INTRODUCTION

Due to the late migrations, the 7th–13th centuries represented for Central and Eastern Europe a period marked by territorial changes, accompanied by social, political and economic transformations. On the edge of the great political powers of the period, both inside and outside (in the vicinity), in fortifications, towns and settlements, everyday life presents different characteristics compared to that inside their territories. Raids, conflicts, administrative changes, instability, as well as the influence of great powers on neighbouring territories, are just some of the factors that strongly influenced the evolution of these communities. This fluctuating process, almost permanently under the "shadow" of conflict, led to specific forms of political-historical and cultural development, recorded or not in written sources, but revealed through archaeological investigations and confirmed by interdisciplinary analyses.

The present volume is dedicated to the presentation of these specific forms, and for this purpose, researchers were invited to contribute, whose studies bring to light new discoveries, approaches, and interpretations, which will contribute to a better understanding of certain local and broader phenomena.

According to their geographical location, the contributions focus on territories that during this period were either part of or under the influence of Central and Southeastern European political powers. For the first geographical area, the studies address regions in the Carpathian Basin that fell within the sphere of influence of continental powers such as the Avar Khaganate, the Carolingian Empire of the Franks, Great Moravia, and the Kingdom of Hungary. A comparative analysis is conducted on three settlements in the Silvania Depression (northwestern Romania); the territory inhabited by the Vistulans is proposed to be expanded through the inclusion—based on new discoveries—of four hillforts in the northern border region (Poland); the possibility of the Hungarian army's presence in the Carpathian Basin as an ally in the Carolingian-Moravian conflict prior to the year 895 is analysed, based on a coin hoard discovered in Hungary; a fortress and monetary discoveries from a necropolis, both now located in southwestern Romania, are also presented.

Most of the contributions refer to the border areas of the Byzantine Empire, both in its immediate vicinity and within its territory, presenting various aspects through the interpretation of written sources, archaeological discoveries, radiocarbon analyses, and monetary circulation. Covering territories from Serbia to the Black Sea coast, and from east of the Carpathian Mountains to the Balkan Mountains, the studies address topics such as evolution of settlements, daily life, community beliefs, features of material culture, the presence of migrating populations, the destruction of certain fortresses and the founding of new ones, administrative organization and reorganization, craftsmanship, and the circulation of goods and currency, historical

geography hypotheses, etc. Two contributions focus on the construction timeline of two fortresses located on the empire's Danubian frontier, substantiated by the results of radiocarbon analyses and new stratigraphic data.

A contribution is added that presents interesting aspects of monetary circulation after the stated period and the evocation of one of the precursors of medieval Dobrujan archaeology, the researcher Petre Diaconu, whose birth has turned one hundred years old in 2024.

The topics addressed broadly span the 6th to the 16th centuries, with most contributions focusing on the period between the 9th and 11th centuries.

The archaeological sites presented are located today within the territories of Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Serbia. Among these, we mention: Adamclisi (*Tropaeum Traiani*), Aghireș, ancient Augusta, Medieval fortress "Golemiya grad", Golyamo Peshtene, Hârșova (*Carsium*), Iași, Ipotești, Jászfelsőszentgyörgy, "Kaleto" fortress near Mezdra, Kastritsi, Kostkowice, Kostol (*Pontes*), Marca, Mizia, Novosel, Păcuiul lui Soare, Petrich Kale, Porț, Ruyno (Kartal Kalé**)**, Siedlec, Udórz, Vălcani, Vladimirescu, Medieval fortress Vratitsa, Zlatar, Złoty Potok, etc.

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Cristina PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI

A REEVALUATION OF THE DISCOVERIES FROM IPOTEȘTI, OLT COUNTY

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Keywords: *settlement, pottery, bone pieces, earring, belt end, Ipotești-Cândești culture, 6th–7th centuries*.

Cuvinte-cheie: *așezare, ceramică, piese din os, cercel, capăt de curea, cultura Ipotești-Cândești, secolele VI–VII*.

Abstract: *The discoveries from the settlement at Ipotești ("La conac" site), Olt County, broadly attributed to the 6th–7th centuries, have significantly influenced the archaeological interpretation of the period for the area between the Carpathians and the Danube. Archaeological research has provided a collection of ceramic material considered significant enough for the site to become one of the eponymous stations of the Ipotești-Cândești culture. By correlating information identified in field notebooks with published data and materials from deposits, clarifications are made regarding the location and dimensions of the site, and a re-evaluation of the discoveries is proposed, considering that the results of the old archaeological research can still offer new data concerning the chronology of the station and beyond*.

Rezumat: *Descoperirile din așezarea de la Ipotești (punctul „La conac"), jud. Olt, atribuite larg secolelor VI–VII, au marcat interpretarea arheologică asupra perioadei, pentru zona dintre Carpați și Dunăre. Cercetările arheologice au furnizat un lot de material ceramic considerat semnificativ pentru ca situl să devină una dintre stațiunile eponime ale culturii Ipotești-Cândești. Coroborând informații identificate în carnetele de șantier de date edite și materiale din depozite, se fac precizări privind localizarea și dimensiunile sitului, respectiv se propune o reevaluare a descoperirilor, considerându-se că rezultatele vechilor cercetări arheologice pot oferi, încă, elemente noi referitoare la cronologia stațiunii și nu numai*.

The discoveries from the site at Ipotești, Olt County, broadly attributed to the 6th–7th centuries, have significantly influenced the archaeological interpretation of this period for the area between the Carpathians and the Danube. The settlement investigated at the "La conac" site between 1959 and 1960 provided at that time a collection of ceramic material considered significant enough for the site to become one of the eponymous stations of the Ipotești-Cândești culture. Although published 50 years ago, the results of the archaeological research can still offer new data concerning the chronology of the station and beyond.

Two brief reports on the research at Ipotești and its results were published by

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E. Comșa in 1962 and 1973[1], focused on prehistoric discoveries, and an article by P. Roman and Suzana Dolinescu-Ferche in 1978[2], dedicated exclusively to the discoveries from the early medieval period. Additionally, there is a study by D. Măndescu[3], dedicated to a collection of Hallstattian pots in the museum collections in Pitești.

Research history

The three archaeological campaigns took place in the years 1959–1961. Initially, in 1959, two excavation sites were opened, coordinated by E. Comșa and P. Roman. Subsequently, the research continued in only one site, in the area where the remains published in 1978 were identified.

The article, published in the journal *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche și arheologie* (SCIVA), was strictly based on the excavation documentation prepared by P. Roman[4]. Access to the documentation from the archives of "Vasile Pârvan" Institute of Archaeology provided us with the opportunity to complement the published data with new information[5], identified in the excavation notebooks completed by E. Comșa for the archaeological campaigns of 1959 and 1960. For the following year's research, mentioned by V. Teodorescu[6], the information is missing. D. Măndescu also does not mention anything about possible excavations conducted by Marinel Popescu in 1961.

In this text, I will briefly present relevant information identified in Eugen Comșa's notebooks. He noted that on Wednesday, May 13, 1959, he left Bucharest for Ipotești, Olt County, with the objective of conducting a rescue excavation in the area of a Boian settlement, reported by Professor I. Moroșan from Slatina. Professor Moroșan had come to the Institute of Archaeology in Bucharest in 1958 and then again in the spring of 1959 to show the ceramic fragments he had discovered.

On May 18, 1959, Petre Roman also arrived at Ipotești, sent by Ion Nestor[7] "to retrieve the rest of the early feudal materials (6th century) "[8]. Later, Marinel D. Popescu[9] joined him as well.

Eugen Comșa recorded in his journal the opening of a trench, labelled A, 10 m long and 2.5 m wide, positioned perpendicular to the contour lines and slightly oblique to the direction of the Olt Riverbank. The research from the first days, both through the excavation in trench A and through fieldwalking in the investigated area, identified the presence of a Neolithic settlement (Vădastra II and Sălcuța[10]),

[1] COMȘA 1962; COMȘA 1973.

[2] ROMAN, FERCHE 1978.

[3] MĂNDESCU 2004.

[4] ROMAN, FERCHE 1978, p. 74, note 1.

[5] Thank you to Mrs. Roxana Dobrescu for facilitating access to E. Comșa's excavation notebooks.

[6] TEODORESCU 1971, p. 121, note 49, where it is stated that in the years 1960–1961, M. D. Popescu dug alone, P. Roman not being mentioned.

[7] The action takes place within the activity of the *Commission for the study of the formation of the Romanian language and people to gather information necessary for the drafting of the Treaty on the History of Romania.*

[8] COMȘA 1959, notebook p. 13.

[9] ROMAN, FERCHE 1978, p. 74.

[10] COMȘA 1959, notebook p. 12.

overlain by a late Roman habitation from the 3rd–4th centuries. In the eastern part of the trench, the discovery of a fibula with the foot turned underneath was noted[11].

On May 19, 1959, the archaeological excavation was expanded with a trapezoidal area to fully investigate a pit identified in trench A[12]. A day later, area B was laid out[13], 30 m south of trench A, located on "the highest bank"[14]. Trench B included the area opened by P. Roman and aimed to investigate a pit with prefeudal materials, identified during a surface survey[15].

The excavations at the Ipotești "La conac" site continued in 1960, with the campaign beginning on August 19th. Marinel Popescu, from the museum in Pitești, was also included in the team. Several trenches and research areas were opened on this occasion. A Neolithic settlement was identified; Hallstattian pottery fragments[16] and, sporadically, La Tène period materials were found; a medieval habitation was identified, along with traces of habitation from the 3rd–4th centuries, dated by a fibula with the foot turned underneath[17]. E. Comșa also recorded the presence of materials attributed to the 6th–7th centuries, but "without there being a proper layer from that time"[18].

The location of the site

The descriptive mentions included in the excavation notebooks and published texts are extremely useful given the absence of cartographic references for the area. The area is illustrated only with a panoramic photograph in the article published in 1962 (**Fig. 1**). In the 1959 excavation notebook, E. Comșa specifies that the site is located "West of the village, on the high terrace of the Olt, in the place called 'La conac' (named after a manor of the Brâncoveanu family, destroyed in 1916) "[19]. The terrace edge is situated 15 m above the Olt River. A significant part of the settlement was eroded and destroyed by the river's waters[20], particularly the part with more intense habitation[21].

When revisiting the study of the prehistoric materials discovered at Ipotești, Cristian Ștefan[22] and Cătălin Pătroi[23] proposed locating the site as a perimeter circumscribed within a circle, with very small differences in placement (**Fig. 2**). Likely influenced by the location in the National Archaeological Repertoire (RAN code 127581.03[24]), the two colleagues overlooked the details provided by E. Comșa

[11] COMȘA 1959, notebook p. 7.
[12] COMȘA 1959, notebook p. 14.
[13] COMȘA 1959, notebook p. 18.
[14] COMȘA 1959, notebook p. 19.
[15] COMȘA1959, notebook p. 19.
[16] COMȘA 1960, notebook p. 36–37, probably those published in MĂNDESCU 2004, p. 33–37.
[17] COMȘA 1960, notebook p. 25.
[18] COMȘA 1960, notebook p. 28; COMȘA 1973, p. 33.
[19] COMȘA 1959, notebook p. 3.
[20] COMȘA 1962, p. 214.
[21] COMȘA 1973, p. 36.
[22] ȘTEFAN 2014.
[23] PĂTROI 2018.
[24] https://ran.cimec.ro/sel.asp?codran=127581.03.

regarding the morphological characteristics of the terrain, complemented by the photographic perspective published in the 1962 report.

For a more accurate location of the site, I correlated the details mentioned by the authors of the archaeological excavation with the cartographic information provided by historical maps, satellite photographs from the 1960s (sourced from the Corona satellite), and more recent images made publicly available by Google Earth.

The rectification of the mid–19th century plan (Franziszeische Landesaufnahme)[25], which also served as the basis for the Charta României Meridionale created by Carol Popp de Szathmari in 1864[26], indicates the location of the noble estate on the terrace north of the area marked as the site by colleagues C. Ștefan and C. Pătroi. The noble estate no longer appears on the Planul Director de Tragere[27], which could suggest that it was demolished before 1916[28]. Additionally, the rectification of the Corona satellite photographs[29] illustrates the terrain configuration during the 1959 and 1960 research periods, allowing for the first time a fairly precise location of the area where the archaeological excavations were conducted. Furthermore, on the image provided by Google Earth[30], the terrain's alveolar shape is distinguished, which was interpreted as a possible defensive ditch by E. Comșa[31] **(Fig. 3)**. These data highlight the localization error present in the RAN and perpetuated by C. Pătroi and C. Ștefan, who placed the site on a flat, low-lying area, rather than on a terrace eroded and raised 15 m above the Olt, as indicated by the description and the published photograph.

As a result, based on the arguments presented, it can be considered that the accurate location of the "La conac" site is found north of the area depicted in the RAN and by the aforementioned colleagues, within a triangular zone, with the tip facing west and the base towards the current village **(Fig. 5)**.

Site dimension

At the time of the archaeological investigations, it was estimated, based on fieldwalking and the two areas investigated as rescue operations, that the site was preserved over a length of 100 m and a maximum width of 20 m[32]. The orientation (NW-SE) and the length of the sections (with a maximum of 26.50 m) carried out by E. Comșa and P. Roman in the two research areas suggest that the site was preserved as a strip-oriented east-west along the northern edge of the promontory. However, the note in the journal that there were research sectors located to the north and south, as well as the distance of over 30 m between them, indicates a much larger site, at least at the time of the excavations.

Estimating the extent of the destroyed area is a difficult task that we attempted to undertake, considering it necessary for the current understanding of the archaeological site. To determine the degree of destruction, we relied on cartographic data

[25] https://maps.arcanum.com.
[26] http://charta1864.gis-it.ro/.
[27] https://geo-spatial.org/vechi/download/planurile-directoare-de-tragere.
[28] Sheet 3342 "Brâncoveni" was erected on the ground in 1910.
[29] https://corona.cast.uark.edu/atlas.
[30] https://earth.google.com.
[31] COMȘA 1973, p. 36.
[32] COMȘA 1962, p. 214.

and available satellite photographs. These documents show a succession of changes to the terrace, especially in the northern area, from a promontory with a wide edge in the 19th century to the current promontory with a very sharp tip (**Figs. 6–7**). What stands out, beyond the intense and aggressive erosion over a relatively short period, is the complete disappearance of the area investigated by E. Comșa and P. Roman. This likely occurred due to the construction of a hydropower in the 1980s. In a photograph from 1985, although unclear, the promontory where the excavations took place still appears to have maintained the configuration from 1966, as captured by the Corona satellite. Since the 1985 aerial photograph already shows work beginning on the construction of the banks of the future reservoir, we can conclude that the northern part of the site was destroyed on this occasion (**Fig. 8**).

As a result, what E. Comșa and P. Roman saw and described has disappeared. How much of the archaeological site has been preserved after the brutal intervention of the area's development? An analysis of a photographic image provided by Google Earth in 2021 allows for the identification on the ground of the alveolar feature that Comșa considered a defensive ditch (**Fig. 3**). The same alveolar feature appears in a recent aerial photograph (June 2024). If our hypothesis is proven correct through further research, it is possible that at least the prehistoric settlements located south of the investigated area have survived the destruction.

During a recent visit (June 2024) to the site, I observed what appeared to be the trace of a filled trench, with straight banks and a horizontal base measuring 1.50 m in width. Initially hypothetically attributed to the excavations conducted by P. Roman and/or M.D. Popescu, the "trench" is located approximately 350 m from the northern terrace edge of the 1959–1960 period, not 30 m as indicated in the excavation notebooks. As a result, what is visible today on the steep edge of the terrace represents the natural "sectioning" of a pit, through collapse (**Fig. 4**).

If these observations are correct, then the dimensions of the site are much larger than previously reported. On the promontory overlooking the Olt River, a series of settlements succeeded each other. In addition to the prehistoric settlement, possibly fortified with a ditch[33](?), there is a fairly extensive early medieval settlement (or settlements?) to the south (**Fig. 5**).

In light of these observations, I consider E.S. Teodor's statement that "a part of the site still exists and theoretically a new excavation is possible"[34] to be correct, especially for the southern area, while the northern area is unfortunately compromised.

Observations regarding the dating

At the time of writing the first report published in the journal *Materiale și cercetări arheologice*, the author of the 1959 research, E. Comșa, mentions materials datable to the 6th–7th centuries[35]. In the publication of the next report, he refines the dating, narrowing it down to the 6th century[36]. The extended publication of the

[33] The observed alveolation extends in an arc, enclosing the promontory, with a currently observable length of 110 m.

[34] TEODOR 2001, note 11 (https://www.esteo.ro/TTW/Vol_1/v1_s3/6_1Ipo.htm).

[35] COMȘA 1962, p. 214.

[36] COMȘA 1973, p. 30.

research results from Ipotești introduces a new proposal for dating the "pre-feudal" materials, specifically the 5th–6th centuries[37], although the article title refers only to the limits of the 6th century.

At the time of writing his doctoral thesis, Eugen Silviu Teodor stated that "regarding the inventory of the dwellings – it contains only pottery and lacks classic dating elements, neither relative nor absolute"[38]. Based on this type of findings, represented only by pottery, E.S. Teodor agrees with P. Roman and S. Dolinescu-Ferche on a dating "probably at the end of the 5th century or the beginning of the 6th century".

In 2001, Florin Curta's work on the archaeology of the Lower Danube in the 6th–7th centuries was published. Based on the discovery of a coin issued by Emperor Nerva, F. Curta suggests a dating of the Ipotești site to the Roman era, arguing that no artefacts datable to the 6th century were discovered[39] and, therefore, the site was incorrectly dated and cannot be used in arguing the dating of the Ipotești-Cândești culture prior to the arrival of the Slavs.

However, in the article publishing the excavation results, several artefacts, made of bone or pottery, are illustrated, which, from our point of view, have chronological significance for the 6th–7th centuries and have been overlooked by both the publication's authors (perhaps intentionally?[40]) and by researchers of the 6th–7th centuries up until now (**Fig. 9**).

Bone pieces

In the monographic article from 1978, a bone artefact[41] was illustrated and interpreted at that time as a handle[42]. Recently, I re-analyzed[43] this artefact and provided arguments for interpreting it as a fragment of a *knotenlöser*. Based on analogies, this piece is datable to the 7th century and belongs to an "Avar" cultural milieu **(Fig. 11)**.

Among the materials resulting from the archaeological excavation and currently held in the collections of "Vasile Pârvan" Institute of Archaeology, there is also a fragment of a bilateral comb. The presence of a hole intended for a bronze rivet indicates that the fragment most likely belonged to a comb made of three plates, with the preserved fragment being part of the middle, active plate, which had finer and denser teeth on one side and thicker and sparser teeth on the other side.

Such bilateral combs do not appear in the settlements of the Lower Danube,

[37] ROMAN, FERCHE 1978, p. 73 and especially p. 90 "the earliest stage of the Ipotești-Ciurel-Cândești culture, which is chronologically placed at the end of the 5th century and the beginning of the 6th century AD".

[38] TEODOR 2001, p. 103 (https://www.esteo.ro/TTW/Vol_1/v1_s3/6_1Ipo.htm).

[39] CURTA 2001, p. 231–232 "but no artefacts clearly dated to the sixth century".

[40] The article begins with a "mission" assigned to P. Roman by I. Nestor, specifically from the *Commission for the Study of the Formation of the Romanian Language and People*. It is possible that, in this context, some of the results from the Ipotești excavations that might have been non-Romanic were overlooked. However, the illustration of some of these items, even with erroneous dating (3rd century – stamped decoration pottery) or without comments in the text (the *Knotenlöser* fragment), we believe was not accidental.

[41] In reality, a cervid antler, according to a preliminary identification by our archaeozoologist colleague, Dr. Adrian Bălășescu, to whom we extend our thanks.

[42] ROMAN, FERCHE 1978, fig. 9/1a–b.

[43] MĂGUREANU 2019.

being more commonly found in the Middle Danube region, especially in the Gepidic environment[44], constituting one of the artefacts with sufficient significance to establish chronologies for settlements from the 6th–7th centuries[45].

About pottery

In the context of the current study, the discussion regarding the pottery discovered at Ipotești is limited to the reanalysis of a vessel published in the 1978 article[46]. This concerns a small bowl, dated by the publication's authors to the 3rd century AD and attributed to the settlement of the free Dacians[47].

The decoration of the vessel is striking, as it does not belong to the known repertoire of gray, wheel-made vessels from the Chilia-Militari culture. The identification of the vessel in the repository of "Vasile Pârvan" Institute of Archaeology allowed for further observations. The body is covered with a polished, greyish-black slip, and near the base, a post-firing "X" mark was scratched.

The combination of stamped "triangle" decoration, metallic greyish-black polished slip, and the "X" mark does not represent known characteristics of the pottery repertoire of the free Dacians and cannot be considered a 3rd-century AD vessel. The same decoration also appears on another unpublished ceramic fragment discovered at Ipotești, which, according to the marking, was found in the fill of complex B2 from 1959. The similarity of the decoration on these ceramic vessels highlights the need for a comprehensive analysis of the pottery discovered at Ipotești, Olt County.

Following this type of decoration, both the geographical area and the chronological range expand. Vessels with similar characteristics are found in the Middle Danube region, both in Transylvania and in the Tisza area (**Fig. 10**). The geographically closest discoveries are from Sighișoara[48], Morești, Porumbenii Mici, Bratei[49], as well as further afield from Stupini[50] and Bistrița[51]. Based on these, it can be proposed to redate the respective vessel to the first half of the 6th century[52], a chronology accepted for this stamped decoration[53].

It is interesting to note that this type of stamped decoration is attributed to the Germanic milieu, especially Gepid and Lombard, while it is no longer found on stamped pottery from the Avar environment[54].

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[44] CURTA 2001, p. 201, p. 242.

[45] CURTA 2001, fig. 35; the chronology of this type of comb ends around the 560/570 period, according to MASEK 2016, fig. 17.

[46] ROMAN, FERCHE 1978, fig. 2/1.

[47] ROMAN, FERCHE 1978, p. 74.

[48] HARHOIU, BALTAG 2007, taf. 147/5.

[49] BÂRZU 2010, taf. 44/6.

[50] GAIU 2002, fig. 24/12.

[51] GAIU 1992, fig. 4/12.

[52] MĂGUREANU 2017.

[53] At Sirmium, the ceramic batch that includes a fragment decorated like the one from Ipotești is broadly dated between the late 4th century and the 6th century (DAVIDOVIĆ 2017, p. 133). A more restricted dating is also proposed, covering the second half of the 5th century and the entire 6th century (BUGARSKI, IVANIŠEVIĆ 2019, p. 282).

[54] For a quick overview, see VIDA 1999 and HAJNAL 2013 for "Avar" period pottery, and BARBOCZ 2021 for "Germanic" pottery.

About an earring...

The first mention of the discovery of an earring at Ipotești appears in a 1966 note, when Victor Teodorescu reports finding a specimen with "pendentifs-colonnettes"[55]. Without illustrating the piece, Teodorescu refers to an analogy from Sadovetz and considers this earring as an argument for dating the end of phase II and the beginning of phase III of the Ipotești-Cândești culture, thus towards the second half of the 6th century[56].

In another article from 1971, V. Teodorescu again mentions the "bronze earring with spiral wire pendentifs-colonnettes", discovered by Marcel D. Popescu in 1961[57]. The piece is not illustrated this time either. Later, in a 1972 article, Victor Teodorescu compiles a corpus of ornaments and clothing accessories in an extensive footnote. On this occasion, he mentions the association in group b between "digitated fibulae and earrings with a twisted disc-shaped end". Such earrings were reportedly discovered by M. D. Popescu in complex B1/1960 at Ipotești[58]. In this publication, V. Teodorescu no longer mentions the earring with pendentifs-colonnettes and notes a different year of discovery. The fact that B1/1960 was published without mentioning any type of earring suggests the possibility of an error in the 1972 note.

There are no further references to the earring discovered at Ipotești in the literature. The piece has remained unpublished and is probably lost[59]. However, given the description and the clear reference to the analogy from Sadovetz[60], we believe there is sufficient data to discuss the chronological argument suggested by this earring.

The earring published by I. Welkow is alongside items characteristic of the 6th century. Good analogies regarding the hoop and the attachment system of the pendentifs can be mentioned from the finds at Üç Tepe[61], Kisarabad[62], or northern Abkhazia[63]. At Kisarabad, the dating is secured by a lightly minted solidus of Maurice, and the 7th century is also proposed for the dating of the grave in the necropolis at Chapka in Abkhazia[64]. Therefore, this type of earring can be broadly dated to the 6th–7th centuries, depending on the discovery context, as part of a group of Byzantine-style antiquities[65].

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[55] TEODORESCU 1966, p. 98.

[56] The chronology proposed by V. Teodorescu for what was considered the Ipotești-Cândești culture was as follows: Phase I – in the second half of the 5th century and the first quarter of the 6th century; Phase II – in the mid–6th century; Phase III – from the last third of the 6th century to the beginning of the 7th century; Phase IV – in the 7th century, with the caveat that it probably does not extend until the end of the century (TEODORESCU 1971, p. 112).

[57] TEODORESCU 1971, p. 107–108 and note 39.

[58] TEODORESCU 1972, p. 89, note 42.

[59] The piece could not be identified in the Pitești Museum's repository. Information provided by Dragoș Măndescu, to whom I also extend my thanks.

[60] WELKOV 1935, taf. 17/11.

[61] BÁLINT 1992, p. 316.

[62] BÁLINT 1992, p. 316, taf. 1/1, 4.

[63] VORONOV, YOUCHINE 1973, ris. 14/10–11.

[64] VORONOV, YOUCHINE 1973, p. 191.

[65] BÁLINT 1992, p. 316.

Belt end?

Among the items discovered during the first campaign in 1959, there is a fragmentary piece made of two bronze "plates", decorated with *au repoussé* and fastened together with bronze rivets that "clearly ... plated an object made of leather". Eugen Comșa expressed hope that it might "help in dating the early feudal complex"[66]. The description of the piece, unpublished and not yet identified in the archaeological deposits of the Institute of Archaeology or the Museum in Pitești, suggests a belt end made through pressing.

Artefacts from the 6th–7th centuries made through pressing are extremely rare in the area between the Carpathians and the Danube, being characteristic of the Middle Danube region. From Muntenia, only two discoveries from Budureasca can be cited, datable to the late 6th century and the first half of the 7th century, based on clear analogies from the "Avar" milieu between the Danube and the Tisza[67], as well as a discovery from Sărata Monteoru[68].

We hypothesize whether the mentioned piece from the excavation notebook might also be an artefact from the late 6th century and the first half of the 7th century, potentially contributing, as hoped, to the "dating of the early feudal complex".

Conclusions

Although investigated as a rescue excavation, with seemingly modest results (only three complexes explored), the settlement at Ipotești, Olt County, still holds surprises for the study of the early medieval period. The reanalysis of some of the published artefacts, complemented by information from excavation notebooks or collateral mentions of analogies, enriches and at the same time complicates the picture of the settlement, expanding the discussions on its chronology and the presence of ceramic or horn artefacts characteristic of another region, the Middle Danube area.

Thus, the habitation at Ipotești can no longer be confined solely to the first half of the 6th century, as there are sufficient arguments for dating it into the 7th century as well. Additionally, the chronological framework and the basin of analogies suggest characteristics of possible different nuclei of complexes. The "Gepid" ceramics associated with bone combs and the cruciform mark are specific to one such nucleus. Another nucleus is "defined" by items such as the *knotenlöser* and the *au repoussé*-decorated belt end.

The presence of "Gepid" or "Avar" elements at Ipotești is not surprising, given its location along the Olt River, one of the most frequently used communication routes on the north-south axis between the Lower and Middle Danube.

In this context of the connections between the settlement at Ipotești and the Transylvanian/Pannonian region of the Middle Danube, based on the ceramics and the bone comb, it is worth mentioning the Gepid involved in the conflicts between Priscus and the Sclaveni at the Lower Danube. Additionally, the horn artefact, with analogies almost exclusively in the Avar environment of Pannonia, might bring to mind the punitive incursion of the Avars against the Sclaveni, also at the Lower

[66] COMȘA 1959, notebook, p. 20.
[67] MĂGUREANU 2005; MĂGUREANU 2012.
[68] NESTOR 1969, p. 24, fig. 1.

Danube. However, based on the discussion of just a few artefacts, a historicizing explanation may be only a "colourful touch" added to the issue of the Ipotești settlement, and caution is necessary until the complete publication of the discovered material.

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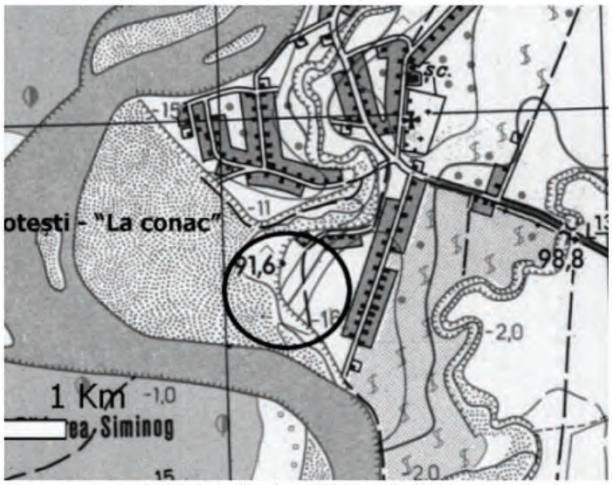
1 1959 (After Comșa 1962, fig. 1)

2 2024

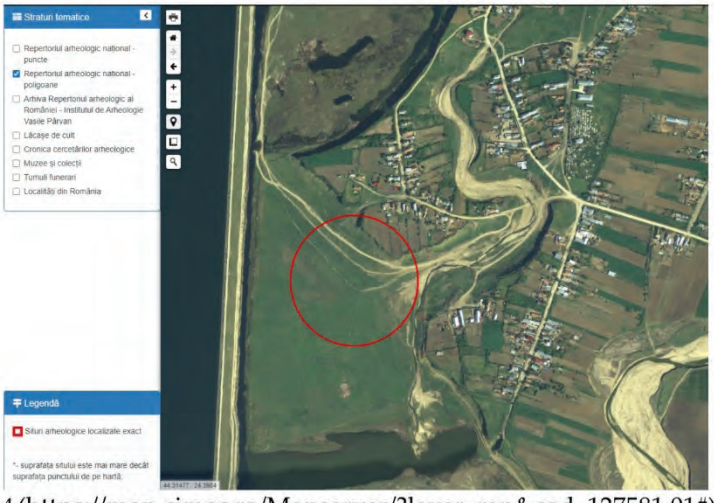
Fig. 1. Comparative images of the steep bank of the promontory on which is located the Ipotești site, Olt County.



1 (After Ștefan 2014, pl. 2/1)

2 (After Pătroi 2018, fig. 61)

3 (After Pătroi 2018, fig. 62)



4 (https://map.cimec.ro/Mapserver/?layer=ran&cod=127581.01#)

Fig. 2. Different proposals for locating the site in Ipotești, Olt County.

Fig. 3. Depiction of the "whitening" on the Google Earth image (1) and in the 2024 photograph (2).

Fig. 4. The location of the "sectioned" pit that can be seen in the break of the bank (June 2024).

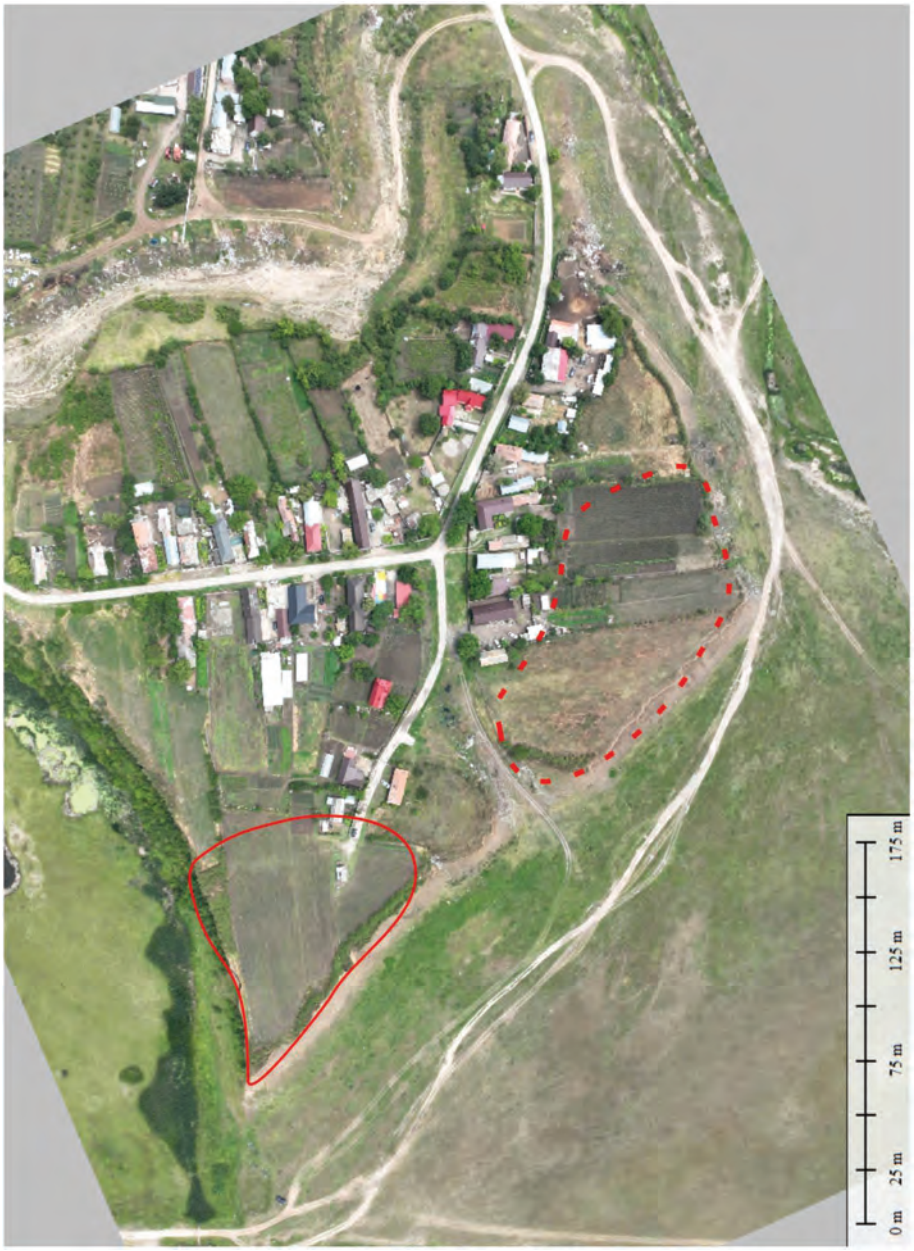


Fig. 5. Location of the site from Ipotești, Olt County (with solid line the site defined by E. Comșa and P. Roman; with dotted line possible extension).

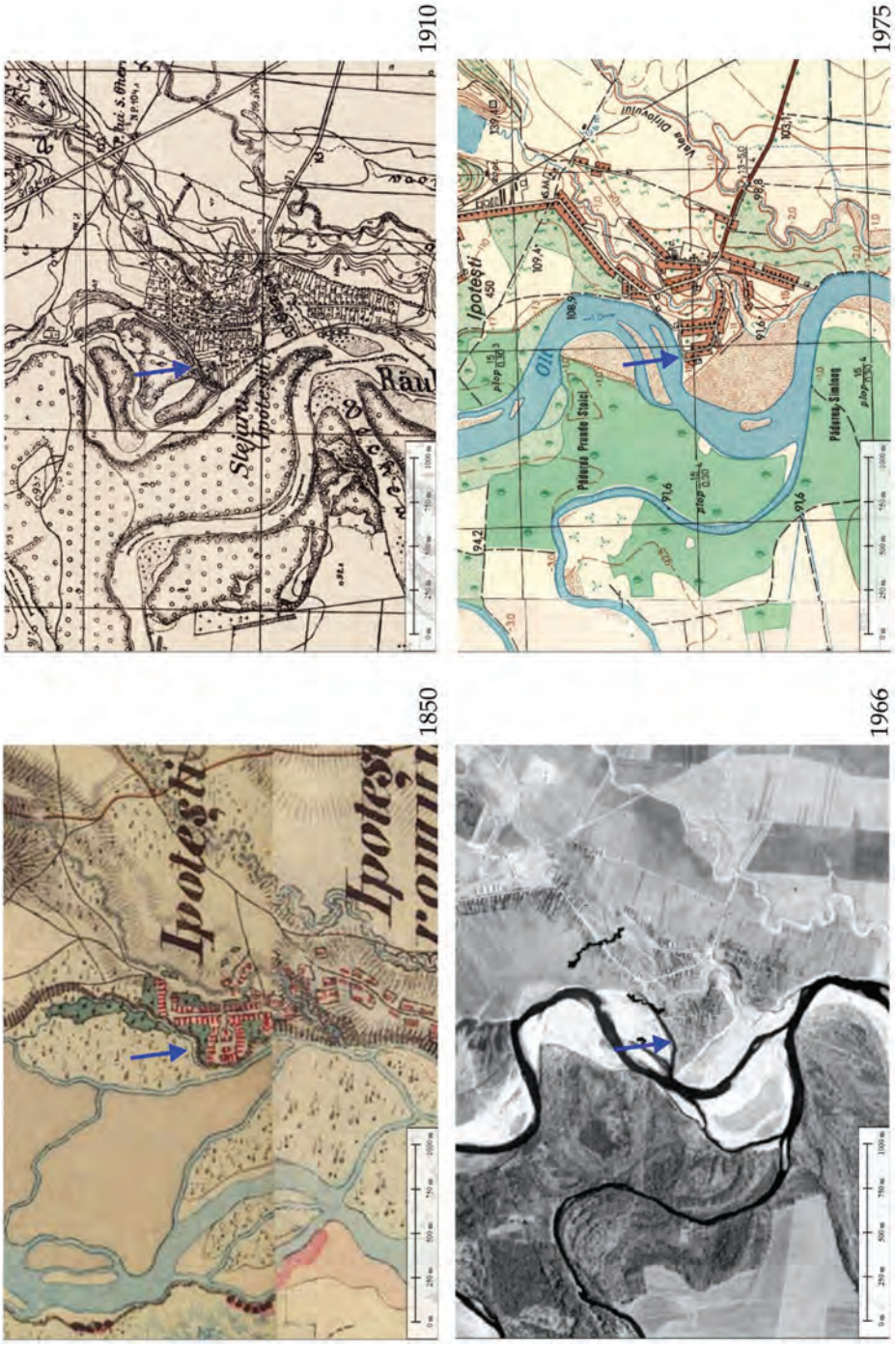


Fig. 6. The evolution of the promontory on which the Ipotești site is located, Olt County.

Fig. 7. The evolution of the promontory on which the Ipotești site is located, Olt County; 1985 – the limits of the future reservoir (1).

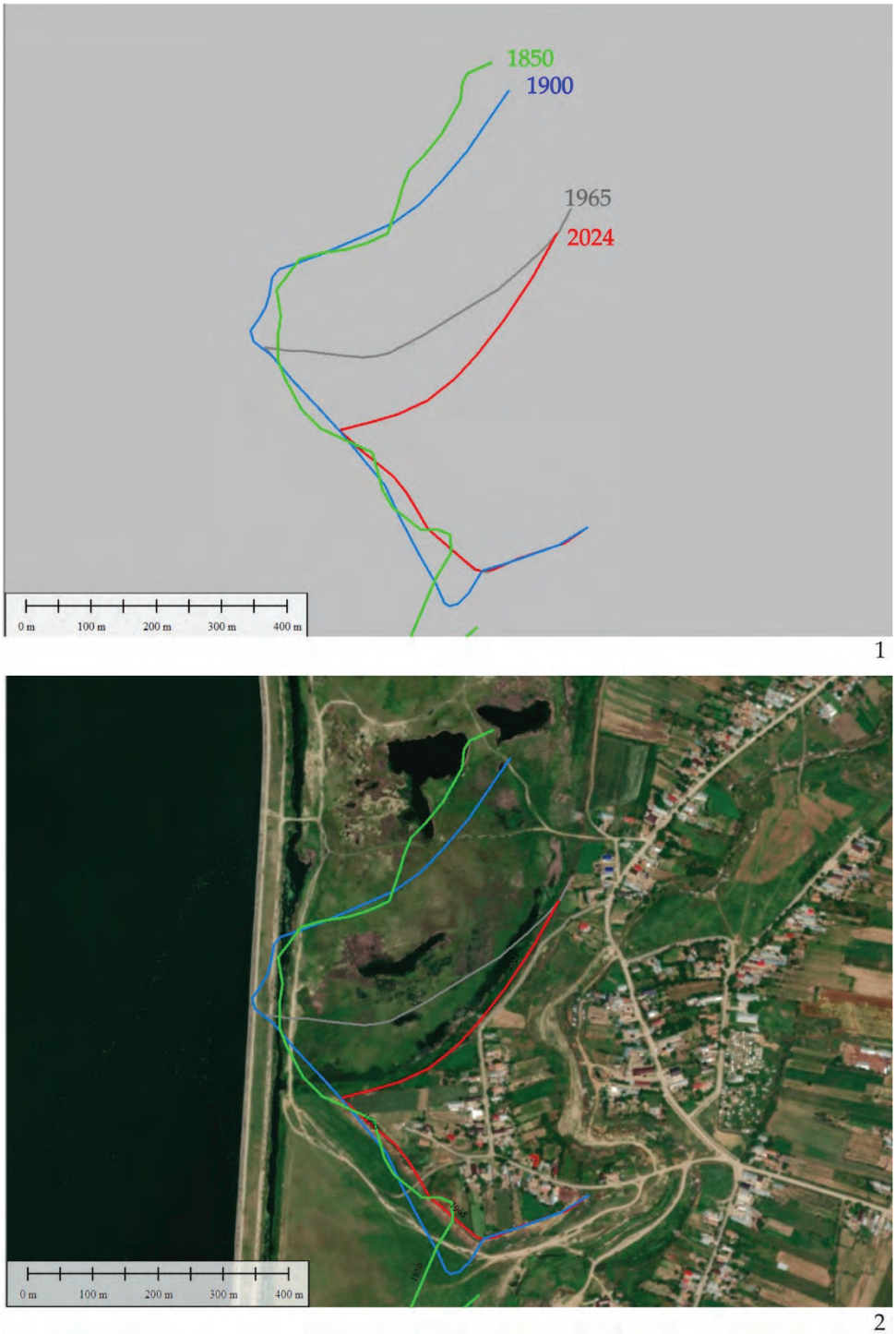


Fig. 8. The evolution of the promontory on which the Ipotești site is located, Olt County.

