
CHRISTIANITY ALONG THE LOWER DANUBE
LIMES IN THE ROMAN PROVINCES OF *DACIA*
RIPENSIS, *MOESIA SECUNDA*
AND *SCYTHIA MINOR* (4TH – 6TH C. AD)

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The Christianisation of the Roman provinces of *Dacia Ripensis*, *Moesia Secunda* and *Scythia Minor*, and more specifically of the towns and fortresses along the Lower Danube Limes is an issue that has been addressed by historians, theologians and archaeologists for over two centuries (Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* III 1, 1 = PGR XII, col. 92; Epiphanius. *Ed. atque ined.* p. 56; Delehaye 1902, 265-266; Quien 1740, 1094-1095; Zeiller 1918, 28-30, 165-166; Черепов 1944, 361-362; Dvornik 1958, 198-200; ВЕЛКОВ 1979, 157-160; Ilski 1994, 79-84; Morlova 2003, 11-28; Pillinger 1984, 11; Popescu 1994, 75-76). So far no indisputable archaeological monuments or written sources have been localized, which can unarguably verify the presence of Christian communities during the 2nd – 3rd centuries in the largest urban centres along the limes, e.g. *Durostorum*, *Novae*, *Oescus*, *Ratiaria*, *Appiaria*, *Axiopolis*, *Histria*, *Halmiris*, *Noviodunum*, etc. (fig. 1).

A. Early Christian martyrs along the Lower Danube Limes during the 3rd – 4th centuries

The earliest authentic sources of the spread of Christianity along the Lower Danube date back to the second half of the 3rd – the beginning of the 4th century AD and are associated with the worst prosecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. Under the influence of his son-in-law, Galerius, in the very beginning of AD 304 Emperor Diocletian (284-305) issued the fourth and most radical edict against the Christians which imposed capital punishment on those of them who would not give up their faith (Stein 1959, 80-81; Jones 1964, 71-82; Поснов 1993, 135-137). Along the Lower Danube Limes most numerous is the group of saints in *Durostorum*, where, according to the sources 8 of a total of 12 martyrs were executed during the rule of Diocletian. Similar was the situation in *Noviodunum*, where ten martyrs are associated with the rule of this Emperor. As a consequence of the law of Diocletian, Christians are supposed to have been executed in *Ratiaria*, *Novae*, *Bononia*, *Axiopolis* and *Dinogetia*. Against this background it is assumed that they must have fallen victims to the edicts of AD 303-304. (Атанасов 2007, 11-20). It is to be expected that the documented demonstrated aggressiveness and hyper-activeness of

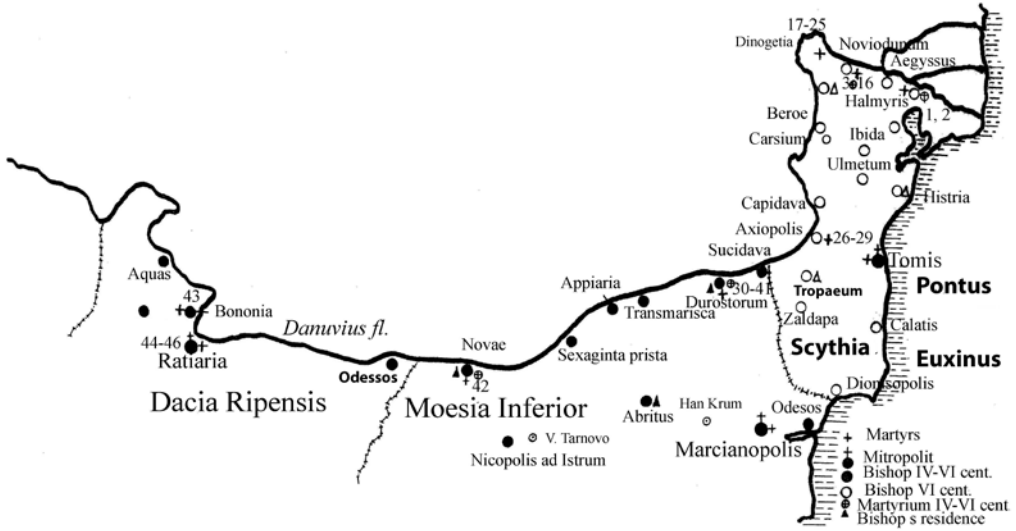


Fig. 1. Christian centres along the Lower Danube Limes

the local authorities was provoked by the two inspection visits of the Emperor Diocletian to the Lower Danube fortresses in AD 304 (Белков 1959, 29). This, like everything else, represents indirect evidence of the spread of Christianity here in earlier times. Its beginning cannot as yet be precisely determined but most probably the Christian theory and practice spread along the Lower Danube as early as the second half of the 3rd century. Christianity seems to have been introduced by eastern traders and particularly by soldiers joining the army in the legions, stationed during the 2nd – 3rd centuries in *Durostorum*, *Novae*, *Oescus*, *Troesmis*, *Noviodunum* and the auxiliary military units in the major fortresses e.g. *Bononia*, *Almus*, *Augustae*, *Sexaginta Prista*, *Appiaria*, *Transmarisca*, *Iatrus*, *Axiopolis*, *Halmyris*, *Dinogetia*, *Capidava*, *Sucidava*, *Aegyssus*, *Beroe*, etc. (fig. 1). Yet, it has already been noted that as early as the 2nd – 3rd centuries, the Eastern cults were gaining popularity in this region (Γολαopoulos 1927, 8 sqq.; Pipidi 1975, 181-197; Тачева-Хитрова 1982, 345 sqq.). The cult to the Eastern God Mithras was particularly popular among the soldiers in the legions. In this sense there were no insurmountable obstacles for Christians from the East to travel and disseminate their ideas along the Lower Danube. Moreover there are explicit written sources and above all epigraphic monuments for periodic waves of settlers from Syria and Asia Minor to the towns along the Dobroudzha Black Sea coastline and the Lower Danube (Белков 1984, 145, 150-151; Минчев 1986, 31; Suceveanu, Barnea 1991, 243-245)¹. In this respect it is overtly argued that during the fierce prosecutions against the Christians in the Eastern provinces in the second half of the 3rd century many settled in the Lower Danube lands. A panegyric of AD 296 in honour of Constantius Chlorus is quoted in this relation, where it is stated

¹ For details about Syrian Early Christian influence on the architecture in Dobroudzha, ref.: Vulpe, Barnea 1968, 475, fig. 34; Атанасов 1991, 33-41.

that the wastelands of Thrace (at that time *Scythia* and *Moesia Secunda* were in the diocese of Thrace, and Dobroudzha in particular was very sparsely populated) was getting crowded with settlers from Asia, who brought Christianity and light (Iorga 1936, 34; Baumann 2003, 101-102). It seems it is among them that we should try to find some of the first champions and messengers of the Christianity in the region. If hagiographic reference can be relied upon, hints of martyrs can indeed be detected, respectively – of Early-Christian communes and civilians (predominantly legionaries) – by far earlier than the edicts of AD 303-304. It cannot be confirmed whether all these documents and interpretations are beyond doubt, because the lives of saints do not necessarily contain exact references as to the dating of the martyr's death. Therefore these stories were considered entirely fictional. The localised *martyrium* of St. Epictetus and St. Astion with their relics and the names written in the crypt below the altar of the basilica in *Halmyris* came, however, quite in time to counter the extreme sceptics (Zahariade, Bounegru 2003, 117-126). This is why it is only natural for the martyrologist of the martyr-saints along the Danube *limes* from *Bononia* to *Halmyris* to start exactly with St. Epictetus and Astion.

I. *Halmyris – Scythia*

1-2. St. Epictetus and St. Astion. According to the hagiographic texts that have reached us, Epictetus (presented as a presbyter) and his disciple (monk?) Astion came from Asia Minor (*Bithynia*) (AASS Iulii, II, 538-551 = BHL, 2568; Delehaye 1923, 1-5; Popescu 1989, 46-53). In order to escape persecution against the Christians during the rule of Emperor Diocletian, they sailed away on a ship to the province of *Scythia* (*in Scytharum fines*) and settled in *Halmyris* (*Almyridensium civitas*). Epictetus was tall, bearded, at about 60 years of age, while Astion was young, at about 35, handsome and tall. In *Halmyris* they were active missionaries and converted many civilians. When the governor Latronianus inspected the town he heard of their deeds and subjected them to interrogation and torture trying to make them renounce their faith. They could not be swayed and the torture continued. One of the judges, Vigilantius, inspired by their example, visited them in prison and later on he converted to Christianity with his entire family. In the end they were sentenced by the governor Latronianus and executed, however, before that they were stoned to death by the crowd. Vigilantius and others of their followers anointed their bodies and buried them at a place where miracles started appearing. Three days after their martyr's death Astion's parents – Marcellina and Alexander – came to *Halmyris*. They were met by Vigilantius and the priest, Bonosus, who told them of his death. Shortly they were converted by the bishop of the neighbouring town (*Tomis*?) and together with Vigilantius and Bonosus they set out to Bithynia.

Leading scholars in Early Christian history like H. Delehaye (Delehaye 1912, 272-273; Delehaye 1933, 252) and J. Zeiller (Zeiller 1918, 119) had doubts as to the genuineness of the narrative, because this pair of saints is barely familiar to martyrologists and hardly appears in church calendars. The story and their martyr's death were rehabilitated and proven unequivocally 10 years ago. Then the *martyrium* below the altar of the late antique Cathedral basilica of *Halmyris* was uncovered with an inscription documenting their names (Zahariade, Bounegru 2003, 117-126) (fig. 2-4).

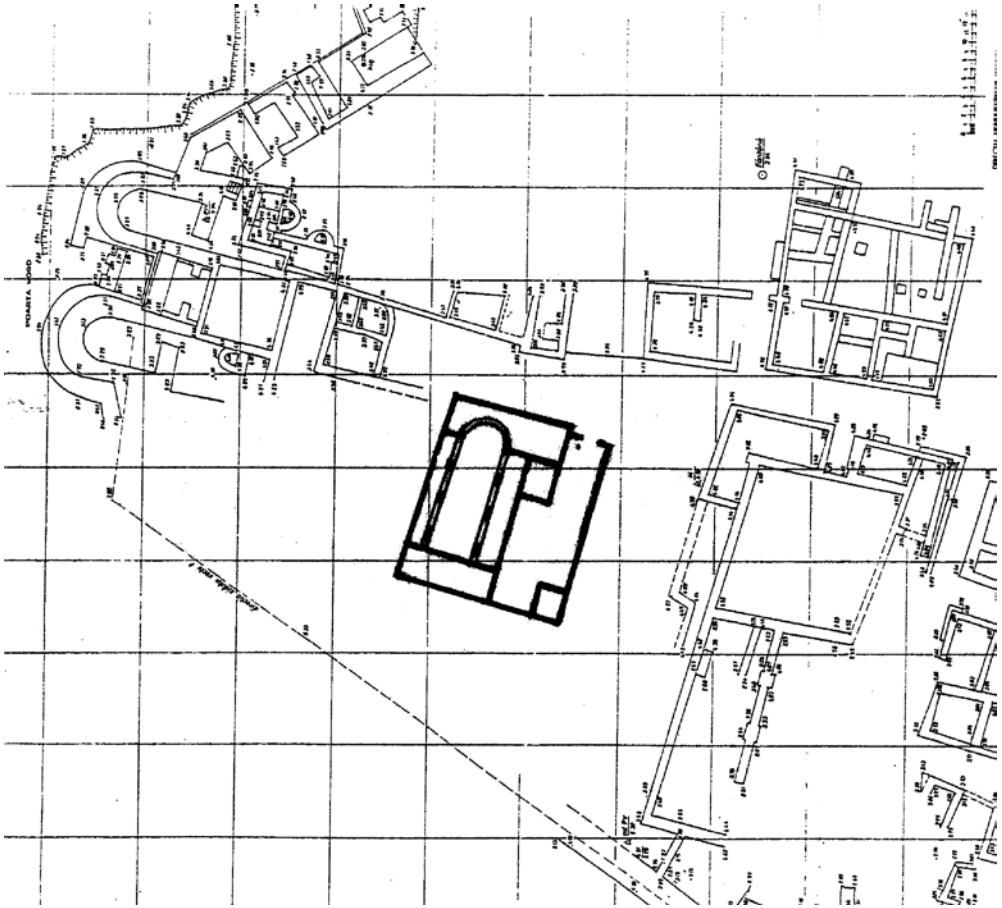


Fig. 2. The basilica (bishop's?) in Halmyris with the *martyrium* of St. Epictetus and St. Astion (after M. Zahariade)

II. *Noviodunum (Isaccea) – Scythia*

Together with *Durostorum* (Silistra), *Noviodunum* is the town along the Danube limes, in respect of which the hagiographic literature has preserved the names of an impressive group of martyrs. As far as the province of *Scythia Minor* is concerned, where it belonged during the 4th century, only the capital city, *Tomis*, has a richer Paleo-Christian past. Besides during the time of the prosecutions in the late 3rd – early 4th century this was one of the most significant fortresses in this zone, since the headquarters of *legio I Iovia Scythica* were organised exactly there.

3-5. St. Valerianus, St. Macrobius and St. Gordianus. These three martyrs were registered in the Hieronymian Martyrology on 17 October (Delehaye 1912, 273; Delehaye 1933, 252; Zeiller 1918, 119; Popescu 1989, 69). The same source registered 15 September for the same three martyrs with *Tomis*. This is not an isolated case when one and the same

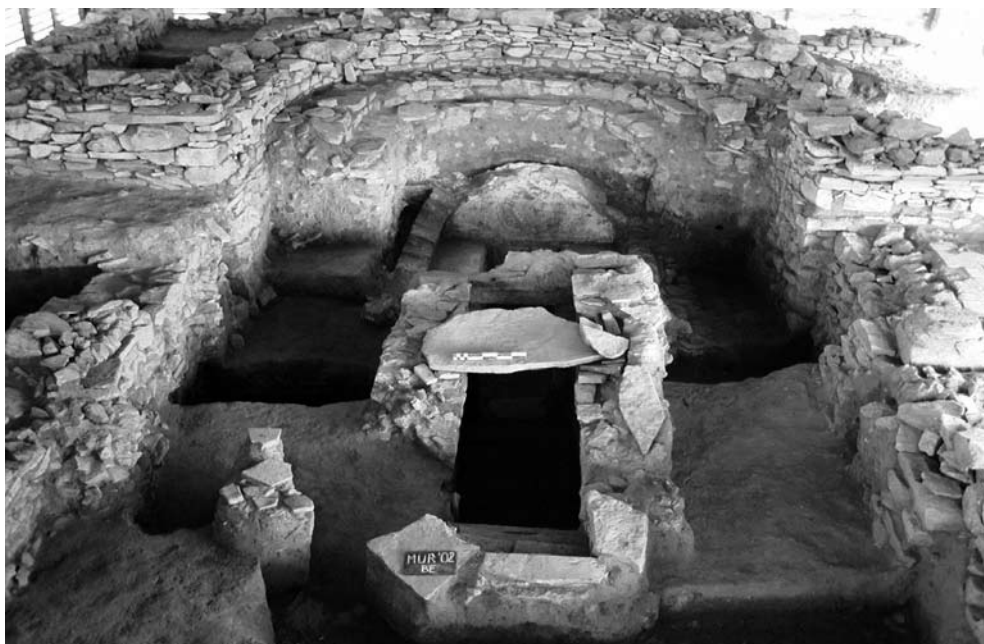


Fig. 3. The *martyrium* of St. Epictetus and St. Astion below the altar of the basilica in *Halmyris*

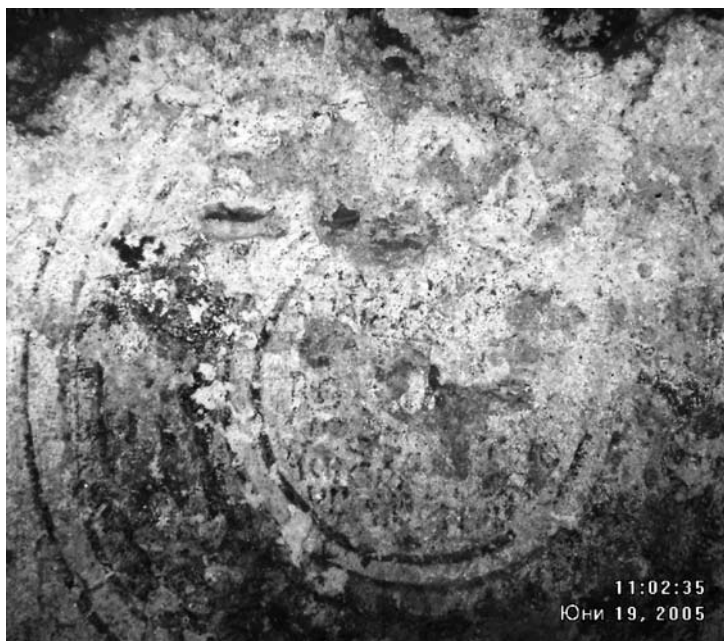


Fig. 4. Mural painting with the name of St. Astion in the *martyrium* in *Halmyris*

martyr (or a group of martyrs) was celebrated in more than one town. This may have to do with transferring the relics from *Noviodunum* to *Tomis*, or alternatively, with a construction of a church.

6-11. St. Heraclius and St. Paulus, St. Peregrinus, St. Minerius, St. Aquilinus and St. Victor. Again the Hieronymian Martyrology, on 17 May in *Noviodunum* mentions Heraclius and Paulus together, and St. Peregrinus, St. Minerius, St. Aquilinus and St. Victor as single saints (Delehaye 1912, 273; Delehaye 1933, 251; Zeiller 1918, 119; Popescu 1989, 69). Conceivably they were victims of the mass prosecution of Christian-warriors in the legion during the late spring and early summer of AD 304, shortly before the visit of the Emperor Diocletian along the Lower Danube.

12. St. Flavianus. His martyr's death was mentioned in the Syrian calendar of martyrs on 25 May (Delehaye 1912, 273; Delehaye 1933, 251; Zeiller 1918, 119; Popescu 1989, 69). It is not unlikely that he also was a victim of the spring prosecutions associated with the visit of the Emperor Diocletian in *Noviodunum* in AD 304.

13-16. St. Zoticus, St. Attalus, St. Camasius and St. Philip. St. Philip was registered on 4 June in the Syriac church calendar, while on the same date Zoticus, Attalus, Camasius, together with Eutychius, Quirinus, Iulia, Saturninus, Galdunus, Ninnita, Fortunio and 25 other martyrs, not known by name, were registered in the Hieronymian martyrology (Popescu 1989, 69). Obviously this is a compilation, but an archaeological discovery rehabilitated the actual martyr's story of Zoticus, Attalus, Camasius and Philip in *Noviodunum*. Relics of four men were found in the *martyrium* localised below the basilica in Niculițel, and the names of Zoticus, Attalus, Camasius and Philip were written on the lunette (Baumann 1972, 189-202; Baumann 2006, 830-831, Taf. 32, fig. 10; Baumann 2005, 103-185) (fig. 5-7). Undeniably, at first glance the *martyrium* is at about 10 km distance from *Noviodunum*, but in fact it falls within the outskirts of the necropolis of the big ancient town, and exactly the necropoleis were the places regulated for burial purposes, including also burials of martyrs. Therefore hagiographic literature associated the names of Zoticus, Attalus, Camasius and Philip, in the *martyrium* localised here, with *Noviodunum*. The debate about the year of the martyr's death of Zoticus, Attalus, Camasius and Philip has been running since the time the *martyrium* in Niculițel was discovered. Some refer it to AD 303-304, when the fierce prosecution under Diocletian took place, others refer it to AD 319-320, i. e. the time of Licinius, still others are inclined to consider the rule of Julian the Apostate (AD 361-363) and even the end of the 4th century, when the king of the Goths, Athanaric, pursued the Goths who had converted to Christianity on both banks of the Lower Danube in AD 370-372 (Baumann 1972, 198; Barnea 1973, 124-125; Diaconu 1973, 633-641; Popescu 1994, 100-106; complete list of all the opinions in: Baumann 2005, 103 sq., 182-185). On the basis of recent data from the archaeological investigations and several additional details (for instance the crosses above the inscriptions), the prominent scholar V. Baumann assumed that the *martyrium* was built simultaneously with the basilica in the end of the 4th century, between AD 370 and 375 (Baumann 1972, 829; Baumann 2005, 120). This presupposes that Zoticus, Attalus, Camasius and Philip suffered their martyr's death in the third quarter of the 4th century during the prosecutions under Julian or more possibly under Athanaric during AD 370-372.

