

PROCEEDINGS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL ROMAN AND LATE ANTIQUE THRACE CONFERENCE



1892 - 1921 - 1948

SOFIA 2024

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National Archaeological Institute
with Museum
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences



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On the covers: Massive Tetrarchic turret in *Deultum*, interior, eastern wall (photo: L. Vagalinski); *hedera* carved on the seats of *Philippopolis*' theatre (photo: N. Sharankov).

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL ROMAN AND LATE ANTIQUE THRACE CONFERENCE

“CONFLICTS AND CATASTROPHES IN
ROMAN AND LATE ANTIQUE THRACE”
(BURGAS, 12TH – 16TH OCTOBER 2020)

EDITED BY
LYUDMIL VAGALINSKI, MILENA RAYCHEVA

SOFIA 2024

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Preface

The fourth edition of the International “Roman and Late Antique Thrace” (RaLATH) Conference was carried out in a hybrid format in Burgas, Bulgaria, in 2020. It proved a challenging undertaking in a year marked by COVID-19 restrictions, which was nevertheless fulfilled successfully thanks to the traditionally excellent partnership between Burgas Municipality and the National Archaeological Institute with Museum – Sofia.

This time, the conference theme focused on conflicts and catastrophes – a rather thought-provoking topic in our opinion, the discussion of which is crucial for the deeper understanding of turbulent events that shaped the fate of ancient Thrace, and for the establishment of chronologies.

We are grateful to all participants who contributed to this discussion in various ways and especially to those who submitted their manuscripts for publication in the present volume.

At the same time, we are looking forward with confidence to our next meetings within the framework of this Bulgarian-Greek-Turkish scientific initiative and their respective proceedings volumes. Because, as we are well aware: *scripta manent!*

3rd December 2024
The editors

Conflicts, Catastrophes, Chronologies

An Archaeology of Catastrophe and Resilience in Aegean Thrace: Environmental Risks and Human-Inflicted Hazards

Vasilis EVANGELIDIS

Abstract: The increase in recent years of studies stressing the impacts of natural disasters, pandemics or conflicts on ancient societies indicates the significant effect that these had on cultural histories. Thus, the ability of ancient societies to adapt successfully to catastrophic features of their natural and man-made environment in a sustainable fashion becomes elementary in any attempt to understand change and development. The south part of ancient Thrace, the main passage towards the East, had its own shares of catastrophes either these were natural events or human-made destructions. Floods, pandemics, earthquakes, conflicts are beginning to be recognized as key factors within the process of cultural evolution and in the shaping of the environment. The overall aim of this article is to critically examine the role (direct or indirect) of extreme catastrophic events (natural processes or results of conflicts) in the area of Aegean Thrace in causing change, reaction, contraction in the settlement strategy of the area during the Imperial period.

Key words: catastrophe, destruction, environment, conflict, resilience.

INTRODUCTION: CATASTROPHE, DESTRUCTION AND RESILIENCE

Catastrophe and destruction, either natural or caused by human agency (conflicts – raids) is a basic parameter of the development of human habitus. Disasters and risks have substantial social and psychological impact (Ungar 2011), which reflect not only the impact characteristics such as the magnitude and severity, but also the pre-existing social and economic vulnerabilities (Torrence / Grattan 2002). The increase in recent years of studies stressing the impacts of disasters and hazards on ancient societies indicates the significant effect that these have on understanding cultural histories (Laoupi 2016; Gould 2007). Over the years, different definitions have been put forward about what a disaster is, but they all seem to converge that the critical and, quite often, quantitative element of a disaster is the human group itself, its habitat and the decision strategies that this group makes after the event (Torrence / Grattan 2002, 5-7).

More recently, resilience and persistence are also beginning to be recognized as key factors within the process (Bottrell 2009). Resilience can have varying conceptualizations in different contexts and disciplines (Middleton 2017) but it is increasingly used to frame research in archaeology as a term related to the capacity of a system to absorb the shock and to sustain and develop its fundamental function, structure, identity, through recovery or reorganization in a new context. The em-

ployment of the term as a means to describe the process of reactions against extreme catastrophic events (Ungar 2011) appears to be extremely intriguing because it implies a conscious act, that of a positive reaction, which can allow us to view the archaeology of an area under a new scope and therefore phrase a totally new set of questions or address new issues – questions such as:

To what extent did severe events have a significant effect on habitation and settlement patterns? What role did these dangers play in short- and long-term settlement strategies? What were the potential effects of the different hazards on human responses?

Responding to the call of the editors to reflect on catastrophe and conflict, this paper aims to explore the impact of natural and man-infllicted hazards on landscapes and settlement organization during the Imperial period in the area of Aegean Thrace (Loukopoulou 2004). The geomorphology of the area (Yassoglou et al. 2017, 71-85; Tsiafakis / Evangelidis 2021) and its character as the main passage towards the East (Lolos 2007), assured that the different groups of people living here (**fig. 1**) experienced their own share of hazards and catastrophes, natural or man-made. Given the different ethno-cultural contexts that coexisted in the area (Baralis 2008; for the Imperial period, see Evangelidis 2020), this is a field of study that presents challenges in interpretation unprecedented in Greek archaeology. One of these challenges is for instance to describe how the different groups living in the area reacted to natural hazards or destructive events. Given the importance of exploring how hazards are spatially distributed within different regions in the Roman world, including Roman Thrace, this article hopes to provide a first step for better understanding of the nature and scale of residents' vulnerability and reaction to natural and anthropogenic risks.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL FACTOR: FLOODS AND DISEASES

Natural hazards and disasters like volcanic eruptions or extreme seismic events were experienced by ancient societies with the same shock, awe and fear that we experience them today (Stiros / Jones 1996). Despite the fact that the area of Aegean Thrace is considered, for the Greek seismic standards, as a rather stable seismic region (despite the existence of an active trench between Maroneia and Makri), several major (magnitude 6 plus) and numerous minor earthquakes have occurred in the area (especially during the clustering of earthquakes during the 4th – 6th centuries AD known to geologists as the “*Early Byzantine Tectonic Paroxysm*”, see Pirazzoli 1986), but as usual the generic descriptions in the sources cannot help us extract specific evidence about the level and the nature of destruction (on seismic events in Thrace, see Ambraseys 2009, 89, 172-178, 197-198, 208-211).

Despite the dramatic character in loss of life and destruction that an earthquake quite often has, the influence of the natural hazards in our case can be best illustrated by the impact of floods and diseases. There is no doubt that the lowlands of the Rhodope was an alluvial zone where wetlands and seasonally flooded landscapes (Gerakis et al. 2007) in combination to river activity had far reaching negative implications for local populations than earthquakes. Through frequent changes in river water capacity and avulsions the unique hydrology created a topography (**fig. 2**) favoring the formation of high water table and overflows (Xeidakis et al. 2010, 1075).

Fig. 1. The area of Aegean Thrace: tribal groups and Greek cities (map: author)

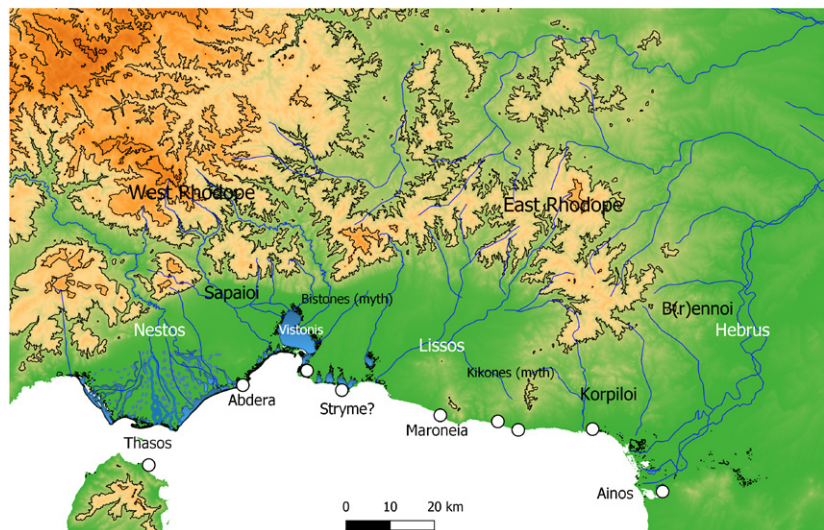


Fig. 2. The geomorphology of the Deltaic plain of the Nestos and the Kosynthos rivers (map: author)

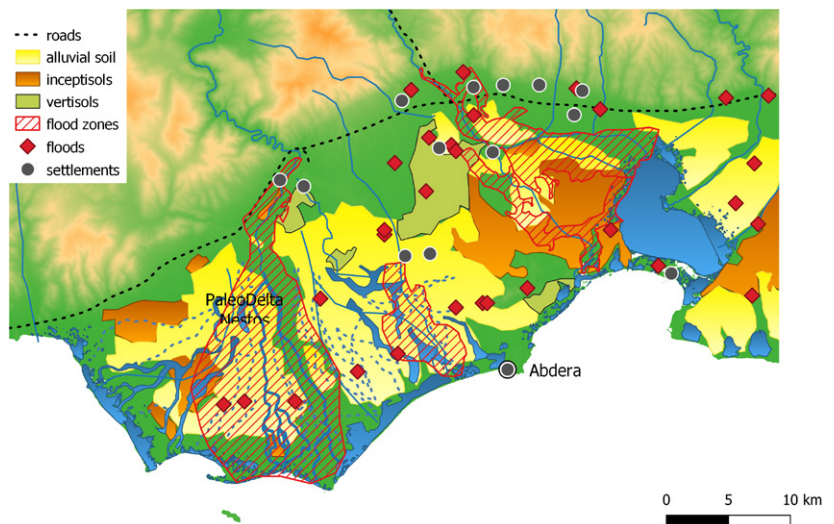


Fig. 3. Flash flood in the Kosynthos river (photo: author)

To this we should probably add frequently occurring severe flash flood incidents caused by intense rainfall in a short time (Koutsoyiannis et al. 2012). In contrast to Central European landscapes, the drainage network of the area is consisted by mountain torrents and small to medium size drainage basins with limited amount of discharge for most of the year (Skoulikidis et al. 2009), thus making flash flooding a very common type of danger (**fig. 3**). The damage from these rapidly rising, fast-moving waters of a flash flood can be devastating as recent events (a severe flash flood caused major damage in the city of Xanthi during the 1990s) have proved. Most importantly, floods and standing water by overflow of rivers can act as breeding sites for mosquitoes, and therefore enhance the potential for exposure of the population to infections such as different vectors of malaria, tertian fever and gastrointestinal illnesses (Manguin 2013; Sallares 2002). The ancient sources like Hippocrates (*Epid.* 1.2) indicate a strong presence of the most dangerous strains of malaria like *P. Falciparum* (Sallares 2002; Sallares et al. 2004) with symptoms like tertian fever which is typical of falciparum infections. The effects of malaria which was endemic in the area till the mid-20th century are characteristic (Λιβαδάς 1955): high mortality rates, anemia and jaundice, muscle fatigue and weakness. Even the least deadly string of malaria entails a series of recur-

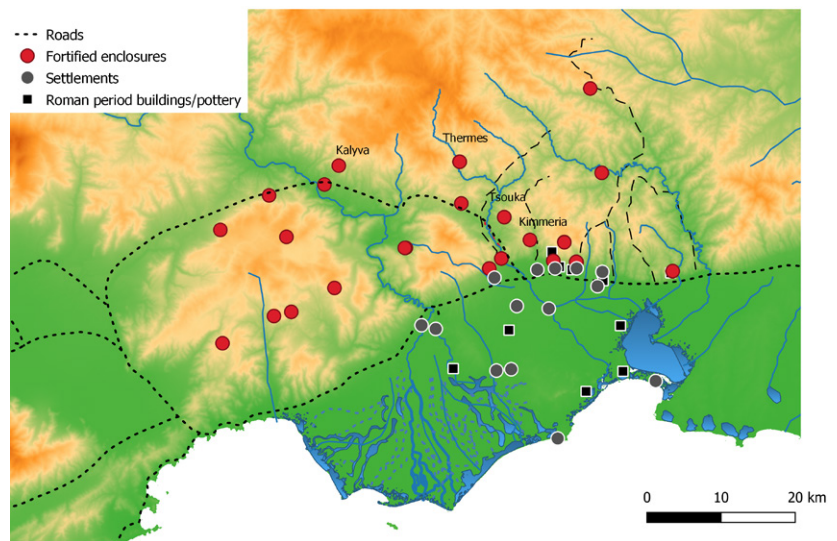
ring episodes of chills, intense fever, and sweating and often includes other symptoms such as headache, fatigue, body aches, nausea, and vomiting.

These were exactly the kinds of hazards that could have had long-term effects in the livelihoods of the local groups who settled along the foot of the Rhodope (Tsiafakis / Evangelidis 2021). Sites close to the floodplain involved elements at risk such as the residents themselves, the built environment and the agro-pastoral economy. The understanding of these natural hazards by the people living in the area may have contributed to effective decision-making about settlement. In response to a series of flooding and drainage incidents the people could have decided in the best settlement location and adapted their subsistence strategies. These included a preference to mountainous or semi-mountainous sites or even a seasonal pattern of habitation (appropriate for seasonal diseases). The extensive occupation zone (of almost 31 square km) that lay at the area between the modern villages of Kimmeria, Lefkopetra – Akarpo, Filia and Vafeika is a case in point (**fig. 4**). A number of sites dating from the Late Hellenistic to the Late Roman period (with recorded previous phases) have been investigated on the lowlands of the foot of the Rhodope range (Evangelidis 2021, 503-507), away from floods, mosquito zones and alluvial soil. Clusters of houses (Lefkopetra), tumuli (in the case of Kimmeria), kilns (Vafeika), burials (Vafeika) and great concentrations of pottery (Akarpo) indicate the existence of a dispersed pattern of evenly spaced sites that might reflect settlements with an amazing longevity from Early Hellenistic to Late Roman times and the Byzantine period. In the cases of Kimmeria, Lefkopetra and Filia the settlements were developed at the foot of the Rhodope range and the beginning (or the ending) of important mountain trails leading to the interior, towards the Echinus Junction and from there to Bulgaria. The importance of these trails was emphasized more with the presence of forts (Kimmeria, Lefkopetra – Zarkadia and Filia), the sites of which seem to have been occupied for centuries. The pattern of a mountainous fort, trail and dispersed rural sites at its foot may have had an important role in indigenous spatial organization and it appears in other sites along the foot of the Rhodope range.

This settlement pattern, the manifestation of their ability to cope with floods which mostly arise fairly rapidly and endemic diseases, does not seem to change radically in Roman times. As in previous periods it seems that no strategies enabling large scale agricultural exploitation were employed and few installations of villa type or large estates have been found in the floodplain (Evangelidis 2021, 509). Therefore, instead of a rational Romanized landscape characterized by villas and organized agricultural activities in a controlled floodplain (an idea that seems to predominate in the archaeological literature), this was a landscape dotted by features that they speak of the continued importance of traditional settlement strategies. This was a landscape with distinctive characteristics identifying it from an environmental perspective: good drainage and avoidance of low-lying areas.

The magnitude and scale of natural damage were not only influenced by the hazard's characteristics but also by the vulnerability and exposure of the people that lived in the particular physical environment. A key factor in understanding the role of a catastrophic

Fig. 4. Distribution of settlements, remains and fortified enclosures of the Roman period in the area of Xanthi (map: author)



event is therefore resilience and persistence. Discussing about resilience, the case of Abdera needs to be stressed out (Isaac 1997, 73-108; Loukopoulou 2004, 872-875). The coastal promontory between alluvial plains where the Greek city developed is characterized by an extensive wetland prone to floods and endemic diseases (Agelarakis 2009-2010, 193). Environmental hazards were not unknown in the area and during the long history of the city the Abderitans had to fight against two very destructive hazards: floods and diseases. We can only imagine that the struggle to control the neighboring marshes and the infectious diseases that these would have nourished would have been constant for the city. Although it is not always easy to track variation in the mortality rate across the period, the osteopathological research of N. Agelarakis has highlighted the extensive presence of malaria from the early Archaic colonization to the Middle ages (Agelarakis 2009-2010, 194).

All things considered, despite the severity of the hazards, they did not lead to abandonment. On the contrary, as in other malaria-stricken places, the environmental risks were continually weighed and possibly socially controlled. These annually expected fevers were a familiar risk that the inhabitants of Abdera seem to have chosen to fight (a kind of positive response against catastrophe). Recent studies have shown that clear perception of the risks can help with the process of successful dealing with a catastrophe or its aftermath (Ungar 2011, 11). Thus, communities had time to consider a number of settlement strategies. In this case, persistence of habitation led eventually to naturally developed mutations (thalassemia, sickle cell trait and G6PD deficiency) against long-standing diseases. Individuals that carried the sickle cell trait or the G6PD deficiency (Sallares et al. 2004, 325) were in fact highly protected against malaria, thus explaining the high prevalence of this mutation in geographical areas where malaria is endemic (Penman et al. 2012). As noticed by Sallares (Sallares et al. 2004, 315, note 21), by the 5th c. BC at least some populations in North Greece (and among them probably the inhabitants of Abdera) already had a high frequency in such genetic mutations conferring some resistance to malaria.

The Greeks in the coast and their descendants down to the Late Roman times appear to be willing to take quite high risks in order to

reap the long-term benefits of the location such as trade and access to inland roads. In Abdera, the long-term benefit of locating a settlement in the particular place with the luxury of a safe harbor (Loukopoulou 2004, 871; Samiou 1999; Agelarakis 2009-2010, 197; Isaac 1987, 74, note 15) or the lack of suitable alternatives appear to override any concern relating to rare, if catastrophic, environmental events or diseases which occurred frequently over a long period. Alternative explanations as attachment to land may also explain the risk taken.

The end of the classical city of Abdera was marked by a great flood in the 4th c. AD, traces of which have been detected around the west gate (Κουκούλη-Χρυσανθάκη 1988, 58). This has been regarded as the last of a series of catastrophic environmental events that eventually led the Abderitans to abandon the site and move to a higher ground at the site of the Byzantine Polystylon. The silting of the west gate of Abdera though indicates in my opinion not so much a sudden environmental catastrophe but foremost the inability of the community to face with adequate resources the long-standing dangers against whom the Abderitans were fighting since the time of the first settlement. What seems to change over the years is the level of community's resilience and vulnerability against the anthropogenic and environmental hazards that endangered the fate of the city throughout Antiquity. To lose resilience in this case, was to become prone to collapse (Middleton 2017, 43). It is worth noting that despite the risky environment and the occasional catastrophes, the fluvial and estuarine data suggest the presence – throughout the historical period – of a stable ecosystem that was constantly controlled (probably at a great cost) by the city. Therefore, the site's abandonment and loss of features associated with urbanism seem to be linked more to broader changes (Evangelidis 2021, 512) that were not principally reliant on natural hazards rather than to a sudden environmental natural catastrophic event such as the flood that silted the west gate of the city.

CONFLICT AND WARFARE: THE IMPRINT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

Identifying warfare and conflict in the material record is a difficult task and it is often plagued by the incomplete nature of archaeological evidence, mostly defensive structures, evidence for destruction (like atypical burials or destroyed buildings) and weapons (or objects that can be used as weapons). Using evidence as such to explore the nature of conflict (Otto 2006, 25) is not without methodological problems and indicators like forts or weapons can quite often have alternative interpretations not necessarily bound with war or conflict (see the discussion in Randsborg 1995; Jørgensen 1999; Wileman 2009).

A number of sites in the area (many of them continuing well into the Imperial period) can be described as defensive in nature (Τριαντάφυλλος 1990), but these as shown by Efstratiou (Ευστρατίου 1988) can be a product of our interpretation and not the evidence itself. Some of them present no evidence of occupation and others are too far from settlements or roads. Walls made from dry stone such as the enceinte at the site Tsouka (near the village of Gorgona) or the small enceinte near Thamna (Τριαντάφυλλος 1978, 309-310) can be associated with diachronically pastoral activities suggesting an eco-

nomical rather than a defensive function. This of course does not exclude the possibility that many of them had been used as last resort refuges that could have served the needs of family or clans of unfortified settlements within a given district in time of crisis. Despite their rough construction these sites were perfectly defensible. Similarly, the fact that the Imperial period was characterized by low conflict level does not mean that strife between different clans or groups was nonexistent (Riess / Fagan 2016, 1-16); on the contrary, local conflicts could be significant drivers of violence. The principal problem relates to the definition of conflict which is largely based upon recorded instances of battles or invasions. These clearly account only for a fraction of ancient violence. Therefore, when discussing about warfare in Antiquity, we should probably consider other possibilities like blood feuds, livestock raids, robbery, duels in which the people of the area would need weapons or defenses.

On the other hand, the existence (and renovation) of permanent forts like the fort of Kalyva (Τριαντάφυλλος 1991) or the Roman fort at Kimmeria (Τριαντάφυλλος 1973-1974, 808) indicates that the need for centralized control over defense was never out of the question. Although a first reading of the evidence suggests a tangible relationship between defense and the need for defense, it is difficult not to see the existence of a circular argument. Equally circular is the logic that sees the varied weapon combinations and skeletal remains of horses discovered in furnished burials in the area as direct reflections of a warlike society, in which status and power were entangled with violence and conflict (Τερζοπούλου 2013, 338, with bibliography). Weapons (swords, lances, knives and occasionally shield bosses) and remains of horses have been discovered in different tumuli burials like in Thyrea, Orestiada, Rhegion, Kyane and Lade. All have been interpreted as items of symbolic importance in a culture that appraised military warrior values (Τερζοπούλου 2013, 99-100; Τριαντάφυλλος / Τερζοπούλου 1996).

Interestingly though, as in other similar contexts across Europe (for instance in Germany or Gaul, see Ebel 1998), weapon burials seem to peak during a period of peace, when one might expect to find fewer “warrior” burials. Therefore, it is likely that all these grave goods had many more connotations besides warfare. It is possible that the act of horse burial or the laying of weapons performed a specific communicative function (during the pre-burial rites) which served to proclaim and strengthen particular identities associations within Imperial period Thrace (Evangelidis 2020, 54).

Another major problem is the inability to successfully correlate archaeological evidence with events mentioned in the ancient sources. As noticed by P. Delev (Делев 2014, 4), the reliability of these sources and the exaggeration of description present limitations to the interpretation of archaeological data. In some instances, the losses of population appear to have been less severe than those described by the literary sources while in most of the cases the city was not abandoned after the event. The Slavic attack of AD 549 on Topeiros is illustrative for such literary *topoi* (Agelarakis 2020, 33-35).

“Then they slew all the men immediately, to the number of fifteen thousand, took all the valuables as plunder, and reduced the children and women to slavery. Before this, however, they had spared no age...

had been killing all who fell in their way, young and old alike, so that the whole land inhabited by the Illyrians and Thracians came to be everywhere filled with unburied corpses" (Procop. *Goth.* 7.38.18-23)¹.

Similar stories about invading armies have been passed down in oral and written history but the real effect of such acts of war is difficult to be evaluated. The imagery of human-caused devastation has an important role in the theorization of urban decline but whether a sudden anthropogenic act of war can have a really destructive effect depends very much on the interpretation we give. While the influence of an act of war is a factor that may be hazardous (buildings with signs of damage and destruction deposits bear witness of significant disasters), few such events have been responsible for sudden decline, as is the case with the destruction of Olynthus by Philip II (see Cawkwell 1962).

Abdera once more is a case in point. The confiscation of 50.000 *modii* of wheat from Abdera by the consul L. Hortensius and the storm (and destruction) of the city is a well recorded incident of the Third Macedonian War (Diod. 30.6; Liv. 43.4.8) which has quite often been mentioned as the starting point for the decline of the city during the subsequent period (Kallintzi 2018, 21; *contra* Papaioannou 2010, 54). Although Roman savagery and overt violence was not unusual during the Republican period (it has to be noted that it was normal for the generals of the period to requisition supplies on a large scale), a vicious attack on a Greek allied city took destruction on a total different level. Providing supplies for a Roman army was a tremendous task and the confiscation of almost forty tons of wheat must have been a serious blow on local economy, but we may wonder: Was it enough to drive the economy of Abdera to destruction and lead the city to permanent state of decline?

What archaeological and epigraphical evidence (Papaioannou 2010, 60, note 51; *IThrAeg* 166) has shown us is that despite the severity of the impact and the image of destruction drawn by the ancient sources, the early Imperial period at Abdera was marked by financial activity, the presence of Roman *negotiatores*, the minting of bronze coins and building activity with new habitation quarters and artisanal areas towards the sea (Chrysanthaki 2004, 317). Cities such as Abdera have geographical advantages which do not die easily by an economic blow. The city held a position not only central to this part of Aegean Thrace, but also to the North Aegean Sea and land routes. As long as these advantages were not wiped out by some extreme natural or human action (such as a radical change in the course of the river or the total destruction of the city), the city could, and did, derive continuing benefit from them, throughout the Imperial period.

Thus, the "decline" is best discussed in terms of the broader transformations in the political landscape (e.g. the rise and the aggressive policies of the Thracian client kingdom) of the region during the Late Republican and Early Imperial period (Evangelidis 2021, 512) rather than the result of a single event. As the period wore on, other pressures such as the emergence of the new urban centers (like Topeiros) and the general destabilization of the area in Late Antiquity under the pressure of barbaric raids conspired against the growth of the city. When the city entered the Early Christian period, its long and successful policies ended; it underwent economic change and population loss which led to urban shrinkage.

¹ Translation by H. B. Dewing (see Dewing 2014, 456)

CONCLUSIONS: STEPS TOWARDS AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF DESTRUCTION AND RESILIENCE

One of the most valuable lessons to be learned from considering urban and rural histories from the perspective of conflict and destruction is that we must be willing to consider long-term cycles (long-term developments) and a greater range of effects than what a single destructive event implies. It is also worth pointing that drastic change or collapse is not necessarily an aftermath of destruction (Middleton 2017, 46-48) and there are in any case many factors that could account for resilience.

Nonetheless, the question of how archaeology can identify and assess environmental and human-inflicted destruction (beyond obvious cases like *Pompeii* or *Olynthus*) remains a crucial but problematic one (see the discussion in Torrence / Grattan 2002, 8-11; Middleton 2017, 43). A major difficulty is that not all catastrophic events can create archaeologically detectable evidence. The limitation or, quite often, the absence of archaeological evidence has clearly an effect on the way we understand destruction. Thus, analyzing patterns of destruction and conflict requires extensive data (especially bioarchaeological and mortuary data which can give some more concise answers) combined with text and chronological framework.

The task is becoming more difficult when the discussion comes to the Imperial period, a significant period of peace, low conflict and climatic stability. In the absence of major catastrophic natural events (at least in the area under discussion), the focus of research can be turned on the ways that people dealt with existing hazards. Floods, drainage problems and endemic diseases for instance – besides their direct effects – can be, as we have seen, a catalyst for long-term habitation patterns. The wetter conditions suggested by climate reconstructions for between circa 100 BC and AD 200 (McCormick et al. 2012) would have exacerbated the risky environment through storm events, drainage problems in the low-lying areas and spread of vector diseases. Within this environment – and as in many other pre-industrial societies – environmental constraints, hazards and sudden shocks were part of a constant interaction, which kept local societies trapped at a specific form of economy and habitation habit, by dictating their resource base.

What it would be interesting to examine is whether the technology and engineering of the Imperial period (for instance, dredging or canal construction) helped to withstand against long-standing dangers or how environmental knowledge and reaction was changed and by whom. Evidence, though, for successful management like construction of dams or dredging in the area is minimal. On the contrary, the archaeological evidence suggests that reaction was adjusted to the level of the local experience rather than to the available engineering knowhow. This implies that the communities living in the area assessed risks in different ways and different strategies were employed in response to different types of forcing mechanisms. In the case of the communities of Thracians living at the foot of the Rhodope range for instance, their persistence on traditional settlement strategy and economic modes (pastoralism and mixed farming) enabled them to avoid the risk-laden environment of the deltaic plain. Areas proximal to floodplain were utilized mostly for pastoral activities while settlements continued to be rooted in the mountainous areas. In the case of Abdera, long-term strategies and persistence of habitation despite the

severity of dangers were critical to the way people and central authority responded to the management of wetlands. In both cases this was the outcome of living in a risky environment. Nonetheless, urbanization like the development of Topeiros (Λουκοπούλου 1989; *IThrAeg* 261-265) into a substantial settlement – city and the construction of the road network, a project that involved the construction of *via Egnatia* (Lolos 2007; Lolos 2008 with full bibliography) and the upgrade of secondary roads, could have been a trigger for better management of this marginal area. After all, inhabitation and exploitation of the alluvial plain that surrounds the city would not have been possible without successful strategies and investments in infrastructure.

Historical reasoning about the impact of disasters is colored by *Pompeii*-style single events or total acts of war; stories of collapse which are ideal for their romantic and tragic appeal. While these cases can be useful in their particular contexts, a more flexible approach to the issue of the impact of a hazard/disaster would have considered a wider framework of parameters, like the relationship between natural processes such as flood or alluviation and cultural responses. The same can be said about conflict. Although connotations of sieges, warfare and armies are difficult to be avoided, the analysis of regional pattern of conflict needs to take into account a wider range of evidence and alternative explanations, which focus on economy and site hierarchy. Given the fact that environmental knowledge is socially dynamic (Walsh et al. 2014, 28), what needs to be explored further is if (and how) the difference in the reactions between the different areas of the region under study in case of danger might match diverging relationships between different groups of people.

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Roman Army and Conflicts in the Province of *Thracia* (1st – 2nd Century AD)

Florian MATEI-POPESCU

¹ For this brand new concept see Ish-Shalom 2021, 153-159, 162-165.

² Vell. Pat. 2, 112, 4, the royal Thracian army taking part in the *bellum Batonianum* in AD 6-7: *at ea pars quae obviam se effuderat exercitui quem A. Caecina et Silvanus Plautius consulares ex transmarinis adducebant provinciis, circumfusa quinque legionibus nostris auxiliariisque et equitatu regio (quippe magnam Thracum manum iunctus praedictis ducibus Rhoemetalces, Thraciae rex, in adiutorium eius belli se cum trahebat) paene exitiabilem omnibus cladem intulit* – they went together there with the detachments of the Moesian legions under A. Caecina Severus' direct command (*PIR*² A 106 – Cass. Dio 44, 29, 3: Καικίνας Σεουήρος ὁ τῆς πλησιοχώρου Μύσιας ἄρχων, highly probably already "*legatus Augusti pro praetore exercitus in Moesia tendentis*"), see also Cass. Dio 55, 30, 3 and 6; 32, 3; Tac. *Ann.* 2, 65, 4, Rhascuporis II, after arresting Cotys VIII, justified the new levies, both infantry and cavalry, by the war he had to wage against the Bastarnae and Scythae (*Sarmatae*): *Thraeciaque omni potitus scripsit ad Tiberium structas sibi insidias, praevenit insidiatorem; simul bellum adversus Bastarnas Scythasque praetendens novis peditum et equitum copiis sese firmabat*; or the army of Rhoemetalces II which remained faithful to the king during the uprising of AD 26, Tac. *Ann.* 4, 47, 1: *rex Rhoemetalces cum auxiliis popularium, qui fidem non mutaverant*.

³ For the strategies, see Gerov 1980, 229-238 and 1988, 33-38, with older bibliography. See also Parissaki 2009, an exhaustive brilliant study, but practically without any comments on the military role of the *strategoi*; Lozanov 2015, 79, mentions that after the Hellenistic model they had administrative and military duties. The military important role of the *strategoi* became clear after the partial publication of the Dionysopolitan decree in honour of Mokaporis, the son of Aulouporis, *strategos of Apsioupolis* (*Axiopolis*, nowadays Cernavoda) and *Daotike* (unfortunately not located), taking also part in a military expedition beyond the Danube against the "common enemies", the Iazyges, probably one of the campaigns led by Cn. Cornelius Lentulus *augur*, Шпранков 2015, 62-63, # 1 = SEG 65, 566, l. 1-3: Μοκαπόρις Αὐλουπορεως / στρατηγὸς κατασταθεὶς ὑπὸ βασιλέως Ροιμηταλκου / Ἀψιουπόλεως καὶ Δαοτικῆς; l. 10-11: στρατευσάμενος δὲ πέραν τοῦ Ἰστρου ἐπὶ τοὺς κοινούς πολεμίους Ἰαζύγους. Thracian garrisons are mentioned also by Ovid within *Troesmis* and *Aegyssus* strongholds, Matei-Popescu 2017. See also Lozanov 2015, 79. For the *strategiae* in the area of the *ripa Thraciae* and of *Scythia Minor*, see Matei-Popescu 2018.

Abstract: No legions were ever garrisoned in the province of *Thracia*, only a small number of Roman auxiliary units, alongside the *classis Perinthia*, which played an important role in the logistics of the Roman army. Whenever there were troubles or conflicts, especially with the warlike Thracian tribes, this small army needed reinforcement from the neighbour province of *Moesia* (*Moesia Inferior* after AD 85/86).

The province was hit by the Dacians, in the winter of the year AD 102, since one of the most important battles was fought in the area of the future city of *Nicopolis ad Istrum*. Although it was a *provincia inermis*, in the context of the preparations for Trajan's Parthian expedition, a *legatus Augusti pro praetore* was sent to *Thracia*, which proved that the province played a key role in the logistics of that war.

Thereafter, for about a half of a century peace ruled in the area, until the raid of the Costoboci in AD 171. Some years later, the army of the province of *Moesia Inferior*, under the command of the procurator, crushed a Thracian tribe which plundered the provinces of *Moesia Superior* and *Thracia*.

The last major battles fought on Thracian soil, before the 3rd century AD, were between Septimius Severus and Pescennius Niger, in the areas of *Perinthus* and *Byzantium*, before the war conflict moved to Asia Minor and the province of *Syria*.

Key words: *Thracia*, *Moesia Inferior*, Thracians, Roman army, military conflicts.

INTRODUCTION

When Thrace was reorganised as an allied kingdom, under the rule of the Odrysian Rhoemetalces I (*PIR*² R 50; Sullivan 1979, 198-200), son of Cotys VII (*PIR*² C 1552; Sullivan 1979, 196-198), after L. Calpurnius Piso pontifex's successful military expedition in 13-11 BC (Vell. Pat. 2, 98; Tac. *Ann.* 6, 10, 3; *PIR*² C 289; Lozanov 2015, 78), the defence of the entire land was entrusted to the king, who acted like a "provincial monarch"¹. From our sources, it seems that a part of the royal army was kept beside him², and the other part was sent in various regions and strongholds throughout the kingdom under the command of the *strategoi*³. The Thracian kings shared with the Pannonian and Moesian

armies the mission to defend the Danube bank⁴. The area defended by the kings was the *ripa Thraciae*, located eastward of *Dimum* and up to the Black Sea⁵. Whenever the danger was at its highest level, like in AD 12 or AD 15, the Roman army, located in the area of the future province of *Moesia Superior*, intervened to help the royal regiments and garrisons (Matei-Popescu 2017, 24-25).

The royal army was probably armed, equipped and trained after the Hellenistic or Roman models, or a combined model, Hellenistic and Roman, but preserving at least some of the older traditional Thracian arms, armour, and tactics⁶. When the kings confronted with heavy uprisings, like in AD 21 and 26, or the Romans tried to force the king to submit to their will, like in AD 19, the army of the neighbouring province of *Moesia* intervened (see below). Moreover, although we do not have any direct sources to confirm it, it is more than obvious that T. Trebellenus Rufus, who was of praetorian rank and acted as the tutor of the children of Cotys VIII in the *ripa Thraciae*⁷, had some Roman legionary and auxiliary detachments alongside him, like it was, for example, the attested case of the Bosphoran kingdom during Claudius⁸.

The land itself was an almost endless reservoir for levies, since, beside the royal army, the Thracians were recruited in the Roman auxiliary units already from Augustus' reign (Zahariade 2009; Haynes 2011, 8). In fact, the uprising in AD 26 was caused by the intense levies among them (Zahariade 2009, 65-66). How these levies were conducted is beyond our knowledge, but it seems that the kings and the *strategoi* were very much involved, as it seems the *strategiae* were both administrative-military divisions and recruiting circumscriptions (Gerov 1988, 171-172; Parissaki 2009, 350-353; Tomas 2016, 115)⁹. The system was preserved also after the kingdom was transformed into a province and the northern part, the *ripa Thraciae*, was attached to *Moesia*. This is a proof that the Roman rule based on the native Thracian aristocracy, who gradually gained the Roman citizenship, but almost exclusively south of the *Haemus*, and their personal relations with the clans from different regions, especially for the delicate matter of the levies, played an important role (Gerov 1980, 83-92).

After the establishment of the province of *Thracia* in AD 45-47, no legion was based there (Gerov 1988, 31-33; Lozanov 2015, 80-82)¹⁰, since the former *ripa Thraciae* was attached to the province of *Moesia* (Mrozewicz 2000, 306-310). Following Flavius Josephus' information, only 2000 Roman soldiers defended Thrace in AD 66-68¹¹, as this is stated by Tacitus as well for AD 69¹². These pieces of information have been confirmed by the recently published military diploma, copied from an imperial constitution issued by Domitian in AD 88¹³,

⁴ Tac. Ann. 4, 5, 3: *et Thraeciam Rhoemetalces ac liberi Cotyis, ripamque Danuvii legionum duae in Pannonia, duae in Moesia attinebant*; Ish-Shalom 2021, 156.

⁵ The same area was later covered by the directly mentioned limits of the *portorium ripae Thraciae*, ISM I 67, 68, before being included in *portorium Illyrici*; see Tomas 2016, 104-108, with the older bibliography.

⁶ As the archaeological contexts seem to attest, Haynes 2011, 10-11. See also Lozanov 2015, 79: "[t]he 'client' kings maintained military contingents trained and equipped in Roman fashion". For the long lasting Thracian tradition of warfare see Stoyanov 2015.

⁷ Tac. Ann. 2, 67, 2: *Thraecia in Rhoemetalcen filium, quem paternis consiliis adversatum constabat, inque liberos Cotyis dividitur; iisque nondum adultis Trebellenus Rufus praetura functus datur, qui regnum interim tractaret*; 3, 38, 4: *nam Thraecia diviso imperio in Rhoemetalcen et liberos Cotyis, quis ob infantiam tutor erat Trebellenus Rufus*.

⁸ Tac. Ann. 12, 15: *At Mithridates Bosphoranus amissis opibus vagus, postquam Didium ducem Romanum roburque exercitus abisse, cognoverat, relictos in novo regno Cotyn iuventa rudem et pauca cohortium cum Iulio Aquila equite Romano, spretis utrisque concire nationes, illicere perfugas*.

⁹ A special discussion could be made on Longinus Sdapeze's origin, who served in the *ala prima Thracum* in Britain, AÉ 1928, 156 = RIB I 201 = Holder 1980, 801, # 801, before Claudius and died before AD 49, when the legion XX *Valeria Victrix* had given up Colchester (Holder 1980, 150). There is no proof that one should read there *pago / Sardi(ca)*, which could have been an unofficial way to indicate the *Sardike* strategy, mentioned by Ptolemy (3.11.8-10; Parissaki 2009, 337-338), and not to leave it as simple *pago / Sardi*, i. e. *pagus Sardis*. However, this should not mean that he could not have been recruited

ed among the tribe *Sardi/Serdi* tribe and the term *pagus* there, into a Celtic context like the one in Britain, and taking into account the Celtic origin of the *Serdi* (Gerov 1980, 183-185), could have been the equivalent of the *strategia*. For another soldier recruited among the *Serdi* see AÉ 1928, 165 = Holder 1980, 327, # 2231 (*Asturica Augusta, Hispania Tarraconensis*): *Fuscus Dori/lis Eptaece/nti f(i)lius miles ex[s] / cohorte T(h)rac/um (centuria) Iuli Martial(is) / dom(o) Serdus an[n] (orum) / XXV aer(orum) VIII h(ic) s(itus) e(st)*.

¹⁰ But this does not allow a judgment like the one expressed by Gerov 1988, 33-34, note 10 (in fact, he regarded the matter "as controversial"), taken over by Lozanov: "Given the decreasing military importance of the territory, the Thracian governor was considered subordinate to the legate of *Moesia*", which is of course very far from the Roman military and administrative habit.

¹¹ Fl. Jos. BJ 2, 368: *τί δαί; Θράκες οἱ πάντε μὲν εὖρος ἑπτὰ δὲ μῆκος ἡμερῶν χώραν διειληφότες, τραχυτέραν τε καὶ πολλῶ τῆς ὑμετέρας ὀχυρωτέραν καὶ βαθεῖ κρυμῶ τοὺς ἐπιστρατεύσοντας ἀνακόπτουσιν, οὐχὶ δισχιλίους Ῥωμαίων ὑπακούουσιν φρουροῖς*.

¹² Tac. Hist. 3, 11, 4: *Duae Mauretaniae, Raetia, Noricum Thraecia et quae aliae procuratoribus cohibentur, ut cuique exercitui vicinae, ita in favorem aut in odium contactu valentiorum agebantur*.

¹³ Eck / Pangerl 2014, 250-253, # 1 = AÉ 2014, 1654, under the procurator Q. Vettidius Bassus, already epigraphically attested IGR I 781, Stein 1920, 8-10, # 2.

which enlisted the soldiers (*equites et pedites*) of the *cohors I milliaria Ituraeorum* and the *classici* of the *classis Perinthia*, without any doubt a *milliaria* unit, like all other provincial fleets¹⁴. The cohort was sent to Cappadocia by AD 94 and it was replaced by two *quingenariae* units from *Moesia Inferior*: the cohorts *II Bracaraugustanorum* and *IV Gallorum*, attested by an imperial constitution in AD 114¹⁵. To these, the *cohors II Flavia Numidarum* must be also added, which was then transferred to *Moesia Inferior* in AD 113¹⁶.

Already from AD 121, the *cohors IV Gallorum* had left the province (RGZM 19), and during the 2nd century AD, three new *cohortes* were garrisoned in *Thracia*: the *II Lucensium*, the *II Mattiacorum*, the *I Aelia Athoitarum* and, only for a short period, the *cohors I Cispadensium* (all *quingenariae* units) (AÉ 2004, 1907; 2013, 2188; 2014, 1655; RMD V 417, 435, 437, 440-441), alongside the *classis Perinthia*, which played an important role in the movement of units during the Eastern expeditions of Trajan, Lucius Verus or Caracalla (SHA, *Ant. Car.* 5, 8). Apart from the fleet in *Perinthus*, we have information only about the bases of the *cohors II Lucensium*, which was transferred from *Moesia Inferior* to *Cabyle* in AD 136 and by AD 198 was moved to *Germania* (Sapareva Banya) (Matei-Popescu 2010, 219-220, # 31), and the *cohortes I Cispadensium* (Matei-Popescu 2010, 205-206, # 20; Matei-Popescu / Țentea 2018, 47-48, # 22) and *II Mattiacorum* (transformed at some point into a *milliaria* unit) (Matei-Popescu 2010, 222-224, # 33), which were accommodated in the fort of *Sostra*, an important crossroad on the route from *Oescus* to *Philippopolis*. During the reign of Gallienus, a newly raised cohort, the *II Reducum*, is attested in the fort of *Sostra* (AÉ 2007, 1222; Eck / Ivanov 2009; Matei-Popescu 2010, 228, # 37; Христов 2011; Hristov 2015). To sum up, from AD 45 until the Severan period, the Roman military forces within the province of Thrace matched almost half a legion, together with the sailors of the fleet based in *Perinthus*¹⁷. Therefore, whenever there were troubles or conflicts, especially with the Thracian tribes, this small army needed reinforcement from the neighbouring province of *Moesia* (*Moesia Inferior* from AD 85/86), which disposed of two or even three legions, auxiliary units, and the Danubian fleet, an army that under Trajan had the strength of more than 30.000 and, under Marcus Aurelius, approximately 18.500 soldiers (Matei-Popescu 2010, 275, 278). These forces seem enough to defend the Lower Danube and to be able to control also the province of *Thracia* to the Aegean Sea. Nevertheless, under great pressure like in the winter of AD 101-102, when the Dacians and the Sarmatians were only stopped in the areas of the future *Nicopolis ad Istrum* and *Traianum Tropaeum*¹⁸, or in AD 170-171, when the Costoboci reached *Macedonia* and *Achaia* (see below), the system proved its weakness. This weakness was even more evident during the mid-third century Gothic raids, but those are beyond the set limits of this paper. However, despite the two mentioned conflicts, being an inland province, Thrace had more problems with interior unrest, especially during the 1st century AD.

Despite the fact that it was a *provincia inermis*, Trajan sent a *legatus Augusti pro praetore* to *Thracia*, while he started a high-scale policy of urbanization, for the better integration of the province within the Roman imperial system (Strobel 2010, 191; Parissaki 2013). The first *legatus* was P. Iuventius Celsus T. Aufidius Hoenius Severianus

¹⁴ Both of them are also attested by inscriptions within the province: a *trierarchus classis* appears at *Perinthus*, dated also to AD 88 (IGR I 781), and the *cohors I milliaria Ituraeorum* at *Serdica* or in another part of the province (IGBulg IV 1952; see the entire discussion in Țentea / Matei-Popescu 2016).

¹⁵ Paunov / Roxan 1997; RMD I 14 = RMD IV 227 = AÉ 1997, 1334. For the units see Matei-Popescu 2010, 196-197, # 14; 210-212, # 26.

¹⁶ IGBulg III.2 1741bis = AÉ 1965, 347 = Holder 1980, 301, # 1211 (320, # 1931) = IDRE II 350 = IGBulg V 5615 and Sharankov 2016, 332 (Shipka); Dana 2019, 227-232, # 1; Eck / Pangerl 2022. On the unit see Matei-Popescu 2010, 226, # 35.

¹⁷ For an overview see also Rossignol 2015, 67-71.

¹⁸ Strobel 1984, 177-186; SEG 39, 358 = AÉ 1991, 1450 = IDRE II 370 (*Epidauros*, sanctuary of Apollo *Maleates*): "Ετους ε' τῆς / Αὐτοκράτορος Νέρβα Τραϊανοῦ Καίσαρος / Σεβαστοῦ Γερμανικοῦ / ἐν Μυσίᾳ νείκης / Σπόρος Ἀλεξᾶ πυρο-/φορήσας εἰεῖρᾱς νυ/κτὸς βωμὸν ἔθηκε / ἐπὶ Σωτηρίχου τοῦ / Απολλοφάνους; Petolescu 1995, who dates the altar in AD 106-107, and not AD 111-112, since the victory in *Moesia* is mentioned, while Trajan was not yet *Dacicus*, therefore the victory must have occurred before December AD 102. Some coin-hoards discovered in the province of *Thracia* have been connected with this invasion, Gerov 1980, 367.

(*cos. suff.* AD 115; *cos. II ord.* AD 129), famous jurist, in office from AD 110/111 and until July AD 114¹⁹, when his successor T. Statilius Maximus Severus is attested (*RMD* I 14 = *RMD* IV 227; *PIR*² S 830, 840-841). These changes should be set into the broader context of the preparations for the Parthian campaign, when the province played a key role in the logistics and the supply lines. Important Roman army forces, especially the units from the northwestern and the Danubian provinces, crossed Thrace (Strobel 2010, 364-365, for a list of the units sent to the East). These travelled along the so-called *via diagonalis*, which connected the Danube (*Singidunum* – *Viminacium*) with *Perinthus*, where it joined the *via Egnatia*, and from there continued to *Byzantium* (Mottas 1989). The famous Thracian *viae militares* were attested already from AD 61²⁰, the segment connecting *Oescus* with *Philippopolis*, on the *via diagonalis*. On the same segment in AD 175-180, Marcus Aurelius rebuilt the *stabula* using the funds of the *fiscus Caesaris*²¹. All these elements prove the long-lasting imperial care of the Thracian roads system to secure the land connection between the western and the eastern parts of the empire. Directly connected with this highly developed road system and with the function of policing the area are the epigraphically attested *praesidia*, *burgi*, and *phruri* in the territories of *Serdica* (*ILBulg* 211 = Sharankov 2011, 146, note 67 (Balgarski izvor), AD 152), *Augusta Traiana* (*IGBulg* III.2, p. 152 = Sharankov 2011, 146, note 67 (Shipka), AD 152), *Marcianopolis* (Sharankov 2011, 146, note 67 (Nevsha), AD 152), *Deultum* (Sharankov 2011, 146, note 67 (Panchevo), AD 155), and *Byzie* (Sharankov 2011, 147, note 68 (Kirklareli), AD 155) in AD 152 and AD 155. Some inscriptions stated that these had been build *ob tutelam provinciae Thraciae*, having a possible defense role (Mihailov 1961), but it has been already pointed out that the strengths of the military posts could not have been so important, taking into account the units attested in Thrace at that time (Rossignol 2015, 70-71). It is more likely that these were connected to the defense of the roads against the outlaws, than to the defense of the province against external threats.

CONFLICTS DURING THE FIRST CENTURY AD

After the establishment of the province of *Moesia*, in AD 19, the Roman army of *Moesia*, led by an expert in Lower Danube affairs, L. Pomponius Flaccus, crossed into Thrace to depose Rhescuporis II²². As former praetorian legate of C. Poppaeus Sabinus in AD 15-16, he was sent again in the area after Latinius Pandusa's (*PIR*² L 125) unexpected death²³. Thanks to Tacitus, we are fully informed about his well-accomplished mission, which combined military force and power of persuasion. Rhescuporis II was first sent to Rome, where, being accused in the Senate by the wife of Cotys VIII (*PIR*² C 1554; Sullivan 1979, 200-204, treated together as with his uncle, Rhescuporis II), the famous Antonia Tryphaena (*PIR*² A 900), received the interdiction to enter the kingdom. The kingdom was then once again divided between Rhoemetalces II (*PIR*² R 69; Sullivan 1979, 204-207), the son of Rhescuporis, and Cotys' younger children, who had T. Trebellenus Rufus as a tutor²⁴. However, from another passage one can better understand that in fact Rhescuporis waged a war against the Romans and he even tried to gain supporters at a higher provincial level, among them Antistius Vetus from the Macedonian provincial elite²⁵.

¹⁹ *PIR*² I 882; directly attested in August AD 113, Dana 2019, 227-232, # 1; Eck / Pangerl 2022 (AD 111-114). See also Stein 1920, 10-12, # 3, for the other attestations.

²⁰ *CIL* III 6123 = *CIL* III 14207³⁴ = *ILS* 231 = Tsontchev 1959, 160 (*Viamata*, Mihilti): [[[Ner]o C[la]ud[iu]s]] / divi Claudi f(i)lius / Germ(anici) Caesaris n(epos) / Ti(beri) Caesaris Aug(usti) / pron(epos) divi Aug(usti) abn(epos) / Caesar Aug(ustus) Germ(anicus) / pontif(ex) max(imus) trib(unicia) pot(estate) / VIII imp(erator) VIII co(n)s(ul) IIII / p(ater) p(atriciae) / tabernas et praetoria / per vias militares / fieri iussit per / T(itum) Iulium Ustum proc(uratorem) / provinciae Thrac(iae), Stein 1920, 7-8, # 1; see other two fragmentary copies, *IGBulg* V 5691 = *AE* 1999, 1397 (Helice, Ihtiman); *AE* 1912, 193 (Buchin prohod) and a slightly different related text, *AE* 1991, 1407 = *IThrAeg* (*Pherai*), dated to AD 59-63, Mottas 1989, 98-101; see also Sharankov 2011, 145.

²¹ Tsontchev 1959, 160-162 = *AE* 1961, 318 (*Viamata*, Mihilti): Imp(erator) Caesar / divi Veri frater / divi Antonini Pii / filius divi Hadri(ani) nepos divi Tra(iani) pronepos di(vi) Nervae abne(pos) M(arcus) Aurelius / Antoninus Augu(stus) Germanicus / Sarmaticus pon(tifex) maximus / tribuniciae pot(estatis) / co(n)s(ul) IIII pat(er) pat(riciae) / stabula vetusta/te dilapsa a solo / sua pecunia resti/tuit

²² *PIR*² R 60; Sullivan 1979, 200-204, treated together as with his nephew, Cotys VIII, and labelled as Rhescuporis III (Rhescuporis I = Rhaiscuporis, rex Thraciae, *PIR*² R 58, Sullivan 1979, 194-196; Rhascuporis II = Rhascuporis, δυνάστης Θρακῶν, *PIR*² R 59, killed by the Bessi in 11 BC, without having been yet king).

²³ Tac. Ann. 2, 66, 2: nec tamen Caesar placitas semel artes mutavit, sed defuncto Pandusa, quem sibi in infensum Rhescuporis arguebat, Pomponium Flaccum, vetererem stipendiis et arta cum rege amicitia eoque accommodatiorem ad fallendum, ob id maxime Moesiae praefecit.

²⁴ Tac. Ann. 2, 67. See also Vell. 2, 129, 1; Suet. Tib. 37, 4; Str. 12, 29 (C 556). For T. Trebellenus Rufus see *PIR*² T 308.

²⁵ Tac. Ann. 3, 38, 2: Caesar Antistium Veterem e primoribus Macedoniae, absolutum adulterii, increpitis iudicibus ad dicendam maiestatis causam retraxit, ut turbidum et Rhescuporidis consilii permixtum, qua tempestate Cotye [fratre] interfecto bellum adversus nos volverat; *PIR*² A 767 and 751, unfortunately not known from other sources.

²⁶ Tac. Ann. 2, 64, 2: *omnem eam nationem Rhoemetalcas tenuerat; quo defuncto Augustus partem Thraecum Rhescuporidi fratri eius, partem filio Cotyi permisit. in ea divisione arva et urbes et vicina Graecis Cotyi, quod incultum ferox adnexum hostibus, Rhescuporidi cessit.*

²⁷ AÉ 1971, 438 = SEG 59, 265: [Η βουλὴ ἢ ἐξ Ἀρ]είου πάγου καὶ ἡ βουλὴ / [τῶν ἐξακοσί]ων καὶ ὁ δῆμος Μεμμία / [Λουκίου Πομ]πώνιου Φλάκ[κου γυ]ναῖκα / [πρεσβευτο]ῦ Τιβερίου Καίσαρος / [σ]ωφροσύνης ἔνεκα; see PIR² P 715, p. 317: “*ad hanc legationem demum referendus videtur titulus*”.

²⁸ If the hypothesis that the newly built city *Tiberias*, mentioned by Malalas, Chr. 236, 1 (10, 10: ἔκτισε δὲ καὶ ὁ Τιβέριος πόλιν ἐν τῇ Θράκῃ ἄλλην, ἣν ἐκάλεσε Τιβερίαν), for AD 28, is in fact *Philippopolis*, then it is almost certain that the city became Rhoemetalcas II's royal seat (almost all royal residences of allied kings bore the names of Roman emperors). It is, therefore, clear that T. Trebellenus Rufus ruled over the eastern half of the kingdom, Cotys VIII's former possessions, while Rhoemetalcas II inherited the western half, Rhescuporis II's part. However, there are no proofs of that, and such city is not at all mentioned by other sources, which makes Malalas' testimony highly problematic.

²⁹ Tac. Ann. 3, 39, 1: *Quae ubi cognita P. Vellaeo (is proximum exercitum praesidebat) alarios equites ac levis cohortium mittit in eos, qui praedabundi aut adsumendis auxiliis vagabantur, ipse robur peditum ad exsolvendum obsidium ducit.* For *robur peditum* see Tac. Germ. 30, 3: *omne robur in pedite* and Tac. Agr. 12.1: *in pedite robur*, referring to the strengths of the infantries of the Chatti and Brittones, Thomas 2009, 70.

³⁰ On the early epigraphic material from *Oescus* see Gerov 1980, 1-13; 149-152. For the earliest archaeological layers in *Oescus* see Kabakchieva 1996 and Kabakchieva 2017.

³¹ For an overview of mass levies among Thracians based on the evidence of the Roman military diplomas: Dana 2013; for the 1st century AD see also Holder 1980, 120; 133, Tab. 8.8; and Mihailescu-Bîrliu / Dumitrache 2012.

³² Tac. Ann. 4, 46, 1-2: *causa motus super hominum ingenium, quod pati dilectus et validissimum quemque militiae nostrae dare aspernabantur, ne regibus quidem parere nisi ex libidine soliti, aut si mitterent auxilia, suos ductores praeficere nec nisi adversum accolas belligerare. ac tum rumor incesserat fore ut disiecti aliisque nationibus permixti diversas in terras traherentur.* All these attest the Roman policy of full integration of the Thracian auxiliaries within the Roman army. The exception in that period were only the Batavians, who were led by their own commanders, being thus not entirely integrated. The situation changed only after the revolt led by C. Julius Civilis in AD 70 (Holder 1980, 110-111).

³³ Tac. Ann. 4, 46-51; see R. H. Martin's and A. J. Woodman's comments in the 1989 edition, 206-215 and A. J. Woodman's comment in the 2018 edition, 240: “T[acitus]'s description of the campaign and of the Thracian enemy are largely conventional”; see also the entire commentary on the chapters at 239-256.

³⁴ Tac. Ann. 4, 46, 1: *Lentulo Gaetulico C. Calvisio consulibus decreta triumphi insignia Poppaeo Sabino contusis Thraecum gentibus, qui montium editis incultu atque ferocius agitabant*; Tac. Ann. 6, 39, 3; 13, 45, 1; PIR² P 847.

Unfortunately, there is no information regarding the area where the Roman army acted, but it seems to have been not far from Rhescuporis' royal seat, located somewhere in the western part of the Thracian heartland²⁶. The expeditionary force was composed by legionary forces, since *tribuni militum* and *centuriones* are mentioned, but some auxiliary detachments could have also joined them. The relations between C. Poppaeus Sabinus (*cos. ord.* AD 9), who governed the provincial complex of *Moesia*, *Macedonia* and *Achaia* (PIR² P 847), and his consular legate, L. Pomponius Flaccus (*cos. ord.* AD 17; PIR² P 715), were very probably regulated through some special *mandata principis* (Thomasson 1991, 43). However, on the statue base set by the Athenians to his wife, Memmia, his title is only expressed as *legatus Tiberii Caesaris*²⁷, which would have meant that he had been indeed extraordinarily commissioned by Tiberius and he had not been subordinated to C. Poppaeus Sabinus.

After two years, in AD 21, the Roman army of *Moesia* intervened once again to crush the rebellion of various Thracian tribes, the Coelaetae, the Odrysae, and the Dii. Although king Rhoemetalcas II was besieged in *Philippopolis*, which seems to have been his royal residence at that time (Topalilov 2012, 367)²⁸, the rebel forces were thrown back only by auxiliary horsemen from the *alae* and lightly armed infantry detachments of the *cohortes*. They were finally defeated by P. Vellaeus, the praetorian legate of *Moesia*, who led the heavy infantry forces, but apparently not the legionary detachments²⁹, and by the royal army, before one of the legions, the *V Macedonica* or the *IV Scythica*, arrived (Tac. Ann. 3, 38, 3-4 – 3, 39). It has been argued that the *V Macedonica* was thus sent, taking into account that it already had its base at *Oescus* (Topalilov 2012, 366)³⁰. Although it seems that the uprising was not as intense as the one of AD 26, it required some prominent Roman military effort to be crushed.

The causes of the uprising in AD 26, directly mentioned by Tacitus, are related with the levies among the Thracians and the spreading rumour that they were about to be mixed with auxiliaries of other origins and sent throughout the empire (Holder 1980, 112)³¹. Up to that moment they were accustomed to be led by commanders of same origin and to fight only against the neighbour peoples³². The conduct of the war is described fully and in detail in the following chapters, using however many literary conventions with good parallels in the works of Sallustius, Caesar, and even Tacitus himself³³. Nevertheless, we learn that C. Poppaeus Sabinus (*cos. ord.* AD 9) led the Roman forces in person, receiving *ornamenta triumphalia* for the victory³⁴, and that

Pomponius Labeo came from *Moesia* with a legion³⁵, quite probably the same *legio V Macedonica*, together with some auxiliary regiments, among which the *cohors I Sugambrorum veterana* (*Sugambra cohors*). This last unit is the only one to be directly mentioned, because it seems to have kept its traditional fighting style³⁶. The Romans blocked the rebels and the siege lasted until they died of famine and thirst. Some of them surrendered, others committed suicide, still others tried to break the blockade with only little success; most of them died while trying. Only few managed to escape to the mountains, but the early winter at the *Haemus* prevented their total submission as well as that of the remote mountain tribes³⁷.

Thereafter, the levies continued: the Thracians enlisted in AD 28-29, for example, had been sent to *Syria*, served in the *alae Gallorum et Thracum* and were discharged in AD 54 (Holder 1980, 22, 26, note 32). One of them, Romaesta Rescenti *f(ilius)*, returned to his homeland, not far from *Durostorum* (45 km SW), an area which had previously been part of the Thracian kingdom and then passed to *Moesia* (AÉ 1930, 72 = *CIL* XVI 3 = *ISM* IV 1, Zafirovo; Holder 1980, 272, # 341; Matei-Popescu 2016). Thracians had been even recruited in AD 26 for the praetorian fleet of *Misenum* and released after 26 years of service in 52 AD (*CIL* XVI 1; Mihailescu-Bîrliu / Dumitrache 2012, 2-3; Dana 2013, 220). Moreover, among the witnesses of the above mentioned diploma of AD 54 a *missicius classis* was of Thracian origin (*Bessus*), being probably enlisted in the same year, in AD 26, after the crushing of the rebellion.

The same Moesian army also played an important role when the province of *Thracia* was formally established in AD 45-47, or during the war mentioned by Tacitus in AD 53³⁸. Detachments were probably led by Q. Cornelius Valerianus, former *praefectus cohortis*, attested by two inscriptions with slightly different texts:

Castulo, Hispania Citerior – *CIL* II 3272 (my reading)³⁹:

[Q(uito) Cor]nelio M(arci) f(ilio) Gal(eria) tribu Valeriano praef(ecto) – – – / [– – –] praef(ecto) vexillariorum in Trachia (!) XV [a leg(ione) IV Scythica? a leg(ione) / V Mace]donica a leg(ione) VIII Augusta a tribunis la[ti]claviis legionibus / tr[ib]us a praef(ectis) c(o)hortium statuis coroni[s] donatus – – – / Castu]lonen(sibus) et c(o)hortis Serviae Iuvenalis [– – – et / Titia]e L(uci) f(iliae) Optatae uxori huic c[o]lonia Patri[cia].

Illiberis Florentia, Baetica – *CIL* II 2079 = *ILS* 2713 = Saxer 1967, 9-10, # 8 = Holder 1980, 249, # E 71 A = *CIL* II² 5, 629:

[Q(uito) Co]rnelio [M(arci) f(ilio) Gal(eria) tribu Valeriano] / de V decuriis [– – –] / praef(ecto) cohort(is) I [– – – praef(ectus) vexil(lationibus)? – – –] / trib(us?) equitum coho[rtium alarumque XV ? – – –] / donatus coroni[s], statuis / clipeis imaginib(us) a [– – – item honor(ato)] / laudatione a numer[is ex]ercitus Moes(iaci)] / [i]tem ab eis numeris q[ui]bus praepositus erat / in pens a loco sepul[ture] – – – / [i]tem ab Hieropolitanis II? [– – –] / item d(ecreto) d(ecurionum) Florentinor(um) Iliberritanor(um) – – – / Q(uintus) Cornelius Q(uinti) f(ilius) G(al(eria) tribu) – – –]

³⁵ Tac. Ann. 4, 47, 1: *At Sabinus, donec exercitus in unum conduceret, datis mitibus responsis, postquam Pomponius Labeo e Moesia cum legione, res Rhoemetalcis cum auxiliis popularium, qui fidem non mutaverant, venire*; Tac. Ann. 6, 29, 1; Cass. Dio 58, 24, 3; *PIR*² P 726; Levene 2009, 234, stressing that: “he is treated as an iconic figure of quite a different sort – the quintessential Tiberian commander, a mediocrity who owed his extended period of command to his friendship with the emperor”.

³⁶ Tac. Ann. 4, 47, 3: *propius incedentes (scil. delecti sagittarii) eruptione subita turbati sunt receptique subsidio Sugambrae cohortis, quam Romanus (scil. dux) promptam ad pericula nec minus cantuum et armorum tumultu trucem haud procul instruxerat*; the military unit is first recorded in *Moesia* being transferred directly from the Rhein, Matei-Popescu 2010, 227-230, # 38; 2010/2011, 209. For the keeping of the traditional fighting style, see Saddington 1997, 493.

³⁷ H. Daicovicu 1972 convincingly argued that the contemporary reports of the fights on the Dacian alpine front could have influenced Tacitus as well. For the topographic details which seems to have been very conventional see Levene 2009, 234-237, esp. 237: “Topographical descriptions in Tacitus, as in other Roman writers, are generally formulaic and governed by the needs of the narrative rather than the actual geography of the locations; ... Having alerted the reader to the significance of topography, the Thracian narrative then shows how topography has ceased to matter: the Romans can win comfortably even in the most alien terrain, and even under Poppaeus Sabinus, the most perfectly Tiberian commander of all”.

³⁸ Tac. Ann. 12, 63, 4: *post magnitudine onerum urgentem finem aut modum orabant, adnintente principe, qui Thraecio Bosporanoque bello recens fessos iuvandosque rettulit*; Stein 1920, 1; Sullivan 1979, 211.

³⁹ See also Saxer’s 1967, 9, # 7, slightly different reading: [Q(uito) Cor]nelio M(arci) f(ilio) Gal(eria) Valeriano praef(ecto) cohortis – – – / [– – –] praef(ecto) vexillariorum in Trachia (!) XV [numerorum, honor(ato) a leg(ione) IV Scythica, a leg(ione) / V Mace]donica, a leg(ione) VIII Augusta, a tribunis la[ti]claviis, ab alis, a praef(ectis) alarum / [a cohort]ibus, a praef(ectis) c(o)hortium statuis coroni[s] – – –; Holder 1980, 249, # E 71 B.

⁴⁰ PIR² C 1471; Saxer 1967, 9-11; *PME*, C 250 ("praepositus vexillationibus auxiliaribus ex Moesia in Thraciam; inter a. 45-62").

⁴¹ *AE* 1914, 93 = 1919, 79 = *ILBulg* 300 = *IGLNovae* 81: *P(ublius) Farfinias / P(ublii) f(ilius) Poll(ia) tribu / Severus Fan(o) / Fort(unae) corn(icen) / leg(ionis) VIII Aug(ustae) / v(ixit) an(nos) L, m(eruit) vel -ilitavit) a(nnos) XXX / h(ic) s(itus) e(st) / Vitalis et Ferox / fili(i) f(aciendum) c(uraverunt)*.

⁴² *SHA*, *Vit. Marc.*, 22, 1: *Gentes omnes ab Illyrici limite usque in Galliam conspiraverant, ut Marcomanni Varistae Hermunduri et Quadi Suebi Sarmatae Lacringes et Buri hi alique cum Victualis Osi Bessi Cobotes Roxolani Bastanae Alani Peucini Costoboci*. For an overview, see Birley 2000, 159-183.

⁴³ *Ptol.* 3, 5, 9: εἴτα Κοιστοβῶκοι καὶ Τρανσμοντανοὶ μέχρι τῶν Πευκινῶν ὁρέων; and 3, 8, 3: κατέχουσι δὲ τὴν Δακίαν ἀρτικώτατοι μὲν ἀρχομένοις ἀπὸ δυσμῶν Ἄναρτοι καὶ Τευρίσκοι καὶ Κοιστοβῶκοι; see Popa 2007, 475: "Die Siedlungsgebiete der Kostoboken sind von der modernen Forschung aufgrund unterschiedlicher Interpretationen der ptolemäischen Beschreibungen (*Geogr.* III 5. 9 oder III 8. 3) in verschiedenen Regionen entlang der Karpaten lokalisiert worden". From the archaeological point of view their presumed habitation area is covered by the so-called Lipica archaeological culture, on the upper stream of the Dniester river. However, very well grounded doubts have been already raised by Popa 2007, 477-479: "Eine derart heterogene kulturelle Vielfalt kann nicht einem einzigen Stamm oder Volk zugeordnet werden. ... Auch was mögliche archäologische Entsprechungen betrifft, besteht immer noch Zweifel, ob die Lipica-Kultur aus dem Gebiet am oberen Dnester tatsächlich den Kostoboken zuzuweisen ist. Die heute der Lipica-Kultur zugeschriebenen Fundstellen bilden keine homogene archäologische Einheit, die nur einem Stamm oder Volk zugesprochen werden könnte; sie kann meines Erachtens nicht mit den Kostoboken identifiziert werden"; see also Popa 2015, 18-23 and Popa 2016.

