

ЦВЕТЕЛИН СТЕПАНОВ

Abstract: The objects of research in this article are distinguished according to the following criteria: spatial – present-day Southeastern and Southern Spain, temporal – between the 550s and 620s, and also political (and ethnic) – the so-called *Visigoths vs.* the Romans. The approaches employed here are twofold: some are theoretical (anthropological) and more general in nature, while others are more specific and tailored particularly to the Middle Ages. Various preliminary specifics have also been clarified, such as the fact that the Visigoths were a "barbarian" state of the *early* type at that time and were also included in the so-called "kingdoms of the [Roman] Empire". Over the last three decades, scholars such as G. R. López, C. Martin, M. Kulikowski, J. Wood, and others have thoroughly refuted the thesis that a typical linear *limes* system was constructed between Visigothic Spain and the Roman domains during the period between the reign of Justinian I (d. 565) and 624 AD. Could we then assume that the lands near and north of Baetica and Cartagena served as a sort of "inner" periphery for Byzantine settlers between the 550s and 624, and that they could be regarded as a "contact zone"?

Keywords: Visigoths, Romans, Byzantines, frontiers, historiography

Още в началото смятам за необходимо да упомена два важни факта. Първо, че тази статия е всъщност много по-задълбочен обзор на подходите по указаната в заглавието тема, което бе маркирано като важен проблем по време на Кръглата маса с докторантски семинар „Граница, периферия, военна зона: пространствени и културни измерения“, проведена в Софийския университет „Св. Кл. Охридски“ през месец март 2023 г. (с оглед съпоставката на юга на дн. Испания с Добруджа и с района на планината Тавър в изтока на Мала Азия) и че на следващите страници ще му

[1] Настоящият текст е резултат от научните изследвания на автора по проект „Граници и културни модели: езичество *vs* християнство в контактната зона на Дунавския *лимес* (Малка Скития и Втора Мизия през IV-VII в.)“, финансиран от Фонд „Научни изследвания“ на МОН по договор № КП-06-Н60/10 от 17.11.2021 г.

бъде предоставено повечко „пространство“ за аргументация. И второ, че съм особено благодарен на проф. Флорин Курта, който ми изпрати няколко важни статии, които не бяха лесно достъпни от България.

Общи (антропологични по същество) теоретични подходи

Те бяха накратко указани още в моя доклад, както бе посочено по-горе, но тук отново ще подчертая най-главното от тях. И така, първият такъв подход е свързан с тезата на видния мислител и историк Райнхарт Козелек за една от основните структури, които правят възможни изобщо размишленията за миналото, а именно съотнасянето *вътре – вън*; от него произтичат и такива съотнасяния като *приятел – враг*, или пък *ние – Другите* (Козелек 2002: 124–150). Всяка една граница, било то физическа преграда, например висока планина, голяма река, море или океан, или пък изкуствена такава, явяваща се дело на човешката ръка, например стени от камък, от валове с ровове, линейна или пък концентрирана в дадено пространство поредица от кули, укрепени градове и замъци и под., особено ясно и отчетливо активира именно това съотнасяне.

Вторият подход отпраща към добре известната теза на Арнълд Тойнби за „предизвикателството и отговора“ (или т.нар. парадигма на ‘*challenge-and-response*’) като базисно отношение в човешката история (Toynbee 1934–1961; Тойнби 1995).

Третият се основава на тези на семиотика Юрий Лотман, например че процесите на културен обмен и оттук – на културен диалог, са най-характерни тъкмо за периферните (граничните, по същината си) пространства. Лотман твърди още, че в основата на всяка семиотична система лежат два водещи проблема: 1) отношението към *вън*-системата, т.е. към *света*, лежащ отвъд нейните предели, и 2) отношението на статика спрямо динамика, другояче казано: по какъв начин една система може да се развива и променя, като същевременно остава себе си (Лотман 1992: 7). Последното изречение очевидно съдържа мисли, които много напомнят на вече казаното от Р. Козелек. Лотман посочва и още нещо съществено: нормалната човешка комуникация, в обвързаността ѝ с *езика*, тръгва от дълбоко заложеното предположение за изначалната неидентичност на говорещия и съответно на слушащия (Лотман 1992: 14).

Специфични теоретични подходи, съобразени с епохата на Средните векове

Към момента изследователите се колебаят между две основни питания относно това как средновековните хора, поне в днешна Европа, са възприе-

мали *границата*[2]. В единия случай се поставя въпросът дали те са я схващали като линия, отделяща и сравнително ясно разграничаваща дадена държава от друга такава, или пък една от друга етническа група, или пък прокарваща ясна разделителна линия между две или повече религии. Или са възприемали границата по-скоро като регионални зони, където хора и култури са били подложени на смесване и последното е предизвиквало у техните владетели и елити желанието да търсят договаряне по конфликтни въпроси. Отговорите на горните питания като че ли дават предимство на онези автори, които приемат *границата* по-скоро като зона, а не толкова като линия. С една малка, но съществена добавка: там, където границата преминавала покрай река, т.е. съблюдавала е географски/топографски обект, то и представите за нея в по-голяма степен се основавали на линейността. Във втория случай големият въпрос е как са функционирали границите. Пораждали ли са създаването на административен апарат, архитектурни форми и социални категории? Отговорите на този втори случай са очаквани: вариациите по места са много и твърде различни, защото зависят в огромна степен от местните контексти (Daileader 2023).

Нека видим и какво пишат някои известни изследователи на римското и ромейското отбранително изкуство. Бенджамин Айзък например сочи, че терминът *limes* се отнасял по-скоро до специфични области, където са издигани крепости, отколкото до системата на самите тези крепости. За да се потвърди представата за *лимес*, то е нужно да се открият във византийската литература пасажи, които да я потвърждават, а такива – поне нему преди края на 80-те години на миналия век – не са известни, допълва Айзък. Същият автор твърди, че на основата на латинските наративи не може да се потвърди представата за наличие на някаква верига от крепости, наричана 'limes', т.е. защитена граница[3].

Ето какво казва и известният със своите изследвания по ранна Византия и изобщо върху военното дело на ромеите Джон Холдън. Основна черта на византийската отбранителна система, пише той, била отворената за преминаване граница. Тя по-скоро е зона или полоса между две политически формирования, а не някаква стриктно очертана линия (Haldon 1999: 69). Следователно нашествениците не били спирани на границата, нито пък точно там те били предизвиквани и приканвани към битка, освен ако ромеите не намирали за супер подходящи тамошните условия, обещаващи им постигането на решителна победа.

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[2] По въпроса на границата съществува огромна литература. Вж. например Settia 1989: 155–169; Pohl, Wood, Reimitz (eds.) 2001; Abulafia, Berend (eds.) 2002; Goetz, Jarnut, Pohl (eds.) 2003; Curta (ed.) 2005.

[3] Isaac 1988: 125, 136-137, 146. Вж. и Isaac1992: 372-418, където същият автор посочва, че на римляните нерядко са приписвани стратегии на отбрана, които са валидни по-скоро за модерните стратегии на водене на война.

Кои са обектите на изследване в конкретната статия и как те са обособени?

На първо място, обособяването е по пространствен критерий: дн. Югоизточна и Южна Испания. На второ, по времеви критерий: между 550-те и 620-те години. И на трето, по политически (и етнически) критерий: основните политически контрагенти, обединени според горните два критерия са готите (т.нар. *вестготи/визиготи*), от една страна, и римляните, от друга.

И така, основният въпрос по *казуса* визиготи *vs* римляни, респективно гранични пространства между тях, е дали навсякъде са изграждани от страна на римляните реални укрепени линейни граници (част от граничната зона) спрямо *Другия*. По тази тема съществуват две диаметрално различни теории. Ще започна с втората, която е по-новата от двете в чисто хронологически план. Тя отрича наличието на съзнателно създадена от римляните през VI в. *лимес*-система. Една от най-известните опонентки на теорията за *лимеса* в юга на Испания е Гизела/Хисела Рипол Лопес. Противници на тезата за наличие на стриктна граница от типа *limes* са още и Селин Мартен, Майкъл Куликовски, Джейми Ууд, Хайме Вискаино Санчес, всички те публикуващи през 90-те години на миналия и съответно през началните две десетилетия на нашия век (Martin 1998: 267-280; Martin 2003; Kulikowski 2005: 247-254; Wood 2010: 292-319; Sánchez 2013: 281-305; Wood 2015: 1-17 – *non vidi*). Според Лопес в *Spania* не е имало някаква значима и отчетлива граница между визиготската и ромейската зони на контрол и влияние. Римската власт била основана по-скоро на редица малки анклави, които не били даже обединени в териториално отношение (López 2001: 99, 107, 115. Вж. и Martin 1998: 267-280; Keay 1998: 12-13). В своята критика Г. Р. Лопес се базира и на липсата на отчетливо дефинирани археологически свидетелства в проучваните райони, макар че набляга най-вече на наративите (López 2001: 108-109). За Джейми Ууд тази последна теория несъмнено е атрактивна, защото тя взимала предвид географията на дн. Южна Испания, белязана от относително тясна брегова ивица, нарязана от речни долини и отделена от вътрешността от серия планински вериги (Вж. Wood 2010: 292-319).

Каква е тезата на Селин Мартен с оглед на *Spania*, изразена в края на XX и в самото начало на нашия век и по същество отразяваща същите тези два противостоящи си възгледа през призмата на *границата*? Тя звучи така: *limes*-ът в Испания би могъл най-добре да се концептуализира като „териториален сектор, а не като линейна конструкция“ (Martin 2003: 287). Видимо Мартен също подкрепя визията на Г. Р. Лопес, а в тази връзка Ууд изказва допълнително и то важно съображение: дори в даваната най-често като съпоставка със *Spania* византийска Африка, сочи той, терминът ‘limes’ бил

синоним на провинция, или на "military circumscriptions of a *dux*". Така този термин всъщност маркирал не линейна граница, а географско пространство. На тази основа същият автор развенчава представата – пак в същото русло за *лимес*-типологията – за наличието на укрепени градове във вътрешността на провинцията. Тя била трудно защитима, защото наистина имало градове във вътрешността, но не можело да се докаже, че всичките са били укрепени, нито че са оформяли части от *лимес*-структура[4]. Затова в този случай Уд не е склонен да използва типологичния подход за съпоставка на същия феномен с други части на Римската империя (Wood 2010: 298).

Тъй като тезата на Г. Р. Лопес е обоснована предимно на базата на наративи (López 2001: 98 ff.), добре е да се подходи по-комплексно и да се огледат внимателно и извори от археологическо, епиграфско, нумизматично и географско естество и по този начин да се прецени дали са налице достатъчно византийски артефакти от периода и дали те предоставят основания да се потвърди наличието на *limes*-система в юга на дн. Испания след средата на VI в. (За детайли вж. Wood 2010: 292–319, и Sánchez 2013: 281–305). Неслучайно Джейми Уд отбелязва, че по правило в онези далечни времена наративите винаги са „спрегнати" със и обусловени от описанието на най-близкия – до дадения регион на описание – град, а това е всъщност област, осеяна с градски центрове, датиращи даже от пред-римските времена; последното обстоятелство може да е подвеждащо за изводите, казва Уд (Wood 2010: 300, вж. и Fig. 1 на с. 304 плюс n. 39). От своя страна Хайме В. Санчес настоява, че ако изобщо е позволено да се говори за процес на „византинизация" в овладените територии след средата на VI в. (в частност в Картахена/*Carthago Spartaria*, Малага/*Malaca* и Септем/*Septem*), то това се случвало по-скоро под формата на „африканизация", отколкото на специално укрепване на отношенията с Източното Средиземноморие; а под „африканизация" авторът тук има предвид близостта с материалните артефакти от градовете в северните предели на Африка (Sánchez 2013: 282). Затова и той говори за недостатъчен брой отбранителни римски съоръжения, откривани при разкопките, които съоръжения не изглеждат като гарантиращи наличието на линеен *limes*, и оттук прави извода за „хипотетична отбранителна линия" (Sánchez 2013: 284–285).

Гореупоменатите накратко визии очевидно се разминават с по-старата представа, която настоява на съществуването на укрепена система от типа *limes* в Югоизточна Испания, наложена след утвърждаването там на римската власт при Юстиниан Велики (527–565) в средата на VI в.[5] Тази визия, а именно как императорът Юстиниан е виждал удържането на ро-

[4] Тезата е на Луис Гарсиа Морено (Moreno 1973: 5–22), срещу чието твърдение се възправя Дж. Уд.

[5] Вж. например Barbero, Vigil 1974, които са сред първите автори, настояващи на подобна теза. Вж. още Moreno 1973: 5–22; Girvés 1993.

мейските владения в юга на Испания, приема, че ромеите създали там организирана и добре уредена структура от типа *лимес*. Според тезата на А. Барберо и М. Вигил системата била структурирана по следния начин: 1) на-лице била една вътрешна зона, състояща се от мрежа от няколко укрепени града; 2) в нея били разхвърляни по-малки защитни съоръжения, заедно със серия от малки укрепени *castra* (*castella*), свързани чрез пътища и защитавани от войници от типа 'limitanei'.[6] Тази теория на Барберо-Вигил за границата и в юга, и в севера на Испания е следвана впоследствие доста активно и от редица археолози, които на нейна основа полагат на съответни места някои археологически артефакти и структури.[7]

Тезата, че в юга на Испания е имало граница от типа *limes* през VI-VII в., се обосновава най-често чрез наративи като, например, Павел Дякон (VIII в.) и неговата „История на лангобардите" (*Historia Langobardorum III. 21*, 1878: 127 – "…*qui in limite adversum Hispanos Gotthos residebant*…"), за която е известно, че не е била написана преди 790-те г. Според Ууд такава датировка повдигала въпроса доколко може да се вярва на късен автор. Вторият важен извор несъмнено е Исидор Севилски с неговата "Historia Gothorum" от началото на VII в., където са налице два пасажа с упоменаване на завземи от кралете Леовигилд и съответно Свинтила римски (византийски) 'castra' (Wood 2010: 297 и n. 21). На базата на последния термин Луис Гарсия Морено още през 1973 г. сочи, че след като римските 'limitanei' били разполагани в 'castra' в другите части на Империята, то можело да се предполага и такава система от *лимес*-тип и в Испания (Moreno 1973: 9). В своя текст обаче Исидор Севилски е твърде непостоянен в употребата на 'castra', което означава, че тезата на Морено не може да се приема безапелационно. Освен това, Исидор едва ли е познавал в детайли римските фортификационни съоръжения в Африка, на Апенините и особено на изток, за да направи подобна съпоставка със *Spania* (Wood 2010: 297 и n. 23). Вече към края на властването на Юстиниан Велики не била съвсем ясна и границата между 'comitatenses' и 'limitanei' – първите дори по-често от вторите били разполагани в близост до границите (Haldon 1999: 67, 69). Така че дори и да е имало 'limitanei' в Испания по границата между визиготи и римляни, то не може да се настоява, че те са били непременно разположени в нещо като гарнизонни укрепени лагери по границата. От казаното у Исидор е видно единствено това, че визиготите са заели онези опорни точки, по-рано пазени от ромеите. Нищо обаче не говорело, че тези защитни съоръжения са били вдигнати или позиционирани в специално съотношение едни спрямо

[6] Вж. Wood 2010: n. 18, където са цитирани проучвания на A. Barbero и M. Vigil, L. García Moreno, M. Vallejo Girvés, F. Salvador Ventura.

[7] За конкретни автори и техните изследвания, съответно за критика срещу представата за *limes*-и в северна и в южна посока, вж. Wood 2010: 296, n. 19.

други, нито пък че са били разположени спрямо каквато и да било линейна граница (Wood 2010: 297).

За някои специфики на тамошния изворов материал

Необходимо е да очертаем някои особености на този аспект, а именно конкретните извори: наративи, такива от археологическо и съответно от лингвистично естество. Тяхното съчетаване е винаги проблемно, защото науките история, археология и езикознание имат свои особени методи и методологии и те невинаги могат лесно и по непротиворечив начин да бъдат съгласувани. Една от причините за това е, че няма как да се подведат по еднакъв начин спрямо добре известното изначално напрежение, съществуващо между динамика и статика, т.е. между събитийността и промяната *vs* структурите и стабилността. Усложняването идва и от това, че за всичките тези десетилетия между 550-те и 620-те години не можем да изградим една непротиворечива картина чрез разказ за подредено пространство и стриктно прогнозируема система на отношения между двата контрагента, ромеите и вестготите. Според мен, и следвайки отново Лотман (Лотман 1992: 208-209), подобна стройна, непротиворечива структура-и-поведение е илюзия; всъщност контактите-и-конфликтите между тези две сили са преминавали през най-различни перипетии в реалния живот. И все пак добре е да опитаме поне да дадем по-общите очертания на проблема за *граничността* в горепосоченото пространство и времеви хоризонт. Но първо трябва да уточним нещо и за метода

Струва ми се особено важно едно мнение на Дж. Ууд, който изследва контакт-конфликта и взаимодействието между вестготи и римляни в юга на дн. Испания. Авторът насочва вниманието ни към факта, че данните, явяващи се обект на неговия анализ, са единствено от типа на военните свидетелства. Той следователно не се ангажира с всякакъв вид римски артефакти от двата основни проучвани региона, контролирани от римляните заедно с техните центрове, а именно Картахена и Малага. Чрез анализа на тамошните данни всъщност той оглежда и градовете, и двата им хинтерланда, в които – ако се приеме, че там е имало *лимес*-система – би трябвало да се открият свидетелства за византийско укрепване от периода след 550-те години. И обратното, казва той: ако е вярна тезата за крайбрежно присъствие на ромеите под формата на анклави, то ще трябва да очакваме там да има малко на брой свидетелства за римско присъствие (Wood 2010: 300). Това е наистина твърде фино разграничение, което заслужава внимание. И какъв е изводът от него? Може тези два основни, а и други по-малки градове да са били обитавани от ромеи, но това не бива задължително да се приема като белег за съществуването на *limes*-система.

За някои предварителни специфики от различен характер

Една от тях е от политическо естество. Вестготите са по онова време „варварска“ държава от *ранен* тип, според най-модерните днес класификации за типа държавност; при това те се причисляват и към т.нар. ‘kingdoms of the [Roman] Empire’.[8] Допустимо е да мислим, че Римската (и Ромейската) империя, въпреки по-общите си гранични и специфичните си регионални военни стратегии,[9] е реализирала по-специални подходи и тактики за справяне с такива различни по своя културен „багаж“ и реална сила противници.

Следваща предварително отчитана специфика при анализа е тази за потенциалното наличие на т.нар. зони на културни контакти,[10] които някои автори предпочитат да назовават ‘zones of interaction’, „зони на взаимодействие“.[11] Известно е, че и вестготите, и ромеите са християни, но с едно важно уточнение: вестготите на Балканския полуостров още от IV в. са ариани и такива ще си останат те и в дн. Испания до Третия събор в Толедо през 589 г. Вече след тази дата и в частност след решението на техния крал Рекаред (586–601) те ще прегърнат Никео-халкедонското православие (Collins 1995: 53–57; Collins 2004: 64–69; López 2001: 95–115; Kulikowski 2005: 250–251; Hen 2007: 125, 141). Следователно двете идентичности, базирани на различно вероизповедание от IV в. и до 589 г., престават да имат своите основания в тукашните им нови земи. Дали този факт ще се окаже важен критерий при търсенето на дипломатически решения на конфликтите? Все пак един от най-забележимите фактори за разграничение между *нас/ние* и *вас/вие* е религията (редом до дрехи, прически, специфични стопански практики и също тъй специфично законодателство и т.н.). Вероятно на тази основа и особено на изследванията на Франсиско Преседо Вело,[12] Дж. Ууд прави заключението, че особено след Втория Севилски събор от 619 г. между визиготи и римляни е била налична по-скоро идеологическа граница,

[8] Вж. повече у Степанов 2023: 32–42, където са указани основни постулати и тези по темата за *ранната* държава. Вж. и *Kingdoms of the Empire* 1997. Срв. Goffart 1980; Goffart 2006; Goffart 2009; Pohl 2013: 1–46.

[9] Вж. тук най-общо Dyson 1974: 277–283; Lutwak 1976; Elton 1996: 126–135; *Frontiers of the Roman Empire* 1996; Whittaker 1994; Whittaker 2004: 63–87 (Ch. 4: Mental Maps and Frontiers); Pohl 2011: 345–374; Breeze 2011; Sullivan 2018: 259–307 (специално за спецификите на стратегиите в западна посока – pp. 294–300).