III. *Dinogetia (Garvan) – Scythia*

Dinogetia is situated to the west of *Noviodunum*—another castellum along the Danube *limes*, which hagiographic literature associated with two groups of martyrs.

17-21. St. Faustianus, St. Martialis, St. Ianuarius, St. Alexander and St. Euprepus. These were registered only in the Hieronymian martyrology on 1 October, with no supplementary information concerning the time and circumstances of their martyr's death (Delehaye 1912, 273; Delehaye 1933, 251; Zeiller 1918, 119; Popescu 1989, 68).

22-25. St. Maximianus, St. Alexander, St. Proculus and St. Afranus. Their names were evidenced only in the Hieronymian martyrology on 14 May (Delehaye 1912, 273; Delehaye 1933, 251; Zeiller 1918, 119; Popescu 1989, 68). Here again there is no supplementary information, apart from their association with *Dinogetia*. The repetition of Alexander (it is believed that this is St. Alexander of *Drisipara* in present-day South-Eastern Bulgaria) and the scarce information arouse doubts as to compilation (Delehaye 1912, 273; Delehaye 1933, 251).

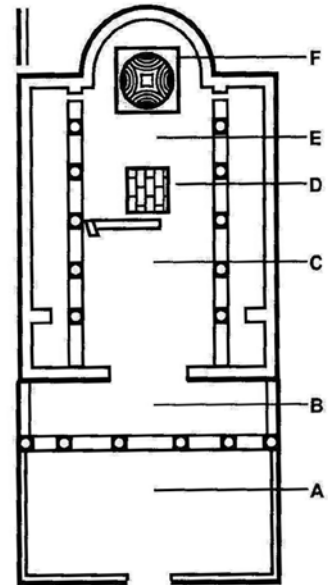
IV. *Axiopolis (Cernavodă) – Scythia*

Hagiographic literature associates several martyrs with another important military and strategic centre, *Axiopolis*; most well known among them are St. Cyril and St. Quindeus.

26-27. St. Cyril and St. Quindeus. The Hieronymian martyrology from the late 4th – early 5th century, on the date of 26 April (*Codex Epternacensis*, now Parisinus Lat. 10837) refers to: „*In Axiopoli natale Cirilli et Vindei*”. It is quite possible that *Vindei* is a distorted form of *Quindei*, because on the date of 9 May the same author (but according to the *Codex Bernensis*) noted down, „*In Axiopoli Quirilli, Quindei et Zenonis*”. Cyril and Quindeus were recorded for a third time in the Hieronymian martyrology on 9 March, but associated with *Nicomedia* (Delehaye 1912, 259-260; Delehaye 1933, 250-251; Popescu 1989, 66).

The martyr's death of St. Cyril in *Axiopolis* was registered also in the “Brief Syriac Church Calendar” on 12 May, together with other six martyrs not mentioned by name (Delehaye 1912, 259-260; Delehaye 1933, 250-251; Popescu 1989, 66).

St. Cyril and St. Quindeus were definitely the most popular and revered saints of *Axiopolis* and this is substantiated in one archaeological monument, which deserves special attention. This is the marble slab from the basilica outside the fortification walls of *Axiopolis*, dated to



Basilica sfinților martiri
în prima jumătate a sec. V d.H.

- A - atrium
- B - narthex
- C - naos
- D - primul mormânt martiric
- E - presbiterium
- F - martirion

Fig. 5. The basilica with the *martyrium* of St. Zoticus, St. Athal, St. Camassius and St. Philip in Niculicel near *Noviodunum* (after V. Baumann)



Fig. 6. The *martyrium* of St. Zoticus, St. Attalus, St. Camasius and St. Philip below the altar of the basilica in Niculițel



Fig. 7. Mural painting with the names of St. Zoticus, St. Attalus, St. Camasius and St. Philip in the *martyrium* in Niculițel

the 5th – 6th century, bearing the names of the martyrs Cyril, Quindeus and Tasius (Barnea 1979, 44, pl. 4-1) (fig. 8).

29. St. Hermes. It was registered together with St. Dasius on 18 October: „*In Axiopoli Hermetis et Dasii?*” (Popescu 1989, 66). Some associate St. Hermes (Hermia, Herma, Hermitus) with Deacon Hermes from *Heraclea Trachinia*, who died a martyr’s death under

Fig. 8. A slab from the cemeterial basilica in *Axiopolis* with the names of the martyrs Cyril, Quindeus and Tasius



the rule of Diocletian in AD 303-304. It is contended that one Philip and a priest named Severus, together with the bishop of the town, were burnt on 18 October, and the remains of their relics were thrown into the Danube. Later on Christians found them and placed them in a locality called *Gestistryum* (*Ogetistryum*).

On 5 August the Hieronymian Martyrology records: „*In Axiopoli Hierenei, Eraclii, Dasi?*”. It is worth noting that Dasius was mentioned in this source 8 times, he is associated with 4 towns, and together with various groups of martyrs – Irenaeus and Heraclius as is the case here. However, it is not impossible that *Hierenei* is again the corrupted name of Hermes. The issue with Dasius will be dealt with further on.

V. *Durostorum* (*Silistra*) – *Moesia Secunda*

It is beyond any doubt that in the Lower Danube provinces along the *limes*, *Durostorum* (*Dorostolon*, *Dristra*, Дръстър, Silistra) is the town (camp of *Legio XI Claudia*) with the most remarkable Paleo-Christian past. Apart from the names of 12 martyrs from the 4th century, material signs of the early martyrs' narratives have survived in this place, including lapidary monuments. Moreover, the martyr's stories of most of the martyrs from *Dorostolon* not only appear in church calendars, but were recorded in detail in hagiography.

30. St. Dasius. The first executed martyr from *Dorostolon* seems to be St. Dasius. There is no other Early Christian martyr from the present Bulgarian lands who has been referred to in so many articles, monographies and extensive passages in dozens of studies dedicated to Early Christianity and the Early Christian martyrs (Cumont 1897, 5-16; Delehaye 1912, 265-268; Delehaye 1927, 190; Delehaye 1933, 248-249; Branište 1976, 85-95; Pillinger 1988, 51-52, note 149; Тъпкова-Занмова 2004, 427-433; Атанасов 2007, 16-22). Indeed, there are abundant and numerous literary sources about the life and martyr's death of St. Dasius. Most of the studies focus on the Life of the saint titled „The Deeds of St. Dasius” (Cumont 1897, 5-16; Pillinger 1988, 8-11). According to it during the rule of the Roman Emperors Diocletian (AD 284-305) and Maximianus (AD 286-305) Dasius, a veteran of *Legio XI Claudia*, was beheaded in *Durostorum*. The reason for this was that he refused to

take part in the pagan cult celebrations of Chronos. It is known that in *Durostorum*, in the early 4th century, the Roman *Saturnalia* were heavily influenced by the cult to and cult practices related to the local Geto-Thracian deity Zalmoxis (ВЕНЕДИКОВ 1983, 112 sqq.; Pillinger 1988, 35-38; Атанасов 2006, 2-32; Атанасов 2010). The attempts to associate the martyr's story of St. Dasius with *Axiopolis* (present day Cernavodă), situated at about 50 km to the north-east of *Durostorum*, have been refuted. It is emphasised that according to his Life, St. Dasius was interrogated in the *praetorium* of the legion, while no legion was stationed in *Axiopolis* in the late 3rd – early 4th century. A slab from an altar table was in fact uncovered in one of the basilicas, with an inscription „Offering (εὐφρασις) to the martyrs Cyril, Quindeas and Tasius (Τασεῖω)” (fig. 8). This, however, is no proof of the martyr's death of Tasius/Dasius in *Axiopolis*, but it evidences that fragments of the relics of the three martyrs were placed below the altar table of the church in the *confessio*. These of Dasius had apparently been taken from the *martyrium* in *Durostorum*. It is not unlikely that Dasius and Tasius are different saints. Among the unquestionable proofs of the martyr's death of St. Dasius in *Durostorum* is his urn-sarcophagus with relics, upon whose cover there is an inscription in Greek, „At this place the holy martyr Dasius lies, brought from Dorostolon” (Cumont 1908, 369-381) (fig. 9).

31, 32. St. Iulius and St. Hesychius. The Life of St. Iulius testifies about the martyr's death in *Durostorum* (Harnack 1891, 50-52)². We learn from it that during the ferocious prosecution against the Christians in AD 304 a veteran of the legion, Iulius, refused to offer sacrifices to the pagan deities. Therefore he was sentenced and slain at the “usual place” in *Durostorum* on 27 May. There is a significant detail that on the way to the scaffold St. Iulius was greeted by other Christians, and one of them, Hesychius, asked him to greet St. Valentio, murdered earlier, and promised that he would also die a martyr's death. Actually, according to St. Jerome, on 15 July (probably AD 304) St. Hesychius was slain in *Durostorum* (Delehaye, Quintin 1931, 241; Delehaye 1912, 269).

33, 34. St. Valentio and St. Pasicrates. The Life of St. Iulius informs us that shortly before him St. Valentio (or Valentinus) suffered a martyr's death in *Durostorum*. According to the *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum* and *Menologium Basilii II* this happened on 24 April (probably AD 304), when St. Pasicrates was slain together with Valentio. Both of them were warriors in the legion commanded by Aulozanes. Their wives also accompanied them in their martyr's deaths.

35, 36, 37. St. Marcianus, St. Nicander, St. Callinicus. The martyr's death of St. Marcianus and St. Nicander is registered in many sources, but on different days. The most probable date, referred to in their Life, is 27 June. Apart from *Durostorum*, they are associated with *Tomis* (Constanța), Alexandria, Athens and Southern Italy. It is not

² The presumption of V. Baumann, that St. Iulius was murdered during the prosecutions of the Christians under Severus Alexander in AD 228, does not rest on convincing arguments (Baumann 2003, 101-102). V. Baumann makes a note about St. Priscus, murdered during the prosecution under Valerian about AD 253-259, and relates this with *Dinogetia* or *Durostorum*. There is no St. Priscus of *Durostorum* in authentic sources. There is one Priscus, who suffered a martyr's death on 1 October, but he is associated with *Tomis*. For details, see Ramsgate 1991; Атанасов 2007, 27-28.



Fig. 9. The sarcophagus of St. Dasius of *Dorostolon*, kept in Ancona, Italy

impossible that other martyrs with the same names might be meant or that this might have to do with the moving of the relics for instance from *Durostorum* to *Tomis* nearby. The fact that Jerome connected the suffering of Nicander with Hesychius, and that the Life of St. Iulius connected Hesychius, Valentio and Iulius, suggests that St. Valentio, St. Pasicrates, St. Iulius, St. Hesychius and St. Marcianus had a common martyrdom. Usually St. Callinicus is also counted in this group. They seem to have been slain one after another between 24 April and 28 July, AD 304. This is the time when the prosecution against the Christians reached its peak in the Empire, when there were unusual visits of the Emperor Diocletian in *Durostorum* during the spring of AD 304.

Sources inform us that Maximinus Daza was a close follower of Galerius (the real inspiration of the fierce prosecutions against the Christians under Diocletian in AD 303-304) and he himself was an ardent prosecutor of the followers of Jesus. Even in AD 306 and 309 the same Maximinus Daza issued decrees requiring imperatively all the civilians to make pagan offerings. In AD 307 he reached a new extreme in the prosecution of the Christians, when many priests and presbyters were murdered (Успенски 2001, 87; Гибън 1999, 270-275; Пощов 1993, 137). This prosecution seems to have had repercussions along the Danube *limes*, because St. Maximus, St. Dadas and St. Quintilianus were slain in *Durostorum*.

38, 39, 40. St. Maximus, St. Dadas and St. Quintilianus. This group of martyrs is referred to in relatively late sources (the *Synaxarium* of the Constantinople Patriarchate from the late 8th century and the *Menologium Basilii* from the 11th century), which however must have used an earlier Life that could not reach us. It is specifically stated that they were slain on 28 April in a settlement (*vicus*?) near *Durostorum*, called *Ozobia* (*Ozēbia*). The context implies that this took place during the rule of Maximinus Daza (AD 305-313) and more specifically during the prosecutions in AD 307, when many presbyters suffered. The sources indeed present St. Maximus as presbyter, and Dadas and Quintilianus as his friends

and disciples. The text leaves an impression that after AD 313 a *martyrium* was built above the relics of the three martyrs, but the place was abandoned afterwards. Probably this happened during the huge destruction in *Durostorum* in the late 4th and the early 5th century upon the invasions of the Goths and Huns. Subsequently the relics were re-discovered in a supernatural way, and the *martyrium* must have been restored. One brick *martyrium* with three tombs-*arcosolia* uncovered in the ancient necropolis of *Durostorum*, is associated with this group of martyrs (Атанасов 2002, 55-65) (fig. 10-11). It is not known when exactly, but almost certainly shortly before *Durostorum* was conquered by Slavs and Avars in AD 579, the relics were carried to Constantinople. There they were placed in the Church to the Holy Mother of God in the Viglention quarter, restored after 532 by the patrician Antonia, wife of General Belisarius.

41. St. Aemilianus of Dorostolon. One of the most popular martyrs of *Durostorum* was burnt at the bank of the Danube on 18 July 362, during the rule of Julian the Apostate (AD 361-363) (Атанасов 2004, 203-218; Атанасов 2007, 31-41). There are numerous sources about St. Aemilianus, and two versions of his Life, referred to with the names of the manuscripts which contain their texts – *Codex Parisiensis* (Halkin 1972, 30-35) and *Codex Vaticanus* (Boschius 1868, 370-377). They reveal that Aemilianus was Christian, originating from a distinguished aristocratic family in *Durostorum*. During an inspection of the *vicarius* of the diocese, Aemilianus reacted violently against the attempts to restore pagan sanctuaries and destroyed the idols of one temple with a hammer. Considering the likelihood an innocent peasant to be sentenced for this, Emilianus gave in to the authorities, and was sentenced to death by burning. He was burnt at the bank of the Danube in the outskirts of *Durostorum*. With the assistance of the wife of vicar Capitolinos, the Christians in *Durostorum* obtained the bodily remains of Emilianus. These were buried in the area of *Gedina* (Γηδινά), at about 3 miles distance, i. e. 4500 m (as in *Codex Vaticanus*), or *Gizidina* (Γιζιδίνα according to *Codex Parisiensis*), respectively at 3 *stadia* (ca. 500 m) from the town. The genuineness of this event was confirmed as early as the late 4th century by the bishop of Milan (*Mediolanum*) St. Ambrose (Delehaye, Quintin 1931, 382-383) and in the Syriac calendar of martyrs. Moreover, at the bank of the Danube, upon the ruins of late antique buildings, in the middle of the 9th century, an episcopal cathedral was constructed. It is believed that it was built on the spot of the pyre of St. Aemilianus. The Life of the saint is assumed to have been compiled in the late 4th century, on the basis of real-life events, but a certain contamination can be detected with the Life of St. George of Cappadocia, compiled approximately at the same time. There are examples from Antioch and other towns where at the same time there were incidental prosecutions of Christians who resisted the restoration of the pagan temples. In conclusion it is assumed that the area of *Gedina/Gizidina* is not far away from the antique *Durostorum*, probably to the south-east, within the zone of the necropolises and the vicus. It is in fact at 4500 m from the Danube bank, where St. Aemilianus was burnt, and at about 450 m from the headquarters of the legion, where the saint was interrogated and sentenced. Recently the last doubts as to the martyrous death of St. Aemilianus have been completely dispersed, thanks to an inscription of the



Fig. 10. The *martyrium* of St. Maximus, St. Dadas and St. Quintilianus in *Durostorum* (Silistra)

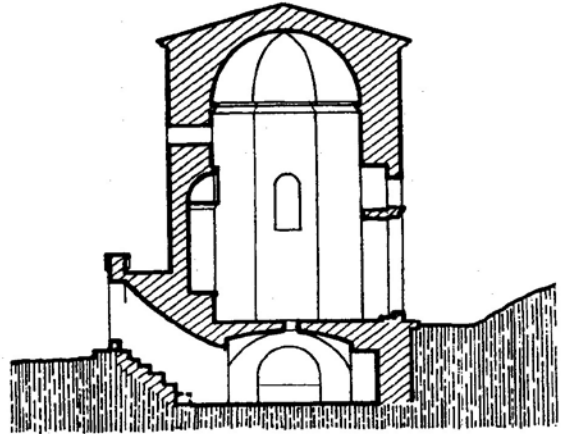
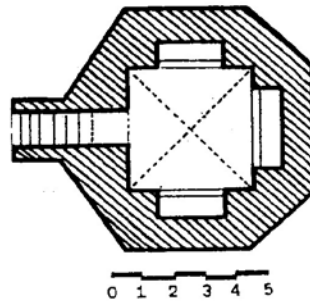


Fig. 11. Plan of the *martyrium* of St. Maximus, St. Dadas and St. Quintilianus (after G. Atanassov)



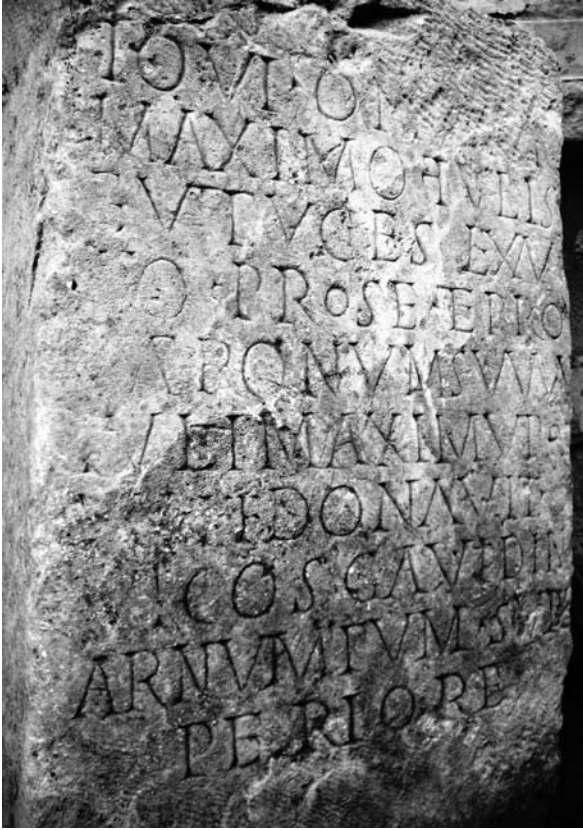


Fig. 12. Inscription from Silistra with the name of the *vicus Gavidina*, where the relics of St. Aemilianus of *Durostolon* were laid

4th century, uncovered during archaeological excavations in *Durostorum*-Silistra. By the way it bears the names of two *vici* (settlements) in the region of *Durostorum*, by the names of *Gavidina* and *Arnumtum superio* (Boyanov 2010, 53-59) (fig. 12). The closeness between *Gizidina* in the *Life of St. Aemilianus*, from the manuscript in Paris, and *Gavidina*, seen in the newly discovered inscription from *Durostorum*-Silistra is more than obvious. It is worth noting that the necropolis of *Durostorum* is localised exactly to the east of the camp of the legion, in the direction of the *vicus* to Ostrov, and with a greater degree of certainty it can already be named *Gavidina/Gizidina*³ (all names in *-dina*, according to Prof. V. Beshevliev, are considered Thracian in origin). It seems that the Christians from *Durostorum* and the neighbouring settlement *Gavidina/Gizidina* laid the relics of St. Aemilianus exactly in this

³ The hypothesis that *Gizidina* might be the *vicus* of *Durostorum* near the town of Ostrov was put forward by me in two articles, a Bulgarian and German versions, concerning the topography of the early Christian *Durostorum* (Atanasov 2008, 27-52; Атанасов 2008, 415-438), published two years before the publication of I. Boyanov. Strange as it may seem that he sustains the same idea, really with more reliable arguments, but omits to mention these studies, respectively the authorship of the presumption that the *vicus* near Ostrov was called *Gizidina/Gavidina*, and not *Durostorum*.

place. The newly discovered inscription constitutes an incontestable substantiation of the authenticity of the martyr's death of St. Aemilianus in *Durostorum*.