⁴⁴ *AE* 1964, 252 = *IDRE* II 337 = *ISM* IV 49: *D(is) M(anibus) / L(ucius) Fufidi(us) Luci(anus) dec(urio) m(unicipii) d(e)ceptus a Ca(stro) stabocos Ilv(ir)atu suo cui merito titul(um) posu(it) Ulp(ia) Marcia / co(i)ux; CIL* III 14214¹² = *ILS* 8501 = *IDRE* II 336 = *ISM* IV 50: *D(is) M(anibus) / Daizi Co(mozoi) vi(xit) an(nis) L interfectus a Cas(tabocis). Iu(stus) et Val(ens) pa(tri) b(ene) m(erenti) [pos]u(erun)t*; see also Matei-Popescu 2014, 206.

⁴⁵ A detachment of the legions *I Italica Moesica* and *V Macedonica Dacica* is supposed to be attested around that year in the area of *Traianum Tropaeum*, at Giuvegea (Băneasa), *CIL* III 14433 = *ILS* 9118 = *ISM* IV 26: *Nept(un)o Aug(usto) sac(rum) / vexil(latio) leg(ionis) I Ital(icae) / M(oesicae) et V Ma(cedonicae) D(acicae) Tro(pae)i sub curam / Eptidi Modesti / (centurionis) leg(ionis) V Mac(edonicae) et / Valeri Clementis / (centurionis) leg(ionis) I Ital(icae) / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*; see also Saxer 1967, 41-42, # 72 – unfortunately the reading cannot be checked anymore, because of the state of conservation of the inscription, which was cut on a local limestone block of very poor quality. For the Neptunus / Poseidon cult in the area see also a Greek inscription dedicated to Poseidon *Kyanochaïtes* at the beginning of the 4th century AD (in *SEG* dated early 3rd century AD), praised for the finding of new water sources (see also another dedication for the same achievement to Hera *Basilissa*, *IGRL* 171 = *AE* 1976, 625 = 2011, 1139 = *SEG* 59, 795), *AE* 2009, 1206 = 2011, 1139 = *SEG* 59, 796 = *ISM* IV 25.

This equestrian officer, after his first equestrian *militia*, was commissioned at the head of the detachments of the Moesian army sent to Thrace⁴⁰, around AD 46 or 53, when a war is mentioned by Tacitus. Being an equestrian officer, he could only have commanded auxiliary *vexillationes* (Saxer 1967, 10; 120-121), but he was honoured also by the Moesian legions, the *V Macedonica*, the *VIII Augusta*, and, highly probably, the *IV Scythica*. The legion *VIII Augusta*, in particular, was transferred to *Moesia* sometime after AD 44, probably in AD 46. It was thus presumed that in the context of the making of the province of *Thracia* (Ботева 2017) and the occupation of the *ripa Thraciae* by the Moesian army, the legion was sent from *Pannonia* to the eastern part of the province, being directly attested in Moesia by a funerary inscription discovered at *Novae*⁴¹, although it is not clear if indeed it was accommodated there, before the coming of the legion *I Italica*. The partially preserved texts of both inscriptions still raise serious problems of reading and of overall understanding of his command. It mainly remains unclear why the legions joined in praising his achievements, even if in theory he could not have commanded these detachments. This can be probably explained with the fact that they were led by someone else. Since the legion *VIII Augusta* is mentioned, it is more probable that the unrest should be connected with the war of AD 53 and not with the establishment of the province of *Thracia*, when the legion had been sent to *Moesia*.

CONFLICTS DURING THE SECOND CENTURY AD

Leaving aside the already mentioned attack of the Dacians and Sarmatians in the winter of AD 101-102, which had little impact on Thrace itself, with the exception of the area of the future city of *Nicopolis ad Istrum* (see above), the reigns of Trajan, Hadrian, and Antoninus Pius were a peaceful and fruitful period for the development of urban and civic life, as well as the economic activities in the province of *Thracia*.

Unfortunately, this period of peace came to an end during the reign of Marcus Aurelius⁴². Within the context of the Marcomannic wars and under the pressure of the Vandals *Astingii*, the *Costoboci*⁴³, a people presumably settled in the Northeastern part of nowadays Romania and Southwestern Ukraine, attacked the province of *Moesia Inferior* (Cass. Dio 72, 12, 1-3; Popa 2007, 474-475). After they sacked *Traianum Tropaeum*⁴⁴, taking advantage of the departure of the *legio V Macedonica* to Potaissa in *Dacia Porolissensis*⁴⁵,

they followed the road south to *Marcianopolis* and further to *Thracia* and *Macedonia* (Premerstein 1912, 139-156; Scheidel 1990; Birley 2000, 165-168). They set on fire the sanctuary of Demeter at *Eleusis* (Ael. Arist. Or. 22, 2, 13; Premerstein 1912, 151-153, # 6; Jones 1971, 46), reached *Elateia* in *Phocis*, on which occasion the famous athlete Mnesibulus distinguished himself (Paus. 10, 34, 5; IG IX. 1 146 = Syll.³ 87; Premerstein 1912, 150-151, # 5; 153-154, # 7). The militias of the Greek cities, like those of *Thespieae* in Beotia, were sent to help the Roman regiments fighting the invaders, joining the imperial expedition⁴⁶. Since it is difficult to believe that they were sent too far from their country and considering the date, AD 168 to 172, this action should be connected to the war against the Costoboci. Although there is no other information, it is likely that not only *Thespieae* sent voluntaries, but also other cities, probably upon an imperial request. They also reached *Scupi*, in the southern part of the province of *Moesia Superior*, where a *decurio* of an auxiliary unit died while defending the city⁴⁷. It is supposed that after that moment the first stone ramparts of the *colonia* were built⁴⁸.

As direct consequence of the raid of the Costoboci, an entire building programme of new precincts in the cities was developed by the imperial authorities, both in *Moesia Inferior* and *Thracia* (Gerov 1980, 267-270; Biernacka-Lubańska 1982, 212-213): *Augusta Traiana*, *Serdica*, *Pautalia*: all were situated along the main roads which were leading to *Byzantium* and Asia Minor. Other examples include: *Callatis* – AD 172 (AÉ 1937, 246 = ISM III 97)⁴⁹; *Traianum Tropaeum* (Matei-Popescu 2014, 210-211) and probably *Mesambria* (Biernacka-Lubańska 1982, 213); *Philippopolis* – AD 167-168 or 172 (IGBulg III.1 878; Biernacka-Lubańska 1982, 34; 253, # 123; Topalilov 2012, 203, 213-214); *Serdica* – Marcus Aurelius and Commodus' joint reign, AD 176-180 (IGBulg IV 1902; Biernacka-Lubańska 1982, 34-35; 256, # 150).

During the raid in AD 170 or 171⁵⁰, L. Iulius Vehilius Gratus Iulianus, future *praefectus praetorio* under Commodus⁵¹, commanded a detachment of auxiliary forces, sent to *Achaia* and *Macedonia* against them, bearing the title *procurator Augusti et praepositus vexillationis*⁵². Both were *provinciae inermes* and only a cohort, the *I Flavia Bessorum*, was accommodated in *Macedonia*, probably in the area of *Thessalonica*, in order to be close to the headquarters of the proconsul (Matei-Popescu / Tentea 2018, 36-37, # XII). The detachment crossed the province of *Thracia*, while chasing the invaders, some of which could have been even crushed on Thracian soil. R. Saxer assumed that a detachment could have been composed only of auxiliary forces, but he admitted that, given the war context, some legionary detachments could have been attached too. However, in this case the commander could have borne the title *pro legato* (or the mention *cum iure gladii*,

⁴⁶ SEG 39, 456 = AÉ 1971, 447 = IDRE II 366, especially ll. 2-6: Κατὰ τὰ δόξαντα τῇ τε βο[υ]λῇ καὶ τῷ δή[μῳ] διὰ τοῦ] / ψηφίσματος τοῦ ὑπογεγ[ρα]μμένου, τῶ[ν] προθύμως ἐκπεμ]/φθέντων νέων ἐπὶ τὴν στ[ρ]ατεῖαν τῷ μεγ[ίστῳ καὶ θεϊ]/σάτῳ αὐτοκράτορι Καίσαρι Μ. Αὐρηλίῳ Ἀντω[νείνῳ Σεβα]/στῶ Ἀρμενιακῶ Παρθικῶ ὀνόματα ἐνεγράφη ταύτ[η]. For an extended commentary see Jones 1971.

⁴⁷ Jovanova 2005, 156 = AÉ 2005, 1315 = AÉ 2006, 1190: *D(is) M(anibus) Timoni Das/si dec(urionis) coh(ortis) II Aur(eliae) / Dard(anorum) interfec-/ti a Costobocos (!) / vix(it) annis L m(i)-li(tavit) annis / XXIII Postumia Spes / coniugi bene merenti / posuit*; Matei-Popescu / Tentea 2018, 53-65, # XXVIII. The unit was usually accommodated at Ravna (*Timacum minus*) and since he was still active, he probably died fighting the Costoboci around the *colonia* of *Scupi*, although a possible origin somewhere in the territory of the *colonia* should not be totally ruled out. If so, he would have been a Dardanian, serving into the first generation of recruits in the ethnic unit. However, he had served 23 years and if we agree that he died around AD 171, then he would have been recruited around AD 148. Since the unit was almost certainly raised during the reign of Marcus Aurelius only, he would have been transferred or promoted to *decurio* from another unit into this *cohors equitata*.

⁴⁸ Jovanova 2005, 157: "In this context, it could be suggested that by analogy to the protection and fortification of cities in Lower Moesia and Thrace, the time after the penetration of the Costoboci tribes, i. e. 170, is the *terminus post quem*, that is, the time after which the construction of the first stone fortification of *Scupi* should be dated. Supporting this assumption, we have the results of the latest research following a trial excavation of parts of the southeast rampart. The technology of the construction points to the time of Marcus Aurelius, while the earliest coins are from the time of Faustina the Younger".

⁴⁹ See also three other inscriptions directly connected with the construction of the precinct, ISM III 98-100.

⁵⁰ For the chronology see Scheidel 1990, 498, highlighting the year AD 171: "Zumindest hinsichtlich des herausragenden Ereignisses dieses Zugs, des Vorstoßes der Costobocen bis Eleusis, legen die im Augenblick greifbaren Quellen eher eine Datierung ins Jahr 171".

⁵¹ PIR² I 615; he was killed by the will of the emperor in AD 189, Cass. Dio 72, 14, 1; SHA, *Comm.* 7, 4, 2.

⁵² CIL VI 31856 = ILS 1327 = IDRE I 18, ll. 8-11: [*proc(urator) Aug(usti)? e]t pra[ep(osito)] / vexillationis per Achaia[m] et Macedoniam / et in Hispanias adversus Castabocas et / Mauros rebelles*; Premerstein 1912, 155-159, #12; Saxer 1967, 35-37, # 67; Birley 2000, 165. For his entire career see Pflaum 1960, 456-464, # 180.

⁵³ Domaszewski 1967, 170-171; Šašel 1974 (highlighting the juridical aspect). See, however, now Faoro 2017, who considers that the title has nothing to do with commanding legionary troops. See also IDRE II 449 and CIL VIII 2582 = 18090 = ILS 1111 = IDRE II 450: *praepositus legionibus I Italicae et IIII Flaviae cum omnibus copiis auxiliorum dato iure gladii* – A. Iulius Pompilius Piso T. Vibius Laevillus Quadratus Berenicianus: PIR² I 477; Domaszewski 1967, 183; Piso 1993, 218-224 (221-222), # 52.

⁵⁴ Domaszewski 1967, 170: “Die militärische Verwendung des Procurators als *praepositus vexillationum* hat die schwere Not des Marcomannenkrieges notwendig gemacht”.

⁵⁵ SHA, Marc. 21, 1: *cum Mauri Hispanias prope omnes vastarent, res per legatos bene gestae sunt*; SHA, Sev. 2, 3-4: *post quaesturam sorte Baeticam accepit atque inde Africam petiit, ut mortuo patre rem domesticam componeret. Sed dum in Africa est, pro Baetica Sardinia ei attributa est, quod Baeticam Mauri populabantur*.

⁵⁶ The same was highlighted by Saxer 1967, 37, too: “Mit demselben Kontigent, mit dem er gegen die Kostoboken gezogen war, eilte Gratus, wahrscheinlich zur See, vom Balkan nach Spanien”.

⁵⁷ AE 1956, 124 = IPD⁴ 536 = IDRE II 445; Pflaum 1960, 476-494, # 181bis; Saxer 1967, 37-39, # 68; PME V 23; Piso 1993, 224-235 (231-232), # 53; Piso 2013, # 111.

⁵⁸ SHA, Marc. 21, 7: *latrones etiam Dalmatiae atque Dardaniae milites fecit*; AE 1934, 209; CIL III 8242 = ILJug 1434 = AE 2010, 1400; CIL III 14587 = ILS 8504 = ILJug 1343 = IMS III/2 93.

⁵⁹ CIL III 1559 = 8009 = IDR III/1 118; CIL III 1579 = IDR III/1 71; CIL III 1585 = 8021 = IDR II 134; Wolff 2003; Ardevan 2004.

⁶⁰ Plin. NH 4, 11 (40): *Thracia sequitur, inter validissimas Europae gentes, in strategias L. divisa, populorum eius quos nominare non pigeat **amnem Strymonem** accolunt dextro latere Denseletae et Medi ad Bisaltas usque supra dictos, **laevo Digerri Bessorumque multa nomina ad Mestum amnem ima Pangaei montis ambientem** inter Haletos, Diobessos, Carbilesos, inde **Brysas**, **Sapaeos**, **Odomantos***; Pflaum 1960, 489.

⁶¹ SHA, Pert. 2, 10: *Cassiano motu composito e Syria ad Danuvii tutelam profectus est atque inde Moesiae utriusque, mox Daciae regimen accepit*; PIR² H 73; Pflaum 1960, 451-454, # 179; Piso 1993, 117-130, # 25.

which gave him also the capital jurisdiction)⁵³ and not only *procurator Augusti et praepositus vexillationis*. Nevertheless, taking into account his previous experience as the commander of an *ala*, even accomplishing a *quarta militia* (*ala I Thracum Herculana* in Syria, during Lucius Verus' Parthian expedition, and *ala I Pannoniorum Tampiana milliaria* in Noricum, after the war had broken out on the Danube), and as *praepositus vexillationibus tempore belli Germanici et Sarmatici* in AD 168-169⁵⁴, it can be argued that he commanded only a large cavalry detachment, probably of the strength of an *ala milliaria* or even double. Moreover, the same *vexillatio* could have been sent overseas to *Hispania*, after completing the expedition in *Macedonia* and *Achaia*, as the text of the inscription implies. In the light of the new information we have on the scale of the cavalry detachments sent from *Moesia Inferior* to the Mauretanian provinces in Antoninus Pius' reign to fight against the rebellious Moorish tribes (Matei-Popescu 2021), one could not be surprised that the same tactic could have been used later on against the same Mauri, in AD 172, then ravaging *Hispania Baetica*⁵⁵. Into such context, one can clearly stress that L. Iulius Vehilius Gratus Iulianus was sent at the head of a large cavalry detachment built upon the contingents sent by the *alae* of *Moesia Inferior*, the same that repelled the Costoboci in AD 171, to crush the Mauri in *Baetica* in the following year⁵⁶. When he came back in AD 173, he was appointed head of the *classis Pontica* (*procurator Augusti et praefectus classis Ponticae*), probably in order to secure the Black Sea and the Straits in the context of the war. In my opinion, he was not a *procurator Augusti provinciae Moesiae inferioris*, like M. Valerius Maximianus (see below), but simply his command was similar to that of a *procurator centenarius*.

In AD 176/177-177/178, the brigands of the Thracian tribe of the Brisei were ravaging *Dardania* at the border area of the provinces of *Thracia* and *Macedonia* under unknown circumstances. Since both *Macedonia* and Southwest Thrace lacked military capability and the army of *Moesia Superior* was located to the north and engaged in the war against the Germanic tribes, the procurator of the neighbouring province of *Moesia Inferior*, the famous M. Valerius Maximianus was sent to the at the head of some detachments to repel them: *adepus procurationem Moesiae inferioris, eodem in tempore praeposito vexillationibus et at detrahendam Briseorum latronum manum in confinio Macedoniae et Thraciae ab imperatore misso*⁵⁷. The presence of the *latrones* was part of a more general phenomenon during that time in the Balkan area, as *latrones* are directly attested in *Dalmatia*, *Moesia Superior* (in *Dardania* and in the region of Ravna)⁵⁸, and in the southwest part of *Dacia Superior*⁵⁹, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. The Brisei were already mentioned as a Thracian tribe on the left bank of the Strymon river by Pliny⁶⁰. The expression *in confinio Macedoniae et Thraciae* meant that they lived in fact within the limits of the province of *Moesia Superior*, in *Dardania*, not far from the border zone between *Macedonia* and *Thracia*. From a chronological point of view, these exploits around AD 176-177 should rather be dated when Maximianus came to *Moesia Inferior*, probably together with P. Helvius Pertinax Maximianus right after he had served in Syria, during the expedition against Avidius Cassius (*Cassianus motus*)⁶¹. Thereafter he was appointed *procurator Moesiae Superioris*

(AD 177-178) and *procurator Daciae Porolissensis* (AD 178-179), both offices held under the same P. Helvius Pertinax, under whom he even served after being promoted in the senatorial order as *legatus legionis V Macedonicae* at Potaissa, *Dacia Porolissensis* (Piso 1993, 127, 233-234).

The last conflict on Thracian soil is attested during the civil wars at the beginning of the reign of Septimius Severus. The entire area covered by the provinces of *Achaia*, *Macedonia* and *Thracia* was into Pescennius Niger's hands. The army of Septimius Severus fought two times against his forces⁶², under the leadership of Asellius Aemilianus, the proconsul of *Asia*, a highly experienced military commander, former governor of the provinces of *Syria* and *Thracia* (*PIR*² A 1211).

Septimius Severus' expeditionary forces were built by the detachments from the Pannonian and Moesian provinces. His brother, P. Septimius Geta, who had served as *legatus legionis I Italicae* under P. Helvius Pertinax in Moesia inferior (*AE* 1946, 131 = *IDRE* II 438; Piso 1993, 150-156, # 31; Birley 2002, 54; 218, # 21; Matei-Popescu 2010, 91), and was governor of the same province had already sent a part of his army to Thrace (*PIR*² S 453; Birley 2002, 83; 98). All these soldiers, according to a statement of Herodian⁶³, remembered the governorship of Pertinax and were eager to avenge him and thus back up Severus' claims to power. New Italian levies brought up to their strength the Pannonian legions, replacing the soldiers promoted to the praetorian cohorts (Christol 1997, 13), and were sent together with the detachments of the praetorian fleets to the East⁶⁴. Septimius Severus' march towards the East (*expeditio Orientalis*) and his military achievements were fully narrated by numerous authors, as Herodian states (Herod. 2, 15, 6-7), but unfortunately none of their writings are preserved. Among these, Marius Maximus' account must have been one of the most important, as he participated in person (see below), but some insights are nevertheless given by Herodian, Cassius Dio and the anonymous author of the *lives of the Historia Augusta*. Some inscriptions complete the information.

Septimius Severus probably reached the Danube at *Singidunum* and *Viminacium*, in *Moesia Superior* (Birley 2002, 109), where his army was joined by the detachments of the Pannonian army, led by Ti. Claudius Candidus, the governor of the province of *Pannonia Superior*⁶⁵. Thereafter they marched on *via diagonalis* towards *Perinthus* and *Byzantium*. At the same time, a detachment from *Moesia Inferior*, commanded by the famous historian L. Marius Maximus Perpetuus Aurelianus, *legatus legionis I Italicae*, was sent to *Byzantium* and after, to *Lugdunum*, in AD 197: *dux exerciti* (sic!) *Mysiacy aput Byzantium et aput Lugdunum*⁶⁷. Experienced military

⁶² SHA, *Pesc. Nig.* 5, 5-8: *Et Pescennius quidem veniente ad orientem Severum Graeciam, Thracias, Macedoniam, interfectis multis inlustribus viris tenebat, ad participatum imperii Severum vocans. A quo, causa eorum quos occiderat, cum Aemiliano hostis est appellatus. Dein a ducibus Severi per Aemilianum pugnans victus est. Et cum illi tutum exsilium promitteret, si ab armis recederet, persistens iterum pugnavit et victus est atque apud Cyzicum circa paludem fugiens sauciatus, et sic ad Severum adductus atque statim mortuus*; SHA, *Sev.*, 8, 6 and 12-17: *Ad orientis statum confirmandum profectus est nihil adhuc de Nigro palam dicens. ... Miserat sane legionem, quae Graeciam Thraciamque praeciperet, ne eas Pescennius occuparet, sed iam Byzantium Nigro tenebat. Perinthum etiam Nigro volens occupare plurimos de exercitu interfecit atque ideo hostis cum Aemiliano est appellatus. Cumque Severum ad participatum vocaret, contemptus est. Promisit sane Nigro tutum exsilium se vellet, Aemiliano autem non ignovit. Aemilianum dehinc victus in Hellesponto a Severi ducibus Cyzicum primum confugit atque inde in aliam civitatem, in qua eorum iussu occisus est. Fusae sunt item copiae ab iisdem ducibus etiam Nigri*; see also Cass. Dio 75, 6, 3 and Herod. 3, 1, 5-7; 2, 1-6; Christol 1997, 14-15; Birley 2002, 108-109.

⁶³ Herod. 2, 9, 8-9: ἤδαι δὲ πάντας τοὺς κατὰ τὸ Ἰλλυρικὸν στρατιώτας μεμνημένους τῆς Περτίνακος ἡγεμονίας· ὑπὸ γὰρ Μάρκῳ βασιλευσύντι πολλὰ ἐγείρας σὺν αὐτοῖς κατὰ Γερμανῶν τρόπαια, στρατηγός τε καὶ ἡγεμὼν τῶν Ἰλλυρικῶν κατασταθείς.

⁶⁴ Herod. 2, 14, 6-7: ἔκ τε τῶν κατὰ τὴν Ἰταλίαν πόλεων νεανίας μεταπεμπόμενος καὶ στρατεύων, εἴ τί τι ἦν ἐν τῷ Ἰλλυρικῷ τοῦ στρατιωτικοῦ λείψανον, κατελθὼν ἐπὶ Θράκῃν ἐκέλευεν αὐτῷ συντυχεῖν. ἐξήρτυε δὲ καὶ στόλον ναυτικόν, καὶ πάσας τὰς κατὰ τὴν Ἰταλίαν τριήρεις ὀπλιτῶν πληρώσας ἐξέπεμπε; see also 3, 1, 1.

⁶⁵ *CIL* II 4114 = *ILS* 1140 = *CIL* II² 14, 975, ll. 2-9 (*Tarraco, Hispania Tarraconensis*): *leg(ato) Augg(ustorum) / pr(o) pr(aetore) provinc(iae) H(ispaniae)*

c(terioris) / et in ea duci terra marique / adversus rebelles hh(ostes) pp(ublicos) / item Asiae item Noricae / duci exercitus Illyrici / expeditione Asiana item Parthica / item Gallica; Cass. Dio 75, 6, 5-6; *PIR*² C 823; Pflaum 1960, 548-549, # 203; *PME* C 128; Christol 1997, 29; Birley 2002, 109-111.

⁶⁶ *CIL* VI 1450 = *ILS* 2935; *CIL* VI 1451 = *ILS* 2936; *PIR*² M 308; Christol 1997, 26-27; Birley 2002, 205, # 4; Matei-Popescu 2010, 89-90. Not be confused with his brother, L. Marius Perpetuus, *PIR*² M 311; Piso 1993, 169-177, # 38. As a historian, he wrote the *lives of the emperors* from Nerva to Elagabalus, which were read and much cited during the 4th century AD. For the expedition against Clodius Albinus and the battle of *Lugdunum* in AD 197 see Christol 1997, 15-16 and Birley 2002, 121-128.

⁶⁷ *PIR*² F 27, L. Fabius Cilo Septiminus Catinius Acilianus Lepidus Fulcinianus, *cos. suff.* AD 193, *cos. ord.* AD 204, and *praefectus urbi iterum* in the same year, which meant that he had been appointed *praefectus urbi* before that year.

commanders were commissioned even to head smaller detachments, one of them is L. Fabius Cilo, the raising star of the regime, future governor of the provinces of *Pontus et Bithynia* (AD 194-195), *Moesia Superior* (AD 196, while Caracalla became Caesar at *Viminacium*) and *Pannonia Superior* (AD 197)⁶⁸. He is attested by two different inscriptions as *praepositus vexillationibus Perinthis peragentibus* and *praepositus vexillationibus Illyricianis Perinthis tendentibus*⁶⁹. After defeating Pescennius Niger's army, all these detachments crossed to Asia Minor and finally crushed the rebellion at *Nicaea* and *Issus* (Christol 1997, 14; Birley 2002, 110-112).

CONCLUSIONS

Although it was not located on the frontier, the province of Thrace experienced several military conflicts on its soil during the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. Before the making of the province, the Thracian allied kingdom had the Danube as its north frontier, the so-called *ripa Thraciae*, which the kings did their best to defend, together with the Roman army located to the west, before and after the making of the province of *Moesia* in AD 15.

The conflicts outburst in mainland Thrace some years later, in connection with the endemic succession crises within the royal house (AD 19), or with the uprisings of the various Thracian tribes against the Roman levies for the auxiliary units (AD 21 and 26). On these occasions the neighbouring Moesian army played a key role. Another major conflict could be connected with the making of the province of Thrace in AD 46/47, or with some unrest in the area of *Byzantium* in AD 53. Within such a context, a Roman officer, Q. Cornelius Valerianus, distinguished himself at the head of a military detachment drawn once again from the Moesian legions and auxiliary units.

After that moment, leaving aside the conflicts during the Dacian expeditions of Trajan, which in fact did not reach the Thracian mainland, peace ruled for more than a century. New conflicts in Thrace were connected with the raid of the Costoboci in AD 171 that led to a massive building program of defensive works in many of the Thracian cities and in the neighbouring provinces of *Moesia Superior* and *Inferior*. Once again, the army of the province of *Moesia Inferior* was sent south under the lead of the *procurator Augusti*, L. Iulius Vehilius Gratus Iulianus, to crush the Costoboci. Another *procurator Augusti* of the same province, M. Valerius Maximianus, led some years later another punishment expedition against a Thracian tribe, the Brisei, who plundered the provinces of *Moesia Superior* and *Thracia*.

The last major conflicts, before the 3rd century AD, were connected with the war between Septimius Severus and Pescennius Niger. The Pannonian and Moesian armies fought against the armies of the Eastern provinces in the areas of *Perinthus* and *Byzantium*, before the conflict moved to Asia Minor and the province of *Syria*.

⁶⁸ *CIL* VI 1408 = *ILS* 1141 = *IDRE* I 12; *AE* 1926, 79 = 1927, 93; see also *CIL* VI 1409 = *ILS* 1142 (*dux vexillationum*); Saxer 1967, 44-46, # 77-79; Christol 1997, 26.

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Abbreviations:

AE = L'Année Épigraphique. Paris, 1888-

CIL = Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. Berlin. 1873-

IDR = Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae. Bucharest-Paris. 1975-

IDRE = *Petolescu, C.C.* 1996-2000. Inscriptions externes concernant l'histoire de la Dacie (I^{er}-III^e siècles). Vol. I-II. Bucharest.

IGBulg = *Mihailov, G.* 1956-1997. Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria repertae. Vol. I-V. Sofia.

IGLNovae = *Kolendo, J. / Božilova, V.* 1997. Inscriptions grecques et latines de Novae (Mésie inférieure). Bordeaux.

IGR = *Cagnat, R.* 1906-1927. Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes, Paris.

ILBulg = *Gerov, B.* 1989. Inscriptiones Latinae in Bulgaria repertae. Sofia.

ILJug = *Šašel, J. / Šašel, A.* 1963-1986. Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Jugoslavia repertae et editae sunt. Vol. I-III. Ljubljana (Situla 5, 19, 25).

ILS = *Dessau, H.* 1892-1916. Inscriptiones Latinae selectae. Vol. I-III. Berlin.

IMS III/2 = *Petrović, P.* 1995. Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure. Timacum Minus et la Vallée du Timok. Belgrade.

IPD⁴ = *Dobó, A.* 1975. Inscriptiones extra fines Pannoniae Daciaeque repertae ad res earundem provinciarum pertinentes. Amsterdam.

ISM = Inscriptiones Scythiae Minoris Graecae et Latinae. Bucharest-Paris. 1980-2015.

PIR² = Prosopographia Imperii Romani. Berlin. 1933-2015.

PME = *Devijver, H.* 1976-2001. Prosopographia militiarum equestrium que fuerunt ab Augusto ad Gallienum. Vol. I-V. Leuven.

RGZM = *Pferdehirt, B.* 2004. Römische Militärdiplome und Entlassungsurkunden in der Sammlung des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums. Vol. I-II. Mainz.

RIB I = *Collingwood, R.G. / Wright, R.P.* 1965. The Roman Inscriptions of Britain. Vol. I. Inscriptions on Stone. Oxford.

RMD = *Roxan, M.M. / Holder, P. A.* 1978-2006. Roman Military Diplomas. Vol. I-V. London.

SEG = Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum. Amsterdam, Leiden-Boston. 1922-

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Archaeological data on cataclysms in the Roman colony of *Deultum* in Southeastern Thrace (2nd – 6th century AD)

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Abstract: Fourteen destructive events – possible barbarian attacks, internal conflicts, and an earthquake – that took place within a 500-year period have been distinguished archaeologically in *Deultum*. This article attempts to provide a historical interpretation of these instances and offer a discussion whether what happened in the Roman colony in Thrace could be considered valid to a significant extent for the entire Southeastern Balkan Peninsula.

Key words: Antiquity, the Balkan Peninsula, Thrace, cataclysms, *Deultum*.

PREFACE

Founded ca. AD 70, *Colonia Flavia Pacis Deultensium* is the oldest Roman city in the territory of Bulgaria and one of the two Roman colonies (together with *Colonia Claudia Aprensis*) established in the province of Thrace (fig. 1)¹. The main purpose of this article is to offer a credible chronology of cataclysms in Roman *Deultum*, from its foundation till the end of the 6th century AD. It is based mainly on stratigraphic data derived from annual excavation reports. With a few exceptions, the reports are of excavations that have been ongoing since 2003, when archaeological investigations were renewed in the city². These are particularly important, since evidence of upheavals in the colony obtained during the earlier archaeological excavations is either missing or uncertain in terms of chronology.

DISCUSSION

The oldest burnt layers were revealed at two archaeological sites (fig. 2). The red dot in the south near the road marks Site 1 (fig. 12 / site 1), where an Early Byzantine eastern gate has been studied (Vagalinski 2018, fig. 8). The burnt layer at that location is dated to the first half of the 2nd century AD, and undoubtedly before AD 156 (Вaгaлински 2006, 185). We do have limited information about the architecture of the colony from the end of the 1st – the 2nd century AD. For instance, the walls consisted of crushed stone bound in white mortar and the superstructure is preserved at a height of 0.80 m. In some places, it was made of large ashlar which were reused in the superstructure of the city fortress built under the Tetrarchy. The red dot in the north (fig. 2) marks the place of the "Imperial temple" site (fig. 12 / site 3), where parts of large bronze statues have been found, including a portrait of Emperor Septimius Severus (Milčeva

¹ For *Deultum* see: Raycheva 2022; Boteva 2020; Milčeva 2020; Boteva / Milcheva 2018; Sharankov 2017; Preshlenov 2015; Vagalinski 2008; 2018; Draganov 2007.

² Krasimira Kostova (Historical Museum – Sredets) studies the city's *thermae*; Hristo Preshlenov (National Archaeological Institute with Museum (henceforth NAIM) – Sofia) excavates the so-called "Imperial temple" site; Lyudmil Vagalinski (NAIM, general scientific head of *Deultum*) explores the city's fortifications. The following colleagues have contributed to the stratigraphic results provided in this article: Ivo D. Cholakov, Sirma Alexandrova, Lyuba Traykova, Milena Raycheva, Silva Sabkova (NAIM); Maria Manolova (Regional Archaeological Museum – Varna); Dobrina Harbalieva, Emil Dakashev, Plamena Dakasheva (Historical Museum – Sredets); Natalia Lambreva (Sofia). I would like to express my gratitude to all of them.



Fig. 1. Location of *Deultum* (after Hammond 1981, map 24)



Fig. 2. *Deultum*, September 2020, aerial view with the main archaeological sites in the central and northern parts of the city; red dots mark evidence of a possible enemy attack in the first half of the 2nd c. AD (L. Vagalinski)



Fig. 3. *Deultum*, September 2020, aerial view with the main archaeological sites in the central and northern parts of the city; red dots mark evidence of a possible enemy attack after AD 161 (L. Vagalinski)

2020; Boteva 2020). Burnt destructions from the first half of the 2nd century have also been unearthed in this place (Дамянов et al. 1989, 85). These two sites, both featuring burnt debris, are distant from each other (fig. 2). It seems that the reason for the destruction was not a domestic incident. Furthermore, it is known that coin hoards found in Northeastern Bulgaria and in Romanian Dobrudzha were hidden after

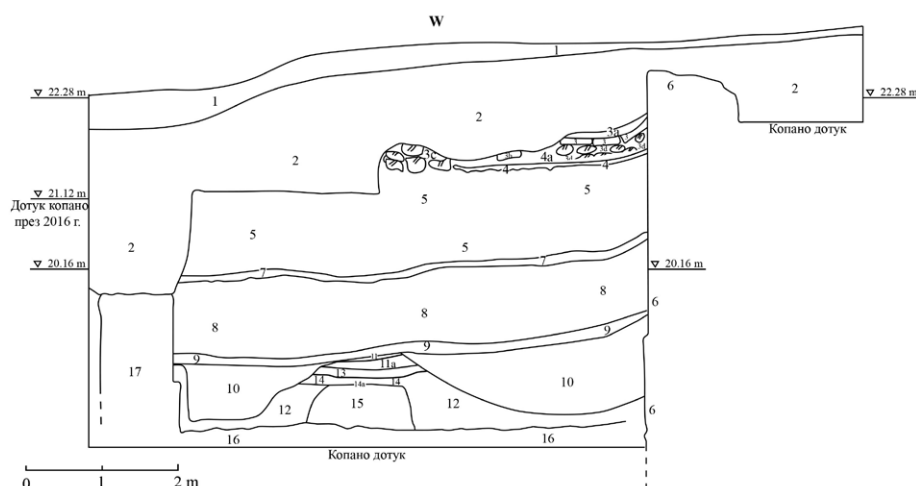


Fig. 4. *Deultum*, site 10, NW corner of the Late antique fortress, W stratigraphic cross-section: 1 humus; 2 present-day pit for looting of Late antique walls; 3 brick floor of a dwelling; 3a fire of 3; 3b clay floor of a dwelling, partly destroyed by 2; 3c S wall of a dwelling, broken stones with clay binding; 3d arranged broken stones with clay binding; 4 clay floor; 4a fire of 4; 5 destruction by fire; 6 N Tetrarchic curtain wall; 7 clay floor; 8 destructions by fire of 6; 9 clay floor of 6; 10 pit dug by builders of 6; 11 burnt layers which belong to an edifice in *opus mixtum* (*villa urbana*?) with baths; 12 pit for lime slaking dug by the builders of the edifice in *opus mixtum*; 13 clay floor of the edifice in *opus mixtum*; 14 layer consisting of three strips of lime resulting from subtraction of lime from 12; 14a working surface of the builders of the edifice in *opus mixtum*; 15 layer that was found by the builders of the edifice in *opus mixtum* who dug it over, *t. p. q.* AD 161; a clay water-main cut by walls of the edifice is the only structure that corresponds to the first cultural layer; 16 pure dark brown clay; 17 wall of the edifice in *opus mixtum* (L. Vagalinski)



Fig. 5a. *Deultum*, site 10, NW corner of the Late antique fortress, E stratigraphic cross-section; see **fig. 5b** (L. Vagalinski)

³ The date of this coin (AD 161-169; field inventory number 158/2017) was initially determined by the numismatist Sotir Ivanov (working at Historical Museum – Petrich at the time) in the autumn of 2017. Six years later, two other numismatists (Emil Dakashev, Historical Museum – Sredets, and Lily Grozdanova, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”) proposed a date of AD 136-138. In any case, a possible attack of the *Costoboci* on *Deultum* needs further proof.

AD 145, AD 150, AD 150-151. It has been therefore suggested that Sarmatians attacked *Moesia Inferior* in the second half of Antoninus Pius’ rule (Varbanov 2007, 159-160). Sarmatian cavalry would easily reach *Deultum* along the Western Black Sea coast. However, there is no archaeological data to confirm such a conclusion. Hadrian’s urbanization policy in the region could be a reason for local turmoil, since it was in his time that the former tribal territories were annexed to military camps and cities (Ботева 2018, 247; Varbanov 2021, 60). A building inscription from the territory of *Deultum* dated between 10 December AD 154 and 9 December AD 155 (Sharankov 2017, E2), along with another four inscriptions, reveals that a defensive system (consisting of *praesidia*, *burgi* and *phruri*) was erected in Thrace by Antoninus Pius (Tačeva 1988; Тачева 2000, 182-183). Perhaps this building program was the result of clashes that had also affected *Deultum*.

At Site 1 (**fig. 3** / south red dot; **fig. 12** / site 1), an arson took place between AD 155 and AD 218 and has been documented archaeologically (Вагалински / Чолаков 2008, 429). In the northwestern corner of the Late antique fortress within Site 10 (**fig. 3** / northern red dot) a burnt layer with a *terminus post quem* AD 161 has been studied (**figs. 4/15, 5a, 5b/18**; Вагалински 2018, 308)³. Enemy raids of the third quarter of the 2nd century have been attested archaeologically in *Moesia Inferior*. Thirty coin hoards whose latest coins were struck under Marcus Aurelius are known from this province. In *Thracia* – south of the Balkan Mountains – three contemporary coins hoards have also been registered; the latest *terminus post quem* for their concealment is set at AD 167. Inscriptions found in *Tropaeum Traiani* (North / Romanian Dobrudzha) and *Scupi* (now Skopje, North Macedonia) even mention the invaders by name – the *Costoboci* (Varbanov 2007, 161-166; Върбанов 2020, 77-78). Therefore, it seems that the new stratigraphic data from *Deultum* supports Boris Gerov’s thesis

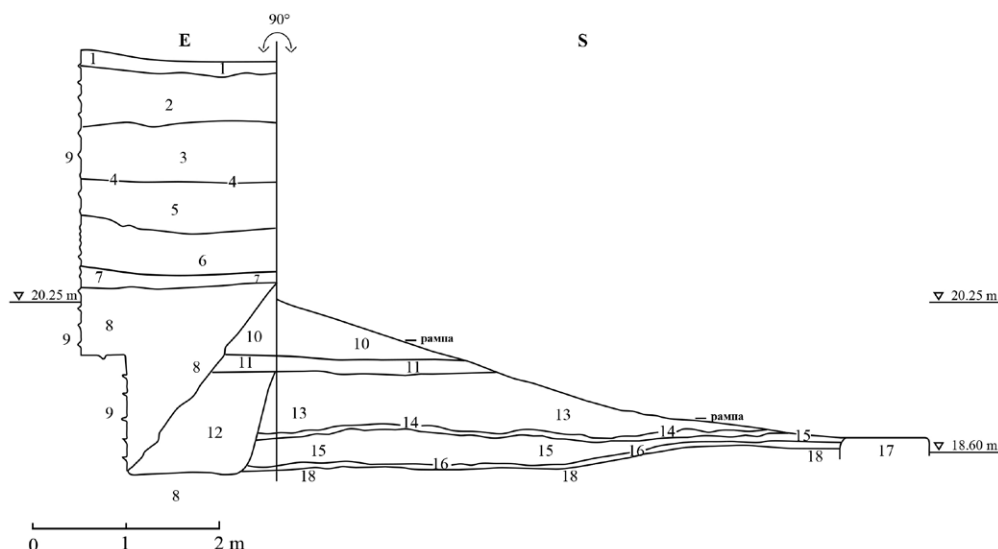


Fig. 5b. *Deultum*, site 10, NW corner of the Late antique fortress, E stratigraphic cross-section (see **fig. 5a**): 1 humus; 2 scattered destructions; 3 burnt layer – grey colour, ash, building and household ceramics, single charcoals, pieces of mortar, animal bones; 4 habitation surface; 5 grey-white layer – shattered mortar, small shards of building ceramics, single scattered charcoals, single pottery shards, small scattered stones; this layer is the result of stone and brick extraction from surrounding damaged walls; 6 debris – broken stones, building ceramics, many animal bones, scattered single lumps of mortar, scattered charcoals, household pottery, grey colour, loose; 7 brown-green clay floor belonged to 9 (the Early Byzantine N fortress wall reinforcement with a staircase; see **fig. 15**); 8 trench to build 9 (the Early Byzantine reinforcing wall) filled with welded debris; 9 Early Byzantine reinforcement attached to the inner face of the N Tetrarchic fortress wall (see **fig. 15**); 10 dug out destructions of the N Tetrarchic fortress wall and the neighbouring Late Roman buildings; 11 light brown clay floor; 12 pit; 13 construction waste from the Tetrarchic fortress erection: finely crushed marble used in the mortar of the new stronghold; single pieces of tiles and bricks, a few broken stones, small lumps of white mortar; 14 grey, pure clay habitation surface of the Tetrarchic fortress' construction; 15 burnt destructions of Late Roman edifice in *opus mixtum* (*villa urbana*?); 16 living surface with white mortar strips of the Late Roman edifice's (*villa urbana*?) construction; 17 stone threshold of the Late Roman edifice's (*villa urbana*?); 18 burnt layer, black-brown colour, pottery, charcoals, small lumps of white mortar, tiles, *t. p. q.* AD 161 (L. Vagalinski)

that the Costoboci moved to the south along the Western Black Sea coast (Gero 1977, 121). As a result, *Apollonia Pontica* (now Sozopol, Bulgaria; **fig. 1**) suffered heavily; there were probably several barbarian invasions that occurred in the period AD 164-171 (Varbanov 2021, 62). Perhaps *Deultum* received its first fortress precisely after the attack of ca. AD 170. Yet, archaeological data for the earliest fortification of the colony is still far from certain. Based on a stone sculpture and general observations of the coins' reverse images, it has been suggested that the city may have been fortified ca. AD 165-184/185 (Boteva / Milcheva 2018).

Burnt layers with a *terminus post quem* AD 218 have been studied in the central part of the colony, along the modern-day intercity route II-79 Elhovo-Burgas (**fig. 6** / eastern red dot = Site 1, Вагалински / Чолаков 2007, 253; 2008, 429; **fig. 6** / western red dot = Site 7, Вагалински / Чолаков 2008, 430; **fig. 7/18**). But does the fire necessarily indicate a barbarian invasion? Ancient authors tell of military clashes between northern aggressors and Emperor Caracalla (AD 211-217; Буданова 1999, 84). Coins of *Nicopolis ad Istrum* (near the village of Nikyup, Veliko Tarnovo district, Northeastern Bulgaria) and *Marcianopolis* (now Devnya, Northeastern Bulgaria) reveal that Roman troops had once again overwhelmed barbarians that had invaded the eastern part of the Balkans (Ботева 1997, 321). However, the event happened in the second half of AD 217, i.e. before this particular instance of destruction occurred in the colony. The coinage of

Fig. 6. *Deultum*, September 2020, aerial view with the main archaeological sites in the central and northern parts of the city; red dots mark evidence of a possible enemy attack after AD 218 (L. Vagalinski)

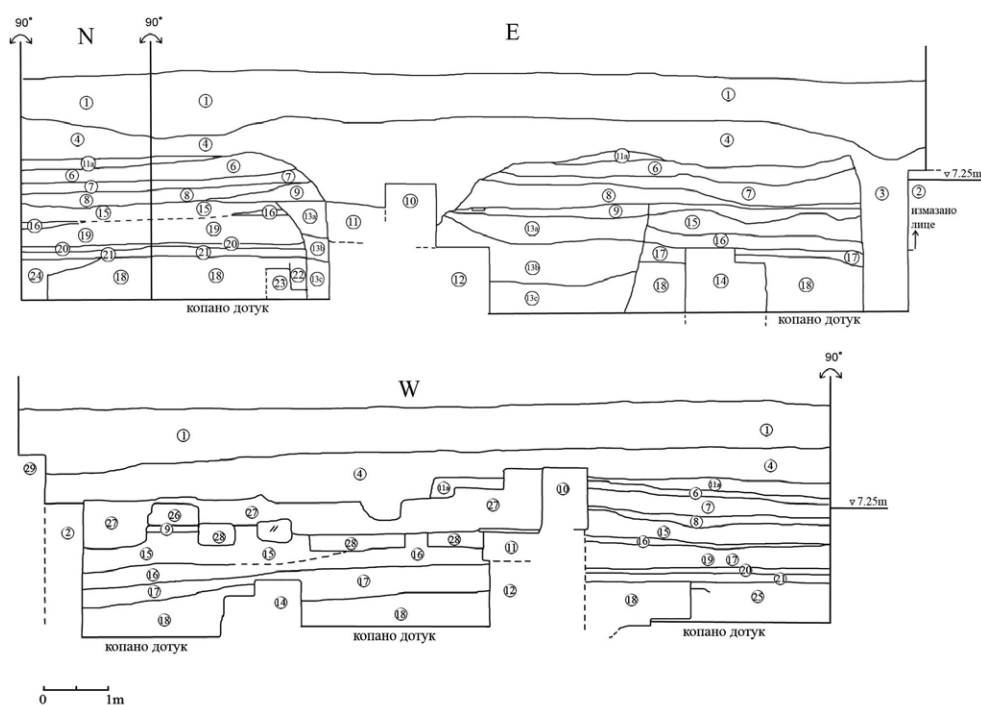


Fig. 7. *Deultum*, site 1 (see fig. 12), stratigraphic cross-sections: 1 humus; 2 wall; 3 ditch; 4 pit; 6 burnt layer; 7 green clay floor; 8 burnt destructions, *t. p. q.* AD 457; 9 green clay floor; 10 wall; 11 wall; 11a clay floor of E Early Byzantine gate at site 1; 12 wall; 13 pit in whose filling three layers are distinguished (13a-13c); probably it was originally a lime-pit; 14 substructure of a wall; 15 burnt layer, *t. p. q.* AD 425; 16 grey-green clay floor, *t. p. q.* AD 355; 17 burnt layer; 18 burnt destructions, *t. p. q.* AD 218; 19 conflagration, *t. p. q.* AD 351; 20 floor of pink hydrophobic mortar containing finely ground ceramics; 21 thick pad made from rubble and sand; 22 burnt debris; 23 stair; 24 green-brown, almost sterile clay; 25 almost sterile green clay; 26 *spolia* with a “swallow tail” groove; 27 stone wall with clay binding; 28 border between super- and substructure of 27; 29 N face of N tower of the E Early Byzantine gate (L. Vagalinski)

Deultum reveals that the city supported Emperor Macrinus and probably received some privileges from him, for which it was punished by Elagabalus (Ботева 1997, 299, 314, 315; Драганов 2006, 54-55, 57-58). It can be assumed that the arson in question could have been a result of the conflict between supporters of the two (16 May AD 218 – 8 June AD 218). In the course of development-led excavations in 2020, a small coin hoard dated to the rule of Macrinus and Diadumenian was found near the village of Belogradets, Varna region (Northeastern Bulgaria). It has been associated unconvincingly with “events of the middle of the 3rd century” (Varbanov 2021, 64).

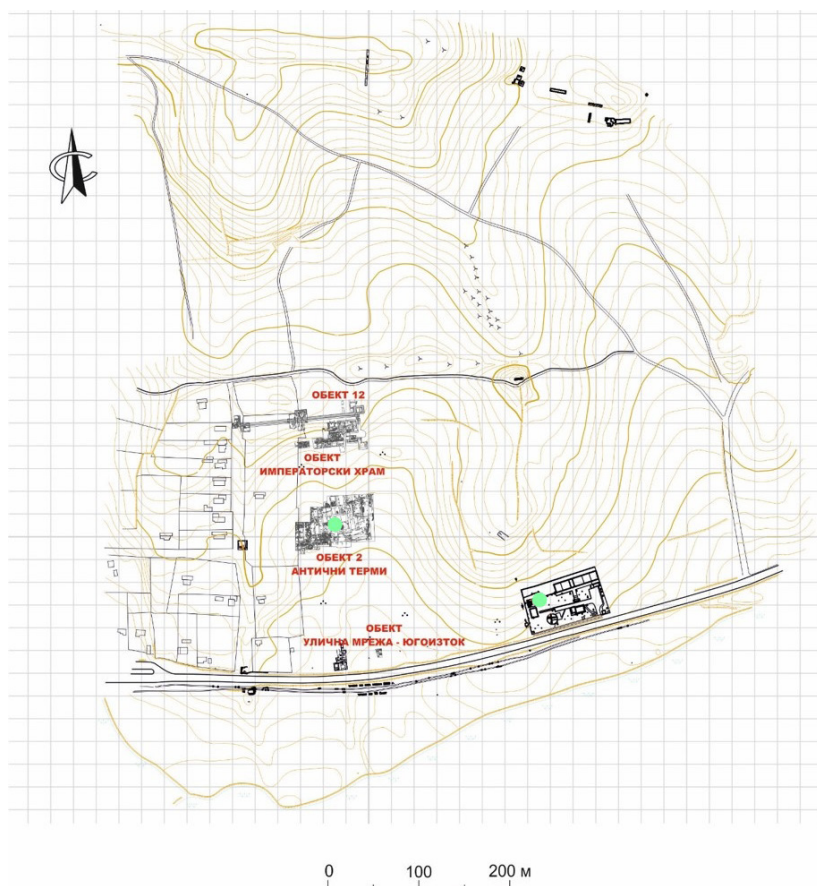


Fig. 8. *Deultum*, September 2019, plan with the main archaeological sites in the central and northern parts of the city; green dots mark evidence of a possible enemy attack after AD 244 (A. Kamenarov / L. Vagalinski)

A layer of burnt destructions with a *terminus post quem* AD 238-244 has been studied during rescue excavations caused by the repair and expansion of the archaeological base at *Deultum* (**fig. 8** / eastern green dot; Костова 2014, 296-297). As a result, a Roman *villa suburbana* was partially revealed and socialized *in situ* at this location. A strong fire was also registered in the central part of the city within the public Roman *thermae* (**fig. 8** / western green dot; **fig. 12** / **site 2**; Костова et al. 2013, 242-243; Костова / Харбалиева 2018, 315, обр. 2). The *terminus post quem* of this disaster is considered to be AD 235-238 and AD 244-247. This would mean that the colony was probably attacked after AD 244, perhaps by Carpi (Grozdanova 2017, 253; Грозданова 2019, 50), Goths, and other allied tribal groups. Literary sources report a march of such groups in AD 248 against *Moesia Inferior*; *Marcianopolis* was thus besieged (Буданова 1999, 106-109). It is likely that the offenders moved to the south along the Western Black Sea coast and raided *Deultum*. Eighty-nine hoards ending with coins of Gordian III are known from *Moesia Inferior* and *Thracia*; three of them were discovered to the northwest of *Deultum* (Varbanov 2021, 64-65, map 9/13, 73, 74). Several coin hoards ending with issues of Emperor Philip the Arab (AD 244-249) have been also identified in the vicinities of *Deultum* (Boteva 2001, 39; Varbanov 2021, map 9/147-156). Only two provide a precise *terminus post quem* (AD 247) for their concealment and for a possible hostile assault in the area (Varbanov 2012, map 3, 302-303).

A strong fire has been documented at the northern end of the colony (**fig. 9** / red dots). Its *terminus post quem* at Site 11 is AD 270 (**fig. 9** / western red dot; **fig. 12** / **site 11**; **fig. 10/9**; Вагалински 2019, 334).

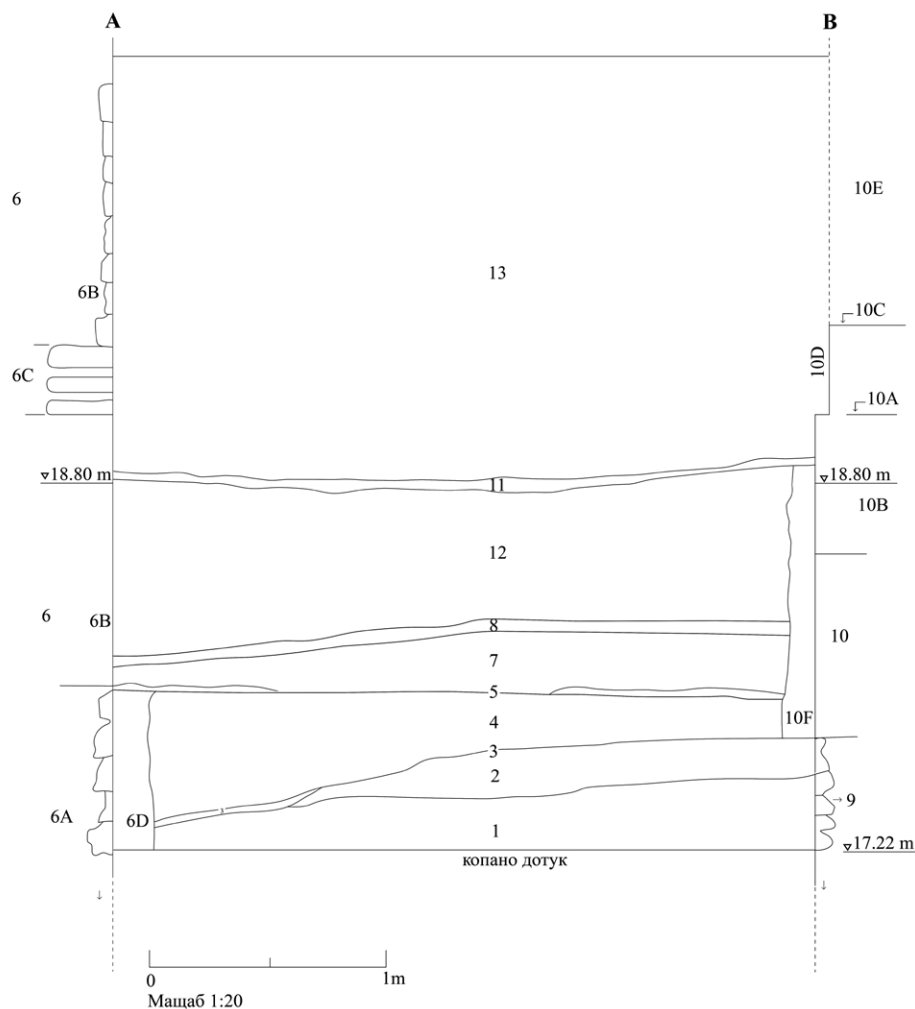


Fig. 11. *Deultum*, site 12, stratigraphic cross-sections south of the NE corner turret of the Tetrarchy fortress; see **fig. 13/A-B** (L. Vagalinski): **1** pure dark brown clay with a lot of pebbles; **2** grey-brown, dense and greasy layer with a lot of scattered charcoals; **3** green clay floor of a long Roman wall N-S along the W border of a *cardo*; **4** burnt destructions of **3**, *t. p. q.* AD 268; **5** brown clay floor of a *poterne*, *t. p. q.* AD 297; **6** an E-W wall which is parallel to the N fortress wall and perpendicular to the E one it is based on; it marks the S end of *intervallum* along the N curtain wall; **6a** substructure of **6**: crushed stones and yellow mortar; **6b** superstructure of **6**: crushed stones and white mortar with milled pottery; **6c** superstructure of **6**: brick belt of three lines bricks thick by 0.06 m; **6d** trench for **6a**; **7** burnt destructions, *t. p. q.* AD 313; **8** green clay floor; **9** substructure of **3**: crushed stones with white mortar; **10** substruction of the entrance of the NE corner tower formed in the Early Byzantine reinforcement of the N curtain wall: nine lines of bricks thick 0.05 or 0.07 m; **10a** S border between sub- and superstructure of the NE corner tower built in the Early Byzantine reinforcement of the N fortress wall; **10b** substructure of the NE corner tower's entrance in the Early Byzantine reinforcement of the N fortress wall: crushed stones, mortar with milled ceramics; **10c** clay floor of the NE corner tower's entrance made in the Early Byzantine reinforcement, ▼ 19.45 m; **10d** superstructure of the NW corner tower's entrance in the Early Byzantine reinforcement: crushed stones, mortar with milled ceramics; **10e** Early Byzantine thicken/reinforcement of the Tetrarchy N fortress wall; **10f** trench for **10B**; **11** light brown clay floor of **10**; **12** burnt destructions including pieces of *lorica segmentata*, *t. p. q.* AD 367-378; **13** partially dug over burnt destructions caused by an Avar attack, *t. p. q.* AD 576 (L. Vagalinski)

70, map 14/9). The devastation in the colony was so great and the city's population decreased so drastically that *Deultum* subsequently reduced its protected area to only 2.45 ha, when a new fortress was built under the Tetrarchy (**fig. 12A** / green)⁴. This attack was by far the most severe disaster suffered by the colony. Ammianus Marcellinus (ca. AD 330-390s) rightly called the city "*oppidum*" around AD 377: *Barbari... oppidum petivere nomine Dibaltum* (Amm. Marc. 30.8.9). According to the stratigraphic data, this new fortification was erected ca. AD 300 (between AD 297 and AD 313) (Vagalinski 2020, 812)⁵.

⁴ In October 2021, during our excavations, we were surprised to find out that the new Late antique fortress was half the size of what we had previously expected.

⁵ Prior to my excavations in 2019, I had dated the construction of *Deultum*'s Late antique fortress within a broad chronological frame – between AD 268 and AD 383 (Vagalinski 2018, 87).

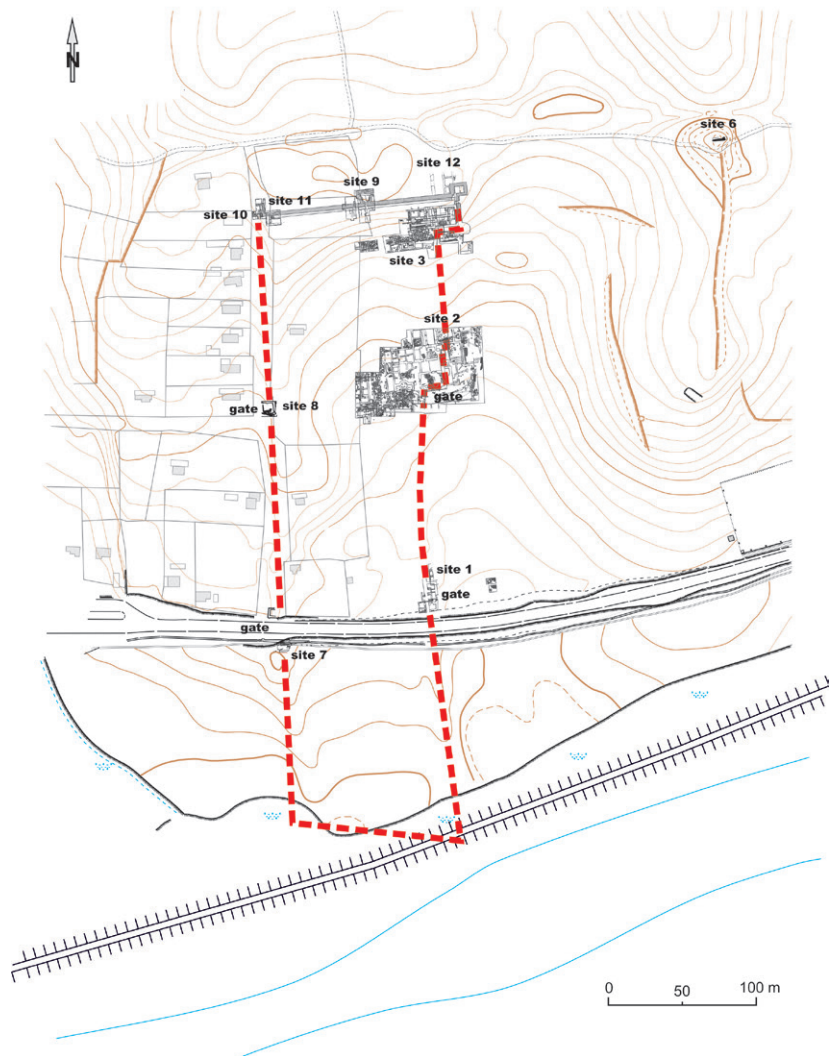


Fig. 12. *Deultum*, plan of the archaeological sites and the Late antique fortress (A. Kamenarov)

The buildings that remained outside and around the new fortress were destroyed: e.g., the eastern part of the *thermae* and the main part of the “Imperial temple” site which was unearthed in 2019 (fig. 13/2; Вагалински 2020, 811-812). Architectural elements of the presumed temple were used as *spolia* in the new northern fortress wall (figs. 14, 15), which seemed to have been moved more south in comparison to the course of the previous northern protective wall. Thus, the powerful assault did not just lead to a significant reduction in the colony’s protected area – especially from the east and the west – but also caused a significant change in its urban planning.

Deultum’s new fortress was attacked very soon after its completion. Burnt debris has been observed in the northeastern corner of the fortress, to the south of Site 3 (the “Imperial temple”) and within Site 12 (the northeastern corner tower) (fig. 12, fig. 16 / red dots). The latest coins found among the ruins belong to Licinius I and Constantine I and were struck between AD 312-313, AD 313-315 and AD 316 (Прешленов 2013, 244; Вагалински 2020, 812, обр. 3/7; fig. 11/7). These burnt layers may reflect the battle at *Campus Ardiensis* (which probably took place near the town of Harmanli, Southeastern Bulgaria) between Licinius I and Constantine I in the autumn of AD 316 (Lenski 2006, 74, 402). Because of the titles *Gothicus Maximus* and *Carpicus Maximus* that Constantine the Great received in AD 318, it is gener-

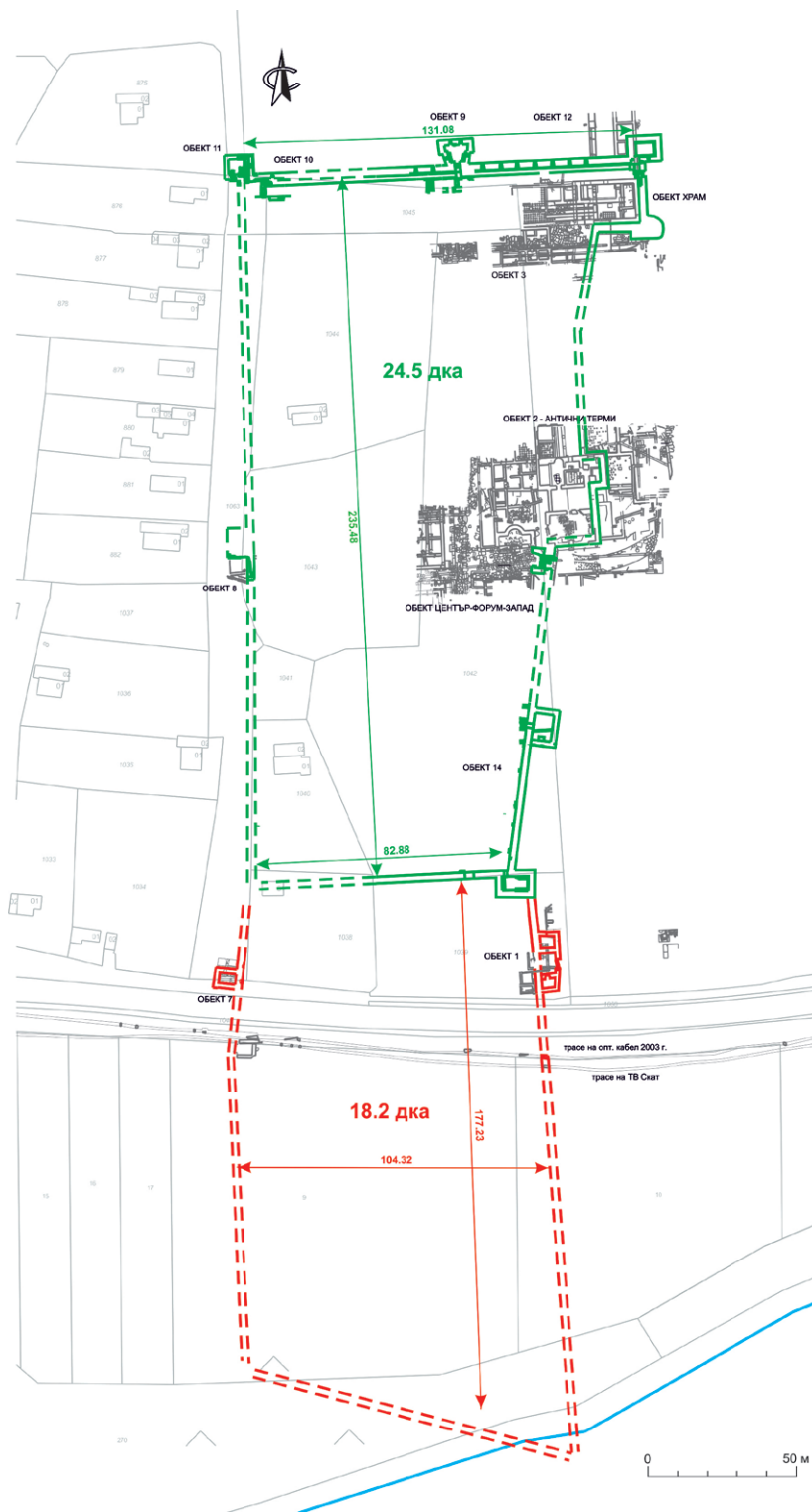


Fig. 12a. *Deultum*, plan of the Late antique fortress: **green** – Late Roman; **red** – Early Byzantine (A. Kamenarov, L. Vagalinski)

ally believed that the same year these tribes carried out attacks south of the Lower Danube (Madgearu 2010, 173, footnote 2). However, no archaeological evidence of such raid has been found for *Deultum* yet.

The colony faced a heavy cataclysm in the middle of the 4th century, which has been detected archaeologically at several sites (fig. 17 / green dots, fig. 12). The documented instances of destruction include deep cracks, street and floor level deformations, shifting of curbs and walls (Вагалински / Чолаков 2007, 253; Прешленов 2010, 294;

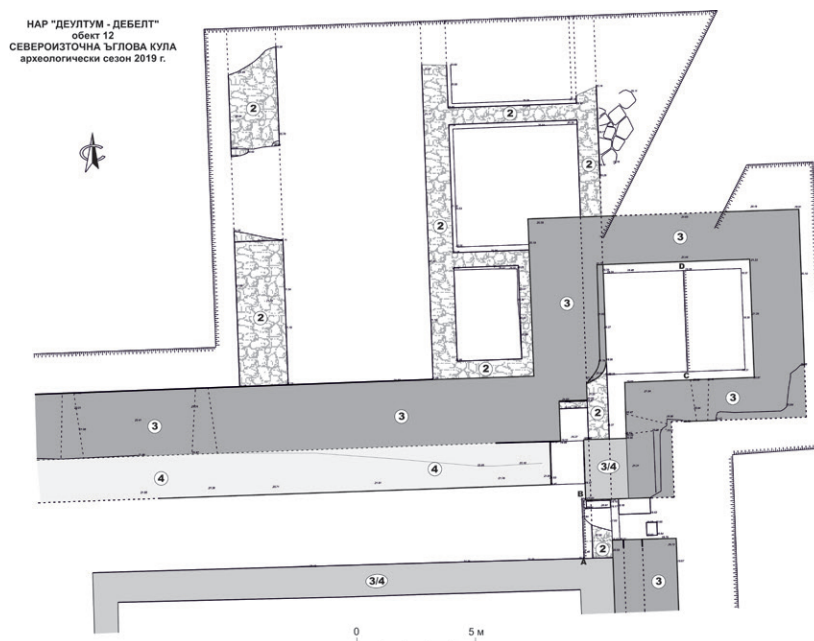


Fig. 13. *Deultum*, plan of the north-east corner of the Late antique fortress:
 2 – 2nd-3rd c. AD; 3 – 4th-6th c. AD;
 4 – second half of the 5th – 6th c. AD
 (after Вагалински 2020, fig. 1)

2012, 256; Костова 2016, 408), which suggests that the city was hit by a strong earthquake. According to the stratigraphic results, this disastrous event took place after AD 351 (Вагалински / Чолаков 2007, 252-253), or even after AD 353/358 (Прешленов / Райчева 2021, 762). It destroyed the *thermae* (Костова et al. 2014, 293; Костова / Харбалиева 2020, 818), after which their premises were used for residential and economic needs⁶. This natural cataclysm triggered new changes in *Deultum*'s urban planning, attested for example by the overbuilding of streets and the disconnection of water mains (Прешленов / Райчева 2021, 762). Four morphogenic faults could be the possible reason behind the earthquake in the colony: the Northern Anatolian, the İğneada, the Aytos and the Prosenik (enlisted here from south to north). Seismologists and geologists believe that the southern Bulgarian Black Sea coast is not currently under threat by earthquakes stronger than 5.5 on the Richter scale (Радупов 2020, 81-83, 86-88), but does this observation apply for Antiquity as well? Ammianus Marcellinus reports a massive earthquake that hit *Nicomedia* (now İzmit/Kocaeli, Turkey) on 24 August AD 358 (Guidoboni 1994, 255-259). He records not only the destruction of the city itself, but also devastation in *Macedonia*, *Pontus* and *Asia*. Most likely, *Deultum* suffered during this event as well.