[10] Вж. за тях, както и за разликата с термина „контактна зона“, Арутюнова-Фиданян 1994; Арутюнова-Фиданян 1995: 42–61; Агаджанов 1995: 7–22; Арутюнова-Фиданян 2012: 13–19.

[11] Вж. например Wood 2010: 307–309, който използва този именно термин за визиготска Испания.

[12] Вж. Precedo Velo 2003: 95–163, където са представени многобройни примери за „културни влияния“ на римляните/ромеите спрямо визиготите в области като религия, юриспруденция, изкуство, епиграфика, нумизматика и т.н. Специално за влиянията на римското/ромейското монетосечене върху ранното визиготско такова вж. Pliego 2020: 235–255.

отколкото такава от материално естество; последното се потвърждавало от многобройни примери за постоянен обмен на всекидневно ниво между двете общности (Wood 2010: 319). През последните години се обръща немалко внимание на този търговски и изобщо всекидневен обмен по и през границата, особено в годините на IV–V в. Предложена бе и тезата за т.нар. „вътрешни“ и „външни“ периферии на Римската империя.[13] За такива „вътрешни“ периферии може да се мислят земите не само в стриктните рамки на Империята, но и онези, отстоящи на ок. 100 км отвъд границата, които всъщност се явявали селскостопански хинтерланд и били подходящи за всякакъв обмен между римляни и „варвари“. От там често са били набирани и частите на помощните войски, наемащи се на служба в римските армии, които нямали статут на римски граждани и следователно не можели да служат в легионите. Така че в случая тезата на Ю. Лотман за ролята на периферийте за културния обмен не може да бъде лесно опровергана и точно в тези пространства би могло да се мисли за наличие на т.нар. контактна зона. Неслучайно Питър Хедър упоменава факта на непрекъснатото търсене на стоки от страна на пограничните римски потребители от двете страни по рейнско-дунавския лимес във времето на IV–V в., обръщайки внимание и на обмена там с не-римско население. А това са реални контакти и неслучайно и при „варварите“ отвъд римската граница през IV в. се открива немалък брой римски монети (Хедър и Рапли 2025: 69, 70).

Поредната предварително отчитана специфика е от сферата на езикознанието и се съдържа във въпроса съществуват ли ясни данни в първичните извори от епохата от края на V и до първите десетилетия на VII в. за разграничение между *римско* и *готско* на лингвистично равнище точно в региона на *Spania*?[14] За такива разграничения поне през VI в. можем да говорим с оглед на вестготското позициониране в дн. Испания. Тамошни топоними с форми, базирани например на ‘*Romanus*’ и онези, основани на ‘*Gothus*’, ни подсказват стриктно разграничение на два вида поселения – такива с римляни и такива с готи.[15]

И още една от т.нар. предварителни специфики във връзка с вестготите: техните крале подновили един стар едикт на император Теодосий II (408-450), според който римски граждани от провинциите не можели да се обвързват с женитба за „варвари“. Последните отчетени специфики

[13] Вж. последно Хедър, Рапли 2025: 66–67, 73–74. Любопитно е да се види дали и евентуално до каква степен те могат да се съотнесат с известните гранични стратегии при релацията северни номади-„варвари“ *vs* Китай, маркирани чрез термини като *‘inner’ and ‘outer’ frontier strategies*. За последните вж. Barfield 1989: 70, *passim*; Barfield 1991: 35.

[14] Изобщо по темата за лингвистичните граници вж. например Goetz 2012: 61–73; Bocek 2019: 63–86.

[15] Вж. Kulikowski 2005: 249 и n. 8, където са отчетени редица по-стари изследвания по този въпрос.

подсказват, че поне в началото съвременниците са виждали ясните различия между вестготи и римляни (*Codex Theodosianus 3.14.1* 1905: 155. Вж. и Liebeschuetz 1998: 131–152; Kulikowski 2005: 249 f. и n. 9).

Следвайки Г. Р. Лопес, може да укажем още една разграничителна линия между вестготи и римляни. Според нея, и базирайки се на артефакти от областта на торевтиката за времето на VI–VII в. от провинция Бетика в частност, трябва да се приеме, че поне някои представители на готския елит са притежавали модни вкусове различни от тези на техните съседи (López 1998 – цит. по Kulikowski 2005: 250, n. 10). Не е ли логично тогава да зададем въпроса дали в юга на Испания ще иде реч за „контактна зона" или пък само за „зона на контакти" между визиготи и ромеи поне до 580-те г.? Можем ли да говорим там за създаване на т.нар. общество на границата ('frontier society'), за каквото настояват редица автори, наред с тях, макар и доста по-внимателно и нюансирано, и Майкъл Куликовски (Kulikowski 2005: 253–254)? Или би трябвало да търсим друга основа, на която са били поставени взаимоотношенията между римското провинциално население и власт и съответно вестготите след завладяването на юга на бившите провинции Бетика и Картагиниензис от войските на Юстиниан Велики през 550-те г.?

Преди да видим дали може да се приеме за валидна гореспоменатата теза на Лопес – Мартен – Куликовски – Уд и да можем да намерим по-адекватни решения на някои от горните проблеми, трябва да се спрем накратко и върху историческата контекстуализация и археологическата конкретика на терена.

На основата на законодателството на император Юстиниан I (527-565) и на пасажи от съчинения на Прокопий Кесарийски, Дж. Уд сочи, че историята на ромейската провинция *Spania/Спания* начева с Юстиниан Велики, от 534 г. и насетне, когато тече реконкистата на Северна Африка и са надвити вандалите, след което бързо е зает *Septem* (дн. Сеута) в Северна Африка и са били разгърнати гарнизон с морска база (Wood 2010: 294 и n. 6). С този акт и с подсигуряването на достъп до Гибралтар се създала основата за бъдеща атака над визиготска Южна Испания (Wood 2010: 294). Провинция *Spania* се появява през 550-те години, покривайки южните части на старите провинции *Baetica* и *Carthaginiensis*. През 620-те години тя е разорена от визиготите, а окончателно е изоставена от ромеите през 624 г. (Hen 2007: 130). В началото Юстиниан Велики навярно е изпратил малък експедиционен корпус в юга на Испания, тъй като към 530-те г. течели все още големите разпри с остготите в Италия; вероятно едва към 555 г. императорът е могъл да отдели повече войски за втора експедиция към Испания. Все пак не е ясно дали Юстиниан е възнамерявал да завладее цяла Испания, или просто е бил насърчен от някои вътрешни раздори сред визиготите и е решил да интервенира (Wood 2010: 293, 295. Вж. и Goubert 1944: 5–78;

Goubert 1946: 71–110; Goubert 1946b: 111-134, както и Girvés 1993; Asensio, Sánchez 2002: 313–332; Presedo Velo 2003).

Картахена е най-вероятната столицата на *Spania* и като такава, тя притежавала най-ярките свидетелства на укрепване с цел отбрана от този период, например части от крепостна стена и полукръгла ромейска кула; също и керамика *terra sigillata* от типа, обикновено датиран към 580-620 г.; частично са запазени и арки на крепостни врати и т.н.[16] Според Исидор Севилски (*Etymologiae XV.1.67* 2006: 305) вестготите на крал Свинтила (621–631) превзели и опустошили Картахена през 624 г. (Hen 2007: 151). Данните от близките до центъра Картахена градове обаче все още са несигурни, що се отнася до това дали тези защитни градски ядра са били вдигнати от ромеи, или са били дело на вестготи. По думите на Йоан Бикларски (550/6-621/31), специално гр. Баса бил завзет от Леовигилд (569–586) през 569 г. (John of Biclarum 2001: 62 (*s.a.* 569). В същото време нямало археологически данни за съществуване на укрепена военна система-граница около дн. Елче, макар и някои свидетелства да сочат, че тамошни контексти подсказват ромейско присъствие (Wood 2010: 302). Защитните съоръжения в Дения, град, контролиращ брега северно от Картахена и подсигуряващ Балеарските острови, са били наново укрепвани в началото на VI в., т.е. преди ромейската инвазия, и следователно може да са били просто пре-използвани от ромеите (Girvés 1993: 382 – цит. по Wood 2010: 303). В заключение, Картахена наистина е била стабилно укрепвана през втората половина на VI в., най-вероятно понеже се явявала център на провинцията и защото контролирала тази част от Средиземно море. Значителен брой от находките в региона носи ясни следи от византийски „архетипи“ и влияние, като са очевидно свързани с контрола на ключовите позиции около пътища, в речни долини и по крайбрежието. И въпреки това, казва Ууд, в Картахена и нейния хинтерланд няма „достатъчно свидетелства“ за „организирана, укрепена *лимес*-система в *Spania*”. Все пак той смята, че са налице повече свидетелства за византийско присъствие в този район, отколкото допуска теорията на Г. Рипол Лопес (López 2001: 108–109; Sánchez 2013: 284. Срв. Wood 2010: 304-305).

Другият основен център, Малага, е стратегически разположен на североизток от Гибралтарския проток, но се предполага, че не е бил сериозно укрепван. Той не е завладян през 569 г. от крал Леовигилд (John of Biclarum 2001: 62 (*s.a.* 569). На основата на наличните артефакти няма основания да се твърди, че градските центрове в близост до Малага са били укрепвани от ромеите. Нещо повече, някои от градовете изобщо не са били под властта на ромеите (Wood 2010: 303 и ns. 57–60). Йоан Бикларски пише, че добре укрепеният (‘fortissimam civitatem’) Medina Sidonia е имал страте-

[16] За литература по въпроса вж. Wood 2010: 301 f. и ns. 41-42.

гическо положение за западна *Spania* и че е бил превзет от Леовигилд през 570 г. (John of Biclarum 2001: 63 (*s.a.* 570). На този фон ромейски монети са откривани в дн. Кадис (*Gades*), а в Алгесирас (*Carteia*) – епитафия на гръцки от 616 г.; и двата тези центъра са крайбрежни средища с хубави търговски пристанища. Навярно те са били силно обвързани със *Septem* (упоменатата Сеута в Северна Африка), който е известен с гарнизона си и с морския си флот, помагащи в следенето на обстановката в юга на Испания. Трябва да се признае, че е налице голям разнобой относно тълкуванията на местата около и по-далече от Малага от страна на различните изследователи. На основата на намерените там материали едни автори ги мислят за визиготски, а други – за византийски (Вж. Hinojo 1998: 316; Girvés 1993: 385 – цит. по Wood 2010: 305-306).

Базирайки се на М. Валехо Хирвес и на Фредегар (*Chronicon* 33), в частност, Дж. Уд постулира три фази на овладяване на Малага от визиготите: 1) 569–570 г. – крал Леовигилд завзема някои важни места в планинските райони на север и Медина на запад (Girvés 1993: 288 – цит. по Wood 2010: 307, n. 71); 2) при крал Витерих (603–611), когато навярно е имало някакъв военен удар, при който визиготите надвили ромейските части при Sagontia; най-вероятно впоследствие ромеите са успели да възстановят контрола си там, че дори и във вътрешността на полуострова; 3) към 613-615/6 г., когато Малага е овладяна при крал Сисебут (611/2-621) (Fredegar 1960: 21; Wood 2010: 307, n. 71), един от най-прочутите и прославени крале на визиготите (Hen 2007: 128-141, 149–152).

Вече към второто десетилетие на VII в., и при Втория събор в Севиля (619 г.) в частност, е видно, че ромеите са контролирали значително пространство от Малага. На същия този събор били подновени диспутите между някои от присъстващите епископи, например тези на Малага, Есия, Илиберис и Кабра: последните трима поели контрола над храмове и земи, по-рано принадлежащи на епископа на Малага. Всичко това може да се свърже както с напреженията между визиготи и ромеи в провинция Бетика, така и с вътрешните напрежения между римските епископи, дошли като „наследство“ от натиска на визиготските епископи над същите тези територии (Wood 2010: 306). Нека си спомним, че след 589 г. визиготите вече са католици и при превземане на земи и поданици на ромеите са могли да предявят легитимни права над новите си поданици и в религиозно отношение.

Свидетелствата за наличие на (погранични) укрепления по границата между Малага и Гранада не могат да се отрекат, но дори и в началото на XXI в. е трудно да се каже дали те изобщо са имали военно предназначение и ако да, може ли в тези места дефинитивно да се разграничат визиготски или ромейски фази на градежи. За Малага специално липсват данни за римско укрепване по време на византийската доминация там и при тази ситуация, според Уд, е ефимерно да се мисли за наличие на „базирана на градове

вътрешна защитна линия зад Малага“. Както и при Картахена, и в случая с Малага „няма дефинитивни свидетелства за граница от *лимес*-тип, но същевременно няма възможност и да бъде подкрепена една минималистка позиция“ – в стила на Г. Р. Лопес – за отсъствие на ромейски артефакти и влияния, сочи същият изследовател (Wood 2010: 307).

От направения кратък преглед на свидетелствата от и около Малага става ясно, че за редица автори те не са достатъчни за постулирането на линейна *limes*-система, градена след 550-те години, което твърдение изобщо не влизало в противоречие с видимите на места ромейски следи. Набиващият се в очи извод е, че между 550-те години и 624 г. може и да са ги обитавали ромеи, но последното не е задължително белег за съществуване на ясно структурирана и преднамерено изграждана *limes*-система.

На базата на примера с римско-визиготската граница в юга/югоизтока на дн. Испания през VI и първите две десетилетия на VII в., както и на редица други примери от историята на Късната Римска империя е видно, че трудно може да се говори за повсеместна римска защитна практика на солидни и *непрекъсваеми* линейни граници. Според редица изследователи подобни практики ще станат реалност едва през Новото време. Въпреки това Майкъл Куликовски вижда все пак създаване тук на стабилни контексти (*sic*) при корелациите между *култура*, *етничност* и *географски маркери за граничност* през Ранното средновековие, като смята обаче последните за отчетливо видими единствено при Каролингите и при мюсюлманско-християнската граница в Испания след 711 г. (Kulikowski 2005: 254 и n. 25).

От своя страна Дж. Ууд твърди, че концепцията за *лимеса* като укрепена граница, разделяща две ясно дефинирани политически цялости, не може адекватно да обясни повечето от известните римски/ромейски граници (Wood 2010: 299). Неслучайно още в *abstract*-а на своята статия той сочи (Wood 2010: 292), че артикулацията на противопоставянето между тези две сили в дн. Испания се осъществявала най-вече посредством *дипломация и „пропаганда“* (*sic*) – и двете битували едновременно в тази „флуидна зона на взаимодействие“. Изглежда в земите на дн. Южна Испания римляните са разчитали повече на дипломацията, отколкото на директни военни акции или пък на създаване на структури за отбрана. Стратегиите им били разнообразни и включвали намеса във вътрешните спорове на визиготските елити, споразумения с техните владетели и размяна на посолства (Wood 2010: 294–295). Така в негово лице, както и в това на Г. Рипол Лопес, Селин Мартен, М. Куликовски и др. автори виждаме през последните три десетилетия сериозен отпор на тезата, че между визиготска Испания и римските владения през епохата на Юстиниан Велики и до 624 г. е изграждана типична линейна *лимес* система. А на този фон бихме могли да се замислим дали земите в близост до и на север от Бетика и от Картахена не са били нещо като

„вътрешна“ периферия на ромейските заселници между 550-те и 624 г., т.е. да ги провидим като „контактна зона“.

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ГОДИШНИК НА СОФИЙСКИЯ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“
ЦЕНТЪР ЗА СЛАВЯНО-ВИЗАНТИЙСКИ ПРОУЧВАНИЯ „ИВАН ДУЙЧЕВ“
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ПРЕЗ ЧУЖДИ ОЧИ: ЗАПАДЪТ ОГЛЕЖДА ДОБРУДЖА, XV–XVIII ВЕК[1]

ИВАЙЛА ПОПОВА

Abstract: The present study aims to provide a brief overview of the information from the travelogues of Western authors from the mid-15th century to the mid-18th century, examining their information about the Dobrudja region. Western authors are of different ethnic origin (Burgundians, Germans, French, English) and pass through Dobrudja for different purposes (military campaigns, trade, political and diplomatic missions, etc.), but their data is equally valuable and provide curious information about the nature of the region; about the population, its ethnic makeup, livelihood and religion; about the towns with their location, fortifications, secular and religious institutions; about the history of the Lower Danube zone.

Keywords: Western travelers, Dobrudja, Black Sea region, population, history

Настоящето изследване цели да направи кратък обзор на сведенията на западни автори от средата на XV в. до XVIII в., като разгледа техните сведения за региона на Добруджа. Западните автори са с различен етнически произход (бургундци, немци, французи, англичани) и с различна цел преминават през земите на Добруджа (военни кампании, търговия, политически и дипломатически мисии и др.), но данните им са еднакво ценни и дават любопитна информация за природата на региона; за населението, неговия етнически облик, поминък и религия; за градовете с тяхното разположение, укрепления, светски и религиозни учреждения; за историята на долнодунавския регион.

На връщане от османски плен немският рицар Ханс Шилтбергер през 1427 г. отбелязва в своя пътепис, че *„императорът ни изпрати с една галера до един замък, който се нарича* ***Килия****, където Дунав се влива в морето“* (Ханс Шилтбергер 1971: 155; Божилов, Гюзелев 2004: 262). През първата

[1] Настоящият текст е резултат от научните изследвания на автора по проект „Граници и културни модели: езичество *vs* християнство в контактната зона на Дунавския *лимес* (Малка Скития и Втора Мизия през IV–VII в.)“, финансиран от Фонд „Научни изследвания“ на МОН по договор № КП-06-Н60/10 от 17.11.2021 г.

половина на XV в. Килия е под молдовска власт и привлича вниманието на влашкия воевода Дан II (1427–1431). През 1429 г. той направил опит да я превземе, но молдовският воевода Александър Добрия (1400–1432) заповядал пълна блокада на пристанището на Килия, с което временно парализирал дунавската търговия.

Другата възлова крепост в Дунавската делта – **Ликостомо**[2] – е под властта на генуезците, които правят всякакви усилия да я задържат, за да могат да контролират навлизането по реката и да извличат дивиденти от закупуването на зърнени храни и други земеделски продукти от Добруджа и Бесарабия. Редица документи показват генуезкото присъствие в Ликостомо до средата на XV в. Междувременно, заедно с Килия, и други градове на крайдунавска Добруджа са отбелязани като притегателен център за молдовския воевода Стефан II (1432–1447) (Божилов, Гюзелев 2004: 263).

Интересен е разказът на бургундския дипломат Жилбер де Ланоа за преминаването му през Маврокастро, след като е изпратен от Филип Добрия (1419–1467) с дипломатическа мисия в Леванта през 1421–1422 г. Бургундецът описва срещата си с воеводата на Молдова Александър I Добрия (1400–1432), както и преживяванията си в Маврокастро. За пристанищния град отбелязва, че е добре укрепен и населението му се състои от генуезци, власи и арменци: „*Оттук* [от Каменец] *се отправих към Малка Влахия* [Олтения] *през грамадна пустиня и намерих воеводата Александър* [Александър I Добрия], *господар на Влахия и Молдавия, в едно село, наречено Козял. Той ми съобщи пълната и достоверна истина за смъртта на императора на Турция и за голямата война, както около страната на Гърция, така и от другата страна – откъм ръкава на Св. Георги* [Босфора] *около Турция, и че имало трима господари и всеки от тях искал да стане император чрез сила. И ми каза, че не трябва да минавам през Дунав, защото никой от неговите хора не бил толкова смел, че да се реши да ме изпрати или преведе през Дунав. Така на мен ми се наложи да променя моите намерения и да пътувам през Турция, и – в очакване на случая – да заобиколя Голямото море* [Черно море]. *Отправих се по суша към Кафа. Когато си тръгвах от господаря на Влахия, той ми даде кон, ескорт, преводачи и водачи. Аз тръгнах през големи пустини, разпростряли се на повече от 4 льо* [левги] *из споменатата Влахия. Аз пристигнах в укрепен пристанищен град на споменатото Голямо море, наречен Монкастро* [Маврокастро] *или Белград* [Акерман – Белгород Днестровски], *където живеят генуезци, власи и арменци. При настъпването на нощта в споменатия град Монкастро аз и моя преводач бяхме хванати, аз бях повален на земята, ограбен от разбойници и даже набит и накрая – здраво вързан, а най-лошото от всичко – че бях съвършено гол, само по една риза останах. Мене ме при-*

[2] За мнението на румънския историк Петре Дякону, че Килия и Ликостомо са една и съща крепост, вж. Атанасов 2001: 198, бел. 72 с цит. лит.