VI. *Novae – Moesia Secunda*

42. St. Lupus. According to the *Synaxarium* of the Constantinople Patriarchate St. Lupus suffered a martyr's death on 23 August; however, no other details are provided (Delehaye 1902, 917; Delehaye 1912, 258). We have information about the cult to him in *Novae*, where he was beheaded, thanks to Theophylactus Simocatta. He stated that Peter, Emperor Maurice's brother, arrived on a visit to *Novae* on the feast of St. Lupus (Theophyl. Sim. *Hist.* VII 2, 17).

VII. *Ratiaria – Dacia Ripensis*

43. St. Hermes. According to the Hieronymian martyrology he suffered a martyr's death on 31 December in *Ratiaria*, the capital city of *Dacia Ripensis* (Delehaye 1912, 247). At the same time, the brief Syriac calendar of martyrs associated him with *Bononia* (Constantinesco 1967) on 30 December. It can be considered fully acceptable that Hermes was celebrated in two neighbouring towns as *Ratiaria* and *Bononia*, similarly to St. Dasius, who was likewise associated with two neighbouring towns along the Danube – *Durostorum* and *Axiopolis*. On the basis of this analogy we can assume that St. Hermes suffered a martyr's death in *Ratiaria* on 30 December, while he was associated with *Bononia* as a result of the carrying of his relics to some of the churches in the town on 31 December.

VIII. *Bononia (Vidin)– Dacia Ripensis*

44, 45, 46. St. Gaius, St. Hermes, St. Aggeus. Again according to Hieronymus St. Gaius (Gagus) was celebrated in *Bononia* on the same date, 31 December. Again there the following was recorded in the beginning of January, 1 and 4, *in oriente, civitate Bononia Hermetis, Aggei, Ga(g)i* (Delehaye 1912, 258).

B. Archaeological and epigraphic monuments, related to the Early Christian martyrs along the *limes* from the late 3rd to the mid-4th centuries.

Considering the contradictions, compilations, interpolations and inconsistencies in the hagiographic texts, the martyrologies and the church calendars, or at least most of them, there existed some doubts as to the real life of the martyrs in the Lower Danube lands (Constantinesco 1967). These doubts flourished on the fact that there have been no reliable material signs corroborating the genuineness of the stories in the narrative sources. During the recent decades, however, this gap has been gradually filled.

1. The *martyrium* of St. Epictetus and St. Astion in *Halmyris* (No 1, 2). This is one of the crucial finds in the Early Christian History in the province of *Scythia*. Commenting on the Life of St. Epictetus and St. Astion as early as the beginning of the 20th century, I. Delehaye predicted that a martyrial basilica with the relics of the two martyrs might be uncovered in *Halmyris*. This actually happened between 2000-2003 (Zahariade, Bounegru 2003, 117-126; Baumann 2005, 55-58). A single-nave basilica with an atrium was found from the mid-4th century, which during the 6th century was reorganised into a three-nave bishop basilica (fig. 2). A *martyrium* was uncovered below the altar (fig. 3), which can be

accessed through 8 steps, along a corridor of 2.15 m, with an entrance from the *presbyterium*. The *martyrium* is a vaulted chamber of the following dimensions 2 x 1.80 m, headroom of 1.88 m. Two couches, 50 cm wide and 82 cm apart, were made of bricks along the two walls. Scattered bones of two men were found in the premises. According to the anthropological analysis one of them was about 1.72 m tall, at about 64-67 years of age, and the other one was younger – at about 30-40 years of age and about 1.75 m tall. There were traces of wounds from a sharp object. Their identification was based mainly on the mural paintings in the church and more precisely on the inscription in the lunette, where the name of Astion is clearly visible beyond any doubt (fig. 4).

1 ΜΑΡ[ΤΥ]C [ΧΡΙCΤΟΥ ...]

2 ΜΑΡΤ[ΥC] ΧΡ[ΙCΤΟΥ ...]

3 [......]ΑΤ[.....]

4 [...]

5 [...]ΑCΤΙΟ

6 ΝΟΙCΑ[.....]

7 ΥΒΠΙ[.....]ΝΤΙΑ

2. The *martyrium* of St. Zoticus, St. Attalus, St. Camasius and St. Philip in Niculițel near *Noviodunum* (No 13-16). It was exactly this *martyrium* that dispersed all doubts concerning the real lives and the martyr's deaths in *Noviodunum* of this group of martyrs. It is located at about ten kilometres to the south of *Noviodunum*, in the vicinity of the village of Niculițel – a zone where the antique necropoleis of the big ancient town were localised (Baumann 1972, 189-202; Baumann 2006, 827-831, Taf. 32; Baumann 2005, 83-132). In a forested area with traces indicative of habitation during the 3rd – 4th c. AD, a three-nave Christian basilica, 36 x 14 m in size (fig. 5), was unearthed in 1971. Coins, ceramics and remains of earlier walls were found under its foundation, which points to a habitation (a small settlement) during the first half of the 4th century. On this basis the construction of the basilica was dated to the second half of the 4th century. Initially it had no *narthex*. A *martyrium* was unearthed at about 0.5 m below the brick floor of the *presbyterium* and more precisely – exactly below the spot of the altar table. It was made from mortared stones and it had a vaulted ceiling. It is almost square in plan of the following dimensions 3.70 x 3.40/3.50 m and 2.30 m in height (fig. 6). The entrance is from the west, the door is 0.70 m in width and 1.80 m in height, framed in stone slates. A wooden (pine-wood) sarcophagus was placed in the centre of the *martyrium*, upon a stone slab (limestone pedestal), containing the relics of four men-martyrs in an absolute anatomical order. Three of them were about 50 years of age, and the fourth one – about 35. According to the anthropological analysis there were traces of physical violence and even beheading. Upon the lunettes on the left hand side (A) and on the right hand side (B) from the entrance there is an inscription in red ochre: A) † Μάρτυρες Χριστοῦ (Christ's martyrs); B) † Μάρτυρες Ζώτικος, Ἄτταλος, Καμάσις, Φίλιππος (Martyrs Zoticus, Attalus, Camasius, Philip) (fig. 7).

A basement of the same dimensions was localised below the brick floor of the *martyrium*, divided in two parts by a slab, but only 0.59 m in height. It was sealed with a

stone slab, and the following text was carved on the slab: ὧδε κ(αὶ) ὧδε ἰχώρ μαρτύρων (“here and there is the blood /the life force/ of the martyrs”). Pots and a bowl from the 4th century were found on the floor and over 100 fragments of two male-martyrs, who must have been at about 45-50 years of age.

To the east of the *martyrium*, under the *presbyterium* and the central nave of the temple, a semi-ruined sepulchre-hypogaeus, of a square shape (3.80 x 3.70 m), covered with bricks, was accidentally found. It may as well be an earlier *martyrium*, where the relics of two other martyrs might have been laid, carried later on to the basement of the *martyrium* below the altar of the basilica. It is supposed that the relics of two unknown martyrs from *Noviodunum* were buried in the primary martyrion as early as the mid-3rd century (AD 249-260) during the rule of the Emperors Trajan Decius and Valerian (Baumann 2006, 830). The event is referred to such an early time, because by the time the new *martyrium* was under construction, around the second half of the 4th century, the memories of them had faded, and the remains of their relics were laid in the basement of the new martyrion under the relics of St. Zoticus, St. Attalus, St. Camasius and St. Philip. The construction of the new *martyrium* in two levels is usually associated with the construction of the basilica⁴ and is referred to the third quarter of the 4th century. According to the scholar investigating the monument, this happened after the martyrous death of four saints during the rule of the Emperors Valens and Valentinian, between AD 370-375 (Baumann 1972, 829; Baumann 2005, 120).

The town with the largest group of Early Christian saints along the Lower Danube Limes – *Durostorum* (Silistra), has recently provided archaeological and epigraphic monuments, related to their martyrous death. In fact, the first monument was documented as early as the beginning of the 20th century.

3. The urn-sarcophagus with the relics of St. Dasius of *Dorostolon* (No 30). The sarcophagus (Cumont 1897, 369-381; Mercati 1936, 318-319; Атанасов 2007, 68-72) is kept with the Diocese museum, opposite to the cathedral of Ancona, Italy. It was made from limestone, with the following dimensions: 1.02 x 0.50 x 0.44 cm, and the cover is of marble. Three crosses are sculptured upon it and there is an engraved text in Greek, “Here lies the holy martyr Dasius, brought from *Dorostolon*” (fig. 9). It seems that during the second half of the 5th or the beginning of the 6th century the relics of St. Dasius were taken out of the primary martyrion in *Durostorum* and were placed in this urn, kept in one of the churches in town. Even in the late 4th, during the 5th, and especially during the 6th century it was quite common to carry the relics from the out-of-town martyrions into the basilicas in the town. Furthermore, the shape of the urn-sarcophagus and, particularly, the inscription in Greek with the name of *Dorostolon* (a Greek variant for *Durostorum*), date back to the 4th century. During the Slav-Avar invasions in the late 4th century, *Durostorum* was destroyed and plundered. It appears that the urn with the relics, similarly to the relics of St. Maximus, Dadas and Quintilianus, was carried to Constantinople or another big Byzantine centre. Presumably after the Fourth Crusade in 1204 the urn was transported to Ancona. This

⁴ It is argued that these were simultaneous.

is evidenced by the fact that it was registered for the first time with the Ancona Cathedral of San Salvatore after its reconstruction in 1213-1214. According to documents, in 1224 the urn with the relics of St. Dasius was placed in a big marble sarcophagus, together with the relics of the local saints Pelegrinus, Martinus, Flavianus etc. It was mentioned also in documents from 1456, 1470, 1675, 1804.

4. The *martyrium* with three *arcosolia* in *Durostorum* (No 38-40). It is in the centre of the ancient necropolis of *Durostorum* (Atanassov 2007, 49-55; Atanassov 2002, 55-65; Atanassov 2008, 27-52), near the well-known sepulchre with mural paintings from the 4th century (fig. 10-11). It was constructed in the shape of a massive brick octagon of the following external dimensions: 7.70 x 7.60 m and surviving height of 2.10 m. Three tombs-*arcosolia* were executed around a square-shaped chamber of the following dimensions: 2.10 x 0.90 x 1.80 m, where the relics of three martyrs were placed. The octagon appears to be the preferred architectural structure for *martyria* as is evidenced by various examples,

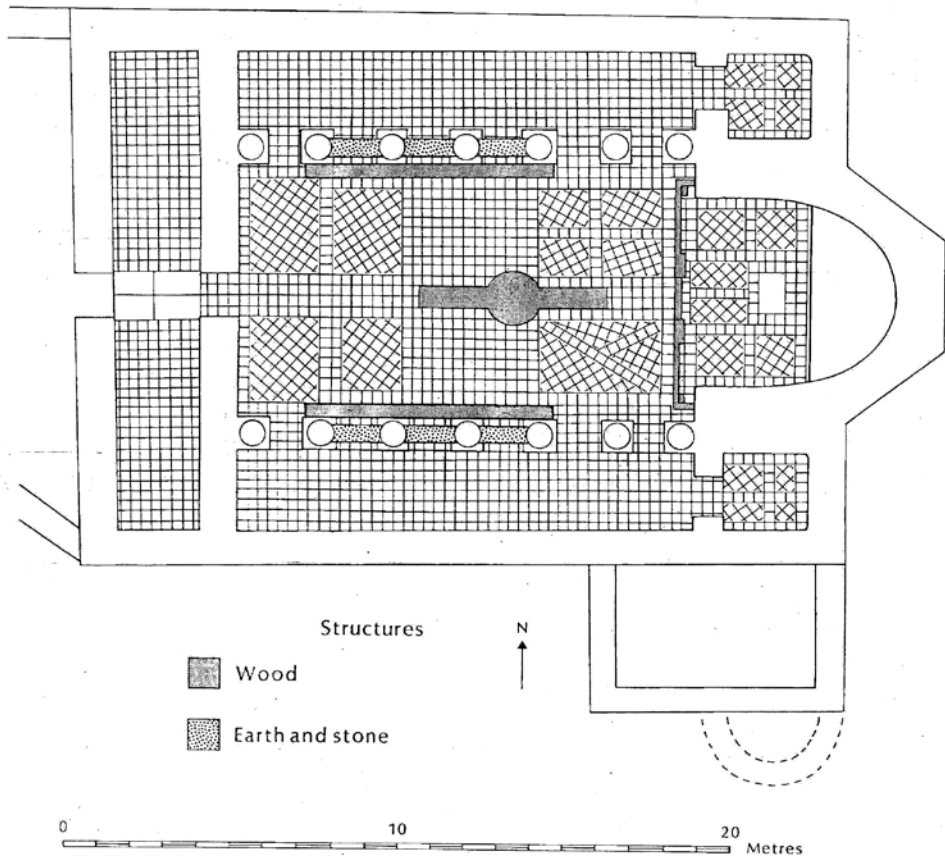


Fig. 13. Basilica of the 5th century (bishop's?) in *Nicopolis ad Istrum* (after A. Poulter)

as is the case with the *arcosolia* for placing martyr's relics. The octagonal *martyrium* in the centre of the ancient necropolis of *Durostorum* dates back to the early 4th century and was supposedly constructed for the relics of St. Maximus, St. Dadas and St. Quintilianus.

5. The Early Christian ring from a tomb in *Durostorum* (No 33-34). The earliest monument, related to the Paleo-Christian past of *Durostorum* is a golden ring (fig. 14) with an engraved anchor flanked by two fishes, and below it there is a text ZHCAIC (Atanasov 2007, 48-49; Atanasov 2007, 9-22; Atanasov 2008, 27-52). Burnt and scattered skeletons of four individuals were found in a burial pit at the south-eastern part of the necropolis of *Durostorum*. The ring dates back to the early 4th century and is believed to have belonged to one of the four slain and burnt early Christians who lost their lives during the prosecutions in *Durostorum* in the beginning of the 4th century. The Paleo-Christian symbolism of the anchor (symbols of the faith and hope) and the fishes (symbols of Christ himself, because it is beyond doubt that in ΙΧΘΥΣ – meaning 'fish' in Greek – the Early Christians actually saw the formula Ἰησοῦς Χριστός Θεοῦ Υἱός Σωτήρ, i. e. „Jesus Christ, Son of God and Saviour”). The text ZHCAIC is assumed to be the optative form of the verb ζῶ – ‘to live’, in the second person singular and could be translated as “May you live!”, “Live!”. If the semantics of the fishes and anchor is added to the meaning of the text, one can arrive at the following decoding, “Live in thrust, faith and hope in Christ – the Son of God and Saviour”. There is no reliable evidence concerning the group of Early Christian martyrs from *Durostorum* to which the mass tomb with the ring can be referred to. According to the sources, St. Valentio and St. Pasicrates were murdered together with their wives (Delehaye 1902, 627; Menologium Basiliï 1894, 420), but it seems rather far fetched to argue that exactly this group can be identified with the tomb of the four martyrs with the ring. In any case this tomb remained unknown to the Christians in *Durostorum* after AD



Fig. 14. Ring with Early Christian symbols from a tomb of martyrs in the necropolis of *Durostorum*

313 because no *martyrium* was erected upon it and the relics were not the focus of any special attention.

6. Mausoleum/*Martyrium* and the holy spring in the *castellum* near the village of Golesh, district of Silistra (No 26). It is in the late antique fortress at about 30 km to the south of *Durostorum*, on the right hand side of Suha River (Atanasov 1997, 127-135; Atanasov 2006; Атанасов 2007, 55-68). The fortress was built in the early 4th century, it was reduced to ashes in the mid-5th century, restored and extended after the beginning of the 6th century, and it was restored and finally destroyed in the late 6th century. The *martyrium-arcosolium* was appended to the extension of the fortress after the beginning of the 6th century (fig. 15). It was excavated as early as 1913 by Romanian archaeologists, but it has not been thoroughly studied or published. It was again investigated in 1993, when it turned out that it was an *arcosolium* tomb, made during the rule of Justinian I (AD 527-565) not far away from the entrance to the fortress. It was made of finely hewn stone blocks and the arch had profiled stones (fig. 15). A stone relief icon of the Virgin Nikopoia flanked by two angels was placed in the *arcosolium*. It was surrounded by a fence as a *temenos*, where there were also other tombs *ad sanctos*. The well with the holy spring (*bagiasmon*) is directly related to the *martyrium* (fig. 15). It was cut in the rock and through two shafts, connected with a gallery one can reach the two reservoirs at about 35 m below the surface level. It is assumed that the mausoleum- *martyrium* contains the relics of St. Cyril, suffering a martyr's death in *Axiopolis* in AD 304. This happened during the rule of the Emperor Justinian I, when, according to Procopius of Caesarea, the fortress was restored and named after St. Cyril. The Early Christian basilica in the fortress with a crypt in front of the apse was restored at that time too. It was made from stones with white mortar in the shape of a two-chamber well (fig. 16). The upper chamber is 0.97 x 0.90 x 0.40 m in size, while the lower one – 0.55 x 0.45 x 0.45 m in size – was covered by a well hewn rectangular limestone slab, sealed with pink mortar. A third small chamber, 0.20 x 0.20 x 0.20 cm in size, was made in the middle of the eastern wall, which was also sealed with a stone cover. Three human bones and a bronze dove were found in it. The relics placed in the *confessio* must have been taken from the adjacent *martyrium* near the fortress gate.