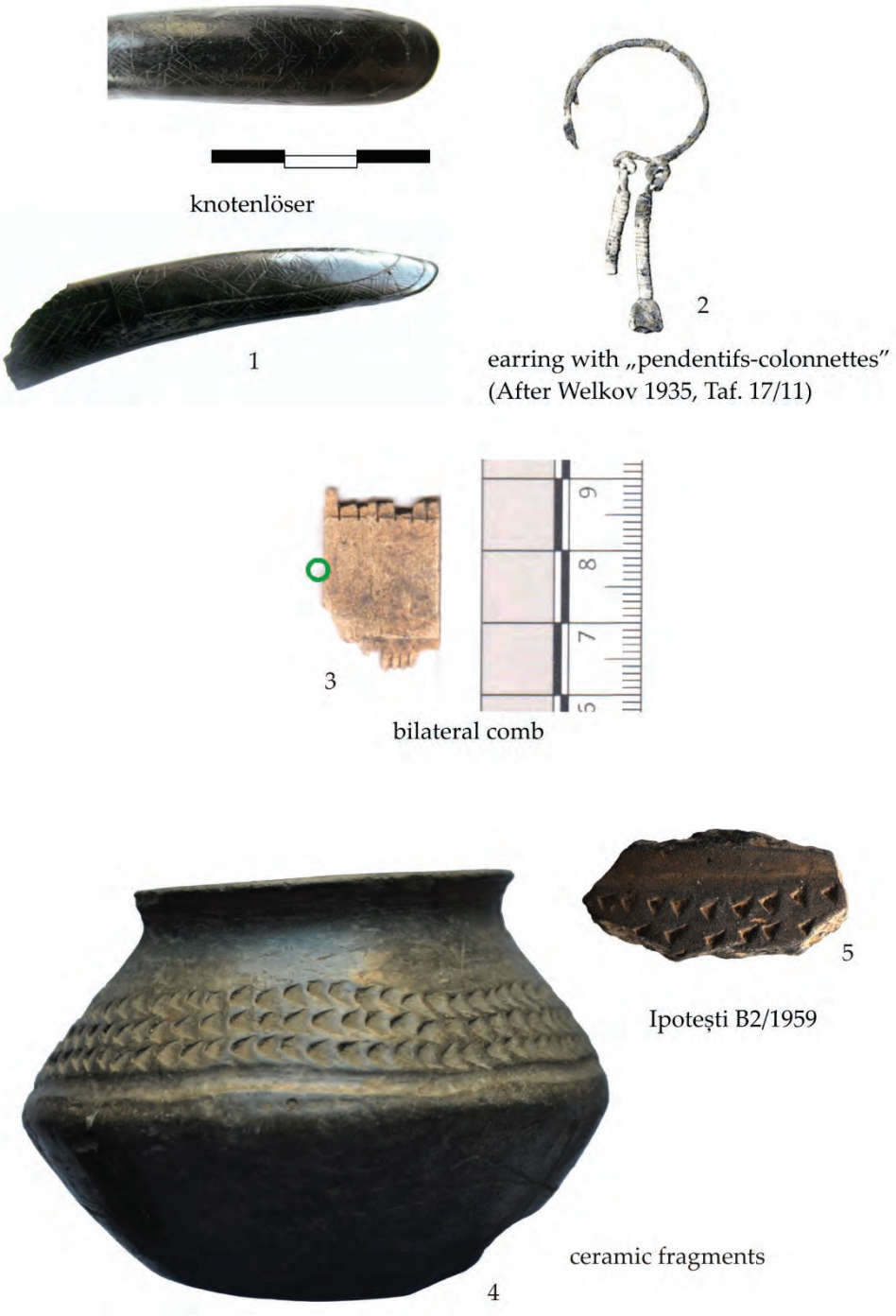


Fig. 9. Pieces discovered in Ipotești, Olt County, and earring analogy (1 bone artefact; 2 earring with pendant; 3 bilateral comb; 4–5 ceramic fragments).

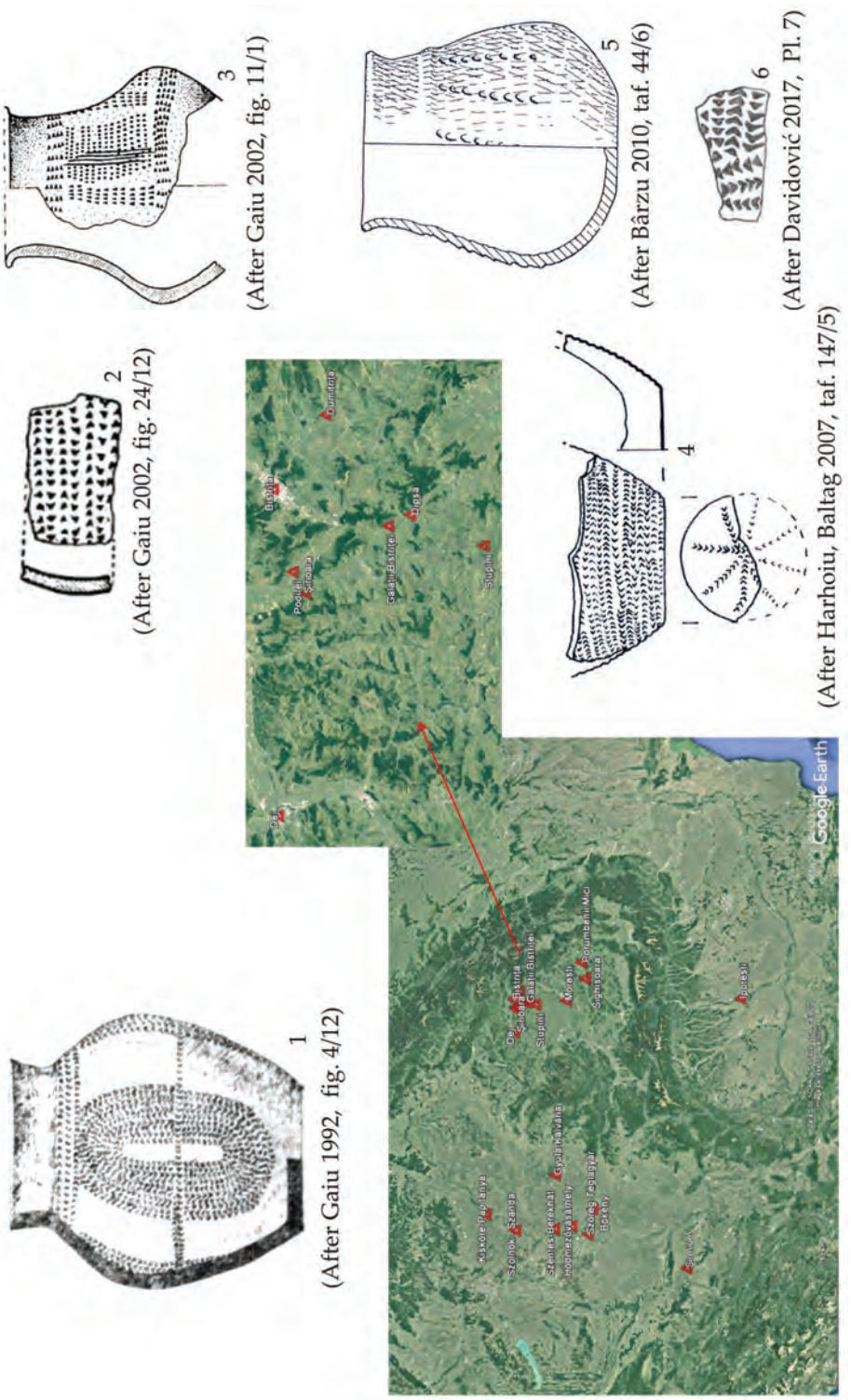


Fig. 10. Analogies for the stamped decoration present on vessels from Ipoteşti, Olt County.

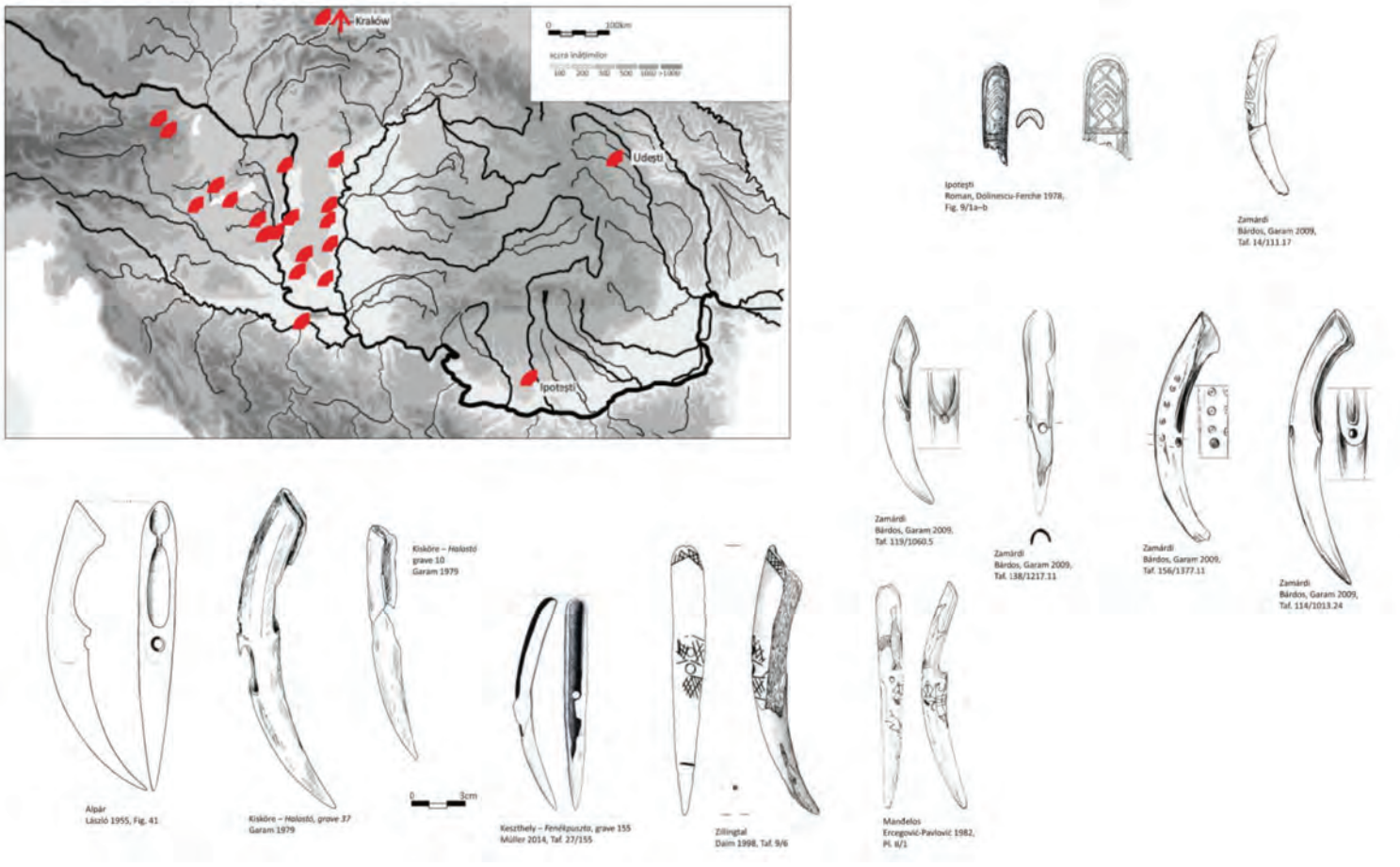


Fig. 11. Analogies for the *knotenlöser* type bone piece discovered in Ipotești, Olt County (scale of heights).

IN THE VICINITY OF THE AVAR KHAGANATE. TOPOGRAPHY, STRUCTURE AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY IN THE EARLY MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENTS (7TH-9TH CENTURIES) FROM THE SYLVANIAN BASIN. THREE EXAMPLES: MARCA – *SFĂRĂUAȘ I*, PORȚ – *LA BARAJ* AND AGHIREȘ – *SUB PĂȘUNE*

Dan BĂCUEȚ-CRIȘAN*

Keywords: *Avar Khaganate, Sylvanian Basin, topography, structure, archeological inventory, settlements.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *Kaganatul avar, Depresiunea Silvaniei, topografie, structură, inventar arheologic, așezări.*

Abstract: *As is known, archaeological research has shown the fact that, during the Avar Period, the northwestern area of Romania (implicitly the Sylvanian Basin) was outside the borders of the Avar Khaganate, representing a neighboring area to it. Altough, the Sylvanian Basin has a significant number of early medieval sites (7th–9th centuries) identified following several surface research campaigns, few of them have been archaeologically surveyed, and of these, only three settlements have benefited from extensive archaeological excavations (preventive archaeological research determined by investment works): Porț* – La baraj*, in 2007, Aghireș* – Sub pășune*, in 2008–2009, and Marca* – Sfărăuaș I*, in 2012. For the Silvanian Basin, from the data we currently have, the spatial arrangement of the archaeological structures (those* insulae*) in a circular arc around a "square" seems to be a common element of the settlements from Porț* – La baraj *and Marca* – Sfărăuaș I. *This internal structure/topography has also been reported in other early medieval Transylvanian settlements, such as those at Jucu de Sus* – Tetarom III/Râtul boilor *and Comana de Jos. In his analysis of the early medieval villages in the Carpathian Basin, P. Šalkovský emphasizes the existence of settlements with archaeological structures arranged in a circle (with examples of sites from the 7th–10th centuries), but also those that are composed of groups (those* insulae*), of archaeological structures with varied functionality (understood as independent farms/households). Regarding the chronology of the settlements now compared, based on the formal characteristics of the discovered artefacts (especially the ceramics) we can assume a possible contemporaneity (8th–9th centuries) of the settlements at Porț* – La baraj *and Aghireș*

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– Sub pășune, *the one from Marca* – Sfărăuaș I *being earlier (7th–8th centuries) than the other two settlements.*

Rezumat: *După cum se cunoaște, cercetările arheologice au arătat faptul că, pe durata epocii avare, teritoriul nord-vestic al României (implicit Depresiunea Silvaniei) se afla în afara granițelor Kaganatului avar, dar în vecinătatea acestuia. Cu toate că Depresiunea Silvaniei are un număr însemnat de situri medieval-timpurii (secolele VII–IX), identificate în urma mai multor campanii de cercetări de suprafață, puține dintre ele au fost investigate arheologic, iar dintre acestea doar trei au beneficiat de săpături arheologice extinse (cercetări cu caracter preventiv determinate de lucrări investiționale): Porț* – La baraj*, în 2007, Aghireș* – Sub pășune*, în 2008–2009, și Marca* – Sfărăuaș I*, în 2012. Pentru Depresiunea Silvaniei, din datele pe care le avem în prezent, dispunerea spațială a structurilor arheologice (acele* insulae*) în arc de cerc în jurul unei „piațete" pare să fie un element comun al așezărilor de la Porț* – La baraj *și Marca* – Sfărăuaș I. *Această topografie internă a mai fost semnalată și în alte așezări medievale timpurii transilvănene, cum este cazul celor de la Jucu de Sus* – Tetarom III/Râtul boilor *și Comana de Jos. În analiza sa privind satele medievale timpurii din Bazinul Carpatic, P. Šalkovský subliniază existența așezărilor cu structuri arheologice dispuse circular (cu exemplificări de situri din secolele VII–X), dar și a celor care sunt compuse din grupări (acele* insulae*), de structuri arheologice cu funcționalitate variată (înțelese ca și ferme/gospodării independente). În ceea ce privește cronologia așezărilor comparate acum, pe baza caracteristicilor formale ale artefactelor descoperite (în special a ceramicii), putem presupune o posibilă contemporaneitate (secolele VIII–IX) a așezărilor de la Porț* – La baraj *și Aghireș* – Sub pășune*, cea de la Marca* – Sfărăuaș I *fiind mai timpurie (secolele VII–VIII) decât celelalte două.*

General data about the sites

As is known, archaeological research has shown the fact that, during the Avar Period, the northwestern area of Romania (implicitly the Sylvanian Basin) was outside the borders of the Avar Khaganate, representing a neighboring/adjacent area to it. Although, the Sylvanian Basin has a significant number of early medieval sites (7th–9th centuries) identified following several surface research campaigns, few of them have been archaeologically surveyed, and of these, only three settlements (**Fig. 1**) have benefited from extensive archaeological excavations (preventive archaeological research determined by investment works): Porț – *La baraj* in 2007, Aghireș – *Sub păşune* in 2008–2009 and Marca – *Sfărăuaș I* in 2012.

Despite the fact that the three settlements (mentioned earlier) did not have the entire surface archaeologically researched (thus, we currently do not have a complete picture of such a settlement), the studied segments nevertheless provided a series of concrete elements regarding their structure/topography, which makes possible a comparative analysis of the archaeological realities captured in the three objectives.

Undoubtedly, when the three settlements were founded, the proximity to a constant source of water was taken into account, with slightly inclined terraces located at the edge of the flood zones, two of the settlements being located on the middle course of the Barcău River (Porț – *La baraj* and Marca – *Sfărăuaș I*), and the third (Aghireș – *Sub păşune*), on the course of the Miței valley (a tributary of the Zalău valley).

In the three settlements, archaeological complexes with varied planimetry and functionality were identified and researched: dwellings, household annexes, open hearts installations, pits and postholes.

The number of archaeological complexes registered in these settlements is also different (**Table 1**): 33 at Porț – *La baraj*, 61 at Aghireș – *Sub păşune* (the habitation phase of the 8th–9th centuries), and 54 at Marca – *Sfărăuaș I*.

Table 1. The situation of the archaeological structures/complexes.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRUCTURES/COMPLEXES		
PORȚ – *La baraj*	**AGHIREȘ** – *Sub păşune*	**MARCA** – *Sfărăuaș I*
7 dwelling	23 dwellings	4 dwellings
10 household annexes	16 household annexes	15 household annexes
1 open-air fire installation	11 open-air fire installations	8 open-air fire installations
6 pits	8 pits	7 pits
5 postholes	3 postholes	17 postholes

Elements of topography and internal structure

As we have already stated, regarding the actual areas and limits of the respective settlements, they remained unknown because none of the three sites were fully excavated due to the characteristics of the investment works. Of course, this fact prevents the formation of a correct image regarding the topography and internal structure of the respective settlements. However, the horizontal distribution of the archaeological complexes captured in the researched segments (the way they are grouped) suggests the existence of certain "urban planning" rules/customs.

a. The settlement from the Porț – *La baraj* (**Fig. 2**):

• as we stated in 2011 (in the monograph of the site), the settlement at Porț – *La baraj* was not fully researched. Only 75% of the site was researched, the remaining 25% remained unresearched because it was outside the area where the respective investment was to take place;

• most of the archaeological structures/complexes are grouped in the form of *insulae*;

• the layout suggests that almost every dwelling had its own household annexes;

• inside the settlement, the composition of a certain grouping of archaeological complexes with varied functionality (dwelling + household annex + pit + postholes) creates the image of a real *farm/household* whose boundaries were marked by the existence of a fence;

• with regard to the general topography of the settlement, the data provided so far by the preventive excavation present the image of a settlement in which the archaeological complexes (grouped) are placed almost circularly around a central space (a situation almost similar to that of Marca – *Sfărăuaș I*);

• most of the archaeological complexes are placed in the northern part of the settlement, where overlaps of complexes are also observed, which could suggest the direction of expansion in time of the inhabited space.

b. The settlement from Aghireș – *Sub păşune* (**Fig. 3**):

• the Aghireș – *Sub păşune* settlement has not been fully researched. Only one segment of the site was investigated (the one that was affected by the bypass belt of Zalău municipality), the early medieval settlement developing on both sides of the investment area;

• and in this site, there are archaeological structures/complexes arranged grouped in the form of *insulae*, however, the horizontal distribution of the researched archaeological complexes suggests that the settlement developed (on the respective terrace) along a N-SE longitudinal axis, in parallel with the water supply pipe.

c. The settlement from Marca – *Sfărăuaș I* (**Fig. 4**):

• the archaeological complexes with varied functionality are arranged in groups (*insulae*)[1];

• the *insulae* are arranged (somewhat) in a semicircle, giving the impression of the existence of a central "square".

Considering the above, from the point of view of internal structure/topography, similarities and differences can be identified between the three settlements:

• in all three settlements there are groups of archaeological complexes with varied functionality (*insulae*);

• in the case of the settlements at Porț – *La baraj* and Marca – *Sfărăuaș I*, the *insulae* are arranged around a central space;

• the isolated *insulae* and complexes in the settlement of Aghireș – *Sub păşune* are distributed along a longitudinal duct, along and parallel to the course of the water source;

• in all three archaeologically researched settlements, the existence of some *insulae* was found, which, through their structure (the varied functionality of the component archaeological complexes), suggest the existence of real *households*.

Characteristics of the archaeological inventory. Chronology elements

From a quantitative point of view, the most representative archaeological inventory is ceramics, a situation valid for all three analyzed early medieval settlements. As can be seen from the tables below, there are common (but also distinctive) elements in terms of the repertoire of ceramic forms and other objects produced from clay (**Table 3**). Within the ceramic repertoire we meet both common shapes (cooking pot, tray, baking bell) and rarer shapes (amphora type vessel, bowl, miniature vessel, cup/beaker).

Table 2. The situation of the ceramic vessels (forms).

CERAMIC VESSELS (FORMS)		
PORȚ – *La baraj*	**AGHIREȘ** – *Sub păşune*	**MARCA** – *Sfărăuaș I*
Cooking pot (handmade, slow wheel made, fast wheel made)	Cooking pot (handmade, slow wheel made, fast wheel made)	Cooking pot (handmade, slow wheel made, fast wheel made)
Tray (handmade)	Tray (handmade)	Tray (handmade)
Bowl (handmade, slow wheel made)	Bowl (fast wheel made)	Bowl (handmade, slow wheel made)

[1] BĂCUEȚ-CRIȘAN 2021, p. 59–73.

Amphora type vessel (fast wheel made)	Amphora type vessel (fast wheel made)	Amphora type vessel (fast wheel made)
Miniature vessel (handmade)	Miniature vessel (handmade)	
Big tray (handmade)	Big tray (handmade)	Cup/Beaker (slow wheel made, fast wheel made)
	Baking bell (handmade)	Baking bell (handmade)
		Small tray/Lid (?) (handmade)
		Large pot/Provision pot (handmade, slow wheel made)

The ceramic fragments discovered come from vessels that were handmade, on the slow wheel or on the fast wheel. The statistical analyzes performed on the ceramic lots (taking into account the vessel modelling technique) reveal certain quantitative values (**Table 2**):

• it can be observed that, in the case of the settlements at Porț – *La baraj* and Aghireș – *Sub păşune,* the slow wheel made pottery is the majority;

• in the settlements of Porț – *La baraj* and Aghireș – *Sub păşune*, the slow wheel made pottery is present in nearly identical amounts (68.50%, and 70%, respectively);

• the largest amount of handmade pottery was found in the Marca – *Sfărăuaș I* settlement (47%)*;*

• the largest amount of fast wheel made pottery is in the settlement from Marca – *Sfărăuaș I* (31%).

Table 3. The situation of the ceramic categories (proportions).

CERAMIC CATEGORIES (PROPORTIONS)		
PORȚ – *La baraj*	**AGHIREȘ** – *Sub păşune*	**MARCA** – *Sfărăuaș I*
Handmade pottery 10.99%	Handmade pottery 20%	Handmade pottery 47%
Slow wheel made pottery 68.50%	Slow wheel made pottery 70%	Slow wheel made pottery 22%
Fast wheel made pottery 20.51%	Fast wheel made pottery 10%	Fast wheel made pottery 31%

Of all the archaeological structures researched at Porț – *La baraj,* the circular complex C. 5/2007 (the only discovery of this kind on the territory of Romania) has the most interesting planimetry, such constructions being noticed in Hungary at Esztergom – *Zsidód*[2], but especially in the space Eastern European[3]. To these analogies we could add examples from England where in sites datable between 700–1000 the traces of some structures/buildings with a circular planimetry (trenches or pillar pits) with the role of farm annexes for the preservation of grain harvests were identified[4].

It is known that, during the Avar Period, wheel made pottery experienced

[2] MOLNÁR 2011, p. 663, kép 4–5.

[3] MOLNÁR 2011, p. 684–685, kép 6–8.

[4] GARDINER 2013, p. 25 and so on., fig. 2/2.

a standardization process. However, in the case of the sites at Porț – *La baraj* and Aghireș – *Sub păşune*, some fragments of vessels with ornamentation and formal characteristics less common attract attention:

• from the complex C. 20/2007 from Porț – *La baraj* comes a fragment from the mouth of a pot (fast wheel made) which, on the inner surface (in the area of the neck which is thicker) has a pronounced shoulder in the form of a groove with the edge sharp[5]. Such modeling of the inner surface of the upper part of the pots is very rare, they were discovered in contexts datable to the 8th–9th centuries (as well as the specimen from Porț – *La baraj*), as is the case with the pot from Stránska (Slovakia)[6] or those from the necropolises of the Lower Danube (Istria – *Capu Viilor* and Izvoru)[7];

• another batch of ceramic fragments (the upper part of some pots shaped on the slow wheel) from Porț – *La baraj* have a strongly arched neck and a sharply drawn down rim[8]. Batches of pots with such mouth characteristics are present in finds from the late Avar Period, such as those from Nagykanizsa[9] or Rákoczifalva[10];

• in the complex C. 17/2007 from Porț – *La baraj*, a fragment of the mouth of a pot (modeled with a slow wheel) was discovered which, on the inner surface, shows some horizontal, straight and parallel striations, drawn very often. This is not a „decoration" but rather the result of techniques for treating and finishing the inner surface of the vessel. For now, in Transylvania, such discoveries have only been reported in the settlement of Jucu de Sus – *Tetarom III/Râtul boilor*[11]. Discoveries of ceramics with such characteristics have also been reported in foreign literature (for example discoveries from the south-east Alpine area[12], Slovenia[13], Germany and Austria[14]), this technique of treating and finishing the inner surface of vessels being considered a legacy from late antiquity[15]. Also, discoveries made in much later archaeological contexts are known, such as those in Poland from Wroclaw, datable to the second half of the 10th – first half of the 11th centuries[16];

• at Aghireș – *Sub păşune*, a batch of ceramic fragments[17] that come from the upper part of some pots (mostly shaped with a slow wheel, a single example of an handmade pot that imitate those shaped on a wheel) is characterized by a broken neck (practically non-existent), rim wide/elongated and sloping outwards. Examples of pots with very wide mouths are known from Slavic-Avar burial contexts (second

[5] MATEI, BĂCUEȚ-CRIȘAN 2011, pl. 63/4.

[6] RUSNÁC 2011, p. 160, fig. 8.

[7] FIEDLER 1992, Taf 31/2 and 36/11.

[8] MATEI, BĂCUEȚ-CRIȘAN 2011, pl. 97/1, pl. 12/1.

[9] SZÖKE 1992, fig. 11/2.

[10] KONDÉ 2017, p. 340, pl. 1/1C.

[11] STANCIU 2016, fig. 123.

[12] On the pottery (of ancient tradition, attributed to the Romance population of the 5th–6th centuries) from the sites of Taurnia, Ulrichsberg and Hemmaberg (RODRIGUEZ 1997, Taf. 1/3, Taf. 2/11, Taf. 3/25, Taf. 4/32, Taf. 7/64, Taf. 8/74, Taf. 9/83–84).

[13] On pottery of ancient tradition (5th–7th centuries) (PERKO 1995, p. 248, Abb. 5/2, 4).

[14] On the ceramics of the ancient tradition (5th–7th centuries) attributed to the Romance population (ceramics conventionally called *horreumkeramik*), see GATTRINGER, GRÜNEWALD 1981, p. 199, Abb. 1–6.

[15] An extensive analysis of these findings in STANCIU 2016, p. 164 and so on.

[16] RZEŹNIK 1995, p. 71, Abb. 9/1, 3.

[17] BĂCUEȚ-CRIȘAN *et alii* 2009, pl. 194/1, 197/1 and 259/2.

half of the 7th – first half of the 9th centuries) such as those from Záhorska Bystrica[18] and Nové Zámky[19];

• the upper part of a pot (slow wheel made) discovered at Aghireș – *Sub păşune* in the complex C. 97/2008[20] is decorated with two parallel rows of short incisions drawn obliquely. It is known that such ornaments are found mainly on ceramics dated *after* the year 1000[21], however, they have also been reported (of course, less often) in archaeological contexts datable to the Avar Period, as is the case with some specimens discovered in the Nové necropolis Zámky [22] and Velký Grob[23];

• also, from Aghireș – *Sub păşune* (from the complex C. 111/2009) come several ceramic fragments from a pot (slow wheel made) decorated with parallel rows of small impressions made with a sharp tool[24]. Again, we are in front of a decoration that is similar to that made with a cogwheel (characteristic of ceramic vessels dating from the middle of the 10th century[25]). And in this case, the use of such a decoration in the Avar Period (of course less often) is supported (for example) by the discoveries from the Slavic-Avar necropolis at Záhorska Bystrica[26], or from the settlement at Kántorjánosi[27].

Final considerations

For the Silvanian Basin, from the data we currently have, the spatial arrangement of the archaeological structures (those *insulae*) in a circular arc around a "square" seems to be a common element of the settlements from Porț – *La baraj* and Marca – *Sfărăuaș I.* This internal structure and topography has also been reported in other early medieval Transylvanian settlements, such as those at Jucu de Sus – *Tetarom III/Râtul boilor*[28] and Comana de Jos[29].

In his analysis of the early medieval villages in the Carpathian Basin, P. Šalkovský emphasizes the existence of settlements with archaeological structures arranged in a circle (with examples of sites from the 7th–10th centuries), but also those that are composed of groups (those *insulae*), of archaeological structures with varied functionality (understood as independent farms/households)[30].

[18] KRASKOVSKÁ 1972, p. 126, fig. 23/1.
[19] ČILINSKÁ 1966, p. 311, fig. 465/4.
[20] BĂCUEȚ-CRIȘAN *et alii* 2009, pl. 223/2.
[21] BĂCUEȚ-CRIȘAN 2014, p. 115.
[22] ČILINSKÁ 1966, p. 294, fig. 310/1, p. 304, fig. 422/2 and 423/4.
[23] ŠTEFANOVIČOVÁ 1996, p. 264, Abb. 3.
[24] BĂCUEȚ-CRIȘAN *et alii* 2009, pl. 243.
[25] BĂCUEȚ-CRIȘAN 2014, p. 115.
[26] KRASKOVSKÁ 1972, p. 141, obr. 38/10, p. 142, obr. 39/1.
[27] BAJKAI 2012, p. 464, Tábla 5/5.
[28] In the case of the settlement at Jucu de Sus – *Tetarom III/Râtul boilor* it can be observed (in the central segment Ia of the settlement) that most of the researched dwellings investigated were arranged in a circular arc (STANCIU 2016, fig. 36).
[29] In the case of the settlement at Comana de Jos, the arrangement of most of the archaeological structures can be observed in a circular arc around a free central space. Another (smaller) group of archaeological structures was attached to this group, probably later (a fact probably determined by the growth and expansion of the community), also arranged in a circular arc (STANCIU 2016, fig. 43).
[30] VIZAUER 2008, p. 145; ŠALKOVSKÝ 2011, Abb. 2/3.

Regarding the chronology of the settlements now compared, based on the formal characteristics of the discovered artefacts (especially ceramics, some of the artefacts being mentioned above) we can assume a possible contemporaneity (8th–9th centuries) of the settlements at Porț – *La baraj* and Aghireș – *Sub pășune*, the one from Marca – *Sfărăuaș I* being earlier (7th–8th centuries) than the other two settlements.

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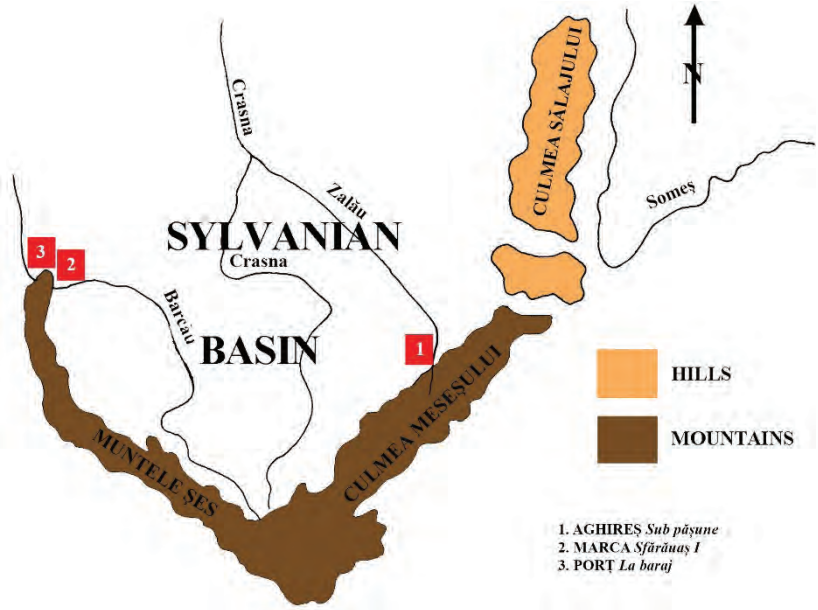

Fig. 1. The location of the three sites analyzed in the text in the Sylvanian Basin.

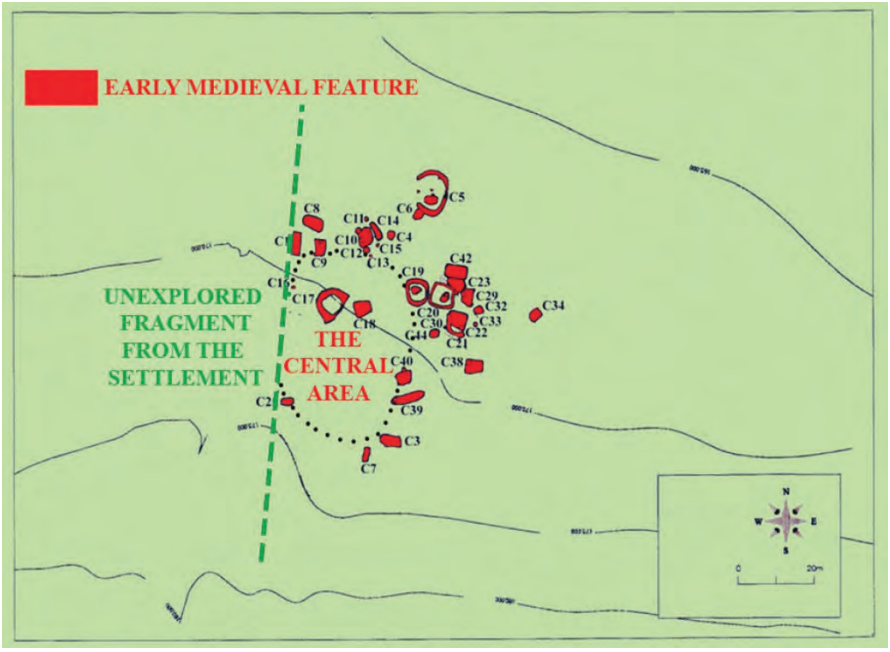

Fig. 2. Early medieval settlement from Porț – *La baraj*. Internal organization (according to BĂCUEȚ-CRIȘAN 2021, fig. 4).

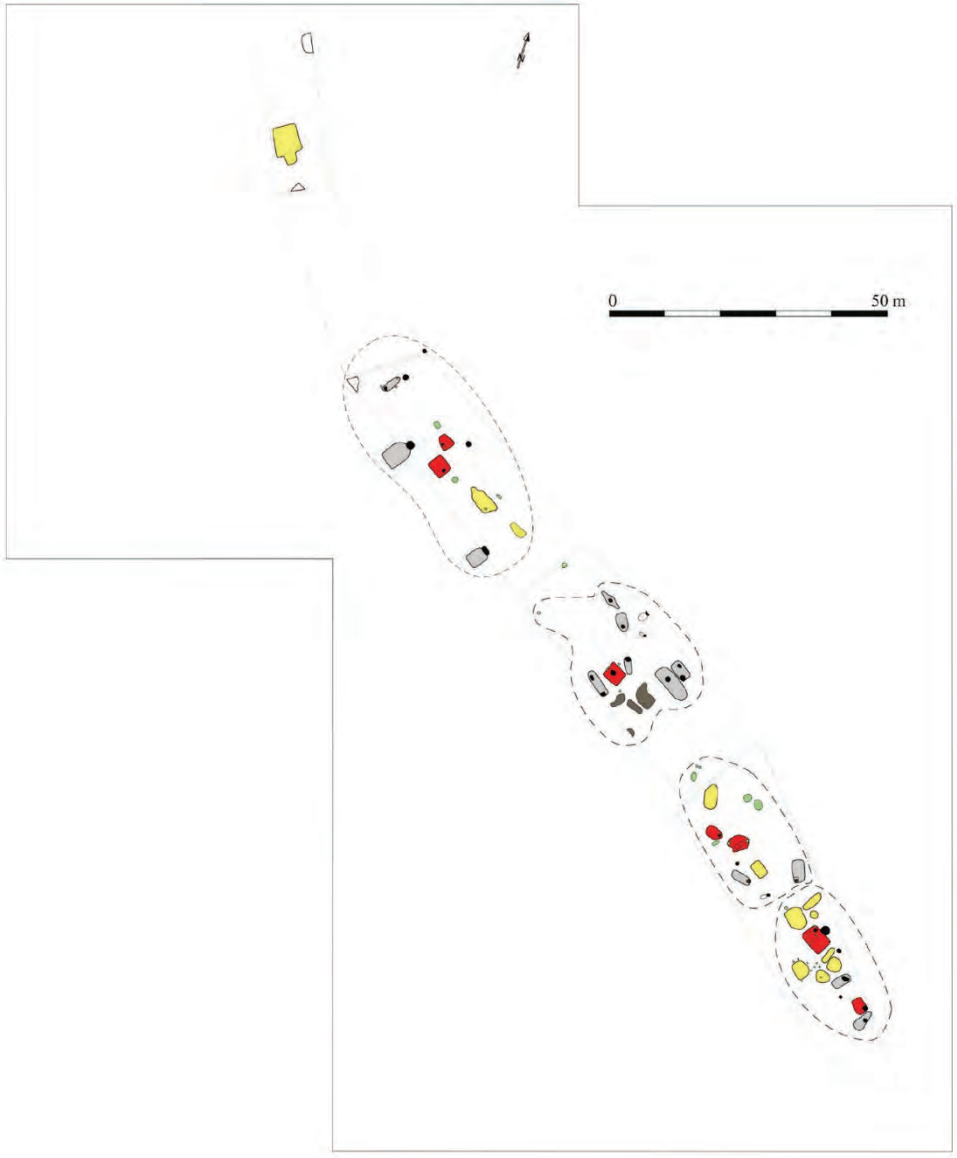

Fig. 3. Early medieval settlement from Aghireș – *Sub pășune.* Internal organization (according to STANCIU 2023, fig. 5).

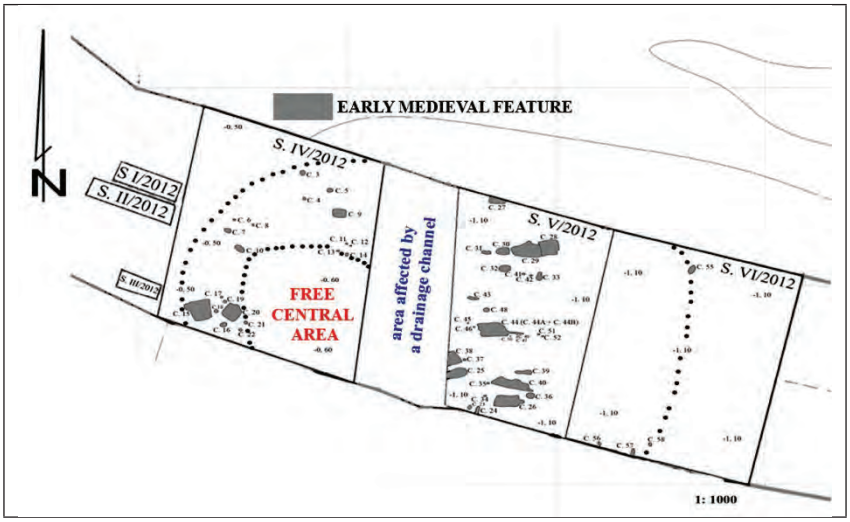

Fig. 4. Early medieval settlement from Marca – *Sfărăuaș I.* Internal organization (according to BĂCUEȚ-CRIȘAN 2021, fig. 4).

ON THE NORTHERN BOUNDARIES OF THE VISTULANS

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Keywords: *Vistulans, Early Middle Ages, hillforts, Lesser Poland*.
Cuvinte-cheie: *vistulani, Evul Mediu timpuriu, cetăți de deal, Polonia Mică*.

Abstract: *This article discusses the northern border region of the Vistulans, a community mentioned in sources from the 9th century. Great hillforts, mounds, and iron axe-shaped bars called the Lesser Poland or the Vistulan type characterized the areas the community occupied. The four hillforts, namely Udórz, Kostkowice, Złoty Potok and Siedlec, which were discussed in the text, were almost absent in the literature, and the researchers solely focused on Cracow as the central place and great hillforts, such as Stradów. Recent discoveries of imports and deposits of iron axe-shaped bars, along with accompanying archaeological material, indicate the significance of hillforts situated on the boundaries of the Vistulan territory in terms of their tribal organization. As a result of the recent examination of the distribution patterns of hillforts combined with the spread of iron axe-shaped bars, it is necessary to revise the existing understanding of the geographical positioning of Vistulan settlements. The previously suggested territorial extension of this area along the upper Vistula as documented in literature should be expanded from the southeast to the northwest.*

Rezumat: *Acest articol analizează regiunea nordică de graniță a vistulanilor, o comunitate menționată în sursele din secolul al IX-lea. Mari cetăți de deal, movile și bare de fier în formă de secure, numite tipul Polonia Mică sau tipul Vistulan, caracterizau zonele ocupate de această comunitate. Cele patru cetăți de deal, și anume Udórz, Kostkowice, Złoty Potok și Siedlec, analizate în text, erau aproape absente în literatura de specialitate, cercetătorii concentrându-se exclusiv pe Cracovia, ca loc central, și pe cetățile mari, cum ar fi Stradów. Descoperirile recente de importuri și de depozite de bare de fier în formă de secure, împreună cu materialul arheologic asociat, indică importanța cetăților de deal situate la granițele teritoriului vistulanilor, în ceea ce privește organizarea lor tribală. Ca urmare a examinării recente a tiparelor de distribuție a cetăților de deal, coroborată de răspândirea barelor de fier în formă de secure, este necesară revizuirea înțelegerii existente a poziționării geografice a așezărilor vistulanilor. Extinderea teritorială a acestei zone sugerată anterior de-a lungul*

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Vistulei superioare, după cum este documentată în literatură, ar trebui să fie extinsă de la sud-est spre nord-vest.