In the period of the last quarter of the 4th – 5th century, *Deultum* was repeatedly attacked, according to the archaeological data accumulated after 2003. A reliable distinction of the chronology of these frequent raids is indeed a stratigraphic challenge, even within one and the same archaeological site, which further complicates the much needed synchronization of the evidence from all the sites studied in the colony (fig. 12). Furthermore, the attacks affected different parts of the city to varying degrees. Even so, I will try to present in the following lines a chronology of the raids that occurred after the earthquake and before the end of the 5th century.

Burnt layers with a *terminus post quem* AD 378 are documented in the central and the northeastern part (fig. 18; Костова et al.

⁶ It remains unclear whether the *thermae* remained functional after the attack with a *terminus post quem* AD 270 and especially after the construction of the new fortress ca. AD 300. Still, it appears that these public baths were not used as intended after AD 270.



Fig. 14. *Deultum*, north curtain wall with *spolia*, looking east, dated to Tetrarchic times (L. Vagalinski)

2014, 293; Прешленов 2015, 381; Прешленов / Райчева 2018, 309; Прешленов / Райчева 2020, 824-825; Вагалински 2020, 812, обр. 3/12, обр. 4/5; **fig. 11/12**) of the Late antique fortress (**fig. 12**). This dating coincides with the Gothic War of AD 376-382. Ammianus Marcellinus reports that in the autumn of AD 377, the Goths defeated an élite Roman detachment in front of *Deultum*'s curtain wall (Amm. Marc. 30.8.9; Wolfram 1990, 130). The *curator palatii*, Equitius, was then taken captive (Schwinden 2022, 49). It is believed that the Goths took the city during that event (Sharankov 2017, 54-55). It is possible, however, that they only caused heavy damage to the colony, since it is known that they failed to conquer the well-fortified Roman cities during this war. It is also possible that they attacked the colony after defeating Emperor Valent on the hot day of 9 August AD 378 near *Hadrianopolis* (now Edirne, in Turkey's part of Southeastern Thrace). In AD 379, Modares – a Goth in Roman service – annihilated a large group of Gothic robbers. Soon the Goths were pushed north of the Balkan Range. On 17 November AD 379 a victory over Goths, Alans and Huns was declared in Constantinople. Apparently, the ethnically mixed cavalry of Alatheus and Safrax was also among the defeated (Wolfram 1990, 138). It is most likely that the Goths attacked *Deultum* before this date. Certain changes in the urban planning of the colony are documented as a result of the Roman-Gothic clashes: for instance, new streets were built and public buildings were transformed into residential premises. It seems that the local population sought protection behind the fortification walls of the city. It is possible that Eastern Germanic people (*foederati*?)⁷ were also allowed into *Deultum*, as their characteristic pottery has been discovered in cultural layers of the 5th century AD (Vagalinski 2008; Костова / Харбалиева 2020, 819).

The next enemy attack impacted a larger area inside the fortress (**fig. 19**, red dots). Many burnt layers were documented at several archaeological sites in *Deultum* (**fig. 12**), whose *termini post quem* are: AD 383-408, AD 395-408, AD 401-403, AD 402-450, AD 408-423, AD 408-450 (Вагалински 2004, 146; 2015, 378; 2016, 419; 2021, обр.

⁷ See Wolfram 1990, 140 about the Roman-Gothic *foedus* of AD 382.

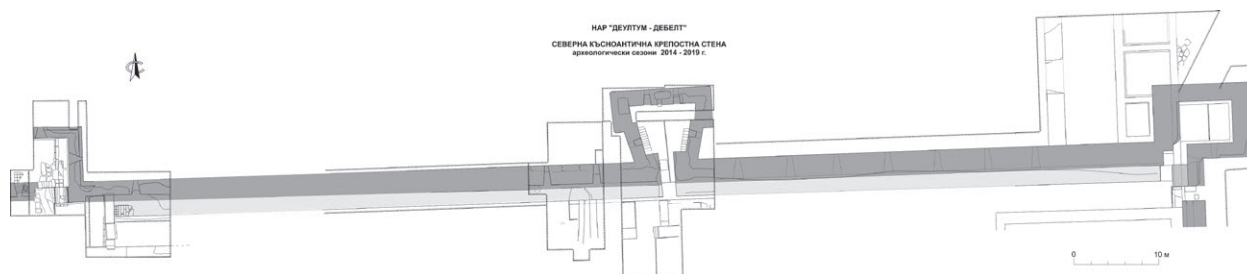


Fig. 15. *Deultum*, plan of the Late antique north wall of the fortress: dark grey – Tetrarchy; light grey – Early Byzantine (2nd half of the 5th c. AD) reinforcement (A. Kamenarov / L. Vagalinski)



Fig. 15a. *Deultum*, Early Byzantine (second half of the 5th c. AD) reinforcement of the north Tetrarchic (ca. AD 300) curtain wall (L. Vagalinski)

5/6; Костова et al. 2005, 231; 2012, 253; 2013, 242; Костова 2014, 295; Прешленов 2011, 270; 2013; 2016; 2015, 381-382; 2016, 405; 2017, 369; 2017a, 373; 2020, 820; Прешленов / Райчева 2018, 310; 2019, обр. 2/13; 2020, 823-824; 2021, XXXX; Костова / Харбалиева 2020, 819; 2021, обр. 2/6). Archaeologists excavating in *Deultum* unanimously agree that the city was attacked in the first quarter of the 5th century. An analysis of the archaeological evidence reveals that the disaster happened in or soon after AD 408⁸. The offenders used arrowheads of trilateral cross-section (Вагалински / Чолаков 2008, 429), which (together with the reflex composite bow) are regarded as weapons characteristic of horse riding nomads⁹. Perhaps the event in question was the attack of Uldin the Hun that took place in AD 408 (Sarantis 2018, 417, footnote 10, 418). This assault has been registered archaeologically across Northern Bulgaria as well (Vagalinski 1998, 96, 98).

⁸ Two consecutive fires dated respectively after AD 383 and AD 395 have been documented in the northwestern corner of the Late antique fortress (fig. 12 / site 10; Вагалински 2018, 309, обр. 2/5, 8; Вагалински 2018, 87, fig. 10/5, 8). Later, new stratigraphic data shifted their dating to after AD 401-403 and after AD 410-430 (Вагалински 2019, 334, обр. 2/3, 5). Future stratigraphic data should further clarify the chronology of assaults in the colony for the end of the 4th – 5th century. The present article is a first attempt to summarize this topic.

⁹ On the reflex composite bow see: Heather 2010, 105-107; Zábóinik / Holešák 2018; Nikonorov 2010, 266-267.

The second quarter of the 5th century (*terminus post quem* AD 425 and *terminus ante quem* AD 457) was a period of continuous hardship for *Deultum*'s residents. Burnt layers inside the fortress and to the east of it have been documented (fig. 12, fig. 20 / green dots; Вагалински 2008, 429; Костова et al. 2008, 431; 2012, 253; 2015, 387; Прешленов 2014, 288; 2020, 820-821; Прешленов / Райчева 2021, 762-763). The damage could be possibly interpreted as a result of Attila's raid in AD 443 or 447 (Sarantis 2018, 421; Madgearu 2010, 178-179).



Fig. 16. *Deultum*, September 2020, aerial view with the main archaeological sites in the central and northern parts of the city; red dots mark evidence of a possible enemy attack after AD 316 (L. Vagalinski)

A subsequent attack with a *terminus post quem* AD 457 hit the western wall of the Late antique fortress (**fig. 12, fig. 21** / green dots; Дражева et al. 1994, 93; Вагалински / Чолаков 2007, 252; 2008, 429; Вагалински 2013, 246; 2015, 378; Костова 2014, 296; Костова et al. 2014, 294; Прешленов / Райчева 2020, 824). This raid prompted the additional strengthening of the Late antique fortress. As a result, its vulnerable northern wall was thickened (**figs. 15** / light grey, **15a**; Vagalinski 2018, 87/4, fig. 3/4). At the same time, the stronghold was extended to the south (**fig. 12a** / red). Thus, the protected area was increased by 1.82 ha. Two gates at opposite sides (eastern and western) were also added, through which today runs the course of the II-79 Elhovo-Burgas road (**figs. 9, 12** / sites 1, 7, **12a**; Вагалински / Чолаков 2007, 252; 2008, 429; Vagalinski 2018, fig. 8; Вагалински 2021, 752). The rather elongated outline of the Early Byzantine fortress was required for two purposes: to exercise control over the terrace overlooking the northern part of the city, and to protect the port at the Sredetska River to the south, through which, by way of the adjacent Mandrensko Lake, *Deultum* maintained a direct connection with the Black Sea. Who were the aggressors? There are several possibilities that historical sources inform us about: sons of Attila attacked Thrace in the 460s AD (Sarantis 2018, 421, footnote 24); in AD 469, Huns and Goths assaulted together Thrace (Wolfram 1990, 265-266); in the same year, Anagastes, *magister militum per Thracias* defeated Huns led by Attila's son Dengizich, which resulted in the killing of the latter (Schwinden 2022, 54); two Gothic leaders – Theodoric Strabo and Theodoric, son of Thiudimir (the future Theodoric the Great), also plundered Thrace in AD 473, while struggling for Roman privileges for themselves and their warriors (Wolfram 1990, 268-276).

Deultum was attacked once again ca. AD 500 (*terminus post quem* AD 498; **fig. 22**; Вагалински 2006, 185; Вагалински / Чолаков 2008, 430; Прешленов 2011, 270; 2012, 256; Вагалински 2015, 378, обр. 2/11; 2016, 419, обр. 2/6, обр. 3/11, 13; 2019, 335/6; Vagalinski 2018, 87/4; Прешленов / Райчева 2018, обр. 2; 2019, обр. 2; 2020, 824)¹⁰. According to literary sources, Bulgars raided the diocese of Thrace in AD 499 and again in AD 502 (Madgearu 2010, 180, footnote 58). The 46 km long Anastasian Wall (“the Long Wall of Thrace”) was constructed at the beginning of the 6th century AD, about 65 km west of Constantinople, which was probably done in response to the increasing threat of the Bulgars (Crow 2007, 397).

¹⁰ This arson is dated at the different archaeological sites in *Deultum* as follows: “after AD 491/518”, “after AD 498”, “after AD 498/517”.

Fig. 17. *Deultum*, plan with the archaeological sites in the central and northern parts of the city; green dots mark evidence of a possible earthquake hit the city between AD 351 and AD 355 (A. Kamenarov / L. Vagalinski)

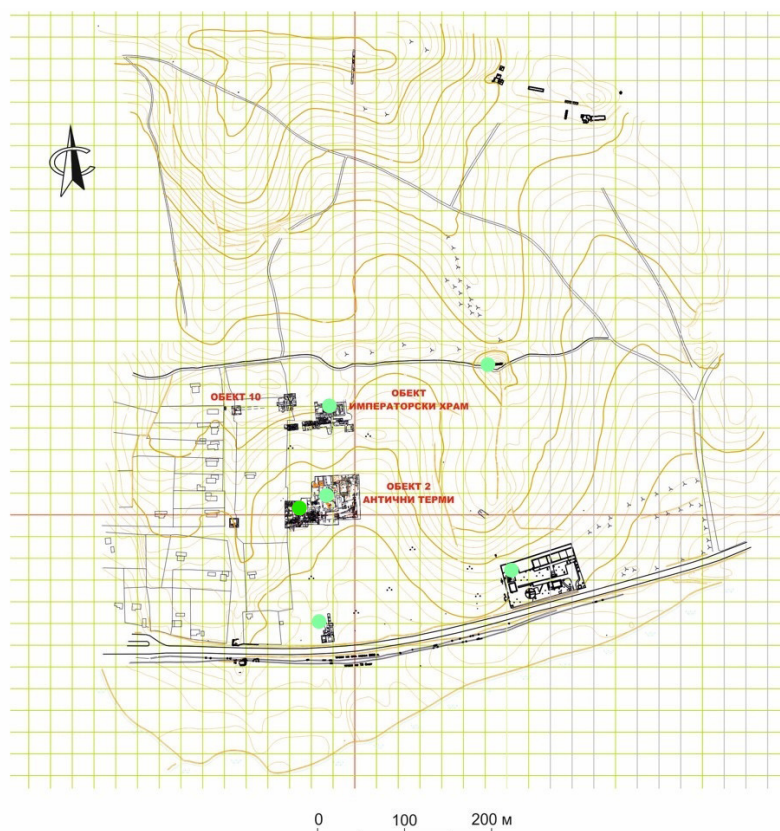


Fig. 18. *Deultum*, aerial view with the main archaeological sites in the central and northern parts of the city; red dots mark evidence of a possible enemy attack after AD 378 (L. Vagalinski)



¹¹ This enemy raid is dated at the current archaeological sites in *Deultum* “after AD 527-538”, “after AD 538-539”, “after AD 547” and “after AD 557-558”.

¹² Oak was used massively in Late antique *Deultum*’s fortification structures according to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tsvetana Popova (NAIM) who has carried out regular archaeobotanical analyses on materials from the ancient city.

Another hostile offence has been recorded archaeologically for the mid-6th century (*terminus post quem* AD 557; **fig. 23**; Костова 2007, 318; Костова et al. 2007, 319; Вагалински / Чолаков 2008, 430; Прешленов 2010, 294; Вагалински 2014, 291; Костова / Харбалиева 2020, 816)¹¹. The fire was intense. The roof tiles of the massive trapezoid tower in the middle section of the northern fortress wall were deformed by the high temperature, most likely obtained when the oak beams were burnt (**fig. 15**; Вагалински 2014, 291)¹². The damage was repaired quickly, if we may judge by a coin of Justinian (AD 561-562) found at a mortar mixing place in the central part of the Late antique fortress (Прешленов 2014, 288). The literary



Fig. 19. *Deultum*, aerial view with the main archaeological sites in the central and northern parts of the city; red dots mark evidence of a possible enemy attack after AD 408 (L. Vagalinski)

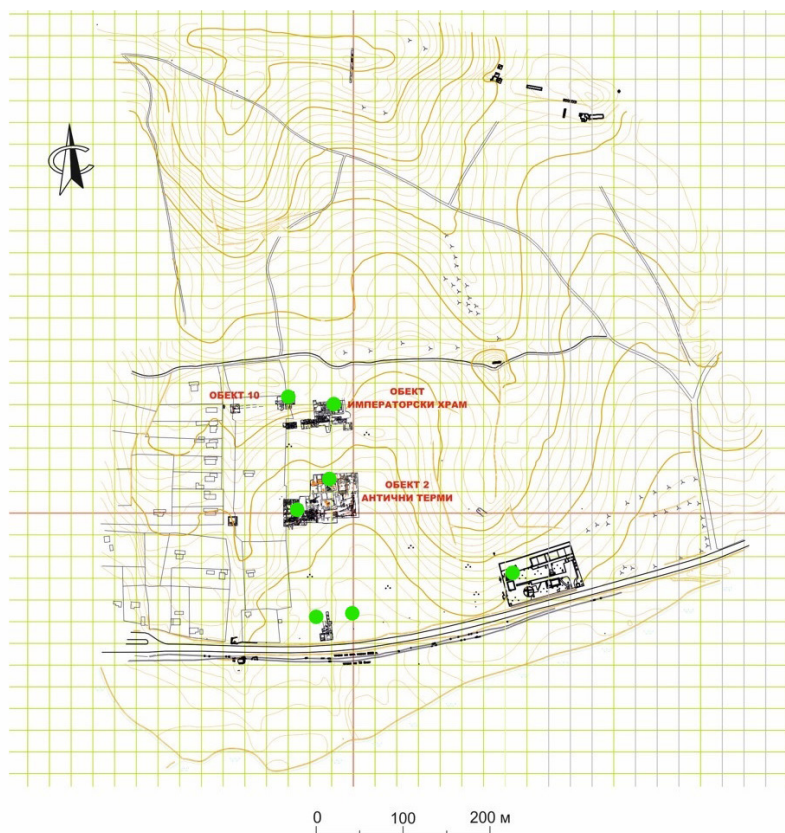


Fig. 20. *Deultum*, plan with the main archaeological sites in the central and northern parts of the city; green dots mark evidence of a possible enemy attack in the second quarter of the 5th c. AD (*t. p. q.* AD 425; A. Kamenarov / L. Vagalinski)

sources report a Kutrigur raid led by Zabergan in AD 558-559 that reached as far as the Anastasian Wall (Sarantis 2018, 417, footnote 10, 418; 2016, 53, footnote 65, 57; Crow 2007, 399).

Deultum's Late antique fortress was again put to fire in the 570s (*terminus post quem* AD 576; **figs. 24, 25a, 25b/9**; Костова 2007 et al., 319; Вагалински 2015, 378; 2016, 419; 2019, 335/7; 2020, 812/8; Костова / Харбалиева 2019, 337; 2020, обр. 2/11; 2021, 759)¹³. Most likely, the attackers were Avars, despite their treaty with the Empire of AD 574-575. As a result of such raids, in AD 584 the Avars managed to increase their annual payment from 80.000 *solidi* to 100.000 (Sarantis 2016, 54, footnote 70). The fortress was never repaired and life in the former colony continued – most likely – without fortification. Archaeological evidence indicates further attacks in the following centuries, the earliest of which happened at the very beginning

¹³ The date of this offence at the archaeological sites in *Deultum* is: "after AD 565-578", "after AD 574", "after AD 574-578" and "after AD 576-577".

Fig. 21. *Deultum*, plan with the main archaeological sites in the central and northern parts of the city; green dots mark evidence of a possible enemy attack after AD 457 (A. Kamenarov / L. Vagalinski)

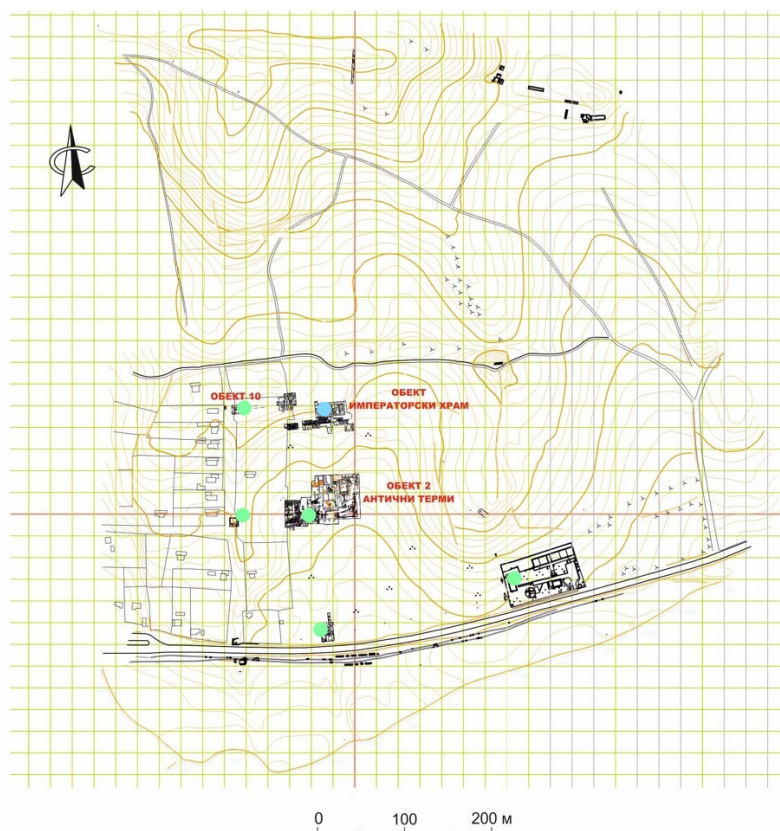


Fig. 22. *Deultum*, aerial view with the main archaeological sites in the central and northern parts of the city; red dots mark evidence of a possible enemy attack after AD 498 (L. Vagalinski)



of the 7th century (*terminus post quem* AD 604-605; Прешленов 2009, 335). Later, a smaller fortress was erected on a hill at the Gorno Gradishte ("Upper Fortress") locality, about 1 km southwest of the colony (fig. 26)¹⁴. Perhaps this stronghold provided protection for the residents of the city until the 14th century, and it was the one taken over by the Bulgarian ruler Krum in AD 812.

CONCLUSION

Literary sources provide no information on specific anthropogenic or natural cataclysms in ancient *Deultum*. The only historical evidence for them is given by archaeological data and observations. Fourteen destructive events – possible barbarian attacks, internal conflicts, and an earthquake – have been distinguished archaeologically in *Deultum*. Their number may have been even greater throughout the 500 years

¹⁴ This fortress was partially excavated in 1980 by Stefan Damyanov (National Museum of History – Sofia) who was the general scientific head of *Deultum* until his untimely death in September, 1988. Its chronology is far from clear. The analysis of the pottery discovered there reveals that it was inhabited till the 14th century (Манолова-Войкова et al. 2006).



Fig. 23. *Deultum*, aerial view with the main archaeological sites in the central and northern parts of the city; red dots mark evidence of a possible enemy attack after AD 557 (L. Vagalinski)



Fig. 24. *Deultum*, aerial view with the main archaeological sites in the central and northern parts of the city; red dots mark evidence of a possible enemy attack after AD 576 (L. Vagalinski)



Fig. 25a. *Deultum*, cross-section perpendicular inside of the northern fortress wall and to the entrance to the median trapezoid tower, see fig. 25b (L. Vagalinski)

(2nd – 6th century AD) of the ancient city's existence. It is believed, for instance, that the time consumed by military conflicts on the Balkans only between AD 332 and AD 610 accounts for about 25% (69 years) of these 278 (Sarantis 2016, 61, fig. 4). *Deultum* is no exception to this picture.

At the end of the 4th and in the 5th century, for a period of just about 100 years, *Deultum* suffered no less than four enemy raids (i.e.

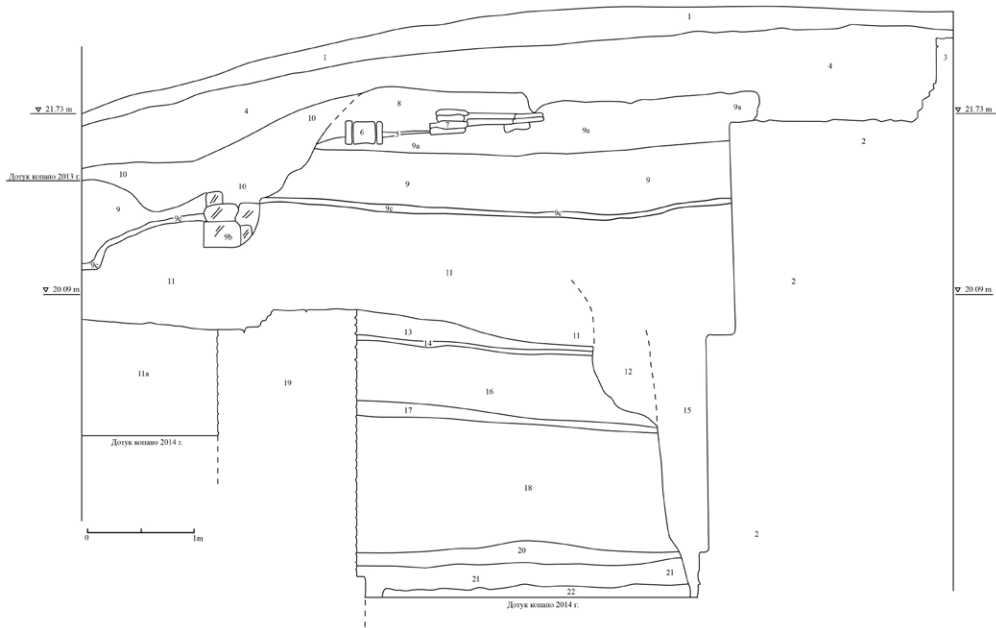


Fig. 25b. *Deultum*, cross-section perpendicular inside of the N fortress wall and to the entrance to the median trapezoid tower (see **fig. 25a**): 1 soil with humus and scattered small broken stones; 2 Early Byzantine reinforcement adjoined 3; 3 Late Roman N curtain wall; 4 dug over remains of the curtain wall; 5 Early Medieval burnt clay floor connected with 6 and 7; 6 Early Medieval brick structure (a hearth?); 7 bricks arranged without mortar; 8 destruction by fire that belongs to 5-7; 9 conflagration, *t. p. q.* AD 574; 9a possible hiatus; 9b wall of 9c; 9c clay floor; 10 pit for looting 9b; 11 destruction by fire, *t. p. q.* AD 491/518; 11a dug over destructions; 12 pit; 13 layer of charred grain and charcoals; 14 clay floor of 2; 15 building trench for the foundation of 2; 16 destruction by fire, *t. p. q.* AD 402/450; 17 clay floor; 18 conflagration of 19, *t. p. q.* AD 383/408; 19 wall; 20 clay floor of 19; 21 building waste of 19 construction (mortar and small shards of bricks); 22 pure dark brown clay (L. Vagalinski)



Fig. 26. The medieval fortress of *Deultum* in the Gorno Gradishte ("Upper fortress") locality; aerial view from the 1980s looking southwest (S. Damyanov)

ca. 30% of all registered attacks for the entire studied period). This statistic observation is a reflection on both the difficult period the Eastern Roman Empire was experiencing and the city's location at the easily accessible road to the capital of Constantinople along the Western Black Sea coast through the lower eastern edge of the Balkan Mountains.

Specific hostile attacks determined the development of *Deultum's* fortifications throughout Antiquity. The AD 270 raid caused the biggest change in urban planning and architecture for the colony. Its residents¹⁵ systematically had to adapt their fortress, in accordance with their capabilities. Thanks to this flexibility, *Deultum* retained its importance in Roman and Early Byzantine Thrace and became a crucial border and customs post between Byzantium and the First Bulgarian Kingdom (AD 681-1018).

Deultum is one of two Roman colonies founded in the province of Thrace. The processes and events that took place in *Deultum* are valid to a significant extent for the entire southeastern corner of the Balkans. This further emphasizes the relevance of tracking cataclysms and establishing chronologies in the city.

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¹⁵ It is possible that the central authorities helped *Deultum's* inhabitants to build the new, small fortress about AD 300. Its towers are distinguished by their large sizes (including the three newly discovered in 2020-2021, 2023 eastern and southern towers) and solid construction. Efficient defense concepts were applied, such as: the massive tower in the middle section of the northern fortress wall had a sophisticated plan (**fig. 15**); the first row of embrasures in the latter was set so low that it allowed shooting at the attackers' legs; a staircase in the thickness of the eastern curtain wall connected a *poterne*, located directly south to the northeastern corner tower, with the eastern part of the fortress (**fig. 13**). At this place, a long wall blocked the direct route to the interior of the fortress against enemies who might try to penetrate through the *poterne* (**fig. 13, 3/4**).

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The Slavic and Avar Incursions in the *Dioecesis Thraciarum* through Contemporary Literary Sources (6th-7th Centuries)

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Abstract: The Slavic and Avar incursions into the Balkans during the 6th and the early 7th century are usually considered to be such disturbing events that they brought an end to the ancient Roman civilization along the central and eastern parts of the Danube. Struck with various major problems both in the West (the Lombard invasion of Italy, which followed shortly after the end of Justinian's long and difficult reconquest) and East (an almost continuous state of war with the Sassanids between AD 502 and 628), the Empire was unable to find solutions for its then North European provinces. Archaeological research seems to corroborate the traditional position, even if modern scholars, with the advancement of excavation methods, increasingly note that the supposed destruction by the Slavs and Avars, as well as the Roman evacuation from the Danubian world were perhaps not as systematic and organized as they have hitherto been presented. Without seeking to revolutionize the generally agreed chronology, it still seems useful to reanalyze the whole dossier of contemporary literary sources on the Slavic and Avar incursions into the *Dioecesis Thraciarum*, with regard to some of the most recent studies on the question, in order to highlight what these documents really tell us.

Key words: Early Slavs, Avars, *Dioecesis Thraciarum*, incursions, raids, literary sources.

INTRODUCTION

"Thus, the city, reduced for various reasons to very few men, had no hope of salvation. Do not accuse me of exaggerating the danger and blackening the situation: what words would be strong enough to equal the grandeur of the events? I am rather afraid of being rightly accused of being overbearing, and of diminishing by the poverty of my language the tragedy of circumstances" (trans. relying on Lemerle 1979, 132).

This deliberately theatrical posture is of Bishop John I of *Thessalonike*, after he has just recounted the first part of an event which he presents as quasi-apocalyptic, namely the (Avaro-)Slavic siege of his city in AD 586 (1.13.130; cf. Lemerle 1981, 46-71, 80; Curta 2001, 93-94, 96-98, 117; Pohl 2018, 126-131). We therefore understand that by the time of composition of the first series of *Miracles of Saint Demetrius*, during the first years of the reign of Heraclius I, some could have already questioned the human and/or material impacts of Slavic and Avar raids in the Late Antique Balkans. Obviously, John is not a historian and his hagiographical discourse, tinged with eschatological thought and relying on some of the methods of apologetics, has another purpose than to objectively tell the exact reality of the events. What he desires to do is convince his readership of the miracles of the patron saint of his city.

In fact, is there any ancient writer who wrote just to tell the truth, nothing but the truth? No, there is not! However, that does not mean that they are lying. As with John's position, it is about points of view and it is the task of modern scholars to submit ancient texts to historical criticism, in their attempt to reconstruct the past. For this reason, there is a clear interest, in the context of a symposium on the *Conflicts and Catastrophes in Roman and Late Antique Thrace*, to look once again at the written testimonies of the main events which would have theoretically been the first cause of the loss of the northern part of the Balkan peninsula by the Romans, viz. the Slavic and Avar incursions of the 6th and the early 7th century. The importance of the movement of these people in the direction of the Empire was such that the author of the *Strategicon*—traditionally attributed to Emperor Maurice—devotes no less than a whole chapter of his work to each of them, just as he does with the Persians and the Germans (11.2 and 4; cf. Zástěrova 1971; Różycki 2017).

There is already a lot of published analysis on the matter, but none is exactly like the one presented here. For one thing, we will focus exclusively on the *Dioecesis Thraciarum*; for another, we will consider only contemporary literary testimonies, which means not exceeding one generation after the event. There is no question here of drawing up a general and exhaustive picture, nor of trying to evaluate the narratives using archaeology, which is a completely different process. By relying on the main reference works on Early Slavs and Avars, but without pretending to quote all of them, the idea is rather to bring out the raw material from literary sources, which may eventually be used for the other above-mentioned approaches. Three major periods emerge from reading the sources, three major periods which form the main parts of this paper: the raids of the Early Slavs in Thrace before the arrival of the Avars; the first contacts of the Avars with the Empire from the Thracian perspective; and the moment of the great invasions. These three parts will be preceded by the necessary presentation of the first mentions of the Early Slavs and the Avars in the written sources, and all the results obtained will be summarized in a table at the end of this paper.

THE FIRST MENTIONS OF THE EARLY SLAVS AND THE AVARS IN LITERARY SOURCES

The Slavs and Avars do not enter the historical sources at the same time. While the Avars are not known from texts before the 5th century AD, the first mentions of the early Slavs go back to the last decades of the 1st or the 2nd century AD (Godłowski 1983, 257, 263-264; Pritsak 1983, 380-383; Kazanski 1999, 9-11; Barford 2001, 29, 35-36; Curta 2001, 39-43; 2021a 47-48). If we follow Jordanes' *Getica* (5.34 and 23.119), both Late Antique Slavic tribes that are the Sclaveni and the Antes (Kardaras 2018b) have for ancestors the Veneti. Procopius of Caesarea, in his *De bellis* (7 [*De bello Gothico* 3].14.29), says rather that their common ancestor was a people called the Σπόροι, which perhaps should be linked to Pliny the Elder's or Jordanes' *Spal(ae)i* (*Historia naturalis* 6.7.22; *Getica* 4.28; cf. Vernadskij 1938; Pritsak 1983, 394-395, # 92; Curta 2021a, 53), unless it is just a condescending nickname for these barbarian nomads: the seeds or, even, the spores (on Procopius' negative perception of the Early Slavs, cf. Sarantis 2018, 358-360).

The same Pliny would be the first to evoke the Veneti, in his *Historia naturalis* (4.13.97), under the name of *Venedi*. The geographic

details given by Pliny are, however, too nebulous to precisely locate them, and it is Tacitus, in his *Germania* (46; cf. Kazanski 1999, 13-17), who allows us to place them in the Baltic space. A few decades later, Ptolemy's *Geographia* (3.5.9) mentions, alongside the Ουενέδαι and other peoples of the same area, the Σταυανοί (cf. Kazanski 1999, 31-33), which has sometimes been interpreted as a deformation of Σκλαυηνοί / Σκλαβηνοί, also known as the Σκλάβοι in the 6th century (John Malalas, *Chronographia* 18.129 would be the first datable mention of this latter form – the *Chrestomathy* of Strabo [7.47], as well as some recensions of the *Historia Alexandri Magni* [Γ.3.35] use the word, but they were probably written in Byzantine times). However, it is impossible to prove the point. As for the Antes / Anti / Ἄνται (Καρδαράς 2015), who are also an early Slavic tribe, we do not meet them until the Sclaveni are also clearly mentioned in the sources, that is to say not only in Jordanes (*Getica* 5.34-35, 23.119, 48.247), but also in Procopius, who associates both people with the Οὔννοι, thus the Huns (*De bellis* 5 [*De bello Gothico* 1].27.2. and 7 [*De bello Gothico* 3].14.2 and 28-29; *Historia arcana* 18.20 and 23.6 l; cf. Curta 2001, 347; 2019, 48). Even if we perhaps have some traces of the *Venedi* in the *Laterculus Veronensis* (13; cf. Riese 1878, 129, *app. crit.* 1), as well as on the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (7.A.1, 4; cf. Kazanski 1999, 37-39) and in the Latin epitome of Epiphanius of Salamis' *De XII gemmis* (36) (obviously, the *Veneti* from North-Western Gaul or North-Eastern Italy are not relevant here), it was in the first half of the 6th century that the early Slavic populations began to enter on the territory of the Roman Empire and it is for this reason that ancient authors begin to mention them more frequently.

We will not go here into the history of migration of these populations from the Baltic to the Danube in detail, for which Jordanes is one of the main narrative sources (in addition to the references already given: 48.247; cf. Curta 2021a, 47-51)¹. In the same way, we will not discuss in detail the passage of the Avars from the Central Asia until their arrival in Europe (cf. Pohl 2018, 21-68). Let us just say that they are probably mentioned for the first time in a work which has only reached us indirectly: Priscus of Panium's *Historia* (*Fragmenta* 40.1-2). However, this would be the oldest reference to the Avars only if the two fragments which mention them, one in Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus' *De legationibus gentium* (14) and the other in the *Suda* (A.18), were not reworked at the time they were integrated into later sources, which is never completely certain in the case of such reconstituted sources. Both fragments mention their first migrations, when they were pushed by other peoples and pushing some Hunnic and / or Turkic populations themselves, resulting in the contact of the latter with the Romans (Pritsak 1983, 353-365; Pohl 2018, 21-68; Kardaras 2019, 13-19). After that, we have to wait till the third quarter of the 6th century before the Avars are mentioned in texts again, when the frontal collision with the Empire occurred. As in the case of the Slavs, the *Dioecesis Thraciarum* was to be the first centre of this confrontation, and soon the imperial authorities would see the incursions of the two populations as one and the same problem.

1. BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE AVARS

As explained previously, only the contemporary or almost contemporary sources about the events will be considered here. In no way is the idea to lessen the importance of later sources, but it is useful here not

¹ Those who are interested can read, among other things: Godłowski 1983; Fine 1983, 25-29; Kazanski 1999, 41-67; Barford 2001, 45-54; Curta 2006, 53-61; 2001, 46-51 – the complete bibliography is too gigantic to make an attempt to be exhaustive here.

to put all the texts on the same footing. It has been already shown for other historical moments that what may appear later as major events, went almost unnoticed by contemporaries, for example the deposition of Romulus Augustulus in AD 476 (Momigliano 1973 = 1980, 159-179). Obviously, invasions which shook the Roman Empire as much as those of the Slavs and the Avars did, were not unnoticed. Nevertheless, it is not impossible that Medieval historiography sometimes over-interpreted, not to say exaggerated, the phenomenon – whether to make the victories even more glorious or to justify the failures.

According to Procopius' *Historia arcana* (18.20), the annual incursions of the Huns, Sclaveni and Antes into the Praetorian Praefecture of *Illyricum* – including Greece – and in the *Dioecesis Thraciarum* began as soon as Justinian came to power, which could be as early as AD 518, since its author does not always seem to distinguish clearly the reign of Justin I and that of his nephew (e.g. he states that it was Justinian who actually held the power during his uncle's reign: *Historia arcana* 6.18). This is confirmed by a passage from his *De bellis* (7 [*De bello Gothico* 3].40.6), in which we learn that Germanus, who is presented a few lines before as the Emperor's cousin (*viz.* Justinian's cousin; cf. 7 [3].39.9), seems to have inflicted a heavy defeat on the Antes when he was *magister militum per Thracias*, so between AD 518 and 527 (Martindale 1980, 506; Curta 2001, 75-76, 116; Sarantis 2016, 83-84, 252). Is this victory the reason for Justinian's title of *Anticus* from the early 530s (*Corpus Iuris Civilis, Institutiones, superscriptio*; cf. Curta 2001, 77; Kardaras 2018a – who confuses *Institutiones* and *Constitutiones*)? Or should this epithet refer to an unknown event that occurred shortly after Germanus' mandate in Thrace? We do know that another member of Justinian's household, Chilbudius, was appointed between AD 530/1 and 533/4 to the same position, in order to prevent the Early Slavs and Huns from crossing the Danube, which he succeeded in doing before dying at the hand of the Sclaveni, in the enemy's territory, *i.e.* on the left side of the river (Procopius of Caesarea's *De bellis* (7 [*De bello Gothico* 3].14.1-5; cf. Martindale 1992, 286-287; Curta 2001, 76-77; Sarantis 2016, 83-88; Curta 2019, 42; 2021b, 304).

Until their final settlement in the Balkan Peninsula, the Slavic tribes were indeed mainly confined to the northeastern part of the Danube, up to the current Ukraine (Procopius of Caesarea, *De bellis* 5 [*De bello Gothico* 1].27.2, and 7 [*De bello Gothico* 3].40.5). Jordanes (*Getica* 5.34) tells us that the territory occupied by the Sclaveni extended, from west to east, along the Danube, between *Noviodunum* and the mouth of the river, and to the north, up to the Vistula and the Dniester. The Antes would have, for their part, occupied a territory between the Dniester and the Dnieper, delimited to the south by the coast of the Black Sea (cf. also Procopius of Caesarea, *De bellis* 8 [*De bello Gothico* 4].4.9). However, this geography of the Early Slavs during the 6th century from literary sources must not be blindly accepted without caution, the authors relying more on their physiographic knowledge than on the reality of the population concerned (Kazanski 1999, 57-59; Barford 2001, 49-51; Curta 2001, 41-43; Sarantis 2016, 65-68; Kardaras 2017; Curta 2021a, 47-54; 2021b, 132-151). Even their knowledge of Roman sites in the regions subjected to raids seems caricatured.

At the date of composition of the *Historia arcana*, most likely at the beginning of the 550s, Procopius (18.20-21 and 23.6) claims thus

that each annual incursion of Early Slavs and Huns in the Balkans resulted in the death or enslavement of more than 200.000 Romans, so that eventually no one inhabited these regions in the end. If we retain this quantitative data, either the number of raids known by literary sources is much lower than what really took place on the ground, or the Balkan Peninsula was already underpopulated before the start of the phenomenon. According to Procopius, the death of Chilbudius immediately opened the gates of the Empire to the North Danubian barbarians (*De bellis* 7 [*De bello Gothico* 3].14.6). However, the next new alleged massive plunder and enslavement of Romans in Thrace by Early Slavs² probably happened at an unknown date between AD 533/4 and 545, but probably rather closer to the later date, if we rely on the events mentioned just before and after in the *De bellis* (7 [*De bello Gothico* 3].14.11)³. If ever the 12-year interval turns out to be right, this obviously does not mean that there were no other raids – perhaps of lesser importance – in the meantime.

Then, the Sclaveni attacked, most probably in AD 549, the fortress of *Tsurulum* (Çorlu, Turkey), nor far from the Anastasian Wall, before they went to *Topeiros* (near the village of Paradeisos, municipality of Topeiros, Greece), by the Aegean Sea, resulting in a massacre or enslavement of those they found in their way (Procopius of Caesarea, *De bellis* 7 [*De bello Gothico* 3].38; cf. Curta 2001, 84-86, 116; Sarantis 2016, 278-279). The following year or the year after, another troop of the same people defeated the Roman army in the vicinity of *Hadrianopolis*/Adrianople (Edirne, Turkey) and devoted themselves to a global plunder of the Ἀστική, viz. the great Thracian Plain, from *Philippopolis* (Plovdiv, Bulgaria) to the Anastasian Wall, before setting off again north of the Danube (Procopius of Caesarea, *De bellis* 7 [*De bello Gothico* 3].40.31-45; cf. Curta 2001, 86-87; Sarantis 2016, 279).

Procopius's *Historia arcana* (11.10-11 and 23.6; also *De bellis* 7 [*De bello Gothico* 3].29.1-3) paints an apocalyptic picture of the entire Eastern European territory of the Empire being invaded on several successive occasions, resulting in cities being either razed to the ground or subjected to significant tributes. This is obviously an exaggeration specific to the style of the pamphlet, whose first aim is to discredit the reign of Justinian and Theodora. The doubt on the level of destruction must be the greater since the same author affirms that the Romans did not do less damage to these same tribes (*Historia arcana* 18.25-26), or even to other groups of barbarians (*De bellis* 7 [*De bello Gothico* 3].13.25), including some inside their own territory.

We also learn from the same author that the Early Slavs may have sometimes been Danubian allies for the Empire, told through specific anecdotes. In the months or years following Chilbudius' death, the Sclaveni and the Antes waged war against each other, and a warrior belonging to the Antes who had the same name as the *magister militum* was captured by the Sclaveni (*De bellis* 7 [*De bello Gothico* 3].14.7-36; cf. Curta 2001, 78-84; Sarantis 2016, 71-72; Curta 2021a, 53, 174, # 9). Pretending to be the Roman general, he became a formidable warrior in the service of the Sclaveni. In AD 545 or 546, he was finally captured by his former people, the Antes, and delivered to the Romans in exchange for their help against the Huns (Kardaras 2010), and for the fortress of *Turris* (probably *Dinogetia*, near the current village of Gärvan, county of Tulcea, Romania; cf. Madgearu 1992). Moreover, Procopius

² On this occasion and for the last time independently of the Antes – cf. Sarantis 2016, 280.

³ Cf. also Curta 2001, 78, 116 and Sarantis 2016, 249 – who is in favor of an earlier date.

tells us about the participation in AD 537 of Hunnic and Slavic troops alongside the Romans in the war against the Goths in Italy (*De bellis* 5 [*De bello Gothico* 1].27.2 and 7 [*De bello Gothico* 3].22.3 and 21; cf. Curta 2001, 78, 349; Živković 2008, 52; Sarantis 2016, 86), and it even continued after the Avars came on the scene.

2. THE NEWCOMERS IN THRACIA

The earliest mention of direct contact between Romans and Avars is the embassy of Kandikh to Constantinople, which modern scholars now place in December AD 558 or January AD 559, despite the discrepancy on this point in the 6th century sources (John Malalas, *Chronographia* 18.125; Victor Tunnunensis, *Chronicon* 166; Menander the Guardsman, *Fragmenta* 5.1-2 = Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *Excerpta De legationibus gentium* 1-2; Evagrius Scholasticus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.1.41; cf. Sarantis 2016, 333-336; Pohl 2018, xiii, 22, 37, 47, 241, 271; Kardaras 2019, 10, 12, 20, 34; Curta 2021b, 10). This first direct contact, perhaps linked with an invasion of the Kutrigur Huns, together with the Sclaveni, in Thrace some months before (John Malalas, *Chronographia* 18.129; Agathias Scholasticus, *Historiae* 4.11-25; and, most probably, Pseudo-Caesarius, *Quaestiones et responsiones* 109; cf. Lemerle 1954, 286; Riedinger 1969, 303; Curta 2001, 44, 116; 2006, 43-44, 58-59; Sarantis 2016, 336-349; Kardaras 2019, 22; Curta 2021b, 49 and 155), led to an alliance between the Romans and the Avars, which encouraged the Avars to move toward the west, from North Caucasus to the north bank of the Lower Danube, after crushing all the peoples in their way, including the Antes around AD 561 (Menander the Guardsman, *Fragmenta* 5.3 = Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *Excerpta De legationibus gentium* 3; cf. Sarantis 2016, 349-351; Pohl 2018, xiii, 49; Kardaras 2019, 21-22, 25). Despite the agreement, the Romans quickly positioned themselves to prevent the Avars from crossing the river, which led to new negotiations in AD 563, this time over their establishment. These talks were not really a win for the Avars, as they wanted the province of *Scythia*, while the imperial authorities offered them *Pannonia Secunda*, a territory the Romans no longer controlled (Menander the Guardsman, *Fragmenta* 5.4 = Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *Excerpta De legationibus gentium* 4; cf. Sarantis 2016, 351-352; Pohl 2018, xiii, 53-57; Kardaras 2019, 23-24, 75-76). The situation remained complicated, with moments of tension, such as when Justin II refused for the first time to pay the tribute to the Khagan of the Avars in AD 565, while this latter was claiming to be the rampart against the barbarian invasions in Thrace (Corripus, *In laudem Iustini Minoris* 3.232-401; Menander the Guardsman, *Fragmenta* 8 = Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *Excerpta De legationibus gentium* 5; cf. Sarantis 2016, 379; Pohl 2018, xiii, 59-60, 221-222, 241, 403; Kardaras 2019, 35, 37, 52). Another moment of tension was during the siege of *Sirmium* in AD 567/8, which was not successful for the Avars (Menander the Guardsman, *Fragmenta* 12.3-4 = *Suda* E.2310; also Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *Excerpta De legationibus gentium* 13; cf. Sarantis 2016, 376, 379; Pohl 2018, xiii, 69-74; Kardaras 2019, 30-31).

Shortly before this failed siege, most of the Avars had established themselves in Northern *Pannonia* (cf. Pohl 2018, xiv, 61, 69-72, 100; Kardaras 2019, 28, 42). More precisely, they occupied the part of this land which until recently had been under the Gepids' control, *Sirmium* being the capital of a Gepidic kingdom which was then a temporary ally

for the Romans. Four years after Justinian's Pannonian offer was put on the table, the Carpathian Basin finally became an option for the Avars, as part of an alliance with the enemies of the Gepids living in the other half of the Pannonian Plain north of the Danube: the Lombards. In AD 568, after the siege of *Sirmium*, the Lombards left for Italy and the Avars integrated their former land into their own territory (cf. Pohl 2018, xiv, 61-68, 100; Kardaras 2019, 28-29). In this sense, one would expect them to have then concentrated their attacks south of the Danube rather in the Western and the Central Balkans. However, the eastern part of the Balkans was not spared by any means. The reason is that the Avars were still then in control of the north bank of the whole Danube, always perhaps with the idea of entering the *Dioecesis Thraciarum* and attacking Constantinople itself, as Menander the Guardsman tells us (*Fragmenta* 12.1 = Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *Excerpta De legationibus gentium* 11; cf. Pohl 2018, 60, 68; Kardaras 2019, 75).

As early as AD 570, they carried out a first actual raid into Thrace. This happened after unsuccessful diplomatic talks in Constantinople, during which the barbarians asked for territories, eventually parts of *Pannonia* south of the Danube (*Pannonia Secunda*? *Sirmium*?) in exchange for handing over of high-ranking Avar hostages to the Romans (Menander the Guardsman, *Fragmenta* 15.1 = Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *De legationibus gentium* 17; cf. Pohl 2018, xiv, 77; Kardaras 2019, 32). Consequently, the Roman army confronted the Avar horde on a battlefield inside the Empire and was victorious (John of Biclaro, *Chronicon* 13 – which places the event between AD 568 and 570⁴; perhaps Menander the Guardsman, *Fragmenta* 15.2 = *Suda* A.2053; cf. Sarantis 2016, 379). The history of subsequent confrontations was not always going to be so glorious for the Romans. For instance, the previously victorious general – the future emperor Tiberius II – was nearly taken by the attackers in AD 574, while he was trying to stop them from crossing the Danube again (Evagrius Scholasticus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.11; cf. Curta 2001, 117; Živković 2008, 11; Pohl 2018, xiv, 77-78; Kardaras 2019, 33)⁵. The sources do not specify clearly, however, on which section of the Danube both armies met, nor whether the Avars managed to cross the river. Perhaps the episode should be linked with the Avar invasion of Thrace that John of Ephesus (*Historia ecclesiastica* 3.2.30) places shortly after the death of the *quaestor sacri palatii* Anastasius (cf. Martindale 1992, 66), during which the invaders destroyed churches and went up to the walls of Constantinople. In any case, if we read the contemporary authors who mention the events following that of AD 574, the *Dioecesis Thraciarum* seemed to become something of a hell on earth.

If we thus follow John of Biclaro (*Chronicon* 40-41), the Sclaveni, who reappear then in the literature as active invaders, seem to have taken several towns of Thrace in their path between AD 574 and 576, emptying them, while the Avars seem to have made the Thracian coast very dangerous to sailors, by setting up blockades. Still according to the Visigothic chronicler (45), the Avars continued their campaign in Thrace by devastating it between AD 576 and 579, before being expelled from it between AD 578 and 581 (52), which would have resulted in directing them to Greece, before they left for a part of *Pannonia* still belonging to the Romans. Most modern scholars, however, think that all these events should be associated with the invasions of AD 578 mentioned by Menander the Guardsman (*Fragmenta* 20.2 = Constantine

⁴ On the dating problems in this work, see below.

⁵ Živković (2008, 11) wrongly places Tiberius' defeat in AD 570/1.

VII Porphyrogenitus, *De legationibus* 24), and carried out by an army of 100.000 Σκλαυηνοί (cf. Madgearu 1996, 36-38; Curta 2001, 49, 117; Pohl 2018, xiv, 80, 88, 430, # 47; Curta 2021b, 10). This position is mainly based on Menander's claim (*Fragmenta* 21 = Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *De legationibus Romanorum* 15; Curta 2021b, 150-151 and 287), according to which Tiberius was on perfectly good terms with the Avars early in his reign, together with Menander's silence on the supposed Sclaveni raids of AD 574/6, as well as the lack of evidence for any navigation capability for Avars regarding the above-mentioned blockades on the Black Sea coast (cf. Curta 2001, 91).

John of Biclaro is not the sole contemporary author who is not fully trusted by modern scholars. Indeed, we see the same reticence regarding John of Ephesus, whose *Historia ecclesiastica* did not come to us in length. Generally, scholars prefer to rely on Menander the Guardsman and Theophylact Simocatta. Of course, both Johns should not be read uncritically, especially considering their respective understanding of the events (cf. Curta 2001, 49), and the choices made by today's specialists of the Avars are deeply considered. However, we need to remind ourselves that the reconstruction of Menander's work from passages of later sources remains theoretical and that Theophylact is not exactly a contemporary historian of the AD 580s – he was rather young then – while being himself not completely reliable on everything he tells us about the Balkans (Whitby 1988, 138-169; 311-352; Whitby / Whitby 1986, xxv-xxvii). It is also true that the work of the Spanish bishop poses enormous dating problems, as there is no consistent match between the reigns of Roman emperors and Visigothic kings: for the part that interests us here, there is a first lag of two years, which becomes three after an error on the date of Justin II's death (John of Biclaro, *Chronicon* 43). Nevertheless, that does not mean that he is mistaken in everything he says.

It seems useful, therefore, to point out that the “Biclarian” and “Ephesian” historians recall, despite their geographical distance, similar events, namely Slavic incursions into *Illyricum* / Greece and Thrace, the first one between AD 580 and 583 (John of Biclaro, *Chronicon* 59) and the second one between AD 580 and 581 (John of Ephesus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 3.6.25). The most prudent position to adopt is therefore to rely still, at least for the moment, on the standpoint formulated by Paul Lemerle in 1954 (289, # 2), namely that “*la datation des événements rapportés par Jean de Biclar reste à préciser*”. To add an additional element in favor of both Johns' work, the bishop of Ephesus (*Historia ecclesiastica* 3.6.45-49), as well as Theophylact Simocatta (*Historia* 1.4.1-5; also Evagrius Scholasticus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.10) recalls the capture of the port city of *Anchialus* (Pomorie, Bulgaria) by the Avars (even if John calls them *Sclavinoi* – the mention of the Khagan leaves no doubt), as part of an incursion into Thrace in AD 583/4 (cf. Whitby / Whitby 1986, 238; Whitby 1988, 90, 142, 171; Sarantis 2016, 376; Pohl 2018, xv, 90-92; Kardaras 2019, 43-44). As there was previously the mention of a doubt that could be raised regarding the supposed blockades of some coastal cities of the Black Sea in AD 574/6, due to the lack of evidence of the Avars' abilities to navigate, we must point out that it is a similar type of military action that we are talking about for the year AD 583/4, *viz.* the blockade of a port (surely from the shore and not by sea).

3. THE TIME OF THE GREAT INVASIONS

The Avar and Slavic incursions into Thrace that followed until the reign of Heraclius are mainly known from Theophylact Simocatta. To proceed systematically: within months after the Avars' departure from *Anchialus*, the Sclaveni crossed the Danube and went up to the long walls of Constantinople, before being defeated on the river *Erginia* / Ergene, in *Haemimontus* (*Historia* 1.7.1-3; cf. Whitby / Whitby 1986, 238; Whitby 1988, 90, 143; Fine 1983, 31; Curta 2001, 95-96, 117). Two years later, in AD 586, an unprecedented Avar invasion began (perhaps also Isidore of Seville, *Chronica* 409-409a). After having taken all the major Danubian cities of *Dacia Ripensis*, the nomadic army attacked *Durostorum* (Silistra, Bulgaria), before entering the heart of the *Dioecesis Thraciarum* and, following the Roman road, successively taking *Tropaeum* (Adamclisi, Romania), *Zaldapa* (Krushari, Bulgaria), *Marcianopolis* (Devnya, Bulgaria) and an unidentified place called Παννασσά, on the river *Panysus* / Kamchiya (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 1.8.10; cf. Whitby / Whitby 1986, 238; Whitby 1988, 90, 147, 171; Madgearu 1996, 43-46; Sarantis 2016, 383; Pohl 2018, xv, 96; Kardaras 2019, 46). Consequently, the *magister militum praesentalis* Comentiolus (cf. Martindale 1992, 322-322) – who was victorious over the Sclaveni in AD 584 – went to *Anchialus* to gather troops and organize the defence of Thrace (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 2.10.8; cf. Whitby / Whitby 1986, 238; Whitby 1988, 90, 148; Pohl 2018, 96; Kardaras 2019, 46). Part of the Roman troops, under the command of the *magister militum* Castus (cf. Martindale 1992, 274-275), defeated the invaders at *Zaldapa* in AD 587 (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 2.10.10), then another part, under the command of the *magister militum* Martinus (cf. Martindale 1992, 848), successfully attacked the Khagan's camp, which was then in the vicinity of *Tomis* (Constanța, Romania) (2.10.12; cf. Whitby 1988, 148; Pohl 2018, 96-97; Kardaras 2019, 46-47). In the same year, the Roman army is said to have regrouped in *Marcianopolis*, before it was moved to an unidentified place called Σαβουλέντε Κανάλιον (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 2.11.3-4; cf. Ivanov 2012, 327 – in the hinterland, between the Balkan mountains and *Anchialus*), where some battles seem to have taken place (cf. Whitby 1988, 149; Pohl 2018, xv, 97; Kardaras 2019, 46-47). The immediate aftermath of the war is difficult to reconstruct: the Avars seem to have attacked *Mesembria* (Nesebar, Bulgaria) on the Black Sea (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 2.12.6), then taken *Appiaria* (Ryahovo, Bulgaria) (2.15.13) on the Danube, supposedly after having been chased from the surroundings of *Calvomuntis* and *Libiburgus* – unidentified sites, most probably not far from *Mesembria* – (2.15.3-4), unless the taking of *Appiaria* is not contemporaneous as some modern scholars think (cf. Whitby 1988, 149; Pohl 2018, xv, 96, 98; Kardaras 2019, 47). In any case, we then find the Avar horde in front of *Beroe* (Stara Zagora, Bulgaria), *Diocletianopolis*, then *Philippopolis*, where it started the siege of these cities, before abandoning it and going to meet the Roman army near *Hadrianopolis*/Adrianople (Edirne, Turkey). The Roman army finally won (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 2.16.12-17.13; cf. Whitby 1988, 150-151; Pohl 2018, xv, 99; Kardaras 2019, 47). The Avars then returned to *Pannonia*.

At an unspecified date between AD 588 and 592 (cf. Whitby 1988, 151-152), following an attack on *Moesia Prima* and *Dacia Ripensis*

(Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 6.3.9-4.12), they entered Thrace again and went immediately to Σαβουλέντε Κανάλιον. The place had just been evacuated by the imperial troops, then under the command of the *magister militum per Thracias* Priscus⁶, immediately after the Romans had heard about the arrival of the Avars (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 6.5.1; perhaps Isidore of Seville, *Chronica* 409-409a; cf. Pohl 2018, 169). Then the barbarians made their way to *Anchialus*, where the Khagan ordered the church of Martyr Alexander to be burnt down, and finally established their camp at *Drizipera* (Büyükkarıştıran, Turkey), which they took with difficulty (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 6.5.2-7; also Evagrius Scholasticus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.10; cf. Pohl 2018, 169; Kardaras 2019, 50). Afterward, they moved on to *Heraclea* (Marmara Ereğlisi, Turkey) and *Tsurulum*, where the Roman general and his forces were entrenched (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 6.5.8-10; cf. Pohl 2018, 169-170; Kardaras 2019, 50). All this foreshadowed a siege of Constantinople, which ultimately did not take place, thanks to a major negotiating effort, and the Avars returned to their land (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 6.5.12-16). In the meantime, around AD 590, the Emperor Maurice himself apparently visited *Anchialus* to inspect the damage to the city caused by the Avars, but without staying there, as the Avars were still nearby (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 5.16. 1; Whitby 1988, 152-153).

Probably taking advantage of the Romans' difficulties with the Persians – a state of war raged between AD 572 and 591 – but also perhaps with the Avars, at least with their help – the Sclaveni, eventually subordinated to the Khagan, plundered Thrace, probably more in its northern part, in AD 588/9 (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 3.4.7; cf. Whitby / Whitby 1986, 239; Whitby 1988, 90; Curta 2001, 98, 117)⁷. At the start of the spring of AD 593, they were supposedly about to re-enter in Thrace, when Priscus arrived on the Danube, on the Emperor's command, in order to pursue them north of the river (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 6.6.1-10.18; cf. Whitby / Whitby 1986, 239; Whitby 1988, 90, 158-159; Curta 2001, 100-103, 117; Živković 2008, 21, 55; Pohl 2018, xv, 171-174; Kardaras 2019, 50-51). The sources do not say it, but we can suppose that the Sclaveni had already begun to give strong signs of hostility, or even to carry out some raids on the Roman side, perhaps the year before, so that the Roman authorities took the initiative to penetrate the *Barbaricum* (cf. Madgearu 1996, 48). In any event, the Romans' major problem with the Slavic populations was yet to come.

By the end of AD 593, if not at the beginning of AD 594, Theophylact tells us that a band of only 600 Sclaveni successively ravaged and looted *Zaldapa* and two sites that he calls Ἄκυς and Σκόπις (*Historia* 7.2.2; cf. Whitby / Whitby 1986, 239; Whitby 1988, 90, 159; Madgearu 1996, 49 – who puts the event in AD 595; Curta 2001, 103, 117; Živković 2008, 23; Pohl 2018, xv, 177; Kardaras 2019, 53). If they should be identified with the big regional sites of these names, viz. *Aquae* (Prahovo, Serbia) and *Scupi* (Skopje, North Macedonia), the Slavic horde would therefore have theoretically travelled very quickly and without encountering resistance from *Scythia* to *Macedonia Secunda*, via *Dacia Ripensis*. To explain this impossibility, modern scholars claim that these Ἄκυς and Σκόπις do not correspond to the above-mentioned *Aquae* and *Scupi*, but to some minor forts of *Moesia Secunda* and *Scythia* (cf. Curta 2001, 103, # 90; Pohl

⁶ Cf. Martindale (1992, 1053), where the events here described are all placed in AD 588.

⁷ Curta (2001, 98, 117) is more in favor of AD 588.

2018, 165, 177, 458, # 55; Kardaras 2019, 177)⁸. In fact, no real argument can support this proposal, but neither can we explain such a rapid move of the Sclaveni, if there was only one band of them (cf. Whitby 1998, 159-160, # 30). Either way, the Roman army was simply moved from *Odessos* (Varna, Bulgaria) to *Marcianopolis* and the situation led the emperor to name his brother Peter *magister militum (per Thracias?)* (cf. Martindale 1992, 1009-1010), in order to chase the Sclaveni down, while they supposedly intended to go to Constantinople (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 7.2.1, 15; cf. Whitby / Whitby 1986, 239; Whitby 1988, 90, 160; Curta 2001, 103).

The imperial troops thus returned north of the Balkan Peninsula, with a first stop at Πιστός, which is a Late Antique name for *Sexaginta Prista* (Ruse, Bulgaria). If we follow Theophylact, they then went east, in the hinterland, to *Zaldapa* – a sign of the importance for the Romans of ensuring its control? – before returning along the Danube to the west, passing through *Iatrus* (Krivina, Bulgaria), Λατάρκιον, an non-localized fort very near *Novae* (Shvishtov, Bulgaria), and encamped in *Novae* itself. There ensued a period at *Theodoro(u)polis*, another non-localized fort (cf. Ivanov 2012, 376-377), where they also camped, at (Se)*Curisca* (Cherkovitsa, Bulgaria) and at Ἀσημος, a place on the river of the same name, the current Osam, which remains not formally localized (Osamsko kale in Bulgaria?) and where Peter behaved in an authoritarian manner with the local population (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 7.2.16-3.10; cf. Ivanov 2012, 25-27; Sarantis 2016, 384; Torbatov 2016; Pohl 2018, 177-178; Kardaras 2019, 53; Torbatov 2021, 137-157). Afterward, the operations were carried north of the Danube and they were favorable to the Romans at first. However, major tactical errors, including a deliberate attack on thousands of Bulgars allied with the Avars, who were supposed to be at peace with the Empire at that time, and a lack of forethought for water supplies, ultimately resulted in a military disaster and provoked the fall of the general (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 7.4.1.6-10; cf. Whitby 1988, 160-161, 181; Curta 2001, 104-105; Pohl 2018, 178-179; Kardaras 2019, 54).

The misfortunes for the Romans on the Lower Danube did not end there. After a full-scale war in *Illyricum* which began in AD 595 (cf. Pohl 2018, 179-183; Kardaras 2019, 54-57), the Avars re-entered the *Dioecesis Thraciarum* and besieged *Tomis* from autumn AD 597 until spring AD 598, with this unusual situation that Priscus' army, who came to meet the Avars, found itself obliged to accept, in order to survive, gifts of food from the Khagan, who even agreed to respect an Easter truce (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 7.13.1-7; cf. Whitby / Whitby 1986, 240; Whitby 1988, 91, 162; Madgearu 1996, 50; Curta 2001, 117; Różycki 2013; Sarantis 2016, 377; Pohl 2018, xv-xvi, 187-188; Kardaras 2019, 57; Curta 2021b, 290). As soon as the truce was over, the barbarians marched towards *Moesia Secunda*, where Comentiolus had brought an army to attack them, but Comentiolus was defeated near *Iatrus* and the Khagan pursued what was left of the Roman army towards Constantinople (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 7.13.8-14.11; cf. Pohl 2018, 188-189; Kardaras 2019, 57-58). On this occasion, they again took and devastated *Drizipera*, while chasing the Roman army (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 7.14.12; cf. Pohl 2018, 189; Kardaras 2019, 58). The peril was such that, despite an outbreak of bubonic plague within the ranks of the barbarians, which may have played a

⁸ Kardaras (2019, 177) associates Σκόπις with some Геленджик in Northeastern Bulgaria, but there is no place of this name in the country.

role in the negotiations (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 7.15.2), the emperor had no choice but to go himself, with an army, to the Wall of Anastasius, in order to begin a negotiation of a new tribute with the Khagan, against his departure (7.15.7-14; cf. Whitby 1988, 163; Pohl 2018, 189-191; Kardaras 2019, 58-60).

The agreement between the two peoples was very short-lived, as the fighting resumed a few weeks later, at the initiative of the Romans, in the north of *Illyricum* (cf. Whitby 1988, 164), and a real truce was concluded only in AD 599, with an exchange of hostages in *Tomis*, which allowed two years of relative peace between Avars and Romans, as long as neither of them crossed the Danube (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 8.3.13-8.4.2; cf. Pohl 2018, 191-194; Kardaras 2019, 60-61). In AD 602, however, Maurice made a grave mistake, by sending Peter to attack the Sclaveni in their own territory (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 8.5.5-12; cf. Whitby / Whitby 1986, 240; Whitby 1988, 91, 164-165; Pohl 2018, 194-195; Kardaras 2019, 63). The truce with the Avars was then broken and they took the opportunity to massacre the Antes, then allies of the Romans. The army revolted against Maurice, especially because the emperor ordered his soldiers to spend the winter of AD 602-603 north of the Danube, and he was finally assassinated with his sons, brother and loyal lieutenants (Theophylact Simocatta, *Historia* 8.5.13-11.4 and 13.1-3; John of Antioch, *Fragmenta*, 316, 318; cf. Whitby / Whitby 1986, 240; Whitby 1988, 91, 165-169; Curta 2001, 52, 56, 81, 103, 105; Živković 2008, 65, # 33; Pohl 2018, xvi, 195-197; Kardaras 2019, 63-64).

After the tragic end of Maurice, the Avar invasions in the *Dioecesis Thraciarum* are less well documented. Furthermore, modern scholars agree that there was no further raid before AD 623, at least none documented. Theophanes the Confessor, who is not at all a contemporary source for the reign of Heraclius I, reports an entry into Thrace and an advance up to the Anastasian Wall in the year AD 618/9 (*Chronographia* A.M. 6110). However, the consistency of the account he gives with what can be read in the *Chronicon Paschale* (623) leaves no room for doubt that he made a dating error (some historians maintain the possibility that there may have been an Avar presence in Thrace in AD 618/9, which would imply that Theophanes could have confused two events (cf. Curta 2001, 117; Pohl 2018, xvi). According to the *Chronicon Paschale*, the Emperor was in *Heraclea* when the Khagan and his Avars arrived to negotiate a peace, but they tried, unsuccessfully, to seize the Roman sovereign, who fled to Constantinople, and they looted some *extra muros* churches, before returning north of the Danube (cf. Curta 2001, 117; 2006, 76; Pohl 2018, xvi, 290-294; Curta 2019, 58; Kardaras 2019, 82-84). To go further into the details – exact sequence and location of events, and motivations of the protagonists – it is necessary to rely on the medieval sources, not only Theophanes, but also Nicephorus I of Constantinople (*Chronographicon* 10). Three years after this failed assault against the Emperor, the same *Chronicon Paschale* (626), as well as George of Pisidia (*Bellum Avaricum*) tells us that the Avars were, with some Sclaveni troops, present alongside the Persians, at the unsuccessful Persian siege of the imperial capital (cf. Fine 1983, 43-44; Curta 2001, 63, 72, 109, 117, 119; Howard-Johnston 1995; Sarantis 2016, 388; Pohl 2018, xvii, 294-305; Curta 2019, 67; Kardaras 2019, 84-87; Curta 2021b, 12). This is the latest known event involving the Avars in the *Dioecesis Thraciarum*, their former Bulgar allies having taken control

of the north bank of the Danube for themselves, in the first half of the 630s (for a summary of this new phase of history both for the Avars and the Bulgars, cf. Komatarova-Balinova 2022, 43-49).