7. The cemeterial basilica *extra muros* in *Novae* (No 42). It was localised in the necropolis of the late antique town, however, its dimensions were unusually big (in exterior 31 x 15 m) for this type of temples (Čičikova 1994, 127-138; Čičikova 1997, 57-69; Biernacki 1997, 71-80) (fig. 17). It even comes to be one of the biggest basilicas along the Lower Danube Limes, which seems strange considering its location. Yet stranger is the masonry tomb under the *presbyterium*, respectively under the altar table. Its dimensions (1.90 x 1.00 m) suggest that a body of an adult individual was placed inside, not martyr's relics (parts of the skeleton). So far no burial of a martyr below the altar has been registered in Bulgaria⁵. However, this was a widely spread practice in the diocese of the Roman Pope and in Northern Africa (Rossi 1864/1966, I, 213; III, 493-494; Gsell 1901, 187, Krautheimer 1937, 144-165; Wieland 1912, 144; Σωτηριῦ 1929, 179, 238-239; Braun 1924, 527-559;

⁵ This is usually achieved by annexes to the temple (Babić 1969, 67-78; Grabar 1946, 354 sqq.).

Delehaye 1933, 48; Ορλάνδος 1995, 454-466). This practice has been registered in the East albeit rarely. Tombs of martyrs were found below the altar table of the Church to St. John in Ephesus and under the bishop basilica in *Stobi* (present-day Macedonia) (Σωτηρίου 1929, 238-239; Saria 1932, 53; Kitzinger 1946, 90-105; Ορλάνδος 1995, 454-466). In this particular case, however, of greatest importance are the analogies with the chronologically and geographically closest monuments, e.g. the basilicas in Niculițel (Baumann 2005, 83-132), *Halmyris* (Zahariade, Bounegru 2003, 117-126), *Histria* (Sucevianu 2007, 28) and *Tomis* (Barnea 1979, 22, 132; Lungu 2000, 69-71, fig. 6-9). Sepulchres were built exactly below the altar tables in the basilica in *Halmyris*, which was commented above, in basilica A in *Tropaeum Traiani* (Lungu 2000, 72-73; Barnea 1979, 22) and in the two big basilicas in *Tomis* (“basilica mare A” and the big basilica under the “M. Eminescu” lyceum) (Barnea 1979, 22, 154), sepulchres were built exactly below the altar tables, where no relics of martyrs were placed, as was the prevailing practice, but sarcophagi containing whole skeletons (Achim 2004, 277-284; Barnea 1979, 22). There are grounds to consider that the sepulchres, particularly in *Tomis* and *Tropaeum Traiani*, were built towards the end of the 5th – 6th century together with the temples. At their inauguration intact relics, i.e. the entire skeletons of the martyrs

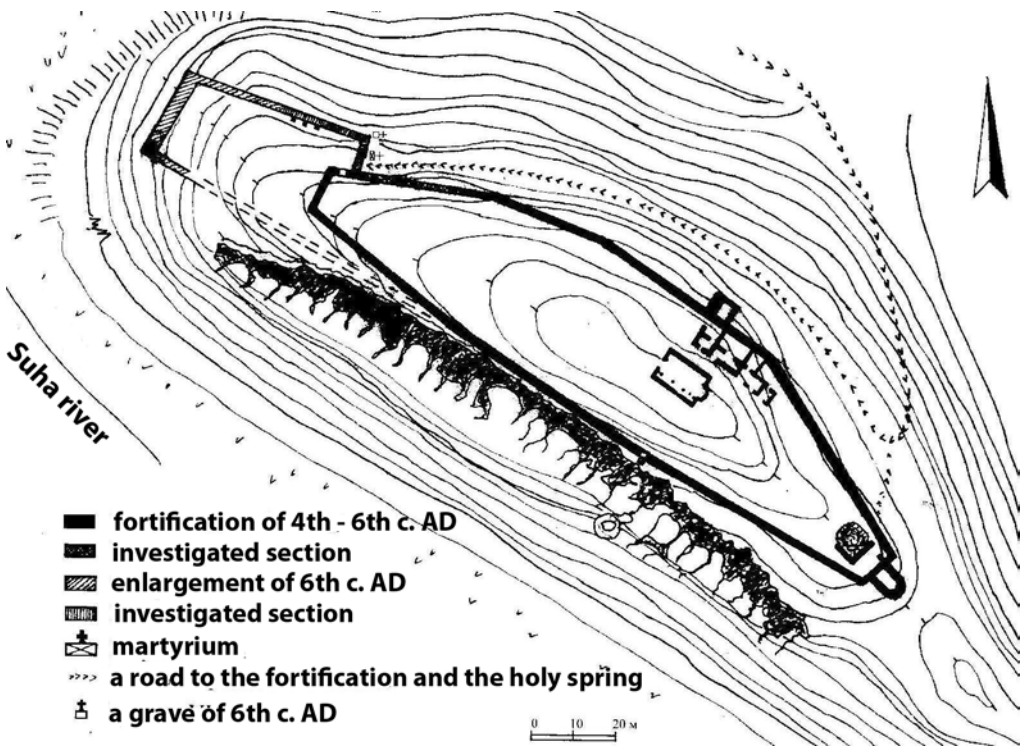


Fig. 15. Early Christian monuments in the fortress of *St. Cyril* near the village of Golesh, district of Silistra (after G. Atanassov)

buried in the early 4th century, were carried from the town necropoleis (principally from *Tomis*, where over 100 martyrs were registered). It was already ascertained that the practice in Niculițel was different and the Roman tradition was adhered to. Initially the relics from the tomb-*martyrium* of the martyrs, buried in the vicinity of the necropolis of *Noviodunum* in the late 4th century, were not carried, but an altar table was placed above them, i.e. there is a sort of merging of *mensa sacra* with *mensa martyrum*. The situation in *Beroe* is even more to the point (Baumann 2005, 53-55). During the 4th century within the boundaries of the late antique necropolis a *martyrium* was built in whose crypt the bodies of the martyrs were placed. During the 6th century the *martyrium* was converted to a cemeterial church and the place of the altar table happened to be exactly above the crypt with the bodies of the martyrs. I suppose that the case in *Novae* is similar. The tomb with the relics of the martyr lain in the town necropolis were not carried to some of the churches in the town, but the altar table of the newly constructed basilica in the beginning of the 5th century was erected and consecrated above it. This is why its size and location are so impressive. These specific features hint at the idea that a martyr might be buried in the cemeterial church in *Novae*. For the time being the most probable candidate is St. Lupus, the only local saint referred to in the hagiographic literature. Anyway it is recognized that the Roman law grants the right to a tomb in the regulated necropoleis even to criminals (Grabar 1946, 48; Delehay 1933, 47-48). Therefore the tombs of most of the martyrs in Rome and the big urban centres are in the necropoleis along the roads, outside the confines of the towns⁶. Along those lines it is acceptable to assume that after his martyr's death, St. Lupus was buried by relatives in the necropolis of *Novae*. Similarly to other cases referred to earlier in this study, at about the mid 4th century *mensa martyrum* developed on the masonry tomb, and during the 5th century it was transformed into *mensa sacra*. Bearing in mind the dating of the basilica *extra muros*, the relics remained in the necropolis both during the 4th and during the 5th centuries. However, it is not unconceivable that these might as well have been carried and placed in the bishop basilica in the centre of *Novae* at a later stage around the mid-6th century (Biernacki, 2005, 53-74). However, according to the archaeological investigations a small *martyrium* was unearthed, which was appended to the eastern wall of the southern nave (above the baptistery) during the last construction phase (fig. 22). At that time a complex of premises with a *peristylum* appeared to the south of the basilica. It is assumed that these were intended to shelter poor pilgrims visiting the tomb of St. Lupus (fig. 22). This suggests that similarly to the other big Early Christian centres, Canon No 94 of the Local Council of Carthage in AD 384 was imposed (Стефанов 1998, 307-308). It demands that the relics of the martyrs should be carried from the out-of-town necropolises to the in-town basilicas⁷. The point was to take the cult to the martyrs away from the outskirts of the towns, as it was difficult to keep it under control there, and to concentrate it in the urban temples.

⁶ For details about the practice to bury Christians and martyrs of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th centuries in pagan necropoleis see Krautheimer 1981, 33-37.

⁷ For details about concentrating the relics in in-town churches see Dragon, 1977, 23-24.

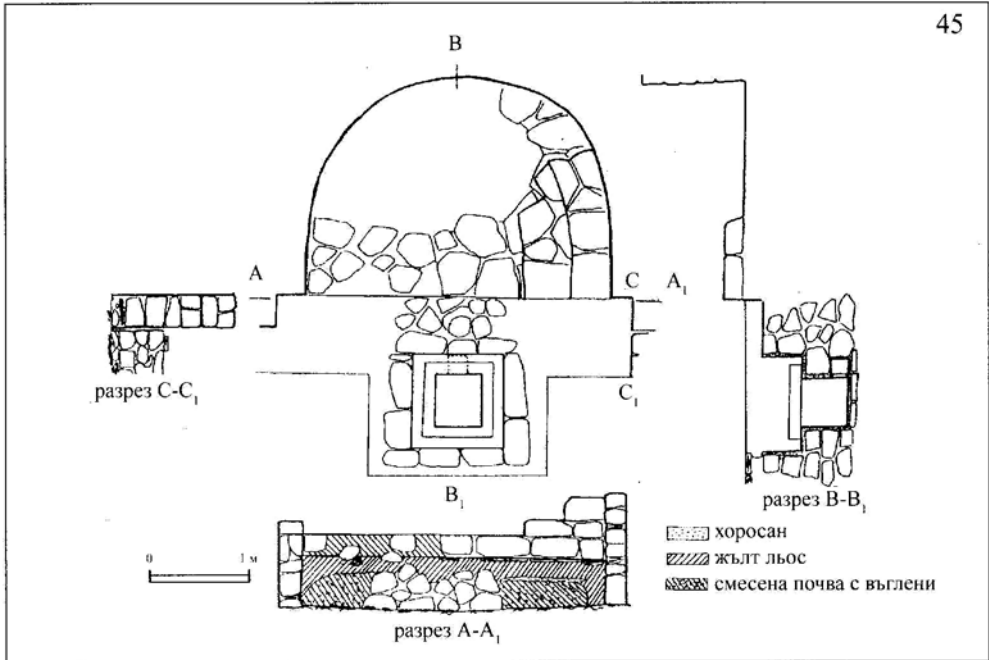
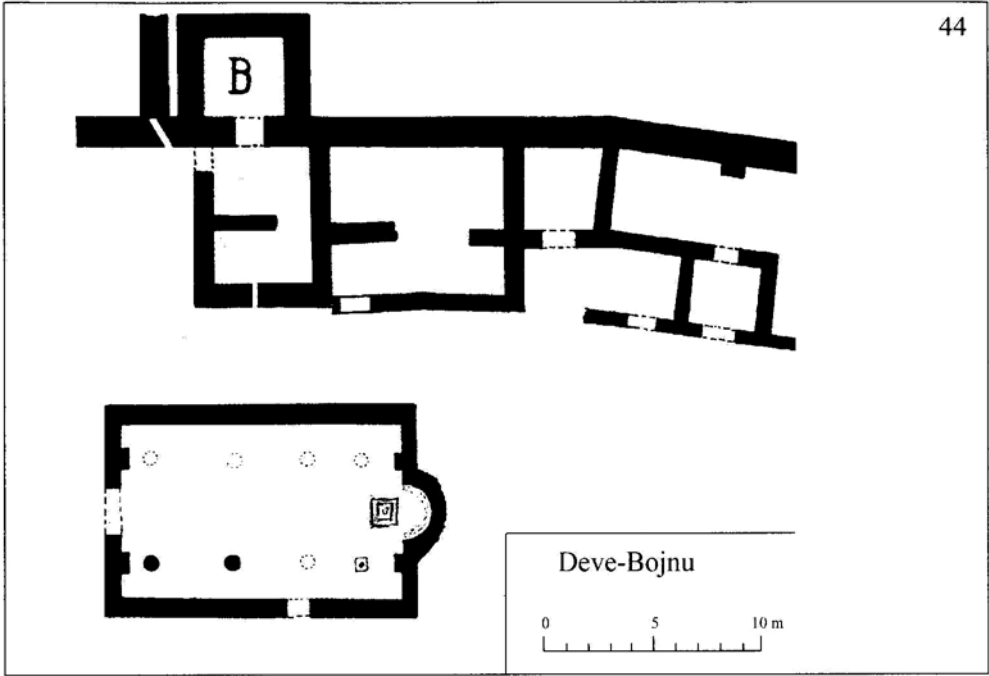


Fig. 16. Crypt with relics below the altar of the church in Golesh (after G. Atanassov)

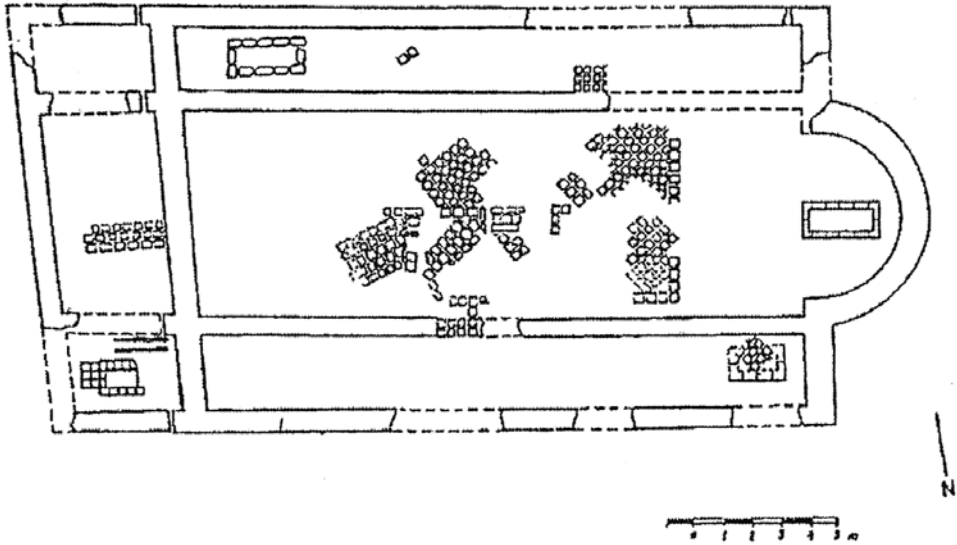


Fig. 17. The cemeterial basilica in *Novae* with a tomb below the altar (of St. Lupus?) (after M. Čičikova)

C. The ecclesiastical organisation of the church along the Lower Danube Limes during the 4th – 6th centuries

The ecclesiastical organisation of the church is still difficult to reconstruct in the provinces along the Lower Danube Limes in Scythia (present-day Dobroudzha), Moesia Secunda (present-day Northern Bulgaria) and Dacia Ripensis (present-day North-Western Bulgaria) from the Edict of Milan (AD 313) to the late 6th century. After the administrative reform of Emperor Diocletian in AD 284, the Balkan Peninsular was divided between the Prefecture of Illyricum (to the West of the river Vit) and the Prefecture of Oriens (to the East of the river Vit). The Prefecture of Illyricum is of interest because of the Dacia diocese, and more specifically the province of Dacia Ripensis, with Ratiaria as its main city. The North-Eastern part of the prefecture covers the diocese of Thrace, which was divided into 6 provinces. The Danube limes was the northern border of the provinces of Moesia Secunda and Scythia. Present-day Central Northern and North-Western Bulgaria, from Suha River (flowing into the Danube through the Oltina Lake at about 30 km to the northeast of Silistra) to the River Vit and from the Danube to the Balkan Mountains, was named the province of Moesia Inferior (or Moesia Secunda), with Marcianopolis as its main city (nowadays Devnya). Almost all of the Central and Northern Dobroudzha were included in the province of Scythia, with Tomis (Constantia) as its main city (Белков 1959, 55-56; Zahariade 1988, 32-43; for details about the boundary between Scythia and Moesia Secunda see Torbatov 2000, 59-72, fig. 6) (fig. 1).

This administrative organisation from the end of the 3rd century and the beginning of the 4th century became a prototype for the ecclesiastical organisation. Its completion seems

to have been sped up by the First Ecumenical Council, held in Nicaea in AD 325 under the auspices of the Emperor Constantine the Great himself. The church administration actually followed to a large extent the civil organisation and bishop sees were established in the big towns, and metropoleis (archbishop seats) were established in the main centres of the provinces (Janin 1959, 136-138, 140-141; Погов 1993, 109-115). Anyway this was a long and slow process, which was finalised only during the second half of the 5th and the mid-6th century.

Instituting Christianity as an equal religion after the Edict of Milan of AD 313, having the wholehearted support of the Emperor himself, necessitated a new organisation. Thus, gradually towards the 5th century the church organization became identical to the civil organization – evidenced in Canon 17 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, which reads, “The organization of ecclesiastical districts should follow the civil organization” (Mansi 1960, VII, 348).

Let us go back to the realities along the limes in *Dacia Ripensis*, *Moesia Secunda* and *Scythia* during the 4th century. It was noted that at the First Ecumenical Council in *Nicaea* in 325 AD there were no bishops from the provinces of *Dacia Ripensis* and *Scythia*, while *Moesia Secunda* was represented only by Pistus, bishop of the main city of *Marcianopolis* (Quien 1740, 1217; Honigmann 1937, 366; Honigmann 1939, 17-22; Zeiller 1918, 164; Fedalto 1988, 32.1.3; Minčev 1987, 298). Eusebius’ statement that an unknown bishop from *Scythia* was present at the Council in *Nicaea* is not substantiated in documents related to the Council (Euseb. *Vita Const.* III 7; for more details about the participants see Fedalto 1988, 32.1.3; Honigmann 1937, 335-337; Honigmann 1942-1943, 28-37). The bishops from *Scythia* and *Moesia Secunda* did not attend the next Council in *Serdica* in AD 343. At the same time *Dacia Ripensis* was represented both by the bishop of the main city *Ratiaria* – Silvester (who had succeeded Paulinus in this position shortly before that) (Hilar. *Hist. Arian.* III 23 = PL X, 674); Bernard 1983; Zeiller 1918, 152-154), and by the bishops of the remaining towns in the province – Vitalis from *Aquae*, Calvus from *Castra Martis* and Valens from *Oescus* (Hilar. *Hist. Arian.* II 9-15 = PL X, 54; Bernard 1983; Zeiller 1918, 154-155). While Silvester was an ardent adherent to the Nicene Creed, Paladius, who succeeded him at about AD 346, was an Arian, and therefore he was condemned at the local Council of *Aquileia* in AD 381 (Zeiller 1918, 148). An unknown bishop of *Ratiaria* was among the addressees of the circular letter of Pope Celestine I in AD 424 (Zeiller 1918, 149). It is noteworthy that the prelates of *Ratiaria* did not take part in the Ecumenical and local councils in the Eastern part of the Empire. This is understandable, because by the 8th century *Illyricum* was in the diocese of the Pope in Rome, who usually sent only envoys of his to the councils in the East and seems not to have demanded from his subordinated bishops to attend these assemblies. However, the aloofness in the behaviour and subordination between the bishops from the Eastern and the Western parts of the Empire could be spotted as early as the Council of *Serdica*. Unlike the previous and the following ecumenical councils, the prelates from the western dioceses significantly dominated this council. Symptomatic is the absence of the bishops from the capital cities of the adjacent provinces of *Moesia Secunda* and *Scythia* (*Marcianopolis* and *Tomis*), while for instance the provinces of *Illyricum*

were represented both by their capital city centres (*Ratiaria*, *Sirmium*, *Viminacium*, etc.) and by the majority of their suffragan bishops (Zeiller 1918, 152-153). Symptomatic also is that the prelates from the East, who were in the minority, left the Council of *Serdica*, and that the Byzantine emperors and the Eastern patriarchs did not consider it Ecumenical. The best demonstrated aloofness is illustrated by the church historian Sozomen, who wrote the following in relation to the Council of *Serdica*: “After this Council they [the bishops of the East and West] no longer behaved to each other as people of the same faith, neither did they holded communion with each other. The Eastern ones confined themselves within Thrace, and the Western ones within Illyricum” (Sozom. *Hist. Eccl.* III 13). As was already clarified, the borderline was exactly the River Vit, which accounted for the behaviour in the bishoprics of *Dacia Ripensis*, respectively the behaviour of the “metropolitan archbishop” of the capital city *Ratiaria*. The behaviour of the bishops in *Moesia Secunda* and *Scythia* was absolutely different.

