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ЖИВОТ В ПРЕХОД НА РИМСКАТА ГРАНИЦА: ДОЛНИЯТ ДУНАВ ПРЕЗ IV-VII ВЕК



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

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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.



В ТОЗИ ТОМ ОТ ГОДИШНИКА НА СОФИЙСКИЯ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „СВЕТИ КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“, ЦЕНТЪР ЗА СЛАВЯНО-ВИЗАНТИЙСКИ ПРОУЧВАНИЯ „ПРОФ. ИВАН ДУЙЧЕВ“, СА СЪБРАНИ ПРИНОСНИ ТЕКСТОВЕ НА ЧЛЕНОВЕТЕ НА НАУЧНИЯ КОЛЕКТИВ НА ПРОЕКТА, КАКТО И НА ДРУГИ УЧЕНИ ОТ СТРАНАТА И ОТ ЧУЖБИНА, КОИТО БЯХА ПРЕДСТАВЕНИ В РАМКИТЕ НА ОРГАНИЗИРАНА МЕЖДУНАРОДНА КОНФЕРЕНЦИЯ НА ТЕМА: „ЖИВОТ В ПРЕХОД НА РИМСКАТА ГРАНИЦА: ДОЛНИЯТ ДУНАВ ПРЕЗ IV–VII ВЕК“, ПРОВЕДЕНА В СУ „СВ. КЛИМЕНТ ОХРИДСКИ“ НА 10–12 АПРИЛ 2025 Г.

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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 AD¹

GABRIEL MIRCEA TALMAȚCHI

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 Dobruja 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 (Talmățchi, Șova 2015: 170-171; Talmățchi, 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 (Talmatchi 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 (Talmatchi 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 follis (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.

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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, Talmățchi, 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)

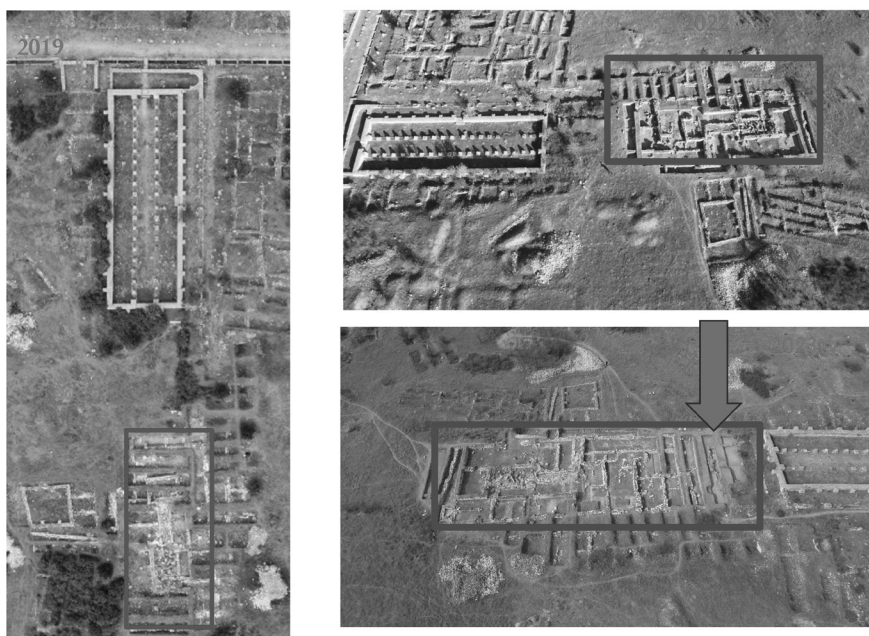


Fig. 2. Stages of the archaeological research of the *Domus*-type building no. 2 in sector C (situations in 2019, 2022, 2023)