Introduction

The Vistulans have been inspiring the imagination of archaeologists as well as of historians for quite a long time. This has been caused by their still unclear role in the forming of state structures in Lesser Poland in the times before the Piast dynasty. In connection to their misty influence, the special interest of researchers is drawn to the territorial extension of this community, which, according to some, comprised the Cracow land alongside the Sandomierz land[1], or solely the Kraków land[2]. Some more precise base to determine this territorial extension is taken by assuming its boundaries by the means of localizing the so called great hillforts regarded as a kind of showcase of the Vistulans' settlement. Due to this, the territorial extension determined this way would comprise mainly the areas northeast and east of Cracow, which makes out the surface area of 7000 square km[3]. Four hillforts namely Udórz, Kostkowice, Złoty Potok and Siedlec, localized north and northwest of Cracow would be entirely omitted whilst in our opinion, they must have constituted a part of the Vistulans' territory building its important defensive northern flank (**Fig. 1**).

The aim of this text is the presentation of four hillforts, often ignored or marginalized in literature, localized on the peripheries of the Vistulans' community, and their potential importance in the Vistula land.

Beginnings of the Vistulans

As a result of not yet clearly identified processes involving probably the stabilisation and growing density of settlement, particularly around the later borough of Cracow, and most probably also some outside impulses like raids from the territory of Avar Khaganate[4] (**Fig. 2**), the Slavic community of the Vistulans was formed on the upper Vistula in the 8th or maybe 9th century, a formation known from some foreign written sources. Under the ethnonym *Vuislane* they were mentioned only once by the so called Bavarian Geographer but two geographical mentions more can be associated with them – firstly, the mention of the Vistula land (*Wislelond*) by Alfred the king of Wessex (died in 899) and the second mention about a very powerful pagan prince who had a seat at Vislech, i.e. on the land of Vistula (*v Vislech*) in the Pannonian Legend (Fragment of the Life of St. Methodius)[5]. They remained a part of the vast Slavic cultural area of which the segment inhabiting the Polish territory is sometimes called Rüssen-Chodlik (post-Prague)[6] cultural zone, while the segment east of Poland is termed Rajkovetska culture (called also Luka Rajkovetska)[7]. This division is completely artificial because it resulted from the post-war border between

[1] LABUDA 1988, p. 186, fig. 4.
[2] ŁOWMIAŃSKI 1973, p. 372, 430, fig. 7.
[3] KURNATOWSKA 2005.
[4] LIWOCH 2020a, p. 273–276.
[5] SŁOWIAŃSZCZYZNA 1999, p. 56–58, p. 108.
[6] LECIEJEWICZ 1989, p. 55.
[7] MIHAYLINA 2007, p. 8.

the states of Polish People's Republic and the USSR and was caused by their limited exchange of research and archaeological analyses[8].

Of this tribal community of Vistulans, quite multiple archeological relics have remained like cemeteries, of which the one in Krzemionki, Cracow, will be mentioned here when discussing the burial of Krak, the legendary eponym of Cracow; furthermore, there are axe-like iron bars and hillforts, but as in the title of the work, only the northern hillforts will be shortly discussed here.

One of the material remainder of one of the Vistulans' princes is Krakus Mound (or the Krak Mound) (**Fig. 3** and **4**), which should probably be included in the numerous group of graves with the burial on top of the tumulus. It differs from other burials of this type only by its size gained probably with respect to the high rank of the deceased buried there. The mound was a dominant element of the vast Cracow barrows cemetery[9] (**Fig. 5**), although the archaeological examination of it is unfortunately impossible now because it has suffered damages in many ways for a thousand years. Some pre-war archeological research of the ducal burial brought finds allowing for the dating of the mound's origin into the time between the 8th and the 10th centuries. The first of these finds was a Late Avar belt fitting (**Fig. 6**), and the second one was a coin of Boleslaus II the Pious, Duke of Bohemia (d. 999)[10], unfortunately lost.

The northern boundaries of the Vistulans' territory in the light of archaeology

The arrival of Slavs – the Early Slavic Phase

Around the half of the first millennium A.D., a fundamental cultural and ethnic change happened in the territory of today's southeastern Poland. It was the Slavs who arrived from the East in the partially desolate lands on the upper Vistula (**Fig. 7**) with their modest if not poor material culture which, taking its name from the Czech Prague and from its archaeological sites with the characteristic hand-made pottery (**Fig. 8**) is now called the Prague culture[11]. It expanded over the vast lands from the Dnieper and Pripyat rivers to the Elbe and Danube, yet, astonishingly, it was poorly diversified which can be explained by its genetic homogeneity with young traditions[12]. The lands were desolate although not completely, as it is indicated by many pre-Slavic toponyms and by material traces, although extremely scarce, of possible contacts. The first indicator is the evidence of continual oral heritage, and consequently also the continuity of settlement, in the times between the Antiquity and the Middle Ages. This heritage mainly includes names of rivers (potamonyms), but also oronyms like the Tatra for the mountain range, the name absolutely ungrounded in the languages used in this territory during the Middle Ages and later[13]. Witold Mańczak[14] elucidates the issue in following simple words: "[…] names of Polish rivers can be distinguished in two categories: 1. Names intelligible for Poles such as

[8] PARCZEWSKI 1999, p. 183.
[9] RADWAŃSKI 2000a, p. 267–280.
[10] JAMKA 1965, p. 223; TYNIEC 2018.
[11] BORKOVSKÝ 1940; PARCZEWSKI 1988; SZMONIEWSKI 2016.
[12] PARCZEWSKI 1991, p. 29–30.
[13] BABIK 2001.
[14] MAŃCZAK 2004, p. 37.

Kamienna (the stony river), Bystrzyca (the rushing water) or *Prądnik* (the current) which are relatively recent, and 2. Potamonyms incomprehensible for Poles such as *Wisła (the Vistula), Odra (the Oder) Raba, Soła, Nysa (the Neisse), Nida, Bug, Drwęca, Gwda, Skrwa,* etc., names which emerged in the ancient past hundreds if not thousands of years before the 5th century AD. At that time, in the 5th century, there were no geographic atlases, not to speak of the fact that the Slavs were illiterate then. In those circumstances, the question arises in which way Slavs who were arriving in desolate parts of the Oder and the Vistula basins should have learnt the names of the rivers having been used there before their arrival". However, it must be noted that linguists' opinions regarding some potamonyms vary significantly, the perfect example of which is the Warta, considered as pre-Slavic by Zbigniew Babik[15], whilst Janusz Rieger and Ewa Wolnicz-Pawłowska[16], noticing its association with the Polish verb "wiercić (się) " (to spin, to whirl, to turn) along with W. Mańczak[17] seeking its origin in *Vŕ̥ta, do not doubt its Slavic root. In opposite, the matter with the Soła mentioned above and listed by W. Mańczak as non-Slavic, is discussed by Z. Babik[18] as follows: "Surely, one can believe in the 'pre-Slavic' origin of the name of the Soła river, but it cannot be denied that it could have originated on the Slavic ground after the divergence from the Proto-language […]. Identical (or similar) toponyms from some non-Slavic territories could have therefore originated independently of this one, on grounds of various Indo-European languages", maintaining that this name refers to the salt content of the river. However, in the light of archaeological data, there is no doubt that the pre-Slavic settlement was vestigial as material traces of contacts with Sclaveni/Sklabenoi coming from the east (such were the names given to Slavs in written sources)[19] with most probably German local population were extremely scarce.

Any remains of the early Slavic material culture are most scarce, too. Apart from a cluster of several settlements localized along the upper Vistula valley between Cracow Nowa Huta and Złotniki to the east, as the closest site to the analysed area we can mention one cremation cemetery, partially explored, in Siemonia, Upper Silesia, where three clay urns of the Prague type were found, and the site in Korzkiew, south-eastern part of the Olkusz Upland, where pottery from the Early Slavic phase was found in a pit[20] (**Fig. 7**).

[15] BABIK 2001, p. 293–297.

[16] RIEGER, WOLNICZ-PAWŁOWSKA 1975, p. 169.

[17] MAŃCZAK 2004, p. 37–38.

[18] BABIK 2001, p. 561–563.

[19] Jordanes, writing in the 6th century, noted that: "Within these rivers lies Dacia, encircled by the lofty Alps (Carpathians Mountains – note by R.L., B.S.) as by a crown. Near their left ridge, which inclines toward the north, and beginning at the source of the Vistula, the populous race of the Venethi dwell, occupying a great expanse of land. Though their names are now dispersed amid various clans and places, yet they are chiefly called Sclaveni and Antes" *(*GETICA 34, transl. MIEROW 1915, p. 59*),* while Procopius of Caesarea mentioned an event from 512: "When the Eruli, being defeated by the Lombards in the above-mentioned battle, migrated from their ancestral homes, some of them, as has been told by me above, made their home in the country of Illyricum, but the rest were averse to crossing the Ister River, but settled in the very extremity of the world; at any rate, these men, led by many of the royal blood, traversed all the nations of the Sclaveni one after the other, and after next crossing a large tract of barren country, they came to the Varni, as they are called" (PROCOPIUS VI: XV 1–3, transl. DEWING 1919, p. 415).

[20] NOWAK *et alli* 2016.

Tribal phase – the Vistulans

It is highly probable that in (the 8th?) 9th and 10th centuries, the northern part of the Vistulans' territory was the Kraków-Częstochowa Upland (Polish Jurassic Highland)[21]. This is evidenced by some known, although not satisfactorily researched and often disregarded hillforts from the tribal phase[22] positioned along the line south/southeast – north/northwest (**Fig. 1**), as well as iron deposits and multiple imports associated with them. One reminiscence of the connection between this region and the Cracow cluster of settlements were the later northwestern borders of the Cracow diocese and the administrative entity of Kraków land, and with the course of time, of the Cracow voivodeship together with Lelów County.

In the southeastern part of the Upland, in Udórz (Żarnowiec municipality, Zawiercie County) on the stream of Udorka, a hillfort was built (**Fig. 9**), which, basing on the ceramic material, can be dated in the period from the end of the 8th to the first quarter of the 13th century[23], however, both the chronology of its beginnings and its functioning in the early state phase require verification. Recently, two spurs have been found on this site with hooks bent inwards, which belong to technotype III technical variant 2 and morphological variant B according to Jan Żak's classification **(Fig. 10)**. They should be dated into the half of the 8th – beginning (?) of the 9th century[24]. The presence of these hooked spurs probably imported from beyond the Carpathian Mountains, in the Udórz hillfort could be regarded as the evidence of the place's significant role within the Vistulans' tribal community being perhaps in the early stage of state formation, as well as they are a sign of some significant settlement processes occurring on these locations during the final phase of the Avar Khaganate existence and before the rise of the Moymirid dynasty.

In the central part of the Upland, in Kostkowice, (Kroczyce municipality, Zawiercie County) on Słupsko Hill, there is a hillfort which has not yet been excavated but under an ongoing surface survey research (**Fig. 11**, **12** and **13**). Archaeologically, only a small cave located on the north-eastern slope of Mount Słupsko, called Jaskinia nad Bramą Słupską (Cave above the Słupsko Gate), was examined. Ceramics from the 9th–10th centuries were discovered in its layers[25]. The results of this surface survey research and findings obtained there in the course of the surface reconnaissance conducted in 2023, multiple fragments have been found of clay vessels typical for the 9th–10th centuries, i.e. for the tribal phase of the Middle Ages[26] (**Fig. 14**). Its Early Medieval chronology is also suggested by two nearby deposits of axe-like iron bars of the Lesser Poland type (**Fig. 15**) from the 9th century[27]. Furthermore, one more find already mentioned here should be added, the archival find coming from monadnock in nearby Kroczyce[28], along with a settlement

[21] LABERSCHEK 2014, p. 19–20.

[22] POLESKI 2013, p. 332.

[23] BRODA 2005, p. 107.

[24] BUGAJ, ZDANIEWICZ, LIWOCH 2020.

[25] KRAJCARZ *et alli* 2014, p. 26, fig. 5.

[26] SZMONIEWSKI, ROZMUS in print.

[27] ZAGÓRSKA-TELEGA, BOCHNAK 2001, p. 39–47; ROZMUS, SZMONIEWSKI, TRONCIK 2006, p. 101–113.

[28] SZMONIEWSKI, ROZMUS in print a.

from the tribal phase of the Early Medieval Period located at its base on the stream Białka. The settlement has been researched to a small extent by the means of excavations (**Fig. 16**)[29], as well as by a surface reconnaissance with the result of finding fragments of ceramic vessels (**Fig. 17**), clay roasters and animal bones from the 9th and 10th centuries[30].

At this point, our attention should be turned to a concentration of axe-like bars in the settlement microregion of Kostkowice-Kroczyce (**Fig. 18**). This is another piece of evidence in support of including the region in the territorial extension of the Vistulans' community because such bars like these are typical solely for Lesser Poland. The bars were iron items shaped like axes. In literature, there is an ongoing discussion regarding their function[31], the occurrence of the axe-like bars is limited to Lesser Poland[32] and especially to the area of the diameter of about 65 km around Cracow as the central borough[33]. Within this area, the bars were discovered on following sites: the biggest deposit in Okół, Cracow, including 4212 items of the total weight surpassing 3.5 tons of iron[34], in Mogiła, Nowa Huta, Cracow (1 item and a fragment of another one)[35], in Zwierzyniec, Cracow (number unknown)[36], and in Modlnica (1 item)[37]. In a close distance from Cracow, in the Szklarka valley near Jerzmanowice, a unique deposit was found consisting of a dozen of bars intentionally cut into pieces. Another deposit in the number of 39 items displaying various grades of preservation was found in the tribal phase settlement in Brzesko near Uszwica[38]. On the nortwestern boundary of the Vistulans' community, two deposits were discovered (6 items and 9 items) in the hillfort of Kostkowice and in the nearby Kroczyce respectively, and in the southeastern boundary, the find in the hillfort of Zawada Lanckorońska[39]. Outside this one particular region, one axe-like bar was found in Radymno on the San River[40] and one on the bank of the Poprad River, in Slovakia[41].

The fact that the bars were found in places so distant from one another like Kostkowice and Zawada Lanckorońska can be interpreted as a trace of a fiscal system of the community being in the early stage of state formation (?) encompassing the region with the main borough in Cracow with its hillfort on the hill of Wawel and having at its disposal the vast hoard – princely treasury (?) – of axe-like bars in Okół at the foot of Wawel[42].

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[29] KOJ 1998, p. 92–95; MŁODKOWSKA-PRZEPIÓROWSKA, KOJ 1999, p. 145, 167, 170, 172, fot. 5–6.

[30] SZMONIEWSKI, ROZMUS in print b.

[31] SZMONIEWSKI 2010; HÁJNIK 2019; HLAVICA, BÁRTA 2021; HLAVICA, KOURIL, MIKULEC 2022.

[32] SZMONIEWSKI, ROZMUS 2022, fig. 1.

[33] SZMONIEWSKI, ROZMUS 2022, fig. 2.

[34] ZAITZ 1990.

[35] HACHULSKA-LEDWOS 1971, p. 26–27, 48, 51.

[36] ZAITZ 1990, p. 162–163.

[37] LIWOCH 2013.

[38] SZMONIEWSKI *et alli* in print.

[39] ŻAKI 1961; SZMONIEWSKI, ROZMUS 2022, fig. 9/1–2

[40] KOPERSKI 1980, p. 99, 110.

[41] BÉREŠ 2002, p. 139–140, fig. 1/1.

[42] RADWAŃSKI 2000b, p. 535–555.

Also, in the central part of the Upland, in Złoty Potok (Janów municipality, Częstochowa County) close to the springs of the River Wiercica, the hillfort of Wały is located (**Fig. 19** and **20**), and north of it on the same small river, there was a medieval settlement. The hillfort probably functioned in the second half of the 9th century and/or at the beginning of the 10th century[43] (**Fig. 21**). One particularly important find from Złoty Potok is a spur strap loop (**Fig. 22**) made of a copper alloy which presumably served for reeving a thong to lash a spur to an ankle. According to the most recent Zbigniew Robak's classification of spur strap loops belonging to the Carolingian type, this sample can be included in type 3 – i.e. to the loops of small sizes with the wrought upper edge, and in variant e – encompassing the loops with their plates having undulated longer sides or semi-oval swellings across the axis of the plate. Regarding the form, items closest to the one from Złoty Potok are iron loops dated in the 9th century from Pobedim and Naszacowice although they do not have holes in their plates. Therefore, it can be assumed that the described loop was also made in the 9th century. It was brought to Potok (the shorter medieval name of the place), to the settlement or hillfort in the northwestern boundary of the territory belonging to the Vistulans' tribal community, perhaps from Great Moravia, most probably in the second half of the 9th century[44].

The widest scope of research was drawn by excavation works on the site located in the northern part of the Częstochowa Jurassic Upland, on the hill overlooking the gorge of the river Warta, with the hillfort Gąszczyk on top (**Fig. 23** and **24**) in Siedlec (Mstów municipality, Częstochowa County). These excavation works, however, have brought relatively humble results including pottery from the Late Bronze/Early Iron epochs, and from the Early Medieval Period (2nd half of the 9th – the half of 10th century) as well as a few artefacts of other raw materials (**Fig. 25**)[45]. The site in Siedlec can initially be identified with the primary Mstów which had been set on the forefront of the vast settlement microregion and had been mentioned as *opole de Mstov* in Boleslaus V the Chaste's document from 1263 releasing serfs from the surrounding villages from the obligation of watching over falcon's nests[46].

The Early state Period

Basing on the localization and chronology it can be assumed that in the times of the Principality and Kingdom of Poland, the successor of destroyed or desolate Vistulan hillforts (?) became Lelów – today, a village in Częstochowa County, but a county town in the time between Late Medieval Period and 19th century. As the successor, we mean more accurately Lelów before the foundation privilege, i.e. the settlement located in the area of today's village Staromieście (nomen omen, as it means old town), not far away from Kostkowice and Złoty Potok. It is true that neither in Staromieście nor in Lelów any hillfort or hillforts could be reliably identified but some archeological sites could be recognized there as dating back to the times of the Principality and Kingdom of Poland, including those researched by excavations conducted in the year 2022 and a cemetery explored in 2023. The latter

[43] LIWOCH 2020b, p. 119–125.
[44] LIWOCH 2020b, p. 119–121, 123–124.
[45] WIECZOREK-SZMAL, KOSIŃSKI, BIELIŃSKA 2019, p. 77–102.
[46] LABERSCHEK 2017, p. 35.

is presumably a fragment of a larger row necropolis which can be initially dated in the 11th to the beginning of the 12th century.

On the examined area, 5 inhumation burials were found, 4 of which belonged to adults and 1 to a child (**Fig. 26**). The assortment of grave goods laid into the graves with the bodies in the examined part of the cemetery in Lelów-Ślęzany is typical for cemeteries. This assortment consisted of: temple rings, rings, beads, knives, a buckle, a clay pot, an axe. In the ploughed topsoil, following artefacts were found which most probably came from damaged graves: a fragment of a denar of Bretislav I (died 1055) as well as temple rings, rings and beads[47].

It should be also noticed that in the neighbourhood of Lelów, three villages have survived; they had the character of serf villages (specialized in various labours as services to the ruler; such services were typical for the economy of the Duchy of Poland): Sokolniki (falcon breeding, training and hunting with falcons), Woźniki (production of wheels and carts) and Psary (breeding hunting dogs, hunting with dogs), the fourth of them – Szczytniki (production of shields for warriors), evidenced in documents only once in 1469, disappeared most probably as early as in the Middle Ages[48].

Conclusions

All the issues mentioned in this text require further studies. It seems that in the next future, only the state of research on these four Jurassic hillforts is going to be improved while the issue of the territorial extension of the Vistulans as well as the characteristics of their political formation will continue to raise doubts. The authors however take the liberty to assume that the Vistulans' domain extended from the southeast to the northwest with the axis formed by the hillforts with the borough of Cracow set more or less in its centre (**Fig. 1**), and not along the Vistula as it is usually reconstructed. This hypothesis seems to be supported by the localization of the finds of axe-like bars along the line from Zawada Lanckorońska (Zakliczyn municipality, Tarnów County) through Cracovian Okół with the huge princely hoard (?) to Kostkowice (**Fig. 18**).

On the basis of the above, it appears that the area of the Vistulans community was larger than suggested by Zofia Kurnatowska[49]. Moreover, the position of Cracow as a central place in relation to the surrounding areas changed and the area itself become the largest central area in the Polish territories, surpassing the central area of Gniezno. The question remains as to why the germ of a state, which could have led to the emergence of the Polish state, did not form around Cracow. These factors are still unclear considering the fact of the presence of a permanent and appropriately hierarchical territorial structure in this area since the end of the 9th century[50].

We hope that gradual and systematic archaeological research will give an answer to the above question.

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[47] SZMONIEWSKI, SOBOTA-LIWOCH, ROZMUS 2024.
[48] LABERSCHECK 2017, p. 31.
[49] KURNATOWSKA 2005, p. 25.
[50] KURNATOWSKA 2005, p. 27.

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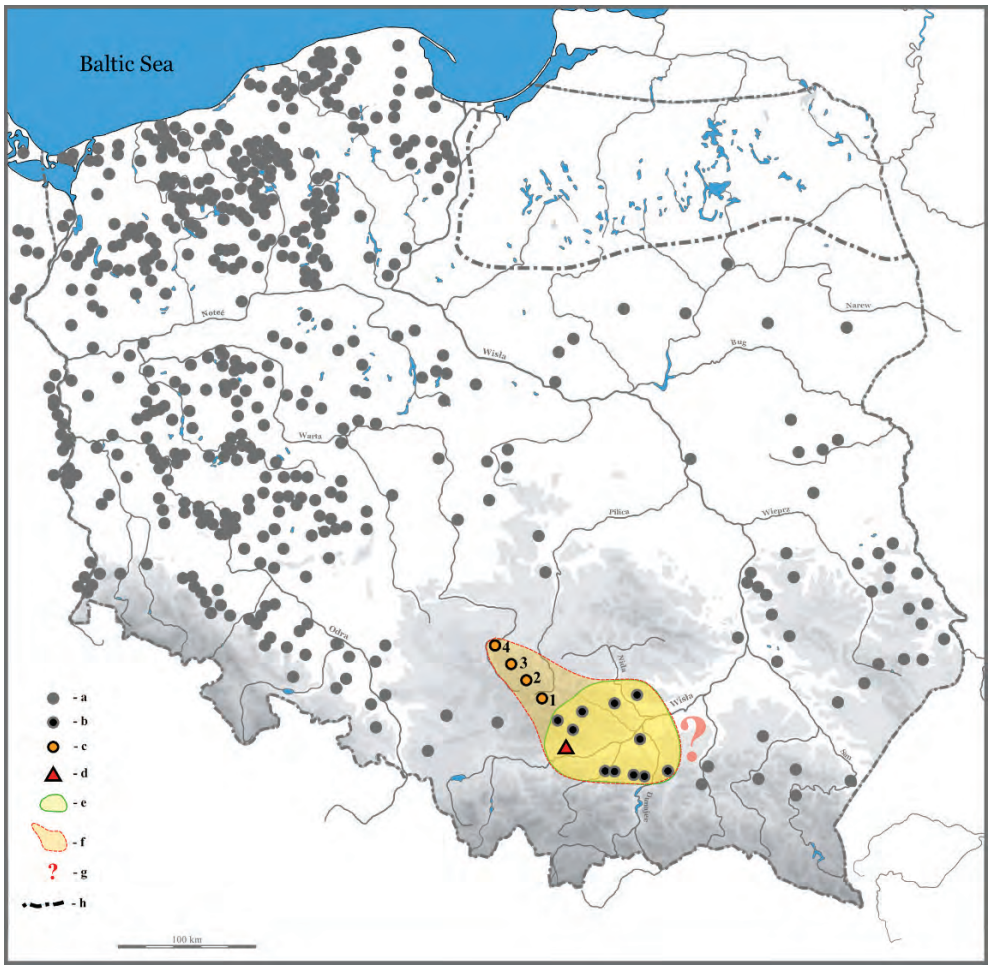

Fig. 1. Distribution of hillforts in Polish lands from 8th–10th centuries (after KURNATOWSKA 2005 and BUKO 2021 with authors' modifications; drawing B. Sz. Szmoniewski): a – hillforts; b – Vistulans' hillforts; c – omitted Vistulans' hillforts; d – Cracow – central place; e – core settlement area of the Vistulans according to KURNATOWSKA 2005; f – core settlement area of the Vistulans according to authors; g – probable area of the Vistulans settlements; h – border between Slavic and Baltic communities (1 – Udórz; 2 – Kostkowice; 3 – Złoty Potok; 4 – Siedlec).

Fig. 2. The Iron triple-winged arrowhead (Avars?) from Maszków and Pobiednik Wielki, Cracow District, Poland (after LIWOCH 2020a).

Fig. 3. Krakus Mound, Cracow, Poland. A contemporary view (photo B. Sz. Szmoniewski).

A

B

C

Fig. 4. Krakus Mound, Cracow, Poland. Archeological investigation in 1930s (source: Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe / National Digital Archives, Public domain): A – Side view of the mound; B – Aerial view of the excavated area; C – Excavation area inside of the mound.

Fig. 5. Barrow cemetery in Krzemionki Podgórskie, Cracow, Poland. 19th century copy of the Austrian plan by Charles de Hoefern from 1779 (after RADWAŃSKI 2000a).

Fig. 6. Late Avar belt fitting from Krakus Mound (photo A. Susuł).

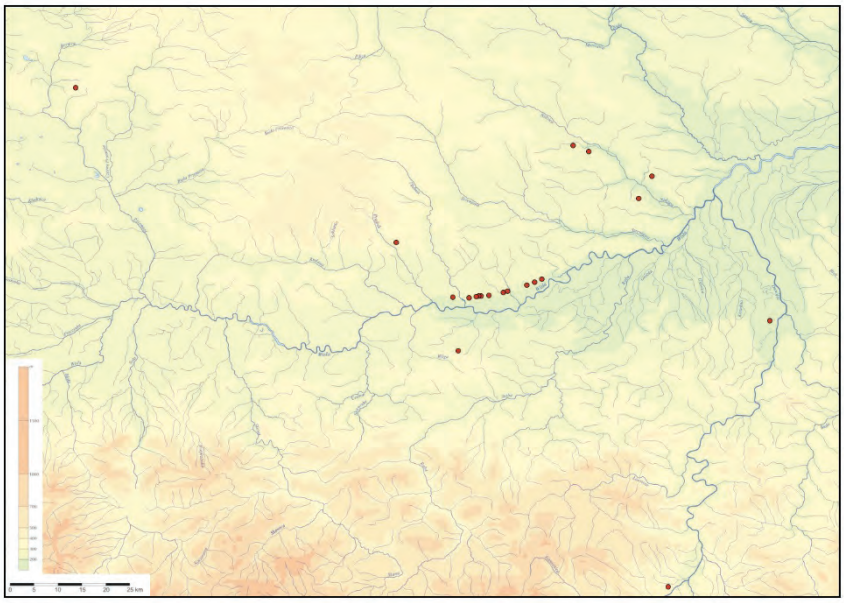

Fig. 7. Early Slavs' settlements – Prague Culture in western part of the southeastern Poland (5th/6th–half 7th century) (compiled and drawing B. Sz. Szmoniewski).

Fig. 8. The Prague Culture vessels from cremation cemetery from Siemonia, Śląskie Voivodeship, Poland (photo R. Liwoch).

Fig. 9. Hillfort in Udórz, Śląskie Voivodeship, Poland, with marked find places of spurs with hook-shaped terminals (after BUGAJ, ZDANIEWICZ, LIWOCH 2020).

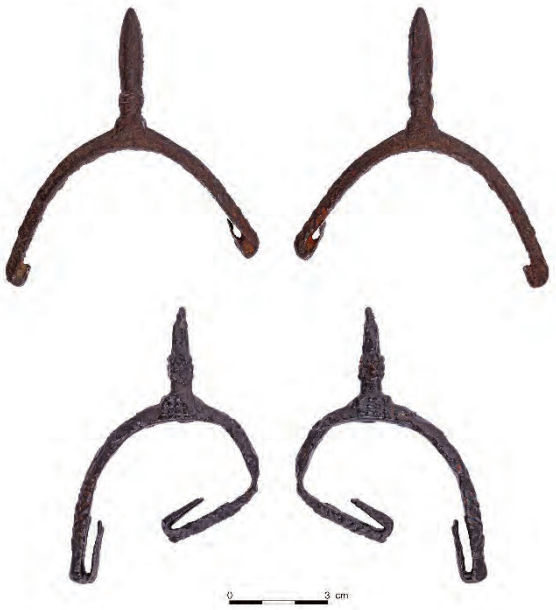

Fig. 10. The spurs with hook-shaped terminals from the hillfort in Udórz, Śląskie Voivodeship, Poland (after BUGAJ, ZDANIEWICZ, LIWOCH 2020).

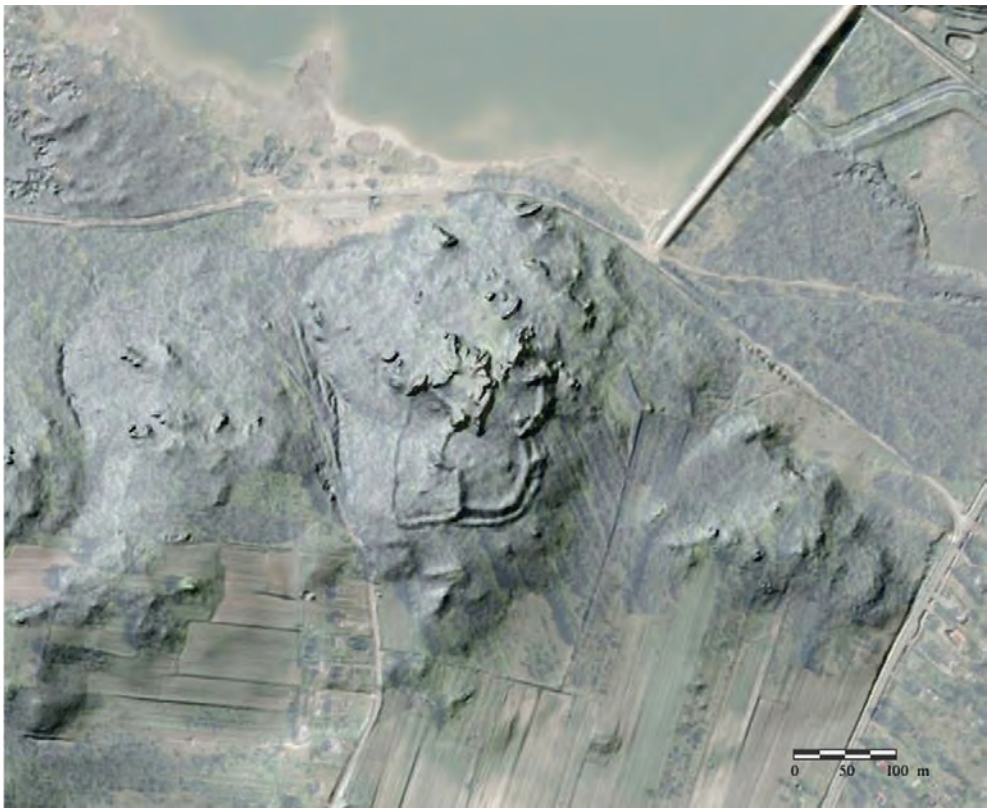

Fig. 11. Hillfort in Kostkowice, Śląskie Voivodeship, Poland (after geoportal.gov.pl.).

Fig. 12. Hillfort in Kostkowice, Śląskie Voivodeship, Poland (photo R. Liwoch).

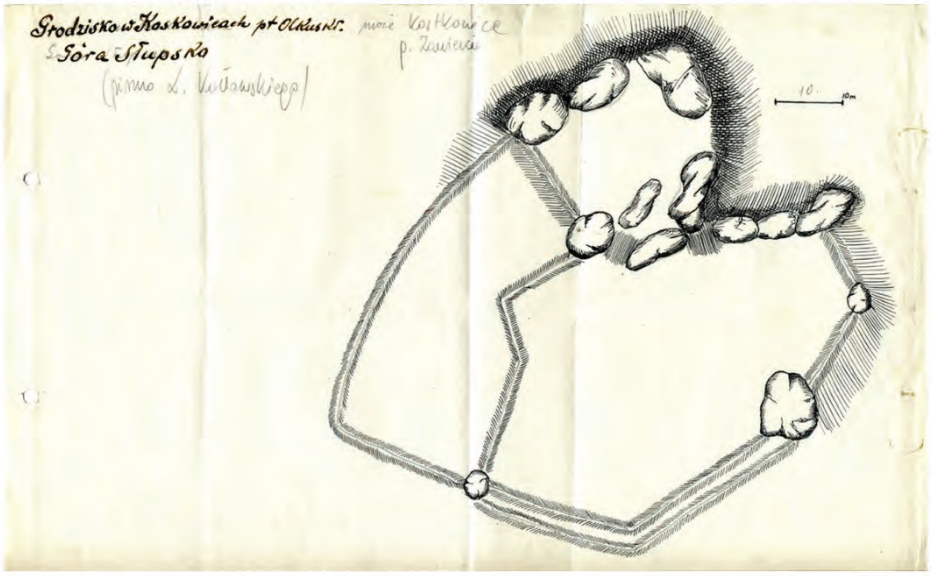

Fig. 13. The archival plan of the hillfort in Kostkowice, Śląskie Voivodeship, Poland (the Archives of the Archeological Museum in Kraków).

Fig. 14. Pottery fragment from the surface of the hillfort in Kostkowice, Śląskie Voivodeship, Poland (photo B. Sz. Szmoniewski).

Fig. 15. The examples of the iron axe-shaped bars discovered in the hillfort from Kostkowice, Śląskie Voivodeship, Poland (photo B. Sz. Szmoniewski).

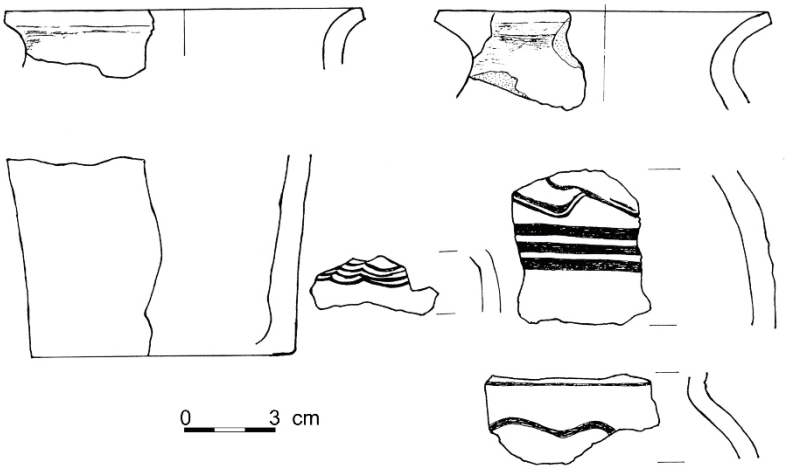

Fig. 16. Pottery fragments from open settlements in Dzibice, site 3, located near hillfort Kostkowice, Śląskie Voivodeship, Poland (after KOJ 1998).

Fig. 17. Pottery fragment from open settlements in Dzibice, site 3, located near hillfort Kostkowice, Śląskie Voivodeship, Poland (photo B. Sz. Szmoniewski).

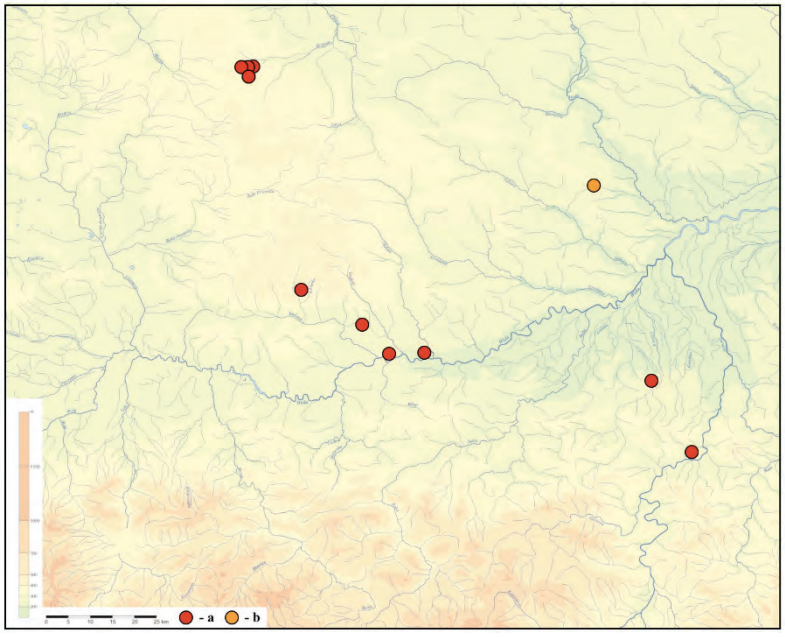

Fig. 18. Iron axe-shaped bars from western part of southeastern Poland: a – Lesser Poland /Vistulans type; b – Great Moravian type (compiled and drawing B. Sz. Szmoniewski).

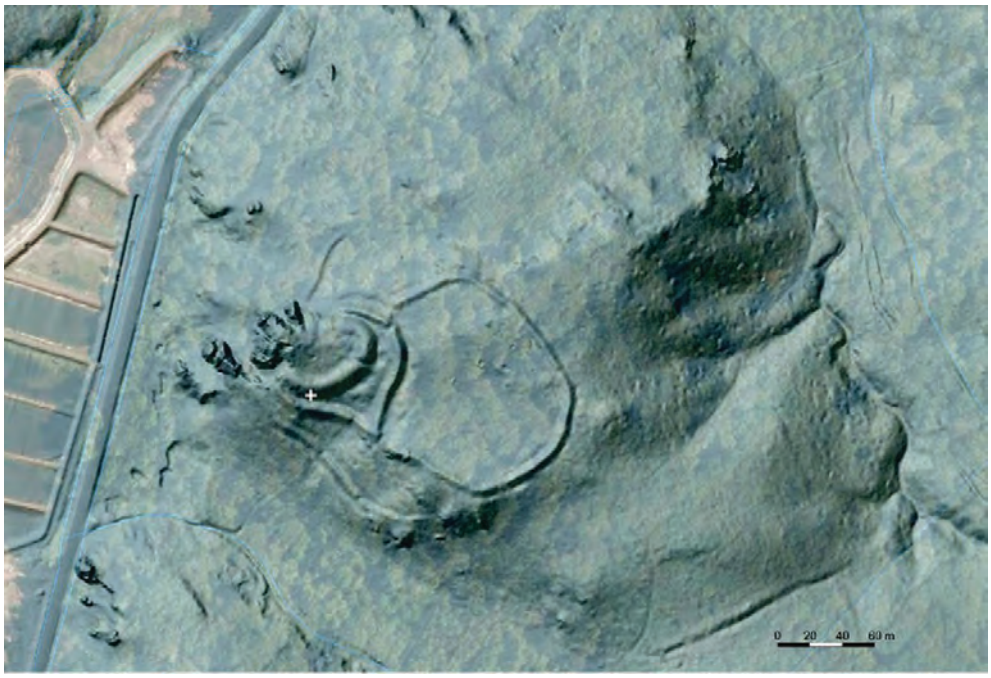

Fig. 19. Hillfort Wały in Złoty Potok, Śląskie Voivodeship, Poland (after LIWOCH 2020b).

Fig. 20. Hillfort Wały in Złoty Potok, Śląskie Voivodeship, Poland (after LIWOCH 2020b).

Fig. 21. Pottery fragment from hillfort Wały in Złoty Potok, Śląskie Voivodeship, Poland (after LIWOCH 2020b, photo R. Liwoch).

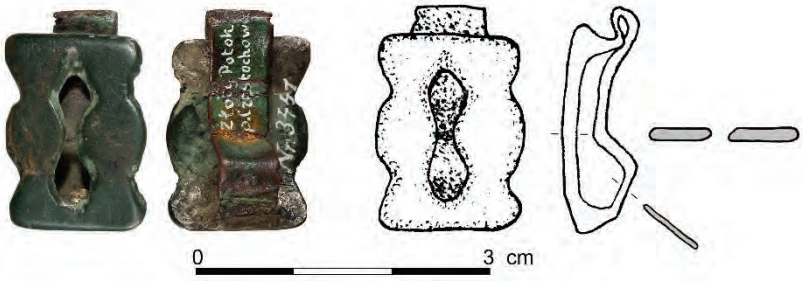

Fig. 22. A Carolingian type spur strap loop from hillfort Wały in Złoty Potok, Śląskie Voivodeship, Poland (after LIWOCH 2020b).

Fig. 23. Hillfort Gąszczyk in Siedlec, Śląskie Voivodeship, Poland (after geoportal.gov.pl).

Fig. 24. Hillfort Gąszczyk in Siedlec, Śląskie Voivodeship, Poland (photo R. Liwoch).

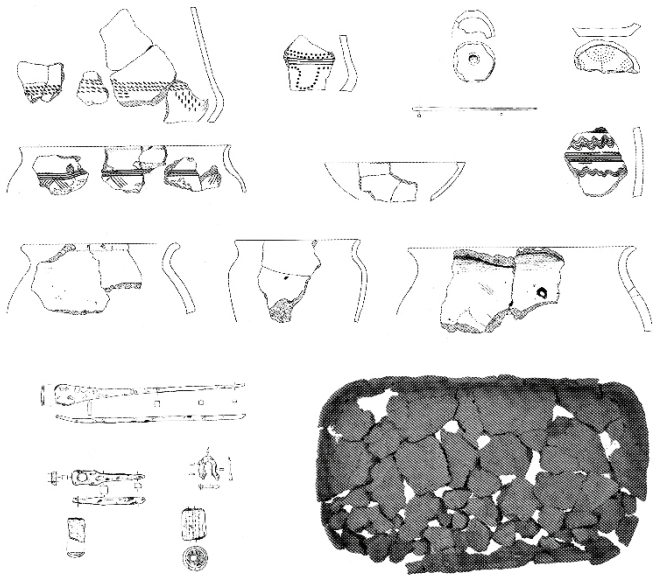

Fig. 25. Pottery from hillfort Gąszczyk in Siedlec, Śląskie Voivodeship, Poland (after BIELIŃSKA, KOSIŃSKI, WIECZOREK-SZMAL 2014).