The Second Ecumenical Council in AD 381 was again attended by the bishop of *Marcianopolis*. The province of *Scythia* was certainly represented, but only by the bishop of the main city *Tomis*. However, it was established that only one archbishop continued to reside in the entire province of *Scythia* by the 6th century – the archbishop of *Tomis*, which was explicitly attested by Sozomen, Theodoret of Cyrrihus, one of the Novels by Emperor Zeno and other sources (Sozom. *Hist. Eccl.* VI 21; Theodoret. *Hist. Eccl.* IV 35; *Cod. Iust.* I 3, 35 = ГИБИ II, 21; Zeiller 1918, 169-171; Barnea 1979, 12). E. Popescu and most of the scholars, however, launched the idea that the archbishops of *Tomis* had subordinated bishops, the so called suffragans (Popescu 1994, 200-215; Popescu 1988, 79-88; Barnea 1979, 13-15; Lungu 2000, 79-82). There is no conclusive information about that though (only the inscription about Bishop Stephanus from *Callatis*, at that rather unreliably reconstructed, is not sufficient). At the same time, the original of the diocesan list *Notitia tempore Isaurorum scripta* (or No 3 according to J. Darrouzès, edited after AD 733), where the metropolitan archbishop of *Tomis* appears for the first time with 14 suffragan bishops (Darrouzès 1981, 242; ГИБИ III, 189-191; Snegarov 1956, 647 sqq.), is of an arguable dating – an issue which will be dealt with further down.

It seems that similarly to *Scythia*, by the second half of the 4th century, the Christians in *Moesia Secunda* were also under the spiritual jurisdiction only of the metropolitan archbishop of *Marcianopolis* (ЦУХЛЕВ 1910, 78; Марков 1995, 43; Zeiller 1918, 164-165, 600; Honigmann 1942-1943, 28-37; Minčev 1987, 298; Fedalto 1988, 32.1.3). Indeed, the earliest evidence about bishoprics in the big cities of the province, e.g. *Odessos* (*Varna*), *Abritus* (*Razgrad*), *Appiaria* (*Ryahovo*, District of *Ruse*), *Novae* (near *Svishtov*), *Nicopolis ad Istrum* (*Nikyup*, district of *Veliko Tarnovo*) and *Sexaginta Prista* (*Ruse*) date back to only after the beginning of the 5th century (Zeiller 1918, 164-169; Ilski 1995, 36-41, 44, 46, 49). The first town in the province to acquire an archbishop cathedra after *Marcianopolis* as early as the second half of the 4th century, was almost certainly *Durostorum*. How can this be accounted for?

During the first half of the 4th century the Goths dominated in the lands beyond the Danube and to the north-east of *Durostorum*, who thanks to *Ulfilas* (who converted

to Christianity and translated the Holy Scripture in the language of the Goths), started to Christianise. In AD 341, Ulfilas was already ordained bishop by the Arian Bishop of Nicomedia, Eusebius. However, about AD 347 the king of the Goths started prosecutions against his Christian subjects, which made them cross the Danube and settle in the lands of the Empire south of the river, and Ulfilas was greeted with honours in Constantinople. Several decades later on the Goths to the north of the Danube (some of them already Arian Christians) were defeated by the Huns, and afterwards they were accepted as federates by the Roman Emperor Valens (AD 364-378) (Thompson 1966, XIII-XXIII, 82 sqq.; Lippold 1961, 512; Schwarcz 1987, 107-111; Wolfram 1990, 84-86; Zeiller 1918, 417-516; Ilski 1995, 68-75). In AD 376, they crossed the Danube near Durostorum and settled basically along the borderline areas of the provinces of Moesia Secunda and Scythia Minor. Following the coercive actions of the Roman administration in AD 377, the Goths rose and defeated the Romans in the decisive battle near Adrianopolis on 9 August 378, where Emperor Valens was killed (Wolfram 1990, 133-138; Успенски 2001, 143 sqq.; ШУКИН 2005, 256-260). During these events in the 370s – 380s a great deal of Gothic population settled to the south of the Danube, including also the region of Durostorum, where they remained till the end of the century.

I am dwelling on these events in greater detail, because the Arian Goths who settled to the south of the Danube strengthened the position of the followers of Arius in the Lower Danubian provinces. An opinion was voiced that the bishop cathedra of Ulfilas was established exactly in Durostorum, but there is only indirect evidence to this effect (Kaufmann 1899, 58-76; Lippold 1961, 512). According to the scholars the Goths crossed the Danube at Durostorum and settled in this region, and bishop Mercurinus-Auxentius, a disciple and follower of Ulfilas, actually lived in Durostorum in AD 380-381. There is no authentic document though, which can confirm that the residence of Ulfilas was also in Durostorum, while commonly Nicopolis ad Istrum is referred to as Ulfilas' residence (Schwarcz 1987, 109; Velkov 1989, 525-527; Марков 1995, 28). However, there are no sources from the 4th – 5th centuries which can attest that Ulfilas or his successor, Selenas, stayed in Nicopolis ad Istrum, quite a well-known town in Moesia (Zeiller 1918, 601; Thompson 1966, 82, 108-119, 135-139; Lippold 1961, 529-530; Schwarcz 1987, 110; Ilski 1995, 50-51)⁸. Provided they were bishops of an early prominent cathedra, like the one of Nicopolis, this would have been made known and would have been even included in the bishop title of Ulfilas and Selenas. The other idea is that the Gothic cathedra was in Tarnovo, on the hill of Tsarevets (Velkov 1989, 525-527), but the basilica that was unearthed there dates rather to the 5th century⁹, while the cathedra founded by Ulfilas is dated to the

⁸ In fact the available written sources (Socrat. *Hist. eccl.* V 23; Sozom. *Hist. eccl.* VII 17) do not provide specific information as to where exactly was the cathedra of Selenas after Ulfilas' death and only *a priori* it is assumed that it was in *Nicopolis ad Istrum*.

⁹ Царевград-Търнов 1973, 271-277, fig. 15, 19. The plan of this earliest basilica and particularly the pentagonal apse, as well as the structure of the altar space are analogous to the basilica of the 5th century in the village of Han Kubrat near Shumen, undeniably associated with the Goths (Балабанов 2006, 71-76; Балабанов 2004, 124-138). It is worth mentioning that the basilica on Tsarevets was dated to the late 5th century, and the basilica

4th century. Finally, the Gothic enclave was concentrated to the south of Durostorum in the North-Eastern Bulgaria – quite far away from Tarnovo and Nicopolis ad Istrum. Therefore I suppose that the bishop cathedra of the Goths in the late 4th and early 5th centuries, headed by Ulfilas and Selenas, was somewhere in this region, in a less well-known fortress, south of Durostorum and not far away from the Balkan Mountains. For the time being I would put forward the hypothesis that this might be the fortress near the village of Han Krum, district of Shumen (south of Durostorum and west of Odessos and Marcianopolis). Several basilicas, a mausoleum and Gothic aristocratic burials with fibulae typical of the 4th – 5th centuries, have already been uncovered there (Балабанов 2006, 71-76; Балабанов 2004, 124-138). We do not know the name of the fortress, but conversely the antique authors did not mention where the cathedra of Ulfilas and Selenas was. As far as its status is concerned, I believe that the Gothic bishops were not subordinated to the metropolitan archbishop of Moesia Secunda in Marcianopolis, but they had a rather autonomous status similar to the one of the chorbishops (*choriepiscope*)¹⁰.

The above facts and events are convincing that the Gothic cathedra was not in Durostorum, but at about AD 380 there was a bishop cathedra in the town, headed by an Arian bishop by the name of Mercurinus-Auxentius. How, when and why Durostorum was granted a bishop cathedra, what was the role of the Arians and especially of Ulfilas and Mercurinus, are issues which are still open. In order to shed more light to these issues, more details need to be presented about the ecclesiastical organization in the Balkan provinces, more precisely in Moesia Secunda.

So far I dwell on the Early Christian practice till the Edict of Milan, when almost every commune was headed by a bishop. It's not by chance that the sources up to the beginning of the 4th century mention more bishops than presbyters (priests) and deacons. Along these lines, Durostorum and the other Christian centres along the limes, could also have had bishops of this rang. The fact that Christian glory poured down over Durostorum particularly as a result of the martyr's death of one of the largest groups of saints to the north of Haemus should not be ignored (Атанасов 2007, 15-46).

However, similar was the situation of other big cities like Odessos, Bononia, Noviodunum, Axiopolis, Oescus, Novae, etc. During the 2nd – 4th centuries they were not

with the similar plan near the village of Han Krum was abandoned after the mid 5th century. Therefore it is not impossible the Goths mentioned by Jordanes around *Nicopolis ad Istrum* (Iord. *Get.* 51) to have relocated on the naturally protected semi-mountainous Tsarevets after the invasion of the Huns around the mid 5th century. Along with the rest they have their specific cult architecture. It must be noted that towards the beginning of the 6th century this "Arian" church on Tsarevets was destroyed and a "classic" Early Byzantine three-nave basilica was constructed upon its ruins. Indeed according to the information of Jordanes the Goths in the area of *Nicopolis ad Istrum* in the 6th century identified themselves as Arians.

¹⁰ Literally translated from Greek, *choriepiscope* means rural bishop. This institution is a legacy of the Early Christian practice of the 3rd – 4th century when each settlement, even the *vici* (villages) had a bishop of their own. After the mid-4th century at church councils and through a number of decrees the official church attempted to liquidate or at least to restrict and neglect the *choriepiscope*. Nevertheless by the 6th century it failed to liquidate finally this institution. For details see *Gillmann* 1903, 32-40; *Zeiller* 1918, 244; *Кочев* 1995, 131-135.

inferior in any respect to Marcianopolis, Ratiaria, Tomis and Durostorum. There were Early Christian communities and testimonies (sometimes semi-legendary evidence, but the Christians in the 5th – 6th centuries considered them absolutely true) about martyr-saints (Quien 1740, 1225; Минчев 1986, 31-38). Even if the leaders of the Early Christian communities in the 3rd and the very beginning of the 4th century were titled bishops, after the Council of Nicaea the sources provide evidence only about prelates from the capital cities of Marcianopolis and Tomis. Under these circumstances to deny cathedras to Durostorum, Novae, Noviodunum, Odessos, etc., means that the principle of having bishoprics only in the capital cities of the provinces was strictly adhered to in the more peripheral provinces during the 4th century. Even after AD 313 the number of the Early Christian bishoprics must have been reduced, because until then the usual practice was for every community to be headed by a bishop. This issue was discussed at the Council of Serdica in 343, when a decision was adopted to continue the process of reducing the number of cathedras in view of enhancing the authority of the bishops (Zeiller 1918, 244; Mansi 1960, VI, 1140 sqq.). Against this background it stands to reason that both at the First (AD 325), and at the Second (AD 381) Ecumenical Councils the Roman provinces in the northern Balkan territories were presented by one bishop each – those of Tomis and of Marcianopolis. However, differences can be perceived in Dacia Ripensis and the other provinces in Illyricum (Dacia Mediterranea with Serdica as capital city, Moesia Superior with Viminacium as capital city, Dardania with Scupi as capital city, Pannonia with Sirmium as a main town, etc.). It was seen that not only bishops from the capital cities of Ratiaria, Sirmium, Serdica, Viminacium, etc., were present at the Serdica Council, but their subordinate bishops from the other provincial towns were also present (Zeiller 1918, 152-153). Apparently this Illyrian practice, namely that the metropolitan archbishops from the capital cities should have suffragan bishops, gradually spread to the East. A true turning point in this respect was the ecclesiastical policy of the Emperor Zeno (AD 474-475), whose legislature required that every town had a bishop and this bishop should be the head of administration as well (Cod. Iust. I 3, 35 = ГИБИ II, 21-22). Indeed, during the 5th century bishops are attested in almost all the real towns in Moesia Secunda and Dacia Ripensis, which suggests that the law did not precede the reality, but only legitimised it. According to Hierocles' Synecdemus, compiled at about AD 527, in the province of Moesia Secunda with Marcianopolis as its centre, there were 6 more cities – Odessos, Durostorum, Nicopolis, Novae, Appiaria and Abritus (Hier. Synecd. 636, 1-7 = ГИБИ II, 90), and in Dacia Ripensis, apart from the capital city of Ratiaria, there were 4 more – Bononia, Aquis, Castra Martis and Oescus (Hier. Synecd. 655, 1-5 = ГИБИ II, 94). Thanks to the literary sources it is known that by the end of the 5th century, when the Novel of Zeno was published, there were really bishops in almost all of the above mentioned centres (Zeiller 1918, 164-169; Белков 1959, 220). There is no information solely with reference to Bononia regarding prelates during the 4th – 5th centuries. At a certain stage, probably towards the end of the 5th century, Zeno's law was enacted in respect of this town too. Apart from the fact that Bononia, according to Hierocles, had a city status, it was glorified also through the martyr's blood of St. Gaius, St. Hermes, St. Aggeus. Actually a cathedra

was registered here only at the Lateran Council in Rome in October 649, where the bishop of Bononia, Luminosus, was present (Mansi 1960, X, 868; ГИБИ III, 198). Probably the bishoprics were established much earlier, but the lack of sources about the ecclesiastical life of this zone during the 6th century makes it difficult to determine precise dates.

Obviously by the beginning of the 6th century the real towns – πόλεις were assigned legitimate bishops¹¹. The only exception here was *Sexaginta Prista*, where there was a bishop at the very beginning of the 5th century (Zeiller 1918, 168; Ilski 1995, 46), but Hierocles did not mention it among the cities. Most probably after the mid-5th or the early 6th century *Sexaginta Prista* declined and lost its city status, respectively – the bishop cathedra. Therefore J. Zeiller might as well be correct by stating that towards the end of the 5th century the bishoprics of *Sexaginta Prista* merged with the one of the neighbouring big city *Appiaria* (Zeiller 1918, 168). Nonetheless there is another possibility. Now that in the early 5th century, according to Socrates (Socrat. *Hist. Eccl.* VII 36), the bishop of *Sexaginta Prista* was relocated to *Nicopolis* in Thrace (according to J. Zeiller – more likely to *Nicopolis ad Istrum*, rather than to *Nicopolis ad Nestum*), it can be then reasoned whether the bishop's cathedra of this Danubian fortress was not closed as early as that time (Quien 1740, 1221-1222; Zeiller 1918, 167; Ilski 1995, 46). The diocesan lists from the late 6th – 7th centuries, which will be dealt with further down, actually contain the names of all the episcopal seats mentioned during the 5th century without *Sexaginta Prista* (Darrouzès 1981, 213; ГИБИ III, 184-188). There were other busily inhabited centres during the 5th – 6th centuries in the province, e.g. Tutrakan (*Transmarisca*), Shumen, Krivina, district of Ruse (*Iatrus*), Onogur, district of Dobrich (*Palmatae*), Tarnovo, Krumovo Kale near Targovishte, etc., which did not have bishops. The omission of *Transmarisca* is particularly bewildering – an important ancient centre, which according to the Pseudo-Epiphanius' List (No 1 according to J. Darrouzès) from the early 7th century (with an earlier prototype, which will be commented upon further down) had a bishop cathedra.

According to the coins in circulation and the archaeological excavations the civil life in Tutrakan was in decline after the invasions of the Huns in the early 5th century and up to the rule of Justinian I in the early 6th century (Paunov 2007, 144). Probably just because of this *Transmarisca* was not mentioned as a city by Hierocles and was not assigned a bishop cathedra until the first quarter of the 6th century. Most likely this is also relevant to other centres, which during the 6th century were no longer considered towns, but were regarded rather as *castella*. It is not unlikely for some of them to have had chorbishops, because the status of the latter turned out to be quite busy. However, their signatures are not to be seen under the decisions of ecumenical and local councils, their cathedras were not mentioned in the diocesan lists, while a number of official documents bear witness in respect of decreasing legitimacy (Gillmann 1903; Zeiller 1918, 244; Кочев 1995, 131-135). Although left to decline, their losing institutional status during the 5th – 6th centuries seems to have been a long process. The large Early Christian churches (with *synthrona!*) in the fortress of

¹¹ Indeed the Novel emphasized this requirement. It is expressly stated though that what is meant are towns which were restored, as well as settlements newly acquiring this status: *Cod. Inst.* I 3, 35 = ГИБИ II, 21-22.

Shumen, *Iatrus*, Krumovo Kale, the hill of Tsarevets in Veliko Tarnovo, Onogur (*Palmatae*) (Чанева-Дечевска 1999, 170-213), the fortress near the town of Byala, district of Varna (Yotov 2010, 22-23), Golesh, district of Silistra (fort of *St. Cyril*, Ἁγίου Κυρίλλου)¹² etc., provide grounds for similar impressions.

While the first evidence of a bishop in *Appiaria* dates back to AD 405¹³, in *Sexaginta Prista* after the beginning of the 5th century (Quien 1740, 1221-1222; Zeiller 1918, 167-168; Ilski 1995, 46), in *Novae* (Quien 1740, 1219-1220; Zeiller 1918, 165, 355-356; Fedalto 1988, 32.1.3; Ilski 1995, 47-48) and *Abritus* (Quien 1740, 1219-1221; Zeiller 1918, 168, 353-354; Fedalto 1988, 32.12.2; Ilski 1995, 38-39) in AD 431, in *Odessos* (Quien 1740, 1225; Zeiller 1918, 166-167, 600; Fedalto 1988, 32.12.2; Popescu 1988, 75-79; Минчев 1986, 31-41; Ilski 1995, 21) and *Nicopolis ad Istrum* (Quien 1740, 1223; Zeiller 1918, 166-167, 600; Fedalto 1988, 32.10.3; Ilski 1995, 37) in AD 458, we have noticed that Auxentius resided in *Durostorum* as early as about AD 383. How can this be accounted for? It is known that the canons adopted at the Councils of Nicaea and Antioch, require that bishops be elected with the active participation of the clergy and the laity. Afterwards a sanction from the bishops of the other towns in the region is required (if any) and a compulsory sanction by the metropolitan archbishop presiding the election (Поснов 1993, 109 sqq.). Against this background, the election of an Arian (probably of Gothic origin?) as is the case with Auxentius, as bishop of *Durostorum* is not accidental. The positions of the Arians in the city during the last quarter of the 4th century seem strong, considering the infiltrated Goths-federates in the area. On the other hand at that time the Emperor Valens implemented an avowed pro-Arian policy, and Domnitius, the metropolitan archbishop of *Marcianopolis* and *Moesia Secunda* (within which diocese *Durostorum* was) was also a staunch Arian (Quien 1740, 1217; Zeiller 1918, 164, 600; Ilski 1995, 21-22). Finally, in the same province and at the same time (*Nicopolis ad Istrum*, the fortress on the hill of Tsarevets in Veliko Tarnovo or more likely in the region of Shumen – Han Krum?) the first bishop of the Arian Goths appeared.