CONCLUSION

At the end of this exclusively historical picture, we note that contemporary sources provide much information on the Slavic and Avar incursions into the *Dioecesis Thraciarum*. To obtain an even more complete reconstruction, however, all references to Scythians and Huns, perhaps even Bulgars, should be thoroughly studied, because, first, these people could have sometimes entered Thrace as agents of the Avar Empire, and, second, their names could have even been used as a synonym for Early Slavs and / or Avars in some context, as some authors use both these names interchangeably (for example, John of Ephesus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 3.6.45-49). Moreover, the consideration of later sources, both Byzantine and Slavic, would make it possible to add more details, some perhaps important, but others relating to a Medieval understanding of the events, or even to political agendas not belonging to the 6th or the 7th century. For example, in the context of the loss of control of the entire Thrace to the Bulgars and their Slavic allies at the end of the 8th century, the Eastern Roman authors would have every interest in presenting the problems discussed here in the most catastrophic way possible. The Byzantine authorities and armies could only have lost this territory because of the completely barbaric, almost inhuman, character of the newcomers. In this sense, the exaggerations of contemporary authors have been fully exploited. If we rely on Procopius alone, the Sclaveni and the Antes had already emptied the entire Balkans of its population and its wealth already in the 550s. If this was the case, one wonders why the Early Slavs and Avars continued to covet the land thereafter.

Obviously, the 6th and the beginning of the 7th centuries were very difficult for the region. Many cities were looted and set on fire, populations were massacred or enslaved, but did the Slavic and Avar nomads have the technical means to carry out real sieges and to destroy and raze fortifications? When we know that the Ostrogoths of Italy themselves did not know how to use siege towers correctly (Procopius of Caesarea, *De bellis* 5 [*De bello Gothico* 1].22.7-9), we can have doubts about the Early Slavs and the Avars (cf. Kardaras 2005). Every attempt to take Constantinople achieved absolutely nothing, apart from frightening the Romans. Furthermore, no ancient author speaks of destruction of the fortifications. The example of *Zaldapa* in Theophylact is obvious. The Roman army recaptured the city twice, after it was attacked by the Avars and Slavs, without mentioning any destruction. What would have been the point of leading a war effort to liberate a completely destroyed site?

It is therefore necessary to wonder about the relevance of trying too hard to match the traces of destruction made visible by archaeology with the accounts of ancient authors. Only the deployment of appropriate dating techniques, such as radiocarbon dating, can allow us to support or refute the accuracy of the information given by Greek and Latin literature. Instead of seeing the total disappearance of human presence in the most affected part of the *Dioecesis Thraciarum*, viz. the Lower Danube, after the events which have been described here, why cannot we imagine a transitional period, in the 7th and 8th

centuries, which would have seen great transformations in the modes of living and in the material culture in the region, taking into account the way of life of the new masters, who would have simply left fewer archaeological traces? In any case, it is something to consider at a site like *Zaldapa*, which is still mentioned by the Byzantines as a human agglomeration, at least theoretically, in the sources of the 8th and 9th centuries (Moreau et al. 2020, 37-38).

APPENDIX

Chronology of the raids of the Early Slavs and Avars in the *Dioecesis Thraciarum* according to “contemporary” literary sources

Date (AD)	People	Source(s)
518/27	Antes	Procopius of Caesarea, <i>De bellis</i> 7 (<i>De bello Gothico</i> 3).40.6 (+ <i>Corpus iuris civilis, Institutiones, superscriptio?</i>).
Just before 530?	Antes and Sclaveni (with Huns)	Procopius of Caesarea, <i>De bellis</i> 7 (<i>De bello Gothico</i> 3).14.2 (+ <i>Corpus iuris civilis, Institutiones, superscriptio?</i>).
533/45 (more likely around 544/5?)	Antes	Procopius of Caesarea, <i>De bellis</i> 7 (<i>De bello Gothico</i> 3).14.11.
549/50	Sclaveni	Procopius of Caesarea, <i>De bellis</i> 7 (<i>De bello Gothico</i> 3).38.
550/1	Sclaveni	Procopius of Caesarea, <i>De bellis</i> 7 (<i>De bello Gothico</i> 3).40.31-45.
558	Sclaveni (with Kutrigur Huns)	John Malalas, <i>Chronographia</i> 18.129; Agathias Scholasticus, <i>Historiae</i> 4.11-25 (+ Pseudo-Caesarius, <i>Quaestiones et responsiones</i> 109?).
568/70 (more likely 570)	Avars	John of Biclaro, <i>Chronicon</i> 13 (Menander the Guardsman, <i>Fragmenta</i> 15.2 = <i>Suda</i> A.2053?).
574?	Avars	John of Ephesus, <i>Historia ecclesiastica</i> 3.2.30 (+ Evagrius Scholasticus, <i>Historia ecclesiastica</i> 5.11?).
574/6? (cf. 578)	Sclaveni	John of Biclaro, <i>Chronicon</i> 40.
574/6? (cf. 578)	Avars	John of Biclaro, <i>Chronicon</i> 41.
576/9? (cf. 578)	Avars	John of Biclaro, <i>Chronicon</i> 45.
578	Sclaveni	Menander the Guardsman <i>Fragmenta</i> 20.2 = Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, <i>De legationibus</i> 24 (+ John of Biclaro, <i>Chronicon</i> 40-41, 45 and 52? – cf. 576/577?, 577/578? and 579/580?).
578/81? (cf. 578)	Avars	John of Biclaro, <i>Chronicon</i> 52.
580/3	Sclaveni	John of Biclaro, <i>Chronicon</i> 59 (580/3); John of Ephesus, <i>Historia ecclesiastica</i> 3.6.25 (580/1).
583/4	Avars	John of Ephesus, <i>Historia ecclesiastica</i> 3.6.45-49; Theophylact Simocatta, <i>Historia</i> 1.4.1-5 (+ Evagrius Scholasticus, <i>Historia ecclesiastica</i> 6.10 – cf. 588/592?-592).
584	Sclaveni	Theophylact Simocatta, <i>Historia</i> 1.7.1-3.
586-587	Avars	Theophylact Simocatta, <i>Historia</i> 1.8.10 – 2.17.3 (+ Isidore of Seville, <i>Chronica</i> 409-409a? – cf. 588/592?-592).
588/9	Sclaveni	Theophylact Simocatta, <i>Historia</i> 3.4.7.
588/92?-592	Avars	Theophylact Simocatta, <i>Historia</i> 6.3.9-5.16 (+ Evagrius Scholasticus, <i>Historia ecclesiastica</i> 6.10 – cf. 583/4; Isidore of Seville, <i>Chronica</i> 409-409a – cf. 586-587).
593?	Sclaveni	Theophylact Simocatta, <i>Historia</i> 6.6.1-10.18.
593-594	Sclaveni	Theophylact Simocatta, <i>Historia</i> 7.2.1 – 6.10.
597-598 (truce concluded in 599 on the territory of the <i>Dioecesis Thraciarum</i>)	Avars	Theophylact Simocatta, <i>Historia</i> 7.13.1-15.14 (+ 8.4.2)
623	Avars	<i>Chronicon Paschale</i> 623.
626	Avars and Sclaveni (among the assailants within the Persian siege of Constantinople)	<i>Chronicon Paschale</i> 626.

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Trouble at The Coast

Rome and Mithridates VI in Southeastern Thrace: Archaeological Evidence of a Conflict?

Ivaylo LOZANOV

Abstract: The present paper aims at discussing the archaeological evidence from several recently excavated fortified sites of the late 2nd and early 1st century BC in Southeastern Bulgaria along the Black Sea coast and the adjacent slopes of the Strandzha Mountain. The sites at Sinemorets, Brodilovo and Ahtopol all share common features of fortified outposts placed upon essential routes as part of an intricate network securing control over mining, commercial traffic, and communications in the area. One can reasonably connect their emergence with the rise of a larger political power, namely the kingdom of the Thracian Astae, and the centralising efforts of its rulers toward more uniform economy, logistics, and infrastructure. The common pattern of synchronous developments and subsequent cataclysms that led to destruction or temporary disruption at these sites can be interpreted as reflecting relevant processes at central level. Revisiting the extant archaeological information, the author attempted to explain the record of destruction on all three sites in the first quarter of the 1st century BC as a direct consequence of the Pontic military offensive in Southeastern Thrace and the Propontis during the Mithridatic Wars of the 80s or 70s BC against the Thracian allies of Rome in the area.

Key words: fortified sites, destruction, Mithridatic Wars.

In the last decade, the archaeological research at the southwestern coast of the Black Sea and the adjacent interior of the Bulgarian Strandzha, took a great pace resulting in the publication of new sites, intriguing remains and finds, dating back to the last quarter of the 2nd and the beginning of the 1st century BC. The present attempt is focused upon presenting an archaeological discussion on three sites, namely those at Ahtopol, Sinemorets and Brodilovo, located relatively close to each other (**fig. 1**). Their characteristics and chronology are used to build a larger historical reconstruction of the specific purposes of their construction, use and eventual decline.

1. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE AT THE GOLATA NIVA, NEAR SINEMORETS

The site is being studied since 2007 with some interruptions and along with the interim reports (Arpe 2008; 2009; Arpe / Дичев 2010; 2013; 2015; 2016; 2019; 2020), the most important results appeared in a published volume (Agre 2016). The site is strategically located on a hill rising by approx. 30 m above the beach next to the confluence of the Veleka river, having both a commanding view to the sea and a protected harbour from the south. The archaeological research covered



Fig. 1. The sites at Ahtopol, Sinemorets, and Brodilovo on the map of Late Hellenistic Thrace (the author)

an area of over 700 m² (out of an overall 0.35 ha) and is concentrated primarily in the southern and northeastern zones (Agre 2016b, 201; Arpe / Дичев 2019; 2020). The cultural layer is thin and varies from 0.20 to 0.75-0.80 m. in depth, and in some places the solid rock appears directly under the turf. So far, the earliest phases recorded on the site belong to the late Hellenistic period from the second half of the 2nd century BC to the beginning of the third quarter of the 1st century BC (Arpe / Дичев 2019; 2020).

The remains of the 2nd – 1st century BC are represented mainly by sections of a fortification wall 1.40 m thick (fig. 2). The masonry faces of the curtain wall are built with medium-sized irregular blocks of rubble and pebbles, while the space between (*emplekton*) was filled with rubble mixed with earth or clay. Thus, the stone socle of uncoursed masonry reaches up to a height of about 1 m, from where a mud-brick superstructure rose up to an overall height of at least 3 – 3.50 m. Judging by the massive remains of whole and fragmented tiles on both sides, the wall had tiled roofing on slanting eaves (Agre 2016a, 28-38; 2016b, 204).

At certain intervals internal buttresses, or rather pilasters, have been registered, the purpose of which was to support a plank-built wall-walk (approx. 2.20 – 2.50 m. wide) on the top of the wall (Agre 2016a, 28-38; 2016b, 205-206; Arpe / Дичев 2020, 535). In this way the

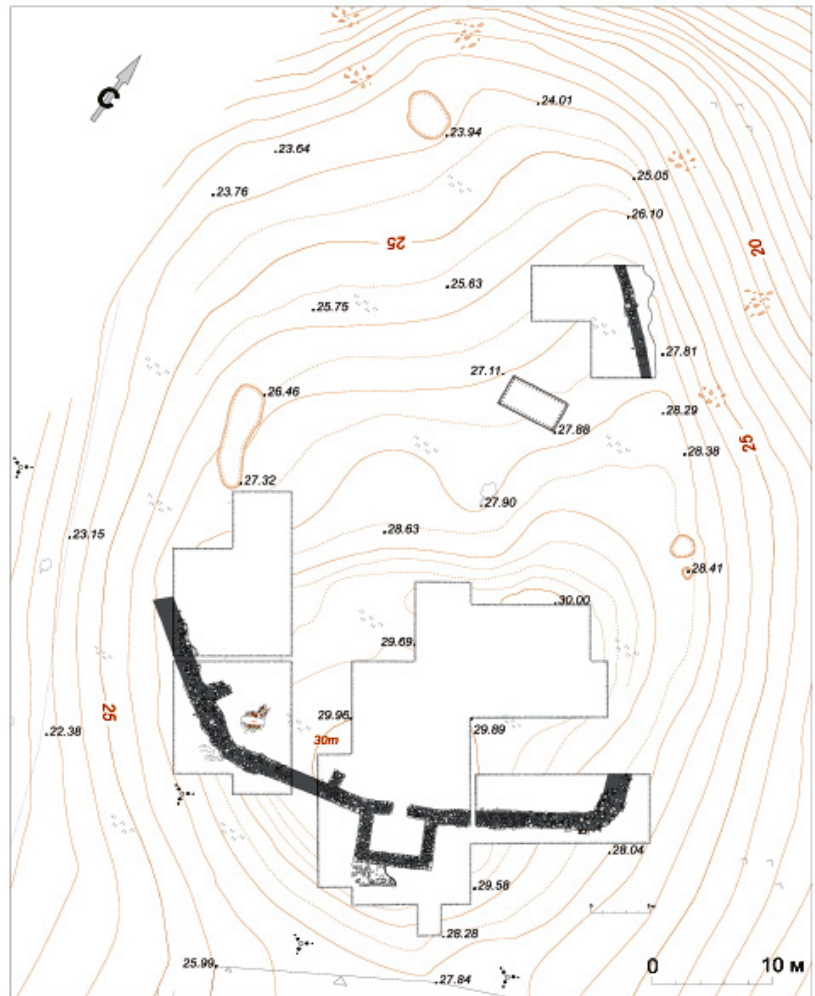


Fig. 2. Plan of the site at Golata niva, near Sinemorets (after Agre 2016a, fig. 1-28)

studied sector of the southern curtain adjoins a rectangular tower with external dimensions 6.70 x 5.75 m. Its walls (1.10 m. thick) are laid by using the same rubble masonry, though of larger blocks (granites and diorites), some of them rusticated, and arranged in irregular rows (Agre 2016a, 20-28, fig. 1-11-1-16). The tower had a second floor, supported by planks coated with clay (Agre 2016a, 25; 2016b, 204). So far, the only entrance through the studied fortification has been recorded west of the tower communicating with an external ramp running parallel next to the wall (Arpe / Дичев 2020, 534-535, fig. 1; Agre 2016a, 26-27)¹. This disposition makes for better protection the most vulnerable approach to the fortified area from the south-southeast.

So far, much of the Late Hellenistic construction in the interior is largely unknown. Inside, next to the southwestern wall, there are remains of at least two buildings interpreted as houses (Arpe / Дичев 2019, 145-146). Their chronology is substantiated by the recent discovery of bronze coins of King Mostis found on their floor levels (Arpe / Дичев 2020, 535). Arguably, Phase I spans a short time, between 40 – 60 years, as evidenced not only by the already noted character of the cultural layer, but also by the reported lack of repairs and alterations to the fortification. The site was destroyed by a massive fire, recorded over the entire researched area. Datable archeological finds (bowls with relief decoration, amphora tare, and coins) allow building secure chronology for the earlier Late Hellenistic Phase (I) between

¹ In view of this character of the building methods and the established defensive purpose of the wall and its constituent elements, it is strange that the research team still insists on calling the fortification “enclosure wall” or “surrounding wall”.

the middle of the 2nd and the first quarter of the 1st century BC (Arpe / Дичев 2015, 213-215; 2016, 274; Agre 2016b, 208; Arpe / Дичев 2019, 147; 2020, 536-537).

An exceptional find with extraordinary numismatic, archaeological, and historical value is the treasure of 199 silver terdrachms found in a ceramic vessel buried in a hole dug out in the rock just outside the fortified area east of the tower. It was sealed by a burnt layer as a result of the already mentioned massive fire (Agre / Yordanov 2013, 2; Agre 2016a, 38-42; 2016b, 207). The coins have the following attributions: *Kyzikos* – 1 (ca 150? BC); *Odessos* – 2 (120-90? BC); *Mesambria Pontica* – 3 (110-100? BC); coins of the Bithynian kings – 14 (183/182-126/125 BC); tetradrachms of the king Mostis – 36 (?); Lysimachus coin types minted in *Byzantion* – 143 (155-120? BC) (the data are summarized in Yordanov / Agre 2016, 47 ff. and Callataÿ 2016). An important detail concerning the tetradrachms of Mostis is their chronological distribution between the 22nd and the 32nd of his regnal years. Nevertheless, Mostis' latest issues along with the two tetradrachms of *Odessos* are the most recent coins in the hoard dated in the 90s BC (see the discussion in Callataÿ 2016, 364-365), thus providing a loose terminus for the destruction of the site (late 90s or early 80s?).

Arguing on the character of the site, the lead researcher referred to the so called *tyrsis* in a sense of a private fortified residence and political centre ruled by a Thracian nobleman. The latter would put under control the organization and trade of the rich resources of Strandzha: iron and copper ore, timber etc., as vital necessities for economic and military expansion². Also, chronological and contextual considerations are advanced supporting the idea that this local aristocrat could have performed the duties of *strategos* of the king Mostis (Agre 2016b, 210-211). However, both statements – about the identification of the site as a *tyrsis*, and a residing person with military-administrative functions (royal *strategos*) – are controversial in view of the available information. No substantiated evidence can be found for “residential buildings sufficient for the needs of the ruler’s household, servants and guard” (as quoted by Agre 2016b, 202 as necessary criteria). Reckoning the site’s stratigraphy, especially the thin and uneven cultural layer, as well as the lack of data for more massive and compact construction in the studied areas, the hypothesis for “ruler’s residence” fails to meet the criteria. Parallels with other fortified sites from the territory between the Burgas Bay and the Strandzha (listed in Agre 2016b, 202-203) do not help, as long as they refer only to similarities of the fortification and the sites themselves have not been sufficiently explored archaeologically.

Further objections can be made to the site’s character as a residence of a *strategos*. Thracian *strategiae* are military-administrative units in most cases stretching over a sizable territory. The closest parallels from the 1st century BC indicate that the headquarters of *strategoï* are usually located in a territory bordering one of the Greek *poleis* on the Western Pontic and the Propontic coasts (e.g. *Anchialos* and probably *Tirizis* and *Heraion Teichos*). The site near Sinemorets obviously does not rank among these centres, neither in scale and internal organisation, nor as commanding position over a neighbouring polis (*Apollonia*?).

² With a similar reasoning, but without any account on the site’s chronology, A. Orachev (2012, 21) identified it with an Odrysian royal estate (ἐπαυλις) from the 5th and 4th century BC, which he believed is Αὐλαίου τεῖχος (for the toponym see below). This view warrants a separate study.

In view of its combined characteristics, I would assume that the site near Sinemorets was rather a fortified outpost to watch over and keep safe the access to one of the important routes leading to the interior of the Strandzha at the intersection with the main coastal road. Housing a small garrison all year round could provide the necessary, though not the only, explanation for the type of coin circulation and hoarding larger silver coins used to pay the military³. In this case, a tentative association with the toponym Αὐλαίου τείχος would speak of a project of a local commander (Aulaios?) under royal commission, as exemplified by the contemporary Late Hellenistic parallels (cf. πύργος Νεοπτολέμου “Tower of Neoptolemus” near the estuary of the Tyras, built by one of Mithridates’ VI generals after the Crimean expedition – Strab. 7.3.16 and Reinach 1890, 73 on the historical context). I am not convinced by the attempts to reject such association (Господинов 2013) simply on the grounds of modern calculations of ancient distances in Arrian’s *Periplus*, having in mind a whole set of issues stemming from our imperfect understanding of the exact relation of the Greek *stadia* to the Roman mile.

2. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE NEAR THE VILLAGE OF BRODILOVO, MUNICIPALITY OF TSAREVO

The site is being explored since 2013. So far, there is only preliminary information from limited in scale and time archaeological campaigns (Дичев 2014; 2015, 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020), but the interest of researchers has already been attracted from the rare numismatic finds documented in stratified contexts.

The site is located approx. 1.5 km east of the village of Brodilovo on a small elongated hill (east-west). The site occupies an area of about 0.1 ha (Дичев 2014, 215-216, fig. 1), fortified by a wall 2.40 m thick, built of rubble mixed with clay (fig. 3). In some places the construction is preserved up to a height of 1.05 m. Sections of the northern, eastern, and western walls have been studied. Occasional buttressing is recorded at some intervals on the inner side of the wall. A rectangular tower was discovered at the most accessible western section (internal dimensions: 5.15 x 3.35 m; wall thickness: 1.50 m; preserved height: 1.90 m). Inside there is a hearth interpreted as a smithy. Concentrations of ash, coal and iron slag have been recorded on the inner floor level. The walls of the tower have acquired a reddish tinge on the inside due to a strong fire (Dichev 2016, 274-276). The cultural layer is studied by mechanical layers, in which “3 coin finds” have been discovered – unfortunately without being presented in the contexts to which they belong. Silver tetradrachms of *Maroneia*, *Odessos*, *Messambria*, Athens (Second Style) and King Mostis are listed, as well as bronzes of lower denominations of the kings Sadalas I and Kotys II (Дичев 2016, 276).

Much of the fortification’s interior is still to be studied. So far, remains of at least 4 houses have been recorded. Some of them contain fragmented corn grinding devices (variants of *Olynthus* mills), storage amphorae and ceramic tableware (Дичев 2017; 2018; 2019). Notably, on the floor level of House 4 in the northern part of the fortified area a ceramic jug containing 16 coins of King Mostis of larger denomination (unfortunately lacking any detailed description) has been found (Дичев 2019, 143). There are also storage facilities inside and outside the fortified area (Дичев 2019, 143-144).

³ Similar interpretation has already been put forward by Fr. de Callataÿ (2016, 365-366) in his recension on the volume edited by D. Agre (2016).

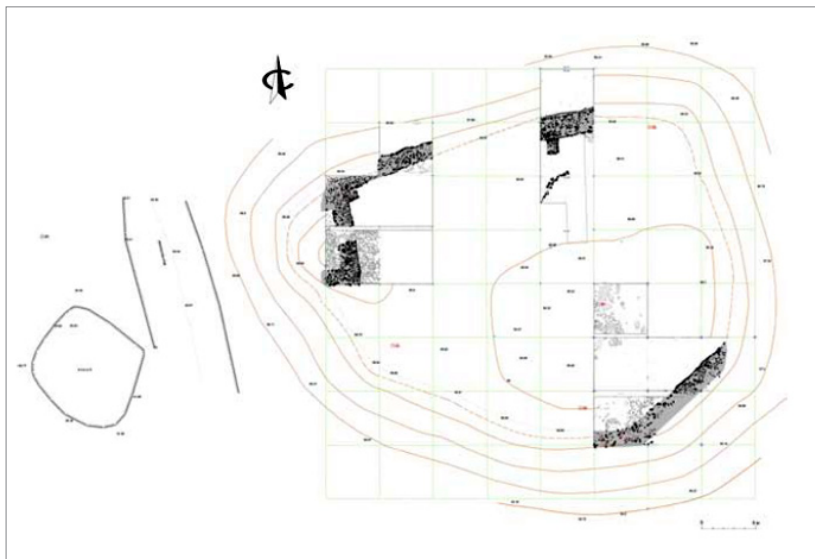


Fig. 3. The fortified site at Brodilovo (after Дичев 2015, fig. 1)

In a situation of still limited archeological observations, the researcher has expressed a convincing opinion on the site's chronology, "built and inhabited in the last quarter of the 2nd and the first quarter of the 1st century BC and presumably destroyed at the end of the 70s as result of the Roman invasion in the region" (Дичев 2016, 277).

As with the case of Sinemorets, the site near Brodilovo is labelled a "fortified residence" without detailed explanation of the term. From a structural and functional point of view, the fortification wall and its constituent elements all correspond to a type of military architecture. Admittedly, at the present stage of archaeological research it is not easy to determine the exact function(s) of the site. Some details are, however, significant. The unusual high percentage of coins of king Mostis found within a relatively small area again might be indicative to a coin circulation connected with military presence. To that, one can add the storage vessels and facilities, as well as corn grinding devices, providing food supply for a small garrison. Traces of iron processing, as exemplified by the finds in the tower, point very likely to a traditional craft typical to the surrounding mining region. As a result, one can think of a fort protecting the traffic of raw minerals and metals extracted from the mountainous zone around the upper course of the Veleka river and their distribution further down to the seacoast.

3. АНТОПОЛ / (AGATHO[*POLIS*?])

The site is located on a small promontory, approx. 14 km south of the municipal center of Tsarevo (fig. 4). Archaeological excavations, accompanied by underwater research, have been conducted since the late 1970s and continue with varying intensity to this day (see the most important studies in Делев 1990; Ганева et al. 1990; Азманов 1997; 1999; Gyuzelev 2008, 269-271; TIR K35/Philippopolis, 11-12; Орачев 2012; Гергова / Иванов 2013; Гергова et al. 2014; Гергова / Мутафов 2015).

There are a lot of controversial moments concerning the foundation of the site, its name and identity. The ancient remains below modern Ahtopol are traditionally associated with the so called AGATHO[*polis*], a name tentatively reconstructed from the reverse legends of bronze coins from the 3rd century BC reading ΑΓΑΘΟ (Velkov 1994; Jouroukova 1994). Drawing on the uncertain reading

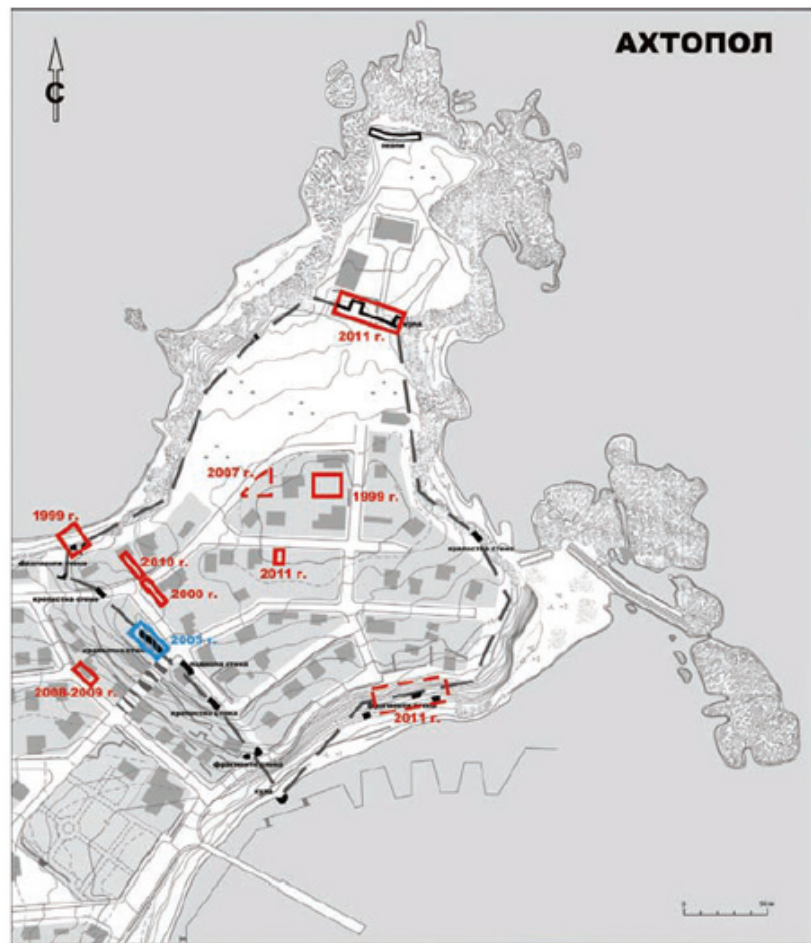


Fig. 4. Plan of the fortified site at Ahtopol (after Гергова / Иванов 2013, fig. 1)

of two fragmented Greek inscriptions from the 3rd century BC found in the modern town, Velkov projected back the foundation of the alleged *AGATHO[polis]* as an Athenian military colony in the time of Periklean naval expedition into the Black sea. With some nuances the idea was welcomed by others. Jan de Boer (2005) saw this foundation as an Athenian clerouchy which he believed was established in the second half of the 5th century BC, as a result of lasting cooperation between the Odrysians and the Athenians, in an attempt to put pressure on the neighbouring rebellious poleis Apollonia and Byzantion. A. Avram (2002) convincingly denied Velkov's reading and tried to connect the origin of the site with the establishment of the Seleucid hegemony in Southeastern Thrace from the middle of the 3rd century BC. Avram also believed that the earlier *AGATHO[polis]* changed its name into *Αὐλαίου τεῖχος* (a local toponym known from the ancient sources) emending it into *Ἀδαίου τεῖχος*, "the fortress of Adaios", one of the many mysterious dynasts in the region at that time. However, the idea of the renaming and the emendation have not found sufficient support.

Despite many years of excavations and observations on the territory of present-day Ahtopol, there is no evidence of active settlement before the middle and second half of the 3rd century BC, while all identified major structures – fortifications, internal construction – are dated back to the end of 2nd and the beginning of the 1st century BC. Initially, the settlement was probably unfortified. The earliest fortification wall

has been traced on the neck of the promontory cutting it off from the mainland. It is built of rubble mixed with clay (Азманов 1997; 1999; Господинов / Мутафов 2010; TIR K35/Philippopolis, 11-12). Recent studies on the sections of the so-called “Thracian wall” provided a general chronology in the 2nd century BC to the first quarter of the 1st century AD. The research team differentiated 3 construction periods, however, no specific dates have been associated to any of them. Though significant, the numismatic material collected from the archaeological layers along the wall is only mentioned *en passant* (“over 100 coins of Kotys I, Kotys and Sadalas from 100-86 BC, Mostis, Kotys and Sadalas from the middle of the 1st century BC have been discovered, as well as coins of Rhoemetals I and Rhoemetals II”), and therefore does not help to solve the problem. Documented traces of a fire which, according to researchers, put to an end the use the fortification wall and burnt the site, are tentatively related to the Thracian uprising against Rhoemetals II in AD 23 (Гегрова / Мутафов 2015, 376).

So far, the archaeological information is at odds with the narrow dating of the coins with the arguable name of *AGATHO(polis?)* in the first half and even the beginning of the 3rd century BC (Jouroukova 1994; Psoma 2009; Tekin 2014), as well as with all the hypotheses presented so far about the origin and nature of the site. K. Rigsby (2005, 109-110) rightly dismissed the very idea that a city named Agathopolis could have belonged anywhere in the ancient pagan world. On the other hand, the Hellenistic site at modern Ahtopol is not readily identifiable with any of the local toponyms known from the written sources (see detailed discussion in Орачев 2012, 19-23). Since the fortification was built only in the last quarter of the 2nd century BC, one can think of a phenomenon similar to other typologically and regionally related sites, namely those at Sinomorets and Brodilovo, as part of a larger synchronous project in the time of one of the Astaeans rulers (Mostis?).

4. CONCLUSION

Having reached their *floruit* in the last quarter of the 2nd century and the first decades of the 1st century BC, the fortified sites near Sinomorets, Brodilovo, and Ahtopol (and the list can be expanded with further examples from the region) are seen here in historical perspective as fortified outposts of Rome’s Astaeans allies. All the sites share structural and chronological affinities that are far from being accidental. Limited in time and space, we can argue for a pattern driven by the interest of the Astaeans rulers in a more elaborate exploitation of the mineral wealth of the region of the Strandzha interior along the valley of the Veleka river down to the maritime coast. Apparently, some of the sites (Brodilovo) are associated with the extraction and processing of raw materials (timber, coal, metal ores). Along the chain for distributing and trading goods we can find intermediate (Brodilovo) and terminal (Sinomorets) points. Some of the sites (Sinomorets) performed tasks of traffic control and security, while others (Ahtopol) could have had a more pronounced administrative and residential functions.

Chronological considerations may lead us to discuss two possible scenarios for their destruction, both pointing to cataclysms connected to the Mithridatic Wars.

The first one may be related to the greatest offensives of the Pontic fleet in the beginning of the First War. Having won a couple of decisive

battles in *Paphlagonia* and *Bithynia* in the summer of 89 BC (for the chronology, see Sherwin-White 1984, 121-126; Callataÿ 1997, 284-285), Mithridates' commanders made further advance by land and sea towards the Propontis and Northwestern Asia Minor. The original plan of the Roman generals and their allies to oppose the Pontic offensive included a naval blockade of the mouth of the Euxine. However, Mithridates' quick advance made him sole master of *Bithynia*, Hellespontine *Phrygia* and *Mysia*, while the scattered forces of his enemies fled south and southwest. So was the naval squadron stationed at *Byzantion* forced to a hasty retreat (App. *Mithr.* 17-19). In this way, already in the late 89 BC, the Pontic fleet wielded an undisputed possession of communication lines across the Marmara Sea. Appian's account does not provide any details, but one might reasonably assume that in subduing the Roman allies in the area, perhaps with the notable exception of *Byzantion* (Lozanov in print), Mithridates' generals directed their campaigns in taking strategic hold on both sides of the Propontis. By the spring-summer of 88 BC, the operation would have included further blows over the coastal zone of Southeastern Thrace facing the Black Sea. Potential assistance could have come from the Western Pontic cities as far as *Apollonia*, which have reportedly sided with the king (see Nawotka 1997, 42 f. with discussion). In this case, preventive attacks upon the coastal strongholds of the Astaeon allies of Rome, including combined naval and limited land operations, could have been planned to inflict further damages upon the military and economic infrastructure of the region between the Strandzha mountain and *Byzantion*.

Alternatively, much of the same speculative reasoning could be referred to the strategic moves in the beginning of the Third Mithridatic War in 73 BC when the Pontic fleet still had great naval superiority (Sherwin-White 1984, 169 f.). Perhaps, it is to the same context that we can refer the evidence for a Mithridatic garrison stationed at *Apollonia* (*IGBulg* I² 392). Eventually, it was forced to surrender (or retreat) and the city was sacked by the army of M. Lucullus (App. *Illyr.* 30; Eutrop. 6.10; Fest. 9). With this scarce evidence at hand we are far from convincing historical reconstructions. As we have seen, modern scholarship discussing the episode tends to approach it from a Roman perspective, i.e. combining the concise information from the Late Roman authors about the campaigns of M. Lucullus against the Western Pontic cities in 72-71 BC and their eventual impact over the entire coastal zone south of *Mesambria* and *Apollonia*. Naturally, from that perspective, any sign of destruction and further devastation in the area is readily referred to the alleged operations of the Roman army. However, having in mind the exact aims and strategic movement of the Macedonian proconsul, the situation could be discussed from a different angle. Marcus' campaign to the Euxine followed the successful Roman offensive of his brother, the consul Lucius, against Mithridates in Asia (cf. App. *Illyr.* 30). Securing the Thracian theatre and mostly the dubious allegiance of the Greek cities on the Western Black Sea meant to prevent those of Mithridates' activities and his allies' that had caused much trouble to Rome in the First War. Also, successful control over the coastal cities would help isolating any attempts at assisting the Pontic army in Asia from that corner. Once secured, the Roman hold on the cities had no lasting effect as long as it was meant to serve a short-term military purpose. Besides, the Macedonian proconsul

had no time and resources to wage punitive campaigns in the coastal region of the Strandzha, nor was it necessary to intervene within the domain of the Astaeans allies of Rome. That said, the archaeological record of destruction from the early 80s as late as the 70s would be more convincingly interpreted as to reflect episodes of the preludes of the First, or respectively of the Third, Mithridatic Wars, when one can reasonably argue for active operations of the Pontic fleet and its allies in the region.

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Verschlechterung bevor Umwandlung. Die Südwestliche Schwarzmeerküste während Marcus Aurelius und Commodus

Hristo PRESHLENOV

Abstract: The study focuses on “stormy” events along the Black Sea coast of Moesia Inferior and Thracia – complicated epidemic conditions, invasions of trans-Danube tribes and the depreciation of regional urban bronze emissions.

The plague was transmitted to the European Roman provinces by Roman military units that participated in the Parthian War (AD 161-164). The disease was spread in *Odessos*, *Dionysopolis*, *Anchialos*, *Apollonia*. In AD 164/165 or 165/166, the oracle in the sanctuary of Apollo *Clarius*, located in the territory of *Colophon*, was consulted (on how to restrict the plague's distribution?) by a *gymnasiarchos* and a citizen of arch-priestly descent from *Odessos*, the *archiereus* of the imperial cult in *Dionysopolis*, and representatives of the *phylai* of *Anchialos*. In *Apollonia*, a local benefactor dedicated to Apollo *Iatros* (in his temple?) construction and repair works after a suffered disaster (ἐκπτώσις) or damage, caused by the Costoboci in AD 170. A collective coin find accumulated in the vicinity of *Odessos* on the coastal road from/to *Dionysopolis* can also be associated with their attack. Most probably, some of the coastal cities' fortifications, e.g. those of *Mesambria*, *Anchialos*, *Deultum*, *Apollonia*, were (re)constructed after those attacks, until AD 184-185. The regional coinage also reflects the complexity of the situation. During the reign of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus in *Odessos*, the “first” nominal lost over half of its weight, the “second” – about two-thirds, the “fourth” (corresponding to the Roman *dupondius*) – almost half; in *Anchialos*, the “fourth” – over one-half. This was practically a process of devaluation of local coin emissions. The imperial coinage types of Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus and Commodus in *Odessos*, and of Commodus (ca. AD 186) in *Anchialos*, are conventional.

Key words: Southwestern Black Sea Region, Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus and Commodus, plague, Costoboci, devaluation.

Während der Herrschaft der letzten Kaiser der Antoninen-Dynastie steht der bis damals prosperierende Römische Staat vor wesentlichen militärpolitischen und wirtschaftlichen Schwierigkeiten, die auch seine Balkanprovinzen nicht umgehen (Gerov 1980a, 264). Einige der Merkmale und Folgen der Krise sind auch in den Städten an der heutigen bulgarischen Schwarzmeerküste, die seit 72/71 v. Chr. verwandelten sich in städtische Gemeinden mit innerer Selbstverwaltung unter der militär-politischen, rechtlich-administrativen und finanziellen Kontrolle der offiziellen römischen Behörden (Nörr 1979, 6; Preshlenov 2018), zu spüren. Hier, wie auch in vielen anderen städtischen Provinzialzentren, verbreiten die am Partherkrieg teilgenommenen Militäreinheiten aus dem Donau-Rhein-Limes die während der Kampfhandlungen ausgebrochene Pestepidemie (Gren 1941, 120; Rostovtzeff 1929, 85). Ein Grabsteinepigramm aus *Odessos*, aus dem 2. Jh. n. Chr. datierend,

berichtet vom Besuch des eines Stadtgymnasiarchen, Sohnes eines Apaturios ins Apollonheiligtum auf der Insel *Klaros* (IGBulg I² 224). Abgesehen von den Beschädigungen wird aus diesem Text klar, daß das Auftreten der Pestepidemie in der Stadt der konkrete Anlaß ist, sich an den Orakel zu wenden. In Übereinstimmung mit seiner Wahrsage trifft der Magistrat von *Odessos* nach der Rückkehr des Gesandten Maßnahmen zur "Vertreibung" der Pest.

Im Archiv des Heiligtums des Apollon von *Klaros* sind zwei weitere Anfragen von westpontischen Bürgern registriert (IGBulg I² 224 comm.). Sie sind von (vermutlich) Theophan, Sohn des Aristokles, ehemaliger Hauptpriester und hauptpriesterlicher Abstammung aus *Odessos*, und von Theodor, Sohn des Apemon, *archiereus* von *Dionysopolis*. In Übereinstimmung mit der üblichen Praxis (IIIamy 1979, 213) bezahlen beide Gesandten für die Durchführung der religiösen Riten und für die Formalitäten beim Dokumentieren des Orakelspruches. Beide Inschriften sind zwischen den Jahren 164/165 und 165/166 n. Chr. angefertigt worden (Ferrary 2014, 445-450, ## 173, 174), d. h. während der Verbreitung der Epidemie in den europäischen Provinzen des Kaiserreiches, einschließlich an der Westküste des *Pontos*.

Es scheint, daß auch die Städte südlich von *Haemus* nicht verschont bleiben. Laut einer Weihinschrift aus *Anchialos* aus dem 2. Jh. n. Chr. verehren die Vertreter der städtischen *Phylen* mit der Errichtung von Statuen die von Apollon aus *Kolophon* genannten Gottheiten mit dem Ziel, eine Epidemie stillzulegen (IGBulg I² 370; Robert 1959, 189). Mit der Erfüllung des Orakelspruches ist der *epimeletes* Titus Flavius beauftragt – ein *magistratus extraordinarius*, dessen Funktionen auch die Kontrolle und Durchführung unterschiedlicher Fristmaßnahmen einschließen. Auch die Wahl des Orakelheiligtums ist kein Zufall. Die Vertreter der Städte *Dionysopolis*, *Odessos* und *Anchialos* wenden sich an Apollon – die größte religiöse und moralische Autorität und Gott aller Wissenschaften, der auf einen sicheren Ausweg aus jeglicher Notlage hinweisen könnte (IIIamy 1979, 212).

In den Jahren nach dem Ausklingen der Pestepidemie und nach dem Angriff der Kostobokoi im Jahr 170 n. Chr. entfaltet ein Einwohner von *Apollonia Pontica*, Metokos, Sohn des Tarulas, Wohltätigkeit, als eigene private Initiative, zugunsten (seiner) in Notlage μετά τὴν ἔκπτωσιν geratenen Stadt und widmet sie Apollon *Iatros* (IGBulg I² 400). Die Untersuchungen zeigen, daß die stärkste durch die Kostobokoi verursachte Verwüstung in Richtung *Odessos* – *Marcianopolis* – *Melta* und im Süden nach *Philippopolis*, Makedonien und Griechenland konzentriert ist (Yourukova 1979, 285). Das schließt nicht das Eindringen einzelner Gruppen von Eroberern der westlichen Küste des *Pontos* entlang auch südlich von *Haemus* bis nach *Apollonia* aus (Danov 1979, 179; Varbanov 2007, 156, 163, Map 2; Vagalinski 2018, 85). Wahrscheinlich ist das Aufkommen der Kostobokoi in die Umgebung von *Odessos* die Ursache für die Vergrabung eines Münzfundes, der in der Gegend "Hl. Konstantin" bei Varna gefunden ist (Мышмов 1914, 272; Gerov 1980b, 372). Auch das von Metokos in *Apollonia* gemachte kann kaum als Bestandteil einer umfangreichen Bautätigkeit betrachtet werden. In diesem Fall handelt es sich eher um begrenzte Wiederaufbauarbeiten an einem Dreiflügeltor (τρίπυλον) der Stadt, welche in dieser Zeit auch in anderen Küstenstädten (*Anchialos*, *Deultum*), die den Angriff der Eroberer standgehalten haben, durchgeführt wurden (Aricescu

1980, 85; Белков 1984, 131; Boteva / Milcheva 2018, 82). Aber es ist nicht ausgeschlossen, daß die Wohltätigkeit des Apolloniers mit der Überwindung der Pestepidemie verbunden ist, die im Kontext der mit $\xi\kappa\tau\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ bezeichneten Disaster ist.

Trotz der erschwerten militär-politischen Situation in *Moesia Inferior* und *Thracia* enthalten die auf dem Territorium der bulgarischen Schwarzmeerküste entdeckten epigraphischen Denkmäler wie die Münzentypen aus den südwestpontischen Münzstädten keine Angaben über eine spürbare Anwesenheit oder Bewegung von Militär in der Region. Eine der wenigen Ausnahmen bildet der Grabstein von Antistia Firmina, ihr von ihrem Ehemann, dem *beneficiarius consularis* Malius Secundus, in der zweiten Hälfte des 2. Jh. n. Chr. (oder Anfang des 3. Jh. n. Chr.) in *Odessos* geweiht (*IGBulg* I² 218; Schallmayer et al. 1990, # 655). Wenn Secundus in der Stadt mit dienstlichem (militär-polizeilichem) Auftrag weilt, kann seine Anwesenheit auch als ein Zeugnis vom Vorhandensein einer *beneficarium* Station (die Antoninus Pius um 152 und 155 n. Chr. ebenso *ob tutelam provinciae Thraciae* bauen ließ (Wolff / Velkov 1990, 603)) interpretiert werden. Solche wurden auch in anderen westpontischen Städten festgestellt (Aricescu 1980, 52, 221).

Mit der Verwendung kaiserlicher Münzentypen kennzeichnen die provinzialstädtischen Verwaltungen manchmal lokale Truppenbewegungen, wenn auch ohne unmittelbare Beteiligung des Herrschers (Schönert-Geiss 1967, 223, 227; Gren 1941, 120, 135). Hinsichtlich der westpontischen Städte bleibt diese Möglichkeit bis jetzt nur noch hypothetisch. Die Gestalten von Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus und Commodus auf der Rückseite der Münzen aus *Odessos* sind konventionelle Typen ohne reale geschichtliche Grundlage (Pick / Regling 1910, ## 2248, 2249, 2258). Auf diese Weise äußert ihre Ergebnisheit auch die Stadtverwaltung von *Anchialos*, wo der einzige bisher bekannte kaiserliche Münzentyp unter Commodus um das Jahr 186 n. Chr. geprägt wurde (Strack 1912, # 441; Schönert-Geiss 1967, 224). Diese Praxis ist auch in anderen niedermoesischen und thrakischen Münzstätten bekannt, hat aber in der Zeit der Severen keine besonders große Verbreitung (Schönert-Geiss 1967, 217; Юркова 1987, 27).

Auch die sg. militärischen Münzentypen, die zu Ehren erfolgreicher Militäroperationen oder als commemorative Serien als Anlaß des Verweilens bestimmter Militäreinheiten geprägt wurden, lassen sich schwer mit konkreten historischen Ereignissen verbinden (Callu 1969, 28; Юркова 1987, 29, 32). Ein solcher Typ ist in *Anchialos* unter Commodus emittiert. Er stellt Nike in einer Triumph *bigae* dar (Strack 1912, # 446) – eine für die thrakische Münzprägung bis zu den Severen traditionelle Darstellungsweise des Militärtriumphes (Юркова 1987, 29).

Als ein Zeugnis von der Anwesenheit der römischen Kriegsmarine im westlichen *Pontos* können die bleiernen Ankerstöcke des “Schachteltypes” gedeutet werden, die bei Unterwasserforschungen entdeckt wurden (Лазаров 2009, 70-72). Ihr Erscheinen in diese Gegend wird (wahrscheinlich) mit dem Eindringen der römischen Kriegsmarine in den *Pontos Euxeinos* während der Mithridateskriege in Verbindung gesetzt. Die Verwendung derselben dauert bis zum 3. Jh. n. Chr. an (Орачев / Орачева 1988, 26). Die Funde aus Constanța,

Mangalia, Kap Schabla, Kap Kaliakra, Varna, Kap Galata, Sozopol, Kap Maslen nos, Varvara u. a. (Лазаров 1975, 79-82; Велков et. al. 1984, 68; Орачев / Орачева 1988, 26) bestätigen nur die Bewegung römischer Schiffe, einschließlich Liburnen der Misenischen und Flavischen Moesischen Marine (Петерс 1982, 92; Прешленов 2007, 37, 38, 39; Bounegru 2008) in der Region von der Donaumündung bis nach Byzantion in der frühen Kaiserzeit.

Die erschwerte Situation im Kaiserreich widerspiegelt sich besonders deutlich in der Münzenprägung der westpontischen Städte, wie in einem eigenartigen Barometer, das die Veränderungen der militärpolitischen und ökonomischen Konjunktur klar registriert. Die Analyse der Emissionen von *Odessos* und *Anchialos* verdeutlicht eine spürbare Reduzierung des Münzengewichtes unter Marcus Aurelius und Commodus. In *Odessos* verliert das Nominal I mehr als die Hälfte seines Gewichtes, das Nominal II – etwa zwei Drittel, und das Nominal IV – fast die Hälfte (Callu 1969, 60; Preshlenov 2007, 114, 116, Abb. 3). In *Anchialos* zeigen die unter Commodus geprägten Nomina II und IV eine offensichtliche Gewichtsreduzierung. Das ist beim für grössere Zahlungen bestimmten IV. Nominal (= *dupondius* nach Lazarenko 2001, 61) – 21,5 g / 31-32 mm unter Antonius Pius gegen 10,85-9,85 g / 27-29 mm unter Commodus (Callu 1969, 63) – besonders deutlich, eine Tendenz, die auch für andere niedermoesische und thrakische Münzstätten charakteristisch ist (Юркова 1987, 91). Eigentlich offenbaren diese Veränderungen die Abwertung der Bronzeemissionen, durch die die westpontischen Verwaltungen nach einem Ausweg aus den entstandenen wirtschaftlichen Schwierigkeiten suchen (Preshlenov 2023, 475).

Unter diesen Krisenverhältnissen ist das fast völlige Fehlen der traditionellen Weihinschriften zu Ehren des Kaisers und seiner Familie kaum überraschend. Die bis jetzt einzige offizielle Inschrift aus den westpontischen Städten ist in *Odessos* in den Jahren nach dem Sieg über die Parther (Мирчев 1960, # 29) aufgestellt worden. Der kaiserliche Titel ist nur fragmentarisch erhalten und kann ebenfalls für Lucius Verus gelten. Auch er (seit Jahre 163 n. Chr.) trägt den Beinamen *Armeniacus*, ist Oberbefehlshaber der Ostarmee während des Partherkrieges und kehrt im Jahre 166 n. Chr. nach vierjähriger Abwesenheit über die Balkanprovinzen siegreich nach Rom zurück.

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Aegean Thrace and Barbaric Invasions from the Mid-3rd to the End of the 4th Century AD Based on Numismatic Data¹

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Abstract: From the beginning of the 3rd century AD and on, the northern border of the Roman Empire along the Danube River was constantly violated. Moreover, barbaric tribes destroyed and looted rural areas and cities of the province, reaching as far as *Philippopolis* in AD 250. One of the major side-effects was the alteration of the monetary image of the province of Thrace. On the one hand, local provincial mints ceased their production – for the cities of Aegean Thrace that happened at the beginning of the 3rd century AD and *Maroneia* was the last one to strike coins under Trebonianus Gallus. On the other hand, the monetary production of the newly established local imperial mints of *Heraclea* (*Perinthos*) and *Serdica* was launched. Thus, the aim of this paper is to detect – through the numismatic data – the impact of the barbaric invasions in the southwestern part of the Roman province from the middle of the 3rd century AD until the end of the 4th century AD.

Key words: Roman Thrace, Aegean Thrace, circulation, barbaric invasions.

INTRODUCTION

For the Roman Empire, the “crisis of the 3rd century” was a period of almost 50 years, i. e. AD 235-284. This was the first time that the Empire had to face a mixture of multi-dimensional external and internal menaces: immense devastating military threats, civil war, successive usurpation, decimating epidemics, social conflicts such as Christian oppressions, and economic agitations. The crisis peaked in the years AD 251 to 268. On the one hand, barbarians overwhelmed the frontiers in waves, the likes of which had never been seen before; on the other hand, the formidable threat of the Sassanians, now under Shapur, whose campaign of AD 252 devastated the Roman East and who, in AD 260, inflicted the most humiliating blow of the whole crisis: the capture of Emperor Valerian. The military and political crisis, naturally, had most immediate repercussions on the economy and society of the Roman Empire as a whole, and, as far as the state was concerned, on its finances and its budget.

In the province of Thrace, this crisis is reflected in the massive attacks of Goths, Carpi and other tribes which culminated in the seizure and plunder of *Philippopolis*, the *metropolis* of the province, in AD 250, and, a year later, the death of Emperor Trajan Decius and his son in *Abrittus* of *Moesia Inferior* (Boteva 2001; Dimitrov 2005; Touratsoglou 2006; Varbanov 2012). For an area that, since its incorporation to the Roman *Imperium* in AD 46 and especially after *Dacia* conquest, was

¹ Organizing the 4th Conference of Roman and Late Antique Thrace in the midst of the pandemic was really a feat and special thanks are owed to all organizers and especially Prof. Dr. Lyudmil Vagalinski and Dr. Milena Raycheva.

characterized by a prolonged period of calm, security and peace, with conditions sufficient for its development, this new geo-military situation with the permanent presence of the army was unprecedented. The only noteworthy external threat throughout the period of the earlier empire were the Costoboci (Rusu 1959; Scheidel 1990; Birley 2000, 165-175), whose invasions of AD 170/171 most likely reached *Plotinopolis* but not the rest of Aegean Thrace. Traces of fire in buildings and repairs on the mosaic of the *triclinium* but mainly the use of an inscribed statue base honouring Marcus Aurelius as a *spolium* in the foundation of a building on the top of the hill of Ayia Petra dating back to the years of Septimius Severus could probably be interpreted in this way (Τασακλάκη 2020, 58, 95).

It is well known that the main feature of Aegean Thrace (the part of the Roman province of Thrace that today belongs to the Greek State) is the fact that it is protected to the north by the inaccessible mountain range of the Rhodope, creating in this way a separate zone safe from the various invaders on the one hand, and isolated from the rest of the province on the other hand. For example, the numismatic data provides evidence of stability and a mild growth during the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, while, at the same time, the rest of the province is vivid and thriving, due to the fact that *Via Diagonalis/Militaris* was used by the Roman army as the predominant military road from east to north. So, within this framework, it is important to examine to what degree the numismatic data is linked to specific historical events from the time when barbaric tribes of the north led to the looting of *Philippopolis* in 250 AD until the battle of *Hadrianopolis* in AD 378.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

I must point out that the numismatic data that has been used for this paper is part of a bigger ongoing personal research project that aims to study in depth the monetary material coming from Aegean Thrace during the Principate and Late Antiquity; that is, the period between the 1st century AD and the beginning of the Early Byzantine era in AD 395. At the 1st Conference of Roman Thrace in Plovdiv in 2016, a preliminary version of the conclusions of this project regarding the material from the 1st to the mid-3rd century AD had been presented (Tasaklaki 2018). In this paper I focus on the monetary data from the mid-3rd to the end of the 4th century AD incorporated into their historical context, which is marked by the raids of barbarian tribes – mainly Goths, Carpi, but also Heruli – into the province.

Particular emphasis will be given to the reflection – if any – of these raids on Aegean Thrace, the southwest part of the Roman province and, after the administrative reform of Diocletian, the part of the Late Roman provinces of *Rhodope* and *Haemimontus*. The absence of written sources from this period necessitates the study of the material remnants in order to reach conclusions regarding the region's historical course.

Until now, a total of 2.663 coins have been collected from the region. 929 are Roman provincial coins. From the Roman imperial coins, 192 are dated between the 1st century AD and the middle of the 3rd, and 186 in the period AD 250-300, while the remaining 1.356 belong to the 4th century AD (**fig. 1, table 1**). So, the number of coins that belong to the period in study are approximately 1.500 (**fig. 1, table**

Fig. 1. Aegean Thrace: ● cities ○ sites
 △ fortresses of Late Roman / Byzantine era



Emperor (AD)	Coastal sites	Along <i>Via Egnatia</i>	Aegean Thrace	Total
Gordian III (238-244)	14	11	8	33
Philip I Arab (244-249)	4	5	1	10
Traian Decius (249-251)	2	1	5	8
Trebonianus Gallus (251-253)	3	1	2	6
Volusianus (251-253)	3			5
Valerian (253-260)	2		3	5
Gallienus (260-268)	23	3	5	31
Victorinus (268-270)	1	2		3
Claudius II (268-270)	16	5	4	25
Quintillus (270)			1	2
Aurelian (270-275)	23	6	3	32
Tetricus (271-274)	1			1
Tacitus (276)	1			1
Florianus (276)	1			1
Probus (276-282)	14	3	3	20
Carus (282-283)	1			1
Carinus (283-285)	1			1
Diocletian (284-305)	18	6	8	32
Maximian (286-305)	12	13	7	32
Galerius (305-311)	4	2		6
Licinius (308-324)	26	7	6	39
Constantine I (306-337)	84	22	33	139
Constantius II (337-361)	155+120	31+36	64+442 (<i>Kyprinos hoard</i>)	848
Constans (337-350)	31	3	5	39
Julian (361-363)	1		2	3
Constantinian Dynasty	72	40	38	150
Valentinian I (364-385)	2		3	5
Valens (364-378)	16	4	3	23
Procopius (365-366)			4	4
Gratian (375-383)	4		1	5
Valentinian II (388-392)	14	2	3	19
Theodosius I (379-395)	14	3	5	22
Arcadius (395-408)	36	5	2	43
Honorius (395-423)	15	4	3	22
Total	734	215	664	1615

Table 1. Numerical distribution of *RIC* in Aegean Thrace (3rd – 5th century AD)

1; Τασακλάκη 2020, 351-366). In terms of their geographic distribution: 152 and 154 coins come from *Maroneia*² and *Abdera*³, 208 from Molyvoti⁴, 205 from *Zone*⁵ and 62 from Imeros, while 154 are related to sites along the *Via Egnatia*, and the rest to various sites. Lastly, 125 coins emanate from the region of Aegean Thrace but their exact provenance is unknown. The majority of the coins are isolated examples, while coin hoards are extremely limited.

COINS IN CONTEXT

The military crisis actually began when in AD 238, during the reign of Gordian III, the Goths reached the Black Sea in the Danube Delta and slowly began to cross into Thrace, looking for a place to settle. Thirty-three (33) coins of Gordian, most of which *denarii*, have been found in Aegean Thrace (*Abdera*, *Maroneia* and in sites along the *Via Egnatia*), while the contemporary provincial issues emanate from *Hadrianopolis*. Again, most of them were found in *Abdera* and at sites along the *Via Egnatia* or the passes to the Thracian hinterland. Furthermore, it seems that during the reign of Philip I, as the barbaric attacks intensified, the only active provincial mints were those in the eastern part of the province. No such issue, however, reached Aegean Thrace. On the other hand, there are eleven (11) imperial issues.

From AD 249 to 268, war events succeeded one another with stormy rhythms; the physical presence of the imperial regime was crucial in this time of crisis not just to show strength across the frontiers but, more importantly, to deter potential revolts. The death of Trajan Decius near *Abrittus* in AD 251, the first Roman emperor to be killed on the battlefield, and the fact that the Rhine frontier collapsed upon Gallienus' departure in AD 259, highlighted the need for this physical presence.

Until this point, the numismatic picture is in accordance with historical events that took place and this became clearer in the following years. The fact that the core of the conflicts was at distance from the region under study is reflected in the limited or even isolated specimens found. Only three (3) coins of Trajan Decius have been found (1 in *Abdera*, 1 in Megalo Doukato, and 1 in Salmoni). One (1) more *denarius* belonging to Trebonianus Gallus and two (2) to Herennius Etruscus were also found in *Abdera*, and three (3) issues of *Maroneia* under Volusianus. On the other hand, the quantity of coins found changed as the enemy came closer. When in AD 267-269 Goths and Heruli descended by sea plundering *Byzantium* and *Cyzicus*, and, upon reaching mainland Greece, Thessaloniki, Cassandria, Athens and Corinth, they were defeated in AD 268 by Gallienus in the battle of Νέσσος (Ammianus Marcellinus 31.10.5)⁶. The number of coins of the emperor increased (25 in number) and were found mostly in coastal places, such as *Zone*, Molyvoti, *Maroneia* and *Abdera* and less on the *Via Egnatia*.

Provincial issues of the period are limited, as most cities had stopped their production since the time of Caracalla (Schönert-Geiss 1968; Τασακλάκη 2020, 364-365). However, there are no traces of destructions that can be dated in the mid-3rd century. The last incursion of this group in AD 269-270 ends up with the battle of *Naissus* where the Goths were defeated by Claudius Gothicus. More than twenty (20) of this emperor's coins have been found, eight (8) of which in *Maroneia*,

² Psoma et al. 2008; in this publication, Late Roman coins are excluded.

³ For foreign coins found at *Abdera*, see Chryssanthaki 2004; Tasaklaki 2018; Τασακλάκη 2020, 355-358.

⁴ For coins found at Molyvoti see also Psoma et al. 2008; Τασακλάκη 2020, 360-361; Tasaklaki forthcoming.

⁵ The second volume on the coins found at ancient *Zone* located at littoral Thrace is under preparation, see Tasaklaki / Tselekas forthcoming.

⁶ For the contested battle of *Nestos* or battle of *Naissus* (modern Niš in Serbia), see Hartmann 2006, 84.

four (4) in *Zone*, and just two (2) in sites along the *Via Egnatia*. In Molyvoti, six (6) coins have been found during the Molyvoti, Thrace, Archaeological Project 2013-2015 (Tasaklaki forthcoming).

The situation changed under Aurelian who managed – after an unprecedented series of victories – to stand up the disintegrated empire (Watson 1999, 140-142). A period of relative calm began and provided new opportunities. In absolute numbers, most represented are the coins of Aurelian (31 specimens), Diocletian (32 specimens) and Maximian (32 specimens), but also of Probus (20 specimens). Isolated examples are representative for the reigns of Florian, Carus, Carinus, Tacitus, and Tetricus. For the first time of the entire imperial era in Aegean Thrace, two small hoards belong to this period. The first – consisting of eight (8) coins of Aurelian – was found in a house in Abdera, and the second which includes five (5) coins of Maximianus was found in Hippio – the latter as part of a hoard consisting of eighteen (18) coins⁷. All coins, but especially those from the second hoard, are in extremely good conservation status pointing to its concealment just after their circulation. This increase in circulation is probably the result of a recovery effort.

4TH CENTURY AD: A PERIOD OF CIVIL CONFLICTS AND BARBARIC INVASIONS

The transfer of the capital from Rome to Constantinople on the 11th of May AD 330, combined with the gradual shift of political power from West to East is the next key point for the region. Initially, it seems to have had positive impact on the cities of Aegean Thrace which, serving as a shield for Constantinople, thrived in many ways. *Maximianopolis* was founded by Galerius Maximianus at the beginning of the 4th century AD along the *Via Egnatia* next to a very important crossroad to the Thracian hinterland (7 km west of Komotini, Ζήκος 2008; Soustal 1991, 369-370), while 11 kilometers east of Komotini, *Gratianopolis* was founded probably by emperor Gratian (Soustal 1991, 276-277)⁸. Already from the 3rd century AD, *Maroneia* is one of the cities with a prosperous Christian community, and in the 4th century it seems that it had its own bishop (Δουκατά-Δερμετζή 2008, 22-24). Architectural remains of the 4th century attest to an extremely high engagement of the harbor of the city, as shown by a new large building unearthed in previous decades (Κοκκοτάκη / Τσόκα 2010, 367-369). Pottery from the site points to imports from *Histria* among other significant centers. Moreover, Pontic *sigillata* found at *Abdera* testifies to the close trade relations with that region, as well as with Çandarlı in Asia Minor (Καλλιντζή / Χρυσάφη 2010).

However, that same advantage brought a series of problems, especially since the former province of Thrace became the theater of the civil war conflicts of Constantine and Licinius and later of Constantius II. Coins of both claimants to the throne, Constantine and Licinius, have been found all around, to a greater extent along the coastal zone (Constantine I: 65 specimens, Licinius: 19 specimens), and to a lesser extent along the *Via Egnatia* (Constantine I: 20 specimens, Licinius: 7 specimens). Coins of Constantius II are found in large quantities both in archaeological contexts and in coin hoards (fig. 3). The hoard of Kyprinos, a site few miles west of *Hadrianopolis* and *Plotinopolis* on the bank of the Arda River, tributary of *Hebros* – found in August of 1977 but still unpublished⁹ – constitutes the largest hoard ever found in Aegean Thrace. It comprises 442 coins of only four iconographic

⁷ According to the Archive of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Rhodope, only eighteen (18) pieces have been delivered, but information provided by a soldier who was doing his service at that time refers to 60 coins. The hoard is unpublished. For the coin hoards of that period from the rest of the province, see Varbanov 2012.

⁸ The city seems to have played an important role during the 13th-14th century. After the destruction of the Thracian capital, *Mosynopolis*, it was the most important residential center of the Central Rhodope for the 14th century.

⁹ All coins are in a high degree corroded probably due to the humidity of the area. Furthermore, the chemical conservation worked negatively on their preservation.

types and was buried around AD 350, since the last emission can be dated in AD 347-348. In chronological order, three (3) coins belong to Constantine I (she-wolf type: AD 333-335, cf. *RIC* VII, p. 582, # 78, Constantinople mint), fifty-six (56) coins are commemorative issues of Constantine I under Constantius II (37 coins of *Veneranda Memoria* veiled Constantine reverse type: AD 347-348, cf. *RIC* VIII, p. 433, # 44, *Heraclea* mint; 19 of Constantine in *quadriga* reverse type, cf. *RIC* VIII, p. 449, # 37, Constantinople mint), one (1) coin of Flavia Maximiana Theodora, spouse of Constantine I (*Pietas Romana* reverse type: AD 337-340, cf. *RIC* VIII, p. 449, # 36), and 382 coins of Constantius II (7 coins depicting two victories holding a wreath: AD 347-348, cf. *RIC* VIII, p. 411, # 99, *Thessalonica* mint; 3 coins depicting Emperor on a galley: AD 348-350, cf. *RIC* VIII, p. 412, # 107; 146 coins depicting two soldiers and among them one standard: AD 337-340, cf. *RIC* VII, p. 431, # 15, *Heraclea* mint; and 196 coins depicting wreath within an inscription *VOT XX MVLT XXX*: AD 347-348, cf. *RIC* VIII, p. 433, # 45, *Heraclea* mint); there are also thirty (30) extremely corroded coins. The time span of those issues between AD 336-348 and the prevalence of Constantius II coins make it clear that the hoard should be related to the civil wars of Constantius II against his opponents Vetranio and Magnentius (Zosimus 2.46-59; Zonaras 13.8.5-13; Potter 2004, 472-476). The Roman civil wars of AD 350-353 caused incessant upheavals and turmoil. The dispersion of his coins is typical. Large quantities have been found all around Aegean Thrace, not only close to urban structures such as *Maroneia* and *Abdera* which were also important ports, but also at less significant sites like *Zone*, *Molyvoti* etc. Two recent findings are small coin hoards along the *Via Egnatia*, one in a farmhouse located between Xanthi and Komotini¹⁰, and another in a *basilica* at Potamos close to *Alexandroupolis*¹¹.

WHEN GOTHs REAPPEAR

After a hundred unprecedented years without external invasion, the Goths reappeared. In AD 376, under pressure from the Huns, they crossed the Danube and reached Thrace. Two years later (9 August, AD 378), the Battle of *Hadrianopolis* took place under Emperor Valens. By nightfall, Valens was dead and two-thirds of the Roman forces slaughtered according to Ammianus Marcellinus (31.12-15, esp. 31.13.18-19). The defeat of the Romans led the successor Theodosius I to an agreement in AD 382, recognizing the Goths as *foederati* and giving them permission to settle in the Balkans, in *Nicopolis ad Istrum*, *Augusta Traiana/Beroe* and *Hadrianopolis*. The number of coins related to that period is lesser than that in the previous one. Ten (10) coins of Valens have been found in the coastal zone of Aegean Thrace and only four (4) in the middle zone. Moreover, four (4) coins of Gratian, the contemporary western emperor, have been found in the same places. Eighteen (18) coins of Theodosius I, thirty-eight (38) of Arcadius and twenty-one (21) of Honorius are the last issues of the 4th century AD and the beginning of the 5th century AD.

The picture we get from the archeological findings of the area, although the latter cannot always be accurately dated, is analogous to the coins. It is clear that during the 4th century AD there was building activity oriented towards the construction of fortress enclosures at the foot of the Rhodope Mountain range in order to get better control of

¹⁰ In the debris layer of a later construction south of the west portico of the farmhouse, among other findings, like *fibulae*, ring key, bracelets etc., 122 bronze coins were found, the majority of which were issues of Constantius II (Chrysafi 2021, 71).