Fig. 26. Grave no. 4 from the early medieval cemetery in Lelów-Ślęzany, site 17, Śląskie Voivodeship, Poland (photo B. Sz. Szmoniewski).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA ON EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE 9TH–10TH CENTURIES UNFORTIFIED SETTLEMENT NEAR THE TOWN OF MIZIA, VRATSA REGION

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Keywords: *Mizia, 9th–10th centuries, unfortified settlement, kiln.*
Cuvinte-cheie: *Mizia, secolele IX–X, așezare nefortificată, cuptor.*

Abstract: *The reconstruction of the settlement network and material culture in the Early Middle Ages also presents a picture of the "ordinary life" of the local population, no less exciting or significant than the life in the political centre. It is in the light of this ordinary daily life of the rural population that the data yielded by the survey of the settlement in the land of today's town of Mizia in the province of Vratsa, will be presented. Eleven dwellings were partially excavated. All of them are of the same type and feature half-dug structures of a rectangular plan up to 0.30–0.60 m below the then terrain. The excavation also exposed fourteen thermal structures located throughout the terrain. They all have a similar arrangement: a clay screed about 2 cm thick, blackened by repeated firing, is laid on a bed of small, round river pebbles. The walls are of earth baked to red. Its inhabitants' way of life, livelihood and occupations are materialized in the presented finds and allow the reconstruction of an ordinary rural daily life. The absence of materials from the 11th century suggests that life at this place ceased in the troubled years at the turn of the 10th–11th centuries, and it seems that the settlement was abandoned in an organized manner.*

Rezumat: *Reconstituirea rețelei de așezări și a culturii materiale din Evul Mediu timpuriu prezintă și o imagine a „vieții obișnuite" a populației locale, nu mai puțin incitantă sau semnificativă decât viața din centrul politic. În lumina acestei existențe cotidiene obișnuite a populației rurale, vor fi prezentate datele obținute cu prilejul investigării așezării din ținutul orașului de astăzi Mizia, din provincia Vrața. Unsprezece locuințe au fost parțial excavate. Toate sunt de același tip și prezintă structuri semi-adâncite, până la 0,30–0,60 m sub terenul de atunci, de plan dreptunghiular. Cercetarea a scos la iveală și patrusprezece structuri termice situate pe tot terenul. Toate au un aranjament similar: o șapă de lut de aproximativ 2 cm grosime, înnegrită prin arderi repetate, este așezată pe un pat de pietre*

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mici de râu, rotunde. Pereții sunt din pământ copt, până la roșu. Modul de viață, traiul și ocupațiile locuitorilor săi se concretizează în descoperirile prezentate și permit reconstituirea unei vieți rurale obișnuite, de zi cu zi. Absența materialelor din secolul al XI-lea sugerează că viața în acest loc a încetat în anii tulburi de la cumpăna dintre veacurile X–XI și se pare că așezarea a fost abandonată într-o manieră organizată.

The study of the early medieval settlement network in the territory of today's north-western Bulgaria is distinguished by a lack of systematicity and regularity, which is the basis of the claim that this area was settled only after "the border [of Bulgaria – authors' note] was shifted to the Middle Danube area"[1]. The provided opportunity to study the region, albeit in the limited area of easements of new infrastructure projects, allows the lack of information about its habitation in the period of interest to be overcome to a certain extent and its potential properly assessed. The reconstruction of the settlement network and material culture in the Early Middle Ages also presents a picture of the "ordinary life" of the local population, no less exciting or significant than the life in the political centre. It is in the light of this ordinary daily life of the rural population that the data yielded by the survey of the settlement in the land of today's town of Mizia in the province of Vratsa, will be presented (**Fig. 1/a**). The study was carried out in connection with the new gas transmission network construction and had a rescue character, not allowing a comprehensive survey of the rescheduled easement comprising an area 35 m wide and 250 m long. The short time and the vast area also determined the trial trenching and the exposure of the registered structures only.

The site is located on a low slope, to the east of the Skat River, 3.9 km from the centre of the town of Mizia, with a gradient from east to west of about 1.40 m. The approximate area of the site, judging by the scattered ceramic material, is over 60 decares (**Fig. 1/b**). The terrain features arable agricultural land, with the trial trenches exposing a thickness of the chernozem (black) soil exceeding 2.68 m. Prior to the rescue survey start, a geophysical scan was carried out within the easement-defined area, to the east of the roadway, the area being divided into four polygons each one 50 m long[2]. A high concentration of anomalies of probable anthropogenic nature was registered in the western part of the area planned for the study (**Fig. 1/c**). In the course of the archaeological excavation, structures and materials from other periods were also recorded: a grave and ceramics decorated with the specific cord-shaped ornament from the Early Iron Age (11th–6th centuries BC); ceramics, fibulae and coins from the Roman period (2nd–3rd centuries), to which two trash pits could also be attributed; the Late Antiquity period was attested by coins of the emperors of the Constantine dynasty, a copper *follis* minted at Cyzicus in 557, during the reign of Emperor Justinian I (527–565), and by the fragmentary ceramic material; the copper coins (*scyphates*), with clipped planchets, one of them secondary pierced, mark the period of occupation of the area after the 13th century; the Ottoman period, represented by the most recent materials, namely coins and fragments of the specific glazed ceramics found in the surface layer and dated from the second half of the 15th

[1] RASHEV 2008, p. 149.

[2] We express our gratitude to Dr. Hristiyan Tsankov from the Department of "Applied Geophysics" of the University of Mining and Geology "St. Ivan Rilski", in Sofia.

to the beginning of the 19th century. Most archaeological materials are moved, therefore they cannot be associated with specific structures and a cultural layer. Only the occupation of the area during the time span from the 9th to the 11th centuries has left a distinguishable cultural layer and structures that reveal the settlement character of the site.

Dwellings, kilns and pits

Eleven dwellings were partially excavated (**Fig. 2**). All of them are of the same type and feature half-dug structures of a rectangular plan up to 0.30–0.60 m below the then terrain. Their visibly preserved dimensions reach up to 3.50 × 2.80 m. In the thick chernozem soil they are distinguished by the fired to red floor levels of a thickness of 3.5–4 cm, in places covered with a layer of coals, such as those in Dwellings 1 and 4 (**Fig. 3/a**). The dug-in part of some dwellings is stone-lined and during the clearing they could be detected because of the stone pilings, similar to those cleared in Dwellings 2 and 7 (**Fig. 3/b**). The construction of the dwellings in height is wattle and daub. Their fills contained fragments of plaster fired to brick-red with impurities of organic matter and imprints of thin sticks and stakes, similar to those found in the medieval stratum above ancient Augusta[3] (**Fig. 3/c**). Sockets from the stakes of the load-bearing structure are noticeable in the control profiles as regularly spaced breaks in the baked to brick-red floor of Dwellings 5 and 6, and as quarter-shaped hollows in the corner of the stone facing of Dwelling 8 (**Fig. 3/d**). In some cases, the floor screed itself is also laid on a network of horizontally set round stakes fixed on their still preserved beds below the red-baked level of Dwelling 1. The absence of material traces of roof structures suggests the use of perishable materials such as straw for their construction.

The half-dug dwellings were the most widespread in the 7th–11th centuries. They are known from a number of sites in northeastern Bulgaria and Dobruja (at Pliska[4], Gradishte[5], Odartsi[6], Topola[7], Brestak[8], Suvorovo[9], Trastika[10], etc.), in north-western Bulgaria (at Bezhanovo[11], Brestnitsa–Poleto[12], Kalenik[13], Dolni Lukovit[14], Antimovo[15], etc.) and in Romania (at Bucov[16], Dridu[17], Gornea-Căuniţa de Sus[18], Vlădeni-Popina

[3] LUKA 2013, p. 622, fig. 3.

[4] MIHAYLOVA 1992, p. 170–184; DONCHEVA-PETKOVA 1993, p. 79–83; GEORGIEV 1993, p. 15–19; BALABANOV 2004, p. 101–167; KONSTANTINOV 2015a, p. 15–31.

[5] IVANOV, TOTEV 2020a, p. 1132–1133.

[6] DONCHEVA-PETKOVA, NINOV, PARUSHEV 1999, p. 11–48.

[7] BOBCHEVA 1976, p. 122–130; BOBCHEVA 1981, p. 198–201; CHRISTOVA 2015, p. 297–306.

[8] DIMITROV 1969, p. 113–116.

[9] SLAVCHEV 2015, p. 319–326.

[10] IVANOV, TOTEV 2020b, p. 1139, обр. 3; HRISTOV, MARINOV 2020, p. 1141–1144, обр. 3.

[11] VAZHAROVA 1961, p. 317–326.

[12] IVANOV 2023, p. 16–20.

[13] IVANOV, CHOLAKOV 2020, p. 1168–1169.

[14] DIMITROV, KUZOV 2019, p. 1246–1250.

[15] LALOV 2012, p. 102–110.

[16] COMŞA 1978, p. 16–24.

[17] ZAHARIA 1967, p. 19–54.

[18] ŢEICU, LAZAROVICI 1996, p. 18–30.

Blagodeasca[19], etc.). The half-dug dwellings near the western fortress wall of Pliska and Dwelling 1 in the settlement near Dolni Lukovit are dated with coins of Leo VI (886–912).

The excavation also exposed fourteen thermal structures located throughout the terrain (**Fig. 2**). They all have a similar arrangement: a clay screed about 2 cm thick, blackened by repeated firing, is laid on a bed of small, round river pebbles. The walls are of earth baked to red. Three types are identified:

1. Massive kilns of an irregular elliptical shape and a large diameter, thicker walls with multiple vent holes and a domed roof – kilns 6, 7, 11 and 14 (**Fig. 4**). The entrance of most kilns is on the south. For some of the installations (Kiln 7) there is evidence of the internal space being divided into several combustion chambers by means of transverse curbs of hard-baked earth. The preserved internal height varies from 0.15 m to 0.30 m, and the external diameter from 1.20 m to 1.40 m. The fill layer contained a small amount of charcoal, fragmented animal bones and sherds of medieval pottery (pots) with the characteristic bands of incised straight and wavy lines, such as on the pot unearthed *in situ* in Kiln 14, as well as on a fragment of another pot in the facility wall. Radiocarbon analysis of the osteological material from Kiln 11 in trench 36 and Kiln 14 in trench 32 yielded calibrated dating from the second quarter of the 9th to the beginning of the 10th century. Household ovens of similar dimensions and characteristics have been published from the early medieval settlements near Vetrino[20], Belogradets[21], Dolni Lukovit[22], etc. Household ovens of adobe superstructure measuring a diameter of 2 m, a domed roof and a height of 1.30 m, studied at Pliska have been interpreted as "bread ovens"[23]. The specific design of these structures, for which no direct parallels were ever found, was the reason for the gamma spectrometric analysis of samples of them, which confirmed their domestic use[24].

2. The second type of kilns is represented only by Kiln 10 (**Fig. 5/a**). It has a round base and a truncated cone shape. The 2 cm to 3 cm thick walls made of clay hard-baked to red are tapering in height and narrowing. The entrance to the interior is shaped on the south. Inside, fallen stones, probably serving to seal the entrance, were found at different depths. Isolated fragments of medieval pottery and animal bones were found inside the oven and no material to suggest a function other than domestic. An analogous kiln of a conical shape and small dimensions exposed in the southern sector of the western fortress wall of Pliska was studied and published. L. Doncheva-Petkova notes that it is very similar to the iron smelting furnaces, but no traces of metallurgical production have been found[25].

3. Round kilns/ovens of a small diameter and a dome-shaped roof, in which there is a vent hole – Kilns 2, 3, 8, 12 and 13 (**Fig. 5/b**). The fill of Kiln 3 contained

[19] CORBU 2013, p. 28–40.

[20] MANEV, IVANOV, KARASTOYANOV 2020, p. 1108–1111.

[21] TOPALILOV, SLAVKOVA 2020, p. 1111–1114.

[22] DIMITROV, KUZOV 2019, p. 1247.

[23] MIHAYLOVA 1992, p. 181, обр. 19.

[24] The analysis was performed in the laboratory of Shumen University "Bishop Konstantin Preslavski", by Prof. N. Arkhangelova, for which we thank her.

[25] DONCHEVA-PETKOVA 1993, p. 80–81, обр. 5.

pieces of brick-hard clay, which we associate with the collapsed dome. Medieval pottery was found in the fill of the facilities, as well as in the layer around them. Similar kilns have been published from a number of sites (Pliska[26], Zavet[27], Brestnitsa-Poleto[28] etc.).

Grouping of dwellings around household kilns of type I was recorded in the excavated part of the settlement, which is clearly developing outside the deferred easement. They were apparently used by several households, which is a situation confirmed by other studied sites (Brestnitsa-Poleto[29]).

Three trash pits – Nos. 1, 2 and 7 – are also associated with the medieval levels. Their fills abound with fragmented ceramics, iron and bone items, typical of the 9th to 11th centuries, which sheds additional light on the life of the medieval population.

Life and livelihood

During the investigation of Dwelling No. 5, *in situ* fragments of medieval pots decorated with incised belts of straight and wavy lines (typical of the 10th and 11th centuries), fragmented bones of animals used for food, burnt and brick-baked plasters, charred boards and charred grain were found, all they confirming the practising of agricultural activities (**Fig. 6/a**). Cereal-based food is evidenced also by the collected fragments of hand-operated grinding stone (**Fig. 6/b**). Osteological analysis reveals that the population was engaged in animal husbandry (**Fig. 7**). The breeding of cattle prevailed, which was undoubtedly due to the favourable natural conditions. The rearing of small ruminants – sheep and goats – had a significantly smaller share, followed by pig farming. Breeding of horses and dogs is also evidenced. The presence of poultry is rather symbolic. The clear preference for dairy animals suggests that milk and milk products played an important role in the life of the local population. Among the wild animals, surprisingly, the top position is occupied by the turtle, which probably served as food, followed by the deer.

Among the materials discovered during the archaeological research, the most numerous are the ceramic fragments (**Fig. 8–13**). Morphologically, over 90% of them can be related to pots. All are made on a slow potter's wheel from clay mixed with sand. They are decorated with incised patterns of straight and wavy lines, sometimes in different combinations – straight and wavy lines, obliquely placed bundles of straight lines, etc. They are baked to a brown, red-brown or greyish-brown colour. Conical pots with narrower or wider shoulders predominate. The bottoms are uneven and have relief marks. It is important to note that there is no variety in these signs – they are mainly diametrically set lines resembling' spokes (**Figs. 8/f, 9/h**). This may be an indication of a local workshop. Although rare, fragments are also found suggesting contacts of the local people with the large urban centres in north-east of Bulgaria. Such are the fragments of amphora-shaped pitchers, some of which green-glazed (**Fig. 14/a-b**). The ceramics coated with a monochrome glaze is well represented in a number of settlements in north-east Bulgaria and Dobruja,

[26] ANTONOVA, VITLYANOV 1985, p. 62–63; BALABANOV 2004, p. 130, 140–141.
[27] VASILEV 2006, p. 58.
[28] IVANOV 2023, фиг. 15/1–3.
[29] IVANOV 2023, p. 21.

where it is associated with 10th–11th centuries strata: Pliska[30], Preslav[31], Skala[32], Tsar Asen[33], Silistra[34], Păcuiul lui Soare[35], Cernavodă[36], Capidava[37], Hârşova, Oltina[38], etc. A graffiti resembling the Cyrillic letter Ж is placed on the handle of an unglazed amphora-shaped pitcher from Dwelling 3 (**Fig. 14/c**). The single fragments of amphora walls found in the burned layer of Dwelling 5 can be defined as the latest chronological benchmark for the medieval settlement. With a great deal of caution, these fragments could be associated with the amphorae of type I in Günsenin's classification[39] (**Figs. 10/g, 13/c**). The completely restored pot found in pit 7, with its elongated proportions, is closer to the pottery of the Valchedram – Yakimovo group, associated with the Slav population that settled in the area after the 7th century[40] (**Fig. 12**). Similar pottery was also found in trench 9 of the medieval settlement near Antimovo, Vidin region, where it is also broadly dated from the late 7th to the early 9th century[41]. Considered in its entirety, the pottery from the medieval settlement near Mizia finds its direct parallels in the ceramic complexes from the medieval layer just above ancient Augusta[42], Altimir[43] and Brestnitsa-Poleto[44] in northwestern Bulgaria, as well as in the 10th–11th centuries layers of almost all the studied settlements in northeastern Bulgaria, Dobruja and Romania.

The iron objects recovered during the exploration of the medieval settlement near Mizia, among which a whole group of knives stands out – intact or fragmented, are widely used in a number of activities of a daily nature (**Fig. 15/a-c**). The two iron hooks intended for fishing can be associated with a more specific use (**Fig. 15/h-i**). The proximity of the Skat River, which is renowned for its high water, obviously played a significant role in the practice of this livelihood. The arrowheads found in many places could have had a different use – combat or hunting (**Fig. 15/d-f**). Functionally related to the arrows is the quiver represented by the triple separator (**Fig. 15/g**). Analogous separators are known from Preslav[45] and Odartsi[46], where they are dated to the 9th–10th centuries. The practice of hunting is attested by the osteological material, especially by the deer antlers (**Fig. 16/a**). They were used in bone working, judging by the cut ends of the horns, as well as by some unfinished bone objects – actually bone billets (**Fig. 16/b-e**). This was a home-practised craft, primarily for making knife

[30] MILCHEV 1979, p. 171, obr. 104; DIMITROV 2004, p. 191; DONCHEVA-PETKOVA 2015, p. 184, obr. 26/a–g; CHRISTOVA-PENKOVA 2018, p. 213–214, fig. 10, 17/3.
[31] CHANGOVA 1957, p. 264–266.
[32] YOTOV, ATANASOV 1998, p. 78.
[33] DIMITROV 1993, p. 113.
[34] KOLEVA 2009, p. 277–278, fig 1/17, 18.
[35] VÎLCEANU 1972, p. 89–92.
[36] BARNEA 1960, p. 77–78, pl. I/4–7.
[37] CURSARU-HERLEA 2016, p. 152.
[38] PARASCHIV-TALMAŢCHI 2017, p. 271–285.
[39] GÜNSENIN 1989, p. 269–271.
[40] ANGELOVA, KOLEVA 1992, p. 173–179.
[41] LALOV 2012, p. 105.
[42] LUKA 2013, p. 642–664.
[43] LUKA 2009, p. 250–255.
[44] IVANOV 2023, p. 30–35, фиг. 34–40.
[45] VITLYANOV 2007, p. 248, cat. no. 34–35, tabl. I/13–14.
[46] DONCHEVA-PETKOVA, NINOV, PARUSHEV 1999, p. 110, cat. no. 734, fig. 136.

handles and small plates designed to be mounted on objects from non-durable material, such as chests or leather goods (**Fig. 16/f-g**). The tool with a pointed tip on one side and a spade-shaped profile on the other, which was found in trench 1 together with unfinished bone objects, can also be associated with bone working (**Fig 16/h**).

Other crafts such as spinning and leather working were carried out in domestic setting, as evidenced by the discovered spindle whorls and bone awls (**Fig. 17/a-e**). They are spherical or bi-conical in shape and made from clay. Their analogies originate from the medieval layer of Odartsi[47].

Elements of the costume and ornaments

Clothing elements are rarely found and belong to only two categories of items – buckles and belt mounts and ornaments designed to decorate various parts of clothing. Two buckles originate from the settlement (**Fig. 17/f-g**). One of the two is similar to the widespread oval-framed buckles with a pentagonal plate, known from numerous sites – Pliska[48], Preslav[49], Skala[50], the Pernik fortress[51], the Krivina village over the ruins of the antique castellum of Iatrus (Ruse region)[52], Smyadovo (Shumen region)[53], Yakimovo (Montana region)[54]. The difference is that the buckle is not attached onto the belt by a solid plate, but only by its frame, i.e. it may be related to a group of double-framed buckles known from settlements such as Odartsi[55]. The belt buckle is crafted from copper and was found in the layer around Dwelling 1. The second buckle is ordinary, square in shape and made of iron. Simple and functional, these buckles were also widespread throughout the Middle Ages. They are also found in necropolises such as the one at Balchik[56] and in settlements such as Odartsi[57]. The round mount, similar to those found in a number of settlements – Pliska[58], Markeli[59], Skala[60], Starmen[61], medieval settlements around Varna[62], etc. is also connected with the functional belt elements (**Fig. 17/h**). A round button-like applique with a loop can be defined as a garment decoration. It consists of two joined hemispheres decorated with radial lines (**Fig. 17/i**). A similar item, incorrectly identified as a button[63], was found in the medieval settlement near Odartsi[64].

[47] DONCHEVA-PETKOVA, NINOV, PARUSHEV 1999, p. 155–157, tabl. XL, XLIXLII.
[48] KONSTANTINOV 2015b, p. 203, fig. 3/6.
[49] STANILOV 1995, p. 113, fig. 3/19–21; VITLYANOV 2007, p. 245–246, tabl. I/1, 3, 5.
[50] YOTOV, ATANASOV 1998, p. 107, fig. 3/3.
[51] CHANGOVA 1992, p. 142–143, fig. 130/5.
[52] GOMOLKA-FUCHS 2002, p. 494, Abb. 1.
[53] ANTONOVA, PETROVA 1983, p. 7, fig. 22/3.
[54] MILCHEV 1963, p. 34, fig. 14.
[55] DONCHEVA-PETKOVA, NINOV, PARUSHEV 1999, p. 104, fig. 134, cat. no. 651.
[56] DONCHEVA-PETKOVA, APOSTOLOV, RUSEVA 2016, p. 131–132.
[57] DONCHEVA-PETKOVA, NINOV, PARUSHEV 1999, p. 104, обр. 134, кат. no. 636, 637.
[58] KONSTANTINOV 2015b, p. 210, fig. 5/23, 24.
[59] MOMCHILOV 2015, p. 401–402, fig. 1/1–2.
[60] YOTOV, ATANASOV 1998, p. 110, pl. CXV/454.
[61] HENSEL *et alii* 1970, fig. 7/8.
[62] PLETNYOV, PAVLOVA 1994–1995, pl. IV/58–78, V/79–84.
[63] The designation of these items as buttons is only due to formal proximity to later ones, but they did not actually serve to close/fasten an opening on a garment, but rather were sewn on as decoration.
[64] DONCHEVA-PETKOVA, NINOV, PARUSHEV 1999, p. 104, обр. 133, кат. no. 633–635.

A bronze earring with a profiled pendant was found in the layer around kilns 8, 9 and 10 (**Fig. 17/i**). It belongs to type III.2 according to V. Grigorov's classification[65]. This type of earrings was widespread in the 9th–10th centuries both in necropolises (Sultana, Galiche, Valchedram, Gradeshnitsa, Dolni Lukovit 1, Batin, Tabachka, etc.) and in settlements (Pliska, Preslav, Okorsh, etc.)[66]. In the settlement near the village of Yakimovo, region Montana, a similar earring was found in a half-dug dwelling and dated with coins of Leo VI (886–912) and Constantine VII and Zoe (913–919)[67].

The archaeological research in the region of Mizia, although limited in scope, provided valuable information on the life of a medieval village. Its inhabitants' way of life, livelihood and occupations are materialized in the presented finds and allow the reconstruction of an ordinary rural daily life. The absence of materials from the 11th century suggests that life at this place ceased in the troubled years at the turn of the 10th–11th centuries, and it seems that the settlement was abandoned in an organized manner.

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[66] GRIGOROV 2007, p. 24.

[67] MILCHEV 1963, p. 28.

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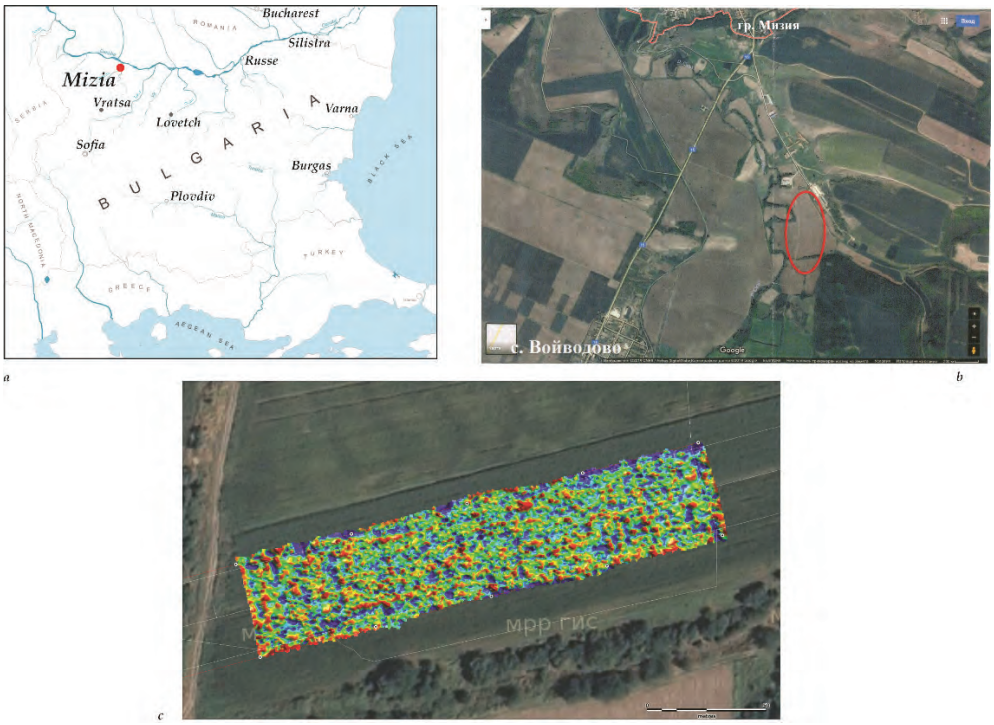

Fig. 1. a – Location of Misia; b – Site area; c – Geophysical survey of the object.

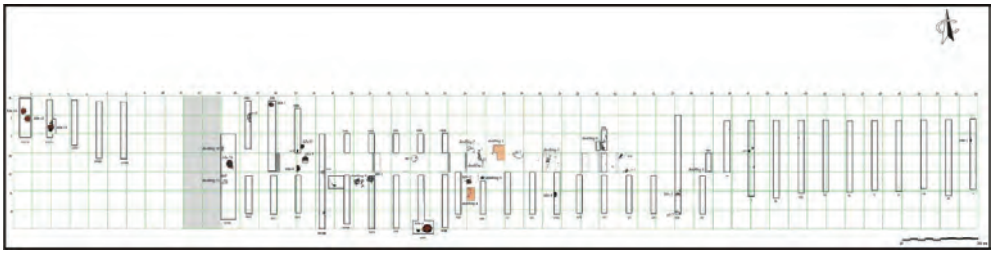

Fig. 2. Plan of the excavated area.

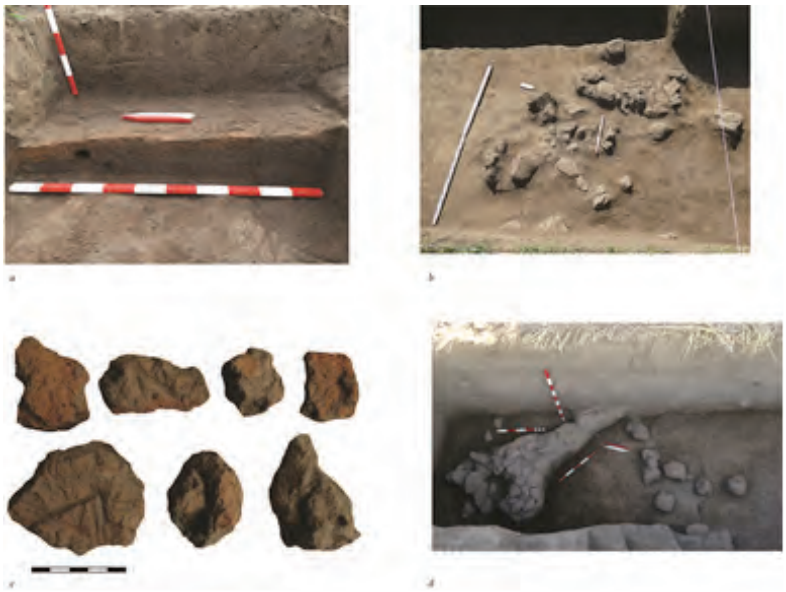

Fig. 3. a – Floor level of Dwelling 1; b – Dwelling 2; c – Plaster with impurities of thin sticks and stakes; d – Dwelling 8.

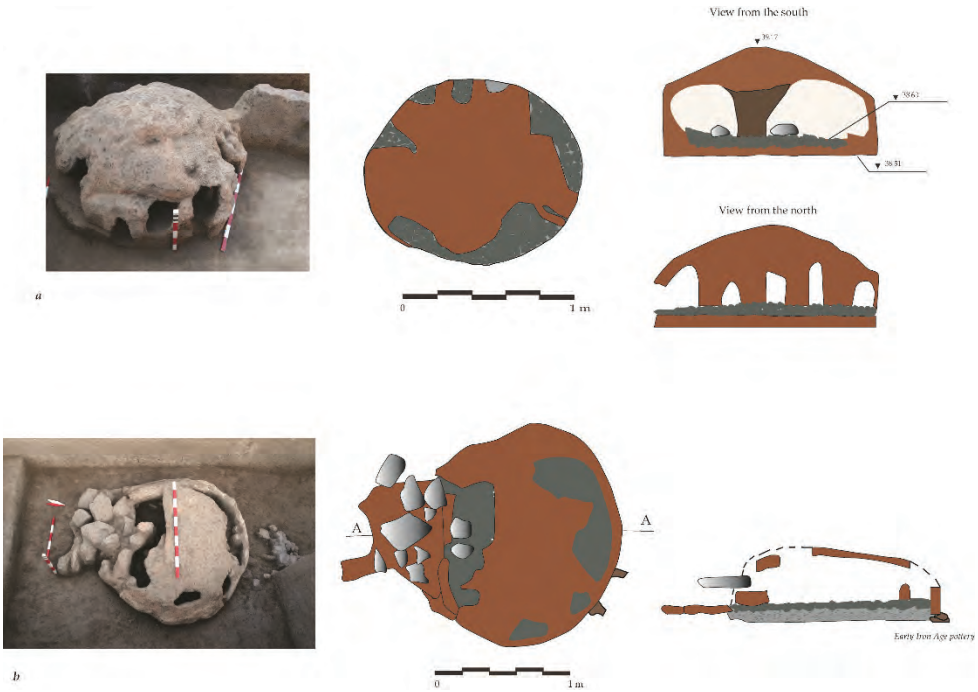

Fig. 4. a – Kiln 6; b – Kiln 11.

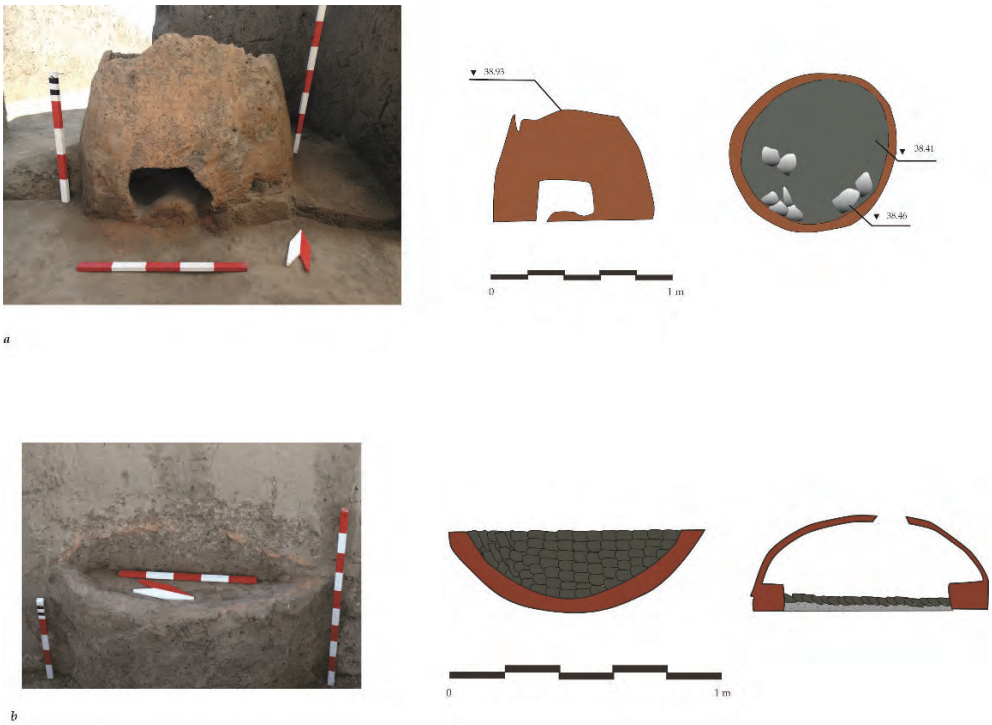

Fig. 5. a – Kiln 10; b – Kiln 2.

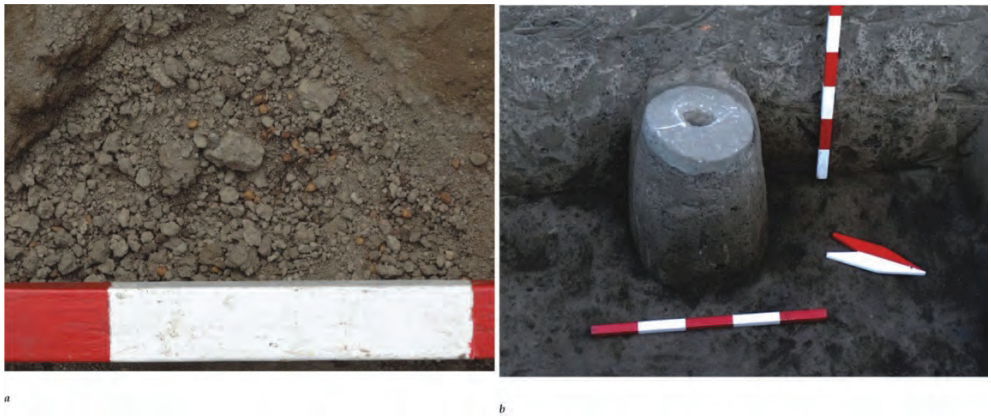

Fig. 6. a – Charred grain in Dwelling 5 (*in situ*); b – Grinding stone (*in situ*).

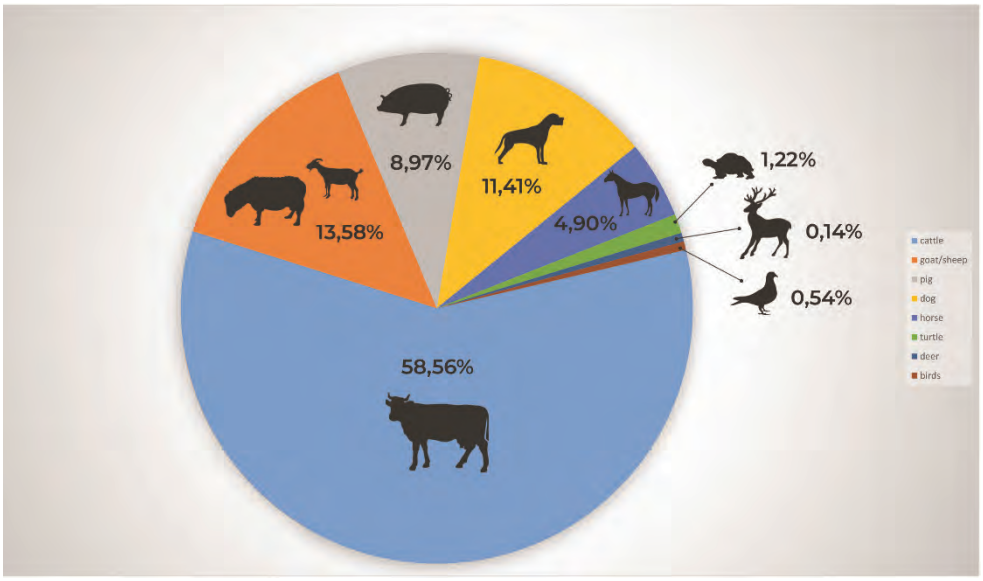

Fig. 7. Species distribution of animal bones (in percent).

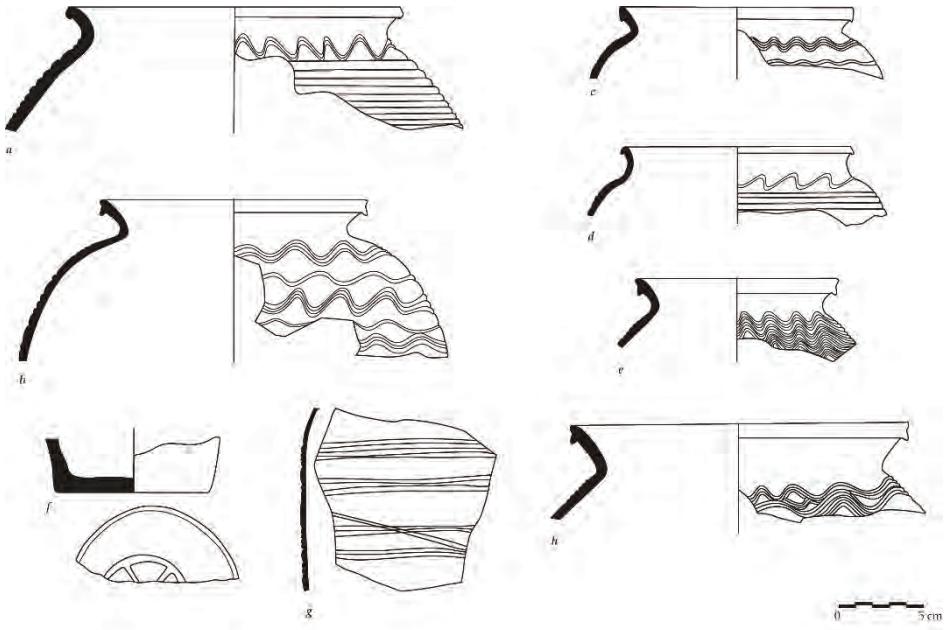

Fig. 8. a-e – Ceramics from Dwelling 8; f-g – Ceramics from Dwelling 4; h – Ceramics from Dwelling 6.

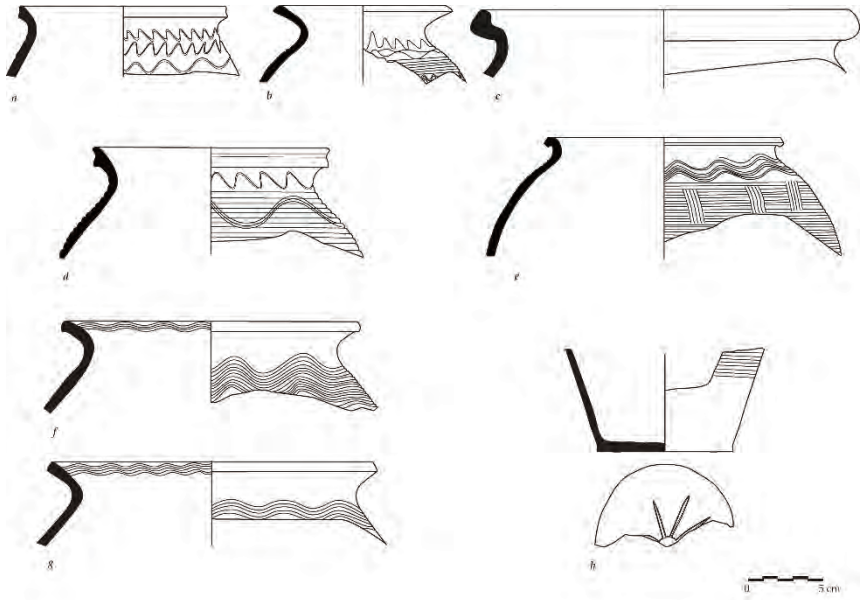

Fig. 9. a-b Ceramics from kiln 5; c – Ceramics from kiln 10; d – Ceramics from kiln 8; e – Ceramics from kiln 9; f-g – Ceramics from kiln 11; h – Ceramics from kiln 7.

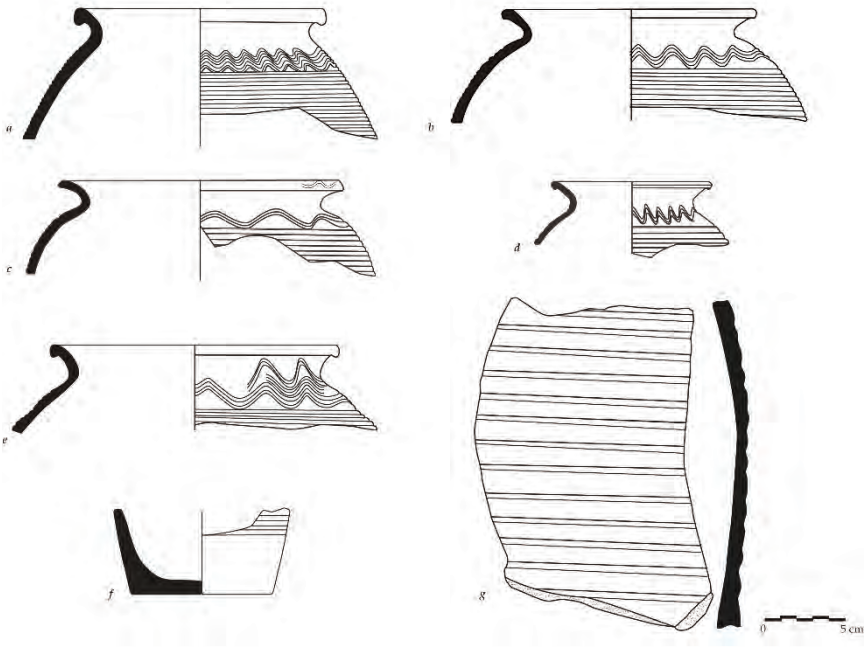

Fig. 10. Ceramics from the burned layer in Dwelling 5.

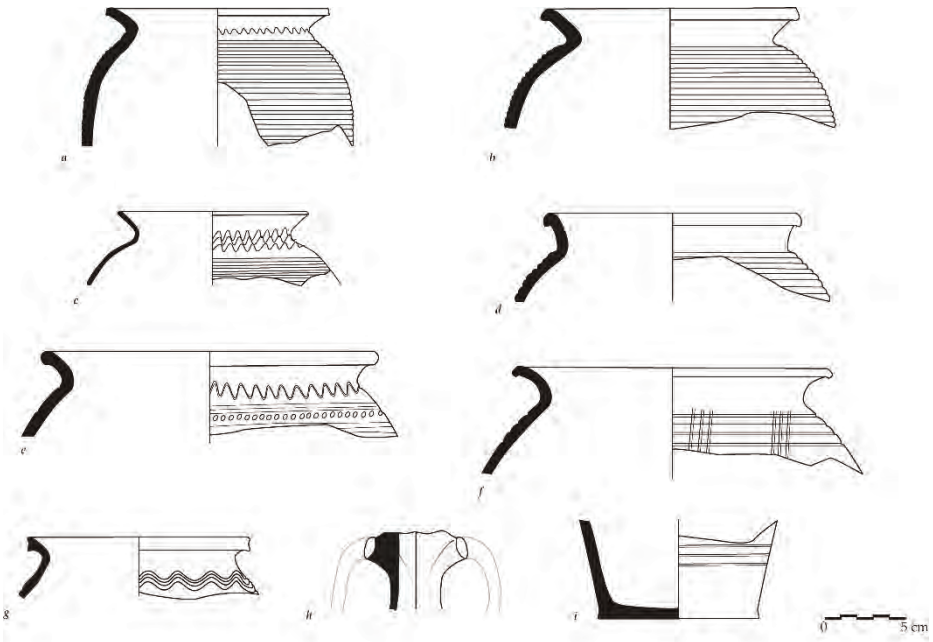

Fig. 11. Pottery from the medieval layer.