вързаха за цяла нощ към едно дърво на брега на р. Днестър, където прекарах нощта в голяма опасност да бъда убит и удавен, но благодаря на Бога, на сутринта ме развързаха и аз съвършено съблечен, както преди, само по риза, избягах от тях и стигнах в града, спасявайки си живота" (Potvin 1878: 58–60).

При похода на Владислав III Ягело (1434–1444) ясно са открояни значението на крепостите в региона на Добруджа[3]. Но този поход тук не е обект на изследване.

Ценни за градовете и крепостите по Дунав са данните на бургундския автор Жан дьо Ваврен. Хрониката му дава интересни и важни сведения за Черноморието, Добруджа и Подунавието от 1445 г. във връзка с похода на бургундската флота, водена от неговия племенник Валеран дьо Ваврен. Бургундците се намират в Константинопол в края на 1444 г., където разбират за поражението при Варна, и на следващата година се отправят през Черно море към Дунав в търсене на краля и остатъците от войската му. Нека да не забравяме, че първоначалните планове на западноевропейските сили относно кръстоносната флота са били тя да се включи в превозването на западните рицари през Дунав в началото на похода, но както папската, така и венецианската, и бургундската флотилии закъсняват преди всичко по финансови причини (Попова 2025: под печат).

Потегляйки през 1445 г. от византийската столица, бургундските кораби първо стигат крепост, наречена **Несебър** (Mesemble) (Jehan de Wavrin 1859: 86), след това акостират в „*едно пристанище, наречено"* ***Мангалия*** (Pangala), което „*имало голяма стена, вклинена в морето, широка 30–40 стъпки"* (Jehan de Wavrin 1859: 91). Навлизайки в Дунавската делта, те стигат крепостта Лукостомо (Licocosme), *„която принадлежи на господаря на Влахия"* (Jehan de Wavrin 1859: 89); оттам посещават пристанището **Маврокастро** (Moncastre), където „*има град и крепост, принадлежащи на генуезците*" (Jehan de Wavrin 1859: 95). Към тях се присъединява влашки отряд от 500 души с лодки, воден от сина на влашкия воевода Влад II Дракул (1436–1442, 1443–1447) и точно власите искат да нападнат „*един град, който се наричал* ***Триест*** (Дръстър)*, който някога бил превзет и разрушен от власите и сега нямаше здрава стена, но отново е добре застроен и населен* [от турците]. *Там има и един брод, през който твърде много бе опустошавано Влашко*" (Jehan de Wavrin 1859: 102; Кузев 1981а: 192).

От един пленен турски рибар кръстоносците получават сведения, че в „*Дръстър има 3000 турски конници и там са събрани всички субаши от земята на България*" (Jehan de Wavrin 1859: 107). Въпреки опитите за превземането на крепостта от страна на бургундците и власите, турците я удържат. Важното стратегическо значение на Дръстър през османска-

[3] По-подробно за похода вж. Гюзелев 2019.

та епоха не само, че не намалява, но дори нараства, както ще видим и от по-късните сведения на западни автори.

Нека се върнем към сведенията на Ваврен. Флотата на бургундците преминава покрай Никопол, но градът не е нападнат[4] (Jehan de Wavrin 1859: 112; Кузев 1981е: 132); след това се „*отправят на запад към крепостта наречена*“ **Тутракан** (Turquant, Toustourcain) (Jehan de Wavrin 1859: 104). Бургундците се установяват на една левга от крепостта, в местност, в която имало „*много дървета и място, подходящо за приготвяне на дървени въглища*“ (Както ще видим и от по-късните текстове, този поминък на населението остава и до XIX в.). След като отбелязва, че „*кастелът Тутракан, подобно на град Дръстър, е в България*“, Жан дьо Ваврен прави подробно и интересно описание на крепостта, от което получаваме ценни сведения за фортификацията на крайдунавските крепости: „*Кастелът Тутракан, разположен на брега на Дунав, беше с квадратна форма, с 4 стени, като на всеки от трите ъгъла имаше по една малка кула, а на четвъртия ъгъл извън крепостната стена имаше една голяма квадратна кула, която бе масивна, висока повече от 10 крачки* [ок. 7–8 м]. *И там се изкачиха турците по една стълба*“ (Jehan de Wavrin 1859: 114–122). В горната част на кулата има помещение с големи дървени тераси, издадени навън, откъдето османците се отбраняват. Отзад се намира вътрешен двор, който огражда трите стени на крепостта и кулата, а около тях има големи ровове и дървени прегради (палисади). Нападната от четирите страни, крепостта е завладяна (Кузев 1981с: 173–175; Божилов, Гюзелев 2004: 265).

След като поделят плячката, победителите се оттеглят. На другия ден власите отново слизат на брега и откриват ямите, в които жителите на Тутракан съхраняват зърното си и намират в тях много жито, бакла и грах (*bledt, febves et poiz*) (Jehan de Wavrin 1859: 122). Тези продукти насочват към поминъка на местното население, което се занимава със земеделие – отглежда пшеница, а също и култури като грах и бакла, богати на растителни протеини. Припасите послужили за попълване на запасите на бургунските галери. Власите разрушават две от крепостните стени на Тутракан, завръщат се в лодките си и заедно с бургундските галери потеглят към Гюргево и Русе (*Georgie, Roussico*) (Jehan de Wavrin 1859: 114–122; Кузев 1981d: 173–175; Божилов, Гюзелев 2004: 265).

Макар и по-големи от Тутраканската крепост, по своето устройство Гюргево и Русе са сходни с нея. „*След като кардиналът, господин дьо Ваврен и власите минаха от Тутракан, на втория ден пристигнаха до острова* ***Гюрге-***

[4] Описанието на Никопол от Ваврен: „*Посоченият град Никополи е дълъг и тесен, разположен на хълм, със силна крепост на върха. От двете страни на града има две големи крепостни стени, които се спускат от посочения кастел до реката. Стените са добре защитени с големи кръгли кули. Имаше само една голяма дървена палисада до реката от едната до другата крепостна стена*“ (цит. по Валеран дьо Ваврен 1975: 69).

Во, където имаше много мощен и здрав кастел, квадратен, с четири големи стени и на ъгъла на всяка стена имаше по една доста голяма кула, от която и най-малката беше по-голяма и по-здрава от голямата кула в кастела Тутракан и също така с дървени тераси. Четирите кули бяха масивни, високи повече от 24 стъпки [ок. 8 м]. *Крепостта била четири пъти по-голяма от тази на Тутракан*", пише дьо Ваврен (Jehan de Wavrin 1859: 128–129, 141; Кузев 1981d: 166–167). Крепостта Гюргево се намирала на остров до левия бряг на реката. Приема се, че е построена от влашкия воевода Мирчо Стари (1386–1418), като за последното изследователите се опират на данните от Ваврен, който предава думите на Влад Дракул, син на Мирчо Стари, при превземането на крепостта през 1445 г.: „*Влашкият владетел, който много желаеше крепостта да му остане цяла и неопожарена, за да осигури това, взе като заложници субашията и 30 по-видни турци. След това отиде при Рено дьо Комфид... И каза на няколко пъти: „За Бога, оставете да загасят огъня, за да не изгори моята крепост, защото е най-силната на Дунава и която може много да вреди на всички християни на отсамната страна, ако е в ръцете на турците. Защото когато турците искат да нахлуят във Влашко и Трансилвания, те преминават с конете си на този остров и оттук по моста на кастела, който е над ръкава на реката, идваща от Влашко, навлизат в цялата страна и оттук пренасят всичко заграбено*" (Jehan de Wavrin 1859: 136–137; Кузев 1981d: 164–165).

Сведението, че и русенският, и гюргевският кастел е съвсем подобен на тутраканския, несъмнено е важно. Явно те са изградени по едно и също време, най-вероятно преди османското нашествие в региона. Както посочва дьо Ваврен, тук Дунав е много тесен и власите молят бургундците да превземат и тази крепост. Турците, знаейки вече съдбата на Тутракан и Гюргево, подпалват русенската крепост и цялото село и се оттеглят (Кузев 1981d: 158–159).

Появата на бургундската войска пред стените на **Русе** и новините за победите ѝ предизвикват раздвижване сред местното българско население, както е описано в хрониката на Жан дьо Ваврен: „*Когато тези новини за това как нашите хора побеждаваха неверниците се разпространяваха в страната, християните, които живееха в България под иго, се надигнаха, наговориха заедно и казваха, че не желаят повече да понасят подчинението си на турците. Те взели решение и натоварили на коли и каруци цялото си имущество, жените и децата, взели всичкия си добитък със себе си, за да отидат при господаря на Влахия и при тези от галерите* [т.е. бургундците], *защото смятали, че* […] *могат да ги защитават срещу турците, които били наоколо*". Те го помолили да се заселят в неговата земя, той се съгласил, тъй като тя била „*слабо населена в някои гранични области*". За три денонощия 12 000 българи преминали Дунав, а влашкият воевода бил доволен, защото придобил толкова много население и казвал, че „*българският народ се състои*

от много храбри хора" (Jehan de Wavrin 1859: 143–144; преводът е по Божилов, Гюзелев 2004: 265).

От казаното по-горе може да се направи изводът, че трайното установяване на османците по Долния Дунав предизвиква коренна промяна в етническия облик на региона, както по Дунав, така и по Черноморското крайбрежие (Божилов, Гюзелев 2004: 266).

Западните автори от периода дават и сведения за ландшафта на Добруджа. Андреас де Палацио прави интересно описание на региона на Добруджа, след като кръстоносните войски напускат опожарената крепост Петрич: „*Като минахме през равни и открити полета, имахме от дясната си страна, откъм юг, планините, които отделят Романия от България. Така пътувахме от Бдин до Черно море при Галата, откъдето се отива за Месемврия, а оттам за Константинопол, вероятно по крайбрежието… От лявата страна, към север, ние имахме също други планини, отвъд които е пустинна област, която се простира на север чак до Дунава в района на Влахия и Молдавия, които и двете се наричат общо Влахия, на разстояние 10 или не по-малко от 8 дена път, тъй като в тези краища не съществува навикът да се пресмятат разстоянията в мили. На юг споменатата пустинна местност достига чак до Черно море, а височините, които казах, че се намираха от лявата ни страна, също стигат до самото море при Варна, който град се намира в района на Галата, отстоящ от нея на около 500 крачки*" (Андреас де Палацио 2014: 67). Това описание на Добруджанската пустош/пустинната местност кореспондира със сведенията на другите автори, когато те разказват за бягството на кръстоносците след разгрома при Варна. Такива данни откриваме и в текста на Ян Длугош, който посочва, че „*като унгарците, власите и другите избягали от кралската войска, страхът прибавил такива крила към нозете им, че воеводата Янош, командващ армията ... за две денонощия избягал през брега на Дунава и брода Делафлоче във Влахия. Някои за три, някои за четири или пет дни и нощи, без да са яли нищо, достигнали до този бряг на Дунава, до който за десет или най-малко за осем дена при обща езда едва може да се стигне през онази пустош, в която няма нищо, което може да се употреби от хората. И мнозина в течение на три дни езда не открили никаква вода и мнозина отслабнали от жажда и глад, толкова голямо било желанието на нещастните бегълци да се измъкнат*" (Ян Длугош 2019: 126; Jan Długosz 1997: 496) Тази пустинна местност може да бъде свързана със сухоречията Табан и Канагьол в днешна Добруджа, въпреки някои свидетелства, че в определени периоди през Средновековието тези сухоречия са били пълноводни реки (Атанасов 2023: 33–34; Атанасов 2001: 201).

Джован-Мария Анджолело в произведението си „Турска история" (Donado da Lezze 1910) също дава любопитни сведения за Добруджа, макар че според новите изследвания, творбата очевидно е дело на повече от един писател, сред тях и Донато да Леце. Тази „Турска история" е известна и

използвана и от български специалисти по изданието на Йон Урсу, който обаче приписва авторството на творбата само на венецианския патриций Донато да Леце (Данова 2010: 212, 214). При описание на османския поход срещу Молдова през пролетта на 1476 г. (Babinger 1978: 351) той визира Добруджа на две места. Първото се отнася до споменаване на султан Мехмед II, който, след като стигнал до Варна, се отправил на север до Дунав, „*където в областта няма хора и сигурни места, и липсва прясна вода...*“. Така минахме „*през пустинята, която се нарича Аброзит*“ [Добруджа] (Donado da Lezze 1910: 86–87). По-нататък в текста отново се споменава тази област *Добродзо* (Добруджа), която е разположена край Черно море и в нея имало много „*безлюдни места*“[5] (Donado da Lezze 1910: 92; Атанасов, 2001: 201).

Пустошта на Добруджа е противопоставена на плодородието и благоприятния климат на крайморските територии около Варна, както отбелязва Антонио Бонфини: „*Но щом ще се говори за варненското поражение, трябва да се изложи накратко местоположението на околностите. Хемус се простира в непрекъсната верига на изток почти от Месембрия до Македония и Долна Мизия, а за саизащите от Панониите към Понта покрай Дунав се препречва напреко и ако не се издигаше към Понта, то този път не би бил възможен. Той* [Хемус] […] *уляга чак към Понта и прави крайморските долини плодородни и приятни и преди всичко областта на Варна, която е приятна за гледане отвсякъде. Варна е разположена в тесен залив между два носа; на единия е Галата, а на другия Макрополис: първата е взела името си от галите, идващи от Азия в гибелен поход, когато превзели Галиполи и Калакриум; другият е наречен така поради дължината на града. Около Варна, от брега чак до лозята и овощните градини по-надолу, надясно в долината има някои обитавани села; наляво, където се издига Галата, под мочурливите хълмове се простира езеро“* (Антонио Бонфини 2019: 183; Antonio Bonfini 1606: 462).

Картината на региона по Долен Дунав и Черноморското крайбрежие се допълва и от текста на Филипо Буонакорси Калимах, който пише: „*Хемус започва от Месембрия и с непрекъсната верига от планински хребети се простира чак до Македония и Горна Мизия; там се разделя в две посоки, правейки неголеми извивки.* [...] *По този път ... се намират много долини; частично това са диви угари, част от тях са обработени земи, способни да прехранват и хора, и животни, грижливо засявани и обработвани от жителите по привичния им обичай*“ (Буонакорси Калимах 2019: 159). Тази картина на Черноморското крайбрежие свидетелства както за интереса на западния ренесансов човек от XV в. към описанията, така и за отърсването от сред-

[5] Въз основа на исторически извори и археологически данни Г. Атанасов доказва липсата на стационарни поселения в региона на Добруджа и Лудогорието между 1036 г. и края на XV в. На базата на османски източници авторът достига до извода, че и през XV в. вътрешността на Добруджа продължава да бъде ненаселена (вж. Атанасов 2001: 197–200).

новековните трафарети и за първите опити за възприемане на *другия* и *другостта* в положителен аспект.

В писмото на италианския хуманист Лауро Квирини до папа Николай V, писано през юли 1453 г., т.е. след падането на Константинопол (Лауро Квирини 2020: 161), се споменава, че в Европа османците „*вече владеят всички земи до Дунав и Долна Панония*“, успели са да подчинят редица черноморски градове и крепости, включително „*Урдовиза, Созопол, Анхиало, Несебър, Галата, Варна, Калиакра, Ликостомо, Монкастро* [Маврокастро] (*Vordovasca, Sisopolis, Achila, Mesebria, Acalathia, Vranea, Caliacrea, Licostome, Moncastrus*)“ (Lauro Quirini 1977: 229; Божилов, Гюзелев 2004: 266).

След окончателното покоряване на Балканите от турците и по-конкретно на региона на Добруджа и поречието и устието на Дунав в края на XV в., през следващите векове оттук преминават предимно търговци, военни и/или дипломати.

И през XVI в. също откриваме някои интересни данни за региона, запазени в текстовете на западни автори. Хенри Кевъндиш, юрист и политик, отдаден на приключенията, през 1589 г., се движи по крайбрежния път от Константинопол, през Кърклисе (Лозенград, дн. Къркларели), стига **Провато** (Провадия), като отбелязва, че Провадия „*е в България*“[6], продължава нататък и стига до **Целистра** (Силистра), за която казва, че е „*един хубав град за този вид строителство, при който къщите са ниски и обковани с дъски. Този град е разположен на дунавския бряг и е последният в България*“. После преминават Дунав, за който посочва, че „*на това място е около четвърт миля широк*“ (Хенри Кавендиш 1987: 46). Друг автор от периода е Жак Бонгарс, юрист и хуманист, занимаващ се и с наука, който изпълнява дипломатическа служба за френската корона. Той дава кратки, но интересни сведения за пътя си през 1572 г. от Букурещ през Гюргево, Русе, Преслав, през Балкана и до Константинопол. За **Жерва** (Гюргево), споменава, че е „*паланка и крепост на Дунава с турски гарнизон*“, допълвайки следното: „*прехвърлихме Дунав и дойдохме в* ***Рустик*** (Русе), *паланка и крепост на оттатъшния бряг. Преспахме в Черно воевода* (Червена вода, Русенско), *паланка в приятна долина*“. И още: „*По селата се говори български*“. Бонгарс отбелязва етническия характер на населението в селата – българи, докато за *Крас-града* (Разград), посочва, че е „*красива паланка, украсена с хубави джамии, населена с турци*“ (Жак Бонгарс 1975: 175). Бонгарс посочва, че са пренощували в „***Ески Стамбол,*** *тоест Стари Константинопол* [дн. Велики Преслав], *паланка, при която все още стоят крепостни стени от квадратни бели камъни, почти цели с голям обхват, на брега на река*“ [Камчия]; намирал се „*в една долина*“ (Жак Бонгарс 1975: 177). Сведението за останките от

[6] Под България в този момент се разбира територията между Стара планина и Дунав, р. Тимок и Черно море.

крепостни и други градежи в Преслав се среща и при други западни автори, преминаващи през региона.

Любопитни и достоверни свидетелства за Черноморието оставя Франсоа дьо Пави, сеньор дьо Фуркево, който през 1585 г. пътува из Сирия и Египет и се връща през Константинопол по море и оттам през Добруджа. Авторът дава и обяснение защо Черно море се зове черно: „*Наречено е* ***Черно****, не защото е по цвят различно от другите, а поради черните облаци и мъглите, които почти винаги го помрачават така, че едва от време на време хората могат да се различат едни други на един и същи кораб дори и зиме.* [...] *Морето се нарича още* ***Голямо****, не защото е по-голямо (няма и 3000 мили обиколка), а защото в него изливат водите си безкрайно много реки и рекички, отчасти причина за мъглите, за които споменах. Те му създават постоянен приток без отток, както при другите, като че ли оттук произлизат и водят началото си“* (Франсоа дьо Пави 1975: 179).

По-нататък в текста си Франсоа дьо Пави се спира на **Варна**, като посочва, че „*тя е доста хубав, обграден* [със стени] *град, с предградия,* [град] *търговски и с изобилие* [от стоки]. *На пристанището му слизат онези, които искат да пътуват във Влахия. Там минава една река* [Камчия]. *След това отидохме в* ***Балсик*** [Балчик]*, 18 мили по-нататък. На турски означава кал, тиня, и заслужено носи името си*“ (Франсоа дьо Пави 1975: 180).

Доста остър и негативен е коментарът му за Балчик, но можем да посочим, че се компенсира с любопитен текст, посветен на морската фауна: „*При това плаване виждахме често и в голям брой морски костенурки с необикновена големина. Те се появяваха над водата и бяха толкова големи, повече от една наша ладия, и почти се докосваха до греблата на галерата ни. Турците никак не ядат тези костенурки, нито пък малките земни, въпреки че навсякъде по това море, където пуснахме котва, и намерихме много такива* [костенурки], *та* [турците] *ни виждаха да ги ядем добре сготвени*“ (Франсоа дьо Пави 1975: 180). Едно от често срещаните обвинения през Средновековието към латините от страна на източноправославното население на Балканите – както българи, така и останалите народности – срещано в антилатинските трактати, е, че консумират всякакви нечистотии, включително месо от костенурки (Николов 2011: 123).