It is usually maintained that Mercurinus-Auxentius was ordained as bishop as Ulfilas' successor after the death of the latter in AD 383 (Kaufmann 1899, 94-96, 399, 420, 600; Klein 1953, 165-191; RE XV, 1961, 974-975). It is known, however, that the successor of Ulfilas at the bishop's throne was Selenas¹⁴. Along these lines, if Mercurinus-Auxentius was elected a bishop succeeding Ulfilas, it is more logical for him to have settled in Ulfilas'

¹² About the cult monuments in this fortress, identified with the fortification St. Cyril of Procopius, see Atanasov 2004, 419-424; Atanasov 2006, 101-127; Атанасов 2007, 107-109, табл. XXVI, XXXVIII.

¹³ For the first time Lupicinus, bishop of *Appiaria*, is mentioned in a letter of John Chrysostom to Pope Innocent of AD 404, see Quien 1740, 1225-1226; PGr LI, 531; Zeiller 1918, 167-168; Fedalto 1988, 32.3.3; Ilski 1995, 36-37. One more bishop of *Appiaria* is known – Marcianus, who signed the synod's letter in AD 458, see Quien 1740, 1225-1226; Zeiller 1918, 168; Ilski 1994a, 133-135; Ilski 1995, 38-40.

¹⁴ Zeiller 1918, 418, 519-520, 601; Thompson 1966, 75, 82, 108-119, 135-139; Lippold 1922, 529-530; Schwarcz 1987, 110; Ilski 1995, 50-51. In fact the available written sources (Socrat. *Hist. Eccl.* V 23 and Sozom. *Hist. Eccl.* VII 17) do not provide an accurate instruction as to where exactly was the cathedra of Selenas after Ulfilas' death and it is only a priori assumed that it was in *Nicopolis*.

residence, and not in *Durostorum*. Therefore I presume that Mercurinus-Auxentius was ordained as bishop prior to AD 383. I do not rule out that the episcopal cheirotonia might have taken place before the death of the Goth-tolerating Emperor Valens (AD 378) and might have been conducted by Ulfilas himself, while the Arian Domnitius was still the metropolitan bishop of Lower Moesia, i. e. around AD 376 (Quien 1740, 1217-1218; Zeiller 1918, 164; Fedalto 1988, 32.1.4; Ilski 1995, 21-22). At the Council of AD 381 the province was already represented by the metropolitan archbishop of Marcianopolis – Martyrius who was an enemy to the Arians and a staunch supporter of the decisions of the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea (Mansi 1960, III, 526; Quien 1740, 1217; Zeiller 1918, 164; Fedalto 1988, 31.1.3; Minčev 1987, 298; Ilski 1995, 42-43). Finally, according to an edict of AD 380 all the bishops in the Empire were obliged to observe the Nicene Symbol of faith, while Arianism was already considered a religion of the barbarians.

The fate of the bishops' seats after the Arian bishops were banished from *Scythia*, *Moesia Secunda* and *Dacia Ripensis* remains vague. Presumably one of the decisions of the Nicene Council in AD 325 was observed, which, according to Gelasius of Cyzicus, demanded that the discharged bishops should be replaced by orthodox bishops elected at a clerical council and by the laymen in the diocese (Почнов 1993, 110-111). The Third Ecumenical Council, held in the town of Ephesus in Asia Minor in AD 431, was attended by the metropolitan archbishops of *Serdica* – Iulianus, of *Marcianopolis* – Dorotheus, and the accompanying bishops from *Moesia Inferior* – Petronius from *Novae*, Marcianus from *Abritus* and Jacob from *Durostorum* (Mansi 1960, V, 1211-1214; ACO 1924, I.4, 36-46; Quien 1740, 1211-1227; Zeiller 1918, 165-168; Fedalto 1988, 32.1.3; 32.2.12; 32.6.12; Ilski 1993, 237-245; Ilski 1995, 32-33, 238-240). The absence of the prelate of *Dacia Ripensis* is understandable in view of the above mentioned considerations. The Council was convened to condemn the theses of the Patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius, severely attacked by the unbending Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, and subsequently passionate arguments flared (Labriolle, Bardy, Bréhier, Plinval 1939, 177-180; Успенский 2001, 182 sqq.; Почнов 1993, 229 sqq.; Ilski 1993, 237-245). However, many bishops from the East stood out in support of Nestorius, between whom the prelates of *Moesia* and *Scythia* – Dorotheus, the metropolitan archbishop of *Marcianopolis*, and Timotheus, archbishop of *Tomis*. During the course of the discussions the archbishop of *Scythia* (Dobroudzha) Timotheus sided with Cyril of Alexandria (Quien 1740, 1214; Mansi 1960, V, 1371; Barnea 1979, 12; Fedalto 1988, 31.1.2; Ilski 1995, 61-62). Jacob of *Dorostolon*, Iulianus of *Serdica* and Dorotheus of *Marcianopolis*, however, remained true to Nestorius, and were therefore condemned as schismatics (Mansi 1960, IV, 1426). After the end of the Council Dorotheus and Iulianus were removed from their cathedras and exiled, while no extreme penalties were imposed on the bishop of *Dorostolon*. According to J. Zeiller, the leniency demonstrated to Jacob was due to his voluntary repentance or alternatively his death at the end of the Council might have prevented his exile (Zeiller 1918, 166, not. 6). Most probably Jacob, similarly to his neighbour from *Abritus*, Marcianus, seeing that Nestorius was doomed, also took a neutral position at the final sessions, thanks to which both retained their cathedras.

It is evident that due to the limited basis of sources we are not in a position to reconstruct the ecclesiastical life in *Moesia Secunda*, *Dacia Ripensis* and *Scythia* after the Council of Ephesus. The metropolitan archbishop of the province of *Moesia Secunda* is supposed to have taken part, but his signature is absent in the Fourth Ecumenical Council, held in Chalcedon in AD 451, where the Monophysite heresy was anathemised. The contradictions between the supporters and opponents of the decisions of the Council did not abate. These loomed quite vehemently after the death of the Emperor Marcianus on 24 January 457. In this tense situation the newly elected Byzantine Emperor Leo I (457-474) sent a circular letter to the bishops of the East and of the West in order to make clear their attitude to the decisions of the Council, Monophysitism and the election of Timotheus as bishop of Alexandria. A total of 1600 bishops from the East and from the West responded, among whom there were all the superior clergymen from *Moesia Secunda* and *Scythia* (Auner 1920, 1247; Quien 1740, 1227; Zeiller 1918, 166; Labriolle, Bardy, Brèhler, Plinval 1939, 210-325; Пощов 1993, 265-278). These were Theotimus of *Tomis*, Valerianus of *Marcianopolis*, Marcianus of *Abritus*, Martyrius of *Appiaria*, Menophilus of *Durostorum*, Marcellinus of *Nicopolis*, Petrus of *Novae* and Dizas of *Odessos*, who affixed their signatures below the response desired by the Emperor condemning the Monophysitism and supporting the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon (Mansi 1960, VII, 545, 564, 777-780, 790; ACO 1924, II.5, 32; Zeiller 1918, 131, 165-173; Fedalto 1988, 32.6.2; Popescu 1994b, 212; Ilski 1993, 233-235; Ilski 1995, 43, 59).

The literary sources about the names and actions of the bishops of *Moesia Secunda* were silent for a long period after the circular letter of AD 458. There are no sources about the ecclesiastical life in *Dacia Ripensis* either. This, however, does not mean that these episcopal cathedras were closed. This was attested for instance in one of the Novels of Emperor Justinian I, issued in AD 535 in relation to the newly established archbishopric of *Iustiniana Prima*. It reads that together with other prelates from various dioceses in Illyricum, "... the bishop of *Aquae*, which is a town in the province of *Dacia Ripensis*", should be transferred to the jurisdiction of the archbishop of *Iustiniana Prima* (*Corp. Iur. Civ.* III XI 94 = ГИБИ II, 49). Although rarely, there are sources also about other bishops in this area in the 6th century and even in the 7th century, e.g. a document with the name of the prelate of *Nicopolis*, Amantius, from AD 518 (Ilski 1995, 37; Царевград-Търнов 1973, 332), the signature of John, bishop of *Durostorum*, on the concluding protocol of the Fifth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople on 2 June 553 (ACO, IV.1, 229; Fedalto 1988, 32.6.2; Ilski 1995, 36) and as a final point the above-mentioned presence of the bishop of *Bononia*, Luminosus, at the Lateran Council of AD 649 (Mansi 1969, X, 868; ГИБИ III, 198). This information vacuum of the second half of the 6th and the first half of the 7th centuries is somewhat filled with information from the diocesan lists. The so-called *Notitia* of Pseudo-Epiphanius (No 1 according to J. Darrouzès) is considered the earliest among them, and is believed to have been written during the rule of the Emperor Heraclius (AD 610-641) in the early or mid-7th century, but covers the reality of the reign of Justinian I (AD 527-565) (Darrouzès 1981, 213; ГИБИ III, 184-188; Снегаров 1956, 647 sq.).

The first thing that meets the eye is that the cathedra of the province of *Scythia* in *Tomis* was still headed not by a metropolitan archbishop, but by an archbishop without any

subordinated bishops. Anyway according to the canon archbishops had no right to have subordinated bishops. The idea that *Tomis* was assigned a metropolitan cathedra as early as the late 5th – early 6th century at the time of bishop Paternus (AD 498-520) is based on his signature under a decision of the Council of AD 520 in Constantinople: *Paternus misericordia Dei episcopus provinciae Scythiae metropolitanus*. The last word “metropolitan” (*metropolitanus*) may, however, refer to the capital city (the metropolis) of the province – *Tomis*, rather than to the metropolitan status of the bishop, i. e. to be translated as “Paternus, by God’s mercy bishop of the province of Scythia in the metropolis (= capital city)”. Indeed the same Paternus is mentioned as bishop in the engraved inscription on the silver discus found in the tomb of the Bulgarian Khan Kubrat¹⁵ (Bank 1985, 280-281; Popescu 1983, No 64). It is noteworthy that five authentic documents have survived about the last prelate of *Tomis*, known by name, Valentianus (AD 550-553), who succeeded Paternus, but all of them refer to him as bishop, never as metropolitan archbishop (Popescu 1994, 212-213; Lungu 2000, 79-82; Ilski 1995, 63-64). Even so in AD 529, the year of the first edition of the *Codex Iustinianus*, the so-called Scythian canon was still in effect. Otherwise the Law of Zeno would not have been included in it, which inter alia states that the province of *Scythia* had only one bishop – the one in *Tomis*. This was also confirmed by Georgius of Cyprus, who wrote about the same event during the same 6th century (*Cod. Iust.* I 3, 35 = ГИБИ II, 21-22, note. 1).

It has already been mentioned that the prelate of *Tomis* was titled metropolitan archbishop for the first time in Diocesan List No 3 according to J. Darrouzès, dated after AD 733, but based on an earlier prototype; in this document the prelate was said to have 14 subordinate bishops – *Anaxiopolis* (*Axiopolis*), *Kapedaon* (*Capidava*), *Bipainon* (*Beroe* or *Ibida*), *Koupros* (*Carsium* or *Troesmis*), *Nikomedeon* (*Noviodunum* – Isaccea), *Desos* (*Aegysus* – Tulcea), *Salsobia* (*Salsovia*), *Halmyrion* (*Halmyris*), *Tropaion* (*Tropaeum Traiani*), *Zeldipa* (*Zaldapa*), *Dionysoupolis* (*Dionysopolis* – Balchik), *Kalaton* (*Callatis*), *Istrion* (*Histria*) and *Konstantiana* (Enisala?) (Darrouzès 1981, 242; ГИБИ III, 194-195). It was ascertained that the prototype of the Pseudo-Epiphanius’ List (where the cathedra of *Tomis* was still headed by an archbishop) was drafted during the time of the Emperor Justinian I (AD 527-565), as well as that, between AD 550-553, the supreme priest of *Tomis* still had the title of bishop. Under these circumstances it is only logical to refer the *Notitia* No 3 according to J. Darrouzès, respectively the rise of *Tomis* to a metropolitan archbishopric, to the second half – the end of the 6th century. Against this background all of these 14 bishops subordinated to the metropolitan archbishop of *Tomis*, were active for a very short period. When the list was drafted they were registered de jure, but de facto in the end of the 7th century perhaps only the prelates of *Histria* and *Tomis* were active. Meanwhile during the Early Byzantine period (4th – 7th c.) the Roman Pope, the Patriarch of Constantinople, and quite a few of the metropolitan archbishops were also referred to as bishops, which can be seen in their stamps (Laurent 1972, 156-157, 163-164, No 1806, 1814, 1822). Hence the

¹⁵ About the Christian belief of the early Bulgarian rulers (khans) of the Dulo dynasty see Атанасов 1997, 76-93; Атанасов 1999, 26-46; Атанасов 2004, 33-39.

exact date of the rise of *Tomis*' cathedra into a metropolitan archbishopric, respectively – terminus post quem of the prototype of *Notitia* No 3 according to Darrouzès, cannot as yet be determined accurately on the basis of the existing sources. The available facts, however, suggest that this happened only towards the end of the rule of the Emperor Justinian I, if not under Justin II (AD 565-578).

Unlike the province of *Scythia*, in *Moesia Secunda* the *Notitia* of Pseudo-Epiphanius (No 1 according to J. Darrouzès) registers a metropolitan archbishop in the capital city of *Marcianopolis* with 5 suffragan bishops – i. e. the tradition from previous periods was still observed. In respect of *Moesia Secunda* the document reads, “The metropolitan archbishop of *Marcianopolis* has under his subordination 5 towns or bishoprics, namely: the bishop of *Dorostolon*, the bishop of *Transmarisca*, the bishop of *Novae*, the bishop of *Zekedespa*, the bishop of *Skaria* (*Appiaria*)” (Darrouzès 1981, 213; ГИБИ III, 186, 188-189). It is notable that the bishop of *Odessos*, who during the 5th century was subordinated to the metropolitan archbishop of *Marcianopolis*, was taken out of this diocese and was proclaimed autocephalous archbishop. Worthy of note is also that the bishops of *Abritus*, *Nicopolis ad Istrum* and *Sexaginta Prista*, known from documents of the 5th century, were no longer included in the list. Instead (fig. 1) the cathedras of *Zakedespa* (*Sucidava* at Satu Nou in Romania, at about 20 km to the north-east of Silistra) and *Transmarisca* (Tutrakan) were listed.

Without completely refuting the idea of J. Zeiller (Zeiller 1918, 168) about the merger of the cathedras of *Appiaria* and *Sexaginta Prista* or the suggested transfer of the cathedra to *Nicopolis* in AD 405 (Socrat. Hist. Eccl. VII 36), I would like to put forward one more hypothesis: for example the bishopric of *Sexaginta Prista* might have been relocated to the nearby Danubian town *Transmarisca* at about the mid-6th century. At the same time, during the rule of Justinian I, when the above mentioned ecclesiastical organisation is believed to have taken place, *Abritus* and *Nicopolis ad Istrum* were specifically recorded in the written sources (even as cities by Hierocles) and seemingly there is no logic for these towns to be deprived of their bishop cathedras. However, during the invasions of the Avars in the second half of the 6th century many big centres in the inland territory of *Scythia* and of *Moesia Secunda* were destroyed and might not have been completely restored (Димитров 1993, 3-19; Атанасов 2001, 185-187; Madgearu 1997, 19). Hence some of them might have parted with their bishop cathedras. It is difficult to ascertain exactly when and where this happened, because the so-called *Notitia* of Pseudo-Epiphanius cannot be dated absolutely accurately. Nevertheless there are one or two reliable markers, which I have already pointed out, and in this case they are of crucial significance. I mean Georgius of Cyprus and even more so the *Codex Iustinianus*, completed in AD 529. It was deliberately emphasised that the capital city of the province of *Scythia* – *Tomis* was still without a metropolitan bishop, as it was during the 4th – 5th centuries (*Cod. Iust.* I 3, 35 = ГИБИ II, 21-22, note 1). In this respect the information fully corresponds to the Pseudo-Epiphanius' List (No 1 according to Darrouzès), where the cathedra was said to be headed by an archbishop.

In *Dacia Ripensis*, unlike *Moesia Secunda* and *Scythia*, we can outline sustainable traditions

and lack of any substantial changes in the organisation of the church between the 4th and the 6th centuries. It is supposed that during the entire period the prelate of the metropolis of *Ratiaria* had four suffragan bishops, respectively in *Oescus*, *Castra Martis*, *Aquae* and *Bononia*. It was already pointed out that the suffragan bishops Valens of *Oescus*, Claudius of *Castra Martis* and Cyriacus of *Aquae* participated in the Council of *Serdica*, together with the bishop of *Ratiaria*, Silvester. Their existence was indirectly verified in Justinian's Novel about *Iustiniana Prima* from AD 535 and the acts of the Lateran Council of AD 649, making it clear that the bishoprics of *Aquae* and *Bononia* still functioned.

In conclusion, it is appropriate to mention in respect of this case one more correlation of Hierocles with the *Notitia* of Pseudo-Epiphanius (No 1 according to Darrouzès) and Diocesan List No 3 (according to J. Darrouzès), and this should be done against the background of Zeno's Novel, requiring every town to have a bishop. It was already mentioned that in the list of Hierocles (dated to about AD 527) 6 cities are registered in *Moesia Secunda*, and all of them without any exception in the 5th century, and most probably also in the beginning of the 6th century, had bishop cathedras. It is usually assumed that the Pseudo-Epiphanius' List was compiled at approximately the same time as the list of Hierocles, i. e. in the beginning of Justinian's reign. However, on comparison a number of discrepancies can be noticed as far as the province of *Moesia Secunda* is concerned. In the *Notitia* of Pseudo-Epiphanius there is no mention of the bishop cathedras from the 5th century, *Nicopolis ad Istrum* and *Abritus*, registered as cities by Hierocles in the beginning of the 6th century. Instead *Transmarisca* and *Zekedespa* (*Sucidava* at Satu Nou) were registered in *Moesia Secunda*. This inconsistency suggests that there is at least a little gap in the time when the two documents were drafted. This is to say that if Hierocles is dated to about AD 527, then the prototype of the *Notitia* of Pseudo-Epiphanius dates back to at least a decade later – sufficient time for changes to evolve. There is another line of reasoning as well, namely that under Justinian I the Novel of Zeno (that each town shall have a bishop) was not strictly adhered to. If this was the case, it would not have been in the legislature of Justinian, where it was diligently cited in the edition of AD 529, coinciding in time with the List of Hierocles of AD 527. In this context it can be presumed that some time after AD 527, as a result of certain cataclysms, *Abritus* and *Nicopolis ad Istrum* declined and *Transmarisca* and *Sucidava* rose in their place as towns, respectively bishoprics. Differences can also be found when comparing the list of cities compiled by Hierocles with Diocesan List No 3 according to J. Darrouzès, where the prelate of *Tomis* had for the first time suffragans, i. e. it already enjoyed the status of a metropolitan archbishop. In respect of *Scythia* Hierocles recorded *Tomis*, *Dionysopolis*, *Acrae* (Kaliakra), *Callatis*, *Histros*, *Constantiana*, *Zaldapa*, *Tropaeum*, *Axiopolis*, *Capidava*, *Carsium*, *Troesmis*, *Noviodunum*, *Aegyssus* and *Halmyris* as cities (Hier. Synecd. 637, 1-15 = ГИБИ II, 90). All of them, with the exception of *Acrae*, had bishop cathedras in List No 3 according to J. Darrouzès (Darrouzès 1981, 242 = ГИБИ III, 194-195). At the same time, *Bipainon-Beroe* and *Salsobia-Salsovia* were recorded there as bishoprics, but were not mentioned among the cities registered by Hierocles. Apart from the appearance of 14 suffragan bishops in *Scythia*, Diocesan List No 3 according to J. Darrouzès differs from

Diocesan List No 1 according to J. Darrouzès also in respect of the province of *Moesia Secunda*. Instead of *Marcianopolis*, *Odessos* was pointed as a metropolitan centre¹⁶, and instead of the bishoprics of *Dorostolon*, *Transmarisca*, *Novae*, *Zacedespa* and *Appiaria* the following were recorded: *Appiaria*, *Durostorum*, *Abritus*, *Nicopolis* and *Palaistene (Palastolon)* (Darrouzès 1981, 241 = ГИБИ III, 194-195). These differences may be due to an error resulting from the late compilation in the 8th century (which is the date of the edition which has reached us). The appearance of the bishopric of *Palastolon*, not referred to in any other sources, is noteworthy. Probably the author had access to other sources (it is even believed that his major primary source was not the same as the one used by the editor of the Pseudo-Epiphanius' List), which provided information about the cathedras actually functioning in *Nicopolis* and *Abritus* during the 5th century. Perhaps it reflected also certain tangible changes. Thus for instance, according to the archaeological studies, *Marcianopolis* declined after AD 586 (Ангелов 2002, 108), while *Odessos* survived up to AD 626 (Ирещанев 2002, 73). Whatever the reason, the substantial discrepancies between the two lists of bishops are indicative of a relatively long gap in the time they were drafted.