Fig. 12. Pot from pit 7.

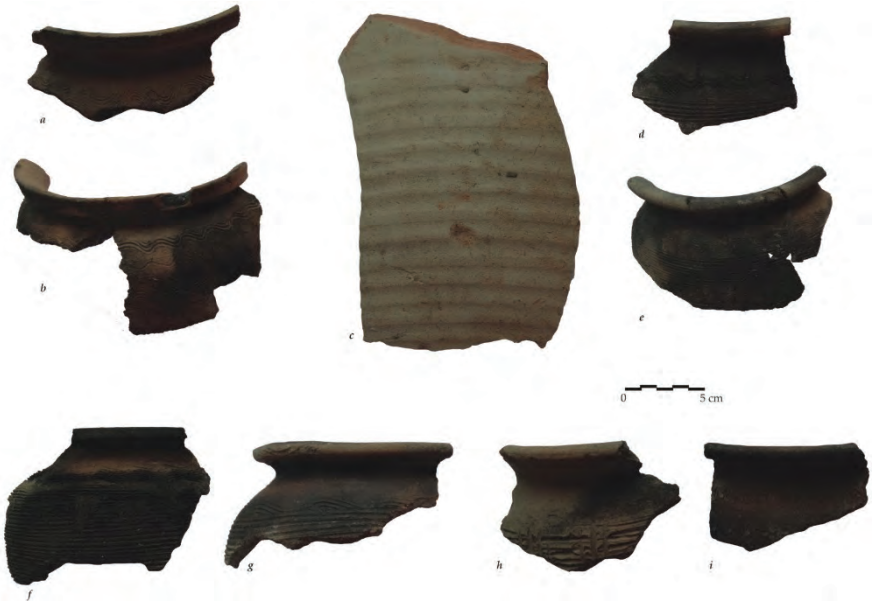

Fig. 13. a-b – Ceramics from Dwelling 8; c-e – Ceramics from Dwelling 5; f – Pot from kiln 9; g-i – Pottery from the medieval layer.

Fig. 14. a-b – Glazed ceramic from Dwellings 5 and 8; c – A graffiti placed on the handle of an unglazed amphora-shaped pitcher.

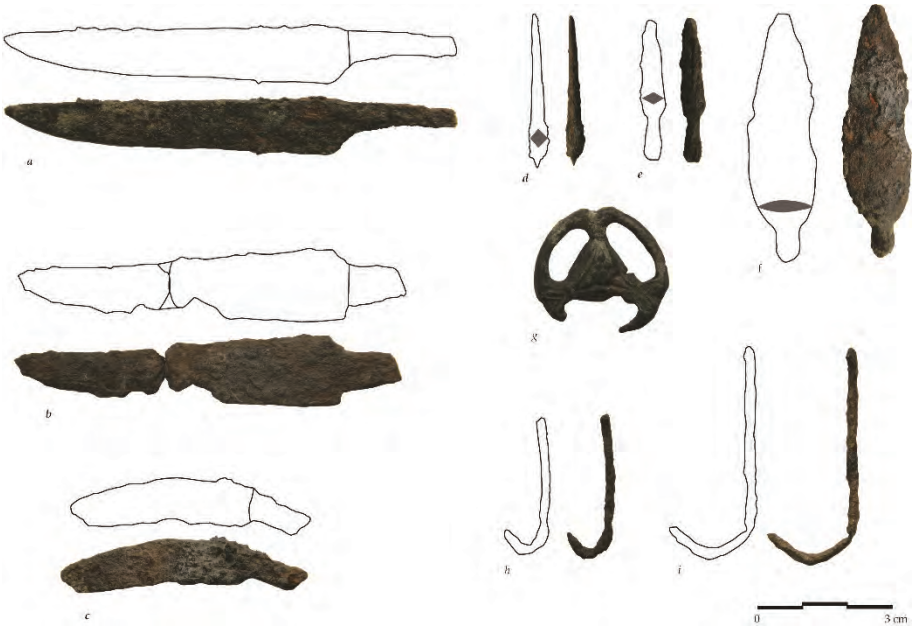

Fig. 15. a-c – Iron knives; d-f – Arrowheads; g – Separator for quiver; h-i – Iron hooks.

Fig. 16. a – Deer antlers (*in situ*); b-c – Cut ends of the horns; d-g – Bone billets; h – Tool with a pointed tip on one side and a spade-shaped profile on the other.

Fig. 17. a-b – Spindle whorls; c-e – Bone awls; f-g – Belt buckles; h – Belt mount; i – Round button-like applique; j – Bronze earring.

WHAT CAN EARLY MEDIEVAL HOARDS FROM PONTES TEACH US ABOUT RELIGIOUS AND EVERYDAY LIFE IN TURBULENT TIMES?

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Keywords: *Pontes, Kostol, hoards, Early Middle Ages, agricultural tools, liturgical objects.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *Pontes, Kostol, tezaure, Evul Mediu timpuriu, unelte agricole, obiecte liturgice.*

Abstract: *Ancient Pontes, today Kostol (Serbia), had a very long history. It was primarily a Roman fort that protected Trajan's Bridge, which continued to play an important role even after the abandonment of the Province of Dacia since it was positioned on the northern Danubian limes. It continued to have such a function until the Roman army abandoned northern limes at the beginning of the 7th century, only to be reoccupied during the Early Middle Ages. The main topic of this paper is the content of three hoards dated to the early medieval period that consist of various agricultural tools and liturgical objects. Such interesting content of the hoards in question testifies that active church life functioned in, otherwise, agricultural community. They also testify that the local population treated the liturgical objects that belonged to the local church as treasure, as well as that they likewise treated their working tools as very valuable objects, which deserve to be buried in the same hoard as the liturgical objects during dangerous times. As such, they can tell us a lot about the religious and daily life in the turbulent early medieval period in this settlement, and it's wider surrounding.*

Rezumat: *Pontesul antic, astăzi Kostol (Serbia), a avut o istorie foarte îndelungată. A fost în primul rând un fort roman care proteja podul lui Traian, acesta continuând să joace un rol important chiar și după abandonarea provinciei Dacia, deoarece era poziționat pe limesul dunărean de nord. El și-a păstrat această funcție până când armata romană a abandonat limesul nordic, la începutul secolului al VII-lea, fiind ulterior reocupat în perioada medievală timpurie.*

Tema principală a acestei lucrări este conținutul a trei tezaure datate în perioada medievală timpurie, care constă în diverse unelte agricole și obiecte liturgice. Conținutul interesant

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al tezaurelor atestă faptul că o viață bisericească activă funcționa într-o comunitate agricolă. De asemenea, ele demonstrează că populația locală trata obiectele liturgice care aparțineau bisericii locale ca pe un tezaur, la fel cum își considerau și uneltele de lucru drept obiecte de mare valoare, demne de a fi îngropate în același loc cu obiectele liturgice, în vremuri periculoase. Prin urmare, aceste descoperiri ne pot spune multe despre viața religioasă și cotidiană din perioada medievală timpurie, dintr-o așezare marcată de tulburări și în împrejurimile sale mai extinse.

Introduction

Ancient Pontes, today Kostol (Serbia), is situated in the area of Djerdap, on the right bank of the Danube, around 5 km downstream from Kladovo. On the right bank of the small dried-up river that once flowed into the Danube, a larger fortification was researched, of almost square shape, with the dimensions of 120 × 112 m. It was used until the 6th century. On every rampart there was a gate flanked by square towers, the inner dimensions of which were 2 × 2 m to 2.5 × 2.5 m[1]. On the left bank of the same small river the remains of another, although quite smaller fortress, can be seen in the configuration of the terrain, but it was never systematically researched[2]. The larger one is what we today designate as Pontes (**Fig. 1**).

During the Roman antiquity, Pontes was an important fortification which, among the rest, protected Trajan`s Bridge (*Pons Traianus*)[3], one of the strategically most important structures that enabled the Roman army to incorporate Dacia within the Empire at the beginning of the 2nd century AD[4]. The role of the bridge was obviously so important that it gave the name to the fortification, as well as to the settlement[5]. After the abandonment of the Province of Dacia in 271, Pontes continued to play an important role of the liminal fortification, since the Danube River was once again restored as the natural north-eastern border of the Empire[6]. The settlement obviously kept similar role for the several centuries to follow. Discovery of coins dated to the reign of Emperor Justinian I (527–565), testify that it was active during Justinian`s intensive restoration of the forts along the right bank of the Danube[7]. It continued to be in such use until the early 7th century, namely until 602, when the Roman army left the *limes* unprotected, in order to follow the newly acclaimed Emperor Phocas to Constantinople[8]. Around that time, Pontes lost its role, only to be reoccupied during the Early Middle Ages.

Results of archaeological excavations

During the archaeological excavations in the 1980s that preceded the erection of the hydroelectric power plant Djerdap II, several very important sites along the

[1] ŠPEHAR 2010, p. 31–32 with older literature, fig. 13.

[2] MIRKOVIĆ 1968, p. 113.

[3] Actually, both fortresses, larger and smaller, protected the access to the bridge, cf. MIRKOVIĆ 1968, p. 113.

[4] GRIFFIN 2000, p. 109–110. About the Romanization of Dacia, see the study OLTEAN 2007.

[5] MIRKOVIĆ 1968, p. 112–114; ŠPEHAR 2010, p. 31–32, with older literature.

[6] MIRKOVIĆ 1968, p. 114.

[7] PROCOPIO, p. 278–279 (IV.1.33); MIRKOVIĆ 1968, p. 114.

[8] KOVAČEVIĆ 1994, p. 122–123.

Danube River were excavated. Among them, the remains of the medieval necropolis and settlement on the former Pontes site were discovered[9]. Archaeological remains of the settlement testify that it was in use from the 9th to the 15th century, which is confirmed by small finds, particularly by several hoards discovered in the settlement itself, which are the topic of our paper, as well as by finds originating from the necropolis. The mentioned hoards are actually the most eloquent testimonies of the religious and everyday life on this site, as well as of their permanent intertwining during the Early Middle Ages.

Archaeological excavations of a larger fortress brought to light the remains of an early medieval settlement within the fortified area, covering the space of over 110 square meters[10]. That space followed more or less the direction of the earlier *decumanus* and stretched from the eastern gate towards the central part of the fortress. We can assume that during the early medieval period within this area, there were still sufficiently preserved remains of ancient and late antique architecture, which newcomers used to facilitate the construction of their modest dwellings. On this occasion, we will focus on two zones (squares G12–13 and L13, discovered in close vicinity of each other), where the most abundant remains of the medieval settlement were found.

Within square L13, three early medieval horizons were identified. Firstly, a house designated as House 9 was erected in the first half of the 9th century. This was a structure with one room, dug into the ground to a depth of 0.50–0.60 m, with dimensions of 5 × 3.20 m. Holes from stakes and posts were observed within the compacted earth floor, indicating that the house was made of wood. The roof was also made of easily perishable material, as no fragments of tiles were found. The interior of the house was heated by two stone stoves located along the southern wall.

After the abandonment, collapse, and leveling of House 9, House 7 was erected above it in the same manner. House 7 was dated to the second half of the 9th century. The floor of this house, also made of compacted earth, was found at the level of the demolition of the stone stoves of House 9. Although smaller in size than the previous dwelling (4.40 × 3.20 m), its interior was divided into two parts. A stone stove was found in the sleeping area, in the northwest corner of the house.

It is presumed that, after the abandonment of House 7 and the leveling of the area, Hoard No. I was buried. Its burial was most likely tied to turbulent times caused by conflicts between the Byzantine Emperor John Tzimiskes (969–976) and the Bulgarians[11].

After a short hiatus, House 13 was built above the same area, of which only the partially preserved compacted earth floor and stove remained. Its erection is associated with the Byzantine restoration of its authority on the Danube during the 11th century[12].

[9] GARAŠANIN, VASIĆ, MARJANOVIĆ-VUJOVIĆ 1984, p. 44; MARJANOVIĆ-VUJOVIĆ 1987b, p. 135–136; ŠPEHAR 2010, p. 31–32; POPOVIĆ 2015, p. 121; ŠPEHAR 2017, p. 65–68, with older literature; ŠPEHAR 2022, p. 137 with older literature.

[10] GARAŠANIN, VASIĆ 1987, p. 81, Plan I; MARJANOVIĆ-VUJOVIĆ 1987a, p. 117.

[11] In earlier literature, this Hoard is labeled with the letter B for 1983, cf. MARJANOVIĆ-VUJOVIĆ 1987b, p. 135.

[12] MARJANOVIĆ-VUJOVIĆ 1987a, p. 117–119, fig. 4–5.

The next zone with intensive traces of use during the early medieval period is represented by squares G12–13, where several pits were discovered, as well as two hoards: Hoard No. II and Hoard No. III, not far from the previous one, that was stored in a completely preserved *pitos*[13].

Early medieval hoards: content and interpretation

Hoard No. I was placed in an oval-shaped pit, with a longer axis of 0.36 m and a depth of 0.19 m. The contents of the hoard consisted of a bronze jug, around which were placed one iron ploughshare, two identical iron axes one of which was fragmented, a fragmented tool designated as a mattock, as well as a tool where the insertion part and the working surface are on the same level, which could be designated as a scraper or a chisel (**Fig. 2**)[14]. Researchers noted that during this discovery, an axe for which there is no illustration, hooks, and a larger number of fragments of iron fittings for a shovel were also found[15]. Based on available analogies, the discovered tools are designated as early medieval and dated between the middle of the 9th and the late 10th or early 11th century[16].

Hoard No. II consisted of a bronze fully cast biconical hanging censer, which had three vertically arranged circular loops on the edge, through which hanging chains were threaded, as well as an iron oval buckle with a broken thorn, an iron harness, and several iron agricultural tools (**Fig. 3**)[17]. The harness had a rectangular loop with an identical horizontally placed opening for a strap, while the tools consisted of two sickles with an insertion thorn and a fragmented scythe[18]. The discovered tools in this hoard are also designated to the early medieval period, roughly dating to the 9th to 10th centuries[19].

The most carefully buried was Hoard No. III, as it was placed in a completely preserved *pitos*. The reason for this lies in the fact that it consisted exclusively of items that had a religious purpose. Namely a liturgical book, the most precious of all stored liturgical items, was hidden here, as indicated by the discovery of nine different bronze circular and longitudinal elements, that were parts of a bookbinding tied to the book by small nails (**Fig. 4**). The book itself is not preserved. The *pitos* also contained a hanging bronze censer, judging by the illustration made from a bronze sheet. It had a conical recipient on a base, perforated along the edge at three points. Three bronze chains, evenly distributed through small circular openings, were threaded and converged at a bronze hook. Chains are partially preserved[20]. The censers and the bookbinding, as well as the discovered tools, are not chronologically sensitive, and therefore cannot give more precise dating of these hoards.

The content of all three described hoards can tell us a lot about everyday life as well as about the religious life of the community that inhabited former Pontes

[13] GARAŠANIN, VASIĆ 1987, p. 81, fig. 12–14.
[14] MARJANOVIĆ-VUJOVIĆ 1987b, p. 135–136.
[15] MARJANOVIĆ-VUJOVIĆ 1987b, p. 135, fig. 2–3.
[16] BUGARSKI, IVANIŠEVIĆ 2013, p. 142–145; ŠPEHAR 2017, p. 202–207.
[17] GARAŠANIN, VASIĆ 1987, p. 81, fig. 14.
[18] GARAŠANIN, VASIĆ 1987, p. 81, fig. 12–14.
[19] CURTA 2011, Cat. no. 83; ŠPEHAR 2017, p. 202–207.
[20] GARAŠANIN, VASIĆ 1987, p. 81, fig. 15–16.

during the Early Middle Ages. Although the content of Hoard No. III is indeed very indicative for understanding of the religious life in this area, the presence of items intended both for liturgical and various economic activities in Hoards Nos. I and II is actually quite interesting in this respect. All mentioned tools suggest the predominant agricultural activity of the local population, including cultivating larger fields (suggested by the ploughshare), grain production (sickles), as well as wood processing (axes). On the other hand, diverse items of liturgical purpose suggest the existence of the local church, which is not yet discovered on the site[21]. For example, both censers were intended to be hanged on chains as is testified by three perforations on the rims of both of them. The censer found in the Hoard No. III, as is already mentioned, had even partially preserved chains and a hook. Such usage of the censer is typical for the church interior, within which it would be hanged and carried. The same can be said for metal bookbinding, obviously originally intended to decorate some unpreserved liturgical book. The purpose of the book with bookbinding was, most probably, to be placed in a well-visible place within some still undiscovered church.

Among the described finds, researchers paid the most attention to the biconical jug discovered within Hoard No. I (**Fig. 5**). It is around 0.20 m tall and decorated with various motifs, incised and cast[22]. Its arched handle was decorated by casting. In its upper part, the head of a panther or a lion/lioness with an opened jaw was cast, while on the lower part there is a head of a ram or a lamb. Above the head of a panther (or a lion), the small bird was cast. On the other hand, the body of the jug was incised with floral and geometrical motifs in the form of friezes that run along its whole perimeter. Floral motifs include vines and ivy leaves. Along the rim of the jug, also along its whole perimeter, a partially altered Greek text of the third verse of King David`s Psalm, "the voice of the Lord is upon the waters" (Ps. 29:3), is incised, more precisely the part of the sticheron red during the sanctification of water, primarily during the Epiphany[23]. Because of its relatively religiously neutral decoration and an inscription of clearly Christian character, the jug was variously dated[24]. Some recent research suggested that, although it was positively discovered within the early medieval horizon, the jug was most probably originally a Late Antique product with strong Dionysiac iconography. The most familiar are the motifs of vine and ivy leaf, the sacred plants in the cult of Dionysus, but the representation of a panther (or lion) can also be understood as Dionysiac motif, closely tied to his triumphal return from the Orient[25]. The cult of the pagan god actually survived throughout the Late Antiquity, but it lost its clear religious implications and became the reflection of a classical *paideia* in otherwise Christianized context[26]. Despite its most probable

[21] ŠPEHAR 2017, p. 190.

[22] NIKOLAJEVIĆ 1989, p. 2454.

[23] ŠPEHAR, VRANEŠEVIĆ 2023, p. 147, 152.

[24] Ivana Popović offers dating to the late 6th or early 7th century, cf. POPOVIĆ 2015, p. 127. M. Beghelli and J. Pinar Gil think that it was one century later, cf. BEGHELLI, PINAR GIL 2019, p. 426. Some authors offer the possibility of later dating, MARJANOVIĆ-VUJOVIĆ 1987b, p. 136; ŠPEHAR 2022, p. 189.

[25] HENRICHS 1999, p. 479–482.

[26] ŠPEHAR, VRANEŠEVIĆ 2023, p. 149. The change that the meaning of Dionysiac

Late Antique provenience, the jug was definitely "Christianised" during the Early Middle Ages when the text of the 29th Psalm was incised along its rim. The fact that it was a later addition is clearly visible by the irregularity of the letters in comparison to the decoration of the jug, especially to the incised friezes of floral and geometrical motifs[27]. It seems that the older vessel was somehow discovered or preserved, and then reused in a completely different setting, changing from, most probably, private house item to religious and liturgical item. We can conclude that it was used in the church, as well as mentioned censers and today lost liturgical book.

To this also testifies the fact that, during the Middle Ages, every functional church must have been equipped with at least one liturgical set, which could be more or less luxurious depending on the resources of the community[28]. One of the most important visual testimony about what such liturgical set consisted of is an early medieval Stuttgart Psalter dated to the 820s or 830s (**Fig. 6**). One of its miniatures depicts a church interior during the liturgy, with the most important liturgical items. Among them are a jug, a book, a censer, a chalice, and a paten. This depiction makes the Stuttgart Psalter a very important source of data about the appearance, usage, and materials for the production of those liturgical items. It seems that most of those items were discovered in the three mentioned hoards, except for chalice and paten.

Conclusion

The discovery of two censers, a jug with a Christian inscription, and metal parts of bookbinding, most likely from the Holy Scriptures, indicate the existence of a larger Christian community in this area that functioned sometime between the 9th and 11th centuries. Such dating suggests that it is reasonable to assume that the today undiscovered church in Kostol was most likely part of the Bulgarian church organization[29]. Namely, the eastern part of present-day Serbia, where the Kostol site is located, was in the hands of the Bulgarians in the mid–10th century, since the Bulgarian border of that time was situated along the Morava River[30]. In tracing possible ubication of the church, one must have in mind that within the fortress of Pontes in square F11, thus near the discovered hoards, a medieval wall made of bricks bonded with mortar was uncovered. Since, according to the researchers, early medieval houses gravitated towards this wall[31], remnants of a church associated with liturgical items found in the discovered hoards might be sought here. Supporting this line of thought is the fact that walls made of solid construction material in the Early Middle Ages in this area are not characteristic of residential architecture, but rather of fortifications or sacred architecture. It is also testified by the remains of excavated wooden houses from Pontes, described in this text. Therefore, it can be assumed that the said brick wall indeed belonged to some

iconography survived during the Christian Late Antiquity is most clearly visible in the text of "Dionysiaca" of Nonnus of Pannopolis, cf. ACCORINTI 2016; BERNABÉ, GARCÍA-GASCO 2016.

[27] ŠPEHAR, VRANEŠEVIĆ 2023, p. 152–153.

[28] BEGHELLI 2017, p. 262–263.

[29] ŠPEHAR 2022, p. 135 with older literature.

[30] KOMATINA 2015, p. 37–38.

[31] GARAŠANIN, VASIĆ 1987, p. 81.

important public building, most probably to a church, the prelates of which, for example, could obviously understand the value of a late antique jug, transforming it into a liturgical item.

The presence of early medieval tools in the described hoards is also very interesting. Namely, the overall finds of early medieval tools in the central Balkans are rare, as only a few reliably dated early medieval tool hoards have been recorded[32]. The practice of storing tools as the most valuable possession, which not so wealthy inhabitants of the central Balkans possessed, is primarily known from the late antique period[33]. Early medieval hoards from Pontes, thus, point to the revival of this practice: it seems that in the difficult times of intense Byzantine-Bulgarian conflicts, older practice of placing tools in hoards and burying them was revived once again. The content of Hoards Nos. I and II clearly testify about the predominantly agricultural population that, among the rest, used the said church as the sacred focus of their faith. But other early medieval finds discovered on the site of Pontes raise a very important question of the strength of that faith among the local population.

Namely, several early medieval cult-purpose pits were archaeologically explored within an early medieval settlement discovered outside the former ramparts of Pontes. Those were most likely the remains of the so-called foundation sacrifice, performed before the construction of a building. In one pit, the skull of a sheep was buried together with two ceramic vessels, surrounded by stones, while in another the complete skeleton of a sheep was discovered. Particularly interesting is House 4, evidenced by a bell-shaped pit found beneath it which, judging by all indications, immediately preceded the construction of the house. In the pit, the skeletons of two dogs were discovered oriented along the southwest-northeast axis, with their heads placed opposite each other. The dogs were laid on a structure made of two rows of stones, between which were discovered fragments of early medieval ceramics dated to the 9th and 10th centuries, a ceramic weight, and two circular plates made of the same material, and an astragal. Clear traces of burning were observed on the stones used to form the structure, which likely indicate a ritual purification by fire. Above the dogs, a covering made of one row of stones was then formed, among which fragmented early medieval ceramics from the same period were noted, along with another ceramic weight. Judging by all indications, the pit located beneath House 4 was supposed to provide protection to its inhabitants, in accordance with non-Christian beliefs[34].

Having that in mind, several suggestions can be made. One of them is that the "pagan" custom of foundation sacrifice predated the establishment of a strong Christian church organization. The population that practiced such traditions was, according to the available information, inhabited outside earlier ramparts. Yet, the strengthening of the presumably Bulgarian administration and church organization may have influenced the inhabiting of the local population within the ramparts, maybe as the protection during the Bulgarian-Byzantine turmoil[35]. But, having in

[32] ŠPEHAR 2017, p. 202–207.

[33] ŠPEHAR P. 2021, p. 213.

[34] GARAŠANIN, VASIĆ, MARJANOVIĆ-VUJOVIĆ 1984, p. 45–46; ŠPEHAR 2017, p. 68; ŠPEHAR, ZORIĆ 2022, p. 999 with older literature; ŠPEHAR 2022, p. 135–136.

[35] The presence of Bulgarians in this part of Serbia is evidenced, among other things, by the

mind the overall level of the research of Pontes site, this statement must remain hypothetical. Yet, another possibility also seems plausible and that is that the local priests didn`t forbade all the older traditions, among them foundation sacrifices, since it was obviously important for the local population and not in direct conflict with the liturgical services performed at the church nor with Christian rituals performed outside it. In such an atmosphere it was quite acceptable to use a Late Antique jug with pagan Dionysiac motifs as a liturgical item on the Epiphany.

Whatever the reasons for the occurrence of non-Christian practices on the site, the content of the preserved Hoards Nos. I, II, and III clearly testify that for the local agricultural population, the most important items for their everyday life were their tools and liturgical items. The tools enabled them to produce food for their needs or for trade, as well as to process the wood, whether as building material or as a material for other items. Liturgical items were considered necessary for all the most important rituals performed in a church. Whoever buried those hoards obviously hoped to return to this settlement and to continue daily agricultural activities and religious life, since praying and participating in liturgy (that implied the use of all the necessary liturgical items) was considered the only guarantee for the Lord's blessing, especially in the turbulent times, which the Early Middle Ages in this area clearly was[36].

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necropolis at the Ravna site near Knjaževac, where finds from the Bulgarian cultural circle were discovered within burials where pagan rituals were practiced, as well as in settlement layers with characteristic ceramics of Bulgarian origin found at the Zlata site. Cf. JOVANOVIĆ, VUKSAN 2005; ŠPEHAR 2017, p. 114–117; MILOSAVLJEVIĆ 2021; ŠPEHAR 2022, p. 114, 166 with older literature.

[36] ŠPEHAR O. 2021, p. 24.

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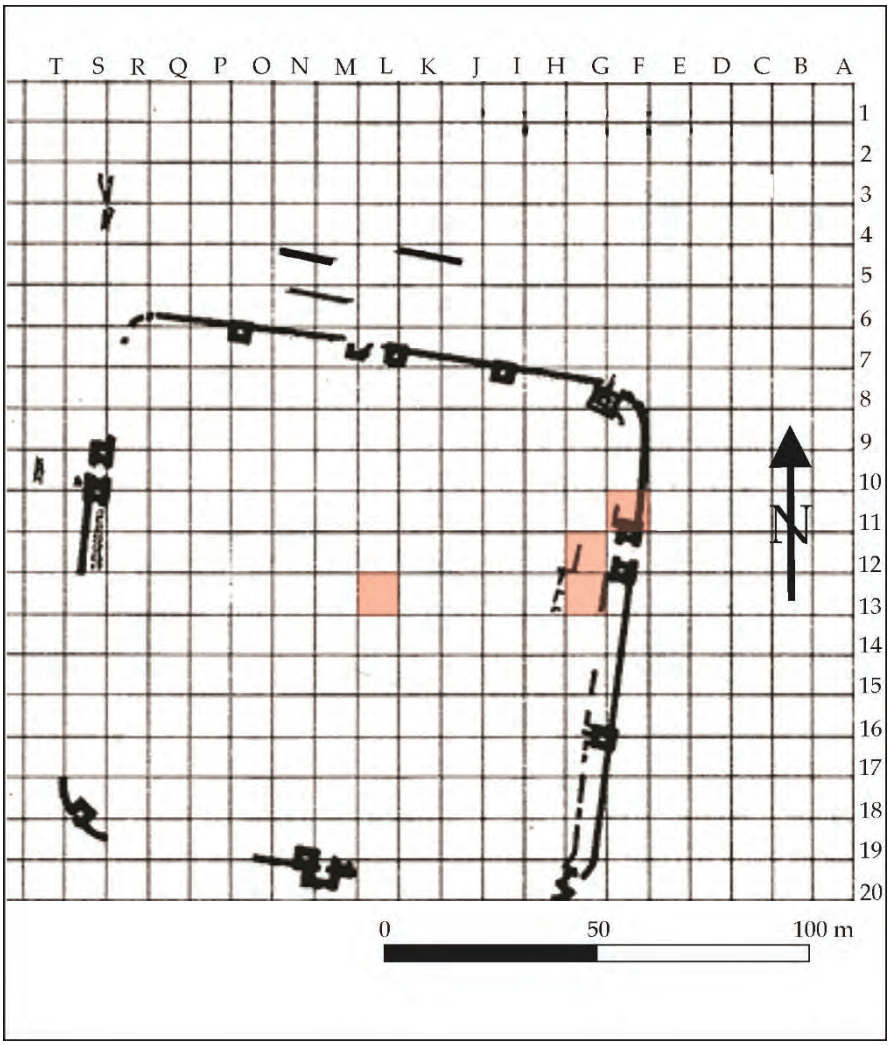

Fig. 1. Ground plan of Pontes castrum with marked quadrants containing early medieval finds (after GARAŠANIN, VASIĆ 1987, p. 105, pl. 1).

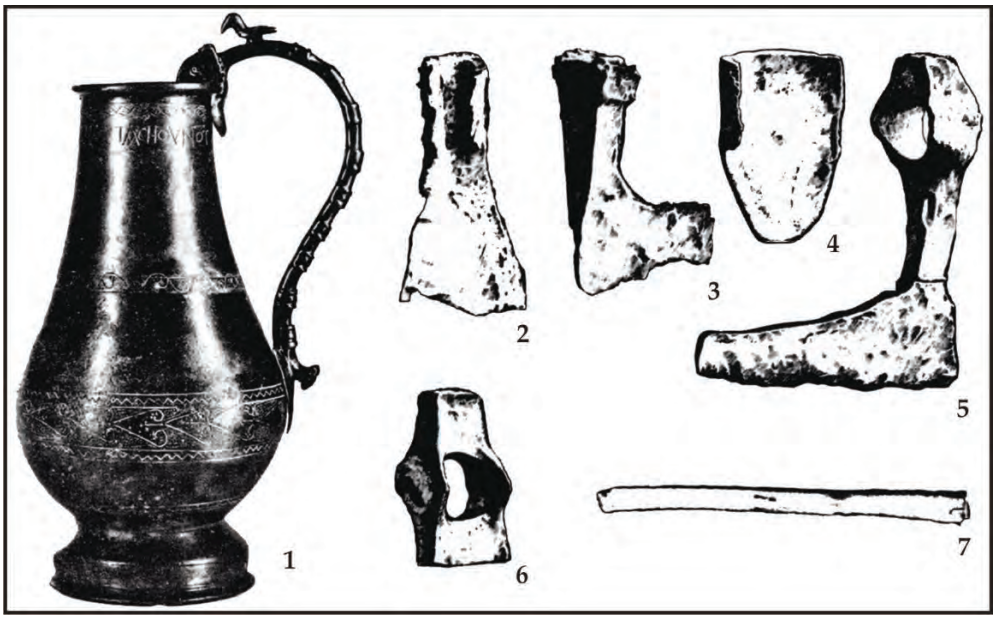

Fig. 2. Content of Hoard No. I, drawings and photo (after ŠPEHAR 2017, p. 187, fig. 43/B, without scale).

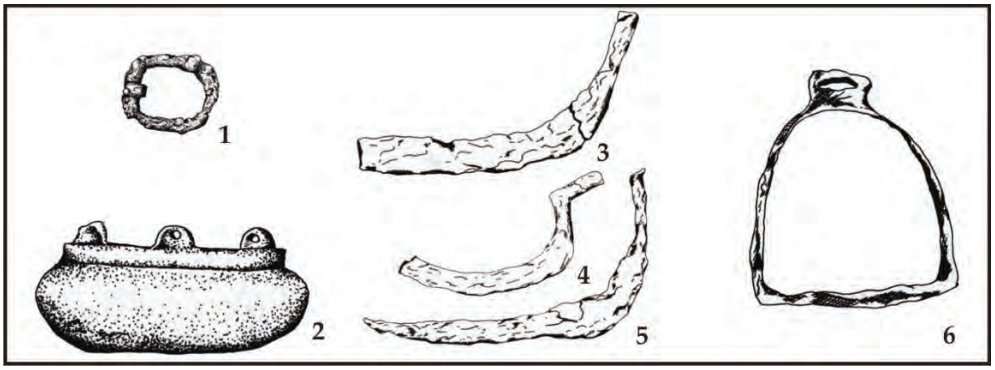

Fig. 3. Content of Hoard No. II, drawings (after ŠPEHAR 2017, p. 187, fig. 43/Г, without scale).

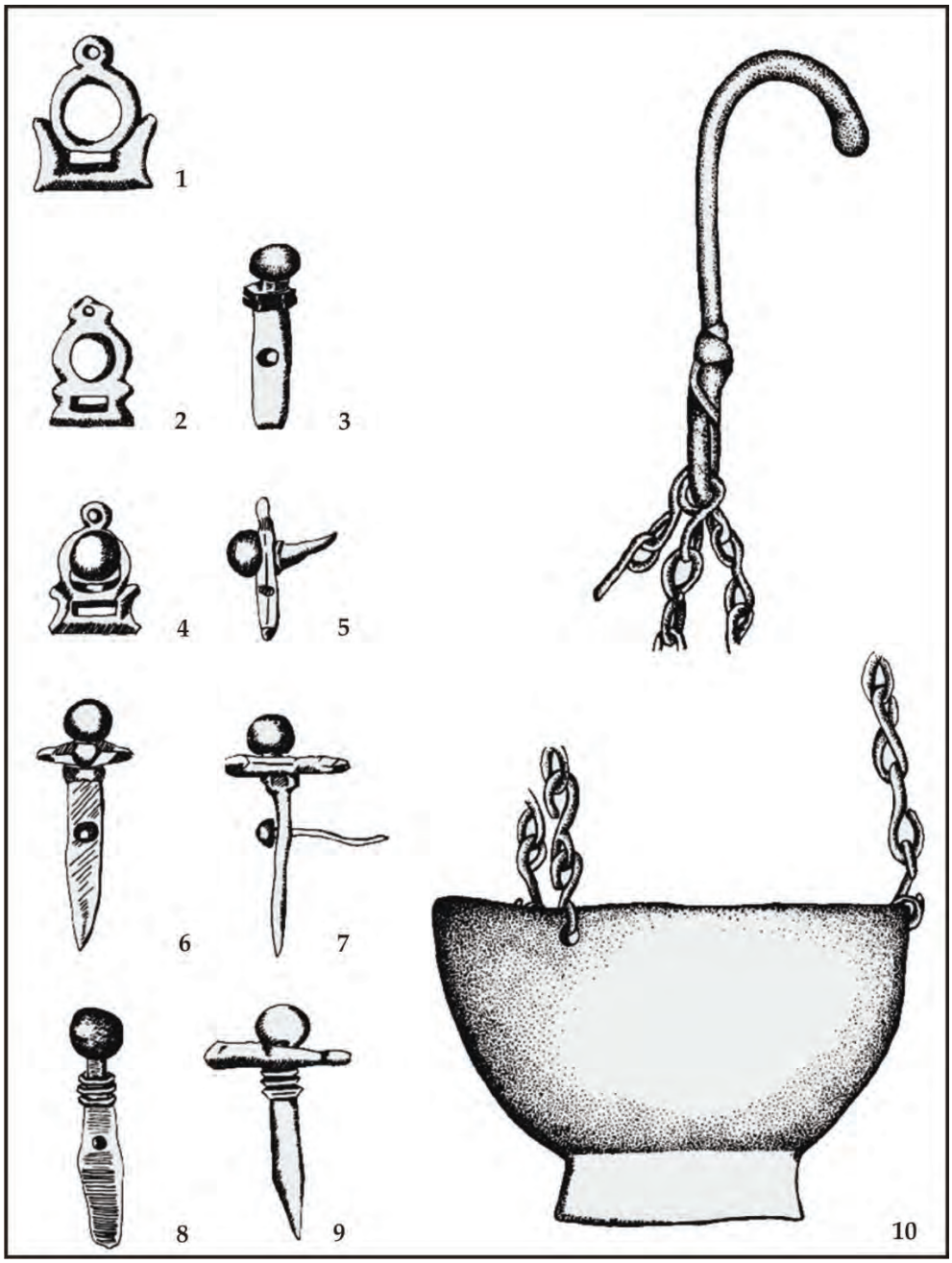

Fig. 4. Content of Hoard No. III, drawings
(after ŠPEHAR 2017, p. 187, fig. 43/Б, without scale).

Fig. 5. Bronze jug from Hoard No. I (after POPOVIĆ 2015, p. 122, fig. 1a, without scale).

Fig. 6. Miniature with the representation of liturgical items, Stuttgart Psalter, 9th century (photo in public use).

MEDIEVAL BELT SET COMPONENTS FROM NORTH-WESTERN BULGARIA

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Keywords: *belt, buckles, strapends, mount/applique, types, Bulgaria.*
Cuvinte-cheie: *curea, cataramă, capăt de curea, aplică, tipuri, Bulgaria.*

Abstract: *The aim of the work is to present the elements originating from belt garnitures – belt bucles, strapends and appliques – stored in the funds of the regional museums in Vratsa and Montana. They belong to the types widespread in the 10th–11th centuries and largely reflect the uniformity of the belt fashion on the Lower Danube. The focus is on belt appliques, which predominate quantitatively. They can be separated into several groups – shield-shaped, heart-shaped, leaf-shaped, geometric shapes with a notch, etc. The fact that the presented pieces find their analogies among the production of the non-ferrous metalworking workshops studied in recent years in the region of Veliki Preslav, allows us to express the working hypothesis of their origin. Although a large number of the objects presented are without a clear archaeological context, as they were the object of illegal trafficking of cultural property, they complete the image of the distribution of these objects. Their publication adds one more touch to the clarification of the cultural unity from northeastern Bulgaria, Dobruja and northwestern Bulgaria.*

Rezumat: *Scopul lucrării este de a prezenta elemente care provin de la garnituri de centură – catarame, capete de curele și aplice – păstrate în fondurile muzeelor regionale din Vratsa și Montana. Ele aparțin tipurilor larg răspândite în secolele X–XI și reflectă, în mare măsură, uniformizarea modei centurii la Dunărea de Jos. Accentul este pus pe aplicele de centură, care predomină cantitativ. Ele pot fi separate în mai multe grupe: în formă de scut, în formă de inimă, în formă de frunză, forme geometrice cu crestătură etc. Faptul că piesele prezentate își găsesc analogii printre produsele atelierelor de prelucrare a metalelor neferoase investigate în ultimii ani în regiunea Veliki Preslav ne permite să exprimăm, ca ipoteză de lucru, originea lor. Deși un număr mare dintre obiectele prezentate este fără un context arheologic clar, întrucât a făcut obiectul unui trafic ilegal de bunuri culturale, totuși ele completează imaginea distribuției acestor piese. Publicarea lor adaugă încă o notă referitoare la clarificarea unității culturale din nord-estul Bulgariei, Dobrogea și nord-vestul Bulgariei.*

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Elements of the medieval belt have been the focus of a number of archaeological studies. They have been commented on as a chronological benchmark, an ethno-determining indicator or a territory marker of one or another state formation. The 10th century belt sets, published either as Hungarian[1] or as Bulgarian[2], are a classic example in this regard. The workshops for production of non-ferrous metal articles (including belt elements) in the Veliki Preslav region, which have been studied in recent years, have to some extent answered the question of the origin of such items and provided an opportunity to outline the distribution areas of the finished products[3]. But the insufficient research and publication of belt set components from north-western Bulgaria is the reason why this territory has remained beyond the attention of the colleagues dealing with this issue. Until now, only a few assemblages from this area have been published and briefly commented on in the literature, those from the Yakimovo site[4], in the Montana region, and Gradeshnitsa[5], in the Vratsa region.

That is why the current report sets itself a single goal: to present a more comprehensive picture of the belt elements that circulated among the medieval population of north-western Bulgaria. The actual object of the study is the collection of the Regional History Museum in Vratsa and another collection recently acquired by and housed in the Regional History Museum in Montana as a result of a specialized action by the Ministry of the Interior against the illegal trafficking of cultural values.

Belt buckles (Fig. 1–2)

The belt buckles are exemplified by six items. According to their formal and constructive features, they can be divided into two types: double-framed lyre-shaped and plate-and-frame buckles[6].

Type I. The lyre-shaped buckles are represented by two variants **(Fig. 1/1–3)**. In the first case, the strap-supporting frame is oval; in the second case, it is rectangular. In all three specimens, two decorative bud-like protrusions are formed onto the carrier. The supporting frame is oval, without additionally shaped bed for the prong. All three described exemplars are of unknown place of discovery in north Bulgaria and are kept in the Montana museum depository. Geographically, the closest analogies are the published belt buckles from the necropolis near Gradeshnitsa, Vratsa region[7], as well as from the medieval necropolis near Dolni Lukovit, Lovech region[8]. Lyre-shaped buckles are widespread in north-eastern Bulgaria (Pliska[9], Preslav[10], Dolni Lukovit[11], Gradeshnitsa[12], etc.). As to the territory of modern Romania, such

[1] GOMOLKA-FUCHS 2002, p. 493–514.
[2] STANILOV 1991, p. 5–70.
[3] BONEV, DONCHEVA 2011.
[4] MILCHEV 1963, p. 32–33, fig. 12.
[5] MAŠOV 1979.
[6] STANILOV 1995, p. 111.
[7] MAŠOV 1979, p. 45, fig. 15/4.
[8] VAZHAROVA 1976, p. 205, fig. 127/3.
[9] STANCHEV 1955, p. 208, fig. 26/2; KONSTANTINOV 2015, p. 202–203, fig. 3/1–3.
[10] VITLYANOV 2004, p. 137, fig. 11/7; TOTEV 2004, p. 239, fig. 8/4.
[11] VAZHAROVA 1976, p. 205, fig. 127/3.
[12] MAŠOV 1979, fig. 15/4.

buckles are known from Tîrgşor[13], Păcuiul lui Soare[14] and *Dinogetia*-Garvăn[15]. They are also common in the Carpathian Basin[16] (**Fig. 2**). They are dated to the 10th and the first half of the 11th century.