Интересният разказ на Ф. дьо Пави продължава с реминисценции за миналото на Калиакра: „*След Балсик, като извървяхме други 18 мили, се намира един планински нос* [нос Калиакра]. *На върху му се виждат различни развалини, които свидетелстват, че в миналото там е имало някакъв голям град*“ [става въпрос за крепостта на нос Калиакра] (Франсоа дьо Пави 1975: 180).

Преди да разгледа подробно ръкавите в делтата на Дунав, френският автор маркира и двата дунавски града **Мангалия и Констанца**, но ги определя като селца: „*От тях отидохме в Карармен* [има се предвид Кара Харман, средновековното селище Чръngрад, при дн. с. Ваду, Румъния], *отдалечен*

оттам на 18 мили, където се влива един от ръкавите на Дунав, наречен Истър, който и с другите три ръкава, се влива в морето, а именно свети Георги, вторият на 70 мили по-нататък, третият пък, по-малък, е на 18 мили, наречен Солине Абугас [ръкав Солина]. *Четвъртият и последен е Кили* [ръкав Килия], *на около 18 мили далеч от нашия път*“ (Франсоа дьо Пави 1975: 181). Авторът подчертава, че Дунав или Истър с право е смятана за най-голямата река в Европа и отново се отдава на морската зоология, както и на анализ на обичаите сред местното православно българско население: „*При устието на тази голяма река, която с право е най-голяма в Европа, с течение от Германия* [нататък] *от 400 левги и със 70 плавателни притока, се лови голямо количество есетри, които видях да продават и по-скоро да подаряват за по-малко от нашите две су парчето, при това толкова големи, че всеки ги товареше на катър. При все че са великолепни за ядене, те ги ловят само за да ги изкормят и извадят от тях яйцата, от които правят хайвер и бутарка, много търсено месо в Гърция и в страните с православна религия заради постите им, през време на които се въздържат да ядат всичко от кръв*“ (Франсоа дьо Пави 1975: 181).

Текстът му продължава с любопитен разказ за подвижните вятърни мелници на крайдунавското население, разположени върху каруци: „*По това крайбрежие на различни места виждахме семейства, които меняха от време на време жилищата си според удобството и тревата по местата, където се установяват. Всяко от тях няма друг покрив за дом освен много дълги коли с четири колела, в които има много катове. На края им има вятърна мелница с 4–6 крила, за да си приготвят брашното. Теглят ги с няколко двойки коне или волове навсякъде, където си искат*“ (Франсоа дьо Пави 1975: 181).

Както споменахме по-горе, значението на **Силистра** през османския период е отчетено от преминаващите през региона западни пътешественици и през XVII в., като например Конрад Якоб Хилтебранд, който пътува от Букурещ, през Силистра, Провадия, Аспарухово, Айтос, Средец към Константинопол. За град Силистра Хилтебранд пише следното: „*Силистра, на турски наречена Десорум* [Дуросторум], *е един султански град, разположен на Дунав, който е бил много пъти нападан и оплячкосван от седмоградчани и власи. Беше хубав търговски град. Трябва да е бил построен от император Константин Велики, според Урбинус. Пашата* [авторът пояснява какво означава *паша – dux limitaneus, т.е. един граничен княз*] *на Силистра по това време не беше в къщата си*“ (Конрад Якоб Хилтебранд 1986: 78). Тук, като се позовава на някой си Урбинус[7], авторът предлага любопитно свидетелство –

[7] Става въпрос вероятно за Теофил Урбинус. Theophilus Urbinus. Türckisches Städt-Büchlein: Darinn Hundert und etliche der auserlesensten Städte, Vestungen und Schlösser, so der Ottomannischen Herrschafft, theils im Königreich Ungarn, theils in andern Reichen und Theilen der Welt, unterworffen; Samt deren Belägerung, Eroberung, Schlachten, Antiquitäten […]. Nuremberg, Johann Hofmann, 1664.

Силистра бил основан от император Константин Велики (Конрад Якоб Хилтебранд 1986: 78).

Интересни данни за балканското население предоставя и Едмънд Чишъл, който през 1702 г. преминава в посока от Одрин през България към Влахия и Трансилвания. Подобно на много други пътешественици, той също се спира върху образа на жените. След като преминават склонове на Хемус/Балкана, достигат до открита равнина и според него оттам „*навлязохме в истинския земен рай на българските християни...* [с. Ряш, Шуменско]. *Тук девойките на селището ни забавляваха вечерта с танци, които изпълняваха без голямо изкуство и разнообразие, но имаше наивност и простота, което бе наистина приятно. Жените тук носят украшения, нещо като лента, която се състои от различни сребърни монети и големи, релефни, сребърни гривни; те ни изпратиха на следващото утро, разпръсквайки пшенични зърна по пътя ни*“. Чишъл правилно отбелязва етническия характер и религиозната принадлежност на населението – от „*Адрианопол до тук, всички села са населени с християни, които по народност са българи, но принадлежат към гръцката църква*“ [т.е. са православни] (Едмънд Чишъл 1987: 278).

Друг автор, който се спира върху образа и украсата на българските жени е един анонимен английски пътешественик**,** преминал през Балканите в края на XVIII в. Текстът му е следният: „*... около нас се струпаха много селянки, една от които ни беше представена като булка. На главата си тя имаше шапка или корона от хартия с късчета златен конец, вързани на пискюли, цялата покрита с малки монети, привързани една за друга като люспи на риба. Други ги бяха вплели в плитките си. Българските жени разполагат с много златни монети, които излагат на показ по този начин; вече е установено, че по-редките руски или древногръцки златни монети често се откриват от пътешественици, когато такива монети, многократно предавани от поколение на поколение, се употребяват по този начин. Носят ги и пришити към панделки, втъкнати в накитите им за глава и провисени до петите им. Тяхно особено любимо украшение са широките пафти със сребърно покритие, които носят на всяка ръка на разстояние две трети като гривни. Що се отнася до древността на тази мода, би било трудно да се каже нещо определено... Тя се съхранява така добросъвестно, че едва ли има достатъчно ниско обществено положение, при което хората да са лишени от тези монети, и не рядко се виждат боси и голи деца, закичени с тези парични знаци, чиято стойност е достатъчно голяма, за да им осигури храна и дрехи за година*“ (Анонимен пътешественик 1987: 359). Английският пътешественик отбелязва традиционните обичаи сред българките, украсата от пафти и пендари. За представителите от Западна Европа тази мода на Балканите е окачествена като безвкусица, но авторът правилно приема, че този обичай е традиционен, макар чужденците да не разбират смисъла и редица от тях

да отбележват, че монетите, с които са закичени жените, биха им осигурили облекло и прехрана за дълъг период от време.

По отношение на сведенията за историята на Добруджа, можем да посочим любопитните данни на Анонимния английски автор, който споменава за **Русе**, че „*е много древен град, който според някои географи бил* ***Аксиаполис***“ [Аксиополис – дн. Чернавода, Румъния] (Анонимен пътешественик 1987: 357). Много повече исторически алюзии откриваме в текста на Едмънд Чишъл. Той дава редица географски и исторически сведения: „*Планината Хемус е границата, която отделя Трансилвания от България, или Древна Мизия според древните, и през която ние през този ден пътувахме. Тя представлява приятна смесица от равнини и долини, гори и поляни, нивя и пасища. По-горе споменатият град* ***Ески Станбол*** *е име, дадено от турците на останките на древен град, (вероятно* ***Oescus Triballorum***[8]*), който в подножието на Хемус има следи от две стени: вътрешната е почти квадратна и е около миля в диаметър; външната е почти кръгла, в диаметър 5 мили. Но освен това няма никакви други останки, нито пък надписи, които да посочват истинското име или пък историята на това място*.“ (Едмънд Чишъл 1987: 279).

Английският пътешественик, отново заедно с исторически реминисценции, прави и верни наблюдения за природната красота и дадености на Дунавския регион, успоредно с бедността и мизерията, в която битува местното населене: „*Междувременно не мога да не си спомня с удоволствие приятната земя на Долна Мизия, през която пропътувахме пет дни. Земя, която (пренебрегната от Овидий и съвременните географи) по богатство на почвата, разнообразния релеф, чудесни пейзажи, осигуреност с вода и гори не може да бъде сравнена с никое друго място на вселената. Но въпреки че тази част от страната, която постепенно се спуска от склоновете на Хемус към брегове на Дунав, е богата както на орна земя, така и на пасища, нейните жители изглеждат доста бедни и живеят в много мизерни къщи*“ (Едмънд Чишъл 1987: 280).

Исторически сведения откриваме и в текста на друг англичанин, Уилям Хънтър, който през 1792 г. пътува от Константинопол по море до Каварна. Първо преминават „*покрай Варна, което е голям град, едно от най-добрите пристанища по Черно море, известен в историята с битката от 1444 г., между Амурат и унгарския крал Владислав, който загубил тук и боя и живота си*“. Авторът допълва в бележка: „*Това била една ужасна и кървава битка. 1000 християни били оставени на бойното поле, а загубите на турците били толкова големи, че Амурат признал, че друга подобна битка би причинила неговия разгром*“ (Уилям Хънтър 1987: 321). Очевидно споменът за Варненската битка е жив доста столетия по-късно.

[8] Тук Едмънт Чишъл бърка – *Oescus Triballorum* е Улпия Ескус (до дн. с. Гиген, Плевенско), а *Ески Станбол*, както вече бе споменато по-горе, е Преслав (Велики Преслав).

Продължавайки към устието на Дунав, обратен вятър ги връща в залива на Каварна, а Хънтър отново се спира на историята и посочва, че „***Томис**, място така прочуто със заточението на Овидий, не беше далеч от тази точка. Има обаче различни мнения относно точното му разположение малко над Варна, където бяхме принудени да пуснем котва. Водите на този залив мият брегoвете на България“*. И после отново се връща към историята, посочвайки в бележка, че „*България някога била част от унгарското кралство*[9]*. Тя била покорена от Амурат II и след това присъединена към турската империя. Тя има няколко големи града, от които **София** е най-главният град и е седалище на бейлербея или управителя на Румелия*“ (Уилям Хънтър 1987: 321).

Тъй като условията за пътуване са лоши и капитанът на кораба смята, че обратният вятър ще духа няколко дни, а Хънтър и останалите пътуващи страдат от морска болест, решават да стигнат до Галац по суша и тръгват с каруца, теглена от волове. Този начин на придвижване дава основание на Уилям Хънтър да направи заключението: „*Условията за пътуване из България са ужасни... пък и лошото време допълваше нашите нещастия, защото каруците ни бяха в толкова тежко състояние .... Тези превозни средства представляват дълги тесни каруци без пружини, покрити с рогозки, твърде износени и целите на дупки. Воловете се движеха с около три мили в час, ... така че не напредвахме много бързо*“ (Уилям Хънтър 1987: 321–322). Пътешественикът продължава своето описание с доста нелицеприятна характеристика на местното българско население, което според Хънтър е негостоприемно, любопитно, склонно дори към насилие: „*Хората на тази страна са негостоприемни диваци, които никога не оказват каквато и да е помощ, освен ако това е задължително. Наистина те така са свикнали да бъдат ограбвани, че се страхуват от пътници и внимателно укриват от тях всичко, включително и най-необходимото за живота. Те изобщо са много любопитни, склонни са към низки хитрости и когато печалбата ги стимулира и случаят им помага, често прибягват до открито насилие*“ (Уилям Хънтър 1987: 323).

Да се върнем обаче към историческите сведения, с които са богати пътеписите. Любопитни и достоверни са данните, които предоставя за ключови събития от историята френският консул в Солун в края на XVIII в. Луи-Огюст Феликс Божур. За град Варна той дава следната информация: „*Град Варна, разположен на левия бряг на река Провадия при изтичането ѝ от Девненското езеро, е обграден само с една проста стена отстрани с кули*“ (Луи-Огюст Феликс Божур 1975: 423). Авторът се спира в детайли и исторически достоверно на важната Варненска битка от 1444 г.: „*Варненската равнина е прочута в историята с това, че през лятото на 1444 г. е била теа-*

[9] Вероятно това твърдение се опира на унгарската окупация на Видинското царство в периода 1365–1369 г. (Димитров 1998: 236–239), или на действията на Фружин, унгарски васал и син на цар Иван Шишман, през първата половина на XV в. – те имали за цел прогонването на турците от българските земи (Павлов, Тютюнджиев 2017: 158–165).

тър на кървава битка между Мурад II и Владислав Ягело, крал на Унгария и Полша. Мурад, след като сключва в Сегедин примирие с християните за 10 години, абдикира след успехите си в полза на своя син, младия Мохамед... Владислав счел, че трябва да се възползува от неизбежните неуредици при едно малолетие, за да … освободи Константинопол... Поблазнен от мнение, което, изглежда, понякога успехът оправдава, но моралът порицава, унгарският крал нарушил примирието и преминал Дунава... Вместо да навлезе неблагоразумно във високите проходи на мизийската верига, Владислав я обходил от източната ѝ страна, завзел главните ѝ склонове по Черно море... Двете армии, които се търсели, се срещнали във Варненската равнина. Ударът на унгарската кавалерия, водена от Хунияди, разбил спахиите и огънал първата линия на еничарите… Клетвопрестъпникът получил този път наказанието, което заслужавал: унгарците, първоначално победители, се откъснали твърде много при преследването на бегълците в равнината, били разбити на свой ред от втората линия на еничарите, която се присъединила към първата, и Владислав, сражавайки се смело сред своите, бил убит с удар на копие.“ (Луи-Огюст Феликс Божур 1975: 424).

Пътешествениците обръщат внимание не само на историята, но също и на заобикалящата ги природна среда. По отношение на отразеното в пътеписите изобилие на плодни дървета и цветя в региона на Добруджа, можем да посочим текста на анонимния английски пътешественик, който подробно описва природните богатства: „*Горите във Влашко и България изобилстват с много видове плодни дървета, особено череши, кайсии, лози и др.* [...] *Дърветата бяха обикновени, нисък дъб, жасмин, диви рози, и пролетни цветя в най-голямо изобилие и съвършенство*“. (Анонимен пътешественик 1987: 363).

И други пътешественици посочват изобилието от овощни дървета и лозя. Джон Джексън през 1797 г. пише: „*... навлязохме в хубава местност и минахме през няколко села с добре поддържани земи, с големи овощни градини и лозя.*“ (Джон Джексън 1987: 377).

Има още редица текстове, които безспорно са сигурни свидетелства за поминъка и прехраната на местното население, което се занимава със скотовъдство, земеделие, овощарство, отглежда лозя и произвежда вино.

Ценен и важен е текстът на Шарл дьо Пейсонел, който преминава през Балканите през 50-те – 70-те години на XVIII в. Френският дипломат прави подробно описание на търговската дейност по Западното черноморско крайбрежие и дунавския регион, като посочва какви стоки се внасят и се изнасят и какви са условията в отделните пристанища, доколко са сигурни и подходящи при всички сезони. Той посочва, че „***България,*** *в която включвам и* ***Добруджа,*** *е била някога велико царство и днес е голяма провинция на Османската империя. Подразделя се на Приморска, Придунавска и Средиземноморска*“ (Шарл дьо Пейсонел 1975: 303).

Най-подробно е описанието му на черноморския порт Варна, за който отбелязва, че е „*най-голямото пристанище на България*“ – „*Това е транзитно място за всички български и влашки стоки, предназначени за Константинопол и онези, които се прекарват от столицата за двете провинции. Градът е малък, но добре населен. Там се наброяват 16 хиляди жители*“. „*Има 5 джамии, един обществен пазар и около 200 дюкяна. Градът е разположен в дъното на един залив, дълбок 8–10 мили, обкръжен от високи планини. Всякакви плавателни съдове могат да влязат и зимуват там с пълна сигурност.* […] *Има 14–15 големи каика, 20–22 пики дълги и много други малки съдове, отредени за пристанището. Почти всички жители са еничари, но доста отдадени на търговия. Във Варна могат да се продават доста голямо количество стоки за потребление в града извън транзитните*“ (Шарл дьо Пейсонел 1975: 306).

Нататък в своя разказ дьо Пейсонел посочва подробно какво и откъде се внася и какво се изнася през това пристанище: „*сукно от Франция, френска захар, ангорски шалове, венециански атлаз, ширити, кинкалерия, калай, подправки (пипер, канела, индийско орехче, карамфил), стомана, памук, сапун от Смирна, черни ботуши с подкови, платнени чалми, лен от Кайро, ориз от Дамиета, хартия, сол, сухо грозде и смокини, лешници, орехи и т.н. Износната търговия на този град се състои от зърнени храни и дървен строителен материал. Районът му е произвеждал такива в много голямо количество*“ (Шарл дьо Пейсонел 1975: 307).

Текстът на френския дипломат продължава със сведения за търговията и пристанищата на Балчик, Каварна, Калиакра, Мангалия и Констанца: „***Балчик** е голяма паланка, населена с турци и гърци. Пристанището му е великолепно, дъното му е широко и всякакви видове плавателни съдове могат да прекарват там по всяко време. В тази паланка се търгува малко. Там се докарват почти същите стоки, както във Варна, но в по-малко количество. Износните търговски стоки са жито, ечемик, ръж, просо, пастърма, сирене и свещи. **Каварна** е паланка почти от същия обхват като Балчик. Вносната ѝ и износната ѝ търговия е същата*“. След това авторът споменава за Калиакра и Ханлар (античната Кария при дн. нос Шабла), за които посочва, че са ненаселени, но с хубави пристанища: „*В околностите на тези две пристанища има селца без никаква търговия. **Мангалия** е голяма паланка. Има пазар и много складове за зърнени храни. Пристанището е много обширно и може да приеме плавателни съдове от всякакъв калибър, без да е съвсем сигурно за през зимата. В Мангалия докарват известно количество вносни стоки, за които споменах при търговията на Варна. Износните са жито, ечемик, ръж, просо, сирене и грозде, каквито има тук в доста големи количества. ... **Кюстендже** е голяма паланка, управлявана от ага, натоварен същевременно да прекарва към Константинопол житото, пожънвано там в изобилие*“ (Шарл дьо Пейсонел 1975: 308).

Шарл дьо Пейсонел продължава с точно посочване на важните градове в Добруджа, като в заключение изброява (в обобщен вид) основните стоки на

износ от земите на България: „*Главните места в Добруджа са Силистра, Бабадаг, Тулча, Исакча... Най-важните места в Придунавска България са Видин, Систов* [Свищов], *Никополи* [Никопол], *Русджук* [Русе], *Орсова* [Оряхово] *и Тутракa* [Тутракан]. *Износната търговия на България се състои във восък, коприни, вълни, биволски и волски кожи, мед, масло, мас, тютюн, сахтияни, желязо, селитра, солено месо, коне, вино и др.*“ (Шарл дьо Пейсонел 1975: 308).

Друг автор, който дава данни за градовете в Добруджа и за поминъка на населението там е Жан Батист Льошевалие. От Кара Харманлък до „***Варна**, главно пристанище в тази област, се намират Кюстендже, Маукалия* [Мангалия], *Каварна и Балчик, където корабите отиват да вземат някои хранителни припаси. Но те товарят в други безлюдни заливчета дърва, с които са покрити планините, и зърнени храни, докарани от вътрешността на страната. Варна, голям град на морския бряг при устието на река... Населението е от около 16 000 турци, гърци или арменци и една голяма част от хранителните припаси, необходими за издръжка на столицата, правят този град много значителен... Варна, чиято околност отчасти е необработваема, има 12 джамии, 2 гръцки църкви и една кула или обикновена камбанария, построена от преди около 25 години. В нея е поставен часовник с камбана. Това е единственото място в Турция, където чухме този звук“* (Жан Батист Льошевалие 1975: 354).

Както личи от цитирания текст, авторът отчита важното значение на град Варна за изхранването на османската столица, но и отбелязва населението на града, състоящо се от турци, гърци и арменци, като посочва и забележителностите – джамии, църкви и камбанарията с часовник-камбана.