The recognized discrepancies between the lists of Hierocles, the Pseudo-Epiphanius' *Notitia* (No 1 according to J. Darrouzès) and the list from the time of the Isaurian dynasty (No 3 according to J. Darrouzès) can hardly be considered accidental. First, there is definitely a gap in the time they were drafted. For Hierocles there is a sure terminus – AD 527, the beginning of the rule of Justinian I. The discrepancies with the Pseudo-Epiphanius' List suggest that the latter was drafted at least a decade later, probably during the second third of the 6th century. Still earlier in time is List No 3 according to J. Darrouzès. It must be noted that according to the archaeological excavations, in most of the bishop's towns in *Scythia* (*Capidava*, *Axiopolis*, *Beroe*, *Aegyssus*, *Halmyris*, *Histria*, *Tropaeum Traiani*, *Acrae*) and in individual centres in *Moesia Secunda* (*Sucidava*) big fires and devastation were registered around the mid-6th century, related to the great invasion of the Kutriguri in AD 559 (Торбаров 2002, 101, 110, 113, 120, 162, 182, 232, 285, 307; Торбаров 2002a, 54). This provides serious grounds the reconstruction works recorded by Procopius in "On the Buildings" to be referred to the time after AD 559, when this part of the work should have been written (De aedif. IV 11) (Торбаров 2002a, 49-55). Knowing for sure that in AD 553 the prelate of *Tomis* did not as yet have suffragan bishops and that the major towns in the province were reconstructed and renovated after AD 559, then it can be assumed that only during the last third of the 6th century *Scythia* was granted the right to have a metropolitan archbishop and 14 bishop cathedras. Which is to say that Diocesan List No 3 according to J. Darrouzès was compiled towards the end of the rule of Justinian and more probably during the time of his successor, Justin II (AD 565-578). The organisation of the church at the beginning of the 7th century, which was registered in the Pseudo-Epiphanius' List, de jure survived till the establishment of the Bulgarian Kingdom in AD 681. However, *de facto* the reality was

¹⁶ It is not known whether the *quaestura exercitus* established in AD 536 with *Odessos* as capital city, covering *Scythia*, *Second Moesia*, *Cyprus*, the *Cyclades* and *Caria*, has anything to do with the designation of *Odessos* as a metropolitan centre in List No 3 according to J. Darrouzès.

different, because there are hints (particularly archaeological and numismatic), that it started disintegrating as early as the end of Justinian's reign especially in the Danubian provinces and in reality it ceased to exist after Heraclius. Indeed, the metropolis of *Marcianopolis* with 5 bishoprics was registered in the above mentioned Diocesan List (No 3 according to J. Darrouzès), dated after AD 733.¹⁷ The bishop's cathedras in *Moesia Secunda* and *Scythia* were still registered also in lists from the 9th century (Diocesan List No 4 according to J. Darrouzès: Darrouzès 1981, 260), however, it had been noted for a long time that they had nothing to do with the reality, but were only nostalgic replicas of previous realities (Darrouzès 1981, 260 = ГИБИ III, 188-189).

Thanks to the consistent archaeological research we can state unarguably that the coin circulation in the bishop centres of *Abritus*, *Ratiaria*, *Oescus* and *Marcianopolis* was discontinued after the Avar invasion of AD 586 (Ангелов 2002, 16; Иванов, Ковачева 2002, 33; Дзанев 2007, 77). In *Novae*, *Trophaeum Traiani*, *Axiopolis*, *Odessos* (?), *Ibida*, *Aegyssus*, *Halmyris*, *Noviodunum* and *Constantiana* (Enisala?) this happened during the invasion of the Avars of AD 614-615 (Димитров 1997, 147; Ангелов 2002, 108; Лазаренко 1998-1999, 150-166; Димитров 1992, 87; Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1995, 159; Poenaru-Bordea, Ocheşeanu, Nicolae 1989, 60-72; Chiriac 1995, 134-135; Preda, Nubar 1973, 227; Торбатов 2002, 101, 182, 159, 192, 307), and in *Tomis*, *Durostorum*, *Callatis*, *Histria*, and in all probability also in *Bononia* – as a result of the invasion of Asparukh's Proto-Bulgarians only at the end of the 7th century (Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1995, 159; Chiriac 1995, 133-135; Atanassov 1996, 3; Mănucu-Adameştesnu 1991, 299-303). With the exception of *Durostorum*, there are no traces of habitation, ceramics and coins in these Early Christian bishop's towns during the 8th – 9th centuries which is the period when the above mentioned Diocesan List No 4 according to J. Darrouzès dates back to.

In consideration of the thus established historical realities the following conclusions can be drawn:

* The metropolis of *Tomis* with subordinated bishops in the province of *Scythia* appeared in the last third of the 6th century;

* The mid-6th century (after AD 553) is the upper limit for the prototype of the Pseudo-Epiphanius' *Notitia* (No 1 according to Darrouzès), because it contains no Scythian bishoprics;

* The prototype of Diocesan List No 3 according to Darrouzès, where the metropolis of *Tomis* was registered with 14 suffragan bishops, was compiled after AD 559 and almost certainly in the last decades of the 6th century.

The memories of the ancient glorious bishop's cathedras, however, survived in Constantinople. This is attested both by these lists from the 8th – 9th centuries, and by the fact that after Byzantium conquered the north-eastern lands of the First Bulgarian Kingdom in AD 971, the Empire made an attempt to restore the diocesan organisation of the 5th – 6th century (Атанасов 2004, 325-338; Атанасов 2007, 232-246).

¹⁷ Darrouzès 1981, 241. In this list (No 3 according to Darrouzès), compiled towards the mid-9th century, for the first and only time the centre of the metropolis is *Odessos*, and not *Marcianopolis* (Nicolova 1998, 95).

D. Archaeological monuments, related to the church organisation along the *limes* in the Lower Danubian lands

Archaeologists have already found Early Christian basilicas along the Lower Danube Limes in the bishop towns of *Halmyris* (Zahariade, Bounegru 2003, 117-126), *Histria* (Suceveanu 1973, 85-90), *Noviodunum* (Vulpe, Barnea 1968, 476-477, fig. 12; Lungu 2000, 75, fig. 20), *Troesmis* (Vulpe, Barnea 1968, 480, fig. 23; Lungu 2000, 74, fig. 25), *Ibida* (Lungu 2000, 75, fig. 27), *Dinogetia* (Vulpe, Barnea 1968, 477; Lungu 2000, 75, fig. 18), *Capidava* (Lungu 2000, 75-76), *Axiopolis* (Barnea 1979, 44; Lungu 2000, 75, fig. 1; Baumann 2005, 51-52, fig. 4), *Tropaeum Traiani*¹⁸, *Zaldapa* (Горбагов 2003, 99-101, fig. 13), *Sucidava* (Lungu 2000, 75, fig. 22), *Durostorum* (Атанасов 2007, 96-106), *Abritus* (Дзанев 2006, 95-106; Dzanev 2010, 15-17), *Novae* (Biernacki, Medeksza 1995, 9-23; Kalinowski 1999, 65-73; Бернацки, Кленнина 2002, 97-105) and *Nicopolis ad Istrum* (Nicopolis ad Istrum 1995, 145-173, fig. 60-61). So far, however, they have not had the chance to come across churches in the bishoprics of *Carsium*, *Salsovia*, *Aegyssus*, *Appiaria*, *Sexaginta Prista*, *Transmarisca*, *Castra Martis*, *Oescus*, *Ratiaria*, *Bononia* and *Aquae*, but on the other hand churches were unearthed in the hinterland of the bishop towns – respectively in the limes fortresses and settlements at Niculițel (fig. 5), *Argamum* (Lungu 2000, 75, fig. 22), Slava Rusă (Lungu 2000, 75, fig. 4; Baumann 2005, 70, fig. 12), Golesh (*Sf. Cyrił*) (Атанасов 1997, 127-135; Атанасов 2007, 55-68) (fig. 15), *Iatrus* (Иванов 1976, 6-22), Shumen (Antonova 1970, 6-9), Han Krum (Антонова 1968, 57-65; Балабанов 2006, 71-76), Byala (Yotov 2010, 22-23), etc. Almost all of them belong to the same architectural type – three-nave basilicas with narthex. It is difficult to discern whether they were bishop basilicas. They were identified as cathedral temples on the basis of their dimensions, impressive interior and exterior, location, existing atrium and most of all of a bishop residence near the temple. In line with these criteria the following basilicas can be recognised as bishop's cathedrals with a good deal of certainty, namely the basilicas in *Durostorum* (fig. 18), *Abritus* (fig. 19), *Zaldapa*, *Tropaeum Traiani* (fig. 20), *Ibida*, *Histria* (fig. 21), *Halmyris* (fig. 2), *Nicopolis ad Istrum* (?) (fig. 13), *Novae* (fig. 22) and *Troesmis* (fig. 23); they are big in size, located in the central part of the towns and most of them had atriums. And finally, in *Durostorum* (fig. 25), *Abritus* (fig. 29), *Tropaeum Traiani*

¹⁸ It is contestable which of the three big basilicas in *Tropaeum Traiani* was the bishop's basilica. It is commonly assumed that this was the so-called Marble Basilica or Basilica B (Barnea 1979, 154-158; Vulpe, Barnea 1968, 468-471, fig. 2, 9; Lungu 2000, 72-74, fig. 15-17). Its location in the corner of the fortress and the lack of buildings (residence?) around it make this statement rather arguable. In my opinion it is much more probable that the double basilicas A and D, flanking the main street (*via principalis*) are the bishop's centre of the town during the second half of the 6th century. The *diambulatorium* and the crypt in the apse of basilica D, the *martyrium* below the altar of basilica A and the buildings to the north of it suggest that this is the place of the bishop's residence. Moreover, even J. Hubert, in a special study of double cathedrals, emphasized that as a rule these were typical for bishop's centres. According to him, the existence of two churches is necessitated by the fact that usually bishop's cathedrals are built at places related to the cult to martyrs or the carrying of their relics in towns. Thus one of the basilicas functions as a cathedral bishop's temple, and the second one – as a temple-martyrium (Hubert 1977, 168-176). In the end, basilica D is the largest in size in *Tropaeum* and, similarly to the bishop's basilica in *Histria*, has a transept.

(fig. 20), *Troesmis* (fig. 23), *Histria* (fig. 24), *Halmyris* (fig. 2) and *Novae* (fig. 21), a bishop residence was found next to the bishop temple. On the other hand, the existing residence is an indication *sui generis* that there was a cathedral basilica. Most of the residences were localised very close to the temple – in *Novae* (Biernacki, Medeksza 1995, 9-23; Kalinowski 1999, 65-73; Бернацки, Кленина 2002, 97-105), *Tropaeum Traiani*¹⁹, *Troesmis*²⁰, *Abritus*²¹, while these in *Durostorum* (Atanassov 2004-2005, 275-287; Атанасов 2007, 103-107) and *Histria* (Popescu 1994c, 317-318; Lungu 2000, 71-72, fig. 12) were relatively remote (at about 60 m) from the basilica. Apparently they observed the principle *Ut episcopus non longe ab ecclesia hospitium habeat* (the bishop should not live far away from the church), which is repeatedly emphasised by ecclesiastical writers and sealed by express decisions of the ecclesiastical councils in the 4th – 5th centuries (Mansi 1969, III, 952; Pallas 1968, 335). One of the identifying criteria for (bishop's) residences is the imposing hall considered to be a kind of its emblem. Unfortunately in *Tropaeum* and *Halmyris* the bishop's residences have not been entirely studied and for the time being the layout and the dimensions of the central halls cannot be commented upon. They were usually extended with exedras in the form of semi-circular apses, known from the bishop palaces in *Ephesus*, *Side*, *Aphrodisias*, *Stobi*, *Salona*, *Tsarichin grad* (rectangular), etc. (Janin 1962, 131-150; Pallas 1968, 335-350; Testini, Cantino, Pani 1989, 14-17, fig. 2; Bovini 1968, 85-91; Rizzardi 1989, 711-272, fig. 3, 5; Sodini 1989, 411, fig. 5, 7; Müller-Wiener 1989, 657-709; Biernacki, Medeksza 1995, 11-17, fig. 2-9; Бернацки, Кленина 2002, 97-105). The orientation of the apse does not follow any rules – in *Ephesus* it faces south, in *Side*, *Novae* and *Aphrodisias* it faces east, in *Stobi* it faces southeast, in *Salona* and *Tsarichin grad* it faces north. Anyway exedras can be seen in the houses of the wealthy and the palaces of the local secular aristocracy (these are some of the prototypes for the bishop palaces, but usually there are niches for statues in them, and these are not to be found in the bishop exedras (Kuzmanov 2000, 27-37, fig. 20-21; Müller-Wiener 1989, 655-656). In this case more attention should be paid to the apses of the bishop's halls in *Novae*, *Abritus* and *Histria*. In view of the semi-circular apse unearthed subsequently with an altar in its eastern wall, the scholars researching the residence in *Novae* relinquished their initial idea that this was the representative hall of the bishop palace and assumed that this was a second basilica (Бернацки, Кленина 2002, 97-105, pic. 3). Analogous are the cases in *Abritus* and *Histria*, where in view of the existing apses in the east, it was unanimously agreed that these were second churches or chapels. Certainly, double basilicas were localised in many bishop's centres (Hubert 1977, 168-176), which, however, were of similar dimensions, while in *Novae*, *Abritus* and *Histria* these buildings are several times smaller than the cathedral temple. Therefore, in my opinion, it is quite likely that this building combined two functions – chapel of the bishop and a representative

¹⁹ See above note 17.

²⁰ Vulpe, Barnea 1968, 480, fig. 23. It is not impossible to have a bishop centre here with the pair of basilicas typical for this structure.

²¹ In my opinion the bishop's residence is the so-called Small basilica, north of the narthex of the big three-nave basilica. For analogies see Hubert 1977, 168-176.

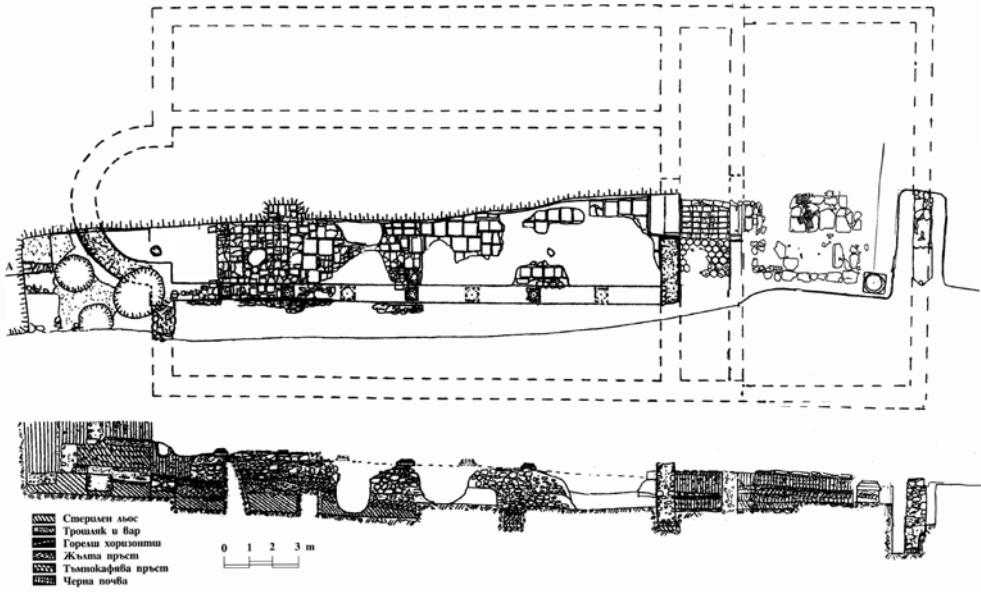


Fig. 18. The basilica in *Durostorum* (Silistra) (after G. Atanassov)

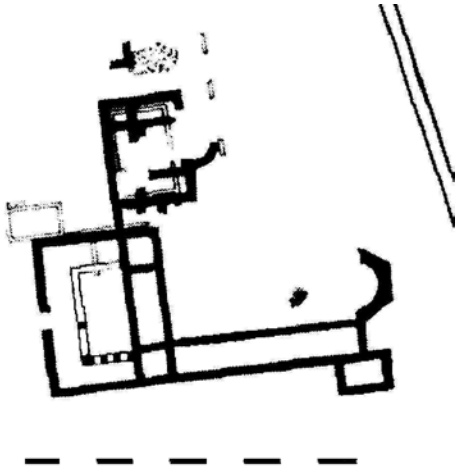
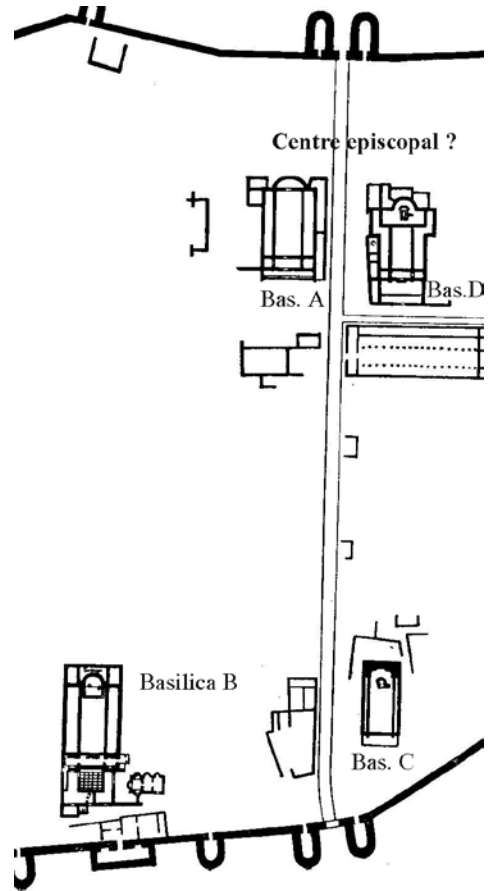


Fig. 19. The basilica in *Abritus* (Razgrad) and the bishop's palace to the north of the narthex (after G. Dzanev)

hall of the bishop's palace. Nevertheless, a similar layout, dimensions and an apse in the eastern wall can be seen in the representative halls of the bishop palaces in *Stobi*, *Resafa* and *Hermion*, situated next to the very bishop's basilicas (Pallas 1968, 348-349; Müller-Wiener 1989, 657-658, Abb. 2). The hall in *Hermion*, just like the ones in *Novae*, *Histria* and *Abritus*, is a chapel with an apse and an altar table.