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

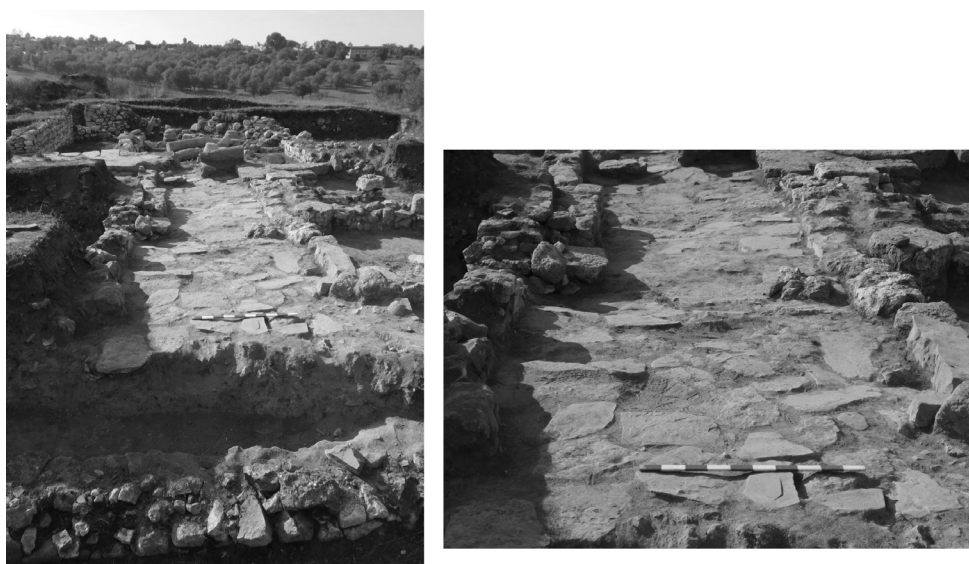


Fig. 4. The central hall of the *Domus*-type building in sector C

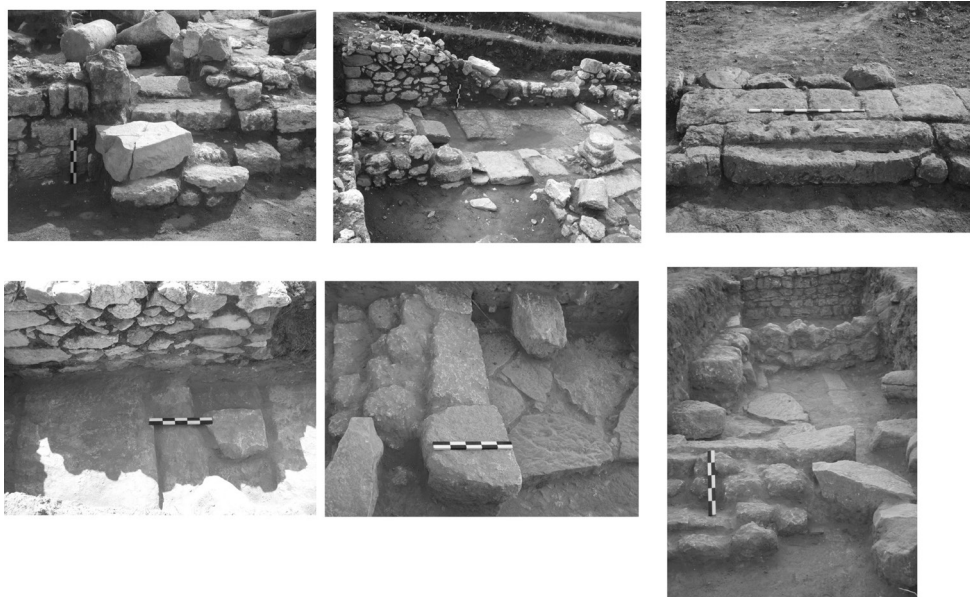


Fig. 5. Side and interior entrances of the *Domus*-type building in sector C

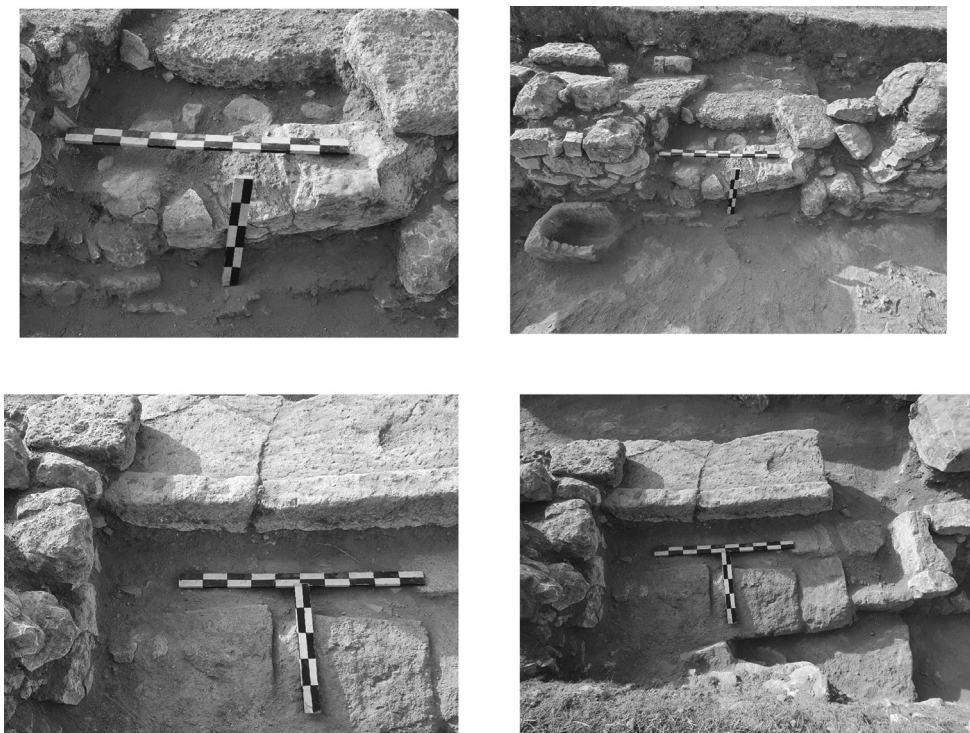


Fig. 6. The entrances to the annex building no. 4 discovered in 2023 north of the *Domus*-type building