Интересно описание на крайдунавските градове Русе, Свищов и Тутракан прави френският консул в Солун Луи-Огюст Феликс Божур в самия край на XVIII в.: „*Всички селища по Дунав от Видин до Никопол са само паланки с по няколко групи къщи, обаче **Никополис, Сищов и Русчук** са градове, обградени със стени, защитени с крепости*“ (Луи-Огюст Феликс Божур 1975: 417); „***Русчук** има повече от 30 000 жители, а **Сищов** – близо 20 000. **Тутукай** или Тутракан, разположен на десния бряг на реката между Русе и Силистри... **Силистри** е разположена на същия бряг при вливането на Дристри, има много голямо военно значение, понеже както Русе е разтоварище за търговията на България с Влахия. Този град може да има 10 до 12 000 жители, докато Тутракан няма повече от 5–6 хиляди, но той е по-важен като преходна позиция, понеже е разположен срещу устието на Аргис и влашкото село Олтеница, което е най-благоприятната точка за преминаване на Дунав от армия, идваща от Влахия, и специално от Букурещ...*“ (Луи-Огюст Феликс Божур 1975: 419). Божур отбелязва както местоположението на дунавските градове от военно-стратегическа гледна точка, така и броя на населението им.

В заключение ще посоча някои мнения за българските земи и българите, техния произход и религия, плод на западни пътешественици, преминаващи през Добруджа.

Граф Александър-Морис д'Отрив определя българските земи като „*една от най-богатите страни в света, покрита със села, гори, долини, потоци и обработваеми полета*“ (Граф Александър-Морис д'Отрив 1975: 338). За селата в района между Варна и Шумен, Д'Отрив дава твърде любопитно описание на съвместния живот на християни и мюсюлмани: „*Села наполовина турски, наполовина български, където мюсюлмани и християни живеят заедно, без да се презират, сродяват се, пият заедно лошо вино и нарушават рамазана и постите. Те познават, както и техните свещеници, само кръстния знак или илмах, аллах и т.н. И при всичко това не са по-малко честни хора.* […] *С по-малко предубеждение и малко снизходителност намирам, че техният начин на живот напомня патриархалното време. У тях съществува простота и добродушно гостоприемство, макар че не могат да предложат на пътниците дори козе месо, печено на жарава... Имамите и поповете се отнасят еднакво снизходително към браковете на вярващите от двете религии. Не е рядкост да се видят под един покрив чалмите и иконите, коранът и евангелието едно върху друго. Най-спокойно се изповядват две толкова различни религии, а на децата се оставя изборът на тази, която им е най-удобна*“ (Граф Александър-Морис д'Отрив 1975: 339).

Без да се претендира за изчерпателност в настоящото изследване, може да се отбележи, че от приведените откъси от пътеписите на преминалите през Добруджа военни, учени, търговци, дипломати или пък авантюристи получаваме доста пълна представа за района на Долния Дунав и Черноморието, за стратегическите от военна гледна точка крепости и портове по Дунав, както и за важните черноморски градове и пристанища. Пред очите ни се разгръща жива и ярка картина на местното предимно българско население с неговия бит, облекло, храна, обичаи и поминък.

От текстовете на преминалите през българските земи в периода XV–XVIII в. западни пътешественици можем да направим извода, че жените определено се радват на вниманието и интереса им. Любопитството на западните автори е провокирано от ежедневието и бита на населението тук, от облеклото, украсата, бижутата, красотата на представителките на нежния пол на Балканите. Макар и някои описания да съдържат известно снизхождение, като цяло тези текстове дават богати и ценни сведенията за бита и за жените в този дял от Балканите и в българските земи в частност. Трябва да отбележим и достоверната представа на авторите за българите като цяло: поробени, но със силно чувство за свобода и омраза към поробителите; бедни, но трудолюбиви и честни, простосърдечни и приятелски настроени, живеещи в недоимък и мизерия, но заобиколени от природната красота на Добруджа. И разбира се, не на последно място, в текстовете е отразен интересът на пътешествениците към останките от антично и средновековно минало, с които е известен районът на Добруджа.

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ГОДИШНИК НА СОФИЙСКИЯ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“
ЦЕНТЪР ЗА СЛАВЯНО-ВИЗАНТИЙСКИ ПРОУЧВАНИЯ „ИВАН ДУЙЧЕВ“
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ЕЗИКОВАТА СИТУАЦИЯ В ЮГОИЗТОЧНА РУМЪНИЯ. ДИСТРИБУЦИЯТА НА РУМ. *BALTĂ* 'БЛАТО', 'ЛОКВА' В ДОБРУДЖАНСКИЯ АРЕАЛ

ДАНИЕЛ ТОМОВ

Abstract: The present text examines the linguistic situation in the region of Northern Dobrudja, a part of Romania located between the Danube River and the Black Sea. The focus of the study is the historical linguistic contacts between Turks, Greeks, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Bulgarians, and other groups and the local population, as well as the influence of the languages of these peoples on the vocabulary of Romanians living in Southeastern Romania. The migration and settlement of Romanians from various parts of the country to this region occurred for diverse reasons, including avoidance of taxes, exemption from military service, seasonal agricultural work, transhumance, etc. As a result of these contacts, the Dobrudja dialect (*graiul dician*) incorporated lexical items from a range of Romanian subdialects (*graiuri*) (Transylvanian, Moldavian, Wallachian, Oltenian, and Banat). This enrichment is most evident in the active vocabulary related to crafts, animal husbandry, weather and climate, as well as social and family relations.

The paper also examines the distribution of the literary Romanian word *baltă* in the aforementioned area. This lexeme is of autochthonous origin and belongs to the common Romanian–Albanian lexical corpus. Using data from the *Atlasul lingvistic român pe regiuni: Muntenia și Dobrogea*, the study identifies the phonetic and semantic variants of this lexeme (*băltoagă*, *băltoacă*, *băltog*), as well as indicates borrowings and inherited words of the same meaning from other languages (*ghiol*, *lac*, *japșă*).

***Keywords*:** Southeastern Dobrudzha, *baltă*, language contacts, areal linguistics

Настоящият текст ще се фокусира върху съвременната югоизточна румънска област, наречена Добруджа (рум. *Dobrogea*), която в миналото е била известна като Понтийска Дакия или Скития. Разположен в югоизточната част на днешната румънска държава, добруджанският район обхваща територията на север до Добруджанския масив (Мачинските планини), ограден от три плата – Тулчанското плато, Платото Бабадаг и Касимча, на североизток до Делтата на р. Дунав, на изток до Черно море, на запад до долното течение на р. Дунав, а на юг до границата с българската държава.

Административно в Румъния този регион включва два окръжни центъра – Констанца и Тулча. Сред по-важните градове са Констанца, Мангалия, Меджидия и Тулча (Stăncioiu et al. 2011: 126).

С настоящото проучване си поставяме за цел да разгледаме особеностите, отразени в структурата и дистрибуцията на рум. *baltă* - 1. 'Широко място със застояла вода, не много дълбоко, характерно със специфична флора и фауна – блато'; 2. 'локва', 3. 'мочурище' (DEX).

Румънските диалектолози разглеждат *добруджанския/дичианския говор*[1] *(рум. graiul dobrogean/dician)* като част от мунтенския поддиалект, който обхваща южната половина на страната – цяла Мунтения, която включва днешните окръзи Арджеш, Олт, Дъмбовица, Телеорман, Прахова, Гюргево, Кълъраш, Яломица; в Олтения – Горж, Мехединци, Олт и Долж; и в Добруджа – окръг Констанца и южната част на Тулча. В Трансилвания той се говори предимно в района на Брашов и Сибиу (Алексова 2004: 57–58).

Споменатият говор е бил силно повлиян от гръцки, турски, украински и български език, както и от другите съседни поддиалекти на дакорумънския – кришански, молдовски и мунтенски (влашки). Интензивното откриване на училища води до смесването му с мунтенския и впоследствие с книжовния румънски език. Неговите следи се губят в началото на XX в. и днес са останали само няколко странни лексеми, които най-често са свързани с пасторалния начин на живот на местното население, срв. *buhalcă* 'инструмент, който се използва за сплашване на рибата', *ciortan* 'шаран, който тежи между 200–500 грама', *ceair* 'пасище' и др. (Penișoară 2002–2003: 195).

За да разберем по-добре различните аспекти на изследваното наречие, смятам за необходимо да отбележа някои по-важни характеристики на културата и бита на уседналото население. Земеделието, пастирството, пчеларството, лозарството и риболовът са сред най-важните поминъци на румънците от югоизтока.

Към *дичените* (рум. *dicieni*), както са наречени в изворите румънците от региона на Добруджа, в определени моменти от историята се присъединяват и *кожаните* (рум. *cojani*) от Яломица, Бузъу и Браила, *молдовците* (рум. *moldoveni*) от близките райони в северна Румъния и *арделените* (*моканите*) (рум. *ardeleni*, *mocani*) от района на Трансилвания. Причините за това разслояване към Югоизточна Румъния били различни: някои търсели убежище от непосилните данъци и от принудителния безплатен труд, който дължали на болярите, други – спасение от военна служба, а трети извършвали сезонна работа на база на споразумение между различни господари и Високата порта (Penișoară 2002-2003: 193).

[1] Става въпрос за наречие (говор), който не може да наречем език, тъй като е имал само устна форма (цит. от статията на Costel Carangan във вестник „Adevărul.ro" (Carangan 2022).

На тази етническа пъстрота се дължи и богатството на основния лексикален фонд в района на Югоизточна Румъния. Автохтонната лексика е смесена със заемки от турски[2], татарски, украински, гръцки и български език, както и с форми от дакорумънския, срв. рум. *bair*, заемка от турски ***bayir*** 'склон, хребет, наклон, връх', ***ghiol*** от тур. ***göl*** 'езеро, вода', ***bahnă*** 'мочурище, покрито с трева' от укр. ***bahno*** 'блато, тиня, кал', ***lac*** 'езеро' книжовна румънска форма, която е унаследена от лат. ***lacus***. Влиянието на адстрата и суперстрата е изключително силно, което води до напълно заместване на лексемите с местен характер.

Що се отнася до лексикалната картина на думата *блато* в изследвания ареал, най-широко се употребява книжовната форма ***baltă***, която се конкурира с лексемата ***lac*** (в района на Констанца, Бузъу и Галац) и тур. ***ghiol*** с фонетичен вариант *gol* (в областите Тулча и Вранча) (ALR 2004, map 543: 181). Забелязва се, че по целия ареал тази част от релефа се наименува с чуждици, а не с форми, запазени от езика на местното население. Изключение представлява лексемата *baltă*, ако я причислим към част от автохтонната лексика на румънския език. Тук книжовната форма се среща с варианти *băltoagă* и *băltoacă*. Посочените примери илюстрират тенденцията към суфигиране с цел умаляване – *оасă* с вариант *-оагă*.

Що се отнася до морфологичните особености на изследваната лексема, тя запазва форма за мн. ч. за ж.р. с окончание *-е* (*băltoagă*/(*е*); *băltoacă*, (*е*)/ *baltă-(i)*. Отбелязан е само един случай в района на Бузъу на формата *băltog* – ср.р., без да е упомената форма в мн. ч.

На диалектната карта на Мунтения и Добруджа са отчетени и случаи, в които значението на *baltă* се предава от конструкциите *lăcușor* и *lăcuț* (диминутиви на думата *lac* – района на Браила и Мачин), които отразяват лексикалните особености на дакорумънския. Вариантът *lăcuț* е некнижовен и вероятно е повлиян от аналогия с подобни именни форми – *căluț* 'конче', *pătuț* 'легълце', *drăguț* 'симпатичен'.

С подобен замисъл е конструкцията *lac mic de ploaie* (пак в района на Браила и Мачин), където идеята за смаляване на обекта е постигната от прилагателното *mic* 'малък'. Бихме могли да отбележим това като проява на аналитизъм при образуването на сравнителна степен.

Базирайки се на данните от Диалектния атлас на Мунтения и Добруджа, с основание може да отбележим интерференция на значенията на лексеми-

[2] От историята е известен фактът, че през втората половина на XI в. куманите са превзели Молдова и Влахия и са се насочили към Дунав. Някои от тях се установяват по-късно в част от територията на Византийската империя. В резултат от претърпените от монголо-татарите поражения след 1230-те години, немалко кумански родове се заселват в земите на Второто българско царство. В лингвистичната наука не се откриват основателни доказателства за причисляването на лексемите *ghiol* и *bair* към куманските елементи в речника на румънския език (Stratan 2021: 336-340).

те *lac* и *baltă* на диалектно равнище (срв. 543 (lac) и 543 (baltă)). Горенаправеното заключение позволява да се изведе омонимия на равнище диалект между лексемите *lac* ‘езеро’ и *lac* ‘блато’, както и между *baltă* със значение ‘lac’ ‘езеро’ (в централна Румъния) и *baltă* ‘блато’.

Етимологията на румънската лексема *baltă* не е напълно изяснена. В лингвистичната наука съществуват две теории. Едната от тях обвързва споменатата форма с алб. *baltë* със същото значение и приписва на двете думи автохтонен характер. Според тази теория балканските лексеми са се развили от и.е. корен **bal-* , който е запазен в ст.вис.нем. *pfuol*, ст.англ. *pol*, лит. *balá*, слав. *blato*, келт. **palta*, гр. *βαλτός*. Според някои етимолози от този корен се е развило илир. **balton*, мн.ч. **baltă*, откъдето може да произхожда не само рум. *baltă*, но и алб. *baltë*, както и гр. *βαλτός*. За доказателство на тази теория се посочва фактът, че илирите са древно племе в Ю.-И. Европа, което е обитавало влажни места, и тази форма на релефа е била част от тяхната активна лексика. Разпространението на лексемата в езика на албанските преселници в Северна Италия би било още едно доказателство в полза на посочената теория (DELR 2007: 75).

Другата теория се базира на сходствата между рум. *baltă* и слав. *blato* вследствие на ликвидна метатеза, което възхожда към същия и.е. корен, който бе отбелязан по-горе, и откъдето се е развило бълг. *блато*, чеш. и слов. *blato*, пол. *bloto*, руск. *boloto* (Асенова, Детрез 2021: 66). В БЕР преминаването на слав. *o* в рум. *ă* е обяснено с фонетични особености на румънския език, срв. рум. *cislă* ‘число, сума, сбор’ от слав. *čislo*, рум. *ciudă* ‘усещане за тъга и завист, примесено с обида или омраза’ от слав. *čudo* (БЕР/I: 54).

Някои езиковеди отчитат, че възприемането на рум. *baltă* и алб. *baltë* като славянска заемка е дискусионно, тъй като праслав. форма **bolto* е регистрирана много рано, т.е. преди процеса на ликвидна метатеза в южнославянските езици. Също така фактът, че терминът е част от активната лексика на четирите говора на румънския език, както и в албанския език, плюс наличието на множество деривати на формата и в двата езика, биха могли да послужат за основание да приемем, че лексемата има автохтонен характер (Boboc 2005: 136-137, DPEWA).

Примерите от славянската и румънската топонимия дават възможност да се подчертае автохтонният характер на изследваната румънска дума. По територията на България срещаме доста селища, които имат в името си корен *bla-*, например Блатница, Блатец, Блато и др. и само един пример с корен *bal-*, Балтата при Попина (БЕР/I: 54).

Логично изглежда да причислим към този ред от топоними и името на град Балчик, но наименованието на това населено място е с различна вътрешна мотивация. Вероятно ойконимът представлява умалителната форма на общтюркс. *балик* ‘град’ и по-точно с неговата умалителна форма **балыкчик* ‘градец, градче’. Другата по-утвърдена в лингвистичната наука

теория обвързва името на българския град с турс. *balçık* ‘кал, тиня; мочурище, блато’, но това изглежда е вследствие на асоциацията с района, в който се намира градът (Добрев 2018: 1–5).

В румънската топонимия не са регистрирани случаи, в които името на населеното място да е с корен *bla-* (т.е. да е съхранило формата след славянската ликвидна метатеза), което е още едно доказателство за вероятния местен произход на лексемата *baltă* ‘блато, локва’. Срещат се имената *Balta* (населено място в района на Мехединци), *Balta Albă* (в района на Бузъу), *Bălți* в Молдова, квартал *Balta Albă* в Букурещ и др.

Интересна е дистрибуцията на отбелязаната на диалектната карта лексема ***japșă*** ‘недълбока долина, образувана от дъждовете или от разлива на реки, покрита с вода, в която се развива богата водна растителност’. Думата е регистрирана в района на Гюргево, Зимнич и Олтеница. Тя е с неясна етимология. Възможно е да я обвържем с рум. *jap* ‘нещо, което имитира звук от удар’ (DELR 2007: 442). Тъй като е регистрирана главно в пограничните райони с България, не е изключено тази лексема да отразява значението на бълг. *жабуняк* ‘застояла, зеленясала вода’ (РБЕ).

И няколко думи в заключение: по територията на изследвания ареал лексемата *baltă* ‘блато, локва, мочурище’ има сравнително хомогенен характер. Забелязва се превес на книжовната форма с прогресивна деривация (*baltă*, с варианти *băltoagă*, *băltoacă*), както и спорадична употреба на лексемата *lac* със значение ‘блато, локва’. Правят впечатление изолираните случаи на употреба на заемките *ghiol* и *japșă*.

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Използвани речници

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ГОДИШНИК НА СОФИЙСКИЯ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“
ЦЕНТЪР ЗА СЛАВЯНО-ВИЗАНТИЙСКИ ПРОУЧВАНИЯ „ИВАН ДУЙЧЕВ“
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ANNUAIRE DE L'UNIVERSITE DE SOFIA "ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI"
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ON WRITING REVIEWS, ONCE AGAIN (AND PARTICULARLY ABOUT ONE SUCH "REVIEW" BY A. KRAFT)

TSVETELIN STEPANOV

I have always believed that each book has its own unique way of reaching its readers, and that this is not directly dependent on the author. I also believe that each reader will understand and appreciate the book according to his or her particular perceptual abilities and accumulated experience (the experience of a scholar is only one aspect of the overall human experience, which also encompasses the social and life dimensions in general). This is also the reason why I have never responded to reviews, except in cases when required by law, such as during dissertation defenses. A few months ago, I accidentally stumbled upon a review by András Kraft, published in 2020 in "The Byzantine Review"[1] and dedicated to my book "Waiting for the *End of the World*: European Dimensions, 950-1200".[2] Like any review, this one does contain some valuable points. However, when considered as a whole, it is actually a series of manipulations and distortions of the author's views and approaches. And more importantly: it demonstrates the inability of the reviewer to make sense of what the author of the book is proposing. I have given a great deal of thought and deliberation as to whether to respond, in light of my previous attitude towards such matters. Ultimately, I decided that this review was in need of an adequate commentary to dispel a number of queries, ambiguities, insinuations, and speculations, thus providing a clearer understanding of the content discussed in both the book and the "review" itself. First and foremost, I would like to point out that I am not personally acquainted with the reviewer, nor have I ever had any correspondence with him.

[1] See 02.2020.012/doi: 10.17879/byzrev-2020-2904; pp. 50-65**.**

[2] Stepanov, Ts., Waiting for the *End of the World*: European Dimensions, 950-1200. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2020.

My book in question, which was published by the prestigious Brill Publishing House, is actually an English translation of the original Bulgarian text.[3] It was completed in the early fall of 2014; this is also clearly stated in the English edition. It was written partly in view of a tendency that had become quite pronounced in certain branches of the humanities in the late 20th and early 21st centuries toward a return to broader narratives and "canvases" that seek to combine the *local* with the *regional* and the *supra-regional/global* in the study of various phenomena or periods of human history. It was no coincidence that this moment in time also marked the beginning of a search for a "meeting point" between microhistory and macrohistory, as well as for a more adequate implementation of various approaches characteristic of anthropology, ethnology, and sociology in historical research. Another embodiment of these trends was the inclusion of the topic 'Perspectives on Global History: Concepts and Methodology' among the major themes of the 19th International Congress of Historical Sciences that was held in 2000 in Oslo. The fruitful collaboration of different perspectives on the past, which were often in conflict with each other until then (especially the so-called macro- vs. microanalysis), is now taken for granted. "The play of scales"[4] makes it possible to see the similarities as well as the differences between many phenomena, and it is this approach that has been used in my book. It combines local and regional dimensions with those of a more global nature, thus enabling us to identify the similarities, but also the tensions between the *individual/private* and the *general*. Such an approach is typical of historical research, but also of mythology, sociology, and anthropology. At the same time, this approach shields us from the danger of merely describing individual facts (such as written sources, artifacts, specific archival units, etc.), without providing context or in-depth explanations of basic, or archetypal, aspects of human behavior. The latter are undoubtedly also characterized by variability, while also possessing a kind of stability and structure in a number of their elements that persist over time. Given the rapid development of theories in the field of the humanities, it would be unacceptable to ignore how various local phenomena are positioned within broader global contexts – be they social, political, cultural, economic, or ideological in nature. It is precisely this "crossover" between the heightened interest in a renewed anticipation of the *End of the world*, which arose shortly before and immediately after the year 2000, and the interest in macro-structures and macro-frameworks for understanding the past in relation to the social and human sciences that actually forms the basis and motivation for this book. In an attempt to paint a broader picture of the expectations of the times regarding the *End of the world*, I have sought fundamental markers of a structural (mental) nature in the events and *texts* (the latter perceived in the broad sense of the word) of the period spanning from the mid-10th century to the early 13th century. At the same

[3] Stepanov, Ts., V ochakvane na *Kraya*: evropeyski izmereniya, ok. 950–ok. 1200 g. Sofia: UI 'Sv. Kliment Ohridski', 2016.