Fig. 20. The basilicas in *Tropaeum Traiani*
(after I. Barnea)



It is interesting that so far along the Lower Danube Limes no unambiguous monastic building has been registered²², in spite of the relations of the bishop's institution with the monastic abodes, where to a large extent reserves were created for the church. Moreover, literary evidence can also be brought up about the eastern traditions in the spread of monasticism in *Scythia* and *Moesia Secunda* during the second half of the 4th – 6th centuries. The beginning is usually associated with the well-known monk by the name of Audius, who initially lived in Mesopotamia or more likely in Syria. During the rule of Constantius II he was sent on exile to Dobroudzha, where he laid the foundations of a monastery (PGr XLII, 369-373; Zeiller 1918, 419-420; Schwarcz 1987, 107-108; Ilski 1995, 15-16; Telea 2003, 269). His followers, Uranius and Silvanus, organised a sect of monks named "Audiani" in Scythia, who were anthropomorphists and lived in isolation in abodes far away from big towns. It is argued that during the 5th century the Audiani were registered in Syria and Dobroudzha, but under the rule of the Emperor Zeno they were excommunicated by

²² There are certain suspicions about the complex in Slava Rusă, see Lungu 2000, 75, fig. 4.

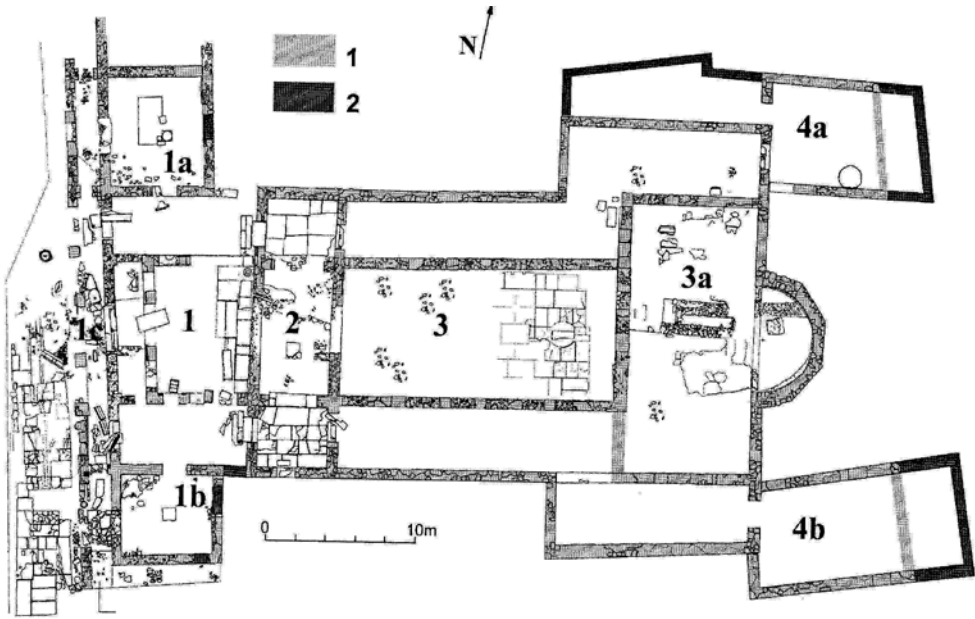


Fig. 21. The bishop's basilica in *Histria* (after A. Suceveanu)

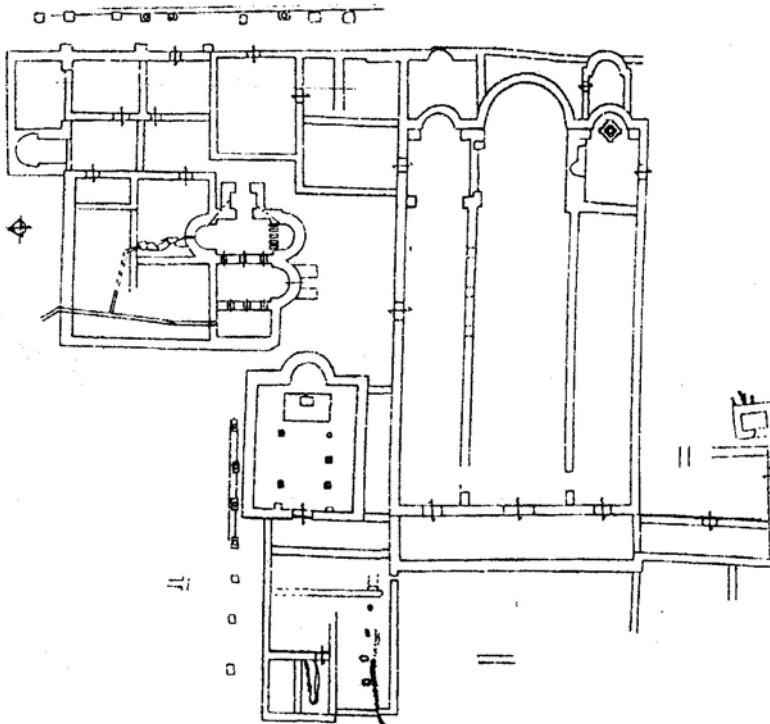


Fig. 22. The bishop's basilica and the bishop's residence in *Novae* (after A. Biernacki)

Fig. 23. Plan of *Troesmis* with the basilicas (after I. Barnea)

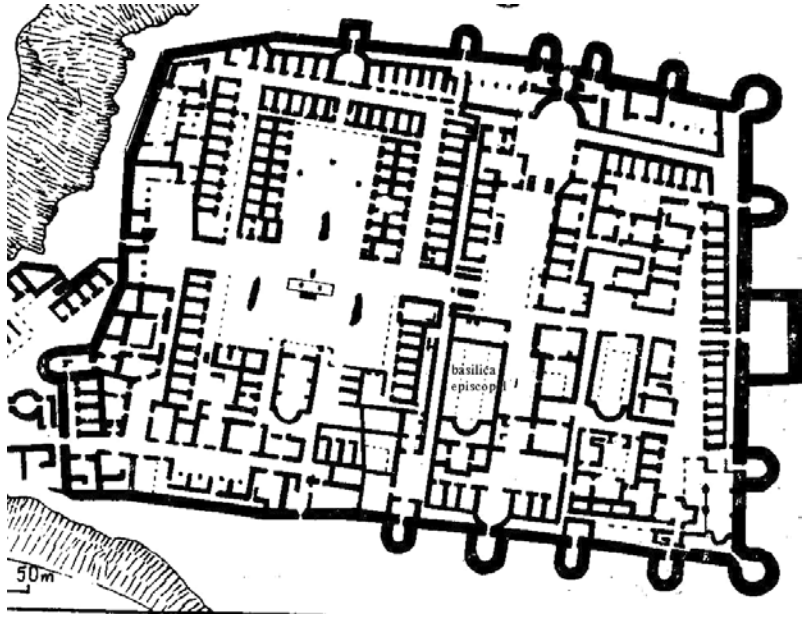
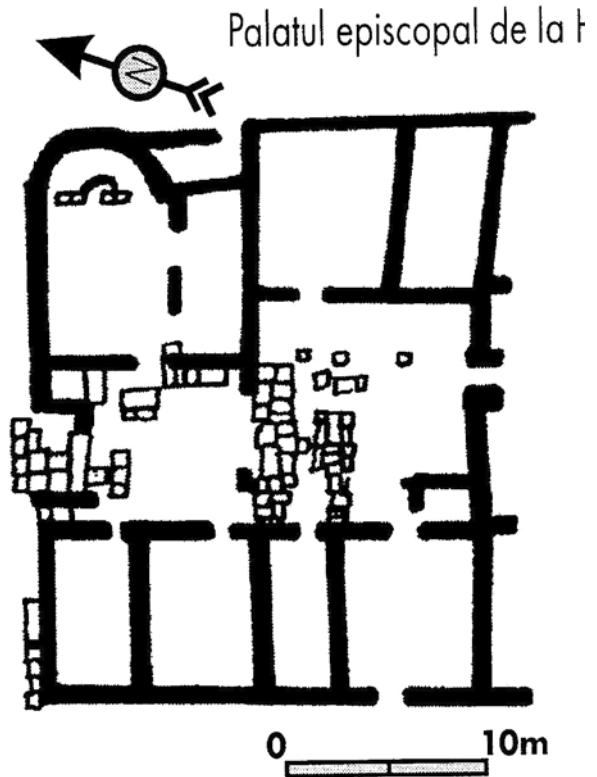


Fig. 24. Plan of the bishop's residence in *Histria* (after E. Popescu)



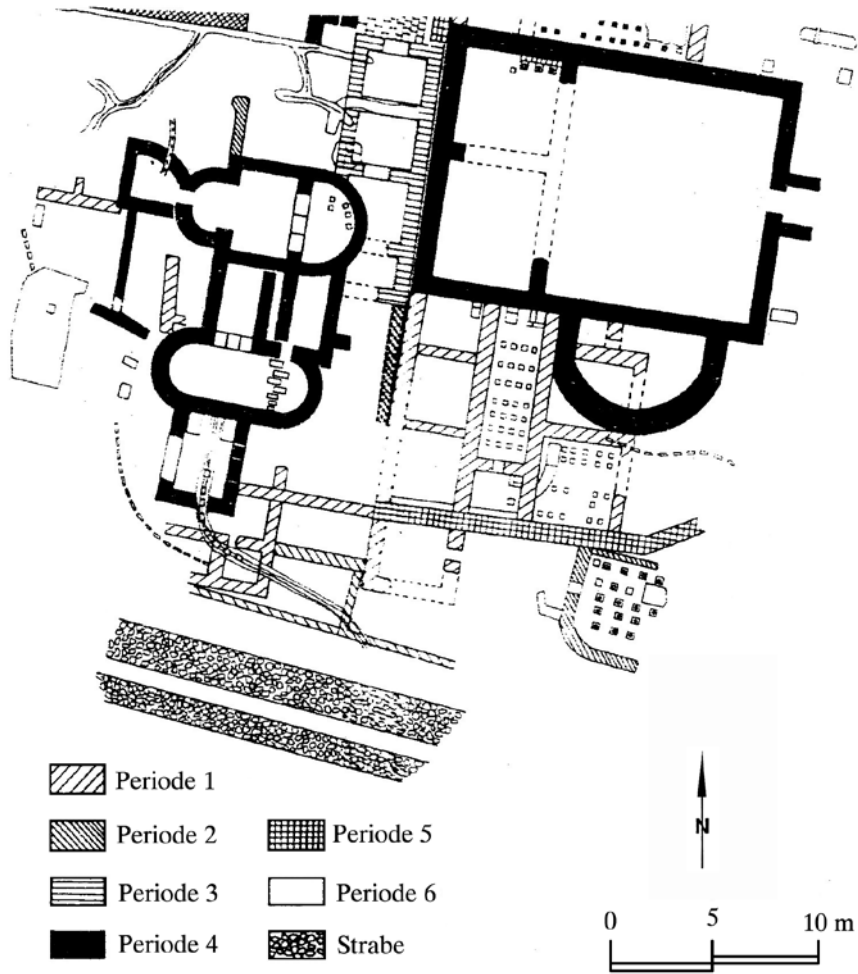


Fig. 25. Plan of the bishop's residence in *Durostorum* (after P. Donevski and G. Atanassov)

the church²³. Exactly at this time St. John Cassian started his activities in Dobroudzha – one of the most eminent European monks in the beginning of the 5th century.²⁴ Dionysius Exiguus was a follower of his, who according to Cassiodorus was a Roman of Scythian origin, speaking Latin and Greek (Barnea 1979, 16-17; Duță 2003, 282-289; Smolak 1987, 27). Literary sources evidence a wide spiritual and political activity of monks from *Scythia*

²³ Puech 1950, 910-914; Bareille 1923, 2266; Zeiller 1918, 420; Schwarcz 1987, 108; Telea 2003, 270; Ilski 1995, 16. There is evidence that also among the Goths along the Lower Danube in the late 4th century there were followers of Audius.

²⁴ Guy 1961, 11; Chadwick 1968, 9-15; Barnea 1979, 16-17; Telea 2003, 270-275. About the authors challenging the origin of John Cassian in Dobrudzha, see Smolak 1987, 24-26.

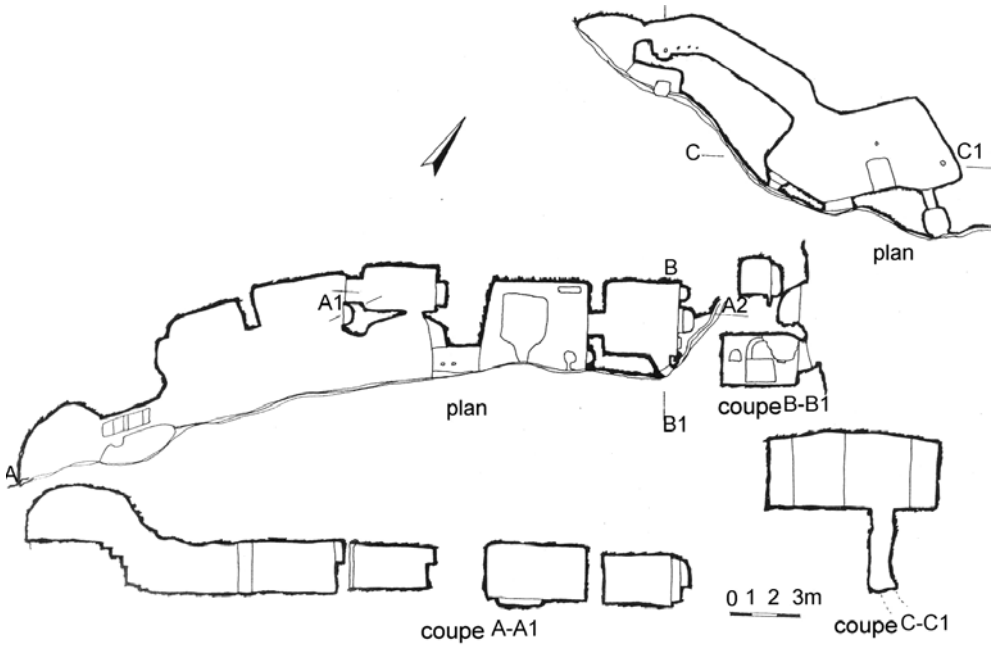


Fig. 26. The rock monastery of the 5th – 6th century near the fortress of the village of Balik, to the east of *Durostorum* (*Adina*) (plan and photo after G. Atanassov)

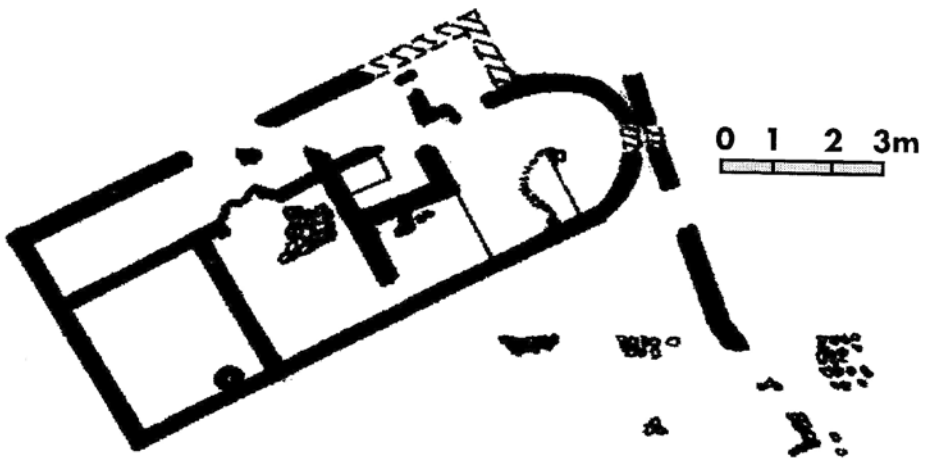


Fig. 27. Plan of the church near Telița, district of Tulcea (after V. Baumann)

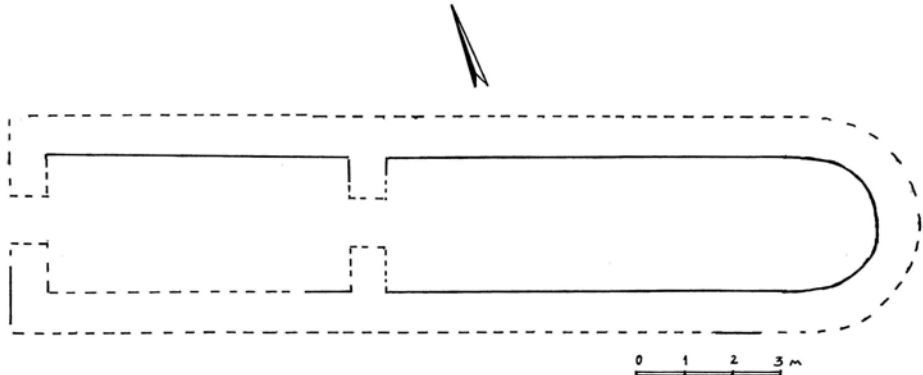


Fig. 28. Plan of the church near Pop Rusanovo, district of Silistra (after G. Atanasov)

(*Minor*) during the time of Anastasius I and Justinian I (Duchesne 1925, 134; Barnea 1979, 15-16; Nifon 2003, 239-242). Nonetheless, so far during archaeological excavations in Dobroudzha and the Lower Danube lands no monastery, constructed during the 4th – 6th centuries, has been indisputably localised and identified. For the time being this gap is filled solely by the rock monasteries from the 5th – 6th centuries along Suha River (fig. 26) (at the border between the province of *Scythia* and *Moesia Secunda*), Dumbraveni (at about 20 km to the south of *Tropaeum Traiani*) and along the northern Black Sea coastline (Атанасов 1991, 33-43; Chiriac, Papasima 2000, 222-231; Atanasov 2011; Атанасов 2007, 109-118).

In conclusion I will bring up archaeological evidence that in the late 4th – 5th centuries Christianity was prevalent not only in the towns and fortresses, but it was widely spread also in the rural areas. The small single-nave churches and narthexes in Telița (near Tulcea in *Scythia*) (Baumann 2006, 830-831, Taf. 32, fig. 10; Baumann 2005, 63-70) (fig. 27) and the village of Pop Rusanovo (near Silistra in *Moesia Secunda*) (Атанасов 2010a, 14-15) (fig. 28), in rural areas far away from the urban life, indirectly confirm this tendency. Apart from everything else, this is an indirect proof of the absolute triumph of Christianity along the Lower Danube Limes.

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