Type II. Three belt buckles are included in the second type. They have an elliptical frame and a five-sided plate with a round hole for the prong (**Fig. 1/4–6**). One of them was discovered during planned archaeological research in late-antique and medieval Vratitsa near today's Vratsa, the other two are of unknown provenience. Similar belt buckles were discovered during the archaeological research in a number of centres, such as Pliska[17], Preslav[18], Skala[19], the Pernik fortress[20], the Krivina village over the ruins of the antique castellum of Iatrus (Ruse region)[21], Smyadovo (Shumen region)[22], Yakimovo (Montana region)[23], where they are ascribed to the 9th to 11th century period. Outside the borders of Bulgaria, matching buckles have been found in Păcuiul lui Soare[24], in Romania, Karos[25] and Izsák-Balázspuszta[26], in Hungary (**Fig. 2**).

The discovery of belt buckles similar to the ones presented here among the production of the art metalwork centres near Nadarevo and Novosel gives grounds to launch a working hypothesis of their origin, which should be associated with these two workshops[27]. Of course, this hypothesis should find additional argumentation.

Strapends (Fig. 3–4)

The strapends are also represented by six exemplars. They are all single-sided, tongue-shaped, and used to be attached to the belt strap with a rivet or a pin. They differ in size and decoration, and can be divided into three types.

Type I. Two strapends originating from the medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta (today the village of Harlets, Vratsa region), kept in the regional history museum (RHM), Vratsa, belong to the first type, as well as another strapend from the depository of RHM in Montana. The specimens from Vratsa are crafted by metal pressing, and were found in a fragmented state. Their surface is plain, without decoration (**Fig. 3/1–2**). The relief edge on one of the strapends repeats its contour, thus emphasizing its tongue-like shape. A similar decoration occurs on the strapend from the Iatrus-Krivina belt set[28], whose dating prior to 971 is securely based

[13] HARHOIU 1972, p. 417–425.
[14] DIACONU, VÎLCEANU 1972, p. 155, fig. 62/10–11, 16–17.
[15] BARNEA, ŞTEFĂNESCU 1971, p. 309, fig. 105/8.
[16] RÉVÉSZ 1987, p. 257–286.
[17] KONSTANTINOV 2015, p. 203, fig. 3/6.
[18] STANILOV 1995, p. 113, fig. 3/19–21; VITLYANOV 2007, p. 245–246, tabl. I/1, 3, 5.
[19] YOTOV, ATANASOV 1998, p. 107, fig. 3/3.
[20] CHANGOVA 1992, p. 142–143, fig. 130/5.
[21] GOMOLKA-FUCHS 2002, p. 494, Abb. 1.
[22] ANTONOVA, PETROVA 1983, p. 7, fig. 22/3.
[23] MILCHEV 1963, p. 34, fig. 14.
[24] DIACONU, VÎLCEANU 1972, p. 155, fig. 62/6.
[25] FETTICH 1937, tab. XLIII/32.
[26] TÓTH 1976, p. 154, fig. 15/12, p. 161, fig. 20/12.
[27] BONEV, DONCHEVA 2011, tabl. XXXI/198, 199, tabl. XXXII/209, 210.
[28] GOMOLKA-FUCHS 2002, p. 494, Abb. 1.

on the time of the Bulgarian-Kievan Rus'-Byzantine war when the settlement was burned down[29]. A similar strapend was also found in the medieval settlement near Odartsi (Dobrich region), destroyed during the Pecheneg invasion in the 1030s[30]. The Montana strapend is cast and smaller in size (**Fig. 3/3**). Its attachment onto the belt was done by means of three rivets.

Type II. The second type includes three cast strapends with relief geometric decoration. One of them was found during the exploration of the medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta and is now registered in the collection of the RHM in Vratsa. The contour of this strapend is paralleled by a punched ornament, the field formed in this way being filled with rhythmically recurring diamonds and arcs (**Fig. 3/4**). Two other strapends listed in the Montana museum collection, are of unknown provenience. One has a raised edge along the periphery and in the middle, which divides its face into two fields. They are filled with a pattern of circlets (**Fig. 3/5**). The other strapend is smaller in size, its surface being decorated with mirrored geometric shapes (**Fig. 3/6**). Strapends with geometric decoration are known from Samotino (Varna region)[31], Pliska[32], Păcuiul lui Soare[33] and Oltina-"Capul dealului"[34]; they are dated to the 9th and 11th centuries.

Type III. The third type of strapends is exemplified by two specimens decorated with a plant ornament. The one example, found in the medieval settlement of Augusta, has the so-called "palmette tree" motif incised on it (**Fig. 3/7**). Unfortunately, the motif is partially preserved because of the fragmentary state of the strapend when found. The second exemplar is from the collection of Montana regional museum. It is decorated with two five-leafed palmettes rendered in diamond-shaped fields (**Fig. 3/8**). The space between the diamonds is filled with raised triangles. Three rivets helped the strapend to be attached onto the belt.

Strapends similar to those described here have been found in a number of settlements in Bulgaria (Yakimovo[35], Pernik[36], Pliska[37], various settlements in the Varna region[38], etc.), in Serbia (Aleksinac fortress[39]) and northern Dobruja[40]. They are dated to the 10th and the first half of the 11th century (**Fig. 4**).

Belt mounts

This is the most numerous group of belt components, which is easily explained, taking into account the fact that they were arranged along the entire length of the strap, as shown by the reconstructions of medieval belts based on the studies of

[29] DONCHEVA 2020, p. 61.
[30] DONCHEVA-PETKOVA, NINOV, PARUSHEV 1999, cat. no.697, pl. LI/697, LII/697.
[31] PLETNYOV, PAVLOVA 1992, p. 198, pl. IV/30.
[32] KONSTANTINOV 2015, p. 206, fig. 4/11.
[33] DIACONU, VÎLCEANU 1972, p. 154, fig. 63/1.
[34] PARASCHIV-TALMAŢCHI, CUSTUREA 2018, p. 377, pl. II/32.
[35] MILCHEV 1963, p. 33.
[36] CHANGOVA 1992, p. 143, fig. 123/22.
[37] KONSTANTINOV 2015, p. 204–207.
[38] PLETNYOV, PAVLOVA 1992.
[39] RADIŠIĆ 2018, p. 147, fig. 8.
[40] PARASCHIV-TALMAŢCHI, CUSTUREA 2012, cat. nos. 9, 12–13, pl. 2/9, 3/12–13.

the necropolis. For greater clarity and convenience, these items will be presented according to the classification of Stela Doncheva[41], taking into consideration some specifics and differences of the materials from north-western Bulgaria, the subject of the study. According to their formal characteristics, they can be divided into several groups: shield-shaped, heart-shaped and leaf-shaped, with a geometric shape and openwork.

Shield-shaped belt mounts **(Fig. 5–10)**

The seventy-two mounts included in this group have a shield-like form, with bud-shaped protrusions along the contour and a medallion in the middle, which is encircled by a raised edge or a row of granulation. The differences in the shield design allow three main types to be defined.

Type I. The mounts included in this type have an elongated shape, with a broad base and a pointed rim and four to six "bud" protrusions located along the edge. Within the type, two groups are identified, for the crafting of which a different production technique was used, casting (twenty-three mounts, **Fig. 5**) and pressing (ten mounts, **Fig. 6**). The attachment was achieved by means of two rivets. The decoration of the majority of the commented specimens is reduced to the shaping of a central medallion through a relief edge along the periphery. One item from the Montana regional museum collection has a trefoil rendered in the central medallion (**Fig. 5/3**). Another belt mount from the same museum collection is decorated with a stylized three-leafed palmette in relief, with a diamond-shaped central leaf. The lateral leaves sprout up from volutes at the base, each leaf tapering to the top of the mount (**Fig. 5/21**). Two mounts from the medieval settlement over Augusta have the decoration rendered as a five-leafed palmette (**Fig. 5/22–23**). The ornament of another mount from the same settlement consists of two arched rows of granulation (**Fig. 5/20**). The smooth surface of three of the mounts suggests a possible use as models. This type of shield-like mounts has parallels in the materials from Preslav[42], Pliska[43], Durankulak[44], Starmen[45], Markeli[46] and the medieval fortresses near the villages of Novakovo, Debrene and Suvorovo, Varna region[47]. They are generally dated to the end of the 9th and the 10th centuries (**Fig. 10**).

Type II. Twenty-eight cast (**Fig. 7**) and six pressed belt mounts belong to this type (**Fig. 8**). Although they have the same shape as the previous type, they are distinguished by their proportions and greater variety in decoration. They are shorter and wider, and the number of bud-shaped protrusions along the edge varies from three to six. The mounts were attached onto the belt by means of two or three rivets or two pins. The central medallion of the considered mounts is formed with the help of a raised edge along the periphery or a row of granulation. On one specimen from the collection of Vratsa regional museum, this raised edge passes into trefoil

[41] BONEV, DONCHEVA 2011, p. 109–127.

[42] MAVRODINOV 1959, p. 230–231, fig. 274/3; BONEV 1993, p. 72–73, fig. 12/a–b; VITLYANOV 2007, p. 257, fig. 2/13.

[43] KONSTANTINOV 2015, p. 207–209, fig. 5/9–10.

[44] MELAMED 1989, p. 137, tabl. V/20.

[45] HENSEL *et alii* 1970, p. 237, fig. 7/1, 3.

[46] MOMCHILOV 2015, p. 404–406, fig. 1/6–7, 9–10, fig. 2/6–7, 9–10.

[47] PLETNYOV, PAVLOVA 1994–1995, tabl. XX–XXII.

palmettes by means of volutes at the base (**Fig. 7/1**). The linear granulation forming the central medallion of a mount from Augusta is surrounded by relief leaves ending in volutes. They, in turn, include side "buds" in the decoration (**Fig. 7/5**). The decoration of eight belt mounts consists of a stylized palmette with a different number of leaves. Such are the mounts found in Augusta and in the Golyam Grad fortress, near Staro Selo, Vratsa region, as well as the examples of unknown provenience from the collections of the two museums (**Fig. 7**). On one mount from Augusta the so-called "twig" ornament is depicted (**Fig. 7/25**), on another – curved arcs in relief (**Fig. 7/22**). An exemplar from the collection of the Montana museum has an opening (**Fig. 7/21**). Two other mounts from the same collection have an extra wide width. Similar artefacts occur among the materials from Pliska[48], Odartsi[49], Drastar, Popina and Sredishte (Silistra region)[50]. The published complete belt set from Iatrus-Krivina includes similar mounts[51]. Comparable mounts and models originating from the workshops near Nadarevo and Novosel not far from Preslav connect the production of the above-commented exemplars with this area[52]. Outside the Bulgarian territory, they are attested in Păcuiul lui Soare[53], Oltina-"Capul dealului"[54] (in Romania), Kadoros, Zemplin and the complete belt set from Szentes-Nagyadz (in Hungary)[55] and in Svrljigrad (in Serbia)[56]. They are dated to the 10th century and only for some assemblages a later date is accepted, including the beginning of the 11th century. It was assumed that they had a limited area of distribution, mainly in north-eastern Bulgaria and Dobruja, but the museum collections in Montana and Vratsa require rethinking this thesis (**Fig. 10**).

Type III. This type includes a group of four pentagonal trapezoidal and one hexagonally shaped mounts (**Fig. 9**). In the classification of Stela Doncheva similar belt components are included in the group G of mounts of geometric shape[57]. They are presented here because of their decoration, which features a central medallion formed by a raised edge or row of granulation. This technique is related to the previous two types. Three of the pentagonal mounts are cast and one is pressed. On two of the specimens, a three-leaf palmette is featured in the medallion (**Fig. 9/1, 3**). The cast mounts are of unknown findspot somewhere in north-western Bulgaria, and the pressed one is from the medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta (**Fig. 9/5**). The hexagon-shaped mount originates from the Golyam Grad fortress, near Staro Selo (**Fig. 9/4**).

Heart-shaped belt mounts **(Fig. 11–15)**

This is the second largest group of mounts in the considered collections. It includes sixty-one examples. In terms of their shape, the mounts referred to in this

[48] KONSTANTINOV 2015, p. 207–209, fig. 5/11–15.
[49] DONCHEVA-PETKOVA, NINOV, PARUSHEV 1999, cat. no. 673, p. 674, pl. L/673–674.
[50] ATANASOV 1985, p. 130, tabl. I/3.
[51] GOMOLKA-FUCHS 2002, p. 494, Abb. 1; DONCHEVA 2020, p. 61, fig. 7.
[52] KONAKLIIEV 2005, p. 241, tabl. I/3; BONEV, DONCHEVA 2011, p. 110, 275–276.
[53] DIACONU, VÎLCEANU 1972, p. 155, fig. 62/2.
[54] PARASCHIV-TALMAŢCHI, CUSTUREA 2018, p. 386, pl. II.
[55] LANGÓ, PARAY-HORVÁTH 2016, p. 583, fig. 10; BÁLINT 1991, Taf. 64.
[56] RADIŠIĆ 2015; RADIŠIĆ 2018, p. 145, fig. 6/8.
[57] BONEV, DONCHEVA 2011, p. 126.

group resemble a heart, although this definition is quite conditional. In general, they are quite close in formal terms to the leaf-shaped belt mounts. Usual is the absence of "bud"-like shapes on the edge of the mount, except for one at the base. Certain typical details in shaping and decoration allow this group of mounts to be represented in two main types.

Type I. Thirty-six mounts are included in this type, the variety of which allows three variants to be distinguished.

The first variant (twenty-three items) have a classic round shape with one "bud" protrusion in the centre of the base (**Fig. 11**). The decoration consists of variations of the palmette (three-leafed, five-leafed) and the trefoil. A mount from Augusta has a heart-shaped opening at the base (**Fig. 11/9**). Seventeen of the mounts are casts (**Fig. 11/1–17**), and the remaining six crafted by metal pressing (**Fig. 11/18–23**). The majority of these fittings originate from the medieval settlement over Augusta and one comes from the land of the village of Golyamo Peshtene (Vratsa region). The rest are from unknown sites in north-western Bulgaria, and belong to the collections of the two museums.

The second variant of the considered mounts resembles the first, but the top of the mount is shaped as a "bud" protrusion (**Fig. 12/1–4**). Three exemplars from Augusta and one from the village of Golyamo Peshtene are included here.

The third variant is very close to the previous one, but the "bud" at the base is quite elongated (**Fig. 12/5–13**). The decoration involves a central field shaped by a raised border or row of granulation. Sometimes the raised edge transforms into curled side leaves of three-leafed palmettes (**Fig. 12/12–13**). These belt mounts originate from the medieval settlement over Augusta, from the land of the village of Selanovtsi (Vratsa region), and the Golyam Grad fortress, near Staro Selo, as well as from unknown findspots in north-western Bulgaria (**Fig. 15**). Heart-shaped mounts of this type can be found among the materials from Pliska[58], Preslav[59], Vetren[60], Skala[61] and Markeli[62]. They date back to the 10th century. Their discovery in Pliska, in layers dated with anonymous *folles* class A2 (976–1930/1035), allows us to draw their upper chronological boundary to the first half of the 11th century[63].

Type II. This type comprises twenty-five specimens, divided into four variants (**Fig. 13–14**).

The first variant includes fourteen mounts, with a classic heart shape and a single "bud" at the base (**Fig. 13/1–14**). The difference between them and the previous type is in the proportions – these have a narrower base and an elongated, pointed top. The decoration features the typical stylized palmettes with three or more leaves. Two specimens have the palmettes surrounded by a scalloped line and granulation. The belt mounts described here originate mostly from the Vratsa region – the medieval settlement located over the vestiges of Augusta, the Golyam Grad fortress, near Staro Selo and from the medieval layer of the fortress near Mezdra.

[58] KONSTANTINOV 2015, p. 207–209, fig. 5/5–8.
[59] TOTEV 2004, p. 237, fig. 6/6; VITLYANOV 2004, p. 257, fig. 2/4, 11, 14.
[60] ATANASOV, YORDANOV 1994, p. 21, pl. III/20.
[61] YOTOV, ATANASOV 1998, p. 108, pl. CXIV/436, 439.
[62] MOMCHILOV 2015, p. 404–406, fig. 1/19–20, 2/19–20.
[63] KONSTANTINOV 2015, p. 207.

One of the mounts from Augusta was crafted by pressing. The collection of Montana regional museum includes three examples of this variant, the provenience of which is unknown.

The second variant of this type is represented by four mounts (**Fig. 13/15–18**). What is characteristic of them is the mount tip shaped as a "bud" protrusion. Two items are of unknown findspot, one is from the medieval settlement at Augusta and one originates from the Vratitsa late antique and medieval fortress near Vratsa. Three of them are decorated with a stylized palmette closed in a field. Two raised edges dividing the space into three fields are shaped on the mount from the medieval Vratitsa.

The third variant is represented by two mounts with a smooth surface (**Fig. 14/1–2**). One originates from the Golyam Grad fortress, near Staro Selo and the other, from the collection of the RHM Montana, is of unknown findspot. S. Doncheva notes that the heart-shaped mounts with a plain surface are among the most mass-produced forms of the three production centres: Nadarevo, Novosel and Zlatar[64]. Similar mounts originate from Pliska[65], the medieval fortress near the village of Pet Mogili (Shumen region)[66], Novakovo and Suvorovo (Varna region), Odartsi[67], Adamclisi[68], Oltina-"Capul dealului"[69] and *Dinogetia*-Garvăn[70] (Romania), as well as from Svrljigrad (eastern Serbia)[71]. They are dated to the end of the 9th–10th centuries.

The fourth variant of this type includes five belt mounts – one from the medieval settlement at Augusta and four from the collection of the museum in Montana, which are of unknown findspot (**Fig. 14/3–5**). They feature a rounded base and a slightly pointed tip. They are decorated with stylized palmettes. Comparable belt mounts are known from a number of settlements in north-eastern Bulgaria[72].

Heart-shaped mounts are of the most common and favoured belt fittings. They occur among the materials from the production centres at Novosel and Nadarevo, as well as in a number of centres in north-eastern Bulgaria (Skala and Odartsi, in Dobrich region; Novakovo, Suvorovo, etc., in Varna region), to the south of the Balkans in Markeli (Burgas region), in Dobruja (*Dinogetia*-Garvăn, Adamclisi, Oltina-"Capul dealului"), in Serbia (Svrljigrad), in Hungary (Ketzel). They date back to the 10th century.

Leaf-shaped belt mounts **(Fig. 16–20)**

This group comprises thirty-two belt mounts. Based on the different decorative technique of these mounts, two main groups can be distinguished.

The first group includes twenty-one items with incised decoration. According to their shape, they can be divided into two types.

Type I. The ten mounts included in the type are elongated leaf-shaped, with

[64] DONCHEVA 2020, p. 56.
[65] KONSTANTINOV 2015, p. 207–209, fig. 5/3–4.
[66] STANILOV 1993, p. 153, fig. 2/7.
[67] PLETNYOV, PAVLOVA 1994–1995, p. 198, tabl. VI/110–117, VII/131–138.
[68] PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI, TALMAȚCHI, ŞOVA 2014, p. 195, pl. VII/10–11.
[69] PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI, CUSTUREA 2018, p. 386, pl. I/10.
[70] ŞTEFAN *et alii* 1967, p. 296, fig. 173/8.
[71] RADIŠIĆ 2015, p. 21–34; RADIŠIĆ 2018, p. 145, fig. 6.
[72] PLETNYOV, PAVLOVA 1994–1995, tabl. XXVI.

one or two "buds" formed at the edge (**Fig. 16**). The incised ornamentation consists of different variations of the "twig" motif, as well as of arc-and-circlets combinations. Seven of the mounts are from the collection of the museum in Vratsa; they come from the medieval settlement over Augusta and the Golyam Grad fortress, near Staro Selo. Four exemplars, which have no known place of discovery, are from the collection of the museum in Montana.

Type II. Ten mounts belong to this type (**Fig. 17**). They are wider, decorated with different variants of the "twig" motif, arcs, curves, etc, with some specimens having four or five "buds" formed at the edge. Within this type, there is also a variant with a rectangular, oval or triangular opening at the base. They were found in the Golyam Grad fortress, near Staro Selo and the medieval settlement at Augusta, as well as among the materials of unknown provenience in north-western Bulgaria, now stored in the depositories of the two museums.

Belt mounts, comparable to those presented here occur among the materials found in Pliska[73], Preslav[74], Skala[75], Suvorovo and Provadia (Varna region)[76], and Markeli[77]; they are dated to the 10th and the first half of the 11th century (**Fig. 18**).

The second group of leaf-shaped mounts are with **relief** decoration (**Fig. 19**). It includes eleven exemplars from the collection of the museum in Vratsa, which originate from the medieval settlement at Augusta, with one stray find coming from the area between Gigen (Pleven region) and Ostrov (Vratsa region), villages on the banks of the Danube River. Here again we can describe them as elongated and wide. The decorative pattern is of palmettes, trefoils, or resembling a cluster of raised "buds" enclosed in three circular fields as is the case of one mount. It is worth-noting that most of these materials have direct parallels in the production of the workshop at Novosel.

Leaf-shaped belt mounts occur among the materials from the production centres at Novosel and Nadarevo, as well as from Preslav, Silistra, Skala and Markeli. Outside Bulgaria, similar fittings are also known from Hungary[78], Romania[79] and Serbia[80]. They are dated within the 10th and first decades of the 11th century.

Openwork belt mounts **(Fig. 21–22)**

Typical of this group of mounts is the presence of openings and cutouts, which have a decorative function and participate in the artistic shaping of the mount. In formal terms, three main types are distinguished.

Type I. Five mounts are included in this type, the shape of which is close to a leaf or heart (**Fig. 21/1–5**). One mount from the Montana museum collection has three round holes at its top and base with the field between them being occupied by a floral pattern (**Fig. 21/1**). In another mount from the same collection, the hole

[73] KONSTANTINOV 2015, p. 210, fig. II/16.

[74] VITLYANOV 2004, p. 247, fig. 2.

[75] YOTOV, ATANASOV 1998, p. 109, pl. CXIV/447.

[76] PLETNYOV, PAVLOVA 1994–1995, tabl. XXIII–XXV.

[77] MOMCHILOV 2007, p. 259–265.

[78] FODOR 1996, fig. 1, 6.

[79] PARASCHIV-TALMAŢCHI, TALMAŢCHI, ŞOVA 2014, p. 195, pl. VII; PARASCHIV-TALMAŢCHI, CUSTUREA 2018, p. 386, pl. I.

[80] RADIŠIĆ 2018, p. 147, fig. 7.

is heart-shaped and occupies the central part of the item (**Fig. 21/2**). The opening is similar to the one of a mount from Augusta, but unlike the others, it is equipped with a "bud"-like protrusion at the base and the top (**Fig. 21/3**). A fitting from Augusta and another one from Montana have rectangular openings around which an incised floral ornament develops (**Fig. 21/4–5**). These mounts are less common and yet, similar ones can be found among the materials from the workshop at Novosel[81], as well as from Preslav, Suvorovo and Botevo, Varna region[82] and from the fortress near Debrene, Dobrich region[83] (**Fig. 22**).

Type II. Five mounts with a rectangular shape and a rectangular opening are included here. They are mostly undecorated (**Fig. 21/6–10**). Only in one case the surface of the mount is scalloped. All fittings were found in the area of Augusta and the Golyam Grad fortress, near Staro Selo and are now part of the collection of the museum in Vratsa. Similar mounts occur among the materials from the production centres at Nadarevo[84] and Novosel[85], as well as from the region of Varna[86] (**Fig. 22**).

Type III. Three triangular fittings belong to this type. The one, coming from the RHM Montana collection, also has a triangular opening and a trefoil-decorated top. The other two mounts originate from the medieval settlement at Augusta. The base of the triangle is shaped like a trefoil, and the opening below it is round. It is not excluded that they were used as loops for suspension in the belt set.

Geometrically-shaped mounts **(Fig. 23–24)**

The geometrically-shaped mounts in the considered collections are represented by twenty-five specimens. They are divided into four types.

Type I. These are round-shaped mounts. They are decorated with an incised ornament representing rosettes (twelve items) or raised "buds" (two items). Six of them were found in the medieval settlement at Augusta, and the rest are of unknown discovery place (**Fig. 23/1–14**). Similar mounts can be found among the materials from the production centres at Nadarevo and Novosel[87], as well as from Pliska[88], Markeli[89], Skala[90], Starmen[91], medieval settlements around Varna[92], *Dinogetia*-Garvăn (Romania), etc. They are dated to the 10th and the 60s of the 11th century.

Type II. This type includes six mounts with a rectangular shape achieved by connecting four circles, between which the diamond-shaped field thus formed is emphasized in relief. They have a bud-like protrusion at one side. All exemplars originate from the settlement at Augusta. Four are cast in bronze, one is cut out from sheet copper, and one is pressed (**Fig. 23/15–19**). Such fittings occur among

[81] BONEV, DONCHEVA 2011, p. 122, tabl. XLVII.
[82] PLETNYOV, PAVLOVA 1994–1995, p. 144–145, tabl. X–XI.
[83] PLETNYOV, PAVLOVA 1994–1995, p. 144–145.
[84] KONAKLIIEV 2005, p. 242, pl. II/11.
[85] BONEV, DONCHEVA 2011, pl. XLVIII/522.
[86] PLETNYOV, PAVLOVA 1994–1995, p. 27, 192, pl. I/17–20, II/21–27.
[87] BONEV, DONCHEVA 2011, p. 123–124, pl. XLVIII/525.
[88] KONSTANTINOV 2015, p. 210, fig. 5/23–24.
[89] MOMCHILOV 2015, p. 401–402, fig. 1/1–2.
[90] YOTOV, ATANASOV 1998, p. 110, pl. CXV/454.
[91] HENSEL *et alii* 1970, fig. 7/8.
[92] PLETNYOV, PAVLOVA 1994–1995, pl. IV/58–78, V/79–84.

the output of the production centre at Novosel[93], as well as among the finds from Preslav, Okorsh (Silistra region) and medieval settlements around Varna[94] (**Fig. 24**). They date back to the 10th century.

Type III. The third type is represented by the so-called double crescent-shaped mounts. It comprises four exemplars. The individual lunate segments forming the mounts are separated from each other by an incised line and end in protrusions at both ends. One example found in the Golyam Grad fortress, near Staro Selo is composed of three such segments (**Fig. 23/20–23**). Similar fittings come from Pliska[95], Vetren[96], Debrene[97], Suvorovo, Izvornik and other sites[98]. They also occur among the production of the workshops at Nadarevo[99] and Novosel[100] (**Fig. 24**). The mounts of this type are dated to the 10th and 11th centuries.

Type IV. The fourth type of fittings with a geometric shape is represented by two mounts. They are composed of three connected spheres, being attached onto the belt by means of a pin. One mount was found in the medieval settlement at Augusta, and the other was a stray find from the land of the village of Golyamo Peshtene. They are now stored in the depository of the museum in Vratsa (**Fig. 24**).

The multi-component belt, as an element of early medieval culture, remains one of the most studied phenomenon by specialists. The empirical material accumulated over the past decades reveals both the production centres and the regions of distribution of these finds. The present preliminary report overcomes a blank spot in the very geographical "heart" of this fashion, north-western Bulgaria.

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[93] BONEV, DONCHEVA 2011, pl. XLVIII/527–540.

[94] PLETNYOV, PAVLOVA 1994–1995, pl. V/85–97, VI/98–100.

[95] KONSTANTINOV 2015, p. 210, fig. 5/17–18.

[96] ATANASOV, YORDANOV 1994, pl. III/23.

[97] YOTOV 1993, p. 123.

[98] PLETNYOV, PAVLOVA 1994–1995, pl. XLVIII/841–850.

[99] KONAKLIIEV 2005, p. 241, pl. I/10.

[100] BONEV, DONCHEVA 2011, pl. XLVIII/547.

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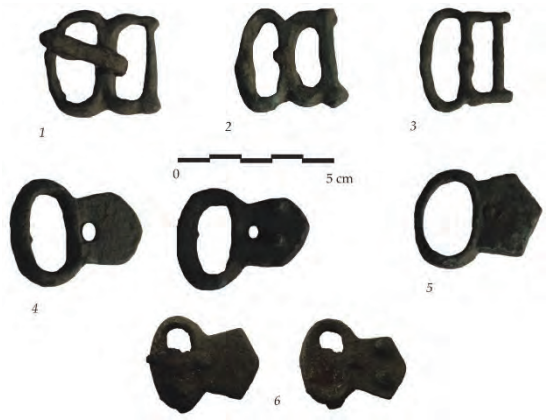

Fig. 1. Belt buckles. *Type I*: 1–3 Unknown findspot. *Type II*: 4–5 Unknown findspot; 6 Medieval fortress Vratitsa (1–5 RHM Montana, 6 RHM Vratsa).

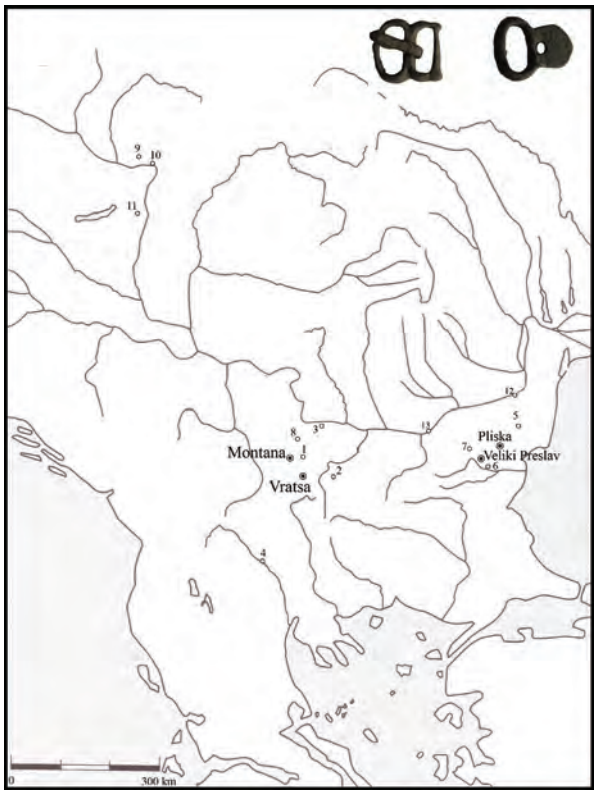

Fig. 2. Belt buckle distribution map: 1 Gradeshnitsa, Vratsa region; 2 Dolni Loukovit, Lovech region; 3 Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta, Vratsa region; 4 Medieval fortress Pernik, SW Bulgaria; 5 Skala, Dobrich region; 6 Smyadovo, Shumen region; 7 Novosel, Shumen region; 8 Yakimovo, Montana region; 9 Tarczal, Hungary; 10 Izsák-Balázspuszta, Hungary; 11 Târgșor, Romania, 12. Păcuiul lui Soare, Romania; 13 Yatrus-Krivina, Rousse region.

Fig. 3. Strapends. *Type I* – 1 Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta (inv.№ 565); 2 Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta (inv.№ 566); 3 Unknown findspot. *Type II* – 4 Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta (inv.№ 445); 5–6 Unknown findspot. *Type III* – 7 Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta (inv.№ 511); 8 Unknown findspot (1–2, 4, 7 RHM Vratsa; 3, 5–6, 8 RHM Montana).

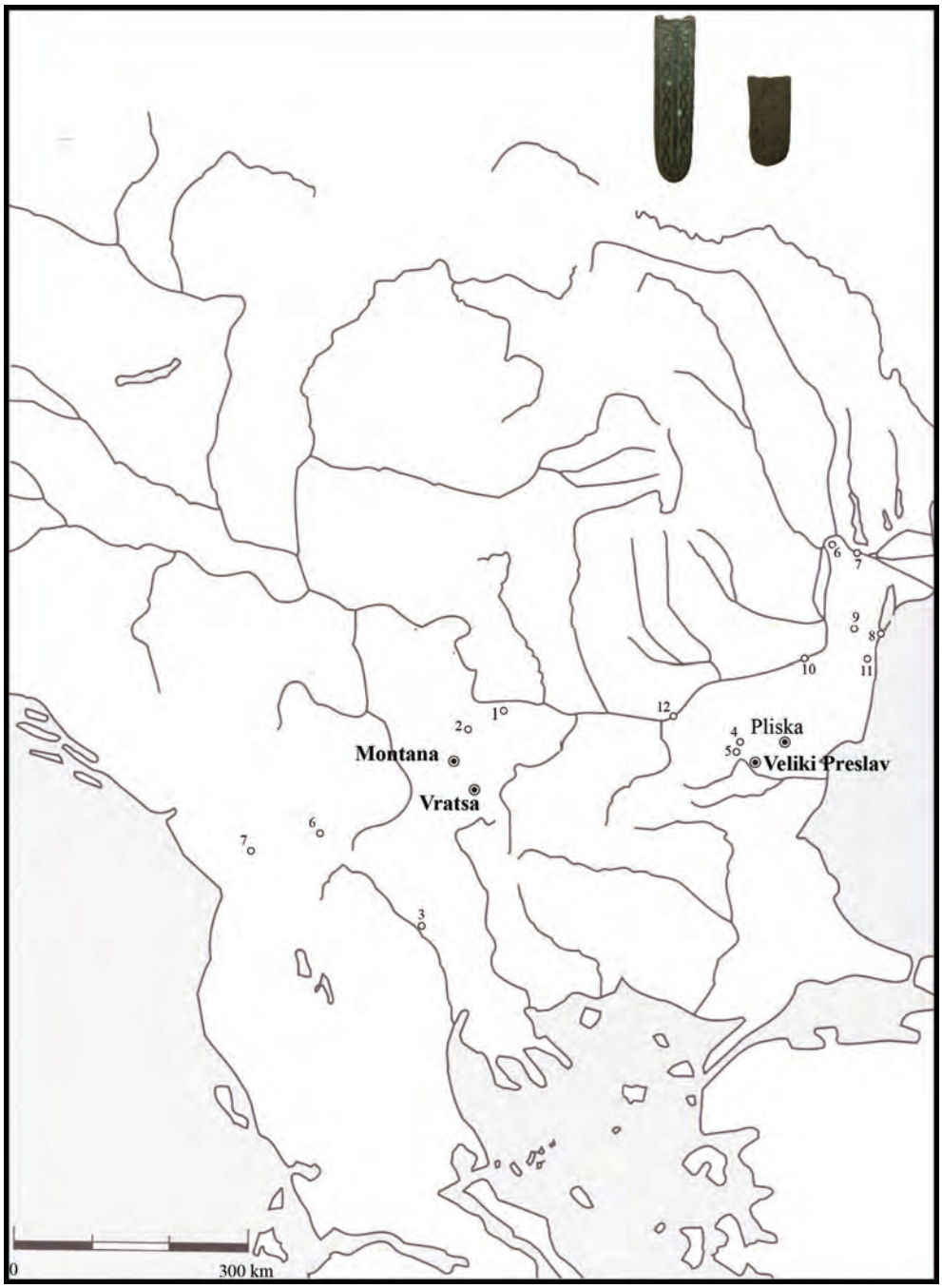

Fig. 4. Strapends distribution map: 1 Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta, Vratsa region; 2 Yakimovo, Montana region; 3 Medieval fortress Pernik, SW Bulgaria; 4 Aleksinac fortress, Serbia; 5 Ras fortress, Serbia; 6 *Dinogetia*-Garvăn, Romania; 7 Isaccea, Romania; 8 Histria, Romania; 9 Târgușor, Romania; 10 Păcuiul lui Soare, Romania; 11 Valu lui Traian, Romania; 12 Yatrus-Krivina, Rousse region.

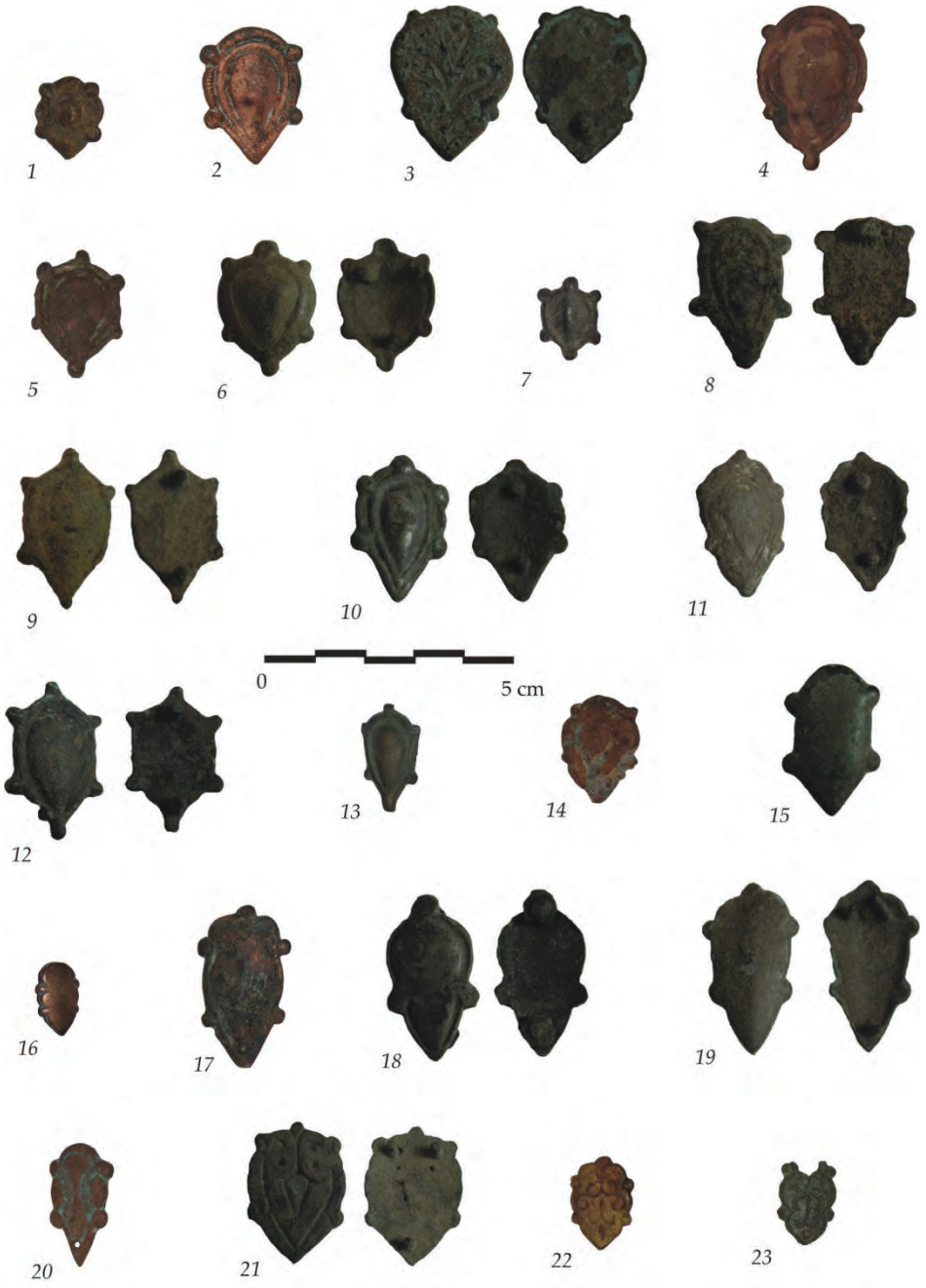

Fig. 5. Casted shield-shaped belt mounts. *Type I* – Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta: 1 (inv. № 434), 2 (inv. № 585), 4 (inv. № 446), 5 (inv. № 360), 7 (inv. № 586), 13 (inv. № 376), 14 (inv. № 468), 16 (inv. № 548), 17 (inv. № 415), 20 (inv. № 497), 22 (inv. № 552), 23 (inv. № 437); Unknown findspot: 3, 6, 8–12, 15, 18–19, 21 (1–2, 4–5, 7, 13–14, 16–17, 20, 22–23 RHM Vratsa; 3, 6, 8–12, 15, 18–19, 21 RHM Montana).

Fig. 6. Pressed shield-shaped belt mounts. *Type I* – Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta: 1 (inv.№ 358), 2 (inv.№ 418), 4 (inv.№ 549), 5 (inv.№ 386), 7 (inv.№ 583), 8 (inv.№ 417), 10 (inv.№. 584); Medieval fortress "Golemiya grad", near Staro selo village, Vratsa region: 3 (inv.№ 460), 9 (inv.№ 454); Unknown findspot 6 (inv.№ 403) (1–10 RHM Vratsa).

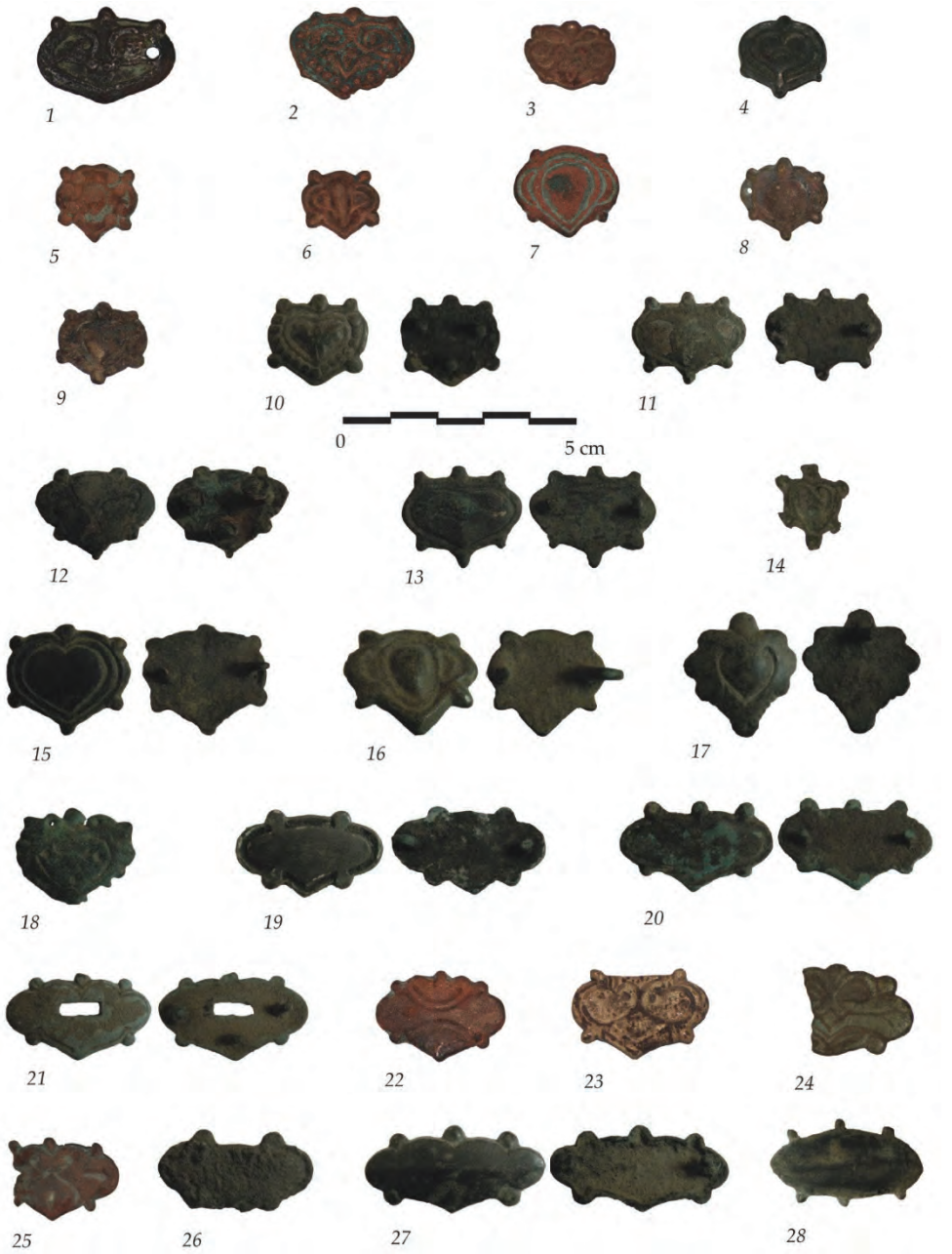

Fig. 7. Casted shield-shaped belt mounts. *Type II* – Unknown findspot: 1 (inv.№ 263), 10–13, 14 (inv. № 679), 15–21, 26–28; Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta: 2 (inv.№ 382), 3 (inv.№ 389), 4 (inv.№ 416), 5 (inv.№ 447), 6 (inv.№ 496), 7 (inv.№ 591), 8 (inv.№ 424), 9 (inv.№ 589), 22 (inv.№ 544), 23 (inv.№ 390), 25 (inv.№ 363); Medieval fortress "Golemiya grad", near Staro selo village 24 (inv.№ 482) (1–9, 14, 22–25 RHM Vratsa; 10–13, 15–21, 26–28 RHM Montana).