¹¹ The three-aisled *basilica* at Potamos formed part of a larger defensive and domestic complex that extended over a broad time span between the 2nd and the 6th century AD. It is close to the well-known medieval castles of Gatelusi dated back to the 13th and 14th centuries. The hoard of nine (9) coins – eight (8) bronze and one (1) silver – of Constantius II was found at the northwest section of the *narthex* (Karadima / Miltakaki 2021, 41). One more was found outside the *narthex*, in the *atrium*.

the *Via Egnatia* and the intersection to the Thracian hinterland. Along with fortresses in important geopolitical sites such as at Potamos, at Arsakeio, at Nea Santa, at Komotini, at *Topeiros* etc. (**fig. 1**), new fortified cities emerged: *Maximianopolis* and *Gratianopolis*. Moreover, in the course of the 4th century AD, Molyvoti, Imeros and *Zone* – sites that thrived before the Hellenistic era and were then abandoned – were reoccupied as suggested by a significant number of coins (Tasaklaki forthcoming, Tasaklaki / Tselekas forthcoming)¹². In parallel, in *Maroneia* there were changes in the buildings of the port – change of use as a result of the reduction of trade and the restriction of contacts with the Thracian hinterland (Κοκκοτάκη/Τσόκα 2010, 369). Only the case of *Abdera* is different since the changes that are identified – movement of the city to the Acropolis – were due to the continuous floods of the *Nestos* that made living extremely difficult (Kallintzi 2018, 26, 29). The region that was most affected by the events of the second half of the 4th century AD was that of *Plotinopolis*, due to its immediate vicinity to *Hadrianopolis* and *Via Diagonalis/Militaris*.

DISCUSSION. A FEW CONCLUDING NOTES...

First and foremost, a noteworthy remark concerns the total number of coins. The specimens are evenly distributed throughout the examined mid-3rd – 4th century AD period. At first glance, this might indicate stability; however, it actually points to a recession for the entire 3rd century AD, since the economic value of coins, due to constant devaluations, was not the same (**fig. 4**).

As far as the period of the Gothic invasion from AD 249 to 268 is concerned, it seems that there is a slight increase in coin circulation during the time of Gallienus and Claudius II Gothicus, since the battle fields were not far away from Aegean Thrace. Moreover, no matter how turbulent the years were, no coin dated to that period has been found. Coin hoards, seven (7) in number, can be dated to the intervening time (**fig. 3**), i.e. between the barbarian invasions. Apart from the as yet unpublished Kyprinos hoard that I mentioned earlier, four more containing Constantius II coins have been found. One in Alexandroupolis (22 coins) in the vicinity of *Traianopolis*, one in Kipoi/Dymi (5 coins) where we assume that the *Via Egnatia* crossed the *Hebros* River, and one (9 coins) in the *basilica* at Potamos, another area along the *Via Egnatia*. A last one was found at Sounio, where a farmhouse came to light.

Nonetheless, seven (7) coin hoards – two (2) after the Gothic invasions in *Abdera* and Hippio and five (5) during the reign of Constantius II along the *Hebros* – is still a very low number in comparison to the number of hoards that have been found in Bulgaria (cf. Paunov 2021, 23; Varbanov 2021, 68-70).

The distribution of the coins shows high levels of concentration along the coastal zone either in Greek cities like *Maroneia* and *Abdera* or in smaller sites/cities. In fact, in areas such as the city on the peninsula of Molyvoti, Imeros and *Zone*, significant numbers of coins have been found, which, in combination with the architectural remains, indicate resettlement. While those cities were abandoned or shrunk at the beginning of the Hellenistic period, they present traces of human activity in the 4th century AD. At the same time, *Abdera* appears to have been shrinking and moving outside the city walls mainly due to

¹² Especially at Molyvoti, a significant percentage of Constantine dynasty coins appear in every excavation season. In 2019 in the House of Hermes (Molyvoti, Thrace, Archaeological Project 2019-2024), nine (9) new specimens came to light.

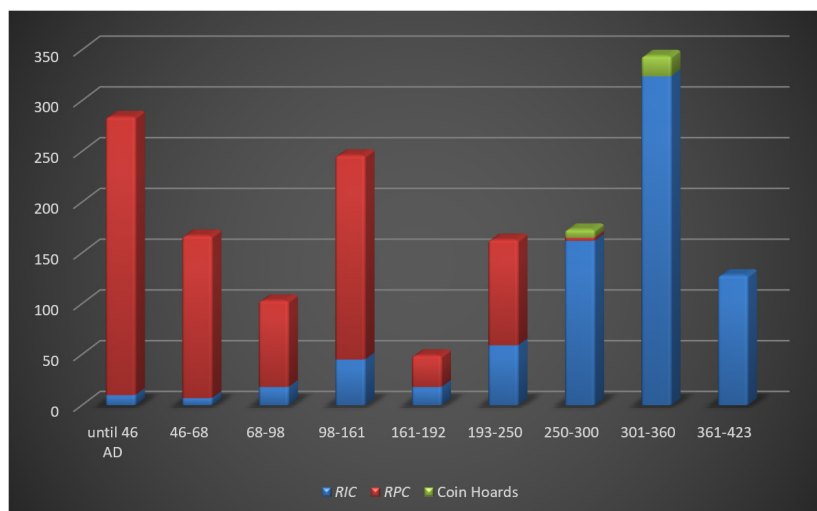


Fig. 2. Statistical analysis of Roman imperial coins found in Aegean Thrace (mid-3rd–4th century AD)

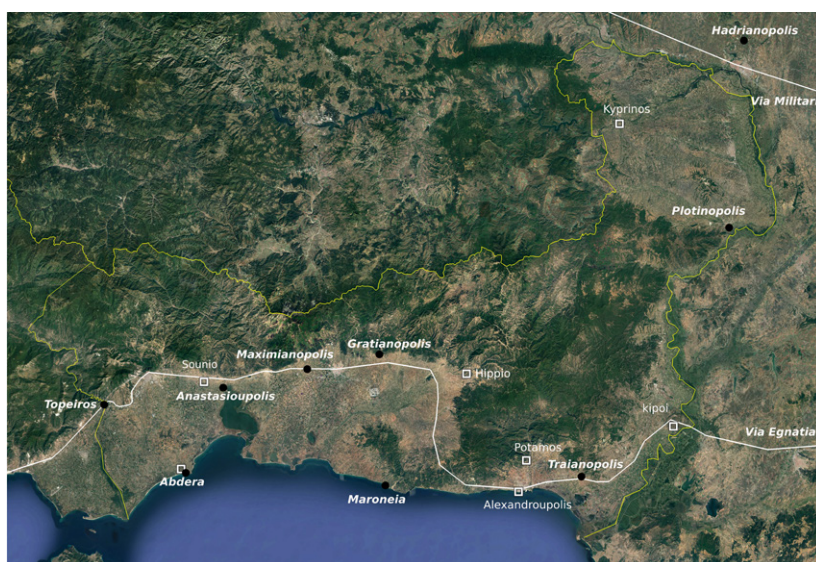


Fig. 3. Coin hoards (□) in Aegean Thrace (● cities)

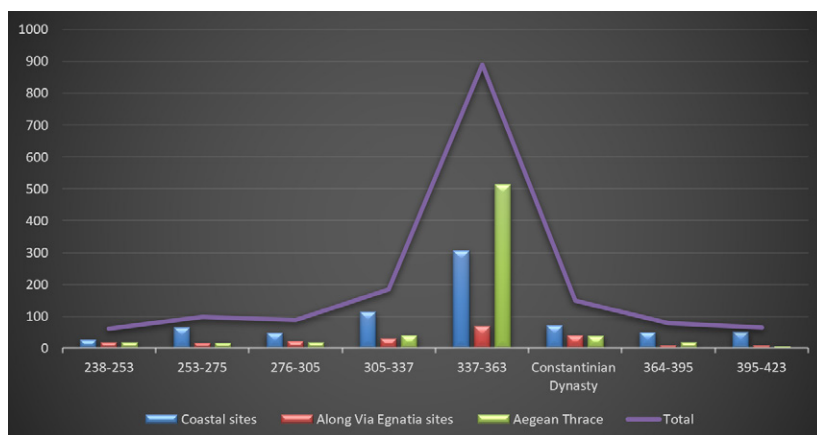


Fig. 4. Distribution of RIC in Aegean Thrace (3rd – 5th century AD)

the floods of the *Nestos*. There are no signs of destruction of the city. *Maroneia* also seems to have shrunk in the area around the port, but here too the buildings bear no signs of destruction. All the changes that appear to have taken place in the region are related to the transfer of the capital to Constantinople. Thrace was indeed a shield for the capital, as attested by the sprouting of a dense cluster of fortresses and the prospering of its coastal region.

Although the region south of the Rhodope Mountain range suffered no immediate consequences by the Gothic attacks of the mid-3rd century, it seems that its inhabitants were under stress and pressure. The only region that was certainly devastated by the raids was *Plotinopolis* and its country. The city's proximity to *Hadrianopolis* on the *Via Diagonalis/Militaris* and the Rhodope located on its left exposed it to any movement in the plain of the *Hebros*. The limited number of coins between the 1st and the 3rd century AD and the large number of coins from the 4th century AD show that the city was affected negatively so much by the 3rd century AD raids as by the general crisis of the Empire. Evdokia Skarlatidou (Σκαρλατίδου 1983; 1988) connects on the one hand the construction of its wall with the raids of the Goths, and on the other – the foundation of the honorary base to Philip I and to Valerian, son of Gallienus, on the top of the hill of Ayia Petra. However, traces of fire on the building with the mosaic and the discovery of many coins fused together by fire in clusters of (probably) ten suggest that the wall was probably constructed immediately after. The buildings of Roman times were destroyed and new Late Roman ones were soon built above them. The excavator stresses that the destruction took place at the end of the 4th century AD, probably close to the battle of *Hadrianopolis*.

Combining all the archaeological data of the period, it becomes clear that the geopolitical situation of the region south of the Rhodope Mountain range did not change dramatically nor was it directly or extensively affected by the Gothic invasions. The mountainous and inaccessible mass of the Rhodope constituted an important obstacle, forcing the invaders to choose the sea route instead. This changed only when they settled south of the Danube River and eventually went closer to the Rhodope. One of their tribes, the Slavs, reached *Topeiros* in AD 449 and plundered it. Its fortification could not hold and, as Procopius (Ὑπὲρ τῶν πολέμων 7.38.9-18) describes, 15.000 men were taken prisoners (Τασακλάκη 2020, 216-219).

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The Effects of Conflicts and Earthquakes in the Troas Region on the *Parion* Coin Findings

Vedat KELEŞ / Kasım OYARÇIN

Abstract: The Troas Region is the area west of the line extending from the source of the *Aisepos* Stream to the *Adramytteion* located in the south of Mount *Ida*, where today the Biga Peninsula is situated. The Troas Region, where the ancient city of *Parion* is also located, has been exposed to frequent disasters throughout history, both due to the importance of its geopolitical position and the attacks of many foreign peoples and as a result of its location in an earthquake zone. The study discusses, with the help of coin finds and other archaeological data obtained in the *Parion* excavations – ongoing and uninterrupted since 2005 – the effects of the natural destruction suffered by the city due to the earthquake that took place in the Troas Region in the 4th – 5th century AD and the tsunamis that occurred afterwards; as well as the Gothic raids in the second half of the 3rd century AD and the Sassanian raids in the first half of the 7th century AD.

Key words: Troas, *Parion*, earthquake, invasion, numismatic evidence.

The ancient city of *Parion* is located at the Kemer village near Balıklıçeşme town, Biga district, Çanakkale province (fig. 1). The city, located on the Anatolian coast of the Dardanelles Strait, contains all the elements that are sought in a port, with some special characteristics of the topography of the land. The city on the shores of the Marmara Sea, which forms a natural border, had a strategic importance with its two sheltered harbors. The favorable geographical setting is the city's most remarkable feature, which enhanced its importance in the Roman Imperial period (fig. 2). This enabled *Parion* to be in constant interaction with the surrounding areas. The coins indicate existing relations between *Parion* and Thrace during the Roman Period. In addition to the numismatic data obtained from the *Parion* excavations, archaeological data also provide clues about these relations (Keleş 2021).

The ancient city of *Parion*, established as a Greek colony at the end of the 8th century BC, became famous in the Roman period. *Parion*, like some of the other cities in the region, was declared a Roman colony by Julius Caesar at the end of the Roman Republican Period (Özsait 1999, 126; Sayar 2015, 163). Thus, in a sense, it became one of the cities where Rome was strongly represented in the Troas Region. This status of the city enabled it to develop and prosper economically. After experiencing a strong period in Roman times, the ancient city of *Parion* was transformed into a significant episcopal center in the Byzantine period (Laurent 1963, 641; *I. Parion*, # 71b; Woods 1999, 371-417; Yılmaz 2020, 943).

Systematic archaeological excavations in *Parion* started in 2005, and all architectural structures unearthed until today are dated to the

	4 th – 2 nd c. BC	1 st c. BC	1 st – 2 nd c. AD	3 rd c. AD	4 th – 5 th c. AD	6 th – 7 th c. AD	8 th c. AD	9 th – 11 th c. AD	12 th c. AD	Byzantine period	Unde- fined	Total
Slope Bath	17	1	45	88	744	42	-	10	-	-	427	1374
Roman Bath	12	4	34	56	377	42	-	12	-	-	67	604
South Necropolis	18	5	49	7	14	-	-	1	-	-	30	124
Theatre	7	1	5	82	724	19	-	18	1	1	32	890
Odeion	14	8	14	19	366	18	-	9	-	-	-	448
Agora	11	1	16	18	132	14	1	6	-	21	32	252
Chamber Tombs	1	3	10	11	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	27
Thermic	1				1	1						3
Test Excavation 7/1				1								1
Test Excavation 8/1	5	2	3	3	26	2						41
Test Excavation 9/1	1											1
Test Excavation 10/ Roman Bath		1		2	20							23
Test Excavation 11				10	8							18
Test Excavation 12	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Acropolis Eastern (Inner) Wall	-	2	1	6	472	38	-	-	1	-	1	521
Water Well				2	1			1				4
Aqueduct								2				2
The mosaic structure				1		2						3
Surface Find	13	5	7	14	141	14	-	4	-	-	32	230
Total	<u>100</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>184</u>	<u>320</u>	<u>3030</u>	<u>192</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>621</u>	<u>4569</u>

Table 1. Distribution of the coins found during the 2005-2019 *Parion* excavations according to find spots and periods

attacks and natural disasters: the important factors that influenced the number of Late antique coin finds in the *Parion* excavations. The earliest destruction layers are dated to the second half of the 3rd century AD. During the works for the unearthing of the stage building of the *Parion* theater (fig. 3), large quantities of pottery from Çandarlı cups, kitchenware, fragmented lamps and terracotta figurines, metal, glass and bone objects, as well as coins, were found (Akkaş 2016; Çelikbaş 2016; Ergürer 2016; Oyarçin 2018). The first thing that draws attention in terms of the Roman provincial coins, discovered collectively among the artefacts belonging to the destruction layer dated to the second half of the 3rd century AD, is that the hoard found in the *Smintheion* sanctuary, located about 180 km southwest of *Parion*, is parallel to the context at the theatre. The sanctuary of Apollo also falls within the borders of the Troad Region. The earliest dated coins in the *Smintheion* hoard belong to the rule Commodus, while the latest ones to that of Gallienus. The earliest of the coins found in the layer that reveals the second half of the 3rd century AD in the theater belong to the reign of Commodus, and the latest – to Gallienus' rule (Çizmeli Ögün 2004; 2005; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2017a; 2017b). Another similarity to the *Smintheion* hoard is the good condition of the coins of Gallienus and Valerian, which is also observed in the coins of Gallienus and others dating from the middle of the 3rd century AD found in the theater. This is the case not only for the coins in this spe-

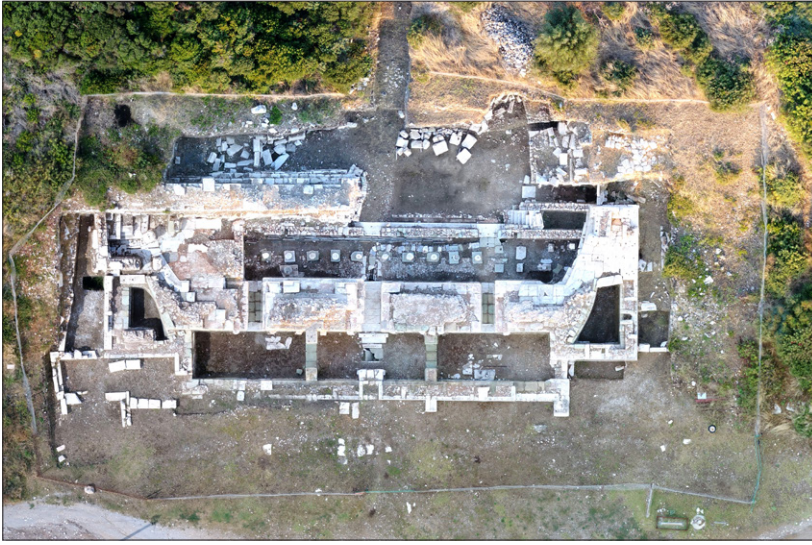


Fig. 3. The *Parion* Theater
(photo: authors)

cific context but also for those unearthed in other *Parion* buildings. This situation is usually attributed to the destruction caused by the Gothic invasions reflected in the *Smintheion* hoard (Çizmeli Ögün 2014, 172). The fact that this is also valid for the coins at the *Parion* theater suggests that *Parion* was also affected by the Gothic invasions in the region in the 3rd century AD (Keleş 2016; 2018). In addition to the numismatic data, a doctoral dissertation on the Roman pottery of *Parion* offers some observations which indicate heavy destruction in the city in the 3rd century AD (Ergürer 2012, 242). *Parion* was not the only city adversely affected by the Gothic invasions in the second half of the 3rd century AD, but many other Western Anatolian cities also suffered from them¹.

According to modern-day scientists, an earthquake of approximate magnitude eight and a resulting tsunami took place in AD 368, affecting the entire *Propontis* region (Socrates Scholasticus IV.11; Jerome, *Chronographia* 286.4; Alpar 2003, 8; Körpe 2006, 71; Doğancı 2018, 389). Among the *Parion* numismatic finds, coins in circulation were found inside the destruction layers from the time of the earthquake, which gives the impression that the city was also struck by this earthquake and the tsunami that occurred afterwards. Their effects on the ancient city of *Parion* can also be observed in the structure known as Test Excavation 10/Roman Bath (fig. 4), the excavations of which are still at an initial stage (Keleş et al. 2019, 608-609; 2020, 399-400). Most of the numismatic material found in this building consists of coins in circulation in the years of the earthquake around AD 368, and a significant decrease in the coin finds is noticeable after this date. Although it has been confirmed that the structure of Test Excavation 10/Roman Bath was damaged after the earthquake, and this destruction caused a significant increase in coin finds, future excavations will provide more concrete data about the specific impact of the earthquake on this structure.

Another building with obvious signs of destruction in the city of *Parion* is the *Odeion*, one of the most massive structures in the Troas Region (fig. 5). A hoard consisting of 249 Late Roman coins found in the excavations carried out in the 1375-1435 grid square of the *Odeion's cavea*, together with other archaeological remains and finds

¹ For archaeological and numismatic studies related to the Gothic invasions in Western Anatolia, see MacDonald 1987; Arslan 1996; Esch / Martin 2008; Çizmeli Ögün 2004; 2005; 2013; 2014; Bursche / Myzgin 2015; Çizmeli Ögün 2015; Fıstıkçı 2015, 52-141; Esch 2016; Çizmeli Ögün 2017a; 2017b.



Fig. 4. The test excavations 10/Roman Bath structure (photo: authors)

in the structure, contain important clues about the nature of this destruction (Keleş / Oyarçin 2019). Of the 208 coins that can be identified among the *Odeion* hoard, 167 were minted between AD 383 and AD 423. The latest dated coins are from the period AD 408-423. During the excavations of the *Odeion*, intense traces of fire were observed in the *orchestra*, the interior of the stage building and in the vaults, which indicate the possibility that the building was destroyed by a fire in the early 5th century AD, based on the great number of coins and pottery found in and above this burned layer. It is possible to say that the latest identifiable examples of the *Odeion* hoard coins related to this fire are datable between AD 408-423, and since the burial dates of this fire and the *Odeion* hoard are close to each other, it can be said that the Late Roman hoard of the *Odeion* consists of coins that support the archaeological data of the building and provide information about its original function and the last phase of its use. Although it may seem possible that this destruction in the *Odeion*, as reflected in the numismatic finds, may have occurred as a result of a barbarian attack, we do not have any concrete data on this issue for now.

The most visible traces of devastation observed during the excavations in the ancient city of *Parion* were those left by the earthquakes and tsunamis that took place in the region at the end of the 5th century AD (Whitby 1985, 571; Ambraseys / Finkel 1987; Kılıç 2001, 69; Altınok et al. 2003, 332; Papadopoulos / Fokaefs 2005, 161; Karagöz 2005, 54; Ambraseys 2009, 172; Ambraseys / Synolakis 2010, 320; Altınok et al. 2011, 277; Doğancı 2018, 390-391; 2019, 547-548). As a result of these earthquakes mentioned by Marcellinus, Malalas, Cedrenus and Theophanes, many cities, such as *Troia*, were abandoned forever (Körpe 2006, 71; 2007, 33). After these earthquakes, many cities in the Troas region turned into episcopal centers. It is believed that among these cities were *Troia*, *Assos*, *Skamandreia*, *Skepsis*, *Priapos*, as well as *Parion* (Cook 1973, 374). Among the coin finds unearthed in the structures currently excavated in *Parion*, a significant density is observed in the coins representing the period of the earthquake. The fact that *Parion* was also impacted by it is observed more clearly in the coin finds from structures such as the



Fig. 5. The Odeion in *Parion*
(photo: authors)



Fig. 6. The Roman Bath in *Parion*
(photo: authors)

Roman Bath and the Slope Bath, which lost their function since they were destroyed to a great extent after these natural disasters (**figs. 6, 7**). During the excavations carried out in both buildings, there was a significant increase in the coin finds in circulation in the 5th century AD and the collective finds that can be considered hoards, followed by an interruption (Keleş et al. 2014; 2015; Yılmaz / Oyarçin 2017; Keleş et al. 2018). A hoard from the excavations of the theater, consisting mostly of coins of Marcianus and Leo I, is among the numismatic evidence that can be associated with earthquakes from the end of the 5th century AD, since the latest coins are dated between AD 457 and 474 (Oyarçin 2018, 168).



Fig. 7. The Slope Bath in *Parion* (photo: authors)



Fig. 8. The Eastern (Inner) Wall at the *Parion* Acropolis (photo: authors)

A total of 39 coins, found at different levels in the burned layer at a depth of 0.80 meters during the 2019 works in the Eastern Inner Walls of the *Parion* Acropolis, hold a special significance in terms of being one of the first examples of Early Byzantine destruction in the city (**fig. 8**). Of the 39 coins found in the burned layer belonging to a destructive event of the fortification wall, 3 are Roman imperial coins, while 36 are dated to the Early Byzantine period (Keleş / Oyarçin 2020). Although the latest date of the Early Byzantine coins is AD 615, most were minted during the reigns of Phocas and Heraclius. Except for the coins in the burnt layer in question, the archaeological remains and finds, completely covered with traces of burning as they had been exposed to intense fire, point to destruction at the walls and, therefore, in the city. In some ancient cities in Anatolia, there is a sudden interruption in the traces of destruction and coin finds due to the Sassanian raids of AD 615-616 (Keleş / Oyarçin 2020, 55-57). The coins found in the burned layer of *Parion* Acropolis' East (Inner) Wall are particularly important as they give the impression that the Sassanians had also visited *Parion* before besieging *Chalcedon* in AD 615-616 and had caused ruination to the city.

As we have observed, it is possible to say that *Parion* was negatively affected by invasions and natural disasters that were classified here un-

der five main “headings”, thanks to the various data obtained from the archaeological excavations carried out until today. However, none of these destructions caused the city’s life to come to an end, probably owing to the natural topographic characteristics of *Parion*, such as the self-sufficient food resources like the fertile lands and fishing opportunities, the strategic geopolitical position, and the importance of the port as a trading station that lasted at least until the middle of the 14th century AD.

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Disasters in Southeastern Thrace with Considerations for Earthquakes in Roman Imperial Times and Late Antiquity

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Abstract: A number of earthquakes in Southeastern Thrace and the Thracian Chersonessos during the Roman Period and Late Antiquity have been registered by ancient sources. The northern shores of the Propontis and the Thracian Chersonessos were particularly affected by the North Anatolian fault. The aim of this contribution is to present the earthquakes that took place between the 1st and the 6th century AD in Southeastern Thrace, according to the sources. Furthermore, examples will be provided regarding the impact of these earthquakes on the demographic situation in the cities of the region.

Key words: Southeastern Thrace, Thracian Chersonessos, Propontis, earthquakes, disasters.

Literary references and epigraphical sources on disasters are very rare for Southeastern Thrace in the Roman Imperial period. There are no detailed records in ancient sources about the earthquakes that occurred specifically in Southeastern Thrace before AD 330, when Constantinople became the new capital of the empire¹. Of the many earthquakes that undoubtedly had occurred over the centuries before and after Christ up until the year AD 330, information is provided only

¹ For the new situation of the settlement history after the foundation of Constantinople, see Rizos / Sayar 2017, 85-99.



by the famous physician Hippocrates of Kos who reports an earthquake that struck in *Perinthos*² in December 427 BC. This is the earliest mention of an earthquake in Southeastern Thrace, recorded in Book 4 of the Hippocratic *Epidemics* (Hippocr. *Epid.* 4.21). Researchers have proposed to date this catastrophic event between 399 and 395 BC³. It is understood from the information given by Demosthenes (Dem. *In Apat.* 33.20) and Aristotle (Arist. *Meteor.* 2.8, 366 a-b) that in 360 BC another earthquake caused destruction in Thracian Chersonese (Guidoboni et al. 1994, 133). In 287 BC, another earthquake struck in the Thracian Chersonessos and it was especially destructive for *Lysimacheia* (Pomp. Trog. *Epitom.* 17.1.1-3; Guidoboni et al. 1994, 136). It is also known that an earthquake occurred in the Hellespont region in the middle of the 1st century AD (Philostr. *Vita Apoll.* 6.41; Guidoboni et al. 1994, 190).

It has been estimated that a few hundred earthquakes occurred in the Propontis region and in Southeastern Thrace during the 1st, 2nd and 3rd centuries AD (Ambraseys 2009, 835-836). Some of these were described in detail by ancient writers, either because the emperors directly provided aid to the damaged disaster areas or because the emperor happened to be in the earthquake zone at the time of the seismic activity.

The narrative passages concerning earthquakes in the Propontis area deal especially with capital cities like *Nicomedia*, which was destroyed in AD 68-69 (Malalas 10.42/259 Dind.; Ambraseys 2009, 118-119) and AD 121 (Ambraseys 2009, 125-126). Two years later, a major earthquake reportedly destroyed *Cyzicus* on the southern shore of Propontis (Ambraseys 2009, 126). According to some sources, a powerful earthquake or a series of earthquakes occurred in AD 161 in the area of the Hellespont⁴ and *Cyzicus* again felt the impact. The magnitude of this disastrous event is unclear, but it seems conceivable that the northern shore of the Propontis was also affected by it, as the Thracian Propontic coast falls into the impact area of the North Anatolian fault zone, which extends to the seabed of Propontis and the Thracian Chersonessos. Perhaps the building inscription set up for the consecration of a temple for Hadrian and Sabina from *Perinthos* (Sayar 1998, # 37), which is dated to AD 128-131, could be considered in connection with the earthquake in AD 121. The temple can be interpreted as a token of gratitude for the imperial donations in *Perinthos*⁵. There are neither direct epigraphical sources, nor archaeological evidence to suggest destructive seismic activity on the northern Propontic shore and in Southeastern Thrace (Lozanov 2015, 75-90). Only one inscription from *Perinthos* (Sayar 1998, # 217) could be interpreted in connection with an earthquake. It is a 2nd century funerary epigram for Susas, the last two lines of which read:

Οὐνομά μοι Σουσᾶς, λίθ<ιν>ον δέ με Σοῦλος ἐποίει, / συνπτώσει
μογεῖν τοῖον ἔτεισα μόρον.

*My name is Susas and Sulos made me as a stone portrait. / I suffered
such a fate through an unfortunate collapse.*

After Constantinople became the capital of the Roman Empire on 11 May AD 330, the first major tremor reportedly felt by the new administrative center was the *Nicomedia* earthquake on 24 August AD 358, the epicenter of which was in the Gulf of Izmit. Due to this catastrophic event, *Nicomedia*, which had been built as a magnificent city and had been the center of the Kingdom of Bithynia in the centuries be-

² For the geostrategic importance of *Perinthos* and the historical sources, see: Sayar 1998, 87-90; 2022, 311-320; 2024.

³ Deichgraeber dates this earthquake between 399 and 395 BC (Deichgräber 1971, 25; Guidoboni et al. 1994, 118).

⁴ Cassius Dio 70.4.1, 72.32.3 (?), Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 4.13; Iust. Mart. *Apol.* 1.70; Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 16.12; Front. *Ad Ant. Imp.* 1.2.6; Aristid. 27; Vita Abercii 48 f. (?); Malalas 11.22 (?); 11.25 (?); *Epit. de Caes.* 16.3 (?); Deeg 2019, 275; Ambraseys 2009, 133.

⁵ On thanking the emperor in the context of disasters, see Deeg 2019, 221-223.

fore Christ, as well as the most important administrative center of the region in the Roman imperial period, was destroyed. The calamity is described in detail by Ammianus Marcellinus in his *Roman History* (Amm. Marc. 17.7.1-8)⁶. *Perinthos-Herakleia* was also destroyed by an earthquake in AD 358/359 (Sozomen. *Hist. eccl.* 4.16.3 = Sozomenus 1995, 159, l. 12). In AD 362, *Nicomedia* was again devastated by a powerful earthquake (Ambraseys 2009, 144-148). In February of AD 363, both Libanius (Liban. *Orat.* 18.177) and Ammianus Marcellinus report seismic activity in Constantinople while an expedition against the Sassanids was in preparation: *inter ipsa enim exordia procinctus Parthici disponendi nuntiatum est Constantinopolim terrae pulsu vibratam* (Amm. Marc. 23.1.7) (cf. also Guidoboni 1989, 335-345; Guidoboni et al. 1994, 263, # 152).

Over the following years, many earthquakes and aftershocks brought destruction to *Nicomedia* and its territory, as well as Constantinople and the neighboring areas in Southeastern Thrace. Historical sources mention no less than 22 earthquakes in the Propontis region between AD 395 and AD 583 (Ambraseys 2009, 151-214; Külzer 2010, 429-441). It has been established that the main cause of these earthquakes in the Propontis region lies is the North Anatolian fault⁷. The next earthquake in Southeastern Thrace, recorded by Sozomenos, occurred in AD 359 in the area of Propontis. *Nicaea* and *Perinthos-Herakleia* were affected by it (Sozomen., *Hist. eccl.* 4.16.3 = Sozomenos 159, l. 12)⁸.

Between September and November of AD 394, a strong earthquake shook the settlements located to the west of Constantinople (Marcell. *Com. Chron.* 64.6-7; Guidoboni 1989, 335-345; Guidoboni et al. 1994, 280). In AD 447, another one struck in *Agoraion Teichos*, on the Isthmos of the Thracian Chersonessos and as a result of this catastrophic event, the Long wall there was significantly damaged (Euagr. 1.17; Guidoboni et al. 1994, 300; Külzer 2008, 238-239 s. v. *Agoraion Teichos*).

In AD 460, an earthquake occurred in Southeastern Thrace and the Hellespont (Guidoboni et al. 1994, 300). The Ganos fault, an extension of the Northern Marmara fault, caused an earthquake in Southeastern Thrace and North Aegean in AD 467/468. The fortresses of *Sestos* and *Kallipolis* were destroyed by an earthquake during the second reign of emperor Zeno (AD 476-491) (Guidoboni et al. 1994, 302-305; Külzer 2008, 646).

Starting from the second half of the 5th century AD, Late antique sources report a number of earthquakes that occurred in Constantinople and its immediate surroundings by giving the year and sometimes even the day, and also indicate the damage they caused (Soustal 1991, 67; Külzer 2008, 603). It is entirely possible that these earthquakes also brought devastation to the Balkans and Southeastern Thrace in particular⁹. Scholars working on the history of earthquakes and other natural disasters since the end of the 19th century have established that approximately 585 powerful earthquakes that caused heavy damage struck within a period of approximately 2.400 years, extending from 500 BC to AD 1900 (Ambraseys 2009, 839-841). However, it must be considered that some of the historical sources that give us information about these earthquakes retell catastrophes that had occurred before the period in which the texts were written, which sometimes leads to confusion in the dates (Guidoboni 1994, 61-67). It can be assumed that earthquakes which resulted only in slight damage or just minor shaking were most probably not recorded. Despite this, it has been acknowledged that the number of earthquakes recorded in the historical sources on Istanbul

⁶ This great earthquake, which can be compared to the strong earthquake that occurred in the Gulf of Izmit on 17 August 1999, was undoubtedly felt in Constantinople, as the historian Sozomenos wrote (Sozomen. *Hist. eccl.* 4.16.3).

⁷ For the North Anatolian fault, see: Le Pichon et al. 2001, 595-616; Ambraseys 2009, 835-836.

⁸ For the date of the earthquake, see: Grümel 1958, 477; Schreiner 1975, I 41; Guidoboni 1989, 302-305; Whitby 1982-1983, 17.

⁹ For the historical events in Thrace in Roman times and Late Antiquity, see: Strobel 2019, 131-322; Mitthof / Strobel 2019, 403-421; Bleckmann 2019, 422-440.

and the area until the beginning of the 21st century that caused significant destruction and loss of life is close to 600 (Guidoboni 1994, 36-347). This is undoubtedly a very high number. According to the information given by written sources (Schreiner 2007, 46-48), approximately 50 major earthquakes occurred in Constantinople from AD 330, when the city became capital, until its sacking during the Fourth Crusade in AD 1204 and the establishment of a Latin sovereign power until AD 1260. It is therefore possible that the true number of earthquakes in Southeastern Thrace was much higher than mentioned in the sources.

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The Dire Centuries

Archaeological Evidence for the Gothic Invasion in *Philippopolis*

Elena BOZHINOVA / Varbin VARBANOV

Abstract: The paper presents two archaeological situations from rescue excavations in Plovdiv which provide evidence for the violent character of the Gothic invasion in *Philippopolis* (Plovdiv, Bulgaria) and rather confirm the information given in literary sources. Human victims, abandoned valuables and lost hoards under the burnt buildings' debris were documented at both sites. A coin hoard, together with purse hoards and separate coin finds, among which the latest one is of Emperor Philip the Arab, allow us to narrow down the date of the event to the middle of the 3rd century AD. In both cases, the buildings were destroyed by fire, never to be restored again. The buildings that succeeded them were of a different plan and were constructed above the thick layer of debris – a situation that was documented in other contemporary buildings at many excavated sites throughout the city center. While the information obtained for the building at 16 Dr. Valkovich Street was limited due to the destruction caused by later habitation, the site at 13 Leonardo da Vinci Street yielded more data about the building's history, thus allowing us to restore partially the life of a family in *Philippopolis* that perished in the conquest of the city in AD 251.

Key words: *Philippopolis*, Gothic invasion, coin hoard, victims.

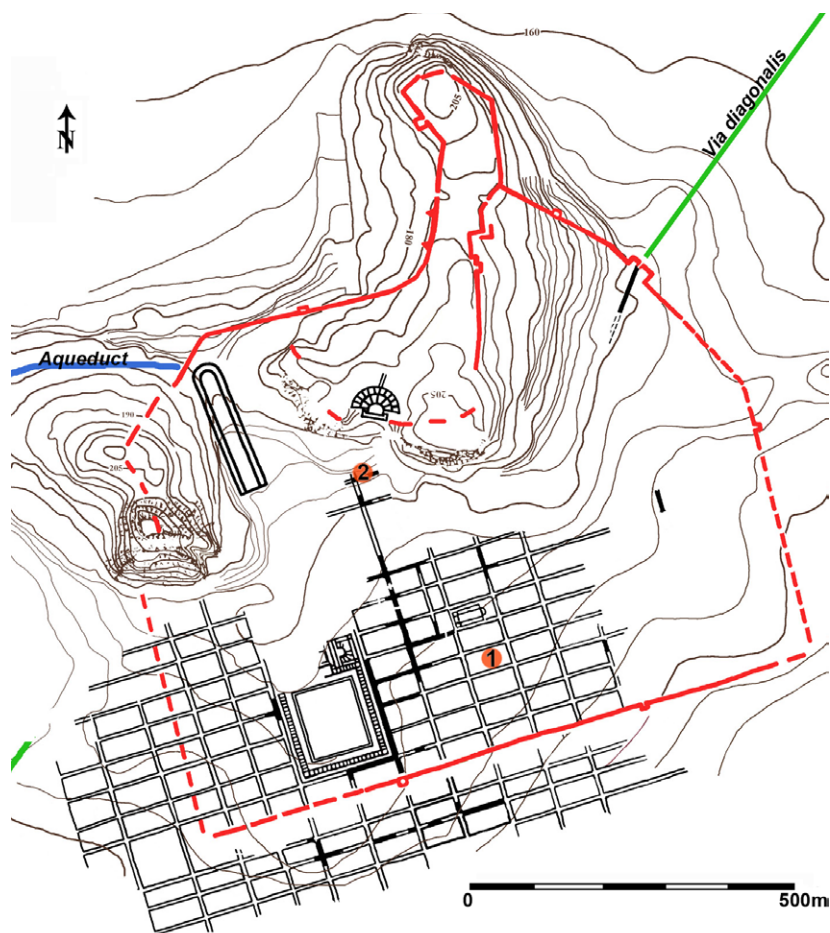
According to the literary sources, in AD 251 the Goths lead by Kniva sacked and burnt *Philippopolis*, 100.000 of its citizens were killed and the rest were abducted into slavery (Amm. Marc. 31.5.15). This invasion is well attested in the archaeological record of the city. It is seen in the thick layers of burnt ruins studied in many of the excavated sites within the central area of the ancient city, wherever the third-century layers have survived the habitation traces of the following ages. The burnt destruction layer is often about 1 m thick and the subsequent construction horizons used new floor plans for the buildings (Топалилов 2012, 181-182)¹. The invasion of AD 251 is also evidenced by the large number of coins found in the city's territory (Varbanov 2020, 513-518).

Two archaeological situations studied recently in the course of rescue excavations prove the violent character of the event. These are the sites at 13 Leonardo da Vinci Street and at 16 Dr. Valkovich Street (map 1).

THE SITE AT 13 LEONARDO DA VINCI STREET

The site at 13 Leonardo da Vinci Str. is situated in the southern part of the Lower City of *Philippopolis*, at about 100 m to the north of the southern fortification wall. According to the data obtained from the excavations, the area was first populated at the end of the 1st century AD (Танкова 2013; Божинова / Иванов 2019). A portion of a street has been studied in a neighbouring plot from the west. The street is

¹ The list of sites catalogued by Topalilov needs to be further expanded with later excavated sites at 1 Vazrazhdane Square (Божинова / Славкова 2019, 308), 12 Leonardo da Vinci Str. (Божинова / Иванов 2019, 306), and 1-3 P. Parchevich Str. (Христева / Станев 2021).



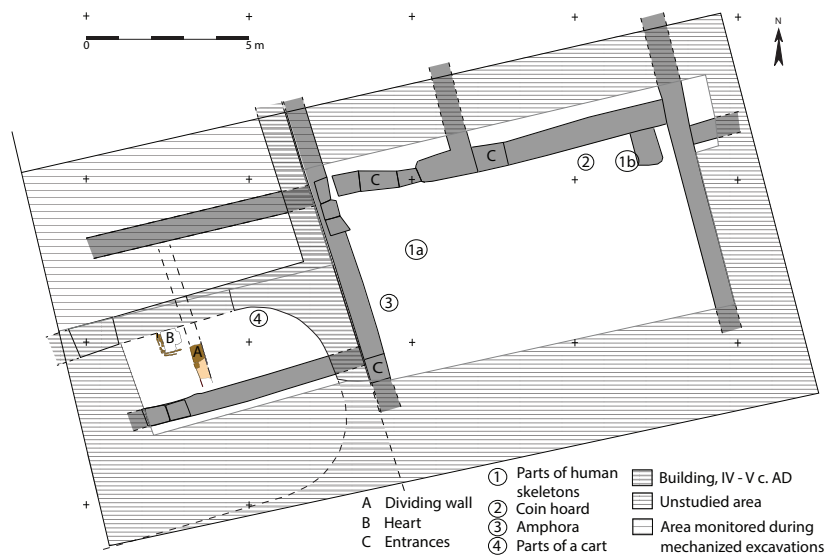
Map 1. *Philippopolis*, with the 13 Leonardo da Vinci (1) and 16 Dr. Valkovich (2) sites (map: E. Bozhinova)

known to have continued in northern direction towards a large basin (Танкова / Драганова 2019, 299; 2020). The buildings adjacent to the street were in use for a long time, as indicated by a series of reconstructions and a number of consecutive floor levels in the rooms. A fire led to their ruination, which can be dated to the middle of the 3rd century AD based on the finds. The pavement level was raised at some moment and the street continued to function, but the burnt buildings were abandoned and the area was later re-built with a new arrangement (Божинова / Иванов 2019).

The information from the neighbouring 13 Leonardo da Vinci Str. is rather limited due to the circumstance that the archaeological remains suffered greatly from the landowners' illicit attempts to build a new house without the compulsory excavations that should precede any construction activities under Bulgarian law. As a result, a considerable portion of the archaeological strata was scraped out, including the upper levels of the building's central section which is the subject of the present paper (Божинова / Станев 2020, 787).

The entire studied area of the site comprises parts of a 2nd – 3rd century building (Божинова / Топалилов 2021, 721-722). The building was probably of a peristyle floor plan. A large area of an inner courtyard and two rooms of its western wing have been studied from it (**fig. 1**)². The terrain was first levelled by an embankment that probably originated from the waste of a nearby pottery workshop (Мартинова-Кютова 2011), as suggested by the enormous amount of pottery sherds – including pieces of defective vessels – found in the bulk layer. The walls have

² The excavation of the latter was largely mechanized as required by the project's constructor for safety reasons because the studied plot of land borders directly an old house.



deep (1.40 m) stone foundations and a superstructure that consists of a stone base preserved up to ca. 1 m, topped by mud bricks. The walls that enclosed the courtyard are made of stones bound in clay, while the rooms' inner walls are bound in mortar. Large well-cut stone blocks which apparently had been extracted from a massive structure were re-used in the building's walls. Many pieces of window panes in the western part of the courtyard attest that the residential part had glazed windows overlooking the court. The recorded reconstruction phases in the building suggest its active life for a long period.

A room situated in the central western part of the building was best preserved and revealed the most information about the building's history. Its width is 5.50 m and the length is over 8.50 m. The southern wall was upgraded at least 3 times as seen in the well-shaped indents formed by the greater width of the base compared to the upper part of the construction (fig. 2). Earth binding was used in the earliest building phase, while mortar of greyish-white colour was chosen for the later one.



Fig. 3. Hearths in the western room before (1 – 3) and after (4) the room's division, 13 Leonardo da Vinci Str. (photos: E. Bozhinova)

The room's continuous use is proved also by the sequence of 14 earthen floors that raised the level up to 1.55 m (**fig. 2**). A hearth was situated in the middle of the room, 5 reconstructions of which were recorded (**fig. 3/1-3**). The earlier two hearths had no special pad but a ledge at their western border formed by a row of bricks. The following hearth used the same ledge which was upgraded. The next hearths had a rectangular base of bricks. In the last building phase the room was divided into two smaller rooms by a thin wall (0.35 m width) made of bricks over a stone base, all with mud binding. Its socle was formed with a row of bricks laid on their ends (**fig. 1: A**; **4: A**). A hearth in the western part was situated close to the division wall (**fig. 1: B**); it was made of a large square gneiss slab used as a pad and with a ledge of brick sherds placed vertically (**fig. 3/4**; **fig. 4: B-4: B**)³. The eastern room's floor was probably made of wood, judging by the charred parallel wooden beams driven into the layer below floor level. The walls were covered with polychromic fresco decoration, pieces of which were found among the debris on the floor. A small part of the decoration was preserved *in situ* on the division wall. The extant fragments allow the restoration of a number of panels over a background of Pompeiian red, one of which contains a floral motif – a palm tree on white background (**fig. 5**). The wall decoration includes also profiled cornices embossed from the mortar plaster.

Very little information is available about the other room of the building. A fireplace and a sequence of floor levels recorded in the north-western room suggest that it probably had residential functions similarly to the adjacent room. No other rooms were studied archaeologically. It is only clear that there were separate rooms to the north and east of the inner court. It is notable that the walls in the western part of the building were of higher quality compared to those in the eastern part, and had better shaped faces even at their underground parts. Large blocks were used only in the western part. This building manner suggests a different purpose for the rooms and since the western part had housing functions, the economic activities were most probably situated in the eastern one.

³ A hearth was registered during the machine excavations in the north-western part of the site. The hearth probably belonged to this western room.

Fig. 4. The western room at the destruction layer, 13 Leonardo da Vinci Str.: **A** division wall; **B** hearth in the western part; **C** destruction layer of burnt mud brick walls; **D** wooden beams for the floor (photos: E. Bozhinova)



Fig. 5. A panel of the wall painting in the western room in its final phase, 13 Leonardo da Vinci Str. (photo: E. Bozhinova)



The court's length is 10.07 m and its width exceeds 5.18 m. It lacks any solid floor level but it is easily distinguished by the different properties of the embankment below it and the destruction layer above. The floor level is at nearly 1 m below the last floor in the residential room⁴. Its main entrance is at the northern wall just at the north-western corner. Here the western wall is made of large stone blocks to a greater height compared to the other walls. Two of the blocks feature specific embossment at their front sides which indicates that they have been taken from a vault construction. The entrance was once restricted in width and later its level was raised up by a row of bricks. Another two entrances – one at the northern and one at the western wall were bricked up, and the latter was closed at an early stage, before the construction of the southern wall of the residential rooms (**fig. 1: C**). Evidence of reconstructions is seen also in the constructive joints in the wall that starts from the court and

⁴ The courtyard's floor is at an altitude level of 157.99 m and 157.75 in its center; the latest floor in the separated residential room is at 158.84/158.94 m; the earliest one is at 157.34 m.



Fig. 6. The eastern part of the courtyard with the destructions, 13 Leonardo da Vinci Str. (photos: L. Yankov)

separates the rooms behind it. A stone base that resembles a short wall starts from the northern wall and goes inwards. It was built in the north-eastern corner. It probably served as an abutment for the wall but could have been also used as a base for a column to support the roof. The large amount of roof tiles found on the court's floor suggests it was partially covered with a tiled roof (fig. 6).

Finds from the preceding layers related to the building's earlier history came mainly from the embankment layer in the court. Beside the large amount of pottery sherds, these are: a bronze figurine of Fortuna (pl. I/20); a terracotta of Venus (pl. I/21); a *terra sigillata* cup with birds in medallions and hunting scenes above them (pl. I/23); two glass beads (pl. I/14-16); three bone (pl. I/8-10) and one bronze needle (pl. I/11); a lead measuring weight (pl. I/17); a lead seal (pl. I/18); a bronze application (pl. I/19); a bone spoon (pl. I/12). Also from this layer, 18 coins came to light. They belong to *Philippi* (2) and the following emperors and members of the imperial family: Hadrian (1), Antoninus Pius (2), Marcus Aurelius (2), Faustina the Younger (1), Commodus (1), Septimius Severus (2), Geta (1), Elagabalus (1), Gordian III (1), and 4 specimens are worn out and undetermined (dating from the 2nd to the beginning of the 3rd century) (pl. II/1, 3-4, 6-13, 17, 19, 23, 25-27, 30). Two of them are *denarii* of Septimius Severus (pl. II/12-13), and the rest are provincial bronze issues, almost all of them of small denominations. They were probably accidental losses. The earliest ones are dated in the 1st century AD and are issues of *Philippi* (pl. II/1, 3). Eight coins were struck in *Philippopolis* (pl. II/4, 6-7, 10-11, 19; IV/25-26), one in the mint of *Nicaea* (pl. II/23), one in *Pautalia* (pl. II/17) and one in *Augusta Traiana* (pl. II/8). All of the coins were used for a long time and show us the momentary picture of the coin circulation in *Philippopolis* in the middle of the 3rd century AD.



Plate I. Artefacts from the embankment layers under and between the floor levels of the building, 13 Leonardo da Vinci Str. (photos: K. Stanev and E. Bozhinova)



Plate II. Coins from the embankment layers between the floor levels of the building and from the destruction level, 13 Leonardo da Vinci Str. (photos: V. Varbanov)

The artefacts found in the residential part are very few in number and originate only from the embankment strata between the floor levels. The room must have been carefully cleared before the reconstructions took place, as no item was found on the floors. Two bronze pins (pl. I/1-2) were found among the earlier layers; a ceramic lamp

(**pl. I/5**), a bone tool (**pl. I/3**) and a bronze hand from an anthropomorphic figurine (**pl. I/4**) belong to the later ones; to them we can add two sherds with *graffiti* (**pl. I/6-7**). The only coin found here is from the lower levels⁵ and is a *dupondius* of Aelius Caesar (**pl. II/5**). According to this coin and considering the relatively long life of the building because of the recorded reconstructions, its beginning should be dated within the first half/middle of the 2nd century AD. The later coins in the court's embankment layer – from the first half of the 3rd century – could be explained with later activities here, as the court's floor that lacked pavement would have needed regular repair.

The building was destroyed by fire as seen by a thick layer of partially burnt mud brick walls and multiple charcoals (**fig. 4: C**; **fig. 6**). The fire was most intense in the residential part of the house and less violent in the court, which can be explained with the concentration of timber constructions and other flammable materials in the living quarters. The disaster was sudden and unexpected, as lots of valuables were abandoned and some of the inhabitants failed to escape and perished. Remains of two individuals – a child and an older person – were found in the court. Only few pieces of the skull have remained from the child, found 2 m south of the court's entrance (**fig. 1, 1a**). In the north-eastern corner of the court and at 7 m to the east from the child's skull, the lower part of an adult individual's skeleton was found (**fig. 1, 1b**). Only the part of the lower limbs and a small fragment of the left forearm were preserved. The inclination of the skeleton is towards the feet, and since the archaeological excavations in this part of the site began at the level just above the bones, it is most likely that the upper part of the skeleton was dug up by the mechanical excavation that preceded the actual scientific research on the site. The skeleton remains were in an unnatural body position, with the left leg over the right one (**fig. 6/2**). The skeleton was found among roof debris and tiles were found just below and above it. This, together with the unusual position of the skeleton, suggests that the person had been hiding on or under the roof when the building collapsed. Close to this skeleton, some 1.25 m to the west and again among the tiles of the roof destructions, a coin hoard was found, together with two bronze adornments – an earring and a bracelet – as well as a bronze decorative nail (**pl. III/3-5**). Most of the coins were found in one chunk, stuck together as a result of the fire (**fig. 6/3**). They had been put in a leather bag, preserved as brownish dust on the terrain. A smaller part of the find, including the adornments and the nail, was found scattered over an area with a diameter of 0.60 m. The find spot among roof tiles suggests the hoard had been hidden in the roof of the building⁶.

The coin hoard consists of 593 silver coins. The analysis shows that they are distributed as follows: Antoninus Pius (1), Commodus (2), Didia Clara (1), Septimius Severus (154): [Septimius Severus (55), Julia Domna (30), Caracalla (30), Plautilla (7), Geta (32)], Caracalla (39): [Caracalla (33), Julia Domna (5), Geta (1)], Macrinus (10), Elagabalus (29): [Elagabalus (24), Julia Soaemias (1), Julia Maesa (4)], Severus Alexander (18): [Severus Alexander (13), Julia Mamaea (5)], Maximinus Thrax (16): [Maximinus Thrax (14), Paulina (1), Maximus (1)], Pupienus (1), Gordian III (263), Philip the Arab (59): [Philip the Arab (48), Otacilia Severa (2), Philip the Younger (9)]. Of them, 457 were struck in Rome, 132 in Antioch, and 4 in *Laodicea* and *Emessa*.

⁵ Between the fifth and the sixth level, counted from bottom to top.

⁶ A similar situation is attested on the island of Euboea (Greece). During an archaeological excavation in 2011, a coin hoard was found within the context of a collapsed roof construction (Spoerri-Butcher / Casoli 2012).

The coins are well preserved and belong to widespread types (except those of Didia Clara and Paulina).

Another 4 provincial bronze coins, again stuck together due to the fire, were found in the western part of the court: 1 dating to the 2nd century (**pl. IV/29**), 2 to Caracalla's rule (**pl. II/14, 16**) and 1 to that of Gordian III (**pl. II/22**). Two of them were produced in the mints of *Pautalia* and *Nicaea* (**pl. II/14, 22**). Probably, they represent a lost purse hoard.

Another 7 coins came from the destruction layer above the floor level of the court. Four of them are silver: 1 *antoninianus* (probably Philip the Arab – **pl. II/24**), 2 *denarii* of Julia Mamaea (**pl. II/20-21**) and 1 *denarius* of Elagabalus (**pl. II/18**). The last one was found just next to the skeletal remains of the adult individual. The remaining coins were provincial bronze specimens: 1 of *Philippi* (**pl. II/2**), 1 of Caracalla, struck in *Hadrianopolis* (**pl. II/15**), and 1 is from an unknown Balkan mint (probably from the province of Thrace, 2nd century – **pl. IV/28**).

A number of artefacts, besides the coins, were found among the ruins: a bronze key (**pl. III/7**); a bronze object, likely a furniture element (**pl. III/10**); a bronze bell (**pl. III/6**); two similar beads with white spiral decoration – a ceramic (**pl. III/1**) and a glass one (**pl. III/2**); a piece of a ceramic roundel with relief depiction of one of the labours of Heracles (**pl. III/12**); a ceramic lamp (**pl. III/11**); and a ceramic furnace cap (**pl. III/17**). While all these small items could have appeared accidentally among the debris of the building, together with the mud brick dough or introduced in another way, this is definitely not the case with a transport amphora and probably a ceramic lamp. The amphora was found next to the western wall of the court, broken into pieces as result of the building's demolition (**fig. 1/3**). It is a Dressel 30 type specimen, of North African origin. Two *dipinti* inscriptions made with red paint in cursive writing were placed on both shoulders, one “Λεον|τίου”, and the other “εὐτυχεῖτε” (**pl. III/19**)⁷.

Some notable items were found on the floor of the western room with the wall painting decoration, under a thick layer of heavily burnt mud brick destructions. These include cart fittings: a bronze application with a relief bust of Dionysus (**pl. III/14**) and a flat iron rod frame with rings at both ends (**pl. III/18**); a bronze ring of rectangular cross-section, that could perhaps also belong to a cart (**pl. III/9**); an iron knife (**pl. III/13**); a bronze application for a small wooden box with a keyhole and iron attachment rivets (**pl. III/15**); and a marble *pistulum* (**pl. III/16**).

The latest coin among those found in the destruction layer comes from the large hoard and is dated no later than AD 249⁸. Thus, we can accept that the disaster could be identified with the known Gothic invasion of AD 250-251. None of the other artefacts contradicts this chronology, as they are all well attested for the period of the first half of the 3rd century AD.

Many researchers believe that the chronological framework of a hoard determines the time of its accumulation, as well as the time of its concealing. In this case, the hoard belongs to the group of the so-called “circulation hoards” and accurately reflects the monetary circulation in *Philippopolis* in the middle of the 3rd century AD. The lack of coins of Trajan Decius can be easily explained. The delay of the latest

⁷ The amphora was identified by Dr. Nadezhda Borislovova. The inscriptions were read by Dr. Nicolay Sharankov.

⁸ It is an *antoninianus* of Philip the Arab, dated to the period AD 247-249 (*RIC* IV, III, # 65). The remaining coins of Philip the Arab and his family are dated before AD 247-248.



Plate III. Artefacts from the destruction level, 13 Leonardo da Vinci Str. (photos: K. Stanev and E. Bozhinova)

emissions is normal, as the coins of Philip the Arab, Gordian III, as well as those of the emperors before them, were still in circulation. Not insignificant is the fact that only two military units were located south of the Balkan Mountains (cohorts, or about 1.000 people), while in Lower Moesia the military units were much more numerous and amounted to 20-25.000 people (Varbanov 2021, 66-67).

Some 46 years ago, Professor Boris Gerov intuitively suggested that most of the finds ending with coins of Philip the Arab from Southern Bulgaria remained in the ground during the time of Trajan Decius (Gerov 1977, 135-138). This “delay” is also evident in the few finds from Southern Bulgaria that end with coins of Trajan Decius. Such is, for example, a recently published find from Sofia. It was unearthed during the archaeological excavations of a Roman *villa* in the Gerena neighbourhood more than 50 years ago and consists of 227 silver coins. Those of Gordian III are predominant as well, and there is only one dating to Trajan Decius. From the coins of Philip the Arab (49), only one dates from the period AD 247-249, while the rest are from the more widespread emissions of AD 244-247 (before the rebellion of Pacatianus).

The hoard discovered in the *thermae* of *Pautalia* during the archaeological excavations that took place in 1962 presents a rather comparable situation. It has been known for a long time in scientific literature with a *terminus post quem* of AD 238-244. Only after its publication in 2004 it became evident that one of the coins belongs to Hostilian, the son of Trajan Decius. Similar is the case with the accidentally discovered hoards from the village of Shiroko Pole, Kardzhali region (2 coins of Trajan Decius out of 140), the village of Sadiisko Pole, Sliven region (1 out of 404), the village of Sbor, Pazardzhik region (2 out of 496), etc. (Върбанов / Коджаманова 2020, 82-83).

Some data for further building activities on the plot is provided by the western part of the site. The subsequent building dates to the end of the 3rd – beginning of 4th century, according to the 8 coins found in it. Though the western wall of the peristyle court (which was preserved to a great height) was used as the eastern wall of the new building, the latter differs in terms of floor plan, size, orientation, and construction technique. It seems to have been much smaller, and it had a reversed orientation in comparison to the preceding one. The new walls were thinner, with no data for the existence of stone bases. It occupies the area over the residential part of the previous house. According to the limited information for the eastern part, coming only from the stratigraphy profile at the northern border of the site, there is a layer of mud brick destructions above the peristyle house, 1 m thick. The upper limit of this layer is at a level equal to the floor of the next building which occupied the plot in the second half of the 4th – 5th century AD⁹.

THE SITE AT 16 DR. VALKOVICH STR.

The second site under consideration presents another archaeological situation related to the violent character of the Gothic invasion in *Philippopolis*. It is located in the very central part of the city, just below the Taxim Tepe hill, where the Roman theatre was erected (**map 1/2**). This area has been inhabited from the Early Iron Age until present time. Here passes a *decumanus* that leads from the Eastern Gate towards the stadium and is uncommonly wide, 6.74 m (**fig. 7**). An hon-

⁹ This building had an apsidal room decorated with a mosaic floor and wall paintings studied in the eastern part of the site (**fig. 1**; Bozhinova / Topalilov 2022).

orary arch was built over the street at the end of the 1st or the beginning of the 2nd century AD. The street was reconstructed at least twice, and at a period before the middle of the 3rd century AD it was widened. The location in the very central part of the city and the presence of monumental public structures, such as the arch and the street itself, resulted in a densely built up plot with a complex architectural history. For the period of the 2nd – 3rd centuries AD, massive buildings were in use on either side of the street. The façade of the southern building is located 2.55 m apart from the street's kerbstone, most probably to leave a distance for a sidewalk.

The building situated north of the street is of particular interest for the present paper's topic. Its general plan remains unstudied because of the limited area for archaeological excavations, which is additionally hampered by the numerous reconstructions and consecutive building activities. The southern and the eastern wall of a room with its south-eastern corner were partially studied. The walls' substructure and the lower part of the superstructure were built of stones bound in pinkish mortar, with mud bricks used in the upper parts, as evidenced by their remains. The initial date of this building is also unknown, though earlier floor levels and well-shaped wall faces in their lower parts reveal a long previous life for the building.

The southern wall is situated at 2.90 m away from the street's northern kerbstone (**fig. 7**). It cannot be specified whether this area was used as a sidewalk or served as another room. The room measures more than 4.20 m (east-west) x 5 m (north-south) and continues outside the excavated area. The floor was made of compacted clay and during the last phase of the building's use it was at street level. A niche was formed in the inner face of the southern wall¹⁰. Its bottom was mud-plastered and located at floor level, but is easily distinguished by its colour – it had turned to orange due to a strong but controlled fire. The entrance of the room was probably situated in the unstudied parts as no traces of a door were recorded.

The building was ruined by fire. The floor was covered with large amount of heavily damaged iron items and charred wood that were probably remains of furniture and equipment (**figs. 8-9**).

The remains of three human skeletons were found lying on the floor in the northern part of the room, under a layer of burnt mud brick and roof debris (**figs. 8-9**). The bones were heavily damaged by the fire. Skeletons of two adult individuals were situated one next to the other – a woman aged about 18-20 years and a second adult individual whose age and sex cannot be determined (**fig. 9/2**)¹¹. The female individual was in a bent position, turned to the left, with her back to the other adult. Both her arms were bent, the left one in front of the abdomen and the right in front of the face with the hand under the head, as to protect it. She had two bronze undecorated bracelets, one on each wrist. One of the bracelets is open, with slightly thickened ends (**pl. V/3**), and the second one is closed, with the ending clamped by twisting to the opposite part (**pl. V/2**). The only preserved leg of the other adult is in half-bent position to the left, toward the female one. The forearms are bent one above the other just below the chest area. A bronze figurine of Venus with golden torque was found next to the right hand (**pl. V/1**). A purse hoard of 4 provincial bronze coins and a glass bead (**pl. V/4**) were also found in close vicinity to this skel-

¹⁰ The niche measures 0.33 m in width, 0.70 m in length, and had a height of more than 0.18 m.

¹¹The anthropological analysis was made by Stayko Staykov, an archaeologist specialized in bio-archaeology who was present at the site in the moment when the archaeological situation was studied.

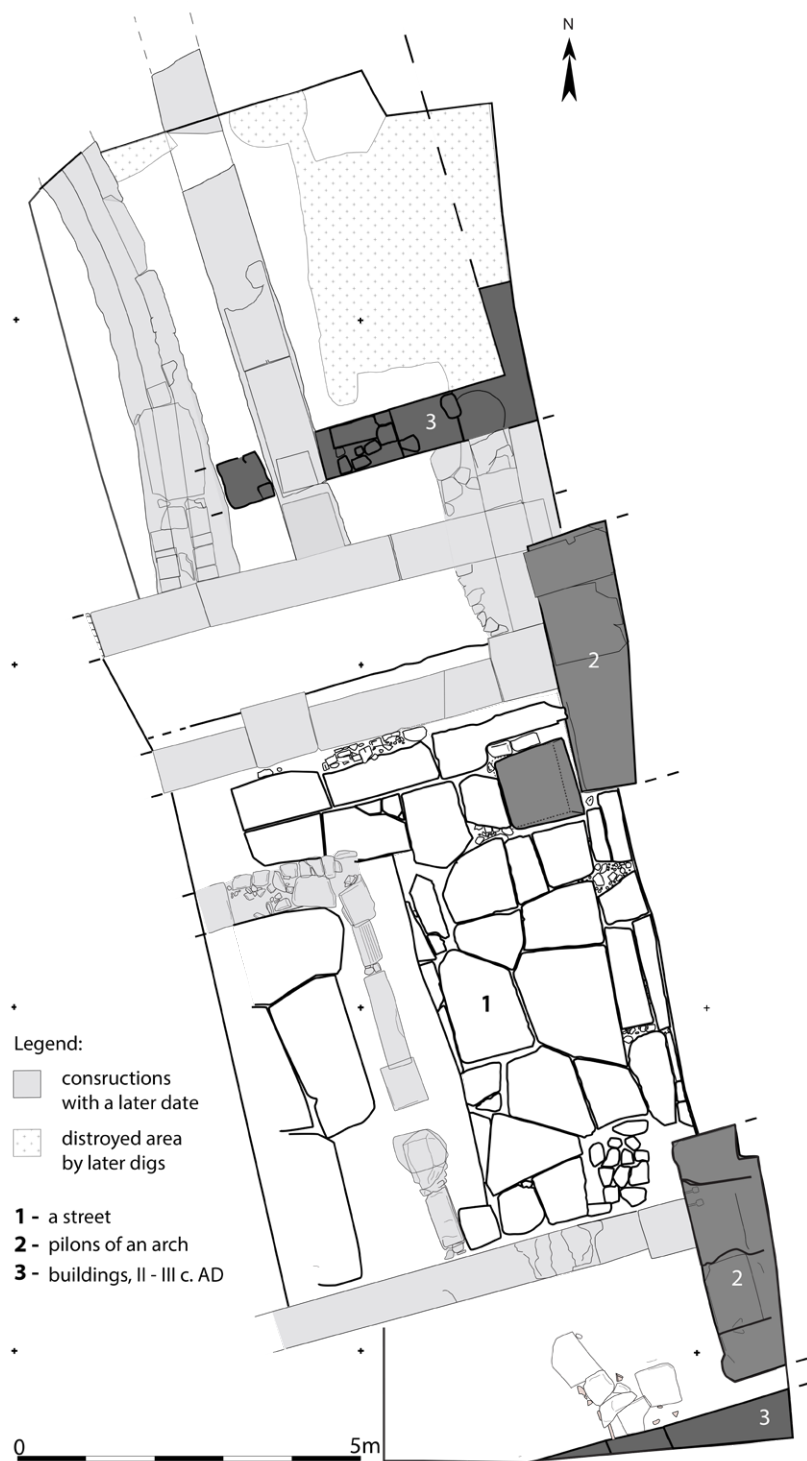


Fig. 7. 16 Dr. Valkovich Street, plan of the site (drawing: Ts. Slavkova, L. Yankov, E. Bozhinova)

eton and particularly the hands. Two of the coins are Caracalla's issues, minted in *Pautalia* and *Nicopolis ad Nestum* (pl. IV/2-3). The other two are very worn out, but can be also dated to the period from the end of the 2nd till beginning of the 3rd century (pl. IV/12-13). Another 6 coins were discovered on the floor level, in close proximity to the skeletons. These are 2 *denarii* of Macrinus and Julia Soaemias (pl. IV/4-5), 1 issue of Gordian III from *Deultum* (pl. IV/7) and 3 *antoniniani* of Philip the Arab (pl. IV/9-11). The latter are of one type and are dated to the period AD 244-247¹².

¹² RIC IV, III, 71, # 28c.

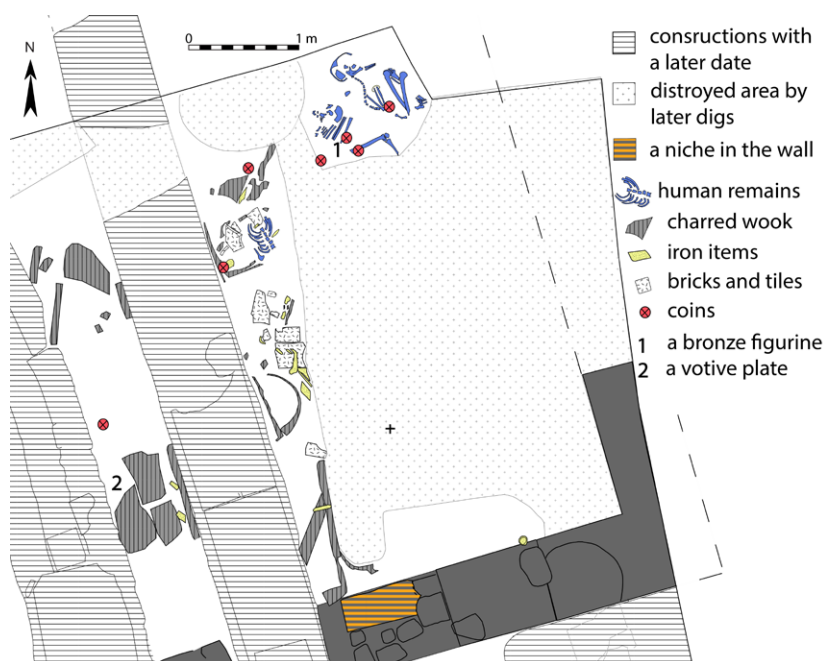


Fig. 8. The destruction level, situation in the northern building, 16 Dr. Valkovich Str. (drawing: Ts. Slavkova and E. Bozhinova).