[4] For this, see Revel, Jacques (ed.), Jeux d'échelles. La micro-analyse à l'expérience. Paris: Gallimard; Le Seuil, 1996.

time, I have also provided an in-depth analysis of this very phenomenon, based on the situations in medieval Danube Bulgaria (see esp. Chapter III), with numerous and varied details and contextualizations concerning this chronological segment. The idea was to bring the scale down to both its regional and local dimensions. The conclusions were drawn based on a comparison of a vast number of individual *cases* and specific facts, precisely in accordance with the requirements and methods of a historical and anthropological study.

At the same time, various permanent or only slightly fluctuating mental structures and concepts have been considered, such as the "four empires" (also known as the alternation of world empires), the "last emperor", the "peoples of Gog and Magog" (or the so-called *unclean peoples*), the north as the direction of the impending *evil*, the "chosen City/capital" and the "chosen people" and their mission before the *End of the world*, etc. These concepts speak to the existence of certain patterns in the development of a given phenomenon and the way it is perceived by different groups of people (organized into countries), both in a specific place (location, or region) and across almost an entire continent. In other words, an effort has been made to integrate *event-related* elements with *structure-forming* ones (and the latter, as it turns out, are often also of an archetypal nature), on the basis of serial sources. This is among the most important methods of historical anthropology, along with those of comparison and the so-called long-term study.

This cyclical reappearance of the same *topoi* (common places), most of which are also known as *universalia* and which appear already in the Old Testament, obviously suggests a kind of regularity and repeatability in the mentalities of societies that profess one of the three monotheistic religions, as well as in their common symbols and cultural codes. The latter is actually a "nod" to approaches in the social sciences and comparative mythology that seek larger regularities and repeatabilities rather than just the individual, the particular, and the concrete that historians traditionally prefer. Thus, my perception of how history is recorded (or recounted) is based on the view that the individual fact and its empirical verification in the source(s) must necessarily be combined with the consideration of some theoretical preconceptions. It is clear that all of them – in their emergence, development and unfolding, and ultimately in their demise or transformation – are shaped by more general or specific contexts. Therefore, I present the totality of narratives, so-called acts and signs-and-symbols (e.g., from the worlds of art and architecture) not simply as a story (a description and enumeration of facts and characteristics), but above all as a set of "texts" created in a specific environment (region) and at a specific time. This is why I place so much emphasis on context, which is evident even in the titles of the chapters/sections. So-called deep contextualization is an integral part of my belief about how to proceed when attempting to understand long-gone historical periods.

At this point, I would like to turn my attention once again to the heightened interest in macro-history and macro-narratives. The growing interest in the global did not

bypass medieval studies. Popular today are trends such as *World History, Connected Histories, Area Studies, Global History*. The emergence of the term *Global Middle Ages*[5] is no coincidence either. There are also journals that cover a wide range of topics from a comparative perspective and that extend beyond a strict focus on Western Europe. Two journals from 2015, for example, have names that speak for themselves: "Medieval Worlds" and "The Medieval Globe". Also "Journal of Medieval Worlds", since 2019. They grow in popularity with each passing year. Kraft must at least be familiar with the journal "Medieval Worlds", as it is published at the University of Vienna, well known to him. These trends are all characterized by the presence of a common tendency to analyze (sometimes massive) phenomena over vast spaces and also over long periods of time. And this is precisely the focal point of my book. The aforementioned scale variations employed in it can provide a clearer understanding of a phenomenon that was primarily spiritual, but at the same time also political and intellectual in nature, such as the anticipation of the *End of the world*.

Moreover, such a macro-approach is neither new nor an isolated occurrence in my research. It is also not coincidental, as I have applied a similar approach in my study of the *Otherness* within the so-called Steppe Empire between the 6th and the 9th centuries,[6] as well as the processes of monotheization in Europe and vast parts of Asia between the 9th and the 12th centuries.[7]

Kraft writes in his "review" that the book relies, if not exclusively, then heavily on secondary sources (review, p. 53). Had he bothered to count the primary narrative sources cited, he would have found that there are 106 of them. And if we were to include sources from the fields of iconography and art, architecture, sphragistics, etc., the total number would exceed them by several dozen more. I hope that he is aware of the fact that a source is not only what appears in the form of a *narrative*, but any type of evidence stemming from fields such as archaeology, art, numismatics, sphragistics – to name just a few of the many spheres of the humanities. If only the narratives cited in the book are counted, their exact number will certainly exceed 106, since some of the above-mentioned publications of narrative sources include more than one written source. Perhaps it would be beneficial for Kraft to

[5] For instance, see The Global Middle Ages. Eds. C. Holmes and N. Standen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018; Political Culture in the Latin West, Byzantium and the Islamic World, c. 700–c. 1500. Eds. C. Holmes, J. Shepard, J. van Steenbergen and B. Weiler. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021; Les empires médiévaux. Ed. S. Gouguenheim. Paris: Perrin, 2024 (2nd ed.); Mass Conversions to Christianity and Islam, 800-1100. Eds. Ts. Stepanov and O. Karatay. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023.

[6] Stepanov, Ts., Bulgarite i Stepnata imperiya prez Rannoto srednovekovie: Problemut za *Drugite*. Sofia: Gutenberg, 2005 (2nd ed.: Paradigma, 2019); Sztepanov, Cv., Lovasnomád birodalmak és városlakók. A *mások* problémája. Budapest: Napkút Kiadó, 2008; Stepanov, Ts., The Bulgars and the Steppe Empire in the Early Middle Ages: The Problem of the *Others*. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2010.

[7] See Stepanov, Ts., Karatay, O. (eds.), Mass Conversions to Christianity and Islam, 800–1100. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023.

check the number of sources referenced in other monographs as well – and in order for the comparison to be adequate, they should also address apocalyptic issues and have a similar number of pages as mine (i.e., between 350 and 370 pages). He will then see that his statement leads down a blind alley. I wonder, is this a deliberate attempt on his part to manipulate readers?

Let us, however, continue with the discussion of the problem of *secondariness*. When writing conceptual and synthesized (holistic, integrative) books, the method that is often applied, and to which I also adhere, is to cite the opinions and ideas of scholars whose names are well established and who are themselves perceived as highly respected in their field of knowledge. Citing the luminaries in a particular scientific field demonstrates knowledge of the traditions in the study of a given problem, and presenting a synthesized version also saves the reader valuable time. It goes without saying that every researcher builds on the achievements of his predecessors, and it is quite normal for the ideas and analyses of the best of them to be popularized and cited. By the way, I should note that the above technique is used mainly in Chapter I, and it is intended both to save time and to make it easier for the reader to navigate the text. If one were to follow the approach of Kraft, it would result in a book of over 1000 pages. I cannot help but wonder if, in our busy times, there will be more than twenty people who would venture to read such a book from cover to cover. Isn't the purpose of every book to reach as many readers as possible, to provoke reflection, and to unleash the intuition and imagination?

Moreover, in a monograph of about 350-360 pages, it is not possible to cite all conceivable sources (and authors of secondary literature) and, above all, to comment on them in detail, especially when the topic, as in the case of this particular book, covers a vast territory and a time span of more than 200 years. I'm also curious about the rationale behind recounting as much as possible about each source, while missing the opportunity to outline the underlying causes and interconnections among a range of phenomena that are at the root of the tense anticipation of the *End of the world*; or even to reflect on the conclusion that, in this particular case, they are a consequence of the monotheization process that took place in Europe during the 9th/10th to 12th centuries. And together with this, to outline the enormous scope specifically of the phenomenon of the anticipation of the *End of the world* with its *common places*, which are connected to the shared heritage of the three monotheistic religions. It is clear, then, that in light of Kraft's views, I approach researching and writing about the past in a different way, in a different paradigm, even. And I don't see anything wrong with that.

The reviewer persistently claims that the book contains nothing original and that it does not cite any new sources. Here, I will leave aside the details of this completely arbitrary statement and just mention the old saying that "young scholars are always hungry for new facts", often in contrast to the "mature" ones, who in turn are, as a rule, "hungry for syntheses". In fact, rather than being pitted against each other, these two approaches should be recognized for what they are: complement-

ing and mutually enriching. But Kraft's above assertion is also downright comical, especially if one is familiar with what is presented as analysis in a substantial part of Chapter II and especially in Chapter III of the book. The entire Chapter III, for example, contains a huge number of elements and analyses of *topoi* that differ from older interpretations. Moreover, the new ones are not interpreted in the old positivist way (or through the well-known approach of theological hermeneutics and philology), but are adapted to the historical contexts and various other methods, common to not only textual studies, but also anthropological and mythological analyses. Here, however, the focus is placed not only on some generalizations and recurring mental structures (and *topoi*), but also on the differences, variations, and the individual, especially with regard to the so-called Bulgarian *case*. Overall, my book does not in any way minimize or obscure the specific differences in perceptions of the *End of the world* in the various parts of the European continent. On the contrary, it examines them in separate case studies. It also unites them, very often with the help of so-called common "cores" (textual and behavioral) that exist at the macro level. Additionally, it identifies and presents the similarities and differences also among adherents of the other two monotheistic religions.

As for Kraft's reproach that I have used old and well-known sources instead of necessarily seeking new ones, let us recall that the musical notes, for instance, are only eight in number. Yet their extremely limited number does not prevent composers and musicians from creating all kinds of music, by applying different techniques to these less than ten notes. The situation with the sources from the Middle Ages is quite similar: they, too, are limited in number, especially the narratives, but depending on the reference (and broader contextual) frameworks in which they are placed, as well as the "keys" (i.e., methodologies and approaches) with which they are interpreted, they can help to reveal different "pictures", with different spatial and temporal scales, and sometimes even lead to different conclusions. Thus, viewing various sources with different types of optics can often result in changes not only to the "pictures" themselves, but also to the conclusions derived from a study.

Kraft's "review" makes it abundantly clear that, firstly, he lacks detailed knowledge about the materials from Danube Bulgaria (which are the subject of an extensive analysis in Chapter III); secondly, the materials concerning the world of Islam and especially that of Volga Bulgaria; and thirdly, the materials dealing with the situation in Khazaria and the Jewish notions about the *End of the world*. In fact, his expertise is mostly based on the issue of the *End of the world* in Byzantium, and it is no coincidence that the vast majority of the arguments presented in his "favor" are related to *case* studies or studies dedicated to the Eastern Roman Empire. Also not coincidental is the fact that the "review" appeared in a journal named "The Byzantine Review". Kraft also certainly has considerable knowledge of a number of issues related to the anticipation of the *End of the world* in Western Europe. But neither what we call Southeastern Europe nor the issues regarding Islam and Judaism are among his strengths, and it is no accident that the "review" contains

no commentary whatsoever with regard to my analysis of these very regions. And they are an integral part of the study! I cannot help but wonder if there are any other reasons for this last "omission", and whether they are not once again related to his attempt to spare the reader important aspects of my research.

I have already touched on the issue of spatial dimensions a number of times. Allow me here to comment on another problematic reading by the same reviewer, this time in the so-called geographical vein. The latter is of great importance for the proper understanding of a particular author's approach. What is this about? According to Kraft (review, p. 51), I have initially chosen the geographical approach in order to construct the object of my research. In this regard, and as far as I can understand his objections, the reviewer is opposed to the use of the word *Europe* in the book (although, in all actuality, the subtitle of my book does contain the word *European*!) and, more specifically, to the geographical boundaries I outlined in the analysis-and-synthesis. He states explicitly that "the term "Europe" does not appear in the sources" (review, p. 51). In this case, it would be very easy to show him, just as it is demonstrated in the book, that the numerous maps of this period indicate quite clearly what the scholars of the time understood by *Europe.* Ancient tradition attributes to Hecataeus of Miletus and Anaximander (6th century B.C.) the distinction of being the first two Greek-speaking authors to define relatively clearly what Europe was. For instance, in his "Journey around the Earth", Hecataeus dedicated Book I precisely to Europe. In the 5th century B.C., Herodotus (*Histories* 4.38, 45), most likely following Anaximander, mentions the Phasis River (present-day Rioni River in Georgia) as a possible boundary between Asia and Europe, but also states that some Hellenes considered the Tanais River (the present-day Don River) to be the boundary. Herodotus also mentions the established division of the world, well known to the people of the times. It consisted of Asia, Europe and Libya, the latter sometimes referred to as Africa (*Histories* 4. 36, 42). Aristotle (4th century B.C.), a favorite Hellenic author in medieval Western Europe, also speaks of the peoples inhabiting Europe, presenting them as a kind of counterthesis to those in Asia and, respectively, to those in Ancient Greece (*Politics* VII, 7). Yes, some medieval maps, especially those based primarily on ancient sources, do show discrepancies in various geographical outlines of the continent. But a number of maps precisely from the period between the 950s and the 1250s (such as the map from St. Emmeram's Abbey in Regensburg, or the so-called Icelandic map, or the Ebstorf map, or that of John of Wallingford) contain specific data from Eastern Europe, for example on the so-called Varangian pillars (*Cades Varacis*), the lands of the Rus' and those of the Cumans, as well as a specific mention of the city of Kyiv, the Norwegians, the Swedes, etc. And all of them are located in the Europe section! Moreover, only three cities in Europe are marked on the Icelandic map (mid-13th century) – Rome, Constantinople, and… Kyiv![8] This is why both

[8] See Chekin, L., Kartographiya christianskogo Srednevekov'a VIII–XIII vv. Teksty, perevod, kommentarii. Moscow, 1999, pp. 21, 42-45, 64-65, 195-196 and map 16; Mel'nikova, E., Drevneskandinavskie geograficheskie sochineniya. Moscow, 1986, pp. 27-28, 103-112 (map 1).

Kyivan Rus' and Scandinavia are rightly included in my book. And whether or not the term *Europe* itself can be found in the apocalyptic texts is not crucial in this case, since the very idea of Europe (and its expanding borders) was already present in the 11th–13th centuries! And another thing of utmost importance: some of these maps explicitly mention "the peoples enclosed by Alexander the Great", or "the peoples of Gog and Magog", or even "the world empires", all of which are elements that are very much present in the apocalyptic narratives. Kraft should be familiar with all this. But evidently this is not the case.

Based on the above objection, Kraft also asks why I limited Europe territorially only to the North Caucasus when moving eastward, and did not include Armenia and Georgia in my analysis, given that they are also Christian countries (review, p. 50). Here, he is clearly referring to the modern perception of Europe's borders. Just an insert: for medieval authors, present-day Georgia was a grouping of three distinct peoples: the Colchis, the Iberians, and the Lazi, all of whom are commonly featured in both the narratives and the maps. The ancient Hellenes were generally only familiar with the Colchis, i.e. the people they had encountered-and-communicated with, who had settled in the western part of present-day Georgia, known as Colchis in ancient times. And here is the specific answer to the reviewer's question: anyone familiar with the basic Hellenic and Roman perception of the eastern border of Europe, which was later carried over into the Christian era, knows that it primarily defined as a boundary between Europe and Asia the Don/Tanais River (most often together with the Sea of Azov/*Paludes M(a)eotis*) and sometimes the so-called Riphei Mountains/*Riphei montes*, considered by many to be the present-day Ural Mountains.[9] The idea of the border along the Tanais was already clearly stated by Polybius and Strabo, and especially by Claudius Ptolemy (2nd century). It has long been known that the term "Europe" is of initially mythological origin. Subsequently, during the age of the Roman Empire (after the reforms of Diocletian, i.e., on the threshold between the 3rd and the 4th centuries, and sometime around the middle/end of the 7th century, during the creation of the so-called *theme* system in early Byzantium), it also appeared for some time as the name of a specific and relatively small Roman province. It generally encompassed lands in present-day Turkish Thrace; at that time, the Province of *Europa* was part of the Diocese of Thrace. During the Early Middle Ages, the term was also adopted in Western Europe. In some cases it only denoted part of the territories of the western part of the modern-day continent, and in others – also the lands of the present-day southeastern, eastern and northern parts of Europe. Thus, both the meaning of the term and its geographical scope have varied over the centuries. Nevertheless, they have been present in the minds of scholars since at least the Homeric period, and certainly since the 6th century B.C. When the monotheistic religions that formed the basis of the *End of the world* no-

[9] For instance, see a map from a Cluniac monastery in modern Northern Spain, from 12th century (Milano, Bibliotheca Ambrosiana F 105 Sup. F. 71v-72) – see Chekin, L., op. cit., pp. 164-165.

tion "flooded" the lands beyond the strict borders of the old Roman Empire between the 9th/10th and the 12th centuries, they actually settled right within the outlines of what we now call Europe. And while the modern perception embraces both Armenia and Georgia as part of this continent (and even Azerbaijan, known for many centuries as Caucasian Albania), for the ancient and medieval man, these lands were always seen as part of Asia. For this reason, both Georgians and Armenians were excluded from this analysis. It is clear by definition that one should adhere to the geographical concepts typical of the Middle Ages and not those of modernity.

However, there is one other thing that Kraft has failed to grasp in this particular geographical context. Generally speaking, history and geography coexist in my book, but the geographical aspect is not initially at the center of my approach. Instead, I consider the gradual territorial expansion of the monotheistic religions from the 10th to 12th centuries, which I try to connect with the notions surrounding the *End of the world*. The successes of Christian and Islamic preaching, when placed on the geographical map and viewed through its essentially spatial optics, *de facto* outline the European borders that were subsequently imposed and established. Such an approach can also be indirectly associated with a method of modern science called *mapping* (from Eng. 'map', which in turn leads to the Lat. *mappa*). Consequently, the book promotes the idea that the explosive development of the monotheization processes between the 9th/10th and the 12th centuries can be seen as a precondition for a greater homogenization – relatively speaking – in the spiritual and religious, but also in the intellectual sense, across this vast space. This confirms the view that the monotheization of this second wave[10] is at the root of the massive spatial deployment of the phenomenon of expecting the *End of the world*.

As I mentioned above, two of the specifics of historical anthropology are the comparative method and the so-called long-term study. In this regard, the *time period* enclosed between the years 950 and 1200/1204, which define the chronological period of study in the title of the book, is actually a sign not only of the temporal duration, but also of the spatial unfolding of the ideas and notions surrounding the expected *End*. I shall come back to the second date later, in view of the spatial parameters. So, in other words, I have remained true to an essential postulate of historical anthropology and the *Annales* School: to not merely seek to discover, describe, and analyze just individual facts or specific texts. Instead, the better approach would be to attempt to understand the special, semi-visible, semi-hidden connection between the various enduring structural mental phenomena behind the texts, which transcend the dimensions of both specific time and specific space. These structures are capable of clarifying human attitudes, perceptions, and behavior in much greater depth. This is why I will have to disappoint Kraft: I have not initially chosen the geographical approach "to demarcate an intellectual phenomenon", as he himself writes (review,

[10] For these 'waves', see the Introduction of "Mass Conversions to Christianity and Islam, 800–1100." Eds. Ts. Stepanov and O. Karatay. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023, pp. 1-25, especially pp. 6, 12-14.

p. 51). But at the same time, I have not neglected to acknowledge the role that this school assigns to geography, that is, to *space*. In fact, let us recall that the *Annales* School has always promoted the mutual collaboration among historians, sociologists, economists, geographers, and philologists. From what has been said thus far, it is clear that the reviewer has fallen into error and, at least as far as the author's intentions are concerned, has clearly reversed the places of *cause* and *effect.* Whether this was done out of ignorance, or for some other effect, I cannot begin to guess.