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

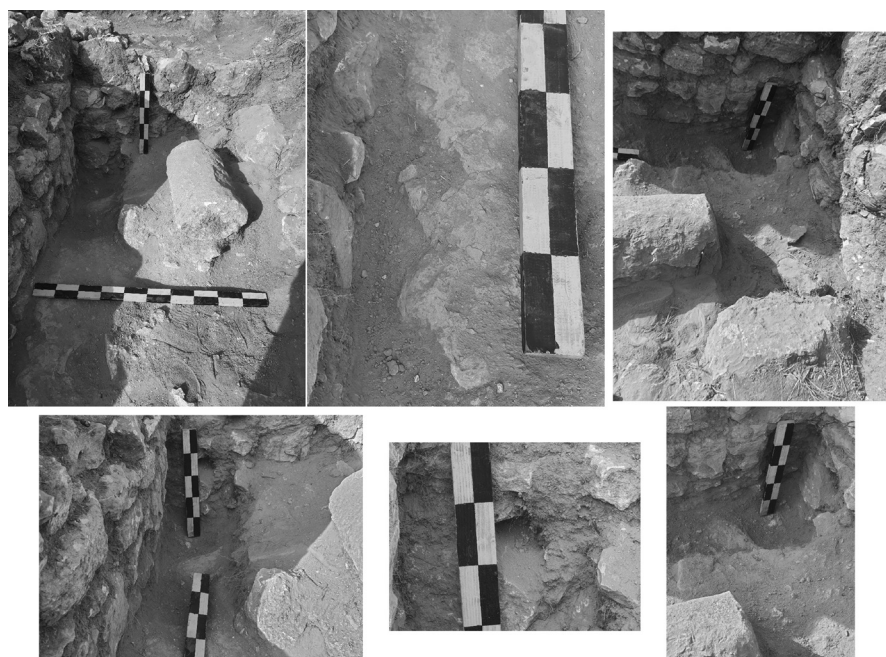


Fig. 8. The southwest corner of annex building no. 4 with the wooden roof pillar

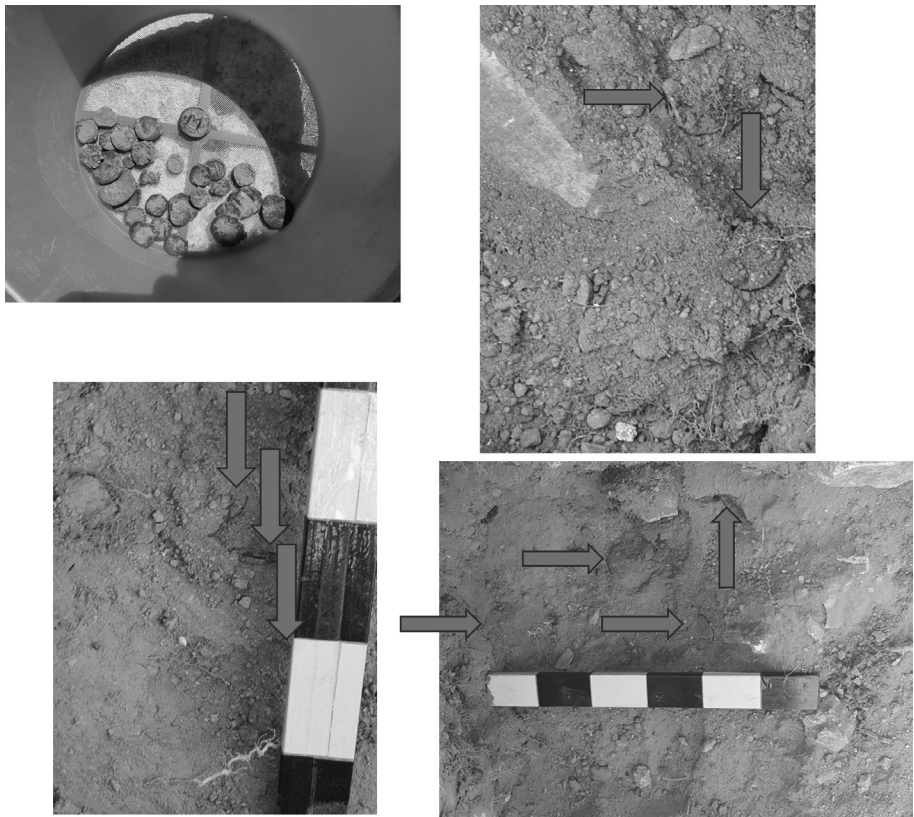


Fig. 9. The monetary hoard dated to the 6th century discovered in the annex building (2023)