Fig. 9. The destruction level, situation in the northern building, 16 Dr. Valkovich Str. (photos: E. Bozhinova)

The upper part of the skeleton of a child, approximately an 8-year-old, was found lying on its back, with the head turned towards the adults, and at a distance of about 1 m southwest from them (fig. 9/3). An iron blade was found among its left ribs. The blade is the head of a large arrow or a small spear, with a twisted shape (pl. V/7). A large conical iron sharp tool which was found driven vertically into the floor can most probably be interpreted as a spear butt (pl. V/8). It was situated just

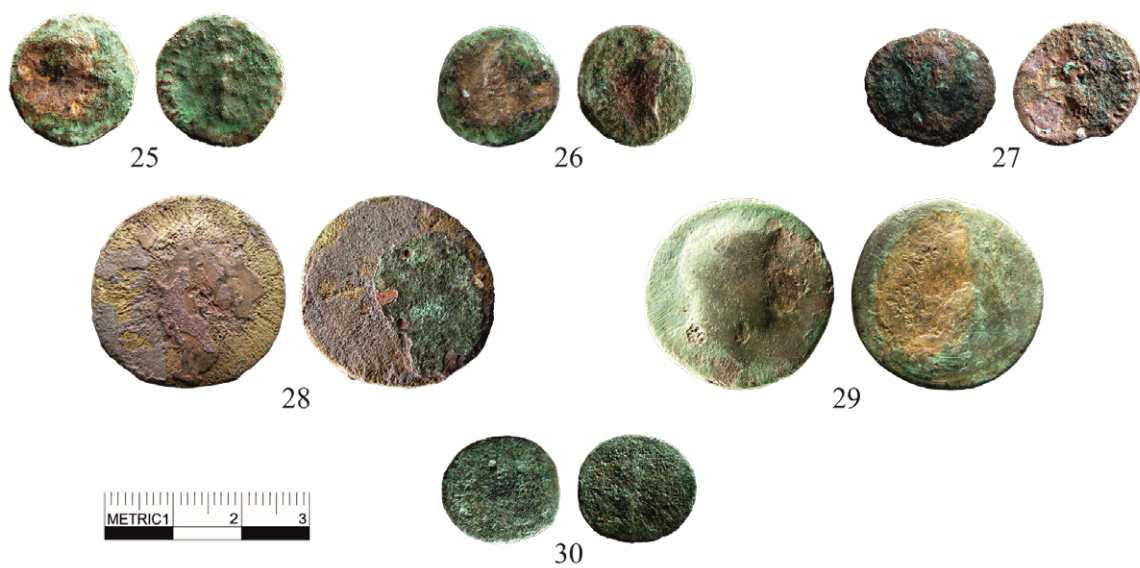


Plate IV. Coins from the destruction levels at 16 Dr. Valkovich Str. (1-13) and 13 Leonardo da Vinci Str. (25-30)
(photos: V. Varbanov)

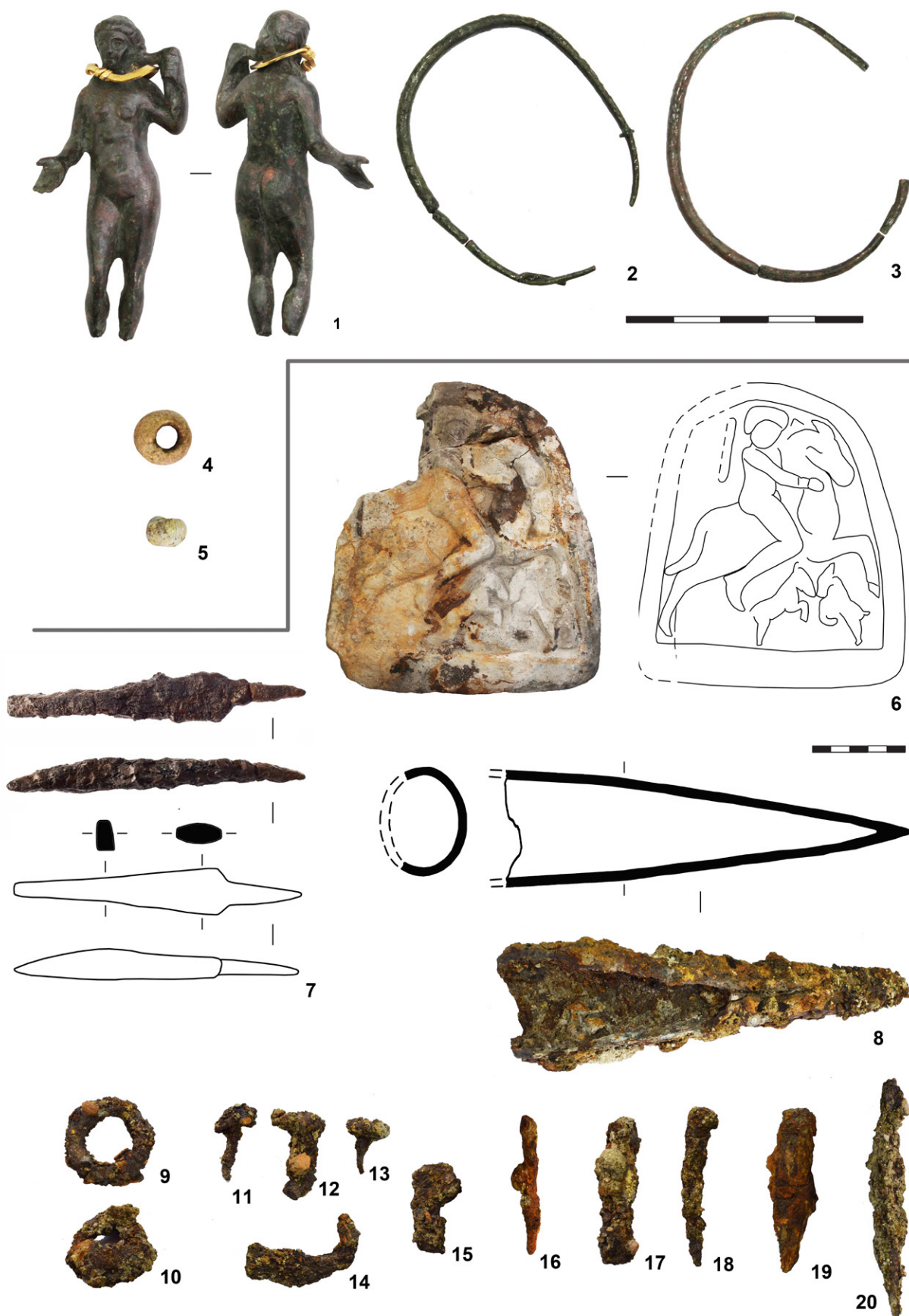


Plate V. Artefacts from the destruction level, 16 Dr. Valkovich Str. (photos: K. Stanev and E. Bozhinova)

next to the room's south wall, at a distance of 3.55 m southeast of the immature skeleton. Both the archaeological situation and the sizes of these two artefacts define them as parts of two separate weapons. A *denarius* of Caracalla was found under the child's skeleton (**pl. IV/1**).

Apart from the multiple iron nails, rings, clips, as well as fragments of such and similar objects (**pl. V/9-20**), a number of other artefacts were found on the floor. A marble votive plaque was discovered in the central western part of the room, amidst a large spot of charred wood containing a few iron items. It shows the Thracian Horseman riding to the right with two dogs in heraldic posture. An elongated oval hole was set asymmetrically in the upper part for the hanging of the plaque (**pl. V/6**). A glass bead was found at a distance of 1.30 m south of the infant skeleton (**pl. V/5**), again in an area with concentration of iron items, large pieces of charred wood and bricks. Two coins were found in the western part of the room – a *denarius* of Julia Paula and a bronze provincial coin (*Nicaea*) of Gordian III (**pl. IV/6, 8**).

All three skeletons definitely reveal violent death followed by burning and complete destruction of the building. The date of this event again leads to the Gothic invasion in *Philippopolis*.

The building was never restored after the destruction. The street continued to be in use and the arch was preserved, but in the area to the north of them a large building was constructed over the ruins with a new plan that had nothing in common with the preceding one. Its chronology is approximate, between the 4th and the 6th century¹³. We lack any data for the habitation of the plot between the two buildings.

CONCLUSION

Both archaeological sites, at 13 Leonardo da Vinci Str. and at 16 Dr. Valkovich Str., present situations of two separate buildings with the fate of their habitants sealed in a very distinct moment of time in the middle of the 3rd century, identified with one particular event: the Gothic invasion and sacking of the city. The buildings' history and the artefacts found in them reveal the life of these particular *Philippopolis* citizens. Both situations are very similar, and not only in terms of the destruction layers' chronology. The victims at both sites had died of unnatural causes and reveal fatality cases. Obviously, no relatives had been left alive in the city to bury them. In both cases, the victims had not been robbed. We can assume that there was plenty to plunder in the wealthy city and the attackers did not need to be so precise in the looting. The fate of both buildings was also the same – they were destroyed by fire, remained un-repaired afterwards, and were left buried under the layers of ruination. The streets continued to be in use, but the new buildings that appeared were made *ex novo*, with new planning.

The data from the archaeological excavations in Plovdiv about the conquest and plunder of *Philippopolis* in the middle of the 3rd century AD corroborate the information from the preserved written sources, including the recently discovered fragment of Dexippus' *History* (Gunther / Grusková 2014). We have had the rare chance to record archaeologically a historical event: in AD 251, the city was conquered and burnt, and its citizens were killed or abducted into slavery. Some period must have passed before the town was rebuilt and its functions of a regional centre were restored. At least 50 years were needed by the survivors of this attack in order to regain the glory and wealth of the splendid city of *Philippopolis*.

¹³ Both the initial and the final date of this building remain undetermined because no floor level is preserved after the intensive habitation here during the period of the Middle Ages.

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Roman Swords, Barbarian Axes: Downplaying Gothic Victory at Adrianople in Ammianus 31

Amia DAVIS

Abstract: The Battle of Adrianople was a monumental test of military tactics between Goths and Romans. There the most significant turning point in Rome's military might and most quintessential "barbarian" victory occurred, with Fritigern's forces massacring over two-thirds of Valens' army. Ammianus' account of the battle downplays the Goths' success against the Romans, outlining the cause of the disaster not as the Goths' superior operational and tactical planning, but rather as the Romans' poor communication and lack of disciplined soldiers. Ammianus' account is therefore a powerful continuation of the literary tradition of the Romans stereotyping enemies they face in battle. This paper, then, will explore how Ammianus 31 ethnographically marks the Goths as inexperienced, frenzied barbarians in hopes of downplaying the real possibility that the Goths could be a force capable of rivaling the might of the Roman Empire.

Key words: Battle of Adrianople, Ammianus Marcellinus, ethnographic marking, tactics, weapons.

On August 9, AD 378, Valens' army in Adrianople "disappeared like shadows" (Them. *Or.* 16). Two-thirds of the Eastern Roman Army were swept away among them many high-ranking officials and even the emperor Valens himself (Amm. Marc. 31.13.18-19; Them. *Or.* 16.206d; Lenski 2015). The Goths, at first peacefully seeking refuge in Thrace from the Huns, rained down on the Romans like a storm. Thrace, a land of peace, transformed into a land of war, the battleground for a monumental test of tactics between Goths and Romans.

Adrianople was undoubtedly one of the Empire's most crushing defeats. Scholars have convincingly offered a number of reasons for the disastrous outcome for the Romans, ranging from lack of disciplined soldiers, corruption amongst commanders, poor intelligence gathering, and tactical errors on the battlefield (Austin 1972; Heather 1991, 142; Speidel 1996; Lenski 2002, 325-341; Halsall 2007, 177-179; Kulikowski 2007, 123-143; Jacobsen 2009, 51-53). Error undoubtedly played a significant role in Roman demise, as Greek and Latin accounts of the conflict would later report. However, in consequence of emphasizing Roman error as the cause of the disaster at Adrianople, less credit for the Goths' role in Roman defeat is given. In other words, the exceptional tactical and operational skills among Gothic forces become downplayed and overlooked.

Ammianus Marcellinus is such an example of how the Battle of Adrianople would be remembered. The underlying message of Ammianus 31 is that the cause of Roman defeat was not the Goths' superior operational and tactical planning, but rather the Romans'

poor communication and lack of disciplined soldiers. This subtle perspective endows our time with a legacy not of the Goths winning the battle, but of the Romans losing it. The objective of this paper, then, is to explore such perspectives of Adrianople in Ammianus' account and discuss how this interpretation follows a long-standing historiographical tradition of ethnographically marking enemy forces.

In order to understand why Ammianus portrays the Goths in such a barbarizing manner, it is first important to understand Greek and Latin historiographical tradition. Ammianus is not the first to downplay the enemy's status as one worthy of rivaling the Roman army. He follows a long-standing literary tradition of portraying non-Roman peoples as backwards, uncivilized—socially, culturally, politically, and militaristically¹. Michel Kazanski (2013, 494) notes that authors can oftentimes make notes of various fighting styles as an “ethnographic marker” used to create a perceived identity in a given narrative. To add to Kazanski's observations, these authors can use such ethnographic markers to prevent any opposing force from being seen as serious rivals to Roman might. Furthermore descriptions of weaponry is an overlooked, but significant, example of such ethnographic marking in these literary accounts. The enemy tends to possess markedly inferior weapons than the Romans—or are under-supplied and tactically unprepared; these details polarize such conflicts as much as possible in order to transform the narrative into battles between the “civilized” and the “uncivilized”.

Narratives of conflict against Germanic peoples, or more generically tribes both along and beyond the Danube, are especially susceptible to this polarization, since the Romans most commonly encountered them on the battlefield (O'Gorman 1993, 139). The stereotypical Germanic soldier was fierce and brave, yet undisciplined, frenzied, and suboptimally equipped in terms of weaponry. An example of this can be found in Tacitus' *Germania*, where he describes the Germanic weapons and armor as primitive, lackluster, and unsophisticated:

“Ne ferrum quidem superest, sicut ex genere telorum colligitur. rari gladiis aut maioribus lanceis utuntur: hastas vel ipsorum vocabulo frameas gerunt angusto et brevi ferro, sed ita acri et ad usum habili, ut eodem telo, prout ratio poscit, vel comminus vel eminus pugnent. et eques quidem scuto frameaque contentus est, pedites et missilia spargunt, pluraque singuli, atque in inmensum vibrant, nudi aut sagulo leves. nulla cultus iactatio; scuta tantum lectissimis coloribus distinguunt. paucis loricae, vix uni alterive cassis aut galea. equi non forma, non velocitate conspicui. sed nec variare gyros in morem nostrum docentur: in rectum aut uno flexu dextros agunt, ita coniuncto orbe ut nemo posterior sit” (Tac. Ger. 6.1-6).

The above excerpt from *Germania* is one of many examples where the Romans imagined Germanic armies as direct opposites to their own: Germanic warriors, although fierce, lacked the military structure, discipline, and technological sophistication the Roman army possessed. This sentiment seemed to stretch across time, as it is further evident hundreds of years later in Vegetius' *De Re Militari*. Here Vegetius argues for Rome's superiority in discipline, comparing its

¹ For further examples of such literary traditions, see Woolf 2011, especially 8-31, 89-117; Halsall 2007, 46-55; Isaac 2006, 427-439; see also Gruen 2010, 141-147, 159-169.

soldiers' conduct to other enemy forces. He writes, "*Nulla enim alia re videmus populum Romanum orbem subegisse terrarum nisi armorum exercitio, disciplina castrorum usuque militiae. Quid enim adversus Gallorum multitudinem paucitas Romana valuisset? Quid adversus Germanorum proceritatem brevis potuisset audere?*" (Veg. 1.1.4)². While Vegetius is not implying that the Gauls and Germans were *not* disciplined, it is clear he sees the Romans as *more* disciplined and unmatched in military organization.

Together these quotes demonstrate that Ammianus' account of the disaster at Adrianople is in no way an exception to the tradition of barbarizing the enemy, since he describes the Goths in a similar fashion. In the chapter "Defining Identities" in *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568*, Guy Halsall (2007, 50) argues, "By the fourth century, the political configurations of the Germani had changed but Roman writers continued to repeat traditional views, and to hold that all the peoples between the rivers Rhine and Danube and the island (as they thought) of Scandinavia were Germani and could be treated together as such." Halsall (2007, 56) further emphasizes this point when he argues, "Thus the barbarian is wild, ferocious and cruel when an author wishes to play up the Roman army's, or its commanders', martial prowess or, conversely, to account for a defeat." Ammianus' account of Adrianople supports Halsall's observations, as Ammianus emphasizes Roman commanders' errors in suppressing Gothic aggression in order both to make an excuse for the Roman army's shortcomings and to belittle the Goths. In other words, Ammianus' Goths become stereotypical Germanic caricatures used to either elevate the Roman army's prestige or to mask its weaknesses.

The first example of Ammianus ethnographically marking the Goths occurs when he uses stock "barbarian" stereotypes to describe them. He compares them to beasts (*bestiae*), describes their fighting style as "breathing forth madness" (*vesanum adhuc spirantibus barbaris*), defines their military strategy as "the power of an indomitable craze mixed with desperation" (*cum desperatione rabies valeret indomita*), coins their military leaders as insane (*male sanos eorum ductores*), and characterizes their attitude towards the war as a "flaming barbaric overconfidence" (*tumor barbaricus flammans*) (Amm. Marc. 31.7.2-3, 7.9, 8.9, 9.1, 12.6, 14.5). These characteristics invoke his audience's sympathy for the Roman army and make it difficult to imagine the Goths as the next successor to the Roman Empire. With that being said, Gothic warfare would constantly parallel Roman warfare in Ammianus' narrative.

Descriptions of undisciplined, lackluster, and unsophisticated warfare among Gothic forces appear in other episodes within Ammianus 31. One can recall the Marcianople incident, when the Goths revolted against Lupicinus and Maximus in retaliation for the unfair treatment afflicted upon the refugees (Amm. Marc. 31.4.10-11, 5.1-8). Here Ammianus depicts the Goths' attack on the Roman soldiers as reckless (*incauti*). Furthermore he records that the Goths equip themselves with Roman weapons after the assault. He writes:

"Barbarique hoc contemplato, globos irrupere nostrorum incauti, et parmas oppositis corporibus illidendo, obvios hastis perforabant et gladiis, furoreque urgente cruento, et tribuni et pleraque pars armatorum

² See Whately 2015 for a brief overview of discipline in the Late Roman Army.

periere, signis ereptis, praeter ducem infaustum, qui ad id solum intentus, ut confligentibus aliis, proriperet ipse semet in fugam, urbem cursu concito petit. Post quae hostes armis induti Romanis. nullo vetante per varia grassabantur" (Amm. Marc. 31.5.9).

Once again, despite Ammianus describing the Gothic attacks as *incauti*, he records the Goths frequently succeeding in breaking through Roman defensive lines:

"Iamque verrutis et missilibus aliis, utrimque semet eminus lacescentes, ad conferendas coiere minaciter manus, et scutis in testudinum formam coagmentatis, pes cum pede collatus est. Barbarique ut reparabiles semper et celeres, ingentes clavas in nostros conicientes ambustas, mucronesque acrius resistentium pectoribus illidentes, sinistrum cornu perrumpunt: quod inclinatum subsidialis robustissimus globus, e propinquo latere fortiter excitus, haerente iam morte cervicibus sustentavit" (Amm. Marc. 31.7.12).

"... et mutuis securium ictibus galeae perfringebantur atque loricae" (Amm. Marc. 31.13.3)³.

"steterunt impropecti pedites ita concatervatis manipulis, ut vix mucronem exserere aut manus reducere quisquam posset" (Amm. Marc. 31.13.2).

The above passages echo back to the literary tradition of using certain fighting styles and weapons to mark non-Roman forces as lackluster, unsophisticated, and primitive. Not only are the Goths using clubs and axes – weapons often absent in Roman archaeology amongst regular units, since they were mostly used as simple farming tools – but they are also arming themselves with looted Roman equipment (Deschler-Erb 2015, 1-71; Schumacher 1989, 247-254; Duvauchelle 2005, 35-39)⁴. Historically speaking, perhaps this is due to an important detail unspecified in Ammianus' narrative: when the Goths crossed the Danube to seek refuge in Thrace in AD 376, Valens ordered the Goths to surrender their arms⁵. While it is highly probable that many Goths were able to smuggle weapons into Thrace, the surrendering of arms nonetheless puts them at a strategic disadvantage against Roman forces, consequently creating a weapons deficit. With that in mind, it would not be wrong to say that during the violent revolts in Thrace, the Goths had inferior weapons in comparison to the Romans. Ammianus keeps this circumstance in mind when describing battle scenes between Goths and Romans, as it is an opportunity to once again downplay the military expertise of the Goths.

Regardless of the Goths' weapons shortage and despite Ammianus' stereotyping description of the Goths in Ammianus 31, the Goths managed to prevail over the Romans many times. This is a testament to their tactical expertise and military sophistication. The use of heavy weapons like axes and clubs were critical counters to Roman defensive tactics⁶. One can argue that these types of weapons handling were an impressive display of Gothic tactical awareness – far from *incauti*, as Ammianus would lead others to believe; the Goths were aware of the Romans' advantage over them and knew how to nullify such advantag-

³ It is unclear whether *mutuis* means that Romans and Goths were using axes to shatter breastplates and helmets or that Goths were shattering Roman equipment in every direction with their axes.

⁴ Axes do appear as a construction tool and sometimes as a weapon among irregular army units. However, they were not a standard weapon of the Roman army. See Deschler-Erb 2015; Duvauchelle 2005, 35-9; Schumacher 1989, 247-254.

⁵ While a detailed account of Valens' agreement with the Goths is absent in Ammianus, Zosimus and Eunapius write that the Goths entered the city unarmed (Zos. 4.20.6; Eunap. *Hist. frg* 42). Some scholars are skeptical about this detail. For example, Heather argues that the Goths were allowed to enter Thrace with their weapons. He references as evidence a line from Ammianus describing the Goths as entering the city armed (Heather 1991, 24-25; Amm. Marc. 31.4.9). Lenski (2002, 341-345), however, argues that Zosimus and Eunapius can be trusted when they say the Goths were unarmed when they entered Thrace and argues that these terms and conditions were a part of *deditio*.

⁶ See Agnew 2017 for further detail on axes' advantages in pre-modern combat.

es. Consider, for example, when Ammianus records the Goths bursting through the Roman's defensive formation (*globos irrupere nostrorum*) (Amm. Marc. 31.5.9). This scene evokes the imagery of the Romans setting up a defensive formation and the Goths successfully breaking through it with shield-bashing, swords, and spears, thus completely nullifying its effectiveness. This scene further demonstrates that the Goths understood the fundamental strength of the Roman infantry – ie. the unification of infantrymen into a single unit – and how to prevent the Romans from using that strength. Hence readers cannot take Ammianus' barbarizing descriptions at face value: the Goths' decision to charge through Roman battlelines cannot be a reckless or undisciplined choice. The frequency at which the Goths employed this tactic supports this observation. This is in addition to the fact that the Goths were not employing these tactics against the orders of their leader – a behavior fatally present among the Roman army.

A close analysis of Ammianus' descriptions of Roman military tactics will lead to the observation that the reckless, undisciplined behaviors he accuses the Goths of exhibiting are *actually* present in the Roman army. Ammianus records that during the battle at Adrianople, targeteers and archers engaged with the Goths without the command of Bacurius and Cassio. He writes, “*Eo ad vallum hostile tendente, sagittarii et scutarii, quos Bacurius Hiberus quidam tunc regebat et Cassio, avidius impetu calenti progressi, iamque adversis conexi, ut immature proruperant, ita inertis discessu, primordia belli foedarunt*” (Amm. Marc. 31.12.16; cf. Amm. Marc. 31.13.2)⁷. Therefore, it is ironic to depict the Goths as undisciplined, when the Romans themselves, whom authors like Vegetius praised for their unmatched sense of discipline, failed to obey orders.

Contrarily, one could still make the argument that Gothic offensive charges were reckless and inexperienced, that the frequent success of this tactic is not necessarily indicative of discipline or lack thereof. Perhaps the success of breaking Roman battlelines lay in the sheer manpower of Gothic forces. Historically speaking, the Gothic revolt in Marcianople heavily outnumbered the Roman army; Valens was occupied with a campaign in Persia while the revolt took place, which meant that the Romans had fewer soldiers with which to protect themselves (Lenski 2002, 329-330). However, brute force and sheer numbers are not the biggest reasons for their success. It is hard to ignore the Goth's sophistication when analyzing how Ammianus depicts Fritigern's tactical genius in the events leading up to Adrianople. It is safe to assume that, since Fritigern had fought alongside Romans numerous times in the past, he would have had knowledge of Roman tactics (Lenski 2002, 269). Ammianus brings this familiarity to light at the Battle of Adrianople. He characterizes Fritigern as a king who was “*astu et ludificandi varietate nimium sollers*” (Amm. Marc. 31.12.9; Lenski 2002, 269). Fritigern pretended to act friendly towards Valens, telling him he would not be able to calm down his forces unless Valens led his entire army with him into the battlefield. By doing this, Fritigern argued, the Roman army could “*eos a pernicioso pugnandi revocaret ardore*” (Amm. Marc. 31.12.9)⁸. If we trust Ammianus in that Fritigern feigned friendliness towards Valens in order to lure the entire Roman army into battle, then this strategy would nonetheless show both Fritigern's understanding of Valens' ambitious behavior in battle

⁷ See also Amm. Marc. 31.13.2, when the Roman cavalry completely deserted the infantrymen and left them unsupported.

⁸ Lenski notes that Fritigern did, in fact, have a hard time holding back the Goths from marching against the Romans into battle, but that Fritigern still had a strategic plan for luring Valens' army to him. See Lenski 2002, 280-281.

and his ability to use that same ambition against Valens. Fritigern thus sensed that the Romans would not settle for peace unless their entire army was wiped out. The fact Fritigern had cavalry arriving onto the scene for support while simultaneously escaping the notice of Roman intelligence further supports Fritigern's proactive planning and insight. Therefore, Fritigern's understanding Valens' ambitions is more genius than Ammianus would have one believe.

After noticing the ethnographic markers Ammianus employs on the Goths' fighting style, questions of such employments' purpose consequently arise. One can make the argument that Ammianus' use of such ethnographic markers reflect his attempts of maintaining the *Roma aeterna* of the Roman army. Yilmazata (2018, 26) states, "The Imperium was not just a political construct but an idea that, for historians as Ammianus as well as his forebears had an everlasting character as derived from the *stoa* and other philosophical interpretations of the world. A crisis on the border of the Empire was seen as temporary regardless of how repugnant the circumstances might be and the Gothic wars were no exception."

In other words, the depictions of Goths as rivals to the Romans' power contradict the *Roma aeterna* narrative and would suggest that the Roman empire was permanently coming to an end. Depicting the Goths as "barbaric" sends the message that the disaster at Adrianople was a fluke exacerbated by failures in the chain of Roman command—something from which the empire was capable of recovering⁹. That means that the Romans did not lose at Adrianople because of Gothic military superiority, but rather from fatal mistakes, which cost the Romans guaranteed victory. Below are a small portion of the numerous accounts strongly displaying Roman shortcomings in the Gothic conflict:

"Verum articulorum dolore Frigerido praepedito, vel certe (ut obtrectatores finxere malivoli), morbum causante, ne ferventibus proeliis interesset..." (Amm. Marc. 31.7.5)

"Trucidassetque omnes ad unum, ut ne nuntius quidem cladis post appareret, ni cum aliis multis perempto Farnobio, metuendo antehac incensore turbarum, obtestatus prece impensa superstibus" (Amm. Marc. 31.9.4).

"Vicit tamen funesta principis destinatio, et adulabilis quorundam sententia regionum, qui ne paene iam partae victoriae (ut opinabantur) consors fieret Gratianus, properari cursu celeri suadebant" (Amm. Marc. 31.12.7).

Most scholars would agree that such mistakes were a great reason for the disaster at Adrianople. Corrupt Roman commanders, ill-treatment of Gothic refugees, tactical errors within the battle itself, and lack of discipline disadvantaged the Romans to a considerable extent. However, Ammianus emphasizes these mistakes so heavily as to overshadow the Goths' due credit for their tactical success, exceptional intelligence, and critical foresight. Ammianus' account of these disasters imply that, whenever the Romans failed in battle, it was not because the Goths fairly gained the upper hand against them, but rather it was because the Romans made critical mistakes that *allowed* the Goths to win. By labe-

⁹ Although the Goths, under Alaric, proceeded to sack Rome from AD 395 to 411, the Roman Empire eventually did recover from the massacre at Adrianople. However, contemporary reactions to Adrianople are varied and complex. For more insight on how others perceived the Roman loss to the Goths, see Lenski 1997, 127.

ling the Goths as “reckless” and “barbaric,” it is easier for Ammianus to display fierce loyalty to the Roman army and overlook the fact that the Goths were simply the more advantaged army in these conflicts.

In sum, the tale of Adrianople is one of great disasters, of a refugee crisis turning into violent ethnic conflict. The Goths, seeking a peaceful refuge from the Huns, most likely had no intentions of revolting against the Romans. Likewise, Valens most likely had no intentions of mistreating the Goths after they crossed the Danube in AD 376 and most likely had hoped they would be a useful asset to the Roman army. Instead, after tensions flared between Romans and Goths, all chances of peaceful relations crumbled. Ammianus’ account of the events show that the way the disaster is remembered in literature is equally as important as the historical facts; it demonstrates how authors can downplay the image of the enemy in order to make the heroes seem more heroic and more sympathetic, regardless of if they are victorious. In other words, depictions of soldiers can be ethnically charged all the way down to the armor they wear, the weapons they use, and how they attack. This detail, in turn, is important to keep in mind when using Greek and Latin literature as historical evidence, as we cannot always read such texts at face value.

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Cabyle and the Gothic War, AD 376–382 (Based on the Results from Archaeological Excavations in Sector V, 2014-2019)¹

Philip KOLEV / Ivan VALCHEV

Abstract: The article presents a brief overview of the results of the 2014-2019 excavation seasons in sector V of the *Cabyle* archaeological site. The excavations brought to light a building (or a complex of two buildings) and two streets, constructed in the second quarter of the 4th century AD. The destruction of the complex could be linked to a fire dated through coins of the emperors Valentinian I (AD 364–375) and Valens (AD 364–378). Four iron arrowheads and two spearheads found in the buildings' destructions, testify to an enemy attack. The attack in question should be linked to the AD 378 retreat of the Goths led by Fritigern, attested in Ammianus Marcellinus. Synchronous destructions are attested in other parts of the ancient town as well. Following the cataclysm, life in Sector V never recovered to its former state.

Key words: *Cabyle*, Gothic War (376–382), Late Antiquity, Late Roman archaeology, Fritigern.

INTRODUCTION

The ancient urban centre of *Cabyle* is sprawled on the eastern slope and foot of the Zaichi Vrah elevation near the large bend of the Tundzha River² (ancient *Tonzos*). The earliest traces of habitation in this place date back to the Chalcolithic. The emergence of the town is a result of the Macedonian expansion and colonization in the interior of Thrace in the second half of the 4th century BC. During the Late Hellenistic, or at the beginning of the Roman period, *Cabyle* lost its urban status and during the reign of Emperor Hadrian (AD 117–138) here was stationed a military unit (*cohors II Lucensium*)³. After the administrative reforms of Diocletian (AD 284–306), the settlement was most probably included in the newly created province of *Haemimontus*, part of the diocese of Thrace (**fig. 1**). At the end of the 3rd century AD, the military camp and the adjacent civilian settlement underwent a transformation into an urban centre. This act of the central government was probably influenced by the state textile weaving manufacture built here. In AD 297, the town was surrounded with fortification walls (Шаранков 2017, 228–231, 236; Sharankov 2018, 104). The inscription informing of the textile weaving manufacture provides information also on the town institutions of the early 4th century AD. The main official was the *logistes* (λογιστής, or *curator civitatis*) appointed by the provincial government. Some of the town council leaders, titled δεκάπρωτοι (Шаранков 2017, 236–237), are also attested. During the first half through the mid-4th century AD, many public buildings functioned in

¹ This article was translated into English by Valeria Bineva, to whom we are grateful.

² On the ancient sources mentioning *Cabyle*, cf. Велков 1982, 14–16. The inscriptions from the settlement site are published by V. Velkov (Велков 1991) and recently revised by N. Sharankov (Шаранков 2017).

³ On *Cabyle* during the Hellenistic and Roman age, cf.: Попов 2002, 111–122; Лозанов 2006; Ханджийска / Лозанов 2010; Lozanov 2012.



Fig. 1. *Cabyle*. Geographic location (drawing: Ph. Kolev)

Cabyle – two baths, two early Christian basilicas, a large grain warehouse (*horreum*) (Лозанов 2006, 164-167).

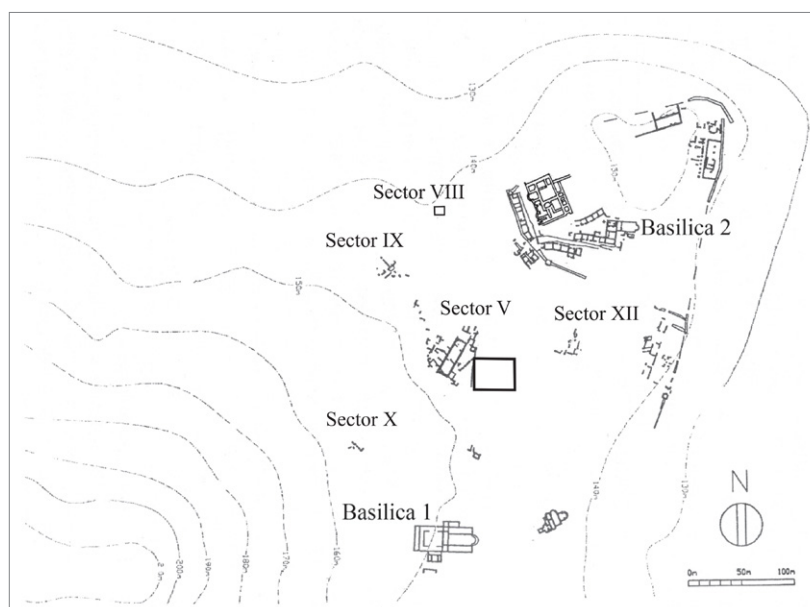
The final mention of the military camp at *Cabyle* is found in an inscription dated to the reign of Aurelian (AD 270-275) (*IGBulg* V, 5637). The care for the AD 297 construction of the fortification walls was entrusted to a centurion (*ordinatus*) (Шарапков 2017, 229-230), perhaps one from the military unit stationed there. Presently, it is unclear whether *Cabyle* had a stationed military contingent during the Gothic War.

INVESTIGATIONS IN SECTOR V

Sector V occupies the central area of the *Cabyle* archaeological site (fig. 2). Stratigraphic observations indicate that habitation of the site started in the second half of the 4th century BC and ceased at the end of the 2nd century BC. No levels securely dated to the Roman period have been detected to date. Occupation resumed at the beginning of the Late Roman period, and the associated deposits sit directly above the Late Hellenistic ones.

As a result of the excavations initiated in 2014, in the East section of the sector a building (or a complex of two buildings) and two streets were detected (fig. 3). A northeast-southwest running street was registered in the western part of the excavated area. It is paved with compacted gravel and fragments of ceramic building materials (tiles). Clay pipes, part of the water delivery pipeline to the northern urban area, had been registered below it. A building (Building A) aligned to the adjacent road was found to the east of the western street. It consists

Fig. 2. *Cabyle*. General plan (after Лозанов 2006, fig. 1, with modifications)



of three lined up rooms. Its plan resembles very closely that of the contemporary Building A in the adjacent sector XII (Лозанов 2006, 160, fig. 2). The building walls had a substructure of quarry stones bound in clay, and superstructure of adobe. Its dimensions are as follows: length 14.20 m, width 6.10 m. Next to the southwestern corner of room # 2 was registered a fireplace. It is formed from reused fragmented roof tiles and quern stones. Its dimensions are 0.94 x 0.63 m. Building A was constructed at the end of the first or the beginning of the second quarter of the 4th century AD.

A street running parallel to the one described above was registered immediately to the east of Building A. In addition, a southwest-northeast running water main was also registered there. Sometime during the 4th century AD, the street was built over and went out of use. At the current excavation stage, it is impossible to determine with any degree of certainty whether the alternation was due to an eastward extension of the existing building of conjoined rooms or to the construction of a new building, adjoined to the first one. However, we can assume with a considerable certainty that it was an integrated complex. The construction of the eastern building (Building B) is identical to that of Building A – a plinth of stones set in clay and adobe superstructure. The dimensions of the registered section of the building are 7.10 m x 6.90 m. So far, four rooms have been registered. Two were studied in full and two – excavated only partially. Next to the building's north wall was documented a circular structure with unidentified function. A row of rough-hewn stones set in clay is preserved. The circle shaped by those has a diameter of 1.90 m and is adjoined to the northern exterior wall of the building.

The complex went out of use due to a strong fire which produced a thick burnt deposit, clearly distinguishable in the stratigraphic cross-section (**fig. 4**). The latest coins in the scorched layers belong to the emperors Valens (AD 364–378) and Valentinian I (AD 364–375) – a total of 37 coins. Similar situation is attested also in the western section of this sector, where the last coins are also those of Emperor Valens (Велков et al. 1988, 50). Almost all of the coins pre-

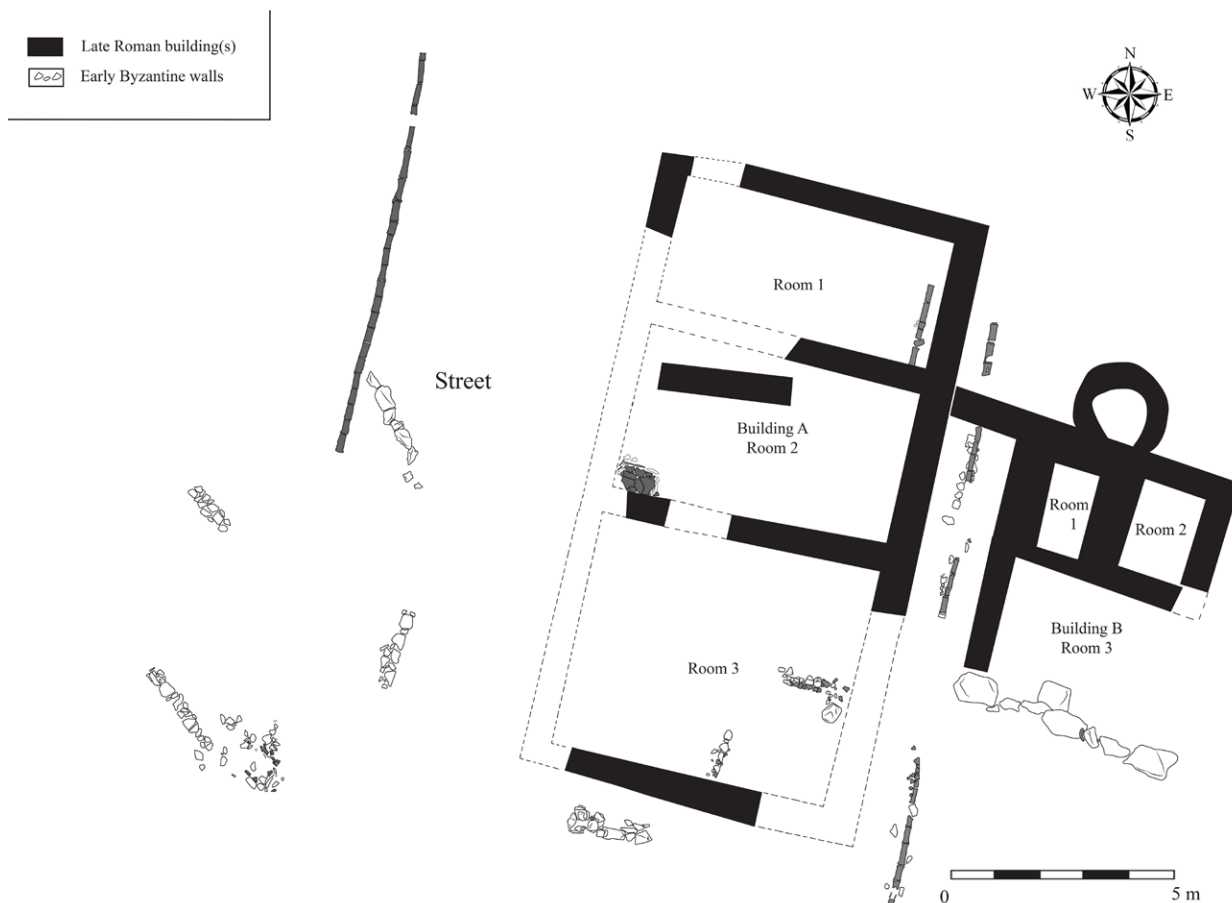


Fig. 3. Cabyle. Sector V – East (drawing: I. Valchev)

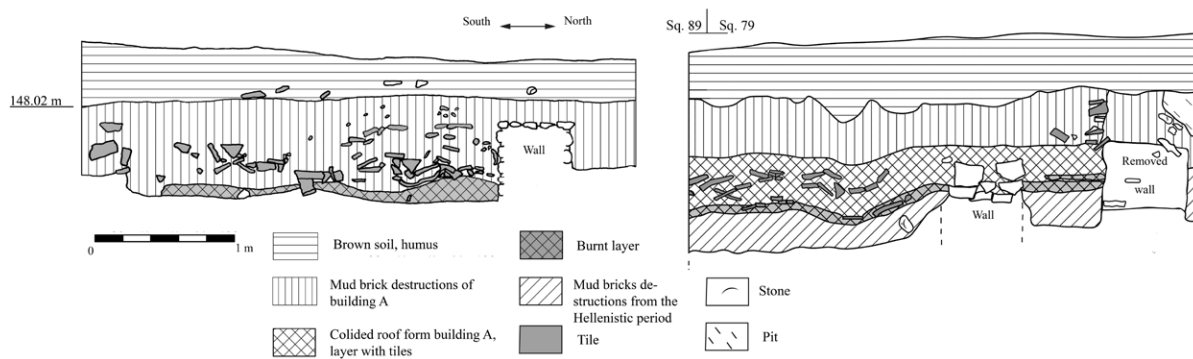


Fig. 4. Building A. Cross section (drawing: I. Valchev)

serve traces of burning and are difficult to identify, which indicates they were in circulation during the fire that destroyed the buildings. In one of the collective finds, of 12 copper coins (Димитров 2023), the last coin is also of Valens. Four iron arrowheads were found in the destructions. The first was a tanged trilobate with dimensions: length – 6.3 cm, width – 1.8 cm (fig. 5.2). It was found between the tiles of room # 1 of the Building B. The second is also a tanged trilobate with dimensions: length – 4.7 cm, width – 1.6 cm (fig. 5.3). It was found in room # 3 of the Building B. The third one is a trilobate with reinforced tip and a tang (fig. 5.4). Dimensions: length – 5.1 cm, width – 1.3 cm. It comes from a layer containing destructions from

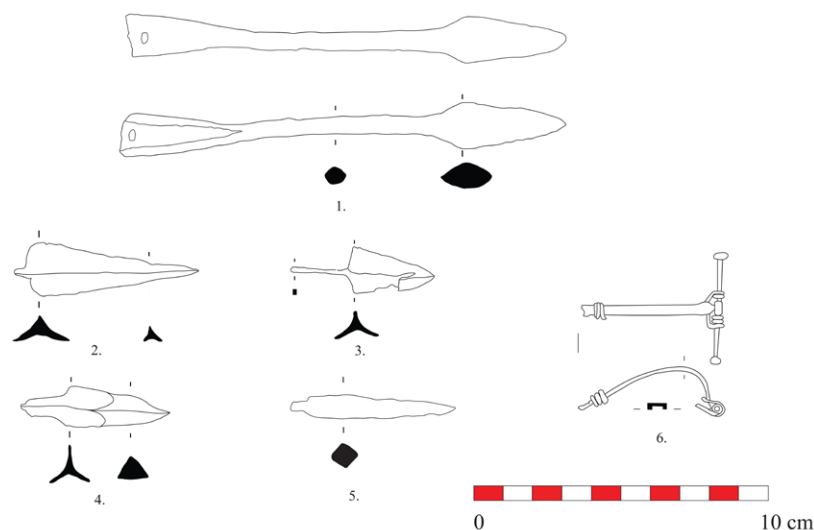


Fig. 5. Iron spearhead, arrowheads and bronze fibula (drawings: Ph. Kolev)

a fallen roof, situated just north of Building B. The last arrowhead has a rhombic cross section and dimensions: length – 5.6 cm and width – 0.5 cm (fig. 5.5). It was found in a destruction layer north of the complex. In addition to the arrowheads, in the destructions of Building A were found two spearheads. The first is leaf-shaped (fig. 5.1). The socket is a truncated cone with a nail hole. Dimensions: length – 14.9 cm, width – 1.6 cm and diameter of the socket – 1.4 cm. The second spearhead has an irregular rhombic shape with flat rhombic cross section. A small section of the socket is preserved. Dimensions: length – 12.9 cm and diameter of the socket – 2.2 cm. Under the fallen roof of room # 1 of Building A was found a two-component bent-foot bronze fibula, type 19c after E. Gencheva, also labelled ‘Gothic’ type (Генчева 2004, 55). Of the fibula remain the bow, of rectangular cross-section, and the spring. A single knob is attached to each tip of the spring. The spring has five coils and a bottom pin. The tip of the catch is also preserved, ‘tied’ three times around the tip of the bow (fig. 5.6). The type is characteristic of the Wielbark and Chernyakhov cultures and is uncommon south of the Lower Danube (Генчева 2004, 55). However, it would be a stretch to attribute the artefact to one of Fritigern’s Goths.

CABYLE AND FRITIGERN’S GOTHs

The analysis of the numismatic material and the stratigraphic observations demonstrate that the fire that destroyed the complex occurred in the late 370s AD. The event could be linked to Fritigern’s Goths, who, according to Ammianus Marcellinus, during the war with Valens in AD 378, retreated to *Cabyle*⁴ (Amm. Marc. 31.11.55⁴). As to why the Goths retreated specifically to Cabyle, modern researchers cite the available supplies of water and food, its strategic location at the foot of a rocky elevation, and its good defensive layout (Lenski 2002, 336–337; Kulikowski 2007, 139). To this we could also add its location at important crossroads, especially of one of the main roads connecting the Northeastern Balkans to Adrianople and the new capital Constantinople, from where the Emperor with his main military forces was expected to arrive.

It is important to note that the results of the excavations on most Late Roman structures at *Cabyle* remain unpublished. At the same time, even on the published ones, graphic documentation and photo-

⁴ On the chronology of the events of AD 376–378, cf. Curran 1998, 94–101; Lenski 2002, 320–367; Kulikowski 2007, 123–143.

⁵ “...revocatis omnibus prope *Cabylen* oppidum cito discessit, ut agentes in regionibus patulis nec inedia nec occultis vexarentur insidiis”. Translation by John C. Rolfe (Ammianus 1939, 461) “...he [Fritigern] therefore recalled all his men to the vicinity of the town of *Cabyle* and quickly left that neighbourhood, in order that his people, by living in the open plains, might not suffer from famine or from secret attacks.”

graphic images of escarpments and stratified finds had not been provided. For these reasons, the correlation between particular destruction deposits and the presently discussed events could not always be verified.

Despite the incomplete data provided in the publications, the obvious conclusion is that late 370s AD destructions have been attested in all of *Cabyle*'s sectors. Basilica # 1 suffered serious damage. Excavations here registered a thick layer of ash, charcoals, and vitrified bricks. According to the observations of the excavator, the destructions must be linked to the events of AD 378 (Димитрова 1982, 133-134). It has been proposed that Basilica # 2 was also damaged at that time (Танчева-Василева 1993, 254). More destruction is attested in sector XII. The abandonment of Buildings A, B, D and F has also been linked to the attack of the Goths (Гетов et al. 2004, 145; Гетов / Бакърджиев 2005, 226; Бакърджиев / Козарев 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020). In room # 2 of Building B a collective coin-find was discovered, deposited after AD 354 (Гетов et al. 2004, 145). The latest coins from sectors VIII (Лозанов / Драганов 2009, 406), IX, and X, are also of Valentinian I and Valens⁶. These observations are testimony of a large-scale cataclysm that affected the entire town and was crucial for the settlement's later development.

After *Cabyle* was torched, large parts of it were abandoned. Habitation amassed chiefly within the fortified *castellum* on the Hisarlaka hill that occupied just the northeast Sector of the earlier town. The settlement was not mentioned in the written sources from that point on and probably lost its urban status. Life in sector V was restored during the first half of the 5th century AD, but on a much more modest scale⁷. To the Early Byzantine period (5th – 6th century AD) belong parts of very poorly constructed buildings with unidentified plans, as well as five pits. The fill of the pits consists of grey-black, loose soil and fragments of building ceramics, stones, and large animal bones. These had been interpreted as refuse pits on the periphery of the early Byzantine fortified settlement. Basilica # 1 continued to function and even received an expansion and was redecorated with mosaics flooring during the first half of the 5th century AD (Димитрова 1982, 134-150). During this period, however, the building was about 250 m away from the inhabited settlement core.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of various sources: historical narratives, stratigraphic observations, numismatic material, and weaponry, expose the cataclysm that befell *Cabyle* in the late 370s AD. Unfortunately, in the absence of publications of the excavations conducted in most sectors makes difficult the detailed description of the processes from the last quarter of the 4th century AD, and the scale of the catastrophe. Still, it is clear that near all of *Cabyle* was torched – traces of destruction and fire dated through the latest coins of Valentinian I and Valens, are found in all sectors. It is also clear that the settlement did not restore back to its previous shape, and that at its expense, as the most prominent regional settlement centre rose the fortress above what is today the city of Sliven (Lozanov 2012, 73).

⁶ Data on the latest coins in Sectors IX and X has been drawn from the 1970s and 1980s excavations' inventory ledgers.

⁷ Similar observations have been made in the adjacent Sector XII (Гетов et al. 2004, 145).

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The Aftermath

Septimius Severus and Conflict Mitigation in Post-Civil War Thrace

Milena RAYCHEVA

Abstract: Amid a deepening political crisis, the conflict between Septimius Severus and Pescennius Niger, part of the civil war of AD 193-197, was especially destructive for the eastern part of the Empire. Fought in Thrace, Asia Minor and Syria, it brought suffering to many cities. Having emerged victorious, Septimius Severus had the urgent task to consolidate his newly acquired power. At the same time, he had to alleviate the war consequences and restore economic order. This was achieved through a range of various penalties and rewards. Thrace, involved firsthand in the conflict, provides an example of these complex policies, as it contains both Severus' headquarters *Perinthus* and the territory of *Byzantium*, the humiliated supporter of Pescennius Niger, along with other cities whose stand is not entirely clear but reveal indirect information that could be speculated upon. The paper examines the available evidence – some old and well-known, some new or revisited – in order to explore the ways in which cities in Thrace "won" or "lost" in the aftermath of the war.

Keywords: Septimius Severus, civil war, Thrace, penalties, rewards.

INTRODUCTION¹

The aim of this paper is to discuss an episode in the history of Thrace related to the consequences of the civil war of AD 193-197. It explores the various ways in which Septimius Severus sought to retain power and consolidate an empire in turmoil – through a combined policy of punishments and rewards to the cities in the East, that took into consideration not only their allegiances during the war, but their underlying relationships based on regional history and rivalry.

The year AD 193 was undoubtedly one of the darkest hours of Roman history. After the assassination of Pertinax, the empire was literally sold off in a most disgraceful manner to the highest bidder who happened to be Didius Julianus. He bought it, Dio tells us, for the promised price of 25.000 sesterces per Praetorian, only to be killed in turn a few months later when the loyalty of the Praetorians shifted again (Cass. Dio *Hist.* 74.11.2-3). Those were clearly times of decreased moral values, marked by desperation and the ruthless rule of the army. The disastrous events shook the Empire and led to a civil war between three contenders for the throne – Clodius Albinus in *Britannia*, Pescennius Niger in *Syria*, and Septimius Severus in *Pannonia*. The climax of this war – the decisive clash between Severus and Niger – was especially destructive for the eastern part of the Empire. It was fought mainly in the provinces of Thrace, Bithynia, Asia, Syria, Palestine, and involved the prominent cities of the area. Thrace was in close proximity to the theatre of war and was involved firsthand in the conflict. To

¹ I would like to express my deepest gratitude to D. Boteva and N. Sharankov for their helpful remarks on this text.

complicate matters further, Severus' own brother, Publius Septimius Geta, was governor of Lower Moesia at the start of the conflict, ca. AD 190 – 193/194 (Boteva 1996b, 239-240; Ботева 1997, 28, 163; *AE* 2004, #1242), and the former governor of Thrace, Asellius Aemilianus, a relative of Clodius Albinus, joined the side of Niger who was at the time the *legatus* of Syria (Mihailov 1963, 114). While these elaborate circumstances bode well for some cities, they determined the tragic fate of others.

Having disposed of all his opponents, Septimius Severus survived and won the war by AD 197. His task at hand was to assert authority: to make a display of power but at the same time, please an army and a senate, and restore economic order as much as possible before another civil war started. The completion of these tasks was a process that took nearly a decade before achieving a certain degree of stability. Tracing the well-known historic events presented in the narrative sources, two approaches can be distinguished in Septimius Severus' attitude towards the cities in the East: retribution and clemency. Each of them was generally favored during particular phases of the war and its aftermath, but they could be also used simultaneously and certain overlapping did occur, in accordance with the specific events and places. Retribution in the form of drastic measures, including excessive punishments and rewards, was the prevalent approach in the final stages of the conflict with Pescennius Niger, around the time Caracalla became *Caesar*, and when Clodius Albinus was declared public enemy (from ca. AD 194-195 until the final victory in the civil war). Once the throne was more or less secured, the approach of clemency was more frequently used, combined with an enhanced propaganda in favor of the heirs. This started as early as Caracalla's promotion to *Caesar* in AD 195 and peaked around the years AD 198-202 with the ultimate reconciliation of ruler and cities (Ziegler 1978, 495-500; Birley 1988, 142-143; Burrell 2004, 239; Cordovana 2012, 69-70). In the period of AD 195-197/8, between the two key victories over the main opponents and until Caracalla's promotion as *Augustus*, both strategies were employed, depending on the particular situation: there were still occurrences of retribution, but the process of mending had already begun.

Thrace provides a spectrum of evidence of the multifaceted policies of the new ruler. While most of it has been well-known and examined repeatedly in academic writings, some of it is newly found or reassessed, which makes worth revisiting the subject once again.

PENALTIES

Despite the fact that by the end of the conflict with Niger many cities had already suffered bloodshed and ruination, the new emperor had to punish some of the wrongdoers in order to prevent further disobedience. Cities which had fought on the public enemy's side, according to the Roman notion of justice, naturally had to face consequences. Severus was certainly aware that the reasons behind a city's support for a given candidate was not necessarily based on a particular personal preference, but had a lot to do with other factors – from geographical location and the momentary stationing of troops to some pre-existing circumstances, such as the inter-city relationships of a given province. Herodian emphasizes that it was precisely the proverbial rivalries in the East that determined each community's stand in political matters

such as this one (Hdn. 3.2.7-9), yet the fact that cities were known to switch sides suggests that there must have been serious debates taking place in city councils and not just impulsive decisions. Whether scholars tend to accept unquestionably the cities' competitiveness as a general explanation (cf. Robert 1977, 22-25), or prefer a more nuanced view, seeing an exaggeration on behalf of the sources (Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 149), all agree that these relations played some role – decisive or not so – and provided context to the events that followed. Thus, in *Asia*, *Nicomedia* and *Nicaea* naturally backed opposing sides; in *Syria*, *Laodicea* supported Severus because *Antiochia* was Niger's headquarters, and so forth (Kushnir-Stein 2000, 149; Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 148-150). Adding further to the complexity of this picture was the role of provincial governors and other high officials – sometimes 'grey' figures whose personal presence or political involvement in the events are not always detectable through the extant evidence, but may have influenced the cities' choice in a particular direction. In any case, it seems that no region had a unanimous and permanent stand in the course of the civil war, and some cities did not have a full inside agreement. Sadly, the narrative sources present us with only few examples of the fate of particular cities and we can expect that many local situations remain unrecorded and unknown.

Although *Thracia*, along with *Pannonia* and *Moesia Inferior*, is generally considered among the "provinces faithful to him [Septimius Severus]" since the outset of the war with Niger (Mihailov 1963, 115), there is direct and indirect evidence that suggests that the situation was not so straightforward and that, especially at the beginning of the conflict, the cities of Thrace may not have acted in unison (Boteva 1994, 16-18).

Demolition and deprivation

Historical accounts of the events reveal that various forms of punishments were used by Severus to cities and individuals. For the cities, these ranged from physical demolition of structures, to deprivation of civic status and territory, honorary titles, privileges, etc. Cassius Dio, Herodian and *Historia Augusta* all inform us that the cities that were most seriously punished by Severus were *Byzantium*, *Nicaea*, *Antiochia*, and *Neapolis* (Cass. Dio *Hist* 75.14.3-5; Hdn. 3.2.9, 3.3.3-5; HA *Vita Sev.* 9.4-5; HA *Vita Car.* 1.7). As for individuals, the most drastic punishments included confiscation of property and executions, with a distinct penchant for decapitations as appropriate for the "enemies of the state" (Cordovana 2012, 63-65).

Of the punished cities, most significant for Thrace but perhaps also most remarkable in general was the fate of *Byzantium* which suffered many of the abovementioned forms of punishment. The city had been captured by Asellius Aemilianus on behalf of Niger and was used as an outpost for an attack against *Perinthus* (Birley 1988, 108). In the later stages of the conflict, after a long siege, when even Niger's severed head would not convince the city to surrender, it finally fell to Severus' army². What followed was massive destruction that involved the demolition of the city walls. The contemporaries of the event regarded this as an extreme and unnecessarily cruel move. According to Dio, a Bithynian from *Nicaea* (another city that had backed Niger and was punished by Severus), the destruction was massive and unbefit-

² The variations on the exact date of the fall according to different scholars have been most recently summarized in Boteva 2020, 24.

ting *Romanitas*: “I myself saw the walls after they had fallen, looking as if they had been captured by some other people rather than by the Romans³.” (Cass. Dio *Hist.* 75.14.3-5). Some of the public architectural monuments inside the city were also harmed, such as its “theatres and baths” and “all adornments” (Hdn. 3.6.9). Unfortunately, none of this can be verified archaeologically, as almost nothing is left today from Roman *Byzantium* apart from random artefacts exhibited at the Istanbul Archaeological Museums and we cannot possibly assess how trustworthy this information is. We do not have any other evidence from Thrace – written or archaeological – of physical destruction as a form of punishment, or from elsewhere in the East for that matter. *Antiochia*, the headquarters of Pescennius Niger and a city that had an altogether troubled relationship with Septimius Severus (HA *Vita Sev.* 9.4-5), avoided such a harsh punishment. Perhaps the defiance of the Byzantines despite the long siege angered Severus and caused his excessive decision. While *Antiochia*’s resistance was understandable, considering that it was the seat of the enemy’s governorship, the city on the Bosphorus consciously chose not to support Severus, even at a point when the war had been already decided in his favor.

A very severe form of deprivation used by the new emperor was related to the withdrawal of civic status along with a subsequent reduction of territory to the advantage of other cities (Birley 1988, 108-120). This was a rare and serious penalty – even if temporary – and was therefore duly noted by contemporaries. Undoubtedly, other than being a form of retribution, it was also a gesture towards the exhausted cities that had supported Severus throughout the conflict (Ziegler 1978, 494-495). Unlike the demolition of walls, this form of punishment was attested in more than one place: it happened on account of *Antiochia* whose lands were given to *Laodicea*; *Neapolis* in Palestine also became a village, perhaps to the gain of *Sebaste* that took its territory. In Thrace, *Byzantium* was demoted to a *kome* and its *chora* was handed over to *Perinthus* (Cass. Dio *Hist.* 75.14.3-5; Hdn. 3.3.3; HA *Vita Sev.* 9.4-5; Ziegler 1978, 493-494; Kushnir-Stein 2010, 151). *Byzantium* – *Perinthus* remains the only pair of cities in Thrace linked to forceful transition of city territory that we are aware of, and obviously the only such incident that occurred, because a punishment that grave would have left a significant trace in historical writings or epigraphic records. The territorial change that occurred in Thrace might be tentatively attested through a statue base for Caracalla in the time of his sole rule (ca. AD 212), found some 12 km north of *Selymbria* and set up by “*neokoros Perinthos*” (*Perinthos-Herakleia* #307, with discussion). This monument, if it indeed originates from *Selymbria*, may confirm that the settlement was still within Perinthian jurisdiction after Septimius Severus’ reduction of *Byzantium*’s *chora* (which most likely included *Selymbria*). However, this is a very uncertain hypothesis, as the monument may have been brought from *Perinthus*. Moreover, the gradual rehabilitation of *Byzantium* and the related restitution of its lands most probably took place some years earlier, while Severus was still alive (see below).

The withdrawal of titles and privileges and the conferral of the same or similar ones on rival cities were yet another way to penalize a city, since these were very meaningful for the prestige of communities. After its demotion, together with the loss of city status, *Antiochia*

³ Here and below, the English translations of Cassius Dio’s *History* are by E. Cary, according to the LCL 177 (1927) edition.

also stopped being a *metropolis*, and the title was passed to *Laodicea* (Ziegler 1978, 493-494). This type of deprivation existed in a milder form too, without the removal of *ius civitatis*. For example, in *Bithynia*, *Nicaea* remained a city and kept its territory, but lost the titles “*neokoros* of the emperors” and “first city of *Bithynia* and *Pontus*” which were struck from the inscriptions above the city gates. The damage is still visible at today’s Lefke kapı and İstanbul kapı in Iznik (Robert 1977, 24-26; Burrell 2004, 164-165). In *Syria*, *Berytus* was humiliated in an exceptional way: although no title or status was formally removed from this Roman colony, its rival *Tyre* (Hdn. 3.3.3) became the capital of the newly formed province of *Syria Phoenice* and its subordinate settlement *Heliopolis* became an independent *colonia*. Evidence of title removal lacks from Thrace proper. This can be explained mostly with the circumstance that at that period, most cities of Thrace, and in particular *Byzantium*, did not seem to bear special titles other than occasional imperial epithets. A notable exception is *Philippopolis*, the *metropolis* of the province and seat of the Thracian *koinon*, where, despite a possible involvement of the city on Niger’s side, all numismatic and epigraphic evidence points to the fact that the title was retained (see below). Apparently, this punishment was not widely applicable in Thrace as it was in Asia Minor.

Land reduction but without removal of civic status was also a possible option – in the abovementioned case of *Berytus*, from whose jurisdiction *Heliopolis* was subtracted and given the rank of *colonia* and a *territorium* of its own (*Dig.* 50.15.1.2; Millar 2006, 193; see also Kushnir-Stein 2010, 151, note 13, with a skeptical view on that chain of events), but no such phenomenon occurred in Thrace according to the available evidence and current state of research.

Less common but nonetheless powerful punishment was the cancelation of traditional athletic festivals. We are aware of the suppression of the Antiochene Olympics until they were reintroduced in AD 212 under Caracalla (Downey 1937, 143-146; Remijsen 2010, 431-432). Despite of the existence of some pre-Severan *agones* in Thrace, we lack any information of their deliberate cancellation with regard to the civil war events.

The general observation is that Thrace got a taste of serious depriving punishments through one city only, *Byzantium*. And while most ways in which the city was penalized are consistent with Severus’ treatment of other cities, the physical destruction of the fortification walls seems exceptional, even to the contemporaries of these turbulent events (Cass. Dio *Hist.* 75.14.4). The emperor’s decision apparently owed to personal reasons – whether out of anger for the city’s stand during the siege, or in revenge for *Perinthus* that had been previously attacked and harmed, is impossible to tell. So far, we remain unaware of capital punishments and seizure of private property carried out against individuals in Thrace, again save for those that took place after the fall of *Byzantium* – the soldiers and the city officials were executed, and the assets of citizens were confiscated, but there is no evidence for harmed civilians with one exception (Cass. Dio *Hist.* 75.14.1-3). However, if Severus’ treatment of supporters of Clodius Albinus at the end of the civil war (HA *Vita Sev.* 12.1-4, 13.1-8, 14.1) was anything to judge by, the list of punished private individuals after the conflict with Pescennius Niger must have been much longer than we currently know.

Financial penalties

Written sources suggest that other forms of punishments were less extreme, obviously when the offense was less grave. When possible, the preferred (and more practical) method of doing justice would be the implementation of fines, especially to prosperous cities and wealthy individuals – a process in which the emperor was not above some personal satisfaction too (Birley 1988, 114). Severus needed the money in order to reimburse the communities that had suffered at the hands of the enemy, and to reward his army (Hdn. 3.6.9; HA *Vita Sev.* 12.2-3). This method had an undeniable benefit for both parties, as it resolved financial concerns for the ruler and prevented the greater humiliation of the cities. Penalties that were exclusively pecuniary and not part of greater punishments should be viewed separately from the radical measures discussed above, since these were meant to settle matters in a singular act, without the further implication and humiliation of the wrongdoer.

We cannot be sure of the exact number of cities that were fined – in Thrace or elsewhere for that matter – but it can be expected that all or nearly all cities in the involved provinces must have, at a certain point of the war, offered some form of help in their capacity as supporters of the new emperor or of his opponents. It is difficult to imagine that in a long-lasting war the larger settlements, located along imperial and provincial routes, were able to remain neutral or avoid providing shelter, funds or provisions to one side or the other. In any case, it can be expected that a multitude of cities, many more than the few attested in the narrative sources, must have faced such a choice and some of them may have “wronged” Severus in less drastic ways that remained unaccounted for. In such cases, it seems conceivable that suitable smaller-scale punishments were carried out. In Cassius Dio’s words: “*As for the various cities and private citizens, Severus punished some and rewarded others. [...] He was merciless in his raising of funds; thus, for example, he exacted four times the amount that any individuals or peoples had given to Niger, whether they had done so voluntarily or under compulsion.*” (Cass. Dio *Hist.* 75.4).

In light of this narrative, an intriguing document that surfaced from the north part of *Philippopolis’ agora* may be considered as evidence of the same phenomenon taking place in Thrace. A fragmented official inscription interpreted as an imperial letter mentions that a fine (ζημία) of an unknown amount was paid on behalf of the community by a regular benefactor of the city and conveyed via an embassy of two individuals, Philippos and Caecilius Cerealius, who were entitled to travel expenses for this⁴ (Мартинова-Кютова / Груева-Здравчева 2020, 779-780, fig. 2). The formulation of the text is similar to that of other epistolary documents, and its content and paleography towards the end of the 2nd century gave grounds to N. Sharankov to view it as a testimony for a possible fine levied on *Philippopolis* by Septimius Severus as part of the general post-war retribution climate. Why the financial burden was taken upon by a citizen can only be speculated, as the reasons may vary: goodwill to save the city, prestige and self-promotion, or simply a personal duty in case of involvement with the events that had led to the penalty. We can only guess about the exact way in which *Philippopolis* (along with an unknown number of others) may have disappointed Severus: it might be that the city delayed

⁴ The cited publication is an archaeological report that reveals the circumstances of the inscription’s discovery at the *agora* of *Philippopolis*, which however fails to mention that the reading and interpretation of the text as an imperial letter was provided by N. Sharankov. The inscription’s content has been commented upon in media interviews but currently remains unpublished.

or refrained from sending provisions, or that they assisted Niger in some way in the course of his campaign on *Perinthus* in AD 194. Or perhaps the connections of the former provincial governor Asellius Aemilianus were still strong in this city and some of the local individuals, institutions or associations. Naturally, such an attitude might have been fueled by the fact that the rival *Perinthus* was the temporary headquarters of the new emperor.