Fig. 8. Pressed shield-shaped belt mounts. *Type II* – Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta 1: (inv. № 387), 2 (inv. № 551), 3 (inv. № 596), 4 (inv. № 677), 5 (inv. № 423), 6 (inv. № 536) (1–6 RHM Vratsa).

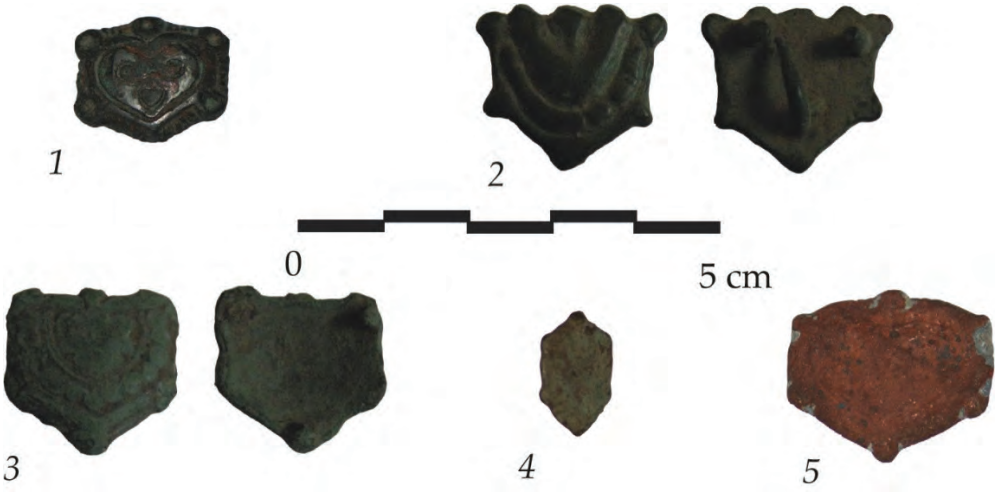

Fig. 9. Shield-shaped belt mounts. *Type II* – Unknown findspot: 1 (inv. № 330), 2–3; Medieval fortress "Golemiya grad", near Staro selo village, Vratsa region 4 (inv. № 483); Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta 5 (inv. № 590) (1, 4–5 RHM Vratsa; 2–3 RHM Montana).

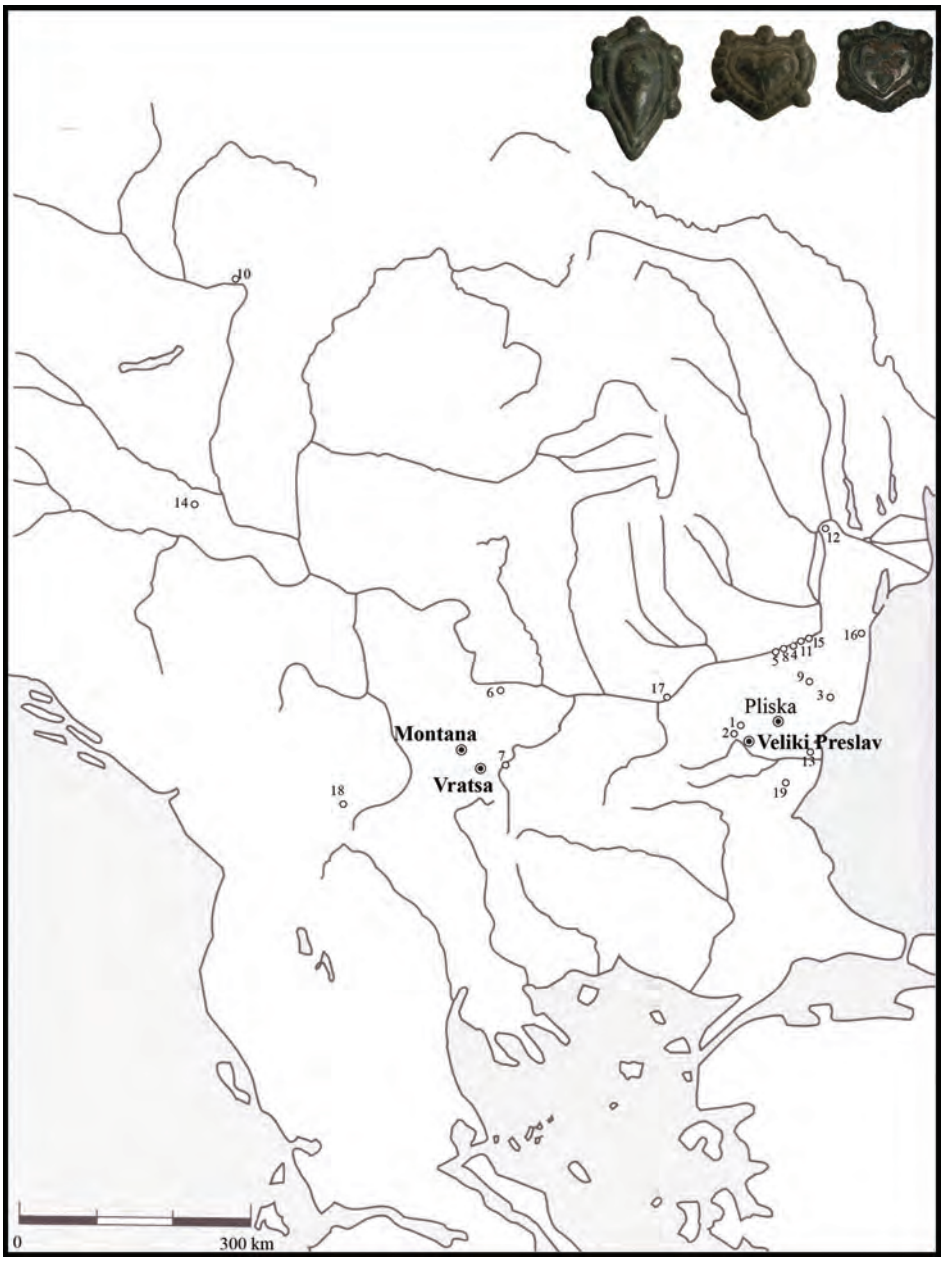

Fig. 10. Distribution map of shield-shaped belt mounts: 1 Novosel, Shumen region; 2 Nadarevo, Targovishte region; 3 Odartsi, Dobrich region; 4 Silistra; 5 Vetren, Varna region; 6 Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta, Vratsa region; 7 Medieval fortress "Golemiya grad", near Staro selo village, Vratsa region; 8 Popina, Silistra region; 9 Skala, Dobrich region; 10 Zemplin, Hungary; 11 Păcuiul lui Soare, Romania; 12 *Dinogetia*-Garvăn, Romania; 13 Varna; 14 Bátmonostor, Hungary; 15 Oltina-"Capul dealului", Romania; 16 Valu lui Traian, Romania; 17 Yatrus-Krivina, Rousse region; 18 Svrljigrad, Serbia; 19 Late-antique and medieval fortress Markeli, Bourgas region.

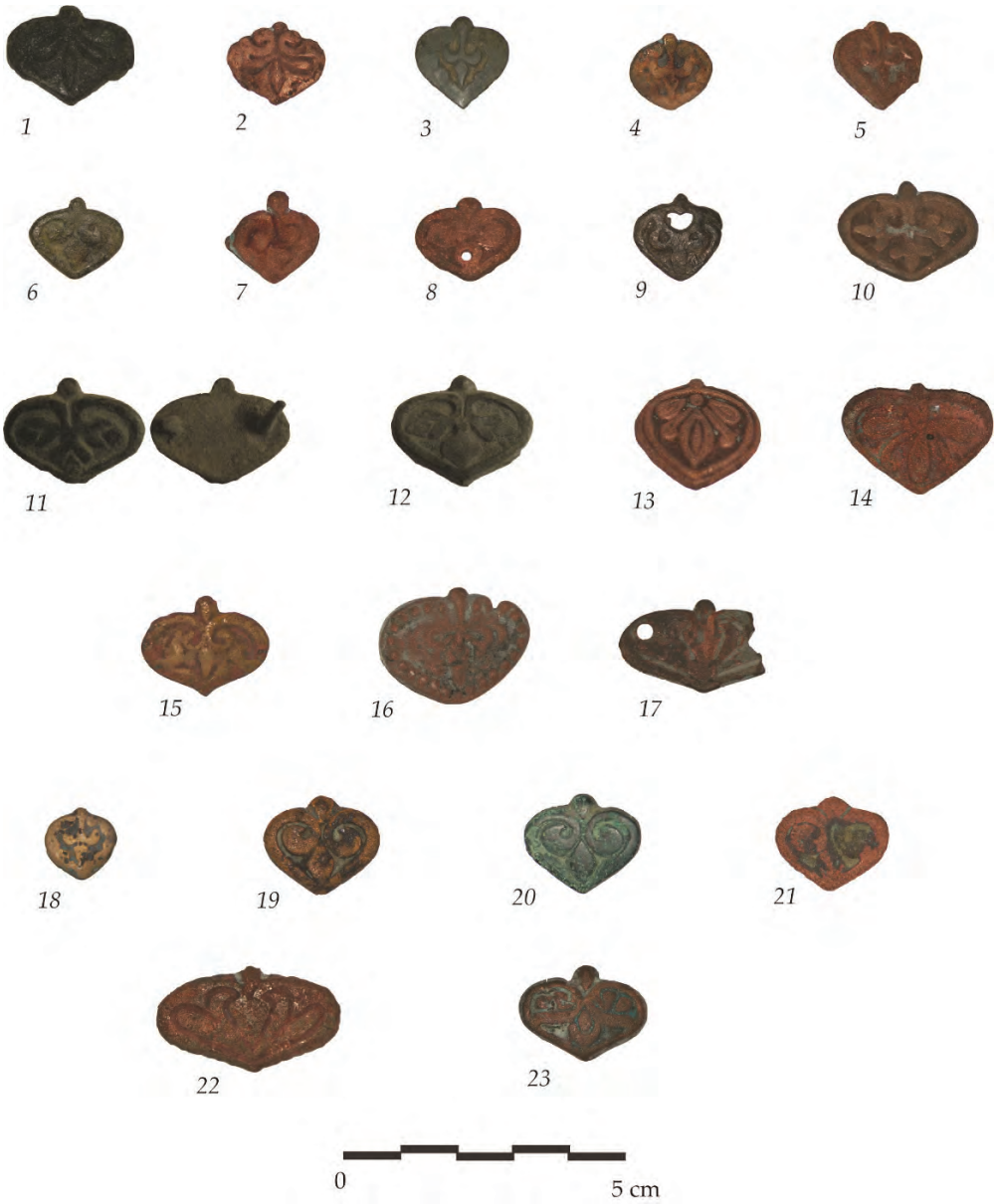

Fig. 11. Heart-shaped belt mounts. *Type I, variante 1* – Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta: 1 (inv.№ 357), 2 (inv.№ 537), 4 (inv.№ 554), 5 (inv.№ 500), 6 (inv.№ 532), 7 (inv.№ 553), 8 (inv.№ 541), 9 (inv.№ 560), 10 (inv.№ 425), 13 (inv.№ 534), 14 (inv.№ 540), 16 (inv.№ 381), 17 (inv.№ 320), 18 (inv.№ 419), 19 (inv.№ 422), 21 (inv.№ 595), 22 (inv.№ 427), 23 (inv.№ 594); Unknown findspot: 3 (inv.№ 395), 11–12, 15 (inv.№ 495); Golyamo Peshtene, Vratsa region 20 (inv.№ 570) (1–10, 13–23 RHM Vratsa; 11–12, RHM Montana).

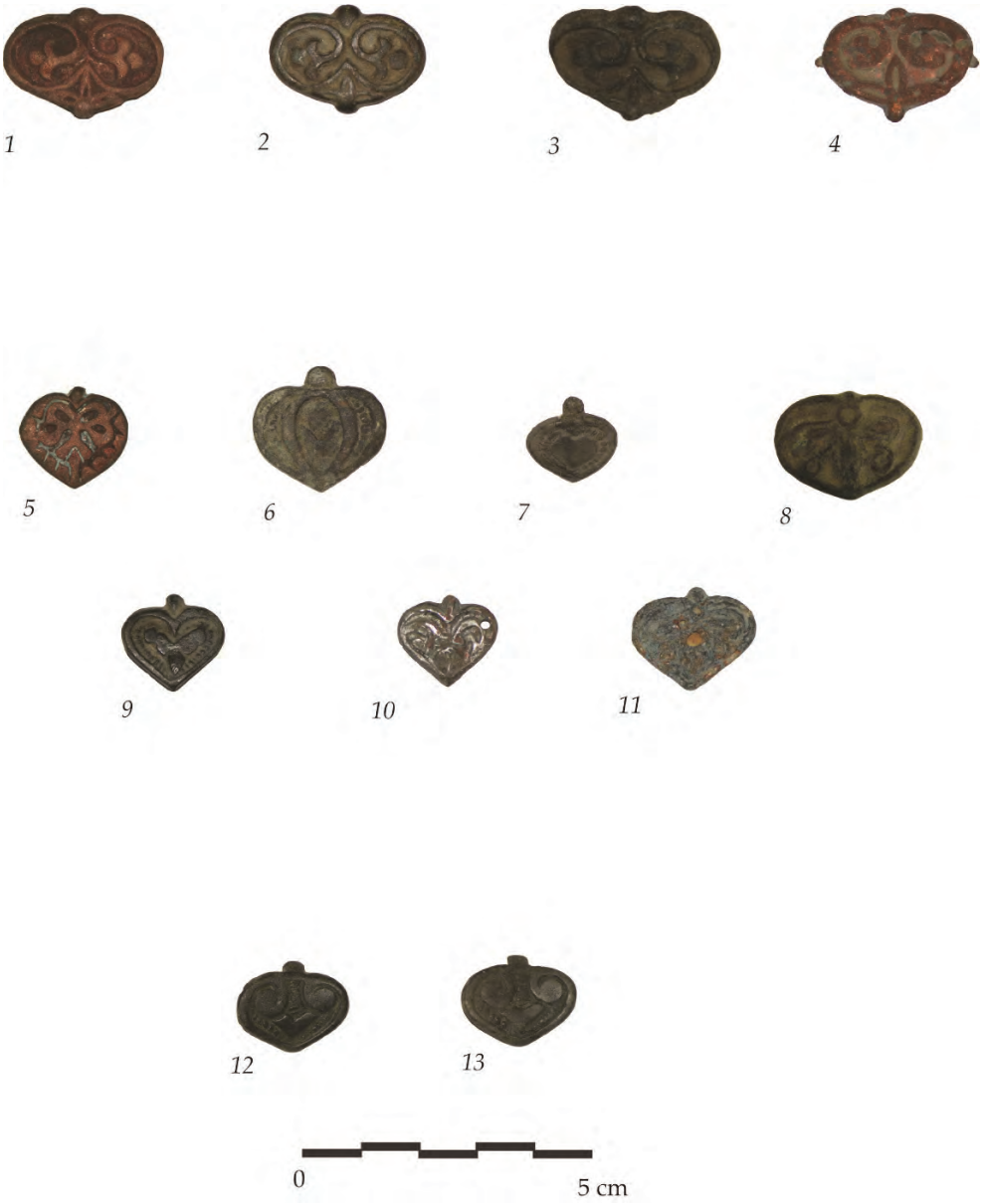

Fig. 12. Heart-shaped belt mounts. *Type I, variante 2* – Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta: 1 (inv. № 426), 3 (inv. № 547), 4 (inv. № 588); Golyamo Peshtene village, Vratsa region 2 (inv. № 567); *Type I, variante 3* – Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta: 5 (inv. № 448), 7 (inv. № 533), 9 (inv. № 538), 10 (inv. № 539), 12 (inv. № 359), 13 (inv. № 593); Medieval fortress "Golemiya grad", near Staro selo village 6 (inv. № 452); Unknown findspot 8; Selanovtsi village, Vratsa region 11 (inv. № 314) (1–7, 9–11 RHM Vratsa; 8 RHM Montana).

Fig. 13. Heart-shaped belt mounts. *Type II, variante 1* – Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta: 1 (inv.№ 369), 2 (inv.№ 431), 3 (inv.№ 420), 4 (inv.№ 493), 6 (inv.№ 530), 7 (inv.№ 535), 8 (inv.№ 543), 10 (inv.№ 592); Medieval fortress "Golemiya grad", near Staro selo village, Vratsa region 5 (inv.№ 453); "Kaleto" fortress, near Mezdra, Vratsa region 9 (inv.№ 662); Unknown findspot: 11–13, 14 (inv.№ 402); *Type II, variante 2* – Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta 15 (inv.№ 527); Medieval fortress Vratitsa 16 (inv.№ 30); Unknown findspot 17–18 (1–10, 14–16 RHM Vratsa; 11–13, 17–18 RHM Montana).

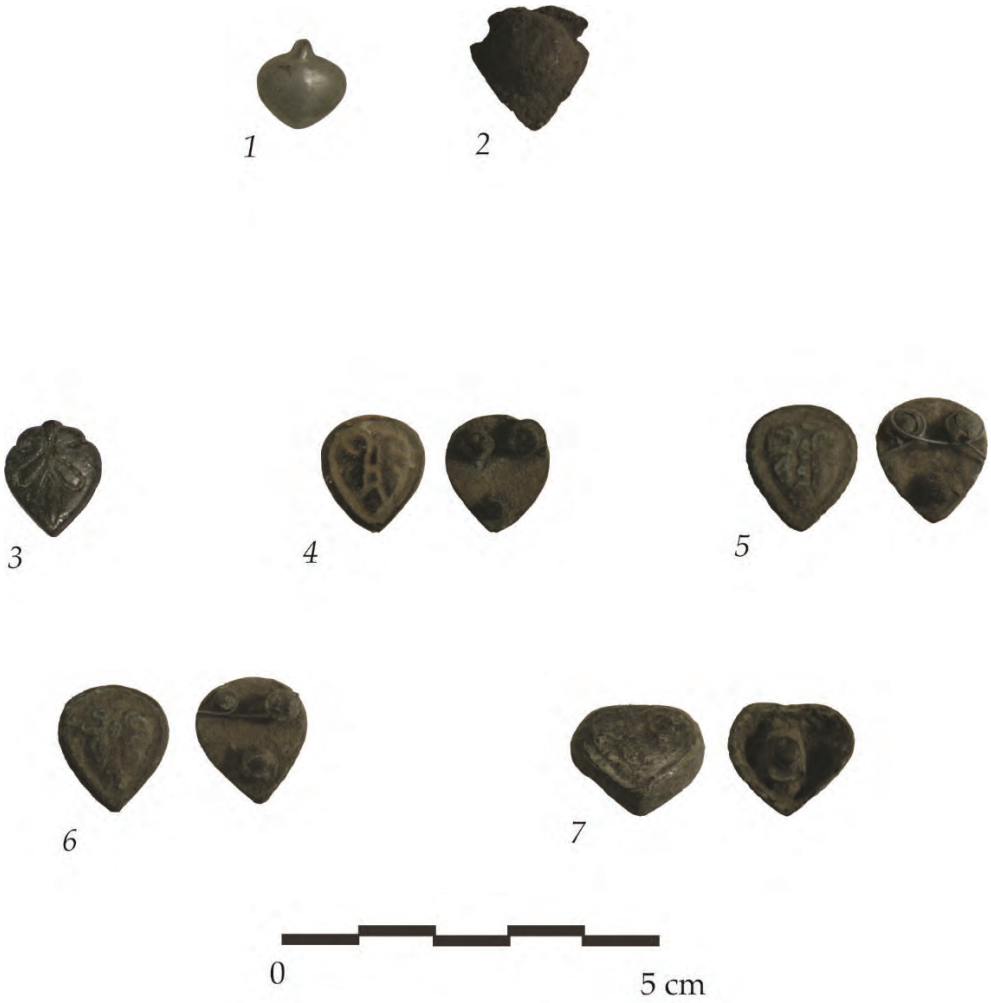

Fig. 14. Heart-shaped belt mounts. *Type II, variante 3* – 1 Medieval fortress "Golemiya grad", near Staro selo village, Vratsa region (RHM Vratsa, inv.№ 670), 2 Unknown findspot (RHM Montana); *Type II, variante 4* – 3 Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta (RHM Vratsa, inv.№ 587), 4–7 Unknown findspot (RHM Montana).

Fig. 15. Distribution map of heart-shaped belt mounts: 1 Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta, Vratsa region; 2 Medieval fortress "Golemiya grad", near Staro selo village, Vratsa region; 3 Novosel, Shumen region; 4 Nadarevo, Targovishte region; 5 Selanovtsi village, Vratsa region; 6 *Dinogeti*a-Garvăn, Romania; 7 Kezel, Hungary; 8 Skala, Dobrich region; 9 Svrljigrad, Serbia; 10 Late-antique and medieval fortress Markeli, Bourgas region.

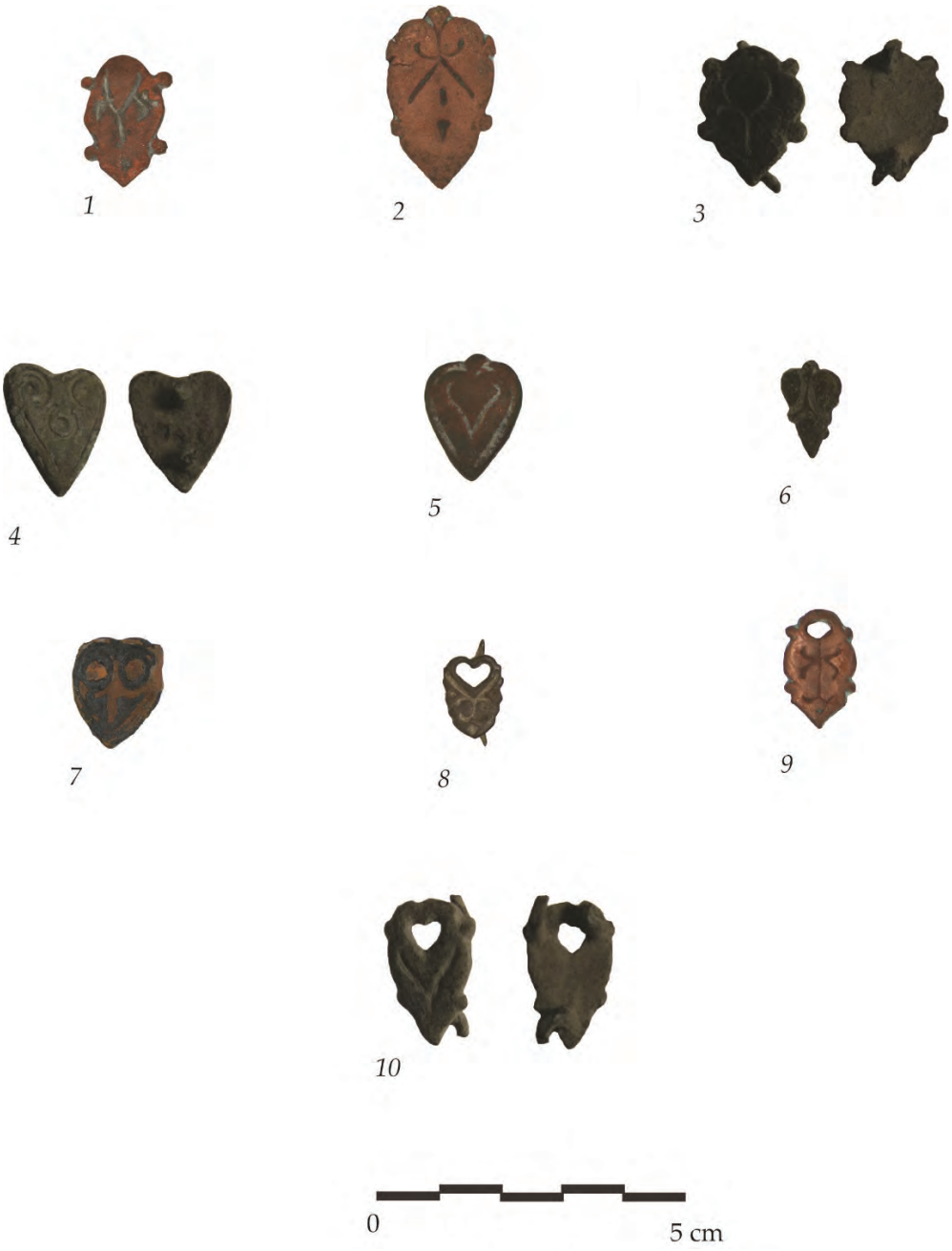

Fig. 16. Leaf-shaped belt mounts with incised decoration. *Type I* – Unknown findspot: 1 (inv.№ 401), 3–4, 5 (inv.№ 317), 10; Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta 2 (inv.№ 501), 6 (inv.№ 436), 7 (inv.№ 365), 9 (inv.№ 491); Medieval fortress "Golemiya grad", near Staro selo village, Vratsa region 8 (inv.№ 456) (1–2, 5–9 RHM Vratsa; 3 –4, 10 RHM Montana).

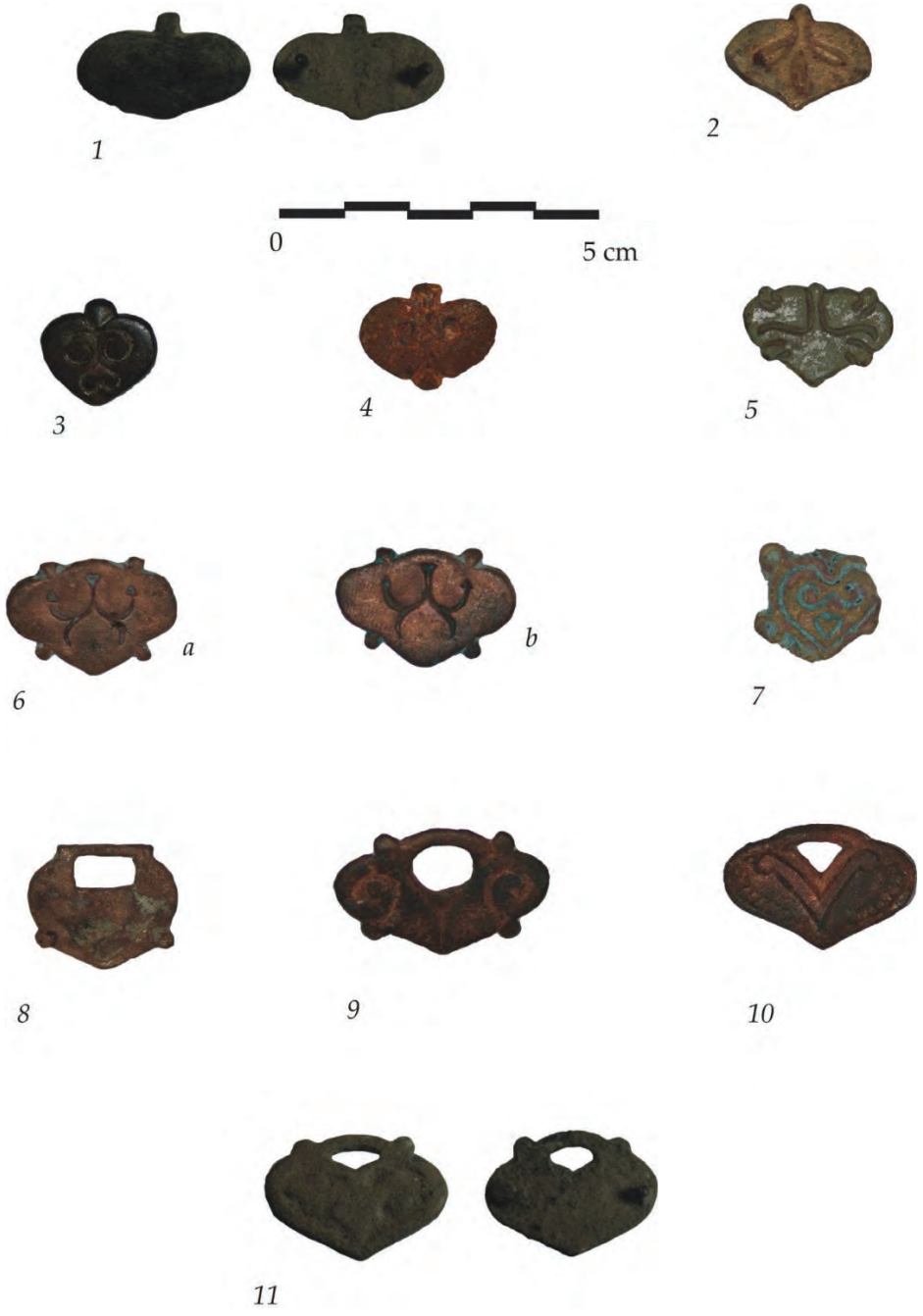

Fig. 17. Leaf-shaped belt mounts with incised decoration. *Type II* – Unknown findspot 1, 3 (inv. № 396), 4 (inv.№ 409), 11; Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta 2 (inv.№ 378), 6 (inv.№ 428), 7 (inv.№ 366), 8 (inv.№ 413), 9 (inv.№ 432), 10 (inv.№ 433); Medieval fortress "Golemiya grad", near Staro selo village, Vratsa region 5 (inv.№ 478) (2–10 RHM Vratsa; 1, 11 RHM Montana).

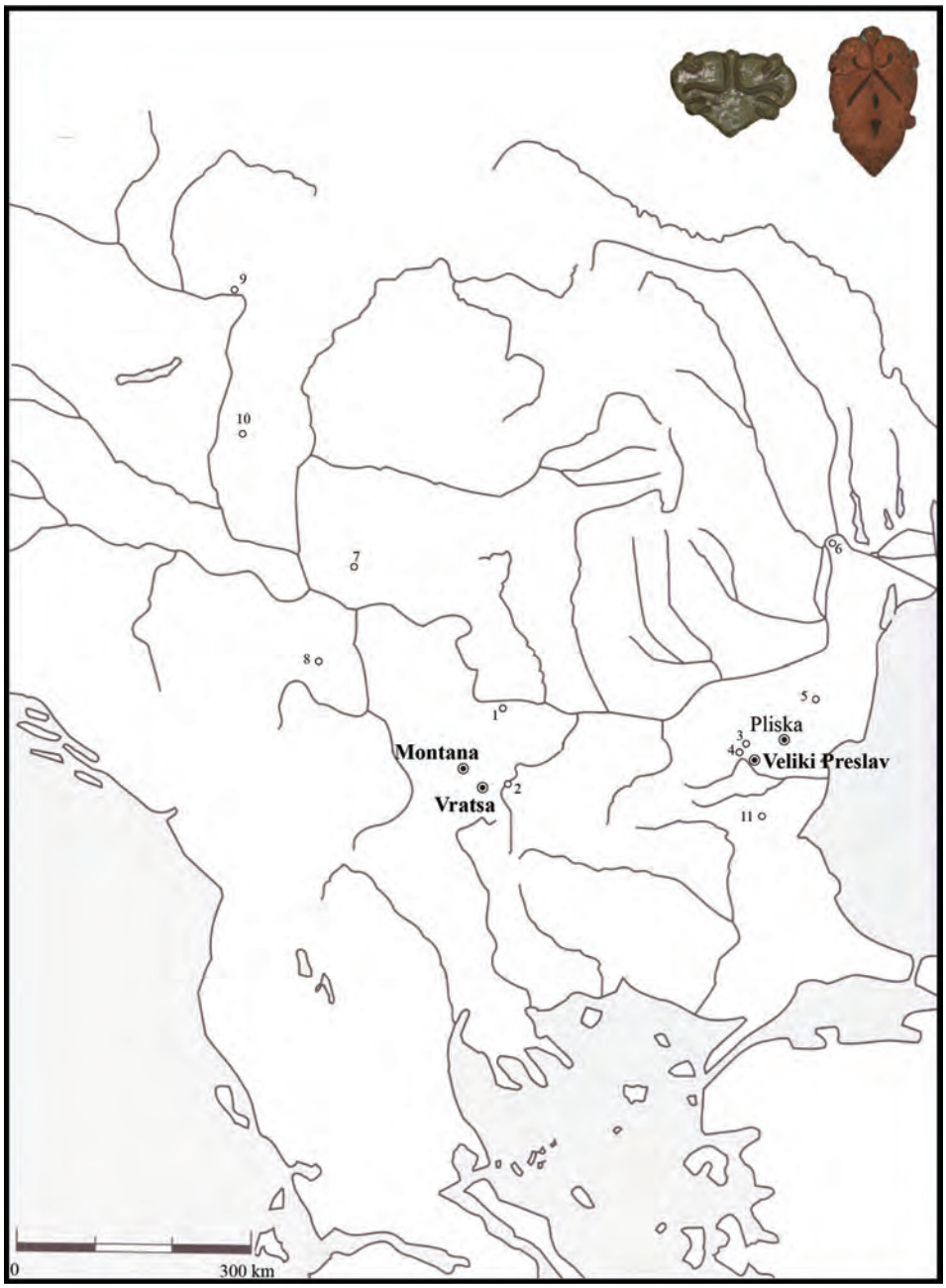

Fig. 18. Distribution map of leaf-shaped belt mounts with incised decoration: 1 Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta, Vratsa region; 2 Medieval fortress "Golemiya grad", near Staro selo village, Vratsa region; 3 Novosel, Shumen region; 4 Nadarevo, Targovishte region; 5 Skala, Dobrich region; 6 *Dinogetia*-Garvăn, Romania; 7 Șeitin, Romania; 8 Rudnik, Serbia; 9 Zemplin, Hungary; 10 Kezel, Hungary; 11 Late-antique and medieval fortress Markeli, Bourgas region.

Fig. 19. Leaf-shaped mounts with relief decoration: Unknown findspot 1 (inv.№ 319), 6 (inv.№ 264); Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta 2 (inv.№ 414), 3 (inv.№ 435), 5 (inv.№ 531), 7 (inv.№ 368), 8 (inv.№ 379), 9 (inv.№ 388), 10 (inv.№ 528), 11 (inv.№ 559); Stray find from the area between Gigen and Ostrov 4 (inv.№ 470) (1–11 RHM Vratsa).

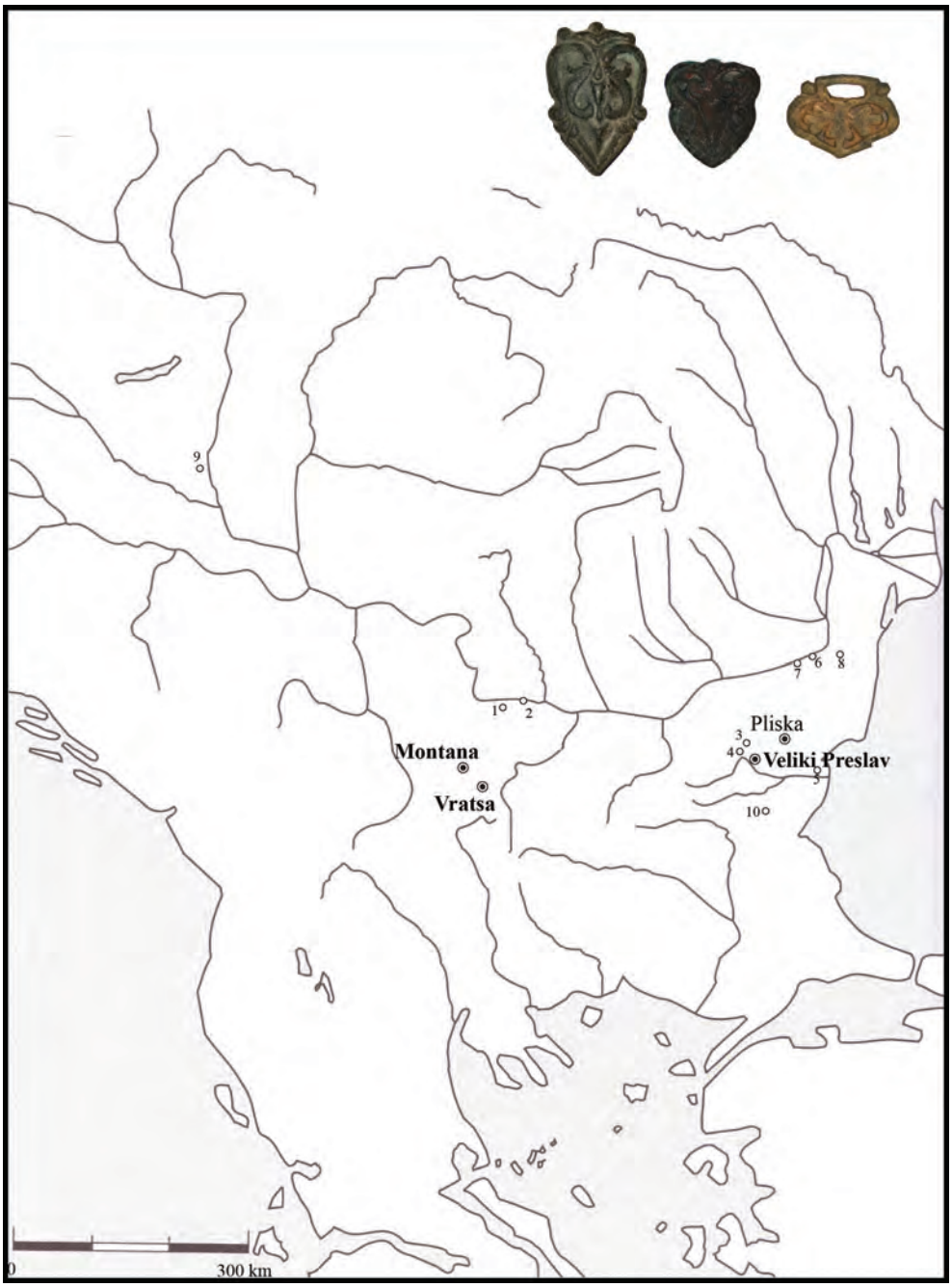

Fig. 20. Distribution map of leaf-shaped belt mounts with relief decoration: 1 Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta, Vratsa region; 2 Area between Ostrov (Vratsa region) and Gigen (Pleven region); 3 Novosel, Shumen region; 4 Nadarevo, Targovishte region; 5 Varna; 6 Oltina-"Capul dealului", Romania; 7 Silistra; 8 Adamclisi, Romania; 9 Kezel, Hungary; 10 Late-antique and medieval fortress Markeli, Bourgas region.

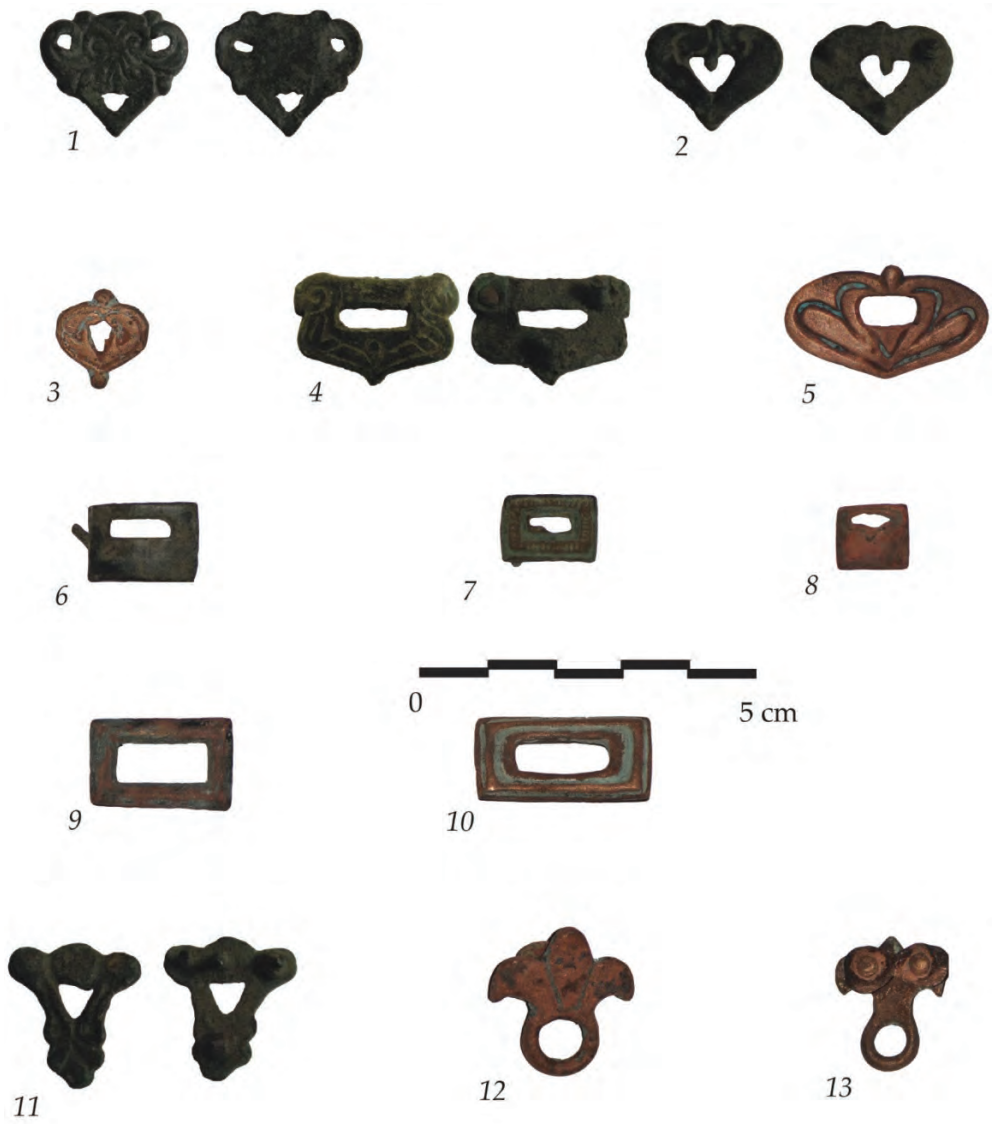

Fig. 21. Openwork belt mounts. *Type I* – Unknown findspot: 1–2, 4; Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta 3 (inv.№ 377), 5 (inv.№ 561); *Type II* – Unknown findspot 6 (inv.№ 404); Medieval fortress "Golemiya grad", near Staro selo village, Vratsa region 7 (inv.№ 455); Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta 8: (inv.№ 564), 9 (inv.№ 562), 10 (inv.№ 563); *Type III* – Unknown findspot 11; Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta: 12 (inv.№ 430), 13 (inv.№ 429) (3, 5–10, 12–13 RHM Vratsa; 1–2, 4, 11 RHM Montana).