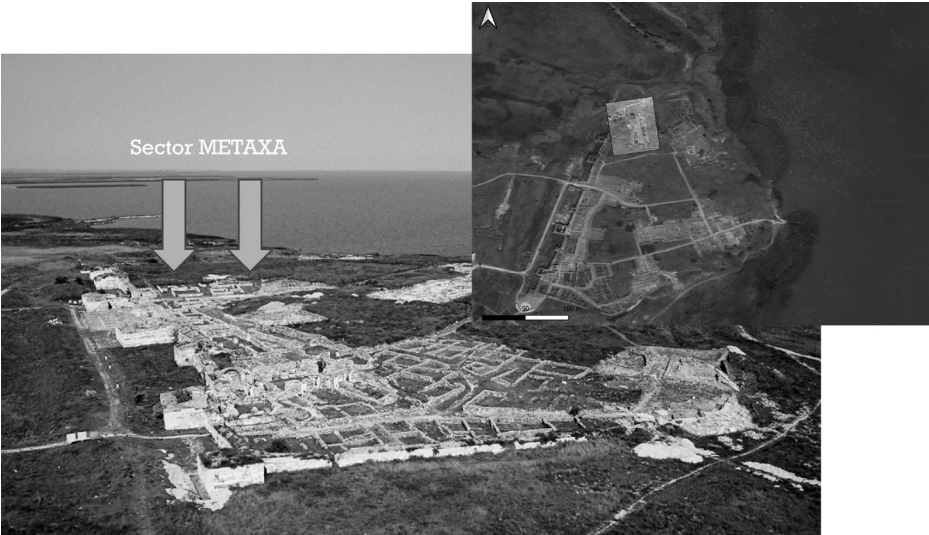


Fig. 10. Location of the Metaxa-Constanța sector in the citadel of Histria



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

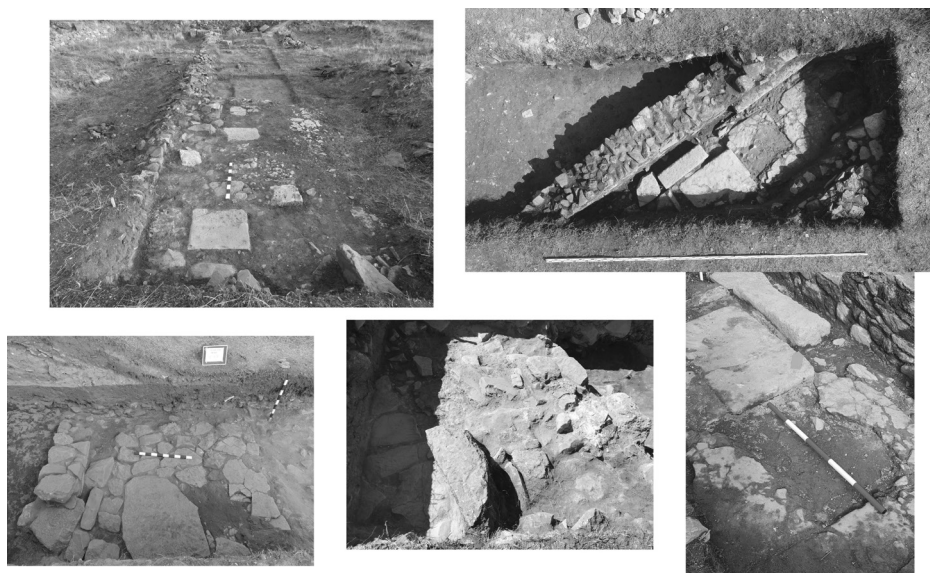


Fig. 12. Late Roman and early Byzantine streets discovered in SI (Histria)



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)