Nevertheless, public life seems to have resumed normally and even thrived in *Philippopolis* after the amicable financial settlement of differences between city and emperor. The city did not seem to lose anything of value. We are not aware of any territorial reduction; it most certainly preserved its *metropolis* title granted since Domitian and the establishment of the Thracian *koinon* seat in this city, and only emphasized it on coinage since Severus, perhaps in light of *Perinthus*' gain of the *neokoros* title. The procuratorial seat, the hosting of the *aedes the<n>saurorum* and the archival function of the city seem to have remained uninterrupted (see below; Sharankov 2005, 241-242; 2007a, 185; Martinova-Kyutova / Sharankov 2018, 69-71).

“Voluntary” donations

Preemptive bribery can be regarded as a peculiar subcategory of Severus' fundraising. In Thrace, our only but very informative piece of epigraphic evidence in that direction has been discussed several times in academic writings and comes from *Nicopolis ad Istrum*⁵. The document is an intact imperial letter⁶ from co-rulers Septimius Severus and Caracalla addressed to the citizens (*IGBulg* II 659; **fig. 1**), dating to the period 28 January – 9 December AD 198 according to the imperial titulatures. The text records the emperors' gratitude for a payment made by the city amounting to 700.000 *denarii*⁷. The great problem posed here is that the letter does not explicitly reveal the nature of the sum given, leading to much guesswork for scholars which is far from over even today. Initially, it was believed that the amount of money mentioned is a gratitude gift for imperial favors after passing of *Nicopolis ad Istrum* into the administrative territory of *Moesia Inferior* (Mihailov 1963, 121-122, footnote 42). Modern scholarship is more inclined to believe that since the administrative change occurred earlier, under the brief rule of Pertinax in AD 193 (Ботева 1997, 27-28), the document must refer to another occasion. The fact that the payment was made in the specific period under examination here warrants the revival of the discussion of whether it may pertain to events that were part of or affected by the civil war.

While the reasons behind the gift are not revealed in the inscription, the text does mention that through it, the Nicopolitans sought for themselves “a better standing in the judgement” of the emperors. For some authors, the sum was a donation – voluntary or not, impossible to tell – and its great amount was explained along the lines of the quadruple fines mentioned by Dio in *Hist.* 75.4 (Ботева 1997, 167; Ботева 1999, 240, with short overviews of previous opinions). D. Boteva initially maintained the hypothesis of a bribery/fine in relation to supporting Niger (Boteva 1994, 17-18; Ботева 1997, 167, with previous lit.). She later favored the idea that it may in fact be related to a territorial issue, the resolving of which took place after the civil war and was not related to it: the city hoped to expand its territory

⁵ *Nicopolis ad Istrum* is viewed here within the context of Thrace despite its administrative transition to Lower Moesia shortly before the events under examination. This is done because *Nicopolis ad Istrum* essentially remains a city of Thrace historically and culturally, and also, in order to examine maximum evidence for the better assessment of the subject.

⁶ The inscription was kept in a fragmented state until 2020 when it was restored and conserved. It is currently assembled and displayed *in situ* at the *agora* of *Nicopolis ad Istrum*. I would like to thank K. Chakarov (Regional History Museum – Veliko Tarnovo) for the discussion and the photo of the inscription.

⁷ D. Boteva points out that the monetary unit – sesterces or *denarii* – is not explicitly mentioned (Ботева 1997, 167).



Fig. 1. *IGBulg II 659*: a letter from Septimius Severus and Caracalla to *Nicopolis ad Istrum*, currently displayed at the ancient city's *agora*. (photo: K. Chakarov)

as far as the *Istros* River, and expected to influence the outcome of a ruling on the matter through a pecuniary gift, possibly presented to Caracalla in person during a stay. The effort proved successful and bore fruit under the new governor Ovinus Tertullus. The same author is inclined to believe that the expansion would not have been possible, had *Nicopolis ad Istrum* taken Niger's side, and that the donation was given too late to be directly linked to the punitive campaigns of the war (Boteva 1996a, 175-176; Ботева 1997, 168; Ботева 1999, 240, 245). Following the recent restoration of the document, an updated photo and a slightly amended reading by N. Sharankov have been published in a catalogue of Regional History Museum – Veliko Tarnovo, with an undecided view on the sum paid as either a donation or a complimentary-style bribe (*Каталог РИМ-ВТ* 2021, 22-23, #15).

It can be argued, however, that both circumstances may be true without necessarily invalidating each other: an unknown form of opposition to Severus' cause may have occurred, in combination with

the city's hope for territorial changes after the war. The reasons behind a possible pro-Niger initial orientation, for instance, may have been manifold, among which an influence coming from the Bithynian population settled in the city. Ample evidence is provided from Asia Minor of communities that changed their allegiances in this conflict. Most of them supported Niger and switched sides only late in the war, after decisive battles (Birley 1988, 112), but nevertheless benefitted in various ways during Severus' period of clemency, including the reconfirmation of privileges and statuses. *Nicomedia*, for instance, joined Severus' side only after Aemilianus was killed at the battle of *Cyzicus*, and yet was greatly endowed at the end of the war; even its permanent rival, the punished city of *Nicaea*, was eventually treated kindly (Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 148-151). Inside Thrace, if the aforementioned hypothesis about *Philippopolis* is true, indicates that payment was a viable option that helped the city not to lose any precious attributes or its prominent role in the province. Furthermore, serious territorial reforms that involve access to navigable ports must be considered long-term investments performed on an imperial level and, with economic purposes in mind; if they could be influenced with donations, then more (and richer) cities would be resorting to it. So far we lack any evidence whether similar "financial transactions" occurred in other cities in the same context, e.g. those whose territory would be depleted by such a reform, or Marcianopolis in particular that had also changed its administrative attribution from Thrace into Lower Moesia.

If we maintain the idea that the pecuniary donation was a concealed form of penalty related to the civil war, most difficult to explain in this line of reasoning would be the timing of the transaction: why as late as AD 198? There had certainly been more suitable occasions for Severus to exact a payment: during *Byzantium's* siege or *en route* to Rome in AD 195/6. Even though there has been so far no satisfactory explanation of this, a solution may be sought in several directions. For instance, the "transgression" may have become evident or started to be viewed as such only later, under particular circumstances and in light of the events revolving around the seminal phase of AD 197/8 – the defeat of Albinus and promotions of both of Severus' sons. Certain individuals or societies within the city may have been exposed or vilified in the later stages of the conflict, since the sources describe a wave of renewed purges in the East after Albinus' defeat (HA *Vita Sev.* 15.4-5). Another path worth exploring is a hypothetical closeness between *Nicopolis* and Severus' brother during his tenure of *Moesia Inferior*. It is implied (only) by HA that Publius Septimius Geta had harbored certain "hopes" at the beginning of the war, and it is later elaborated that his ideas of succession to the throne were greatly upset once his nephew Caracalla was made *Caesar* (HA *Vita Sev.* 8.10; 10.3). We also know for a fact that by AD 195 he was already appointed in charge of *Dacia* (Stein 1940, 56-57; Thomasson 1984, col. 138). Scholars have proposed various explanations for his early hopes and disappointment: among other things, to be relieved after the completion of the *triennium* as governor of Lower Moesia (Boteva 1996b, 240; Boteva 1997, 48), to be assigned to a "more glorious" province (Barnes 1967, 95-96), to command troops in the decisive advance on *Byzantium* (Birley 1988, 109), or to even actually co-rule as HA suggests, which is considered least likely and generally dismissed as unreliable testimony (cf. Hasebroek

1921, 53; Mihailov 1963, 115, note 11, with cited lit.). Yet, on the matter of power sharing by the brothers, “an absolute skepticism appears unjustified”, as it has been rightly pointed out (Bersanetti 1942, 126-127). If we accept Septimius Geta’s expectations were indeed too high for Severus’ liking at that particular moment, perhaps after Caracalla’s rise to *Augustus* and Geta’s to *Caesar* a certain point had to be made in that regard, both to their uncle and to those that might have believed in alternative options of succession. A “voluntary” payment by way of an apology for any confusion the city might have previously experienced could send a message of loyalty to the newly established co-ruler. At the same time, it lacks the uncomfortable connotation of an actual fine, as such could not be formally imposed, since Publius Septimius Geta was not an official enemy of his brother. After being kept away from the main military action and glory, his civic career seems to have advanced – steadily, although not spectacularly, perhaps without much assistance on behalf of Severus (Bersanetti 1942, 127-128); but by all accounts, he remained loyal and on civil terms with his brother, for which he was granted posthumous honors (Cass. Dio *Hist.* 77.2.4). Another aspect of *Nicopolis*’ payment is the involvement of one more party in the issue – the provincial governor. It has been remarked before that he played an important role in the matter (Boteva 1994, 18), but his precise actions and motivations can only be guessed at. Ovinus Tertullus, the “excellent friend” of the emperors and aspiring new governor of Lower Moesia, was the one who sent the decree to the co-rulers, according to the last three lines of *IGBulg* II 659. This specific detail, with no mention made of an embassy of Nicopolitans to the emperor, implies that the city itself did not send envoys and the issue of the payment was raised and solved promptly *in situ*, perhaps entirely at the initiative of the governor. It has been suggested that the absence of an embassy denotes that the donation was made in person, to Caracalla himself (Boteva 1997, 168). It seems likely that Tertullus coerced *Nicopolis* to “donate” at that very opportune moment, by making use of a few crucial circumstances: the city’s suspected previous deeds or sympathies, the imminent visit of the young *Augustus*, the new expenditures incurred on the state by the Parthian campaign of Severus, the upcoming land and infrastructure reforms in the area, and, naturally, the chance to promote his own career.

Veiled forms of bribery and flattery – which may or may not have been accompanied by outright pecuniary donations as in the case of *Nicopolis ad Istrum* – can be seen behind some of the other surviving epistolary monuments of Septimius Severus’ rule, sometimes together with Caracalla (cf. Oliver 1989, ## 213, 214(?), 215, 217 [the letter to *Nicopolis*], 218, 219; Magie 1950, 672). They are phrased in similar ways and most of them mention various tokens of the “spontaneous” joy the cities experienced at the new ruler’s victories: honorary decrees, public festivals, and embassies (bearing material gifts?). This was usually followed by a formal gratitude letter sent by the emperor to the citizens, in recognition for the “joy” and confirming certain privileges, also to serve as a reminder that a new order was in place. Some of these envoys came from cities of Asia Minor (*Aezani*, *Aphrodisias*), most of which must have been in Niger’s orbit at first (Bekker-Nielsen 2008, 150-151) but eventually seem to have sent out a string of embassies to negotiate their relationship with the new ruler. Even though money

is not explicitly mentioned as in the case of *Nicopolis ad Istrum*, these letters share the recurring motif of the “joy – gratitude” dynamic of reconciliation and reassurance. Perhaps one of the most remarkable of these letters is that of Septimius Severus to the citizens of *Aezani* (ILS 8805; Oliver 1989, #213), worth mentioning here not only because of its content, but also due to its recent rediscovery and proposed new reading and dating. The monument has been so far dated variously by scholars from AD 195 to 197⁸. It indicates that an embassy of the outstanding size of nine delegates was sent with formal congratulations, a decree, and possibly a Nike statue to the new emperor in order to demonstrate the current allegiances of the city. If the later dating of the monument is accepted, then the *Aezani* rescript can be placed in the same context as the other similar documents, such as the letters sent to *Delphi* and *Aphrodisias* (Oliver 1989, ##215, 218, 219), and is consistent with the general climate of political restoration in the later period of Severan post-civil war policies. It is entirely conceivable that many cities would opt to offer finances at their own initiative in order to avoid unfavorable treatment and to receive reassurance for their fragile statuses and privileges under Severus. They were aware of the implications of any previous loyalties, just as they were aware of Severus’ rigorous policy of money collection. Obviously, the cities that resorted to this kind of expenditure were not among the most avid supporters, enablers or providers of Severus’ enemies but still had something precious to lose that could be used as leverage.

PARDONS

Even the harshest punishments of Severus imposed on the cities seem to have been short-lived. After having been subdued, the communities were meant to see the good side of the ruler. Historical, archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic evidence points out that there is a distinct wave of clemency policies in the period around AD 197/198 and onwards, after power was secured. Caracalla was appointed *Augustus* and was involved as much as possible in these policies, which allowed him to be seen as part of the reconciliation process (Kushnir-Stein 2010, 150). At the height of this phase, Septimius Severus pardoned the cities as soon as an occasion presented itself. Whenever possible, this was done on a personal visit by the emperor himself and/or separate family members, sometimes as early as the next possible visit. In *Syria*, for instance, Severus redeemed even *Antiochia* which he notoriously disliked, in an almost theatrical manner, while entering the city with Caracalla, and both of them serving as consuls at the turn of the New Year in AD 202 (HA *Vita Sev.* 16.8-9), but the process of rehabilitation is believed to have begun around AD 198 (Ziegler 1978, 495-500). This was accompanied with lavish gifts to the citizens, including the construction of new baths (Downey 1937, 142). If Malalas’ late testimony is to be believed, Severus was irritated but quick to forgive *Alexandria*’s hosting of his enemy and even the insolent inscription over its gates, preserved and in plain sight, proclaiming it as “the city of Lord Niger”; eventually, he even endowed the city with many public constructions during his personal stay ca. AD 200 (Mal. *Chron.* 12.21⁹ [p. 222-223]).

Pardon, or rather a form of amnesty, has been attested also towards some individuals that had fought on Niger’s side, as evident from the letter the new emperor wrote to the city of *Syedra* (Sayar 2014, 337;

⁸ The monument is much debated and vastly covered in literature, since it is believed to document the change of Caracalla’s name from Bassianus to Antoninus and his status as heir. Oliver (1989, 430-433, #213) considered the inscription lost and worked with previous records. Based on various arguments, most of which have to do with two events invariably linked to the dating of the letter: the end of the siege of *Byzantium* and the proclamation of Caracalla as *Caesar*, the year AD 195 has found by far the most support in scholarly literature (see a recent summarization in Boteva 2020, 24-25). The inscription itself was rediscovered not long ago at the temple of Zeus in *Aezani* and republished with a newly proposed date as late as AD 197, due to Wörrle’s autopsy of the stone and the amended reading of Severus’ *tribunicia potestas* from third to fifth (Wörrle 2019, 65), thus making the text irrelevant to the discussion on the capture of *Byzantium* or Caracalla’s status. The universally accepted notion that the embassy from *Aezani* arrived simultaneously with the news of the city’s fall (Birley 1988, 119; Oliver 1989, 432, and many others) has now been re-edited, with the “victory” mentioned in the text referring to a Nike statue sent on the occasion of the defeat of Clodius Albinus (Wörrle 2019, 65, 71-73).

⁹ The *Chronicle* of Malalas is referenced here and below according to the edition of Thurn (2000).

Jones 2015, 125-126), despite Herodian's claim that no one was spared (Hdn. 3.4.7-8). Possibly they were to be given the opportunity to redeem themselves by joining Severus' in his subsequent campaigns (Birley 1988, 115; Jones 2015, 126).

For Thrace, we are aware only of the policy of rehabilitation towards cities and so far we know nothing about conscripts or other individuals that may have played a "negative" role for the Severan cause in the preceding events. Certainly, this meant the restoration of *Byzantium* as an important Roman stronghold between Europe and Asia. In the absence of archaeological evidence, we rely entirely on written sources and we cannot objectively assess their reliability to the extent of the actual damage and consequent repair. An exact "official" date for the rehabilitation is unknown and in any case it should be regarded as a process that falls generally in the period AD 196-202, according to different scholars, but must have been in the same context as the rehabilitation of the other punished cities deprived of *ius civitatis* like *Antiochia* and *Neapolis*. This process must have involved a series of separate or simultaneous events, e.g. the restoration of civic status, the return of lands, the reconstruction of walls and buildings, the minting of special coinage with symbolic scenes, the celebration of athletic festivals, etc. (Ziegler 1978, 495-500; Birley 1988, 142-143; Ботева 1997, 93; Burrell 2004, 239; Андреева 2014, 105). According to the much later and problematic chronicle of Malalas, Severus constructed numerous new buildings, including baths and temples, and restored old public complexes, among which the *Zeuxippon* public bath, the Temple of Helios, the *Kynegion* and the *Strategion* (Malal. Chron. 12.20 [p. 221-222]). The restoration of the city status, the coinage and the appearance of athletic festivals seem to point to a full rehabilitation, which was applied also to all other previously harshly punished communities. According to most historical accounts, this happened largely due to the intervention of Caracalla (esp. *HA Vita Car.* 1.7; Hasebroek 1921, 80, note 2), that led to the acquisition of the epithet *Antoninia* to the city's name; a reflection of these events must be sought in *Byzantium*'s issuing of a rare coin type with Caracalla as "*restitutor Urbis*" (Weisser 1998, 651-652).

We can extend this reasoning further towards the other presumably "opposing" cities about which we lack direct evidence, like *Philippopolis* and *Nicopolis ad Istrum* discussed above. We are unaware whether there was a formal occasion when pardon was granted as in *Antiochia* or whether in the case of the "smaller" offenders there was personal presence involved at all. Perhaps in such cases the pecuniary fines/donations and the respective imperial responses equaled absolution. The period that followed immediately after suggests that the rule of Septimius Severus was undoubtedly a good time for both cities. *Nicopolis ad Istrum* did enlarge its territory towards the *Istros* (Ботева 1999, 240, 245). *Philippopolis*, the seat of the Thracian *koinon*, retained its importance for the province and enjoyed a fruitful connection with the emperor and his successors, attested by the numerous lavish buildings, official inscriptions, elaborate obverses on coinage, and the appearance of new athletic festivals in this period. Moreover, inscriptions reveal that the *fiscus*, the treasury and the *tabularium* of Thrace were all located in *Philippopolis*, and the existence of a *stratura praesidis* may hint that, at least for a while, perhaps even the actual provincial govern-

ment authorities were stationed there and not in *Perinthus* (Sharankov 2005, 241-242; 2007a, 185; see also Haensch 2021, 18-19, note 36, who argues that only the procurator's seat was there). The city's title of *metropolis*, although available since the 1st century, now pointedly appeared on coin legends, which has led scholars for decades to believe that it was namely under Severus that the title appeared in the first place (Mihailov 1963, 118; Sharankov 2005, 241-242).

REWARDS

If a ruler is to be deemed good, he should be seen as just and merciful by all his subjects. The rewards that Severus meted out were swift to come, often simultaneously with the demotion of individual or collective wrongdoers. They were especially due to those that were directly harmed by the opponent.

Some personal rewards have been attested: Severus gave senatorial ranks to the surviving officers of *Laodicea* (Mal. *Chron.* 12.21 [p.223]; Millar 2006, 192). But such instances are scarce, as the brief sources do not go into much detail about each city, and other type of evidence is rarely found. Much more is known about the rewarding process towards whole communities. It was a very individual matter, varying according to the specific situation of a city, its importance and actual involvement in the conflict. We can expect that there were more occasions of smaller-scale “winners” among the various cities in the East, in the context of civil war episodes that lack in the historical sources. The letter of Septimius Severus to *Syedra* (dated in AD 194) provides evidence of one such imperial act documented on stone but otherwise unknown from narrative accounts: the emperor wasted no time to thank for the support and to acknowledge the city's previous suffering at the hands of Niger's troops (Sayer 2014, 334-335).

The letter to *Syedra* does not explicitly reveal what the gain for this small town was, other than the celebration of a festival; it is implied that it had sent an embassy to congratulate the new emperor but it is unclear whether it had requested anything other than the liberation of its abducted fellow-citizens, such as a privilege or financial aid. It seems most likely that it received the right to use the epithets “grand” and “more glorious” in its titulature (Sayer 2014, 337; Jones 2015, 125). Indeed, the granting of prestigious titles like *metropolis*, *neokoros*, or even the city status *colonia*, was a strategy widely deployed by Septimius Severus in the East in his post-civil war reward system (Millar 2006, 191), and we can expect that a vast number of smaller such gifts existed as in *Syedra*'s case. Other known rewards would include the architectural upgrade of the supportive cities, evidenced on a number of occasions, as in the massive building program carried out in *Laodicea* (Millar 2006, 192).

The supporting cities seem to have been rewarded at least twice – once during or right after the war, and then again after the rehabilitation of the punished cities that had been on Niger's side. This two-step approach for the supporters has been adequately described in scientific literature as “the initial reward” and “the compensation” that occurred after the pardon of a rival city (Kushnir-Stein 2000, 152). The latter seems to be the more important and the longer-lasting arrangement, as the initial humiliation of the subdued rivals was surely bound to be temporary. Severus tried to maintain or mend connections with

all cities as soon as possible, preferably when he was personally in the area, also using the occasion to reinvent himself as a fictitious descendant of Marcus Aurelius and introduce his new heir(s) (Birley 1988, 116-118). In *Asia* and *Syria*, for example, as part of the “compensation”, Severus elevated some of his supporting cities to *coloniae*. The raise of their status happened after the rehabilitation of punished cities in the area whose territories and/or titles must have been restored. In doing so, the loyal cities were still distinguished, and ultimately all should have felt justified (Kushnir-Stein 2000, 152).

In this respect, the great “winner” in the aftermath of the civil war in Thrace was *Perinthus*. The “initial reward” for its unwavering support was the territorial gain of the *chora* of *Byzantium*. The victorious city had not taken any titles that belonged to the defeated one, as it happened with other pairs of rivals in *Asia*, perhaps because the latter had no prestigious or desirable appellations to claim. Perhaps for this reason *Perinthus* was distinguished with the conferral of the very special title *neokoros*, along with the construction of a temple of the imperial cult. The honor was granted twice within a very short period of time – under Severus and then under the joint rule alongside his sons, with accompanying festivals. The first title was undoubtedly linked to the events at the very end or right after the war, with scholars dating it, based on numismatic and historic evidence, in AD 195 (Ботева 1997, 106; Burrell 2004, 236-238; Андреева 2014, 84-90; Raycheva 2015, 29). It was the first and only city of the province of Thrace to hold such high honor (which must have left the citizens with a degree of satisfaction in the context of their imperfect relationship with the *metropolis Philippopolis* in inner Thrace). The date of the second *neokoros* title of *Perinthus* is problematic, but the prevailing current opinion is that it was given before the death of Severus, when Geta was promoted to *Augustus*, ca. AD 209. This is the time when two (imperial) temples appear on coin reverses (Burrell 2004, 239; Андреева 2014, 89; Raycheva 2015, 29-30) and can be clearly interpreted as “the compensation” the city was given in light of the ongoing process of *Byzantium*’s rehabilitation and restitution of territory. So far, we have no evidence of Severus rewarding other cities in Thrace in relation to the civil war, and neither do we know of personal promotions and awards given to individuals in the province for their own involvement in the civil war events in support of Severus. If such honors were indeed given, we should expect that they also concerned prominent citizens of *Perinthus* but unfortunately no such clues have been found in the epigraphic monuments from this city yet.

THE RESPONSE OF CITIES

The cities in the East responded too to these policies, using the tools and language they all understood – events, architecture, inscriptions, statues, coinage (Magie 1950, 672; 1540, note 21). Sometimes it is only these responses that survive, from which we may gain further information about the period in general and particular events otherwise undocumented in sources.

In the city-ruler dialogue, official inscriptions often constitute the main body of evidence. In Thrace, the Severan rule brought a noticeable increase in public architectural monuments, in the setting up of honorary inscriptions and dedications for the members of the im-

perial family, and an impressive variety in local coinage. No doubt, much of this owed to the great mobility of this family and its frequent passage through Thrace, as well as the opportunity for first-hand involvement in the province's deeds and problems (cf. Boteva 2013). An especially impressive example is *Nicopolis ad Istrum*, where the inscriptions set up for the Severan family heavily outnumber those for any other rulers (Mihailov 1963, 121). Along with the increased epigraphic activity commonly attested in Severan times in the East, Thrace made use of *damnatio* and *renovatio memoriae*. One obvious enemy, Asellius Aemilianus, previous governor of the province and one of the main figures in Pescennius Niger's orbit, was naturally vilified and condemned. His name is duly removed in several examples across the province (Mihailov 1963, 116; *IGBulg* IV 1902, *IGBulg* V 5668 – *Serdica*; *IGBulg* V 5569 – *Augusta Traiana*; *IGBulg* II 727 – *Discoduratae*). The inscriptions are of official character and were naturally set in visible locations; the condemnation was made publicly known and shown, in order to attest to the new stance of the cities of Thrace. The epigraphic 'dialogue' between the emperor and the province is seen also in a few instances of *renovatio memoriae* of Commodus, in support of the new ruler's claim to Antonine ancestry. Restoring the memory of Commodus was a strategy that pleased the army and served for legitimization: from AD 195 onwards, Severus presented himself as the adoptive son of Marcus Aurelius and claimed to be the same type of ruler. Around that time, his son Bassianus took the name Antoninus. Thus Severus urged the senate for a campaign of restitution of Commodus' memory (HA *Vita Sev.* 11.3-4, 12.8; Varner 2004, 147). Thrace offers some ambiguous evidence which raises questions as to how thoroughly the campaign was put into effect (Boteva 1997, 29-30; Raycheva 2017, 257, with footnotes). The full scope of this practice is particularly difficult to trace, as sometimes it is impossible to distinguish clearly whether the name was ineptly removed or ineptly restored; whether it was displayed in its deleted state or simply taken away from view; whether it was restored by paint that has now vanished or whether no effort was made at all. A further complication arises from the fact that some monuments contain both the names of Commodus and Asellius Aemilianus in official inscriptions from the time of his tenure, and the policy towards their treatment and display is not consistent. In the wall construction inscriptions from *Serdica* they were both left deleted (*IGBulg* IV 1902 and *IGBulg* V 5668), while in *Augusta Traiana*, in an official inscription erected on behalf of the city and recording the construction of a *macellum* between AD 177-180 (*IGBulg* V 5569), only the former governor remained obliterated but Commodus' name is visibly restored. The evidence from *Philippopolis* is also not straightforward in terms of the few surviving official inscriptions mentioning Commodus. One *renovatio* seems fairly certain, on a semicircular pedestal set in the façade of a public building at the agora's north entrance, erected on behalf of the Thracian *koinon* (AD 187, Sharankov N. 2007b, #5; 2018, 377). It is important that Commodus' statue base is very close to the discovery of the one about the financial penalty, perhaps in a subtle display of loyalty. It is not entirely clear whether the other monuments from the city that lack clear restoration attempts (unless paint was used) on his name were left in sight or rather removed – in the logic of described events, perhaps the

latter seems more plausible. It can be observed that in *Nicopolis ad Istrum*, the deceased Antonine ruler was rehabilitated and deified as a “brother” of Septimius Severus – in the imperial letter (*IGBulg* II 659) discussed above, but also on other monuments (*IGBulg* II 620, *IGBulg* II 624, *IGBulg* II 628).

A classic response of cities, including those in Thrace, resulting from the interaction with the ruler was the organization of athletic *agones* bearing special epithets, dedicated to the emperor or members of the family. Festivals were an integral part of the familiar language between emperor and subjects, just like the conferral or revocation of titles and privileges, and were rather important for the maintenance of public welfare. The decade of Severan rule after the civil war was characterized with an outburst of festivals all over the eastern part of the empire. We have information from Thrace about such festivals in the period immediately after the civil war, and some of these games lasted for a few more editions under the next rulers of the dynasty. Three cities display evidence of festivals directly related to the rule of Severus with his sons immediately after the civil war, or a few years later, which might be consequence of the same events. These *agones* are: the *Aktia Pythia* and *Philadelphia* in *Perinthus* that were established more or less simultaneously with the victory over Pescennius Niger (see above; Андреева 2014, 84-90, with cited lit.); the *Antoninia Sebastia* in *Byzantium* to mark the full rehabilitation of the city and express gratitude for Caracalla’s involvement in it ca. AD 211 (Андреева 2014, 104-106, with cited lit.); and the *Severia Nymphaia* in *Anchialus* definitely in ca. AD 211, but possibly also earlier (Андреева 2014, 125-129, with cited lit.). And while *Perinthus* and *Byzantium* had clear historical motives to hold such festivals – one as a supporter rewarded multiple times, and the other as a pardoned former enemy – almost nothing is known of the situation in *Anchialus*.

The games at *Anchialus* are known through numismatic evidence only, which makes the dating and the number of specific editions problematic, with the earliest testimonies of the event attested for in AD 205 and 208 (Ботева 1997, 119-122; Андреева 2014, 124-129). So far no satisfactory explanation about the occasion for the Anchialian games has been proposed, aside from the growing economic prosperity of the city (Андреева 2014, 125-126, with cited lit.) or the receipt of imperial favors (Mihailov 1963, 115-116). It is considered that the games were not too popular and mostly of local significance (Варалински 2009, 53-54), although they were relatively long-lasting, at least until Gordian III in AD 242. Economic prosperity and newly acquired rights are indeed valid reasons for a city to express its good fortune through an athletic *agon*, but they do not seem a sufficient explanation, as far more prosperous or privilege-endowed cities did not hold festivals. It seems that the organization of festivals with an imperial epithet in the decade after the civil war should be viewed with more caution. Even though a special imperial decision was not needed in order for a city to hold festivals with an emperor-related name (Klose 2005, 127), the number of such *agones* is not a vast one and the appearance of these events seems to be limited to special occasions. Mihailov argues that the games in AD 211 clearly did not result from an imperial visit, as that would have been impossible at that time, but they may pertain to privileges bestowed on *Anchialus*

(Mihailov 1963, 116-117). However, it is possible that the existence of the festival was the consequence of involvement in the civil war events a few years earlier. Considering the timing of the event and the general picture of athletic festivals that took place shortly after the civil war, the *Severia Nymphaia* festival in *Anchialus* might hold a clue for previous turmoil in the West Pontic coastal area. In general, the emperor's connection to this part of the empire seems vague: D. Boteva's research on the matter suggests at least two possible visits of members of the imperial family in the Pontic area, of Severus in AD 194/195 and Caracalla alone in AD 198 (Boteva 2013, 89-90; 2020, 25-26, with earlier lit.). Any of these events might be related to the reason for the subsequent festival. Or perhaps the *agon* reflects an event unattested in the narrative sources, linked to *Anchialus*' unclear stand during the civil war. In that case, the privileges suggested by Mihailov (1963, 115-116) may be newly granted ones, but just as well restored such (during the clemency stage of Severus' policy in Thrace). A festival of such name, appearing in this political climate, could be interpreted as a response of a city that was awarded by the emperor as a "winner" at the end of the war, but also as that of a city that was once penalized and later rehabilitated. The date of the earliest occurrence of the festival, AD 205, implies that the first option is less likely because the initial rewards for Severus' supporters were meted out much sooner; unless the games were organized in commemoration of an anniversary¹⁰ of previous glorious events to which the city may have felt connected (or contributing?) in some way. As for the perspective of penalized cities on the other hand, apart from the aforementioned example of *Byzantium*, other communities were also known to hold special (newly established or restored) festivals. *Nicaea* (Cass. Dio *Hist.* 76.16.1; Robert 1977, 31-32; Burrell 2004, 165) and *Antiochia* (Remijsen 2010, 432-436) did so in the period ca. AD 202-204 in celebration of their rehabilitation. If we allow that the *agon* in *Anchialus* developed in such context, this may also lead us to a tentative hypothesis that this athletic event may have been the outcome of a possible animosity with Severus and maybe even a conflict/rivalry with a neighboring city – the Roman colony of *Deultum* and/or *Apollonia*. Certainly, at the current stage of research there are only very few pieces of evidence attesting to Severan activities in the area in general or these cities in particular (see Boteva 2020, 25-26) to make any attempts for a credible reconstruction of the situation. In any case, the involvement of the region during and after the civil war with Pescennius Niger deserves closer exploration.

EPILOGUE: CARACALLA'S ROLE

Severus managed – systematically and consistently – to navigate the crisis after the civil war in the most affected areas, and paved the road for a new dynasty, which was truly the most significant aftermath of the conflict. For Thrace, from the current evidence it appears that there was one indisputable "winner" after the turmoil – *Perinthus*, and a few cities that had presumably taken the opposing side at some point in the war – *Philippopolis* (?), *Nicopolis ad Istrum* (?), *Anchialus* (?), but nonetheless fared well after Severus' reconciliation policy. By all accounts, even the most harshly punished *Byzantium* was restored and rehabilitated soon after the war was over.

¹⁰Such as the *decennalia* of *Byzantium*'s fall in AD 195: a possibility shared in a personal communication by D. Boteva, whom I would like to thank for the idea.

The involvement of Caracalla in the rebuilding of the empire was crucial for his accession as a sole ruler and the maintenance of the new dynasty. He was made *Caesar* at a very young age and was frequently travelling with his father. According to contemporary sources, he witnessed much of the events. He saw the completion of many tasks started by Severus. He is credited with mercy and rehabilitation towards punished cities. The rehabilitation of *Antiochia* and *Byzantium* is traditionally advertised as Caracalla's deed (HA *Vita Car.* 1). It is impossible to know for sure whether these interventions were really at his own initiative, driven by compassion at the destruction that he saw in his travels. Scholars are inclined to think it was part of Severus' plan all along as he always meant to rehabilitate the cities, since not doing so would mean to keep the empire volatile, and he granted the act of clemency to his son, so that he may be viewed as a successor (cf. Ziegler 1978, 495-498).

Caracalla did have his own chance to establish his own dynamic with the East after the death of his father, at first in a brief co-rulership with Geta and later as a sole emperor. That meant a new chapter for Thrace too, where, like in his father's lifetime, he would stay, grant privileges or receive special veneration in various locations. His actions seem to be independent from Severus' legacy in that respect and not necessarily connected to the events of the civil war. He was frequently travelling, with his mother or alone (Boteva 2013, 89-90). These visits demonstrate new relationships with the cities. Notably *Byzantium*, seems to have recovered fully and enjoyed a good connection with Caracalla, as visible by the adoption of the imperial epithet in its name and the organization of a new edition of the *Antoninia Sebastagon* in AD 215 (Ботева 1997, 267; Андреева 2014, 108-109). *Philippopolis* skillfully used Caracalla's fondness of such events and held the *Alexandreia Pythia* in the same year, organized by the Thracian *koinon* to indulge his Alexander-mania, presumably on the occasion of the emperor's visit in the city (Ботева 1997, 273-275; Андреева 2014, 41-42; Raycheva 2016, 282-285). Cities that were not directly involved with Severus' deeds after the war, like *Augusta Traiana*, *Serdica*, *Pautalia*, seem to have seen much of his presence as reflected and commemorated through coinage and epigraphic documents. These visits seem to have been mostly favorable interactions for the cities of Thrace (Ботева 1997, 280-283; Boteva 2013, 89-90).

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The Impact of The Gothic Wars (AD 376-379) on Thrace

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Abstract: The present paper deals with three different cases manifesting how the Gothic Wars of the 380s AD in Thrace impacted various aspects of life not only in the province itself, but also in Constantinople and the empire. As these three cases may be easily multiplied, it is without any doubt that the consequences for the Late antique society were more significant than so far estimated. The Gothic Wars also heavily influenced religious life and the process of Christianization of Thrace, and prepared the base for the transformation of the Late Roman city in the Eastern part of the Balkans into an Early Byzantine one.

Key words: cult of relics, sanctuaries, personification of *Eirene*, divine defenders of cities, protection by relics.

On 9 August AD 378 the greater part of the Eastern Roman army was annihilated and the emperor Valens was murdered near *Hadrianopolis*, Thrace. Following these events, Thrace and the Eastern Balkans were left into the hands and at the mercy of the Goths (Libanius, *Or.* 24.15; Ambrose, *De excessu fratris* 1.30). This was neither the first defeat of the Roman army, nor the first murder of a Roman emperor, but nevertheless it sent the Balkans and some of the Asianic provinces into chaos, as revealed by the letters of Gregory of Nyssa (Greg. Nys. *De sancto Theodoro*; Greg. Nys. *De iis qui baptismum differunt*). The literary sources compared the Roman state to a deadly wounded bleeding man lying near the road (Zosimus, *Historia nova* 4.21.1-3), and the defeat was a clear attestation to the decline of Roman power (Jerome, *Epistola* 60.16; Jerome, *Epistola* 123; *Chron. Marcell.* s.a. 327), state (Rufinus, *Eusebii historia ecclesiastica* 11.13), and therefore – the world itself (Ambrose, *Ex. evan. Lucae* 10.10; Ambrose, *De excessu fratris* 1.30). Comparisons were also made with the Roman defeat near *Cannae* more than six centuries before (Amm. Marc. 31.13.18), as well as with the *Iliad*, which gave it epic *gravitas* (Themistius, *Or.* 1 6.206d-207a). Initially, the new emperor failed with the task upon him – to cope with the problem – which only increased the psychosis (Lenski 1997, 129-168), and it was only in AD 382 when a peace treaty was signed between the empire and the barbarians, a rather humiliating one for the former.

Thrace, as an arena of the military actions, suffered the most, being plundered by the Goths. As they were 'in peace' with the curtain walls, they 'attack and devastate the rich and fruitful parts of the country, which were still without protectors and could be pillaged without any danger' (Amm. Marc. 31.6.4), among which were 'the rich villages, especially those in which it was said that abundant supplies of

food were to be found' (Amm. Marc. 31.6.5) and 'without distinction of age or sex all places were ablaze with slaughter and great fires' (Amm. Marc. 31.6.7). The locals were led into exile 'weeping over the glowing ashes of their ancestral homes' (Amm. Marc. 31.6.8). The barbarians 'in disorder, wherever each man found no opposition, pressed on to set all in confusion; and unhindered they spread devastation over all the wide plains of Thrace...with a most foul confusion of robbery, murder, bloodshed, fires, and shameful violation of the bodies of freemen' (Amm. Marc. 31.8.6). The Goths 'utterly ruin the fertile fields which extend far and wide about it, killing or capturing those who dwelt there' (Amm. Marc. 31.16.3; trans. J. C. Rolfe).

The literary sources, as well as the archaeological excavations, reveal that the Gothic Wars affected the entire life in Thrace and Constantinople for many years to come. In some aspects, however, they affected the empire itself which had to establish a new ideology, as the old one obviously did not work. In the next paragraphs three different case studies in Thrace and Constantinople are presented, which reveal some of the aspects that the disaster provoked.

1. THE 'EIRENE' MOSAIC IN PHILIPPOLIS, THRACE

Despite the fact that the cities remained undefeated during this campaign, they were nonetheless affected. The destruction of rural infrastructure, villages and villas had economic effects, but also led to the migration of part of the rural population towards the cities, seeking shelter behind the curtain walls. These migrants mostly contributed to the huge unemployment that was a distinctive feature of the Late antique city, but the archaeological excavations in *Philippopolis* (Plovdiv) reveal also the emergence of another phenomenon at that time that may be linked to the process. Thus, some of the residential complexes that expanded over an entire *insula* received new reception halls, lavishly decorated with mosaic pavements. The owners of these houses may be identified as the owners of the villas that moved to a more secure place in the city (Topalilov 2014, 231). As archaeological evidence suggests, the Gothic Wars under consideration put an end to the villa complexes in the rural area of Thrace (Динчев 1997, 123-126). Among the new reception halls was that of the so-called *Domus Eirene* which was established at that time and was decorated with exquisite mosaic floors. The residence was discovered during rescue archaeological excavations in 1983-1984, when the main part of the house was fully unearthed. The focus of the decoration was on the image of the personification of *Eirene* that was depicted in a medallion in the eastern half of the room. I am not going to deal here with a detailed description of it, as it has already been done (Pillinger et al. 2016, 178-181), but I would like to point out two major features of the image: the cross-shaped item on the head of the personification, and the representation of the blue halo. They both allowed the *interpretatio Christiana* of the image assumed by V. Popova, related to the desire of the owner for peace in the Church with regard to the dispute between the Arians and the Orthodox which Theodosius I found in Thrace when appointed a new *Augustus*. The presence of St. Irene should symbolize the Peace that had come to the Church by the time the mosaic was laid (Pillinger et al. 2016, 193-195). This interpretation has been put to doubt recently, as the cross-shaped ending

was in fact part of the diadem of the pagan personification of Peace, while the halo itself had an irregular shape that may imply its later insertion. The diadem is very similar to those presented on the mosaics of Cos (see examples in De Matteis 2004, 168, 212, 217, 222, 344), but unlike them is presented here more schematically, with an unelaborated upper end (Topalilov 2018, 280-282). Given these observations, it has been suggested that the depiction of *Eirene* may be regarded as a reflection of the political events in Thrace at the time, presented in a widely accepted manner for its contemporaries. We may even assume that the owner was among those that migrated to *Philippopolis*, considering the date of the transformation of the whole complex. In a later period, the *domus* was transformed into a *domus episcopalis* and the image of the pagan personification was Christianized accordingly (Topalilov 2018, 282, 284). In fact, if this was the image of St. Irene from the very beginning, it should be the earliest image of the saint attested so far in the empire.

Another idea has been advanced recently by M. Ivanov who believes that *Eirene*'s image should rather be considered a symbol assuring the peace and prosperity of the house and its inhabitants, while it also reveals the social status of the owner as the εἰρηναρχος of *Philippopolis*. Among the responsibilities of this office was to secure the order and peace in the city (Ivanov 2019, 88-89). It is not the lack of *eirenarchos* in the inscriptions of *Philippopolis* found so far that does not allow me to accept fully the proposed idea, as this office is attested elsewhere in Thrace too, for example in *Serdica* on an inscription dated to the time of Antoninus Pius (*IGBulg* IV 1953), but the fact that an epigraphic text from the city reveals the existence of the office of a police magistrate (ἀστυνόμος) with similar functions¹. Given this, I am still inclined to the idea of the depiction of the pagan personification *Eirene* as a reflection of the historical events in Thrace at that time, which was later Christianized when *Domus Eirene* was transformed into *domus episcopalis*.

2. THE END OF THE PAGAN SANCTUARY NEAR THE VILLAGE OF DRAGOYNОВО, THRACE

In the course of excavations in the Tsarkvishte locality, some 2 km south of the modern village of Dragoyново, the remains of an Early Christian complex were discovered, dated to the beginning of the 5th – late 6th century AD. The archaeological investigations also unearthed some other remains and a burnt layer of mud-brick, both belonging to another, earlier structure. Some fully preserved and some fragmented votive marble plaques suggest that this earlier structure was a sanctuary dedicated to the Thracian Horseman, and probably Zeus and Hera. All of the plaques had been inserted into the walls of the Christian basilica's first period. In addition, the Christian complex reused the 3rd – 4th century bricks, and the walls of the sanctuary were incorporated into the building situated south of the basilica (on the complex, see Topalilov 2020). All this allowed the conclusion that the Early Christian complex replaced an earlier sanctuary which met with a violent end. The material suggests the last quarter of the 4th century as the date of the sanctuary's demise (Топалилов 2013, 327).

At first glance, it seems reasonable to assume that this sanctuary belongs to the huge group of structures that ceased to exist violently at

¹ *IGBulg* III.1 1023. Although erroneously written as ἀστυνόμος, it is beyond doubt that the deceased served as an ἀστυνόμος of the *metropolis* (as suggested to me in a letter by Nicolay Sharankov to whom I express my sincere gratitude).

the end of the 4th – the beginning of the 5th century. It is assumed that their termination should be attributed to a certain religious antagonism in the local community (Динчев 2002, 139; Вълчев 2015, 175). However, the reuse of the area itself and the marble plaques with pagan imagery may imply that the place preserved its sacred character in Christian times too, and therefore a proper religious antagonism may be irrelevant to the case. Indeed, the sanctuary was entirely destroyed and burnt down, but soon it was replaced by the Early Christian complex that reused the preserved part of the sanctuary's interior, as well as the marble plaques that ensured the continuation of the sanctity of the area through both periods. It seems that the old pagans became the new Christians and kept the importance of the area for both religions. The question that arises concerns the reason for the destruction of the earlier structures – was it due to 'religious antagonism' as suggested for other similar cases, or perhaps the cause for this lies elsewhere? I believe that the answer to this question may be found in the study of other similar cases in the area dated to this very period of time, due to the lack of more specific evidence.

Although the problem of the end of the pagan sanctuaries in Thrace has not been studied fully yet, some preliminary comments have been put forward. For those of interest for this study, the emphasis is on forceful termination, with a possible religious clash that brought about the destruction (Динчев 2002, 136-139; Вълчев 2015, 170-175). The archaeological excavations, however, show that the picture is far more complex. I. Valchev accepts that the reasons for the violent end of some of the sanctuaries at that time may be linked to the rebellion of Procopius in AD 365-366 and the Gothic Wars under consideration (Вълчев 2015, 173). Indeed, the former event affected Thrace and especially *Philippopolis* which became a stronghold of the usurper, but these aspects and processes have remained largely unexplored so far. I believe, however, that they require more attention and specifically the Gothic Wars of the AD 370, as the archaeological excavations clearly reveal the existence of a subgroup of sanctuaries whose life was ended abruptly, which should not be attributed to the end of the 4th – the beginning of 5th century, but to the times of the Gothic Wars. In these cases, the termination is clearly defined by the latest coins found in the burnt layer, issued in the time of Valens, Valentinian I or the early years of Theodosius I. To this group of sanctuaries probably belong: that of the Thracian Horseman near the village of Chernovrah, Teteven region (Вълчев 2015, 205-208, with the latest coin of Valens); that of Zeus and Hera near the village of Gaganitsa, Berkovitsa region²; the one found near the village of Varvara, Pazardzhik region, whose end is marked by a coin of Valens (Цончев 1941, 61-87; Вълчев 2015, 260-261), or Valentinian I (Ivanov 2012, 422); that of Asclepius *Ζυλμυζδρηνος* located near the village of Patalenitsa, Pazardzhik region³; that of Hera near the village of Dyulevo, Panagyurishte region⁴; the one found near the village of Viden, Stara Zagora region (Вълчев 2015, 302-304); that of Apollo *Ζερδρηνος* located near the village of Krun, Stara Zagora region (Вълчев 2015, 304-305); that of Apollo *Τηραδεηνος* located closely (Вълчев 2015, 305-306); that of Apollo *Καρσηνος* near the town of Burgas⁵, etc. With one exception – the sanctuary near the village of Chernovrah, Teteven region – they met with a forceful end. This group of sanctuaries is distinguished by other stud-

² Вълчев 2015, 217-218, with the latest coin of Valens or Valentinian (I). The excavator Zl. Morfova believes that the sanctuary ceased to exist forcibly at the end of the 4th century – see Морфова 1957, 307-308.

³ See Tsontchev 1941; Вълчев 2015, 261-268. The latest coin found is of Theodosius I – see Tsontchev 1941, 73, 75.

⁴ Ботушарова 1948, 61-73; Valchev 2015, 273-274, with the latest coin of Theodosius I.

⁵ Вълчев 2015, 340-341. The last coin of the 4th century is one of Valens, but it seems that in the 6th century some activity in the area may be evident due to the coins of Justin I and Justinian I found there.

ied sanctuaries in the territory of Bulgaria not only by the brutal way their life was ended that should be dated to the period between the latest years of Valens' rule and the earlier years of the reign of Theodosius I, but also by their geographical location. As one may observe, with the exception of Chernovrah and the sanctuary of Zeus and Hera near the village of Gaganitsa, all other structures are located in the plane areas of Thrace. Considering that this was the arena for the Gothic Wars in AD 376-380, as well as the fact that the end of the sanctuaries is marked by coins of Valens, Valentinian I and Theodosius I, I would presume that these structures ceased to exist due to the Gothic activity rather than any religious rage vented by the new Christians, as has been suggested in literature. It is important to note that despite the fact that the Goths were Christians themselves, Christian basilicas also suffered destruction at the time, as revealed for instance by the case with the earliest basilica located near the village of Karanovo, Nova Zagora region, whose termination is dated to AD 377 and linked to the Gothic Wars by its excavator (Чанева-Дечевска 1999, 246). This example is not the only one and the list of Christian basilicas affected may be expanded, which shows that Christian temples were treated like the pagan sanctuaries. It may be assumed that in such cases, the reason for destruction of these buildings and complexes by the barbarians was not based on any religious motives, but rather on the fact that these structures were part of the world that the Goths were waging war against – that of the Roman state (*Pax Romana*). The barbarians tried to destroy the hierarchy, order, and the world of the Romans that they did not recognize and accept, and this was one of the ways, along with the destruction of the rural and suburban infrastructure of the empire. By this means, a new phenomenon appeared in Thrace – that of the violent end of pagan sanctuaries.

Archaeological investigations in Bulgaria have not attested any hostile attitude toward pagan sanctuaries in Thrace until the late rule of Valens – the early years of Theodosius' time. Quite the contrary, they reveal that in the prevailing cases the sanctuaries were abandoned and only in isolated cases a different treatment may be observed. A good example for this is the sanctuary of Asclepius located near the village of Zlatna Panega, Lovech region. The sanctuary is among the major complexes of this type in Thrace for the period of the 2nd – 4th century and seems to have been very popular not only in the region but in the whole province. It is even assumed that the god's importance was not confined within the limits of Thrace, but spread to Lower Moesia as well. The coins and the marble plaques found there date its construction to the middle of the 2nd century, while the last coins of Constantius II mark its end to the middle of the 4th century, when the sanctuary was abandoned (Вълчев 2015, 221-226, with cited bibliography). The importance of the sanctuary is illustrated by the fact that its life continued despite the abandonment of the village located in the vicinity (Динчев 2002, 137). This sanctuary is not the only one such case, and it shows that until the period under consideration in this paper, the Christianization of rural topography as far as the termination of pagan sanctuaries is concerned was similar to the processes that took place in the neighboring provinces, such as those in Continental Greece, on the Aegean islands and in Asia Minor. In them, the pagan sanctuaries in rural and urban areas were abandoned and only in few cases hostili-

ty toward them is attested (Вълчев 2015, 173). Indeed, some sanctuaries in Thrace may have suffered similar treatment during this period, for example those located at the Acropolis of *Philippopolis*, whose area was desacralized in the middle of the 4th century (Topalilov 2021, 130-133), or that near the village of Shishmantsi, Plovdiv region, that was destroyed in the second quarter of the 4th century (Топбатов 2001, 103-104), but as mentioned above, these cases were isolated and do not reveal the full picture.

Tolerance towards the traditional sanctuaries is also observed in the areas where the local population was Christianized by the Goths in the 350s and the 360s AD. It was due to Ulfilas' Goths that settled in the region of Nicopolis ad Istrum in AD 348 and the homogeneity of this group, as well as the paucity of the local population, that the latter was partly or fully Christianized (Динчев 2002, 145). As the archaeological excavations reveal, many sanctuaries located to the north of the *Haemus* Mountains were abandoned, but the lack of coins may also imply that they were plundered, or attest to the poverty of the population. It seems that, more or less, the authorities managed to control the Christian mob in this aspect and violence was sporadic. This may be also due to the still resilient paganism in the region.

This brief analysis reveals that with the incursion of the Goths into Thrace in AD 376 and in the following years, a new practice in the treatment of pagan sanctuaries was introduced by the invaders in that region, which differed significantly to the existing 'policy' – that of the violent end. Those that were located in the areas of Gothic plundering suffered in this way. It may be expected, however, that the destruction of sanctuaries did not cease with the peace treaty in AD 382 and probably lasted in some of them, as I would not assume that even in the time of his anti-pagan legislation the emperor – in this case, Theodosius I – would allow such treatment of pagan sanctuaries by the imperial or local authorities. Thus, until Alaric's Goths finally left Thrace at the very end of the 4th century AD upon their entry into Italy in AD 401, as well the neutralization of the large Gothic group located near Constantinople in AD 399, a suspicion that the destruction of most of the pagan sanctuaries was done by the barbarians would exist. If we were to accept by all means the idea of religious antagonism that spread among the local population, its manifestation surely should be dated to the time after the Goths left Thrace, i.e. at the very beginning of the 5th century. At this time, it would have been about a quarter of a century since the Christianization undertaken by the Goths at the late rule of Valens and the early years of Theodosius' time, or as an outcome of the Theodosian efforts in this aspect, which may explain the hostile attitude to the old sanctuaries by the Christians. These Christians were not the old pagans, as an entire generation had already passed and therefore no personal connection and attitude should be expected to the old sanctuaries besides a religious one. What is remarkable is that if the destruction of the sanctuaries dated to the first two decades of the 5th century was indeed caused by these Christians, it was done in the way introduced by the Goths in Thrace. Whether this was made possible due to the weak imperial power in the region, or those were simply the initiatives of local Christians, or even of the barbarians that remained in the region, is still unclear, as each of these options, if not all of them, are possible.

Given all this, I am inclined to assume that the demise of the pagan sanctuary explored near the village of Dragoyново should be attributed to the Goths and their ravage of the region in the years AD 376-379.

3. THE GOTHIC WARS AND THE CULT OF RELICS AS CITY DEFENDERS

In AD 401, Alaric's troops entered Northern Italy and put a threat to the cities, and it was only after two victorious battles for the Romans near *Pollentia* and Verona that they withdrew. It was at that time, and more precisely in January AD 402, when Paulinus, the presbyter at Nola, asked Christ in a poem to help St. Felix in taming the uncivilized barbarians and shatter them (Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen* 26.246-258).

The next year, Claudian wrote a poem in which he asked various Christian saints to prevent the barbarians from crossing the Alps, to strike the '*Getic hordes*' (trans. M. Platnauer) and guide the armies of Rome against the barbarians invading Italy (Claudian, *Carmina Minora* 50).

As one may clearly observe, on these occasions the divine powers were asked for help in coping with the barbarians and there is not even a hint of the need and belief of the saints' protective power over the defense of the cities. As Rome and Nola escaped defeat, this may be logical. In another poem of Paulinus, however, written in AD 405, he expressed his firm belief that Rome was now under the protection of the bodies of the Apostles Peter and Paul just like Constantinople was under the protection of the relics of the Apostles Andrew and Timothy⁶. The omission of the Apostle Luke in the latter case is significant, as it is known that his relics were brought to the city with those of Apostle Andrew in AD 357 (*Chron. Paschale* 542) and buried in the Holy Apostles' Church, in whose altar space they were later found (Procopius, *De aedificiis* 1.4.21). The omission of these relics may find explanation in Paulinus' attempt to praise Rome as equal to Constantinople and therefore only two Apostles were needed. Otherwise, Constantinople's superiority observed by him with bitterness would be quite obvious. What is more important for our study, however, is the fact that in the said poem, the presbyter of Nola arrived at a conclusion about the protective power of the saints, and especially of their relics in the defense of a certain city. Since there was no direct barbarian threat to Nola or invasion in Italy in the interval between the writing of the two poems, i.e. AD 402 – 405, it is highly improbable that his belief in the relics' power was based on the successful role that a certain saint played as the protector of a city, as has been proposed in literature (Wiśniewski 2019, 61). Indeed, Nola was besieged unsuccessfully by the barbarians in AD 402 and even though St. Felix had 'appeared' on the city-walls during the siege, as Augustine mentions later based on eyewitness accounts (Augustine, *De cura pro mortuis* 19), this was not enough to attribute to his relics (kept in a basilica, located *extra moenia* 2 km away from the city) the protective power over the city's defense that was entrusted to the relics of the Apostles in Rome and Constantinople. It seems that in this case we cannot assume any further development of the saints' protective power, but rather a promotion of a new cult of relics. Besides, as one may observe, despite the unsuccessful barbarian siege of numerous cities in the second half of first decade of the 5th century, as revealed by Ambrose, Gaudentius of Brescia, Maximus of Turin, Jerome, and others (Wiśniewski 2019, 49-50), their leaders did not turn to the cult of relics and in fact, they acted

⁶ Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen* 19.334-343: *His quoque Romuleam sequeretur dotibus urbem, Ut sua apostolicis muniret moenia laetus Corporibus: tunc Andream devexit Achivis, Timotheumque Asia: geminis ita turribus exstat Constantinopolis magnae caput aemula Romae, Verius hoc similis Romanis culmine muris, Quod Petrum, Paulumque pari Deus ambitione Compensavit ei, meruit quia sumere Pauli Discipulum cum fratre Petri.*

as usual. The lack of any sign of the belief in the protective power of the saints' relics in these cases is clearly indicative that the silence of the authors in the West about them was not due to the lack of any serious threats up to that time that would have called for such help as proposed in literature (Wiśniewski 2019, 52), but rather to the lack of any tradition in this respect. As may be observed, even when such a threat appeared and the help from above was seriously needed, no call on their relics was made. In the abovementioned poem of AD 402 that was written at the time of the devastation of Northern Italy by Alaric's Goths and refers to the events, Paulinus did not turn to the relics as one may suppose. Instead, he called upon the power of Christ acting through the local saint to crash the barbarians. It was only in AD 405 that he revealed this new belief, although in this case he was dealing with the Apostles and not just any Christian saints, and despite the fact that not a single threat is attested at that time to Italy, Rome, or Nola and therefore there was no need for this kind of help. All this clearly reveals that the cult to relics was promoted in Italy at the beginning of the 5th century, soon after the invasion of the Goths or simultaneously with their invasion⁷. I would assume that the same may be applied to the silence about this cult that is also observed in the sources in the Greek East.

The poems of Paulinus of Nola from AD 405 and possibly from AD 407, as well as one of Augustine's sermons which was delivered in AD 411 (Rotelle 1994, 202; Salzman 2014, 344-357), in which he expresses the disappointment of some people in Rome for the inability of relics to save cities, including Rome which was '*devastated, afflicted, crushed, burnt*'⁸, (trans. E. Hill) allow me to suggest that the belief under question might have been concentrated in Rome and its vicinity initially. The lack of this cult in the abovementioned almost synchronous examples within the cities that were besieged at the same time show that it took a certain period for the cult of the protective power of relics to spread to Northern Italy and elsewhere to the West from Rome.

Regardless the scanty evidence from the Greek East, as well as the assumption *ex silentio* of the sources, it is argued that in fact Paulinus of Nola was the promoter of this new cult of relics, as it was an isolated phenomenon (Wiśniewski 2019, 48-50).

Although scarce, the sources from the East reveal a different picture and question the proposed hypothesis. In the 380s AD, in a sermon on the feast of St. Theodore of *Euchaita* in Constantinople Gregory of Nyssa shouted out: '*The infamous Scythians gestating war against us are not far. As a soldier, defend us!*'⁹ (trans. R. Wiśniewski 2019, 50) This source is of great importance for this study as this is the earliest evidence for the defending of a certain community by the saints. Indeed, we know that most probably they were asked for help and possibly protection, as it is for example the case with Constantius' general Sabinianus, the commander of the Roman army in the East, who in AD 359 visited some *martyria* in *Edessa*. The laconic words of Ammianus Marcellinus that the general '*had made his peace with the dead*'¹⁰ (trans. J. C. Rolfe) may imply that he asked the martyrs for help in his campaign against the Persians (Wiśniewski 2019, 50). In this and other similar cases at that time, the protective power of saints was called upon, but it was probably bestowed upon individuals and whether it was so about the army as well, is not entirely clear, but very likely. It seems, however, that it was still too early for the belief in the

⁷ A very significant example is the case of Jerome who attributed the saving of Toulouse in AD 407 not to the relics of St. Saturninus that were kept within the city, but by the merit of its bishop Exuperius – see Jerome, *Epistola* 123.16, despite the fact that in the previous year he wrote a letter in defense of the cult of the relics – Jerome, *Adversus Vigilantium*.

⁸ Augustine, *Sermo* 296.6: *Iacet Petri corpus Romae, dicunt homines, iacet Pauli corpus Romae, Laurentii corpus Romae, aliorum martyrum sanctorum corpora iacent Romae; et misera est Roma, et vastatur Roma; affligitur, conteritur, incenditur; tot strages mortis fiunt, per famem, per pestem, per gladium. Ubi sunt Memoriae Apostolorum?*

⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *De sancto Theodoro*, 70-71; E. Rizos CSLA E01749; Wiśniewski 2019, 50, 53.

¹⁰ Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae* 18.7.7: *per Edessena sepulchra, quasi fundata cum mortuis pace.*

protective power of saints to spread over all civic communities. The time for this arrived at the end of the century with Gregory of Nyssa's shout, and a bit later, by a sermon of John Chrysostom who was reassuring the inhabitants of the capital that the relics of martyrs would protect the city much more effectively than 'walls, trenches, weapons, and hosts of soldiers' (trans. in K. Holum and G. Vikan 1979, 117, n. 12) John Chrysostom, *Laudatio martyrum Aegyptiorum* 1). This is the earliest known so far reference to the protective power of martyrs' relics in the defense of the city. Although no exact date is available for this evidence, it may be placed in the first years of John Chrysostom's episcopacy and most probably in AD 398, as no liturgical procession with the translation of martyrs' relics is attested in the sources. It is well known that John Chrysostom organized several liturgical processions and each of them had to do with such activity. The earliest one is dated to the very first year of his episcopacy – that of the arrival of the relics of the martyr Phocas from *Pontus* (Baldovin 1987, 182-183). Another procession took place in the last months of the same year that ended with the deposition of the relics in the *martyrium* of St. Thomas (Baldovin 1987, 183). These processions were accompanied by the emperor or his wife, and are described as the events that 'emptied the city'. As these processions are one of the distinctive features of the episcopacy of John Chrysostom by which he received huge popularity in Constantinople that eventually cost his position, it is highly improbable that the translation of the relics of the Egyptian martyrs would not be celebrated in the same way. The only plausible explanation for this may be that the tradition was not yet established at the very beginning of his episcopacy. Otherwise, we should assume that the events happened soon after AD 399, as the salvation of the city was attributed to the apparition of an angelic host (Wiśniewski 2019, 69), and not to the power of the relics. If so, the translation of the relics of the Egyptian martyrs would be an isolated case with no procession organized due to unknown reasons. What is clear, however, is that at the very end of the 4th century the cult of martyrs' relics that had protective power for the defense of the city was firmly established in Constantinople. And once established, it received further development. Unsurprisingly, around AD 427 or slightly later it is accepted that each city which possesses relics should venerate them as 'guardians and defenders'¹¹ (trans. R. Wiśniewski). In AD 402 at the latest, the *Sermon on St. Thomas the Apostle* may have been preached, in which the author expressed his hope that the apostle would banish the Arians from the West as he did from Thrace (*Sermo in s. Thomam Apostolum*, p. 500), which obviously refers to the Alaric's invasion in Italy. Indeed, the author is anonymous, but it is very likely that he was John Chrysostom (Wiśniewski 2019, 52, note 24) which confirms the proposed date. This is the earliest so far attestation of the role of the Apostles whose relics were venerated in Constantinople.

To sum up, it is without any doubt that after the imperial catastrophe near *Hadrianopolis* in AD 378, Thrace remained at the mercy of the Goths and the cities were left by themselves. They had to rely on their curtain walls and the bravery of their defenders, *militia* only, which played a crucial role for the development of the cult of the protective power of saints whose help was called upon not only in defending certain individuals, but the whole civic community. Just one

¹¹Theodoret, *Graecorum affectionum curatio* 8.10. See Wiśniewski 2019, 54, note 32.

step further was needed to form the notion of the protective power of saints' relics in the defense of communities, cities and regions as it was done at the very end of the 4th century in Constantinople by the new bishop John Chrysostom. It seems that the new cult gained quick acceptance in Constantinople and Thrace, given the political situation in the province and the capital, with the 40.000 yet undefeated Goths camping nearby. Thus, the ensuring of the protection in the defense of the cities and communities which the saints would provide, led to the construction of several *martyria* with relics near the gates, and especially the main, triumphal one, of the cities at that time (on the date of the *martyria* – see Topalilov / Ljubenova 2010, 63-64). It is without doubt that the relics were meant to ensure protection from the Goths. It was a couple of years later, when Paulinus of Nola tried to assure his congregation in the protective power of the relics of the Apostles Peter and Paul. It may be assumed that this idea spread initially in Rome and its vicinity, and influenced Paulinus' poem of AD 405.

We may never know how the idea of the protective power of the Apostles' relics and saints reached Rome and Italy, but the scarce literary evidence may give a hint for this. A letter by Vigilius, the bishop of Trent, to his friend John Chrysostom concerning the transfer of the holy remains of three Cappadocian Saints – Sisinnius, Martyrius and Alexander – to Constantinople (*Patrologia Latina* 13, 552-558) may imply a certain correspondence between them. Indeed, Vigilius may have not been persuaded yet about the protective power of relics in the aspect discussed above, but he was certainly an eyewitness to the chaos and destruction the barbarian raids caused in Northern Italy, as well as to the helplessness and defencelessness of the cities and communities in AD 401 – 402, based on the example of Cremona and Brescia where he preached. This undoubtedly prepared the ground for the spread of the new cult. It seems that the Alpine bishop was also well aware of John Chrysostom's interest in the relics of the martyrs, and the close relationship between the two bishops, we may speculate whether Vigilius himself was one of the protagonists in the promulgation of the new cult to Northern Italy. His sudden death on 26 June AD 405, however, ceased his activity in this field, but it is obvious that in Northern Italy the new cult had already gained acceptance by the end of the decade, with Augustine's letter of AD 411 mentioned above. Therefore, I would not be surprised that the idea of the new cult was promoted to the West by John Chrysostom through letters sent to other clergymen in Italy who would in turn circulate the idea. If the emphasis on the role of the Apostles' relics in the *Sermon on St. Thomas the Apostle* and in Paulinus' poem of AD 405 is not a pure coincidence of time and topic, we may even suggest a certain correspondence between the bishops of Rome and Constantinople on this matter.

It is interesting to consider the aforementioned Jacobus who is named in the letter of Vigilius as the person responsible for the transfer of the relics of martyrs from Anaunia. This very Jacobus is identified with the one to whom Claudian dedicated a poem in AD 403 and who was a *dux* (Claudian, *Carmina Minora* 50), and therefore the commander of the forces that were supposed to stop the Alaric' troops from crossing the Alps and invading Italy in AD 401. He was ridiculed by Claudian on his belief in the power of saints and their relics, which

may have been due to his visit in Constantinople where he probably met John Chrysostom.

This brief analysis allows me to conclude that the Gothic Wars of the AD 370s – 380s in Thrace may be in fact regarded as a catalyst for the development of the cult of relics in an entirely new aspect – for the protection and defense of the city and its community. The call for divine protection by the Constantinopolitan bishop Gregory of Nyssa in the AD 380s was made during the turmoil years when the Goths were still laying waste to Thrace, and the new emperor, Theodosius I, promoted *Augustus* in order to cope with the problem, initially failed to do so. Constantinople and Thrace were again left on their own, with no help but the divine one. The Christian saints at that time were the only possible defenders of the cities and communities. Undoubtedly, this not only motivated the establishment of the cult of the protective power of saints, but also ensured the huge and quick spread of that cult in Constantinople and the area most affected by the Gothic invasion – Thrace. Only one step was needed to its further transformation into the cult of relics' protective power to defend cities and communities.

Given the fact that the empire was still unable to cope with the Gothic problem, despite the organized sham triumphs in Constantinople and elsewhere in the East and West by both *Augusti* (McCormick 1990, 41-44), the construction of the triumphal arch (on the problem – see Bardill 1999, 671-696) in the Theodosian capital and the declared peace treaty, it was logical to make that step soon afterwards. Whether the catalyst for this was the revolt of the Gothic troops of Gaina in AD 399 is unclear, but it is very likely, as it was an immediate threat for the capital. Logically, the cult of the protective power of saints' relics for the defense of cities spread quickly in the regions of the empire that were affected by the Gothic invasions at the beginning of the 5th century, *viz.* Italy. In fact, by this, a further step was made also toward the Christianization of the pagan practice of the belief in the divine powers of the statues of the gods, goddesses and heroes that protected the local community either from natural disasters or by preventing barbarian invasions¹².

The three examples presented in this paper are case studies that, although different in nature, reveal the impact of the Gothic Wars on various aspects of the life of the ancients in Thrace and Constantinople – the places that suffered the most in this conflict. These aspects, however, are not limited to those presented here, and may be easily expanded as the disaster of the of the AD 370s – 380s was a was a profound crisis for the whole empire, not only to this area. The choice of Theodosius I to establish himself in Constantinople and make it his imperial and dynastic center drew the attention of the rest of the Empire to these lands, but also allowed for some of the changes and innovations that originated in the area as a consequence of the disaster to spread to other regions that also met this kind of catastrophe, either at the hands of the Goths or of some other barbaric tribes. In some cases, the innovations lasted for the next millennia and more, such as for example the development of the cult of saints as 'defenders of cities', as well as the cult of the protective power of their relics in the defense of cities and communities. It should be also stated that the Gothic Wars impacted heavily the decline of paganism and the rejection of Arianism: the former incapable to propose salvation in those times, and the latter associated with the world that failed.

¹²As Zosimus informs us, for example, the people in Athens believed that in AD 375 it was the statue of Athena that saved the city from an earthquake, while in AD 395 the appearance of Achilles and Athena stopped the barbarians – see Zosimus, *Historia nova* 5.6.1-3.