Moreover, Kraft does not attempt, or, rather, fails to grasp the author's overall concept of seeing all three chapters as a whole, how each chapter is essentially referential to the other two, and how this approach gives homogeneity and a macro-framework to the analysis-and-synthesis. He seems to forget an important feature of the understanding of a given text according to philosophical hermeneutics (the reference here is primarily to Hans-Georg Gadamer): the established concept of the part and the whole as mutually presupposing each other. This is why the chapters (parts) of the book cannot be considered separately, independently of each other; they should be perceived as one (integral) whole, because they presuppose and justify each other.

A further "peculiarity" of Kraft's reviewing approach is that he presents us with quite a limited sample of the authors I cite in the individual chapters. In this regard, his chosen strategy for writing his "review" is indeed exceedingly strange. It would have been appropriate if the reviewer had established, for instance, that the author of a given study on the anticipation of the *End of the world* in the 10th to 12th centuries had based his research on authors whose expertise in this particular field was questionable, such as, let's say, Mussolini, Stalin, Hitler, Mao… But this is not the case at all, because the author of the present book relies on the knowledge of world luminaries in the field of apocalypticism and eschatology, as well as political ideology from recent decades, such as P. Alexander, J. Fried, B. McGinn, W. Brandes, R. Landes, G. A. A. Kortekaas, G. Reinink, P. Magdalino, A. Lolos, L. Rydén, V. Tapkova-Zaimova, G. Podskalsky, to mention a few. Some of these names, by the way, were not acknowledged in any way whatsoever by Kraft in his "review". Again, I wonder why he has made such an omission.

On page 56 of his "review", Kraft accuses me of a tendency toward generalization, citing the following example: I appear to have postulated (see my book, p. 113) that there were "different perceptions of eschatology among monks, nobles, and the common people", without actually proving it. Such a statement of mine is a *common place* and has long been proven, especially when it comes to the perceptions of ordinary people and those of the "unorthodox" monks. There is no need to prove axioms, but nevertheless, let me say a few words on the subject. Throughout the Christian world, there is ample evidence of the existence of unorthodox beliefs and apocryphal texts from the period in question, something which also applies in full to Bulgaria. It is no coincidence that a number of the texts I quote in Chapter III have long been considered Bogomil apocrypha! It is obvious by presumption

that in a culture with a considerable number of uneducated people, such as that of Europe in the 10th–12th centuries, i.e., long before the Age of Enlightenment, we cannot expect to encounter the same views on such complex issues as eschatology and apocalyptic expectations among the learned bishops or abbots as among the ordinary illiterate rural population.

When commenting on the apocalyptic aspect of the Jewish diaspora and the Khazar nobles who converted to Judaism (see Ch.I.1 of my book) and noting my decision to more frequently cite the studies of Boris Rashkovskii from recent years, Kraft is perplexed as to how I could have ignored a 2013 article by Shaul Stampfer on the problems of Khazar Judaism (review, p. 58). I am, of course, familiar with this article, but until the fall of 2014, when I completed the manuscript of the book, Stampfer's conceptualizations had not garnered a positive reception among the biggest connoisseurs of precisely this aspect of Khazar history. And believe me when I say that I am personally acquainted with – or actively corresponding with – a great number of scholars from the past five to six decades working on the Khazar. I myself have been teaching courses on Khazar history since the year 2000 and have also published a number of studies on various Khazar topics.[11] So such criticism by Kraft is entirely misplaced and misleading. His failure here is understandable, since he has no knowledge of this side of history.

Let us now consider another of Kraft's grievances, namely, the "nationalistic biases" and the "neo-colonial approach to historiography" (see, for instance, review, p. 51, 65), which he finds in my book. The reviewer has made these conclusions on the basis of a limited in number (and manipulatively selected) excerpts, while omitting the frames of reference, i.e., the contexts related to the mindset and the use of linguistic clichés by the people of that time. And, as discussed above, it is this very aspect, the deep contextualization that is especially clearly emphasized throughout the book, including in the section on the Bulgarian *case* study. For instance, there shouldn't be any issue with my statement of the fact that Bulgaria was recognized by the Byzantines as a Tsardom/Empire in 927, and that it became the very first tsardom among the Slavic-speaking peoples, spatially occupying a great

[11] Mentioned here are only works published in English; omitted are the ones published in Bulgarian, Hungarian, French, and Russian: Stepanov, Ts., Rulers, Doctrines, and Title Practices in Eastern Europe, 6th–9th Centuries. – Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi. Vol. 14 (Wiesbaden), 2005, pp. 263-279; Stepanov, Ts., (review article of) "The World of the Khazars: New Perspectives". Ed. by Peter Golden et al., Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2007. – Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi, 16, 2008/2009, pp. 263-283; Stepanov, Ts., The Bulgars and the Steppe Empire in the Early Middle Ages: The Problem of the 'Others'. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2010, *passim*; Stepanov, Ts., Trade and Dependence: Between Historical Facts and Historical Memory about Bulgaro-Khazar Relations, the 9th–10th Centuries. – In: Vostochnaya Evropa v drevnosti i srednevekov'e. XXX Yubileynye chteniya pamyati chlena-korrespondenta AN SSSR Vladimira T. Pashuto, Moscow, 17-20 aprelya 2018. Materialy konferentsii. Moscow, 2018, pp. 271-275; Stepanov, Ts., From 'Steppe Empires'/'Supercomplex Chiefdoms' to 'Early States': The Case of Danube Bulgaria and Khazaria (Religious Aspects). – Khazarskii al'manakh, 17, 2020, pp. 284-296.

part of the Roman *West/Dysis*. This is a truth confirmed by a number of documents from this historical period. It is precisely because Danube Bulgaria was a tsardom after 927 that such apocalyptic texts repeatedly appeared within its borders after the end of the 10th century. However, such texts did not appear in the lands of the Serbs or the Rus' during the same period, the 11th–13th centuries, precisely because their states had no imperial status. This is why both the Serbs and the Rus' adopted them from Danube Bulgaria. Even today, as in the Middle Ages, the term *Tsardom* is often equated with Empire. And since there was an empire, and in view of the anticipation of the *End of Times*, educated people, by definition thought, firstly, within the paradigms of the salvation of souls at the Second Coming of Christ, and, secondly, within the paradigms of the alternation of the "four empires" preceding the *End of the world.* And in addition: they rightly assumed that the tsardom was bestowed with a divine mission. Kraft claims that, through such words, references, and the like, I actually intended "to eulogize Bulgarian history rather than to understand better the medieval source material" (review, p. 51). No, my aim was to contextualize the Bulgarian case within the broader framework of the anticipation of the *End of the world* phenomenon, by highlighting some common places and similarities that connect it to the traditions of the Roman-Christian civilization. At the same time, I also demonstrate some of the changes and "distortions" that Bulgarian medieval authors made to apocalyptic texts in order to present this very tsardom as chosen by God, with a mission before Judgement Day. It is obvious that Kraft is once again attempting to ascribe to me some ideological motives that were not at all the impetus for writing this book. This is why the above phrase containing the word *nationalistic* is utter nonsense. These accusations of his remind me a little of what Jacques Revel said about the emergence in the late 1980s and 1990s of numerous *Histories* of France that subverted genre conventions. Examples are books such as those related to Pierre Nora and his "sites of memory" project,[12] or Fernand Braudel's book on French identity,[13] as well as the volumes compiled and edited by Revel himself, together with Andre Burguière.[14] Both these books, as well as mine, are "not at all an expression of national and even nationalist complacency", in the words of J. Revel,[15] something that the aforementioned famous French researchers have been accused of, and an implication that Kraft is trying to push here.

For Kraft, it is clear that through the *apologia* of Bulgaria (in Chapter III) I have attempted to show how the Bulgarian tsardom was incorporated into the "European civilized world". But from this, Kraft adds, the reader is left with the impression that

[12] Nora, P. (ed.), Les Lieux de mémoire, 7 vols, Paris: Gallimard, 1984-1992.

[13] Braudel, F., L'Identité de la France, 3 vols., Paris: Arthaud/Flammarion, 1986-1987.

[14] Revel, J., Burguière, A. (eds.), Histoire de la France, 4 vols., Paris: Seuil, 1989-1993.

[15] See Revel, J., Le fardeau de la mémoire. Histoire et mémoire dans la France d'aujord'hui. – French Politics, Culture and Society, 18, 2000, pp. 1-12. The quoted passage here is given from the Bulgarian edition: Revel, J., Bremeto na pametta. – In: Revel, J., Eseta po istoriya i istoriographiya. Trans. A. Zheleva. Sofia: Dom na naukite za choveka i obshtestvoto, 2010, p. 148.

my goal was to replace the Marxist and positivist viewpoints with "a nationalist and neo-colonial one" (review, p. 51). He continues in the same vein, suggesting that I believe only Europe is a civilized space, and the parts of the world that remain outside of it are uncivilized. Of course, one can immediately see the crude insinuation behind these words. Those familiar with my research know that it covers a variety of topics, but particularly those related to the world of steppe Eurasia in the Early Middle Ages (with the main counterparts here being the Khazars, the Turks, the Uyghurs, and the Avars and Bulgars, who were by no means treated as "second-class" peoples or states compared to the so-called sedentary empire). In light of this, one can only wonder what to make of such a "statement" and, above all, "interpretation" on the part of the reviewer. It should be stated outright that this claim of his and others like it are utterly misleading. The book actually reconstructs the attitudes of people from the 10th–12th centuries who professed all three (!) monotheistic religions that expected the *End of the world* (and the Second Coming of Christ in particular) and in this regard, they perceived the actions of a number of other peoples as *signs* foreshadowing that very *End.* The frames of reference for these beliefs have also been clearly indicated: the Old Testament, the perceptions about the "wicked peoples of Gog and Magog", the paradigm of Alexander the Great, the *Apocalypse* of St. John, etc., etc., all of which were *common places* in the minds of the educated people of the time.

Furthermore, as every scholar knows, the term *colonialism* was introduced in reference to the period and, accordingly, the phenomenon from the 16th century onwards. The role of colonial powers in this case refers to several European countries, usually Spain, Portugal, England, France, the Netherlands, and later also Denmark, Belgium, Germany, with Russia and Italy included by some. The "common denominator" among them is, relatively speaking, the Christian religion and the "white man" and his "burden" to spread rationality and the scientific and technological innovation based on it, which, unfortunately, is made possible only by the exploitation of various peoples in the two Americas, Africa and Asia. This theory of the superiority of the Western European man evolved gradually between the 16th and the 20th centuries, especially during the last couple of centuries of that period. It was, however, not applicable to the time period between the 10th and the 12th centuries, when the events described in my book took place. If Kraft wants to spread the dubious idea that colonialism as a phenomenon existed prior to the end of the Middle Ages, that is up to him. However, such relativisation and free use of a given concept is not something I am inclined to do myself. My book clearly states that its focus is the time period between the 10th and the 12th centuries, and that the object of its analysis are the Christian, Islamic and Jewish beliefs and enduring notions regarding the above phenomenon. To the extent that distinctions are made as to who was "good" and who was "bad" within this same phenomenon, they were made on the basis of the sources of the time. In my capacity as the author of the book, I have taken into account the perceptions of the people from the 10th–12th centuries, and not the ideology and the views of some Europeans from the 18th,

19th, and 20th centuries. As has long been evident by definition, each historian must consider the perceptions and popular notions typical of the historical period being studied. Introducing and accepting as valid modern and postmodern concepts and clichés characteristic of certain societies, communities, or intellectual trends after the collapse of the colonial system would be a distortion of the historical truth. If we add to the above reflections and arguments the fact that I was born in Bulgaria and this country has never been a colonial power, and therefore, as a Bulgarian I have no interest whatsoever in maintaining a (neo)colonial point of view, then one really has to wonder what Kraft's aim is with such insinuations. If he is the product of elementary – and essentially binary – explanatory clichés such as national(ist) vs. international(ist) or colonial/neocolonial vs. postcolonial, I certainly am not. Such simplification is far from the humanities; it is nothing more than "labeling". And why then, if he is such a purist with regard to the term *Europe*, does he not use the same approach towards the Middle Ages, when terms such as 'nationalist' and 'neocolonial' simply did not exist? In view of these double standards, we may well wonder whether the reviewer has fallen into the familiar trap of "quoting Scripture with the devil's tongue". Or perhaps he was possessed by a desperate desire to keep up with some current intellectual fashions and modern historiographical trends, which have recently been commented upon even in Byzantine studies?[16] As with other books of mine[17] and a number of my articles, it is clear that I work in a field that in no way underestimates or belittles non-European ethnic groups. But because Kraft is unaware of this (or is deliberately concealing it), he allows himself to attribute some kind of "neocolonial" paradigms to me. These, however, are present only in his own mind. I can only laugh endlessly at such accusations and insinuations.

And what is to be said of his claim that I have bypassed "Biblical commentaries" and neglected the "continuous exegetical traditions" (review, p. 51)? This is, of course, a far-fetched allegation, since such commentaries can be found in a number of places in the book. Moreover, my purpose and the focus of the study were entirely different and did not entail a constant emphasis on this particular theological aspect. In some places, for instance, his wish to necessarily rely on "typological exegesis" in order to clarify the meaning of certain uses of terms and words in the Bulgarian medieval texts or later Russian ones (review, pp. 51-52), can be perceived mainly as an irresistible desire to demonstrate his erudition. However, its effectiveness is limited given some of the specific texts/contexts.

[16] See Anderson, B., Ivanova, M. (eds.), Is Byzantine Studies a Colonialist Discipline? Toward a Critical Historiography. 'The Pennsylvania State University Press', 2023; and, Anderson, B., Ivanova, M., The Politics of Byzantine Studies: Between Nations and Empires. – The English Historical Review, 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/ceae159.

[17] See Stepanov, Ts., The Bulgars and the Steppe Empire in the Early Middle Ages: The Problem of the 'Others'. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2010, and Ts. Stepanov and O. Karatay (eds.), Mass Conversions to Christianity and Islam, 800–1100. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023.

With regard to his comment on the references to the Russian *Povest' vremennykh let* and Basileus Michael III (d. 867), it is clearly again a matter of his misunderstanding my thought. In this context, I truly hope that he does not assume I am unaware of the co-called perception of each Byzantine emperor as a "New Constantine", because I have been working in the field of Byzantine studies far longer than he has: my first specialization (1988-1990) was precisely in late Byzantine history, and prior to that, from 1978 to 1983, I deliberately studied Ancient Greek, Latin and Old Church Slavonic. Regarding another one of his comments, namely, that the unknown Bulgarian scribes' use of the *khagan* title in an apocalyptic sense should be linked to Melchizedek of the Old Testament as an archetype, I would like to draw his attention to the fact that one of these sources – and an original at that – deals with the Avars and the ancient Turks, whose supreme rulers were known as "khagans". My book illustrates this well, by citing specific passages from primary sources that served as models for the unknown apocalyptic writer. In his text, the Bulgarian author has replaced these two "imperial" peoples of the Steppe Empire with the Bulgars, who were also part of this nomadic and semi-nomadic space before settling permanently in what is now Southeastern Europe in the 680s. That is why I have preferred to interpret the text in this particular "key", that of the steppe and its supreme lords, since the latter were perceived as "emperors" within the sedentary empires. In the passages replaced by the unknown Bulgarian scribes, there is no reference to Melchizedek as an archetype; instead, the "Avars and Turks" of the original are substituted with "Bulgarians" – and these Bulgarians are led by "Michael Khagan"! So in this case, the reviewer's interpretation actually aims to demonstrate mostly his own erudition in exegesis. However, and especially in light of the specific sources, this interpretation sounds strained, because it does not consider the internal logic of either the original source or of its subsequent use in the Bulgarian milieu during the 11th and 12th centuries, i.e. long after the disappearance of the Turkic and Avar khaganates. And another thing: Kraft overlooks the fact that in my book (p. 254) I have suggested the basic possibility of such a connection with Melchizedek as an archetype, with reference to S. Senderovich.[18]

Elsewhere in his "review", Kraft claims that no new sources were introduced, nor were the old ones interpreted "in a new light" (review, p. 53). Such a statement reveals the positivist in him – for every positivist expects to find new narrative sources in a study. However, his failure to recognize or appreciate that the entire Chapter III actually offers new interpretations of certain narratives at every turn and supplements the analysis with a number of "texts" from the field of art and mythology for further contextualization is his alone. Such a claim, nonetheless, also reveals his helplessness in dealing with the details, as well as with the historiographical achievements in the field of Bulgarian historical apocalypticism. Because

[18] See Senderovich, S., Sv. Vladimir: k mifopoezisu. – Trudy otdela drevnerusskoi literatury, 49, 1996, pp. 300-313.

if he was familiar with it, he would have seen and recognized the numerous new ways of interpretation proposed in Chapter III of the book. New interpretations and reference frameworks can also be found in Chapter II, especially with regard to Islamic views on the anticipation of the *End of the world.* It is only Chapter I of the book that presents, in a rather concise overview, the main parameters of the processes and phenomena in Western Europe, as well as partly in Central and Eastern Europe, which are mutually intertwined with the anticipation of the *End of the world* – as causes, prerequisites and consequences. As already stated above, Chapter I should be considered an integral part of the overall structure of the book. In fact, the chapter builds on what has been achieved thus far within the historiographical tradition of apocalyptic studies, and does not necessarily aim to present new sources; instead it sets frameworks and makes connections between the events themselves and various phenomena and actors that are related to and/or presuppose various aspects of the expectations of the *End of the world*.

Elsewhere (review, p. 55), Kraft states that a weakness of the book is "the absence of a central thesis", which has led to "a lack of structural coherence". A careful perusal of the paragraphs in the Contents section, even without reading the book itself, will surely show that it possesses precisely "structural coherence", because it is built on the same central motifs, cores and *topoi*, which are also seriously contextualized on a historical (including purely event-related) and spatial level. This is especially evident in Chapter II and Chapter III. The latter means that I am fully aware of what the great theoreticians have already given much thought to: that events and (mental) structures are mutually intertwined without this meaning that the former should be reduced to the latter, and vice versa. On this, I rely on the words of the great historian and thinker Reinhart Koselleck. Let me once again remind Kraft that it is often misleading to follow the approaches of classical event-based historiography from the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, which is based on the achievements of philology (textology) and theology, and which usually seeks to describe and evaluate individual facts without placing them in a contextual framework and without considering the aspects of the deep internal, mental indeed, structures of a number of human behaviors and attitudes. It is, of course, very well to follow the rules of a theologico-philologically oriented study in the style of the second half of the 19th century. But it is equally important to keep in mind that strictly and exclusively adhering to the research-and-writing methods of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries runs the risk of "drowning" in the multitude of available sources and of having difficulty in achieving any kind of synthesis.

And his claim that there is also a lack of "argumentative coherence" (review, p. 55) is accompanied with a single example: I have given no proof that the *End* was expected in the year 1092 in the Bulgarian and Byzantine milieu. But is it truly so? First, must a specific source always have to be cited when this conclusion was deductively derived from research on the calendar concepts regarding the expected year of the *End of Times* in the Christian East – the year 1092? And second, what

about the major uprisings on Bulgarian soil in 1040/1 and 1072, i.e. shortly before 1092, aimed at the restoration of the independent Bulgarian Tsardom? Their analysis in the book is deliberate, as is the analysis of the apocalyptic texts that reflect them – and the latter emerged just before or shortly after 1092! Do I need to remind Kraft that at that time, the lands inhabited by Bulgarians were already part of the Eastern Roman Empire and therefore these texts can validate the existence of apocalyptic beliefs among both the Bulgarians and the Byzantines in the Empire, as both of these peoples were (pan-Byzantine) subjects of the basileus in Constantinople? I have stated the latter on pp. 7-8 in my book. In the same vein, Kraft objects to my use of Daniel Verhelst's assertion[19] that the apocalyptic texts were primarily composed in a monastic environment, because it refers to Western Europe and thus should not be generalized. I would like to draw his attention to the fact that the same statement regarding the authorship of Bulgarian historical-apocalyptic texts was made by a number of scholars as early as the 1990s, including Vasilka Tăpkova-Zaimova, Miliiana Kaimakamova, Anisava Miltenova, to name but a few. Thus, what was valid for Latin-speaking Western Europe in the 10th and 11th centuries also applies fully to the situation with such texts in Bulgaria during the same period. The fact that he is unaware of these particulars is his own problem.