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Some Observations on the Last Architectural Design of the Porticos of the Roman *agora* in *Philippopolis*

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Abstract: In AD 251 *Philippopolis* faced destruction after the Goths captured the city and in the late 3rd – early 4th century the ancient city's *agora* underwent its final reconstruction before losing its public functions. The present paper focuses on the data for the last architectural design of the surrounding porticos which prove to be an example of the *spolia* architecture characteristic of Late Antiquity. The archaeological remains and the reconstructions of the colonnades made so far are subject to re-evaluation.

Key words: *Philippopolis*, Roman *agora*, Corinthian colonnades, arcading, *araeostyle*.

INTRODUCTION

The *agora* of *Philippopolis*, within the Roman province of Thrace, is located in the center of today's city of Plovdiv, Bulgaria. The public square is only partially studied and the excavations, which began in 1972, continue to this day. This paper intends to offer an overview of the site's history of research, main features of the architectural plan and dating for the individual construction periods. The study focuses specifically on the last reconstruction of the complex, which took place after the attack of the Goths in AD 251. Although there have been two attempts over the years to graphically restore the porticos, the interpretation of the architectural remains is problematic. Therefore, the aim of this study is to review the previous reconstructions of the porticos' façades and to research to what extent one can attempt to reconstruct the built environment after centuries of construction, collapse and reuse of architectural elements.

HISTORY OF EXCAVATION

The earliest finds related to the public square of *Philippopolis* are architectural elements discovered by chance in the first half of the 20th century and published by the then director of the Archaeological Museum of Plovdiv, D. Tsonchev (Zontschew 1943, 111-114). In 1972, rescue excavations were initiated in conjunction with the expansion of the Central Post Office of Plovdiv and as a result the *agora* of the ancient city was located. Archaeologist H. Djambov and architect M. Mateev were initially in charge of the research project for the period 1972-1980, while new rescue excavations from 1983 to 1993 required the simultaneous work of several archaeological teams. In 1999, M. Martinova resumed research in the northern part of the complex and

in the last two decades additional archaeological excavations have also been carried out by E. Kesyakova in the southeastern and western parts of the *agora*¹. The first articles by H. Djambov and M. Mateev on the results of the archaeological excavations in the southeastern sector of the *agora* were published in the last quarter of the 20th century (Djambov / Matheev 1976, 135-153; Джамбов / Матеев 1979, 47-56; Djambov / Matheev 1980, 106-121; 1983, 284-289). A number of studies have been conducted later², but there are still no complete publications on the results of the archaeological research.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The *agora* of *Philippopolis* was located in the center of the planned city in the lowlands, south of the three hills forming the *acropolis* of the ancient city (**fig. 1**). The complex occupied a rectangular area with a north-south orientation, equal to eight *insulae*. Its exterior dimensions were 136 m wide by 190 m long (Топалилов 2012, 107). The *area* was surrounded by porticos on all four sides (**fig. 2**). Rows of rooms with entrances to the *area* were built on the east, south and west sides. Monumental *propylaea* located axially on the same three sides provided access from the streets surrounding the *agora*. The north side of the complex was occupied by monumental public buildings, among which a *bouleuterion*, possibly also serving as an *odeon*, located at the easternmost end. West of the latter, a small colonnaded plaza, a library (Мартинова-Кютова 2006, 275-284) or *tabularium* (Топалилов 2012, 113-114), and two other public buildings with yet unclear functions were partially uncovered. Several architrave and cornice blocks with a building inscription, found during construction works, suggest the presence of a building associated with the provincial treasury at the western end (Ivanov / Ivanov 1983, 190-196).

Based on the described plan, architectural features and functions of the public complex, the site was identified as an *agora* (Кесякова 2004, 35-37; Топалилов 2012, 118-120) and not as a *forum* as previously thought. The first researchers studied three construction periods of the site, while subsequent archaeologists have managed to document even earlier structures, thus distinguishing four periods in the development of the *agora*. The original architectural plan of the ancient square was largely preserved until the end of its functioning as a public building. During the initial construction of the complex, a stylobate was built between the shops and the *area*; however, the remains are still insufficient to clarify the architectural layout of the porticos. The earliest period is most often dated to the pre-Roman era or before the middle of the 1st century AD (Кесякова 2004, 34; Иванов et al. 2004, 292; Топалилов 2012, 109-111; Боспачиева / Коларова 2014, 170; Кесякова 2015, 520). However, a post-Hellenistic date for the building of the *agora* has also been proposed (Динчев 2009, 65). According to recent studies, the latest coins found in the burnt layer associated with the early stylobate, which are of Domitian (Мартинова-Кютова / Райчева 2013, 318; Кесякова 2015, 520-521), set the *terminus post quem* for the time when the complex was damaged by fire.

During the first reconstruction of the *agora*, a new stylobate was built³, as a result of which the width of the covered porticos was increased from ca. 6.20 to 11.30 m (Кесякова 2004, 37). In the layout of the new stylobate, there was consistency between the axial distances

¹ Brief reports on the results of the excavations are published in the annual series "Археологически открития и разкопки" ("Archaeological Discoveries and Excavations") of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the National Archaeological Institute with Museum.

² For a more complete bibliography, see Динчев 2009, 63-69; Топалилов 2012, 106-120.

³ Since the construction of the two stylobates was identical, the question of what necessitated the making of the second one remains unclear.

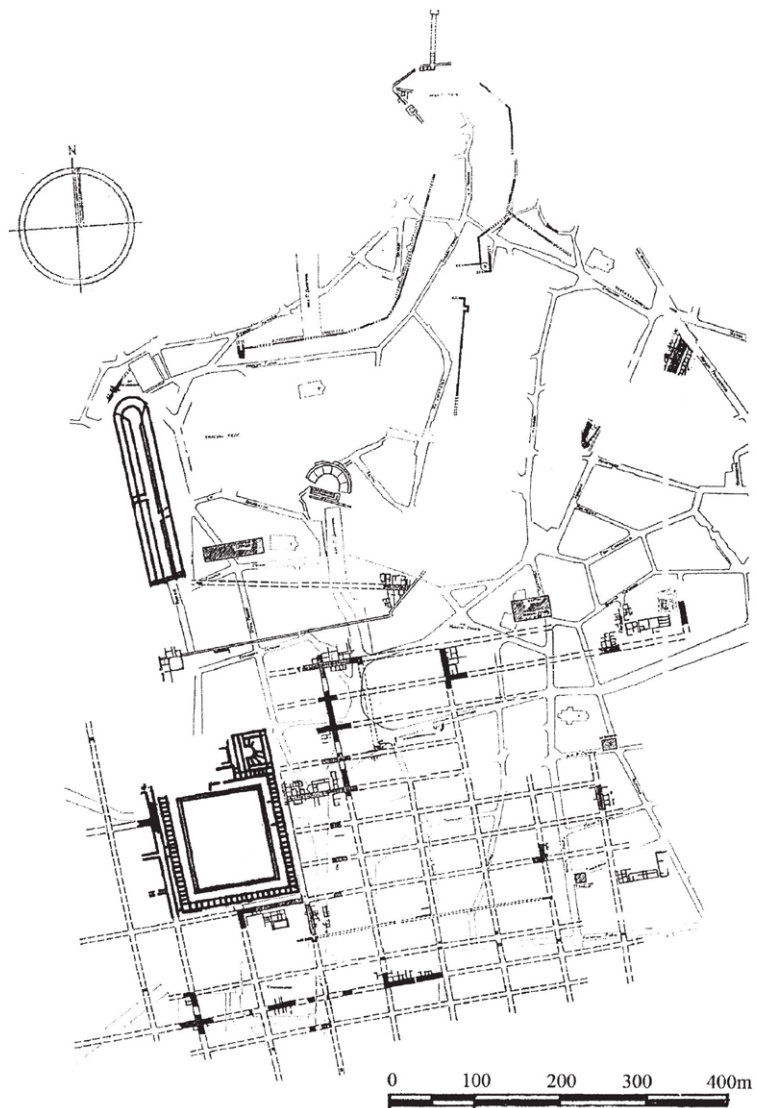


Fig. 1. Plan of *Philippopolis* (adapted from Топалилов 2012, 219, fig. 2)

of the portico and the entrances of the shops. The porticos around the *area* were each with a façade of Roman Doric columns, of which tuff bases and capitals are now preserved. The columns were spaced far apart, with interaxial dimensions of 5.92 m (Джамбов / Матеев 1979, 49; Иванов et al. 2004, 296). Researchers date the first reconstruction of the complex mainly to the end of the 1st century AD. During its second reconstruction, the level of the stylobate was raised and, according to the first researchers, the Roman Doric colonnades were replaced by marble arcaded colonnades in the Corinthian order (Djambov / Mateev 1983, 289). Later, V. Kolarova expressed doubts whether the stage of research allowed for general conclusions on the architectural appearance of the porticos during this period (Иванов et al. 2004, 299). The dating of the latter is also debatable. The third period of the development of the *agora* was set by a number of researchers in the early 2nd century (Djambov / Matheev 1976, 146-147; Кесякова 2004, 41; Боспачиева / Коларова 2014, 170). However, based on the presence of architectural elements and one building inscription suggesting construction activities in Commodus' reign, it was argued that the beginning of this period should be placed at the end of the 2nd century (Иванов et al. 2004, 293; Динчев 2009, 67). The end of the period was

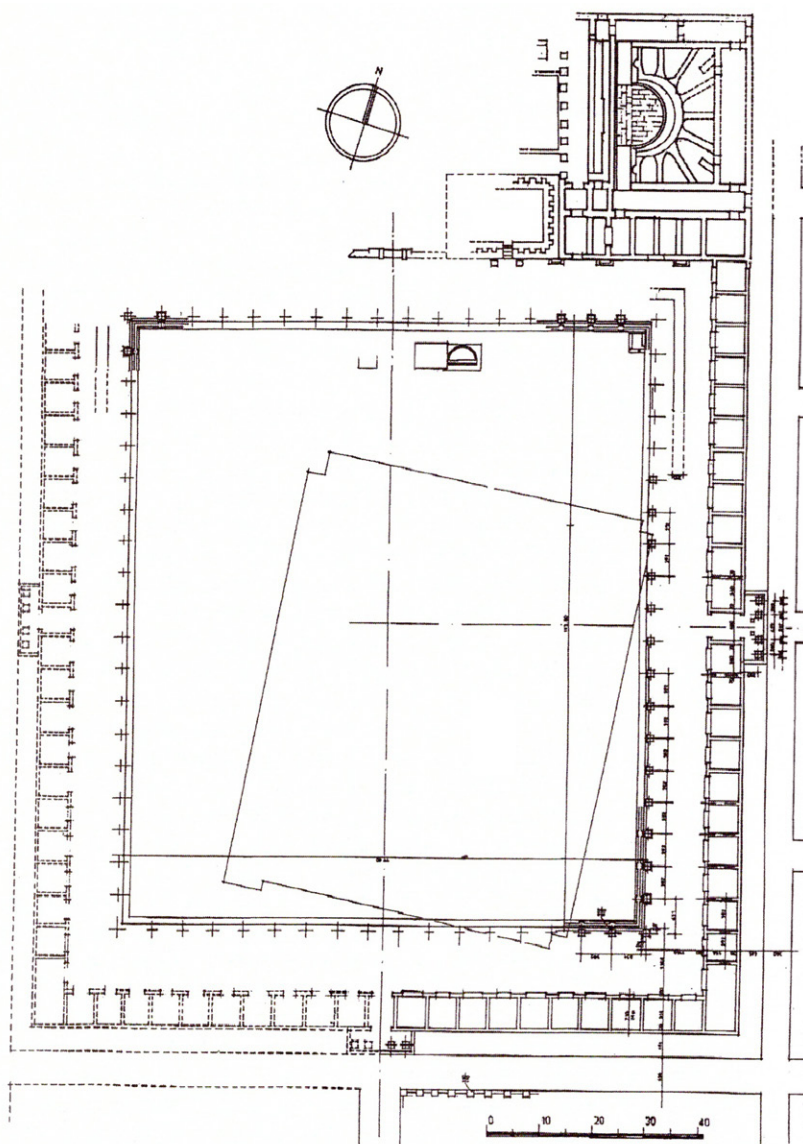
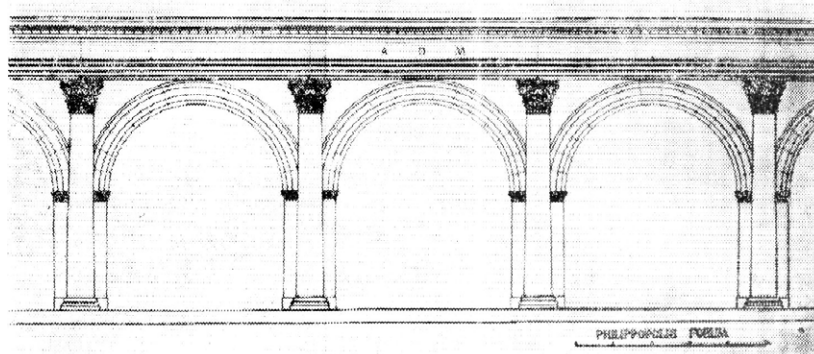


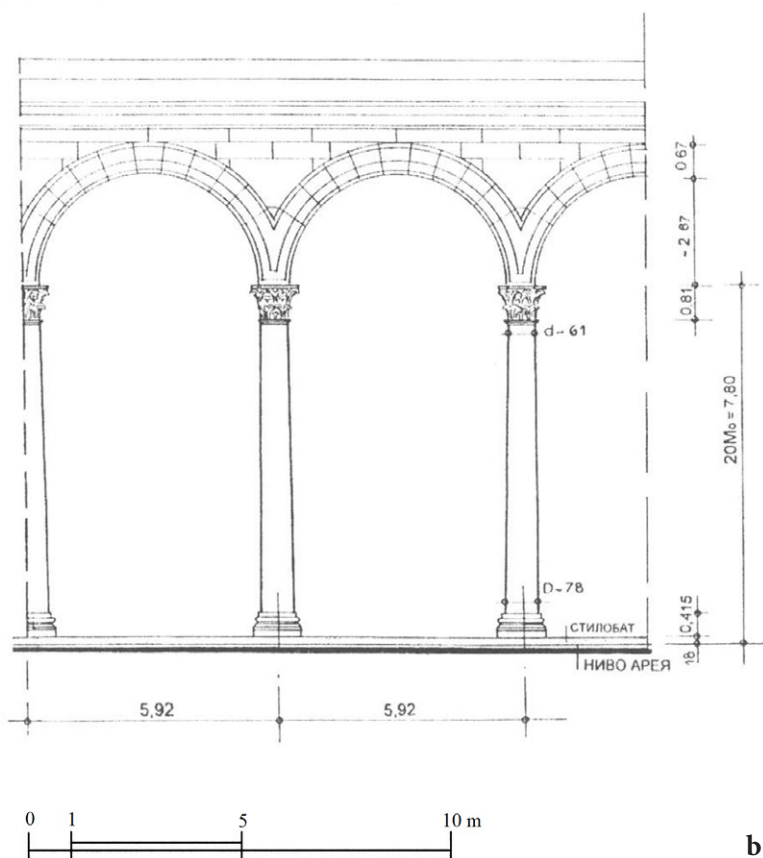
Fig. 2. Plan of the *agora* at *Philippopolis*
(Иванов et al. 2004, 292, обр. 60)

unanimously dated to the middle of the 3rd century, when the city was ravaged by the Goths in AD 251.

The restoration of the *agora* after the Gothic invasion probably took time and should be attributed to the last quarter of 3rd or the beginning of the 4th century AD (Иванов et al. 2004, 304; Динчев 2009, 68-69; Боспачиева / Коларова 2014, 170). This last large-scale reconstruction of the complex may have been associated with the city's becoming the capital of the Late antique province of Thrace. The architectural remains testify to the complete continuity in the square's general plan from the previous periods. The level of the complex and its neighboring streets was raised. The *area* and the covered porticos were paved with marble slabs and only the *propylaea* have lost their monumental layout after the middle of the 3rd century. Given the still unclear appearance of the porticos from the third construction period, the question remains whether the architectural design of the porticos received a new solution during the fourth period, or whether it was restored from the previous one. The last reconstruction of the porticos included architectural elements from different periods, many of which were probably



a



b

Fig. 3a. The reconstruction by H. Djambov and M. Mateev (1983, 289, fig. 9); **b** the reconstruction by V. Kolarova (Иванов et al. 2004, 300, обр. 76)

reused from the previous colonnades. There were also elements put in places that contradict their original purpose (Djambov / Matheev 1976, 147). According to the researchers, the porticos' façades had arcaded colonnades in the Corinthian order during the last building program. The columns were located just above the places of those from the second period (Djambov / Matheev 1980, 115; Иванов et al. 2004, 301; Боспачиева / Коларова 2014, 169) thus preserving the interaxial distance of 5.92 m. This third reconstruction of the *agora* was also its last. It was widely accepted that the *agora* lost its monumental character as a civic center in the middle of the 5th century with the invasions of the Huns. However, according to V. Dinchev (Динчев 2009, 69), this was a process that probably began decades earlier and the results of recent excavations give researchers reason to shift the end of the public functions of the complex to the late 4th – early 5th century (Мартинова-Кютова / Райчева 2013, 319; Кесякова 2014, 400).

THE RECONSTRUCTIONS

Images of the first graphic reconstructions of the Corinthian colonnades surrounding the *area* were published by H. Djambov and M. Mateev (1976, 149, fig. 16; 1980, 117, fig. 19; 1983, 289, fig. 9). However, they lack an accompanying description and analysis of the architectural elements and the method by which the construction of the colonnades was restored. According to these images, the vertical supports of the colonnades were piers with engaged half-columns which framed the arches (**fig. 3a**). The entablature of the façade was projected out over the half-columns.

More than twenty years later, a new graphic reconstruction of the last architectural layout of the *agora*'s porticos was proposed (Иванов et al. 2004, 300, обр. 76). According to its author, architect V. Kolarova, the remains of the architectural elements have been the subject of a complete inventory, the results of which proved the hypothetical nature of the originally published reconstruction. The new design of the porticos used free-standing columns on which the arches stepped directly (**fig. 3b**). Five Attic-Ionic bases for free-standing columns were actually found *in situ* along the northern stylobate (**fig. 4a**). Their workmanship and the inscriptions engraved on their plinths suggest a date in the second half of the 2nd century (Илпаранков 2006, 195) and therefore suggest that they have been reused (Иванов et al. 2004, 299; Кесякова 2004, 19-20). In the northeast corner of the stylobate, two bases for half-column piers, oriented to the west and south, were also found *in situ*, and at least one of them has a later date corresponding to the fourth period of the development of the *agora* (**fig. 4b**). Tightly paired profiled blocks have been found between some of these bases along the northern stylobate (**fig. 4c**), on which railings are supposed to have been erected (Иванов et al. 2004, 303).

The shafts of the marble columns were monolithic and smooth. The total height of the column – from the level of the stylobate to the springing level of the arch, was calculated at 7.62 m with a lower diameter of 0.78 m (Иванов et al. 2004, 300, обр. 76). E. Kesyakova (Кесякова 2004, 20), on the other hand, assumed the height of the column to be 7.04 m with a lower diameter of 0.90 m. Information on the type of capitals was scarce. However, single fragments of Corinthian capitals have been found and generally dated to the 2nd century. They were included in the reconstructions of the porticos due to their consistency with the dimensions of the columns and voussoirs of the arches (**fig. 4d**). The application of the Corinthian order was also evidenced by the discovered parts of Corinthian cornice, dated by V. Kolarova at the end of the 3rd – 4th century (Иванов et al. 2004, 302). The analysis of V. Kolarova concluded that the arcades on free-standing columns, which were less frequently used during the Roman period, and the specifics of the architectural elements correspond to the dating of the last restoration of the *agora*.

THE EVIDENCE RECONSIDERED

As discussed above, according to the reconstruction of H. Djambov and M. Mateev, the façade of the porticos was built of piers with engaged half-columns. Although this type of arcade was typical of Roman imperial architecture, especially in façades of theaters and amphitheaters, the remains and architectural elements found at the site do not



Fig. 4. Architectural elements found in the *agora*: **a** Attic-Ionic base found *in situ* along the northern stylobate; **b** half-column pier, oriented to the south, found in the northeast corner of the stylobate; **c** profiled blocks between two bases along the northern stylobate, view from north; **d** marble voussoir (photos: P. Dakasheva)

support the existence of such construction. Therefore, V. Kolarova was right in stating that this reconstruction was purely hypothetical. As a result of her own research, the façades were then restored with free-standing columns carrying arches. However, this interpretation of the archaeological remains is also problematic, which necessitates a re-examination of the available data.

We will begin with an overview of the hitherto known public buildings from the Roman period, in which free-standing columns carrying architrave-molded arches in place of the traditional flat architrave were used⁴. In “Roman imperial architecture” by J. B. Ward-Perkins, we find the earliest monument in which this feature was applied, if indeed the building was rightly dated to the early 2nd century AD: the basilica on the *forum* at *Doclea* in Dalmatia where arcading was used in the two transverse screens (Ward-Perkins 1994, 252-253). According to the author, however, the first clearly attested example in monumental architecture is the case of the great Temple of Hadrian at *Cyzicus* in Asia Minor which was completed in AD 139 and re-dedicated in AD 167 after an earthquake (Ward-Perkins 1994, 281-282). Unfortunately, it is not yet clear exactly where the columns carrying arches stood. The first and so far the only case of large-scale application of arcading in place of the horizontal architraves of normal classical practice are the Severan *forum* and the

⁴ The use of arcades on free-standing supports can be found on a smaller scale in *Pompeii* (Ward-Perkins 1948, 71) and in the residential architecture of Roman and Late antique *Ostia* (Ward-Perkins 1994, 193, 210-212; Gros 1996, 111).



Fig. 5a. The western side of the stylobate with partially restored colonnade, view from east; **b** Corinthian capital discovered during excavations conducted by E. Kesyakova in the western part of the *agora* (photos: P. Dakasheva)

Colonnaded Street of *Lepcis Magna* in North Africa (Ward-Perkins 1994, 389-391; Gros 1996, 112). Based on the masonry and the characteristically Asiatic architectural ornament, it was assumed that the architect of the Severan buildings probably came from north-western Asia Minor. In the 3rd century, there are another two examples of the use of this motif in North Africa – in the Market of *Sertius* at *Thamugadi* and in the Licinian baths at *Thugga* (Ward-Perkins 1994, 395, 398). The very beginning of the 4th century marked the next well-known use of arches instead of flat architraves in the Dalmatian palace of Diocletian at *Spalatum*. This can be seen in the so-called “Peristyle”, which was part of the north-south street leading up to the residence proper. The Peristyle had arcaded colonnades on both sides and here, as in the case of *Lepcis Magna*, an architect from the eastern provinces was employed in the building project (Ward-Perkins 1994, 454-459).

As can be seen, the use of arches on free-standing columns was sporadic during the Roman imperial period. This structural innovation, which clearly broke with Classical tradition, became wide-

spread after the 4th century and was characteristic of Byzantine, Romanesque and Renaissance architecture (Ward-Perkins 1948, 71; Попов / Иванова 1976, 14, 63; Gros 1996, 112). It should be noted that in Thrace arcading was used in the so-called *Forum of Augusta Traiana*. It is difficult to discuss its architectural design, as there is no complete publication of the site and while the building of the distinctive *cavea* of the complex, with a colonnade above it, dated back to the early 4th century, the architectural details have been dated to the late 2nd – early 3rd century (Димитров 2007b, 218-221; Петрова 2009, 293). Nevertheless, the reconstruction of the arches, standing on a number of double columns, was possible thanks to voussoirs and springers found at the site. As for the reconstruction of the porticos at *Philippopolis*, the problem lies not so much in the rarity of monuments with this feature, as in the scale of the structure itself and in the nature of the preserved remains. Given that the colonnades at *Philippopolis* enclosed an *area* measuring 113.40 by 99.60 m (Кесякова 2004, 37; Топалилов 2012, 112), their proportions should be compared with those of the public buildings at *Lepcis Magna*. However, the interaxial dimensions (ca. 3.15 m) and the rise of the arches (ca. 1 m) of the Severan *forum* and Colonnaded Street (Ward-Perkins 1993, 9-15, 71-72) were about twice smaller than those of the public square of *Philippopolis* according to its last reconstruction (5.92 by ca. 2.67 m). Although located on a smaller area, the colonnades of the Peristyle at *Spalatum* (Sanders 1989, pl. 2.6) had similar parameters to those registered in *Lepcis Magna*. There is still a similarity between the monuments of *Philippopolis* and *Spalatum*, namely the presence of profiled blocks between the columns, with traces indicating that balustrades were erected there (Sanders 1989, 22).

The wide spacing of the columns in the *agora* at *Philippopolis* is a problem in itself. The diameter of the flare at the bottom of the column shaft is ca. 0.83-5 m⁵, and the interaxial distance is 5.82-5.92 m⁶. The spacing of the bases in the northeast corner of the stylobate is even greater (ca. 6.30 m). This results in an intercolumniation of more than 6 times the probable lower diameter of the column shaft (ca. 0.75 m) and thus in a composition called *araeostyle*⁷. On the one hand, in sync with Republican tradition, Vitruvius recommends greater widths between the columns of the porticos of a Roman *forum*, unlike Greek practice where closely spaced columns and entablatures of stone were characteristic (*De Arch.* 5.1.1, 5.1.2). On the other hand, he disapproves of the *araeostyle* as one of the five types of temple design, in which, due to the large distance between the columns, no stone or marble can be used for the architraves (*De Arch.* 3.3.5)⁸. The basilica at the north side of the Upper *Agora* at *Ephesus* offers a glimpse into the intriguing processes of experimentation in architecture in the early 1st century AD. The Ionic capitals in the lower storey were widened on both sides with a protruding bull's head, in order to increase their load-bearing surface and to support the marble architraves after the columns were initially placed about 5 m apart (Stinson 2007, 93, 99, Abb. 4). At the same time, wooden beams paired with stone columns were indeed used in Roman practice as they were capable of longer free spans (Lancaster / Ulrich 2014, 181). There are cases of widely spaced columns in public porticos, as in *Ostia* (Lavan 2012, 675) and *Corinthus* (Stillwell / Fowler

⁵ The diameter of the flare was calculated on the basis of the incisions on the upper surface of the bases.

⁶ New measurements were taken as part of the study conducted by the author of this article.

⁷ The widest intercolumnar spacing equal to more than three column diameters.

⁸ There are examples of *araeostyle* compositions on a smaller scale during the Roman period, which allowed the spans to be covered with stone architraves (Kanellopoulos / Zavvou 2014, 373).

1932, 149), with possible coverage of wooden architraves. Ultimately, at this stage of the research, it remains unclear why the columns from the last architectural design of the *agora* repeated the rhythm of those from the second construction period, especially since colonnades with stone entablatures with a corresponding reduction in intercolumnar spans became dominant in Roman imperial architecture (Lancaster / Ulrich 2014, 181). In addition, the columns have been Corinthian, the most popular type of columns from the time of Augustus onwards, which were more commonly used in closely spaced compositions (Stamper 2005, 154).

Thus, the proposed reconstruction of the porticos at *Philippopolis*, using arches on free-standing columns of unparalleled scale, should be revised. So far, no springers have been found at site, and the six marble voussoirs discovered in the first years of the archaeological research could have been used elsewhere⁹, such as at the monumental entrances to the complex or in the northeast corner of the stylobate. There is scarce data on a possible reconstruction of the *propylaea* made of marble, so we draw attention to the specific layout of the colonnade in its northeast corner. In Hellenistic and Roman times, a heart-shaped pillar was most commonly used at a re-entrant angle while the rest of the supports remained free-standing columns (Димитров 2007b, 31), as is the case in the Severan *forum* of *Lepcis Magna* (Ward-Perkins 1993, 10, fig. 5). In *Philippopolis*, however, on both sides of the partially preserved corner base, at the end of each angular intercolumniation, there is a base for half-column pier. Therefore, due to the presence of constituent architectural elements, it could be hypothesized that the northeast and possibly the northwest corners of the *area* were formed by pairs of arched passages. While the top of the presumed arches can be expected to be equal to the height of the column, the type of bases and supports on which their heels should rest remains questionable. Although such elements are not preserved, the presence of adjacent details is evident by traces of processing on the back of the bases for half-column piers.

The bases found at the site can be divided into three groups, which consist of: the reused Attic-Ionic bases which date back to the second half of the 2nd century; two sandstone cornice blocks which, according to a photograph of 1976 (Djambov / Matheev 1976, fig. 6), were likely reused as bases on the eastern stylobate; and a small number of bases which can be dated to the last quarter of the 3rd – beginning of the 4th century. Larger parts of columns are missing. The few discovered Corinthian capitals, together with one recently found in the western part of the site (**fig. 5a, b**), which has not yet been published¹⁰, can be dated to the Antonine period. Although the covering of the columns in the porticos remains unclear, no fitting marble architraves have been found and it is likely that they were made of wood. It should also be emphasized that the affiliation of the previously mentioned Corinthian cornices to a particular building on the *agora* is uncertain. In addition, although the cornice blocks are dated by V. Kolarova to the end of the 3rd – 4th century, they are in fact not later than the Severan period. The various marble elements indicate that, in addition to the main construction periods, the probable presence of repairs or partial replacements must be taken into account¹¹.

⁹ The new interpretation can be supported by two sandstone voussoirs recently discovered in the western part of the *agora*, which show that similar details were used in previous construction phases.

¹⁰ I would like to thank Elena Kesyakova for the permission to study the material.

¹¹ The idea has already been put forward by Z. Dimitrov (Димитров 2009, 100) and I. Topalilov (Топалилов 2012, 114-115).

CONCLUSION

The military crisis of the 3rd century and the subsequent decline of the marble trade led to an era of recycling (Wilson Jones 2000, 152). In Late Antiquity, it was more common for the *fora* and *agorai* to be repaired than to be built anew and construction activities were especially common in the eastern provinces of the empire (Lavan 2006, 202-204). We still do not know to what extent the *agora* at *Philippopolis* was damaged during the Gothic attack of AD 251, but based on the *spolia* colonnades of the last porticos it becomes clear that no newly produced details can be sought for large-scale construction.

The reassessment of the graphic reconstructions of the porticos' façades concluded that they do not correspond to either the archaeological remains or the historical background. The rarely used in Roman times technique of raising arches over free-standing columns of a continuous colonnade, as well as the wide spacing of the supports and the uncertain nature and affiliation of some of the architectural elements, allow the idea of arcades surrounding the *area* to be questioned. Future research should examine the intent behind the extremely wide interaxial dimension of the colonnades, as well as how they were actually covered, which in turn would clarify the appearance of the façades in the late 3rd – early 4th century.

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Specificities of the Fortification System of *Philippopolis* during the Early Byzantine Era (5th – 6th centuries AD)

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Abstract: This article examines the specific features of the Early Byzantine fortification system of *Philippopolis* (present-day Plovdiv, Bulgaria). The city suffered from the Hunnic attacks in Thrace in the mid-5th century AD. It required a new fortification wall to be built to protect the population. An internal fortification ring was built in the 5th – 6th centuries, which made use of the three hills that were naturally difficult to access – Nebet Tepe, Dzhambaz Tepe and Taksim Tepe – forming together a crescent-shaped rock massif known as *Trimontium*. The authors of this paper present the results from the latest archaeological excavations and a summary of the topography of the fortified sites, the technical parameters of the fortification wall, and the shape of the towers. They also offer a 3D reconstruction of the "Round Tower with *Proteichisma*" complex. And finally, the article draws some conclusions regarding the topographic development of *Philippopolis* in the 5th–6th centuries.

Key words: *provincia Thracia*, *Philippopolis*, Early Byzantine fortress.

The fortification system of *Philippopolis* serves as the framework for the topographic development of the ancient city during the different periods of its existence. It has been studied by a number of authors (see, for instance: Цончев 1938; Botoucharova / Kesjakova, 1980; Кесякова 2001; Боспачиева / Коларова 2014; Мартинова-Кютова 2008a). After many years of excavations and research, archaeologists have reached an agreement regarding the construction periods of the fortification system. The earliest fortification walls from the Hellenistic period have been unearthed on Nebet Tepe, one of the three hills forming the *Trimontium*, the *acropolis* of the ancient city (fig. 1/1). It was only during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, in AD 172 (Филов 1915, 9-21), that a new fortification wall was built in order to integrate the *Trimontium* and a large part of the lower city into a single fortification system. The main concern of the city authorities was the maintenance and repair of the city's defence system in relation to the intensifying barbarian invasions in the mid-3rd century AD and particularly after AD 251 when *Philippopolis* was devastated by the Goths.

The principle of integrating the lower city and the *acropolis* into a single fortification system was also at work in the 4th century AD. Substantial reconstruction works were carried out mainly in the city gates. When finalizing the complex of the Eastern Gate in the second half of the 5th century, a statue of Basiliscus, the future em-

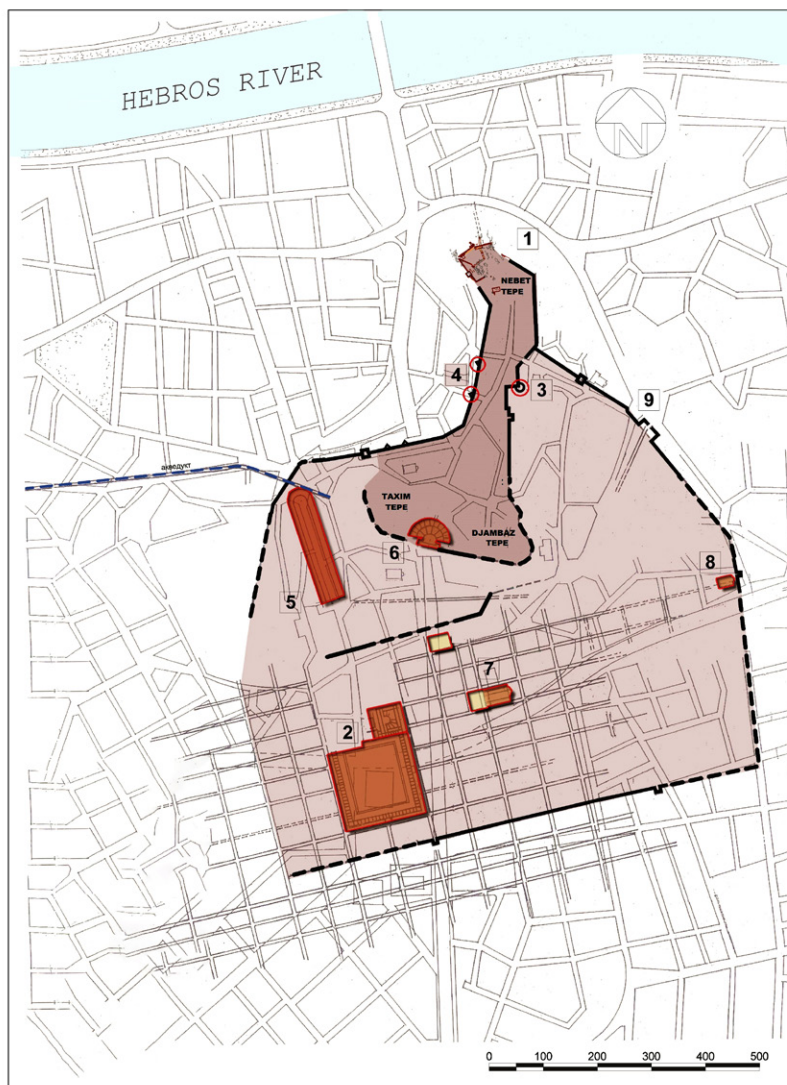


Fig. 1. Plan of *Philippopolis* in the 4th – 6th centuries: 1 Nebet Tepe; 2 Agora; 3 “Round Tower with *Proteichisma*” complex; 4 Early Byzantine fortification wall with triangular towers; 5 Stadium; 6 Theatre; 7 Episcopal Basilica; 8 Small Basilica; 9 Eastern Gate (M. Martinova-Kyutova, D. Mushtanova)

peror (AD 475–476), was erected (fig. 1/9). The pedestal of the statue with a dedicatory inscription was found precisely at this location (Beševliev 1964, 206). The construction of rectangular towers, dated by archaeologists to the 5th century (Botoucharova / Kesjakova 1983, 270–271), represented, indeed, the last efforts to maintain the fortification facilities in the lowlands.

The attacks of the Huns in Thrace from the middle of the 5th century AD reached *Philippopolis*. This circumstance urged the strengthening and reconstruction of the fortification system of the city. An inner fortification ring of *Philippopolis* was built in the 5th–6th centuries AD (Кесякова 2001, 52–66), which encompassed the three hills.

The Early Byzantine fortification wall consisted of a newly built sector along the eastern slopes of the *Trimontium* and of another one which strengthened the sector dating from the 2nd – 4th century AD (Мартинова-Кютова 2008а, 115–128), running on the western slopes and as superstructure building up on earlier fortification walls.

NEBET TEPE

On the Nebet Tepe hill, a number of repairs, superstructures and expansions of the earlier Hellenistic and Roman fortification walls have been identified, all of which executed in the *opus mixtum* technique



Fig. 2. The Early Byzantine fortification wall with the entrance to the Round Tower (photo: M. Martinova-Kyutova)

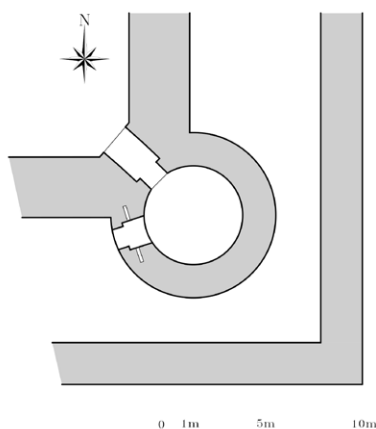


Fig. 3. Plan of the Early Byzantine fortification wall and the “Round Tower with *Proteichisma*” complex (drawing: G. Pirovska)

and dating to the 5th – 6th centuries (**fig. 1/1**) (Kolarova / Bospachieva 2005, 69-83).

The course of the newly constructed sector along the eastern slopes of the *Trimontium* followed the configuration of the terrain, and the foundation of the wall was adjoined to the rock massif. The 3.20 m wide fortification wall was built in the *opus mixtum* technique, with brick bands of 5 rows each. The bricks measure 34 cm x 34 cm x 4 cm and the joints have the same thickness as the bricks. The brick band is 45 cm high and runs along the entire width of the wall.

A round tower was built in the bend of the fortification wall, from where the sentries could observe in all directions and defend the city in an optimal way (**fig. 1/3**). A *proteichisma* was built at a distance of 6 m from the curtain wall and 1.50 m from the tower, duplicating the right angle of the main course (**fig. 3**). It is 2.20 m wide, constructed in the *opus mixtum*, identical to that of the wall (**fig. 2**). The round tower has an inner diameter of 5.20 m and an outer diameter of 8.70 m (**fig. 3**). The tower wall, 1.75 m in width, is in the *opus mixtum*.

The entrance to the tower is at the oblique corner of the fortress wall, securing a structural connection between the fortification wall and the tower (**fig. 4**). This is a vaulted brickwork entrance. There is

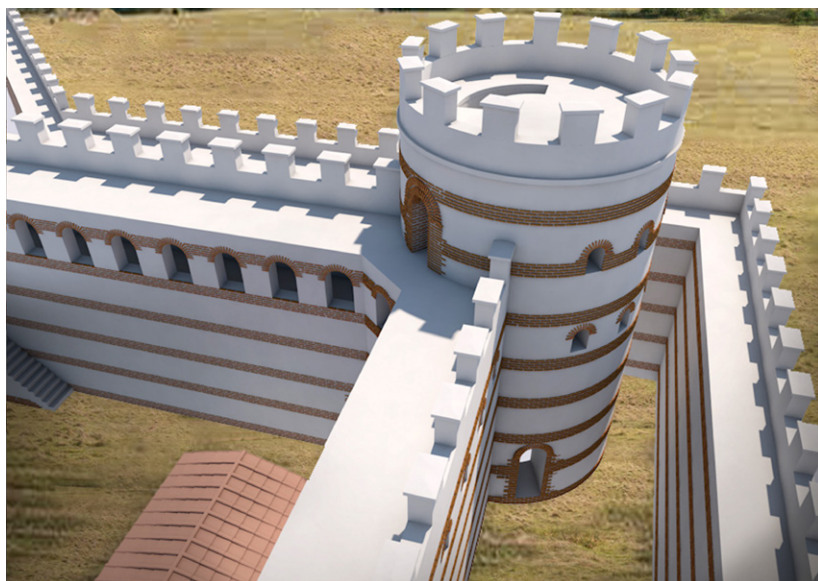


Fig. 4. 3D Reconstruction of the “Round Tower with *Proteichisma*” complex (design: G. Pirovska)

a second entrance, 1.00 m wide, in the tower, which leads to the open space between the wall and the *proteichisma*. The syenite threshold and the brick walls, with traces of openings for the door bars, have been preserved (Боспачиева / Коларова 2014, 49-50).

The roofed gallery was accessed along steps adjoined to the inner side of the curtain wall (**fig. 4**). At this level, there was another flight of steps leading to the battle wall-walk. The battle wall-walk above the tower could be reached along a wooden ladder (**fig. 5**).

Walk-through premises, which might have been barracks, were localised inside the fortress.

The *proteichisma*, built in front of the main fortification wall, provided a second protection line against the enemy, a tactical watch point and an open protected space. The round tower in the bend of the fortification wall ensured an all-round vista for defence purposes. Probably there was a similar tower east of the entrance to the fortress (present-day Hisar Kapiya) (Джамбов 1959, 165-172). Impressive remains from the Round Tower and the fortification wall have survived to the present and can be seen today in the yard of the St. Constantine and St. Elena Church. A sector of the fortification wall was uncovered in 2007 (Мартинова-Кютова 2008b, 401). It is in the immediate vicinity of the Early Byzantine complex of the “Round Tower with a *Proteichisma*”. Here again the fortification wall, built *a fundamentis*, was based on the rock massif.

The joints between the stones were almost always plastered with mortar. Horizontal or vertical lines imitating *quadrae* were drawn onto the plaster. All this imparted an artistic and delightful look to the flat and decoration-free surfaces. This construction technique has been attested also in other excavated sectors of the fortification wall (Боспачиева / Коларова 2014, 49; Мартинова-Кютова 2010).

THE SECTOR ALONG THE WESTERN SLOPE OF THE *TRIMONTIUM*

A 30 m long sector of the fortification wall was unearthed and displayed in this place. A 4.5 m wide wall in *opus mixtum* was appended to the external face of the Marcus Aurelius fortification wall built of syenite *quadrae*. Here the fortification wall was abutted by thicken-

Fig. 5. 3D Reconstruction of the “Round Tower with *Proteichisma*” complex (design: G. Pirovska)



ing the curtain wall and the building of triangular towers (**fig. 1/4**) (Кесякова 2001, 55).

These were structurally connected with the curtain wall and are in the shape of an isosceles triangle. The walls are 7.80 m long and 1.55 m thick.

Between the triangular towers, there were buttresses, protruding to 1.70 m in front of the outer side of the fortification wall. They were erected on the rock massif, and are 3.50 to 5.30 m wide (Боспачиева / Коларова 2014, 85).

CONCLUSIONS

The solid fortifications built at the high points of the *Trimontium* were used as a shelter for the population in the vicinity during enemy attacks. The sheer cliffs, representing natural protection along the three hills, and the proximity of the *Hebros* River were major considerations when selecting the location of the fortification wall. Their dating is associated with the large-scale construction program of Justinian I (AD 527-565) for fortifications in many Thracian cities, including *Philippopolis*.

The new fortification walls enclose an area of 35 ha. The Agora, the Stadium, the Episcopal Basilica and the Small Basilica, the rich aristocratic houses in the low lands remained outside the fortified territory of the city (**fig. 1**).

The latest fortification facility was built in the late 6th – early 7th c. This might have had to do with the attacks of the Avars of AD 587. A fortification wall was erected at the southern foot of the Three Hills, where many marble seats, order elements from public Roman buildings – the theater, the stadium, the baths, etc. – were re-used as *spolia*.

Yet, even the reduced protected area of *Philippopolis* ranks the city among the largest cities on the Balkans, the capital of the province of Thrace in Late Antiquity.

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Bath Conversion into Churches from Late Antiquity: A Case Study from the Diocese of *Thracia*¹

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Abstract: Late Antiquity brought a gradual change in the way of life in ancient cities. During this period, cities experienced a number of upheavals related to plague epidemics, earthquakes, barbarian invasions, disrupted communication routes and the rise of a new religion – Christianity. Gradually, the large baths which were part of the representative urban architecture would disappear, and the landscape would be dominated by ecclesiastic architecture. Could the reason behind the conversion of such buildings into churches be sought into a conflict arising from the introduction of the new religion? The present study² aims to trace the change of habit and lifestyle of people in the diocese of *Thracia* during Late Antiquity.

Key words: Late Antique Thrace, baths, *thermae*, conversion, Christianity.

Many researchers consider AD 313 as the starting point of intense church construction that was carried out along with the demolition of temples, entertainment buildings, baths, and even sculptures. According to this view, it is absolutely impossible for structures related to pagan heritage to be still functional after the rise of Christianity. Furthermore, the massive Gothic invasion of AD 376-378 caused serious destruction to the cities all over the diocese of *Thracia*, which is located on the territory of the Eastern Balkans. Two years later, Theodosius I (379-395) anathematized and forbid pagan cults and Christianity became the only official religion in the whole Empire. And even if some pagan buildings happened to survive these events, it is considered that all of them must have been definitely destroyed after the disaster of the invasion of the Huns in AD 447 (Иванов 2019, 233-258; 2020, 449-454).

There are several general studies regarding ancient bath buildings in Thrace. In 2006, a summarizing article by Stefan Boyadzhiev about the then-known *thermae* from present-day Bulgarian lands was published, in which he mentions the first ever published study of an excavated bath building in Bulgaria – in *Aquae Calidae* in 1910 (Филлов 1910, 216-217; Бояджиев 2006, 37). For the province of *Scythia*, the study of Alexandru Suceveanu was a very important one, but it covers only one site – *Histria* (Suceveanu 1982). Krasimira Vacheva published a number of articles related to baths³ in Thrace, and in 2010 a bibliography on the ancient baths from Bulgaria was written, containing information up to 2003, which included 117 baths (Watschewa 2010, 8). Ventsislav Dinchev's article about the baths from *Serdica* is also crucial for the present study, and will be used further in the analysis

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² During the early stages of my research on baths in Thrace in Late Antiquity, it became clear that this article should focus on conversions of baths into churches only, because the entire problem is too vast to be fully considered.

³ Not all of the author's publications are listed here.

of the examined buildings from that city (Динчев 2011, 101-124). A thoroughly published bath building is the one from *Novae* (Biernacki 2016). The latest general article considering baths and bathing from Late Antiquity from the territory of present-day Bulgaria is published recently (Иванов 2022)⁴. So far, the topic of bath conversion into churches itself has not been studied independently for the territory of Thrace. From the territory of present-day Bulgaria there are a few more sites that display similar characteristics, but they are not part of the diocese of *Thracia* in Late Antiquity and because of that will be only mentioned as parallels in this article.

An important issue that needs to be addressed from the start is the commonly used terminology: bath/*balneum*/*thermae*. It seems that no rules existed as to when a bath should be called a *balneum* or *thermae* (Yegül 2014, 300). This, as will be discussed below, is a particularly important clarification when the fate of the building is considered. On the one hand, we are uncertain about the appropriate term with which private bathing buildings should be named, and on the other hand – without being able to use the correct terminology, we cannot be sure of the interpretation and chronology. Probably the most secure way to make the differentiation is based upon the size and ownership of the facility. However, one major problem related to these buildings (baths) is the high costs of construction and maintenance which usually depended on private patronage. With regard to the problem of baths turned into churches, J. B. Kullberg (2016, 154-155) rightly raises two important questions – once again, who owns them?; and why was it precisely bathhouses that were turned into churches? In the absence of epigraphic or other data, the latter question is very difficult to answer.

AUGUSTA TRAIANA

So far, four ancient baths are known from *Augusta Traiana* (today Stara Zagora) located in the province of Thrace: the ancient *thermae* of the city (Pillinger et al. 2016a, 122-125; 2016b, Taf. 71) (**fig. 1, # 1; fig. 2**), which are located next to the Southwest gate, and are assumed to have in fact been a *gymnasium* (Popova 2017; 57-96); a private bath located at 29 Zhelezni Vrata Str. site (Буюклиев / Калчев 2001, 109) (**fig. 1, # 11**); a bath at Mladezhki Dom (Pillinger et al. 2016a, 135-138; 2016b, Abb. 237-244) (**fig. 1, # 3**); a bath in a *villa suburbana* (Pillinger et al. 2016a, 160-163; 2016b, Taf. 108-110) (**fig. 1, # 10**).

The remains of the city's *thermae* are located right next to the Southwest gate of the city and a church was built within them (**fig. 1, # 1; fig. 2**) at the end of the 4th – the beginning of the 5th century AD (Камишева / Янков 2014, 406) or in the second half of the 5th century AD (Николов 1976, 45). The original construction of the *thermae* has been dated to the end of the 2nd – the beginning of the 3rd century AD (Бояджиев 2006, 66). There is almost no other data available about this site, which lacks a full publication. The aqueduct in *Augusta Traiana* functioned up to the end of the 6th century AD (Църов 2017, 149).

KOVACHEVSKO KALE

In scientific literature, there are different opinions regarding the identification of the Late Antique fortress known as Kovachevsko kale, which are not the subject of this article (Динчев 2013, 454-478; Йорданов 2023, 115-140). The site is located in the province of

⁴ Two dissertations that address various issues related to ancient baths from Bulgaria are at an advanced stage of research: Elena Nikolova – “The Roman baths in *Moesia* and *Thracia* 1st – 4th c.” (Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Bulgaria); Maria Avramova – “Thermalism in Roman Thrace 1st – 4th c.” (Antiquity of Southeastern Europe Research Center, University of Warsaw, Poland). I would like to express my gratitude to them for the information provided and the guidelines for working on this topic.

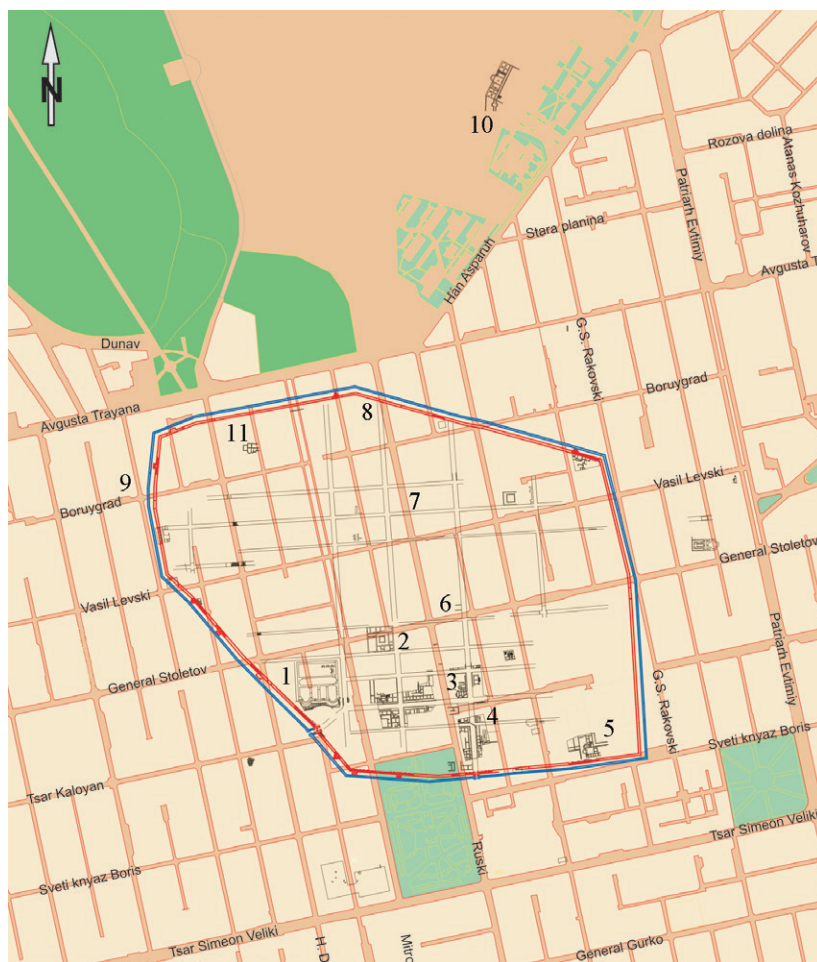
Fig. 1. Plan of *Augusta Traiana* with its baths (after Pillininger et al. 2016b, Abb. 199):

1 *Thermae*

3 “*Mladezhki dom*” site

10 *Villa suburbana*

11 Private bath at 29 Zhelezni vrata Str. site



Moesia II. During recent research, an ancient bathing building was discovered, where two consecutive basilicas were built upon part of it (Александров⁵ 2023, 9-12). The functioning of the *balneum* is dated after AD 324 up to AD 376-382, after which the construction of the earlier basilica began (fig. 3). It functioned until the Hunnic invasions of the mid-5th century (ibid., 18-19). Under the basilica, several rooms in a row were recorded, which were part of the bath, but it was not possible to further specify their function (ibid., 9). It is important to point out that above the western half of the bath there was a single building (that was dismantled), dating from the same time as the earlier church – the end of the 4th / the beginning of the 5th century AD, and functional until the AD 440s (Александров 2019, 8-9). For the time being, it remains unclear whether the construction of the church began immediately after the demolition of the bathhouse.

BATHS CONVERTED INTO CHURCHES FROM THE EMPIRE

So far, there are only a few certain examples of transformation of baths into churches from the Empire (fig. 4):

1. Constantinople (Kalenderhane camii) (Istanbul, Turkey) – 5th / 6th c. AD (Kullberg 2016, 146);

2. Thessaloniki (St. Demetrios church) (Greece) – 5th c. AD (Kullberg 2016, 151);

3. *Labraunda* (Caria, Turkey) – beginning of the 5th c. AD (Kullberg 2016, 151);

⁵ I would like to express my gratitude to Assoc. Prof. Oleg Alexandrov, Veliko Tarnovo University “St. St. Cyril and Methodius”, researcher of the site, for giving me the opportunity to use his image.

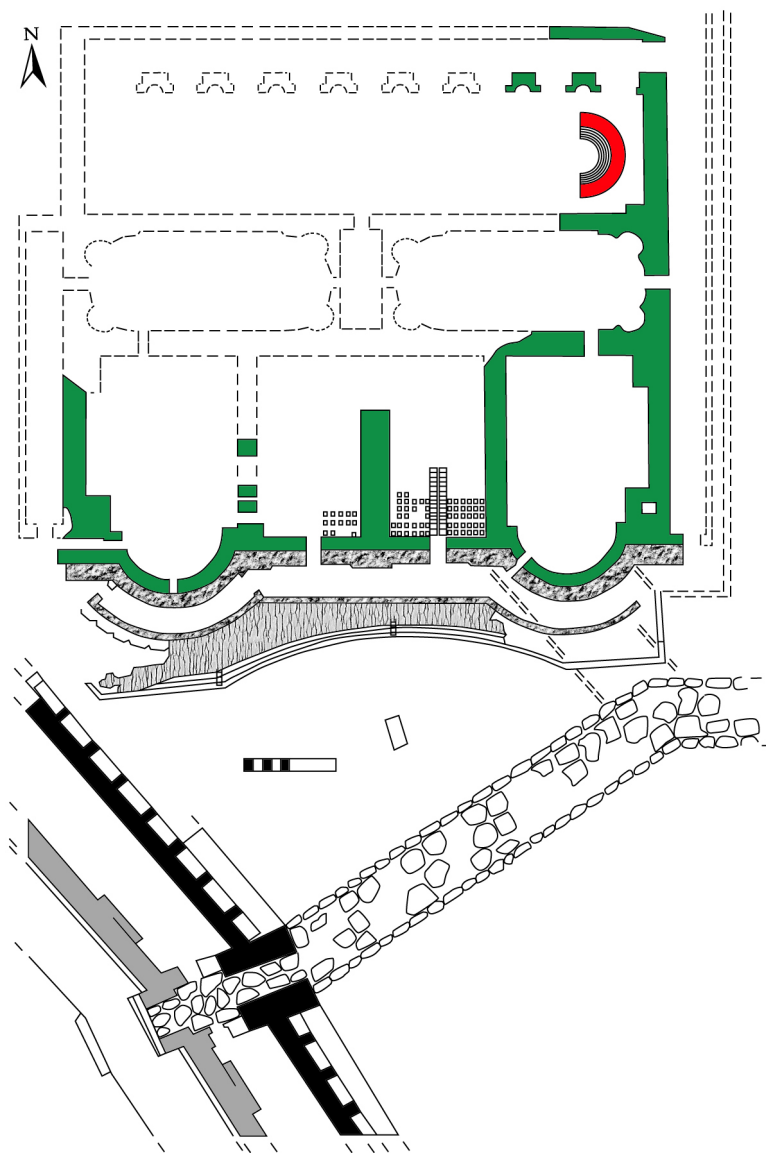


Fig. 2. Ground plan of the *thermae* of *Augusta Traiana*.
(after Nikolov 1987, 102;
additions and design by A. Ivanov)

4. *Hierapolis* (Phrygia, Turkey) – first quarter of the 5th c. AD (Kullberg 2016, 152);

5. *Tlos* (Lycia, Turkey) – 12th c. AD (Gülşen 2012, 128);

6. *Ostia* (Baths of Mithras) (Italy) – uncertain (Maréchal 2020, 120-121);

7. *Rome* (Baths of Diocletian) (Italy) – 11th c. AD (Yegul 1992, 317; 2010, 202-203);

8. *Rome* (Baths of Novatianus) (Italy) – 4th / 5th c. AD (Maréchal 2020, 99-101);

9. *Mactaris* (The West Baths) (Maktar, Tunisia) – 4th / 5th c. AD (Maréchal 2020, 365);

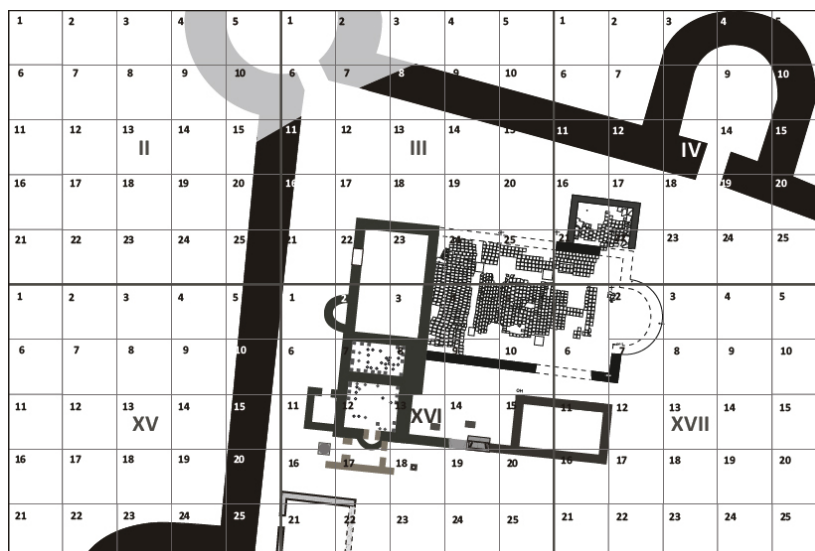
10. *Madauros* (The Small Baths) (M'Daourouch, Algeria) – no data (Maréchal 2020, 366-367);

11. *Thamugadi* (The baths of insula 17) (Algeria) – 4th / 5th c. AD (Maréchal 2020, 148);

12. *Cemenelum* (The West Baths) (Cimiez, Nice, France) – 4th / 7th c. AD (Ardisson 2004, 251-254; Ardisson 2011, 232-236);

13. *Serdica* (St. George church) (Sofia, Bulgaria) – mid-5th c. AD (Бояджиев 2002, 161; Динчев 2011, 117, 121; Ivanov 2018, 106);

Fig. 3. Ground plan of the Northwest corner of the Kovachevsko kale fortress (Александров 2023, 86, фиг. 17)



14. *Serdica* (East of St. George church) (Sofia, Bulgaria) – 4th / after mid-5th c. AD (Станчева 1994, 58-59, 64; Бояджиев 2002, 149-150; Динчев 2011, 118-119; Ivanov 2018, 109);

15. *Ratiaria (thermae)* (Archar, Bulgaria) – end of the 4th / first half of the 5th c. CE (Димитров⁶ и др. – in print).

A specific moment when the transformations took place cannot be determined with certainty from these few cases. The examples from the Empire, as well as those from Thrace itself show that there is some evidence for such a tendency of change around the end of the 4th and the 5th century AD, but it is also possible that it happened later. It is because the big *thermae* ceased to exist around the end of the 4th century AD, but not the small *balneum* (Pickett 2021, 406-407). It is important to underline that there are examples of similar transformations in later periods, when the ancient baths had long ceased to function as such.

The Bishopric of *Novae* (present-day Svishtov, Bulgaria), situated in province *Moesia II* was erected above the legionary *thermae* around the late 4th – the first quarter of the 5th century AD, which is referred to as “Stage I” in literature (Biernacki 2013, 737; Biernacki 2016, 11-15, 96). The construction of the bath which belongs to the complex is associated to “Stage III”: 5th – 6th century AD, although there is some inconsistency later in the text where it is dated to the mid-6th century (Biernacki 2013, 740). Nevertheless, this example shows quite well that the Church not only did not forbid the use of baths, but that such structures could be erected alongside a church.

LITERARY BACKGROUND

Saint Clement of Alexandria (*Paed.* 3.9) wrote that “*There are, then, four reasons for the bath (for from that point I digressed in my oration), for which we frequent it: for cleanliness, or heat, or health, or lastly, for pleasure. Bathing for pleasure is to be omitted. For unblushing pleasure must be cut out by the roots; and the bath is to be taken by women for cleanliness and health, by men for health alone.*” (translated by P. Schaff 1885, 455; cf. Марков 2017, 341, caption 2 with lit.). This case illustrates very well the understandings of the Christian fathers about baths as places where “corruption” was widespread when the two sexes bathed together; bathing even made the skin saggy and led to prema-

⁶ I would like to express my gratitude to Assoc. Prof. Zdravko Dimitrov, NAIM – BAS, researcher of the site, for giving me the opportunity to include unpublished information from his excavations in my article.



Fig. 4. Map with baths converted into Churches from the Empire. Google Maps © 2023 (google.com/maps/)

● Diocese of Thrace:

1 *Augusta Traiana* (Stara Zagora, Bulgaria); 2 Kovachevsko kale (Kovachevets, Bulgaria).

● Rest of the Empire:

1 Constantinople (Istanbul, Turkey); 2 Thessaloniki (St. Demetrios church, Greece); 3 *Labraunda* (Caria, Turkey); 4 *Hierapolis* (Phrygia, Turkey); 5 *Tlos* (Lycia, Turkey); 6 Ostia (Baths of Mithras) (Italy); 7 Rome (Baths of Diocletian) (Italy); 8 Rome (Baths of Novatianus) (Italy); 9 *Mactaris* (The West Baths) (Maktar, Tunisia); 10 *Madauros* (The Small Baths) (M'Daourouch, Algeria); 11 *Thamugadi* (The baths of insula 17) (Algeria); 12 *Cemenelum* (The West Baths) (Cimiez, Nice, France); 13 *Serdica* (St. George Church) (Sofia, Bulgaria); 14 *Serdica* (East of St. George Church) (Sofia, Bulgaria); 15 *Ratiaria (thermae)* (Archar, Bulgaria).

ture old age. St. Jerome (*Epist.* 14.10) continues “*He that is once washed in Christ needeth not to wash again*” (translated by W. H. Fremantle, ed. by P. Schaff 1892, 66; cf. Yegül 1992, 314, 457, caption 1 with lit.; Марков 2017, 342-343, caption 10 with lit.). That shows the strong criticism expressed by the Church fathers such as Saint Jerome and Saint Augustine (Yegül 1992, 314; Maréchal 2020, 208) whose letters and texts were meant only for a special group of Christians – ascetics and virgins. On the other hand, literary sources all over the Empire from the 4th to the 7th century AD recount how the “average Christian” and even members of the clergy used public baths. Even emperors like Valens (AD 364-378), Theodosius (AD 379-395) and Justinian (AD 527-565) sponsored the construction and restoration of baths. However, a transformation in Late Antiquity can definitely be observed, a consequence of a changed perspective which does not have to be necessarily connected to conflicts and catastrophes. The Church tolerated bathing as a hygienic and medicinal activity in small *balnea*, but not in larger *thermae*, which were expensive to maintain and too luxurious for the taste of the Church. Some baths were even owned by churches and monas-

teries (like in *Novae*, for example); and some facilities were even built in combination with baptisteries (Rome, Ravenna, Cuicul, *Thamugadi*, *Sufetula*, Jerusalem) (Zytka 2019, 181-183; Maréchal 2020, 209).

In Constantinople – for comparison – 8 *thermae* and 153 *balnea* existed in Late Antiquity (according to *Notitia Urbis Constantinopolitanae*, see Yegül 1992, 324, note 73); the largest of which were the *Thermae* of Constantine that still operated in the 8th century AD (Yegül 2014, 320). But most numerous were the small *balnea*. An anecdotal story based on a real fact is connected with Bishop Sissinius of Constantinople who proudly announced that he bathed twice a day only because he could not bathe three times (Yegül 1992, 314). When the Seljuk Turks came from Anatolia, they found small public baths – still existing and usable in Constantinople – in the 12th and the 13th century AD. The culture of bathing in the Classical world was apparently inherited by Byzantium, and then continued by the Arabic and Turkic societies of the East that kept the tradition alive; at the same time, in the West it already came to an end by the 7th and 8th century AD (Maréchal 2020, 209-222).

EARLY MIDDLE AGES

Several functional baths dating to the Early Middle Ages have been found in Bulgaria, like those in Pliska, Preslav, the *aule* of Khan Omurtag, Drastar (Георгиев 1982, 2). The earliest dated medieval bathhouse is from the 8th century in Pliska (Георгиев 1982, 5). In Late Antiquity, baths in present-day Bulgaria functioned until the end of the 6th century, even to the second quarter of the 7th century AD – as evidenced by the episcopal residence in *Durostorum* (Ivanov 2012, 59, 66); the recently discovered baths in *Odessos* (Минчев et al. 2020); *Mesambria* (Preshlenov 2012); *Obzor* (Марваков / Господинов 2018); *Byala* (Йотов / Минчев 2020); *Akra* (Йосифова 2008, 154-156); *Sozopolis* (Богданова et al. 2020, 626-629); maybe even Starozagorski mineral baths (Иванов, А. 2022). This means that in the 7th century AD there is a kind of a '*hiatus*' in the use and construction of bathing buildings in Bulgaria's lands, or this reflects the current state of research. It should not be forgotten that some of these territories were part of the Eastern Roman empire and as such – the tradition of bathing was preserved even in the Early Middle Ages.

CONCLUSION

There are indeed instances when churches were built inside the shell of former public baths, as in *Augusta Traiana*, Kovachevsko kale and many other places, but there is no specific evidence that the baths were deliberately destroyed for the purpose (Maréchal 2020, 209). This could have only happened after the baths were deconsecrated and purified, since these facilities were considered as legacy from the pagan world and connected to the devil. A good example is seen in the Acts of Saint John, written in the 5th century AD: the saint started to work miracles in the public baths of *Ephesus*, which were haunted by a wicked demon – probably the spirit of the goddess Artemis. He successfully cast the demon out. From an engraving kept at the British Museum, it becomes clear that the *Thermae* of Diocletian in Rome have probably been purified in a similar manner, before part of it could be transformed into a monastery at the end of 11th century AD under Pope Urban II (1088-1099) (Yegül 1992, 315-317; 2010, 201-203).

It can be cautiously stated that the current state of research indicates that the peak of such conversion occurred around the end of the 4th through the whole 5th century AD. However, there is no evidence that the disappearance of these facilities is caused by disaster or catastrophe. There are some indications that changes of this kind continue to happen even in much later centuries when the big ancient baths had long stopped to operate. But that neither means that the habit of bathing disappeared, nor that the change was a violent one. This culture continued in the next centuries up until today.

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