Next, in defense of his arguments about the *End*, Kraft provides examples from Byzantine history, which are based on Agathias of Myrina and Doukas, respectively (review, p. 55, n. 14). But these are authors who wrote in the 6th and 15th centuries, respectively. If he really insists on citing only sources from the period indicated in the book's title, then why does he use authors from the 6th and 15th centuries in his argumentation? In fact, his approach indirectly suggests that the phenomenon of anticipating the *End of the world* was both non-recurring (within the particular framework of a specific event, centered on a "horizon" close to an important year for the apocalypticists, such as 1000, 1033, 1092, 1492), and recurring, i.e. it reveals the connection between the individual event and the permanent structure. And this is precisely what led me to select several structure-forming and recurring "cores" as the basis for the analysis-and-synthesis in this book. They were nevertheless continually controlled through a reconstruction of the events themselves involving the various agents (in the so-called case studies). The latter is quite clearly articulated in Chapter II and especially in Chapter III.

On pp. 56-57 of his "review", Kraft cites the lack of significant studies on the subject after 2014 as a shortcoming of the book. This approach to writing negative reviews is well-known and is especially popular among certain reviewers. As I have already pointed out, the book was completed in its original form several months before the end of 2014. Each monograph is created during a specific period of time. The English edition that came out in 2020 is simply a translation of the original

[19] Verhelst, D., Adso of Montier-en-Der and the Fear of the Year 1000. – In: The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050. Eds. R. Landes, A.C. Gow and D. C. van Meter. Oxford, 2003, pp. 81-92.

monograph that was published in April 2016. In the case of such a translation, only minor additions can be made, but a general revision of the book should not be expected. After all, this is no mere article of 20-30 pages; the manuscript exceeded 400 pages! And another thing: didn't he notice that in the English translation the so-called secondary literature was located between p. 312 and p. 352? Or does he consider 40 pages of cited secondary literature not enough?

Elsewhere (review, p. 56), the reviewer points out some inaccuracies, in particular the differences in the presentation of the plural form of the Gr. *basileos*, which in some places in the book is given as *basilei* and in other places as *basileis,* respectively. The second form is the correct one if one is to follow the rules of the Greek language. Of course, I am grateful to A. Kraft for his keen eye in this case. However, the translated version *basilei* is also quite correct and is not coincidentally found in many English translations (and original books) – it is simply borrowed from the Latin. Given the fact that Latin was also a fundamental language of the Eastern Roman Empire at least until the 7th century, things fall into place. Of course, from a standardization point of view, it would be better to only see the form *basileis*. Further on, if he is referring to the missing letter 'h' in the phrase *"ta pros thalassan"*, then yes, Kraft is right and I thank him for this correction. At the same time, I do not see what the problem is with the form *apocryph* as used in the book. Perhaps Kraft expected to find *apocrypha* instead? But let us recall that the latter is actually the plural form of the original (Old) Greek *apokryphos*, 'hidden', 'obscure', 'secret'; 'dark', which later entered the English language through Latin (*apocrypha*, pl. from '*apocryph*'). It is actually the same in the language of the medieval Bulgarians: 'анокрыф'. So it would be quite difficult to say a mistake has been made here. Why did these inaccuracies occur? It is good to know that they are mainly due to the author having very little time for corrections during the final editing before the English version of the book was printed.

And with regard to the word *topoic* (from Gr. *topos*, 'place'), which has apparently also irritated Kraft (review, p. 56), it is clearly a neologism coined by the translator. It's important to remember that neologisms have varied fates – some endure over the years, while others fade away and are forgotten. In this regard, it would be interesting to see whether everyone will like the term 'imageneering', for instance, which has recently emerged, albeit in other scientific fields. It "combines" 'image' with 'engineering', attempting to speak in a new manner about (spatial and other types of) dimensions.

Elsewhere in Kraft's "review" (review, p. 57, n. 19), yet another grievance of his can be found. It concerns the final "date" of the analysis-and-synthesis that I chose: the year 1200/1204. Kraft points out that apocalyptic texts in Byzantium 'in exile', that is, until 1261, continued to exist even after 1204, and experienced a kind of revival at that time. Yes, such apocalyptic texts also existed in other places, particularly in Bulgaria during the same period of the 13th century. Here, they were specifically linked to the fall of Constantinople in 1204 and the subsequent rise of the Second Bulgarian Tsardom and its capital, Turnovo. Some enlightened Bulgarians even viewed

it as a potential replacement for Constantinople as an Eastern Orthodox center. Texts like these also existed around and immediately after the second fall of Constantinople in 1453. Apocalyptic expectations and texts would later also appear in some parts of Western Europe and in Muscovite Rus'. Much later, they would even appear in the US. And this is quite normal, given the specificity of this phenomenon. My choice of 1200/1204 is clearly justified on p. 11 in the monograph. Moreover, it was based on the idea that medieval people associated the *signs* of the approaching *End of the world* with not only chronological markers (such as the years 1000, 1033, 1092, and 1492), but also so-called catastrophic events. These include severe epidemics or the loss of the so-called center of the world, such as Constantinople: the fall of the Byzantine capital in April of 1204 was perceived precisely in the vein of the *Great Event*, capable of disrupting the familiar world God had put in order and thus changing the Divine course of history. It is worth remembering that, after 476, Constantinople was considered to be the legitimate capital of the "last empire, the Roman Empire", which had come to replace the previously fallen empires of the Babylonians, Persians, and Alexander the Great. This very motif – of the destroyed Center/capital – goes hand in hand with the motif, widespread on the Balkan Peninsula, of "the destruction of the Tsardom/Empire", since the capital is a miniature model and the quintessence of the Empire. Ultimately, these notions are archetypal in essence. But the beginning of the 13th century likewise serves as a good point of reference for the completed processes of monotheistic "homogenization", the result of the monotheization of the aforementioned second wave in Europe. Once again, I would like to emphasize that without the widespread adoption of the monotheistic religions stretching almost from the Ural Mountains in the east to Scandinavia and Iceland in the north-northwest, we could not speak at all of the adoption of the Christian (and to some extent, Islamic) perception of the *End of the world* in this very vast region. Therefore, the beginning of the 13th century could very well be considered a fitting conclusion to a narrative exploring the interrelations and the intersections between the anticipation of the *End* phenomenon and the process of monotheization within the present-day European space. Thus, through mutual references to the years/*time* (1200/1204) and also to the *space* (that of the future Europe), I acknowledge clearly enough what Mikhail Bakhtin persistently emphasized a few decades ago through the term *chronotope*: the integration of time and space. The concept of the *End* in this monograph, as well as the end of the book itself, is therefore both topological and chronological. Figuratively speaking, the "territories and the map" have attempted to "embrace the centuries" (the metaphorics here are a "nod" to a seminal text by M. Novkov, though penned in the context of a wholly disparate occasion). This fact also suggests that my approach was not based merely on enumerating and exhaustively describing and analyzing all available apocalyptic narratives within the European space, along with their specifics and details (including their appearance in certain manuscripts, their later transcriptions, redactions, and different readings, etc.). Much of this has already been accomplished by the positivists, as well as in studies based on the approaches of biblical exegesis and

textology. My initial goals and theoretical paradigms were different, and they become evident upon an unbiased reading of the book.

On p. 57 f. of his "review", Kraft claims that the author explicitly "highlights that he does not differentiate between the terms "apocalypse" and "eschatology", citing p. 13 of my book. Here again, he is misleading the reader, for I have studied Ancient Greek for several years and am well aware of the differences between the two terms, including in a Christian context. It is no coincidence that at the very beginning of the book (pp. 12-13) the differences in the meanings of the two terms are made very clear, with the following explicit statement: "These terms, of course, are not identical in nature, which is evident even on an etymological level".

In his "review" (review, p. 60, n. 24), Kraft also insists on the fact that I neglected to mention that Prince Sviatopolk II (d. 1113) adopted the name Michael. Apparently, Kraft conveniently forgets that this may have been done on purpose on my part. Does he not allow that this fact, in addition to other information concerning the name/naming "Michael" in Christian Europe, has been left out of this paragraph, since it is precisely this aspect that is supposed to appear in the second volume of the book? The author's intention to write such a volume is clearly stated at the very beginning of the monograph (see Introduction, p. 11).

Further on in his "review" (review, p. 59 f.), Kraft criticizes me for referring to A. Karpov who apparently claimed "that the Rus' did not share in eschatological expectations before 1492, which begs the question why the Rus' were discussed here" (pointing to p. 113 of my book). But let us see what is written on p. 113: "Karpov also claims that any clearly (*sic*) formulated eschatological expectations that appeared in the Rus'ian lands were related only to the year 1492". It is obvious that the reviewer is again misleading in his statements, as he has changed the meaning of what I have said. Moreover, my book quite clearly shows that the notions in Rus' about Gog and Magog, Kyiv as the successor (and re-newer) of Constantinople, and the Rus' as God's chosen people, etc., have existed since the 11th century. And all of them are an integral part and elements of the ideas, narrative, and accounts about the *End*, related to the visions of the archetypal invaders from the north (Gog and Magog), with the "last tsar" and the holy center of the world (Kyiv is not coincidentally perceived as the "mother of Russian cities", a kind of center of the universe, and in this light, an imitation of Constantinople). Rus' may not have a specific written text like *De ortu et tempore Antichristi* in Western Europe, but a number of apocalyptic elements are nevertheless present in the Russ'ian mindset and representations, and they are quite sufficient to include Kyivan Rus in the analysis.

Commenting on Chapter III, Kraft directly tells his potential (English-speaking) readers that an article by Anisava Miltenova, published in English in 2010, as well as the book by Julian Petkov[20] from 2016 are much more valuable than my book (see

[20] Petkov, J., Altslavische Eschatologie (Texte und Arbeiten zum neu testamentlichen Zeitalter 59). Tübingen, 2016.

review, pp. 64-65 and n. 33). It is, of course, his right to reveal his own preferences. I, too, am quite familiar with Anisava Miltenova's studies, and have known them – for understandable reasons – undoubtedly for much longer and in much greater depth than Kraft. Anisava Miltenova is a highly respected scholar in the field of apocalypticism and has worked with great success in this area for many decades. Her approach, however, is mainly related to the theories and methods of linguistics, textology and textual criticism, as well as source studies (it is also no coincidence that she has published quite a few sources). Clearly, then, her starting point is that of a philologist. My approach, on the other hand, lies primarily in the realm of history, the social sciences, and the humanities in a broader sense. Scholars in these fields tend to view texts, and more generally sources of any kind, mainly as testimonies that can reveal a reality hidden behind the texts. Regarding the latter, I once again turn to the words of the eminent historian Reinhart Koselleck. So with references like this, Kraft falls into another well-known "trap" of comparing "apples and oranges". I ask myself, yet again: does he not understand this, or is he doing this in order to mislead the readers? As for Julian Petkov's book, I would just like to clarify that it was published at the same time as mine, in 2016, and that its subject matter, compared to my study, is quite limited: it deals solely with the so-called Old Slavonic literatures.

On p. 62 of his "review", Kraft once again attempts to demonstrate how much he knows about some minor details, specifically in the field of the visual arts of the Eastern Roman Empire. The issue here is whether a well-established tradition of depicting the *Revelation* of St. John existed in the East prior to the 8th century. To refute me (as well as Stephen Shoemaker and an article of his that appeared in 2016), he seeks to highlight the significance of this New Testament Book in both Byzantine literature and iconography. But I have never denied that the subject matter of the *Apocalypse* was completely rejected by the Byzantine muralists! On the contrary, on this same p. 206, which the reviewer also cites, I explicitly state that this topic simply "was just not developed as an iconographic scheme", which "the artists could more or less strictly abide by". I also reference an article on the Heavenly Host's iconography published by M. Grafova in 2012 (see my book, p. 206, n. 74). Shortly thereafter, Kraft references a concise study by Nicole Thierry and Michel Thierry from 1960, as well as another by Yves Christe, from 1999,[21] in order to highlight some examples of scenes from the Apocalypse of St. John depicted in Byzantine churches. As the two cited articles make clear, these examples are too few in number to infer a lasting trend in the depiction of the *Apocalypse*, much less an established canonical tradition of these subjects in early medieval Byzantium. At the time, and especially during the 10th–12th centuries, there were thousands of churches in the Eastern Roman Empire, and in order to substantiate such a claim, one would need evidence from at least a few hundreds of these churches showing

[21] Thierry, N., Thierry, M., L'eglise du jugement dernier à Ihlara (Yilanli Kilise). – Anatolia 5, 1960, pp. 159-168, Pl. XXXVI-XXXIX, at p. 164; Christe, Y., Jugements derniers. Saint-Léger-Vauban, 1999, pp. 21-52.

a permanently established subject matter (along with a canon of depiction) of a particular scene from the *Apocalypse*. Is such a thing known to the greatest connoisseurs of the history of Byzantine art? So, these few exceptions only confirm the rule, as the old saying goes! Furthermore, in the cited paragraphs from the book (Chapter III), I do not examine representations in the field of visual arts from Eastern parts of Byzantium, but those from within the Bulgarian territories of the Empire, and specifically dating from the 11th–12th centuries!

A bit further on, on p. 63, Kraft expresses his bewilderment as to why I have separated the Cumans from the general paradigm of descriptions of the "evil powers" of the North in the Bulgarian historical-apocalyptic writings. The answer is obvious and has been stated in my book: because they have not been named as such in the sources, in contradiction to the Ishmaelites, the Magyars, and the Pechenegs who have often been mentioned in this very role in the same narratives. And as for what the reasons behind this could be, I have offered my suggestions both in my book and at the Eighth International Conference 'Medieval Nomads', held in Sofia 20th–23rd of November, 2019. The possible reasons were then expanded upon in a dedicated article, published jointly with Prof. Ivelin Ivanov in the *Actes* of that same Conference.[22]

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Is it possible to include all points of view on a given event or phenomenon and to present them in a comprehensive manner, especially with regard to the bygone Middle Ages? Even more so when the aim of a given author is to simultaneously present aspects of time-and-space, as well as certain phenomena, in a synthesized manner? Moreover, could one succeed in creating a narrative about this long-lost past that claims complete accuracy, something like an absolute account? Hardly; this seems to me to be a *causa perduta*. But there are some aspects of the medievalist's craft that are at least thought-provoking. I would like to quote the late Ivailo Znepolski, who, referring to the renowned French philosopher and thinker of the 20th century, Paul Ricoeur, and in general to the achievements of the French humanities of the last 6-7 decades, noted that history should always be something more than a mere listing of events in a serial order. Rather, it should seek to organize them into an intelligible totality, for there are always "common points between the particular and the general, the accidental and the predictable, the circumstantial and the meaningful…".[23] It has long been clear that we cannot restore "the past as it actually was" through our writings (in the style and expectations of Leopold von Ranke from the now distant 19th century). It is also clear that we cannot fixate only on quoting narratives, tracing their origins, and listing facts, as Kraft apparently expects. Moreover, theoretical research in recent decades has shown that the facts

[22] Stepanov, Ts., Ivanov, I., Late Medieval Nomads in the Bulgarian Historical Apocalyptic Literature: Images and Realities. – *Chronica* [Annual of the Institute of History, University of Szeged], Vol. 21, 2023, pp. 77-87.

[23] Znepolski, I., Kak se promenyat neshtata? Ot intsidenti do golyamoto subitie. Sofia, 2016, p. 337.

themselves are clearly quite often the result of constructs (based on the preliminary criteria of authors) and can be subject to interpretation. I suppose Kraft is aware that the *past* and the *sources* do not align, and that facts must be synthesized and interpreted collectively, which is achieved through the historical story/narrative. Therefore, the relations between these three are always complex and often filled with tension and ambiguity. This is why merely citing, describing, or retelling a given source, or even explaining the information that it contains through a Biblical "key", does not necessarily mean that one has understood the *past.* For me personally, the search for common denominators behind the facts, through which we strive to give meaning to the latter, has always been an important condition in the attempt to reconstruct the past. Naturally, this does not mean that we should go to the extreme of always seeing behind every past act or every material trace a pre-stated and deeply meaningful (symbolic) human action, which would have too many possible references. In fact, when discussing the Middle Ages and the people of that period, along with their cultures, we cannot, for obvious reasons, allow ourselves to fall into the trap of either total relativization or that of symbolism carried to infinity. And this is so because most people in those distant times did not think in a way that implied a total relativization of, or a total symbolism behind, every human action or artifact. And so, finally, I am compelled to inquire: does Kraft acknowledge these new developments in the field of historical theory and the humanities in general that have occurred over the past six or seven decades? Didn't he have a degree in philosophy? If so, he should be familiar with the work of Paul Ricoeur and Hans-Georg Gadamer, at the very least. (Or maybe he sees himself as a greater scholar and thinker than Ricoeur, Gadamer, or Reinhart Koselleck, whose achievements in the field of interpretation he can easily overlook?)

And now, a few words on the profile of such reviewers and researchers in general. In my opinion, the main characteristic that unites them in a specific group is the following: they have a preconceived notion, often dogmatic and limited only to a single paradigm or methodology, that a particular problem/subject can only be addressed through their unique approach/model/scheme. And if they do not see this in the writings of another author, they tend to dismiss the other person's work entirely without even trying to adequately understand what he/she is trying to say. Therefore, it is hardly a surprise that Kraft concludes by deliberately noting that the book is "a general introduction into European history of the tenth through twelfth centuries" (review, p. 65). In other words, there is too much *history* in it. No, this is not "a general introduction" at all. The monograph acknowledges the significance of historical events, because the very concept of Salvation unfolds in time (most often perceived as the "alternation of the four empires" preceding the coming of the Antichrist), but also in space. In addition, alongside the contextualizations of events, readers will encounter analyses of a number of narratives, seals, murals, and architectural monuments… This is why it would be far better for Kraft to refrain

from commenting on the book by saying "this is not a specialized work" (review, p. 65), since his review demonstrates exactly how limited his knowledge of the history, geography, art history, mythology, etc., of the Middle Ages is. Wise people have long warned that the inability to understand something in its entirety is no reason to completely deny or reject it. This is especially important and is imperative to keep in mind when writing reviews. For there is no single, privileged way in which scholarship in the humanities can be conducted, especially given the boom in methodologies in the humanities and the sciences in general since the mid-20th century.

Another thing to note is that such reviewers often combine a similar attitude and, accordingly, approach, with some scholarly paradigm that is "in fashion" during a given period. In this particular case and with this particular reviewer it is 'neo-colonialism' (Kraft does not fail to mention it also in his concluding remarks on p. 65). It is, of course, rooted in and builds upon the long-standing cliché of 'nationalism'. To an unbiased reader, it is clear that this type of scholars seeks to demonstrate that they are part of the relevant mainstream (and are kind of "cool"). Unfortunately, such attempts often go hand in hand with manipulations or even fabrications that are attributed to a given text or claimed to be the author's original intent. With the help of this well-known tactic from the past – inventing a problem in order to destroy it later – such reviewers often replace both the author's actual words and his/her ideas and intentions. I feel pity for such people; I am also well aware of the fact that they will not change their ways. This is why I have no intention to reply to such "reviews" in the future. The only exception I could make would be for a monograph that attempts to offer conceptual, integrative interpretations of a *macro*-phenomenon in a similar synthesized manner as in my book, but from a point of view that differs from mine. In this regard, let us recall that a consistent concept or theory cannot be refuted by individual facts (or even a very limited set of them), but only by another theory (or a more general concept). Kraft offers none of this in his review, and his theoretical remarks (review, pp. 50-52), are highly problematic, as has already been demonstrated. But perhaps he himself has published a monograph on this subject, where he has made such an attempt? I did not find one.

Last but not least, maybe it would be worthwhile to revisit the long-standing idea that a single ideology (plus methodology) that seeks to explain *everything* ultimately explains nothing. This is why different methodological approaches have been used in my book, depending on the specifics of the analyzed sources and frames of reference. And finally, I would like to remind the readers that what I have offered them in this work, with all of its imperfections and shortcomings (and truly, which human work is perfect?) is, in fact, a model book, i.e., a conceptual one that attempts to integrate *event-based (changeable, dynamic) elements* with those of a *structural (enduring, stable)* kind.




УНИВЕРСИТЕТСКО ИЗДАТЕЛСТВО „СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“