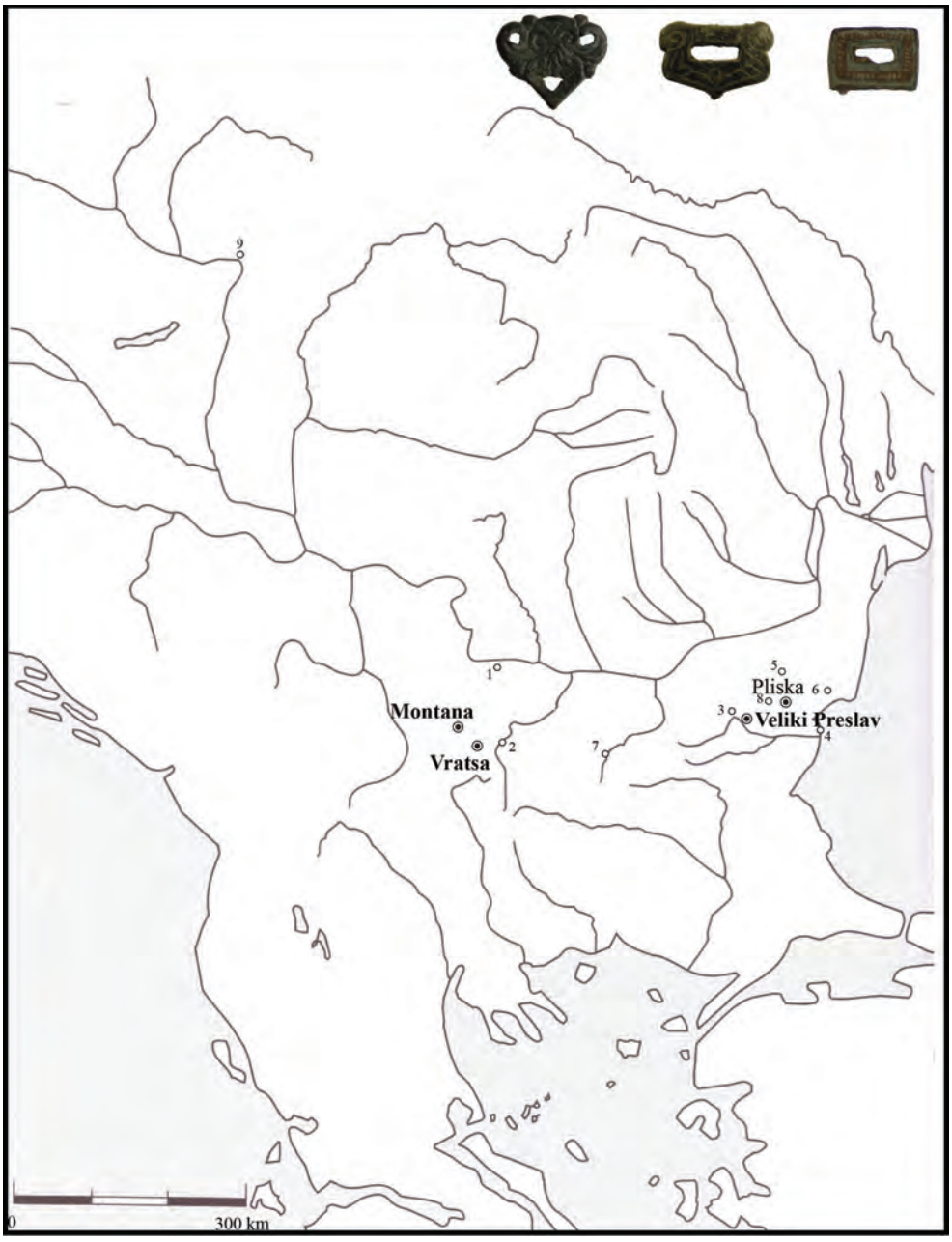

Fig. 22. Distribution map of openwork belt mounts: 1 Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta, Vratsa region; 2 Medieval fortress "Golemiya grad", near Staro selo village, Vratsa region; 3 Nadarevo, Targovishte region; 4 Varna; 5 Balik, Dobrich region; 6 Debrene, Dobrich region; 7 Veliko Tarnovo; 8 Shumen; 9 Karos, Hungary.

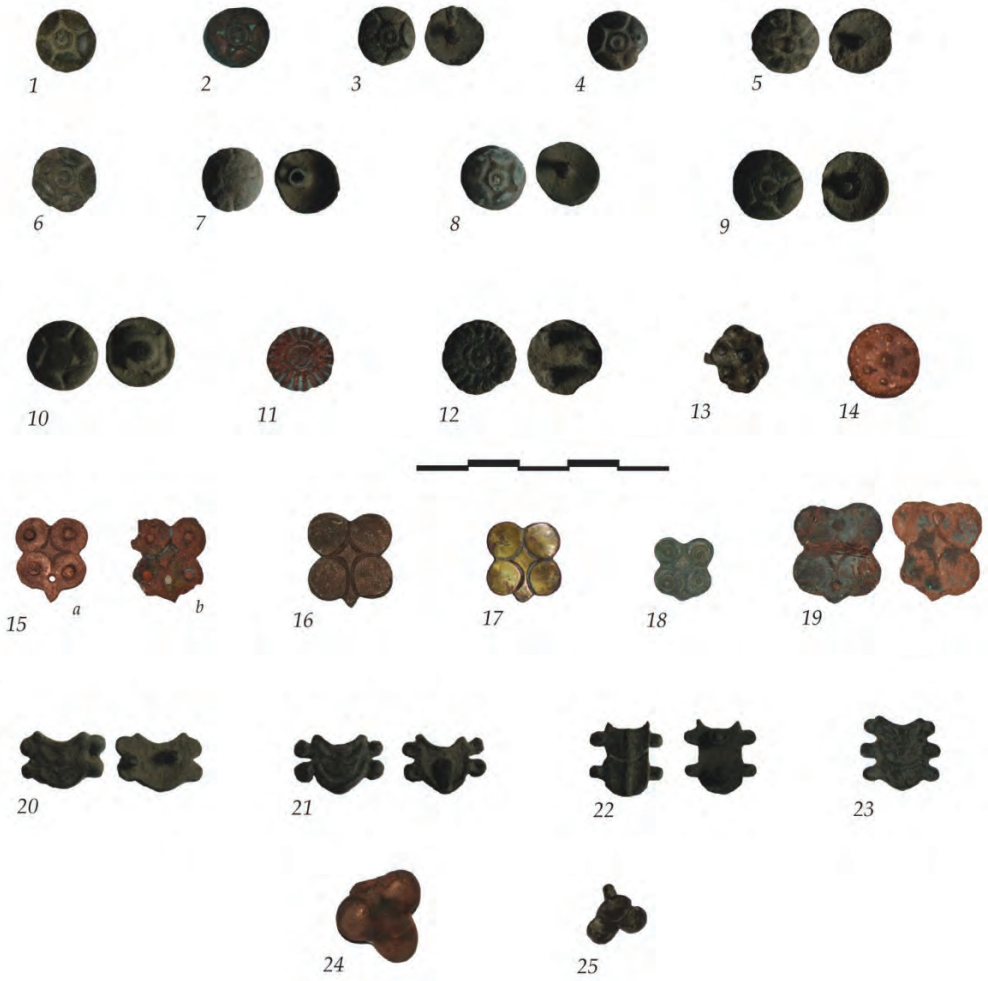

Fig. 23. Geometrically-shaped mounts. *Type 1* – Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta 1: (inv.№ 397), 2 (inv.№ 510), 6 (inv.№ 441), 11 (inv.№ 439), 13 (inv.№ 440), 14 (inv.№ 384); Unknown findspot: 3–5, 7–10, 12; *Type II* – Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta: 15a–b (inv.№ 385), 16 (inv.№ 438), 17 (inv.№ 558), 18 (inv.№ 556), 19 (inv.№ 367); *Type III* – Unknown findspot 20–22; Medieval fortress "Golemiya grad", near Staro selo village, Vratsa region 23 (inv.№ 461); *Type IV* – Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta 24 (inv.№ 555); Stray find from the land of the village of Golyamo Peshtene, Vratsa region 25 (inv.№ 568) (1–2, 6, 11, 13–19, 23–25 RHM Vratsa; 3–5, 7–10, 12, 20–22 RHM Montana).

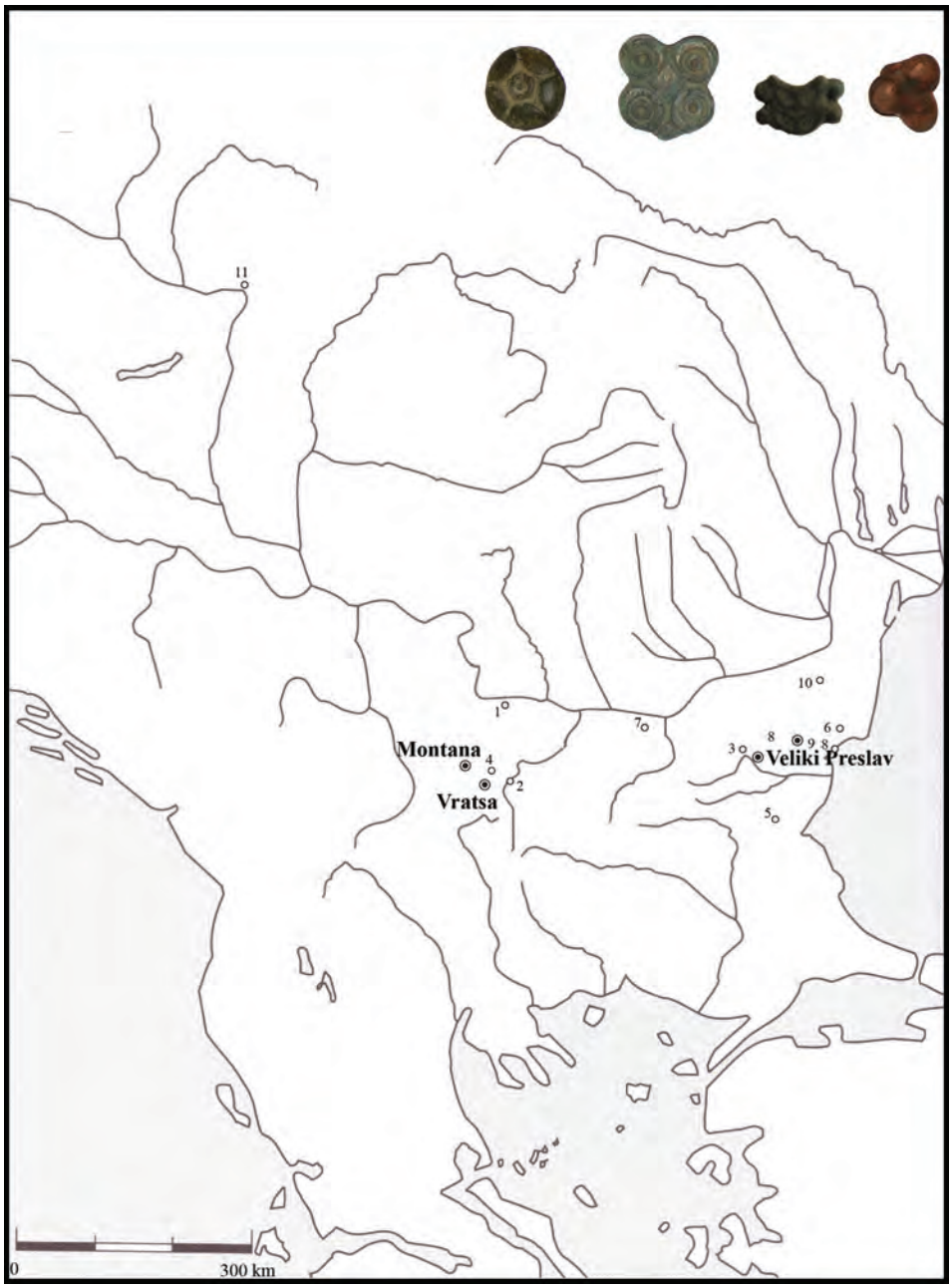

Fig. 24. Distribution map of geometrically-shaped mounts: 1 Medieval settlement over the ancient Augusta, Vratsa region; 2 Medieval fortress "Golemiya grad", near Staro selo village, Vratsa region; 3 Nadarevo, Targovishte region; 4 Golyamo Peshtene, Vratsa region; 5 Late-antique and medieval fortress Markeli, Bourgas region; 6 Balik, Dobrich region; 7 Starmen, Rousse region; 8 Varna; 9 Provadia, Varna region; 10 Okorsh, Silistra region.

SINGLE AND DOUBLE HANGING STAMPS FOUND AT THE PRODUCTION CENTERS NEAR PRESLAV

Stella DONCHEVA[*]

Keywords: *single and double seals, Novosel, Zlatar, 10th century, Preslav, zoomorphic images*.

Cuvinte-cheie: *sigilii simple și duble, Novosel, Zlatar, secolul al X-lea, Preslav, imagini zoomorfe*.

Abstract: *The single and double seals, a work of the material culture of the early Bulgarian Middle Ages, are a topic that has aroused research interest since the last century. Although there is no specific monographic study on the subject, the numerous publications of finds originating from medieval settlements and fortresses, as well as the publication of accidental finds, are a good base for observations on some important issues related to this type of items. Some of them are related to the origin and place of production, the semantics of the pictorial motifs, their chronology and distribution. The finding of single and double seals, as indicated in the specialized literature and the time-imposed division by their appearance, of the two production centers for art metal in the vicinity of Preslav studied so far – at Novosel and Zlatar –, answered to a large extent one of the most important questions, namely about the place and time of their production and distribution. It cannot be categorically believed that such objects were produced only in the workshops of Preslav jewellery centers. It is more than certain that some of them were made in other workshops on the territory of the country, and some of the seals with inscriptions of a wishful nature or with the name of their owner were made in some workshop in neighboring Byzantium. Single and double seals are only a small part of the diverse group of objects used for imprinting, among which are signet rings, signet keys and many others, which became an indelible part of the daily life and lifestyle of medieval man. Apart from their purely utilitarian meaning, these objects also had a protective and protective function, in which their owner always believed. The attraction of the desired qualities was reinforced by the choice of images on the sealing sides of the seals and the belief in their power. Evidence of this is the rich variety of images and symbols in the ornamentation on them. Therefore, no matter how unified and popular the theme of the iconographic repertoire is, it never ceases to surprise us with its unique combination of real and fantastic images drawn from the endless mythological pantheon of ancient beliefs.*

Rezumat: *Sigiliile simple și duble, obiecte ale culturii materiale din Evul Mediu timpuriu bulgar, reprezintă un subiect care a stârnit interesul cercetătorilor încă din secolul trecut. Deși nu există un studiu monografic dedicat acestei teme, numeroasele publicații cu descoperiri provenite din așezările și fortificațiile medievale, precum și publicarea descoperirilor*

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fortuite, constituie o bază solidă pentru observații privind câteva probleme importante referitoare la acest tip de obiecte. Unele dintre acestea sunt legate de originea și locul de producție, simbolistica motivelor picturale, de cronologia și distribuția lor. Descoperirea sigiliilor simple și duble, așa cum este indicată în literatura de specialitate și împărțirea impusă în timp prin aspectul lor, și a celor două centre de producție metalo-plastică din vecinătatea Preslavului investigate până acum – de la Novosel și Zlatar –, a răspuns în mare măsură uneia dintre cele mai importante întrebări, și anume despre locul și momentul producerii și distribuției lor. Nu se poate considera categoric că astfel de obiecte au fost produse doar în atelierele centrelor de bijuterii de lângă Preslav. Este mai mult ca sigur că unele dintre ele erau realizate în alte ateliere de pe teritoriul țării, iar unele dintre sigiliile cu inscripții de natură dorită sau cu numele proprietarului lor au fost realizate într-un atelier din Bizanț. Sigiliile simple și duble reprezintă doar o mică parte a grupului divers de obiecte utilizate pentru imprimare, printre care se numără inelele sigilare, cheile sigilare și multe altele, care au devenit o parte indelebilă a vieții cotidiene și a stilului de viață al omului medieval. Pe lângă sensul lor pur utilitar, aceste obiecte aveau și o funcție protectoare, în care proprietarul lor a crezut mereu. Atracția calităților dorite a fost întărită de alegerea imaginilor de pe fețele de imprimare ale sigiliilor și de credința în puterea lor. O dovadă în acest sens este varietatea de imagini și simboluri ale ornamentelor de pe ele. Prin urmare, oricât de unificată și populară ar fi tema repertoriului iconografic, acesta nu încetează să ne surprindă prin combinațiile sale unice de imagini reale și fantastice, extrase din panteonul mitologic nesfârșit al credințelor străvechi.

The single and double seals, a work of the material culture of the early Bulgarian Middle Ages, are a topic that has aroused research interest since the last century[1]. Although there is no specific monographic study on the subject, the numerous publications of finds originating from medieval settlements and fortresses, as well as the publication of accidental finds, are a good base for observations on some important issues related to this type of items. Some of them are related to the origin and place of production, the semantics of the pictorial motifs, their chronology and distribution. The finding of single and double seals, as indicated in the specialized literature and the time-imposed division by their appearance, of the two production centers for art metal in the vicinity of Preslav studied so far – at Novosel and Zlatar –, answered to a large extent one of the most important questions, namely about the place and time of their production and distribution. Of course, it cannot be categorically believed that such objects were produced only in the workshops of Preslav jewellery centers. It is more than certain that some of them were made in other workshops on the territory of the country, and some of the seals with inscriptions of a wishful nature or with the name of their owner were made in some workshop in neighbouring Byzantium.

The popular zoomorphic and anthropomorphic items, which are found on most of them, are mainly known from the seals found on our lands. Among the repertoire there are also images that are less common, and some of them are attested only on individual finds. Single seals can be conical, pyramidal or multiwall. Double seals consist of two halves hinged together. The shape of the latter is teardrop drawn or rounded. The outer sides are smooth, but there are quite a few examples with relief walls and those resembling a clam shell. Seals with inlays of another metal (silver,

[1] DONCHEVA 2008, p. 401–411 and cited literature.

gold) on their outer sides are less common. Animals (deer, roe deer, and horses), birds (peacocks, pigeons, and eagles), anthropomorphic figures or an engraved inscription are depicted on the stamping surfaces of both types. For greater clarity, in the present study we divide the objects into several groups, relying on two criteria – form and way of making. Here, however, we retain the accepted and imposed conditional division into single and double seals and add some new subgroups.

Single stamps of bronze

They are a diverse group that includes cone-shaped, pyramidal, multi-walled and blossom-bud-shaped specimens. However, a closer look shows that they differ not only in their external sides, but also in the size and type of the stamping surfaces.

A. One-piece stamps with dimensions: height 0.5–0.7 cm and diameter (side) of the base 0.8–0.9 cm. The images in them, regardless of what they look like, are incised directly on the base and are obtained together with the casting of the entire object (**Fig. 1/1–2; 2/1–2**).

B. One-piece stamps with dimensions: height 1.0–1.5 cm and diameter of the base 1.2–1.7 cm. This variety of stamps is distinguished from the previous group by its sealing surface, which continues in the form of truncated cone ending with a hanging eye (**Fig. 1/3–4; 2/3–5**).

C. Two-part stamps with dimensions: height 2.0–2.5 cm and diameter of the base 1.2–1.4 cm. They are mostly cone-shaped and with multi-walled sides and consist of two parts – the shaped body of the object and the sealing plate additionally attached to its base (**Fig. 1/5–14; 2/6–10**). It is noteworthy that regardless of whether the seal has smooth conical walls or they are faceted, the sealing surface, i.e. the tile is always rounded. While it is welded straight to the cone-shaped part, in the case of multi-wall stamps there is a cylindrical recess between the main body and the image plate itself, which is a transition back to a circular section of the base. It is no coincidence that until now only tiles with a circular section have been found (**Fig. 1/10–14; 2/14–26**).

D. Two-part seals with a "bird" and dimensions: height 2.7–3.5 cm, base 3/3–5/5 cm. These seals are close to the previous group, but here the holder is in the shape of a bird, openwork cast from bronze or other metal (**Fig. 1/15–19; 2/13**). The stamping plate is made separately and soldered additionally to the bird's foot, which steps into the pre-formed nest on its reverse side. However, there are also those that are cast together with the sealing plate. Unlike the previous group, where the working part is cone-shaped, here it has a square section. Because of their more attractive appearance, these seals were worn as pendants after they lost their original purpose after the plate at the lower edge broke off. Examples of this are the numerous similar objects found singly or together with other ornaments.

E. Two-part "hollow" stamps with dimensions: height 1.4–1.9 cm, diameter of the base 1.2–1.4 cm. The stamps included here are also in two parts and consist of a conical or multi-walled body and additionally soldered a tile with the image or inscription. This group differs from the others mainly in that the body of the objects is not solidly cast, but hollowly formed from thin sheet metal bent in a solid pattern (**Fig. 2/11–12**). Very often on the walls there is a decoration of incised parallel or

broken lines, which were passed before it was made. The sealing surface as well as the hanging eye are further added to the hollow body of the object. It is noteworthy that the quantity of this type of stamps is not very large, which is due to their unstable shape, in contrast to the strong tightly cast stamps. Seals found in Corinth and Constantinople confirm that this type of seal was made primarily of precious metal (silver, gold).

Technology of making single stamps

All stamps are cast in two-piece moulds. Proof of this is the ”seam” along the longitudinal section of the objects, and especially of the unfinished blanks and rejected products (**Fig. 1/5–9; 2/10**). However, the stamp plates, which were additionally soldered to the main body of the stamp, were cast in one-sided moulds. The entire process begins with the preparation of an initial model of the stamp from well-purified and cooled-hardened wax. All the details were applied to the voluminous wax form, usually with bone styluses, where one end was sharpened in the form of a spatula and the other was sharp. The resulting wax model is poured with a thin clay solution of very well purified clay in a casting box. Since the objects are voluminous and three-dimensional, the clay mould is made in two parts. After one half is poured and set, its surface is smeared with grease and graphite or other fine powder and the second half is poured. Channels and vents are made in both halves. When the clay hardens, the moulds are placed in a kiln and fired. Due to the high temperature, the wax melts and flows, leaving the volumetric impression of the object in the clay mould. After additional retouching, the clay mould is ready for use.

The next stage is pouring the mould with molten lead through the pouring channels in the clay mould, as a result of which a lead model is obtained. It is also retouched if necessary and the desired number of castings are already cast on it in boxes with foundry clay and of the corresponding metal (bronze, precious metals). For this purpose, the crates are initially prepared with the tightly pressed foundry clay, which has a clayey character with quartz and mica admixture. The lead model is then placed on a smooth surface and sprinkled with toasted and sifted potting soil. One half of the crate is placed on it, which is filled with soil and well tamped with a hammer. The half thus filled is turned over and the other side of the model is again sprinkled with dry sifted clay, after which the other half is placed and also filled with clay. This was followed by opening the case, removing the model and forming the drainage channels and vents. This completes the preparation for pouring the pre-molten metal.

After receiving the finished product, the process was facilitated by using it as a model when printing it in the foundry box. However, an exact reproduction of the object was not always possible, since the negative, especially for more complex objects, was rougher and did not convey all the details of the image. The preference for the wax model technology is confirmed by the significant number of lead models found so far in the places where there is reliable information that small objects were produced, including seals with various images.

Double seals of bronze

The group of double seals is no less numerous than that of the single ones. Although they look the same at first glance, they still differ in the way the individual parts are hinged and the suspension. The shape is drop-like drawn, in some cases it is more rounded, and in others it is oblong **(Fig. 2/27–30**). The outer sides are smooth, but there are quite a few examples where the outer walls are embossed and resemble a clam shell. Seals with inlays of another metal on their outer sides are less common. The two varieties we will focus on are the following.

A. Two-part stamps with dimensions: length 2.4–2.9 cm and width 0.9–1.2 cm. These stamps consist of two parts, on the inner sealing sides of which the preferred images are cut into the negative (Rev. 2, 31). One part is load-bearing and has a lug with two holes – one larger for hanging the whole seal to the support arm and a second – smaller for attaching the second half of the seal to the main part. Thus, in use, one half is supported, and the other, hinged to the first, is mobile. The number of these seals is significantly less than those with double-hinged suspension.

B. Three-part seals with dimensions: length 0.8–2.3 cm and width 1.1–1.4 cm. The preserved whole seals are composed of three parts – two drop-shaped plates with images incised on the inside and a carrier piece in the shape of a small single pyramidal stamp, terminating at the lower end in a flat B-shaped plate with two holes and a hanging eye at the upper end (**Fig. 2/32**). The supporting part is stationary, and the other two parts are movable and hinged to the first by means of thin bronze threads. In most cases, not the whole objects have reached us, but only one of the hinged parts with the engraved image in the negative (**Fig. 2/27–30**). In the latter, the noted two ways of interpretation of the image can be observed – volumetrically modelled in depth on the working surface already at the casting itself and initially hinted at only with its most characteristic features and additionally shaped with an incisor (**Fig. 2/29**).

Technology of making the double seals

The individual parts of both groups of stamps were produced by casting in two-component moulds. The flow of the technological process is similar to that of single stamps. Here, too, a clay mould was made, in which the lead model was cast, based on a preformed, precise wax model. In confirmation of this, quite a few of these were found in various places in the country, especially around the production centres. The resulting lead model was refined, if necessary, and then used to make an impression on the soil rammed into the foundry boxes. The bronze products were made after the molten metal was poured through the previously formed casting channels. Due to the relatively small thickness of the sealing elements, the metal often went out of shape and formed holes (**Fig. 1/5–9; 2/10**). This has also happened in the casting of the lead models before. One such model was found at the early medieval fortress at Sredishte, Silistrensko, which was dated with materials from the 9th–10th centuries[2]. Some of them were mechanically removed, and where this was not possible, the object was scrapped and a new one was prepared. While the

[2] ATANASOV 1985, p. 129; JOTOV 1993, p. 290, fig. 1–5.

casting of the bearing part of the second type of seals was not a problem, the making of the main part of the first type of seals, where it was both bearing and working, probably required some precision, especially to make the thin and elongated ear, in which after these are the two holes formed. In many cases, this part shifted off its axis, which could not be corrected due to the rapid solidification of the mantle. This is also one of the reasons why the so-called three-component stamps.

One of the many questions that pose this type of objects and which is one of the few solved so far is that of their origin. All researchers agree that the idea for these monuments and the first samples were brought from Byzantium, which adopted them from the East – Syria, Achaemenid and Sassanid Iran. It is already indisputable that the majority of the monuments found in Bulgaria are products of local production, and this is confirmed by the significant number of lead models and blanks found at the production centres. The objects known to date, some of which were found during archaeological excavations, as well as analogies originating outside the territory of the country, testify to their production and wide distribution in the 10th century. Similar seals (single and double) defined in the broad limits from the 10th to the 12th century were found in Corinth, Constantinople, Serbia, and the western provinces of the empire[3].

An interesting question is that of the semantics of motives. Images of birds of prey and waterfowl, cut in relief in bone, engraved in stone, metal objects or painted on ceramic tiles for wall cladding and white clay tableware, abound during this period (**Fig. 1/4, 10, 13–14; 2/1–2, 14–15, 22, 29, 31**). It is known that the preference for birds quantitatively prevailed over animal motifs in Byzantine art throughout the Middle Ages[4]. Images of birds are found on Byzantine silk fabrics, in miniatures, ceramics. From the repertoire of these motifs is the image of the single-headed eagle, which is preferred and often depicted on single and double seals. Usually, the figure of the eagle is in front with the head turned in profile, and the emphasis is placed on the presentation of the wings – they are widely rapped and emphasized with several lines (**Fig. 1/10; 2/1, 14–15, 22, 31**). An image of an eagle is also recreated by the holders of the seals of type I D (**Fig. 1/16–19; 2/13**). The composition is also found on seals of Byzantine dignitaries from the 9th–10th centuries[5].

The interpretation of the image of the eagle is further developed in Christian art, where the mythological level is the basis of Christian imagery and encompasses all dimensions of medieval thinking. As the king of the birds, he is a symbol of the angels (Ezek. 1:10–12), and in the Revelation of John the Theologian (Rev. 4:7) "the fourth animal is like a flying eagle". In many of the works of art, the eagle is identified with Christ and expresses his ascension and kingship[6].

A common motif is the image of a horseman (**Fig. 1/12; 2/17–21, 23–24**). The ritual role of the horse was imposed already in the 2nd millennium BC. in Central Asia and is a reflection of the solar cult related to the idea of the solar or celestial horse, which is imposed with several storylines – "horse and the tree of life", "horse

[3] DAVIDSON 1952, No. 2677, 2678, 2679, 2680, 2681, 2683, 2686, 2687; GOPPEL 2004, p. 345, Abb. 742, 733, 734, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741; p. 346, Abb. 746, 747, 748.

[4] DARKEVICH 1975, p. 202.

[5] TOČIK 1955, p. 498, fig. 236/1.

[6] BIDERMAN 2003, p. 316–317.

and solar chariots" and "horse with magic reins"[7]. In this connection, we can talk about the image of the epic hero associated with a horseman and a rider on him, which existed in the beliefs among the society. Last but not least, the horsemen are perceived as a symbol of God's messengers who declare his laws in human history (Zech. 6:2–6), Rev. 6:2–8). This is evident from the images of horsemen in art such as graffiti drawings, incised figures on small plastic objects (buckles, belt ends), including seals. A reflection of the important role of the horse and birds in the belief system is their protective and protective role, which is the basis of their proven preference and depiction on various metalwork monuments. The present stamps also present images of a rabbit (**Fig. 1/11**), a deer (doe), (**Fig. 2/28**), as well as an anthropomorphic image (**Fig. 2/30**). The rabbit has a well-established symbolism and most often represents the person who trusts only in God. Rabbits nibbling on grapes symbolize the souls accepted into heaven who have access to the fruits of eternal life. The deer also has important symbolic meaning in Old World cultures. Christian iconography is largely based on Psalm 41: "As the hind longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for You, O God"[8].

The group of stamps is constantly growing, and with it the variety of motifs and subjects. One such example is the fully preserved double hanging seal found in the vicinity of Preslav and undoubtedly a product of one of the production centres here (**Fig. 2/32**). The seal belongs to the second group of seals, which are sometimes also referred to as three-part seals. Preserved whole seals, such as the present one, are rare, given the thin threads and plates on which the two parts are suspended (**Fig. 2/32**). They are usually composed of three parts – two teardrop-shaped plates with incised images on the inside and a supporting part with an eye for suspension at the upper end. The supporting part is stationary, and the other two parts are movable and hinged to the first. In most cases, not the whole objects have reached us, but only one of the hinged parts with the image engraved in the negative. The image can be applied before casting to the pattern of the article, resulting in a volumetrically modelled negative image on the work surface, or it can only be hinted at schematically and refined with a sharp tool after casting.

A griffin and a rhinoceros are depicted on the sealing inner surfaces (**Fig. 2/32**). Both images are executed in detail and realistically, the specific features of each of them are emphasized, and they are located on the central part of the inner stamping surfaces, facing each other, without a frame along the outline. The direction of movement of the two figures is towards the base of the hinge, which predetermines their position on the tiles.

The image of the rhinoceros on one stamping surface has specific symbolism. In Eastern cultures, the image of the rhinoceros is associated with luck and good character. The horn of the rhinoceros symbolizes joy and also strength and bravery as well as knowledge. Ancient recipes for elixirs of longevity are known, in which the main ingredient was part of a rhinoceros horn[9]. The horn was also believed to help detect poison in food or drink. In the emblem of the late Middle Ages, the

[7] NESTOROV 1990, p. 117–120.
[8] BIDERMAN 2003, p. 120, 129.
[9] SHEPHERD, SHEPHERD 2006, p. 180.

image of a rhinoceros served to affirm prowess, piety, and intelligence. A rhinoceros depicted with a horn embedded in a rock denotes wisdom, always ready to respond to the attack of an enemy, and images of rhinoceroses killing a bear are symbols of strategy and the art of war, along with bravery and strength[10].

The second image of a griffin has a well-established semantics and is attested on quite a few monuments from the Bulgarian Middle Ages (**Fig. 2/32**). There is also an image of a griffin on another seal from those presented in the present work (**Fig. 2/27**). The so far known works of stone sculpture, monumental architecture and sculpture on wood, as well as metalwork show that the griffin is a frequently depicted motif (the graphic drawings from Pliska, the slab from Preslav, the limestone capital from Nova Zagora, the marble capital and the slate slab from Stara Zagora, the wooden chest from the cathedral in Terracina, bronze buckles and mounts)[11]. All the examples mentioned fall within the chronological limits of the 8th to 10th centuries, with depictions of griffins with lion heads being less common.

The mythological image of the griffin was already known and popular in Iran and in the art of the Achaemenids, from where it passed into Central Asian art, as a symbol of the deified ruler and a reflection of the cosmic struggle between Good and Evil. In Antiquity, the numerous monuments with griffins were the most frequently used apotropaic. Here the peculiar antique realism was so great that the image of the griffin, executed in such a convincing way, began to resemble a real[12]. The image of the griffin with a lion's head penetrated the art of Central Asia in the 5th–4th centuries BC, where it received an iconographic embodiment in some new pictorial variants. In Byzantine secular art, his image entered the royal emblems and began to personify military prowess and honor. Images of griffins became common on imperial clothing, often found in palace painting and luxury metal objects[13]. The griffin of medieval emblems borrows from the symbolism of the lion and the eagle, a bifurcation of its solar nature. He possesses both earthly and heavenly features and thus becomes a symbol of the two natures of Christ – the divine and the human. It is obvious that the two images on the sealing surfaces of the seal – that of the griffin and the rhinoceros have distinctly apotropaic and protective functions, both in relation to the holder of the object and in relation to the things sealed with it. If we delve deeper into the semantics of the two images, it can be assumed that the rhinoceros is in a duel with the griffin, and the plot as a whole denotes the victory of the forces of good, order and light over the forces of chaos, evil and darkness. This symbolic reading makes the item a powerful protective amulet, which is surely its primary purpose alongside the purely practical needs fulfilled by the double seal.

After losing their original purpose, a considerable part of the sealing plates was reused in the form of a medallion or amulet, depending on the engraved image on the inner plate. This raises the question of how to use this type of object. It is obvious that the practice of wearing such seals was dictated by purely utilitarian functions – the sealing of personal correspondence or property. Both signet rings, single and

[10] TUSKOVA 2003, p. 402–403.
[11] DONCHEVA-PETKOVA 1996, p. 28.
[12] PUGACHENKOV 1959, p. 70–84.
[13] DARKEVICH 1975, p. 242.

double seals were used in the private and public sectors of everyday life[14]. Single and double seals are only a small part of the diverse group of objects used for imprinting, among which are signet rings, signet keys and many others, which became an indelible part of the daily life and lifestyle of medieval man. Apart from their purely utilitarian meaning, these objects also had a protective and protective function, in which their owner always believed. The attraction of the desired qualities was reinforced by the choice of images on the sealing sides of the seals and the belief in their power. Evidence of this is the rich variety of images and symbols in the ornamentation on them. Therefore, no matter how unified and popular the theme of the iconographic repertoire is, it never ceases to surprise us with its unique combinations of real and fantastic images drawn from the endless mythological pantheon of ancient beliefs.

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[14] VIKAN 1980, p. 22–23.

Fig. 1. Hanging stamps found at the production center near Novosel, Shumen district.

Fig. 2. Hanging seals found at the production center at Zlatar, Preslav district (1–30) and the surrounding area (31–32).

A BRIEF RETROSPECTIVE ON THE HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH FROM VLADIMIRESCU "LA CETATE" – GLOGOVĂȚ / OROD (ARAD COUNTY)

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Keywords: *archaeological research, earth fortification, Árpád Age, castrum Orod, Arad County*.

Cuvinte-cheie: *cercetări arheologice, fortificație de pământ, epoca arpadiană, castrul Orod, județul Arad.*

Abstract: *Discussed in specialized works for more than three decades now, the earth fortification in Vladimirescu still raises historiographic polemics. Its situation is due, on the one hand, to the "hardships of present times", but mainly to the partial publication of archaeological results. For these reasons I felt it was useful to turn to it again and to collect the entire material discovered during archaeological excavations in Vladimirescu "La Cetate" or "Cetate" between 1975 and 1980. Preserved in the archive of Arad Museum, the entire material and most of the documentation related to it lay at the core of the entire present initiative that I hope to present in the form of a monograph in the near future.*

Rezumat: *Discutată în lucrări de specialitate de mai bine de trei decenii încoace, fortificația de pământ de la Vladimirescu ridică încă polemici istoriografice. Situația sa se datorează atât „greutăților vremurilor prezente", cât mai ales publicării parțiale a rezultatelor arheologice. Din aceste motive, am simțit că este util să mă întorc din nou la subiect și să adun întregul material descoperit în timpul săpăturilor arheologice de la Vladimirescu „La Cetate" sau „Cetate", între anii 1975 și 1980. Păstrate în arhiva muzeului din Arad, întregul material și cea mai mare parte a documentației aferente stau la baza inițiativei prezente, pe care sper să o prezint sub forma unei monografii în viitorul apropiat.*

Through this article, we would like to share the results of the archaeological excavations undertaken in probably one of the most important sites linked to the medieval period and the evolution of present-day Arad. The articles published by the authors of the archaeological excavations at Vladimirescu have not been able to cover the extent of the six campaigns carried out between 1975 and 1980. Although the subject has already been touched upon on other occasions[1], the present approach

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[1] MĂRGINEAN 2016, p. 90–97.

attempts to make the results as useful and succinct as possible to scientific circulation. This could be a priority starting point if investigations on this important monument of the medieval period in the Arad area were to be resumed. In view of the new discoveries in immediately neighbouring areas, due to infrastructure works such as those on the southeastern ring road of the city of Arad[2] or the Arad − Timișoara railway, we can hope for a somewhat better understanding of the early medieval period in the Lower Mureș Basin (**Fig. 2** and **6/2**).

Built in the middle of the plain, the fortification in Vladimirescu is placed westwards from the eponym settlement (previously called Glogovăț), now almost a suburb of the city of Arad, 1000 m south of the Arad − Deva road, on an alluvium deposit between two former, yet still visible branches of river Mureş, flowing more to the south (**Fig. 1**). Micro-toponymically, the place is called *Şanţuri* (*Öthalom*, *Die Schanzen* – Ditches), while the toponym "Cetate" or "La Cetate" is preserved in the specialized literature. The fortification became the focus of specialists relatively late; the first non-intrusive investigation was only started in the beginning of the 70s of the previous century. On that occasion, pottery fragments were collected from the soil surface and they were dated to the 11th–13th centuries (**Fig. 2**).

The fortification follows a slightly trapezoid shape (well discernible in recent satellite images, with its small side westwards and with rounded corners). It measures 150 m in length, 130 m along the eastern side and 85 m along the western side (**Fig. 3** and **4/1**). If regarding its planimetry the ground plans published so far are those existing on site[3], no accurate plan of the excavations performed during the six archaeological campaigns has been published[4]. The present paper includes an up-to-date ground plan, only missing the exact location of trench 8, excavated during the last 1980 campaign in the south-western corner of the fortification (**Fig. 3**).

The written source does not mention the fortification in Vladimirescu in connection to Ahtum, even less to Glad. Unfortunately, the corroboration of the few preserved written sources and archaeological discoveries did not yet bring sufficient clarifications on the chronology of such monuments. The biased and partial publication of archaeological discoveries, the often subjective interpretations, lacking supporting arguments, only led to speculative scenarios according to each author's "interest".

In general, the presence of earth fortifications from the Early Middle Ages was seen as indication of existing administrative, political and economic power centers. The fact was not entirely by chance, since the significant commercial route along the Mureş Basin made necessary the creation of control points (mainly aimed at controlling salt transports). In the present case, this seems not to have been the only reason. Starting from the few written records (in fact the two chronicles: the 11th century chronicle of St. Gerard and the 12th century chronicle of Anonymous), corroborated (in a more or less far-fetched manner) to archaeological discoveries, one finds today

[2] MĂRGINEAN *et alii* 2023.

[3] MĂRGHITAN 1985, p. 143; PĂDUREANU 1985, p. 41–42; BÓNA 1998, p. 98–99, fig. 51; RUSU, HUREZAN 1999, p. 32, fig. 4; IAMBOR 2005, p. 346, pl. XVIII/1.

[4] This was due to the authors of the excavations not publishing the general ground plan; besides the annual reports, they were unable to valorize their archaeological research later on in a monograph. This led to the perpetuation of a falsely rendered or more likely an incomplete ground plan.

an entire literature dedicated to the topic[5]. In most cases, the analysis of earth fortifications was made according to out-dated scientific general lines. For the area under discussion, there are two antagonistic historiographical trends: one Romanian, and the other Hungarian. A closer analysis reveals that there is as yet no solid database focused on the architecture and inner organization of early medieval fortifications. No major change in the approach of these issues was noted during the post-revolution period. Radu Popa's appeal to the pressing need of reconsidering the topic, printed in 1991, seems not to have triggered significant changes in the analysis of such monuments[6]. One still waits for pertinent reaction to questions formulated by members of the Hungarian historiography, such as Bóna István, regarding the dating of "pre-Hungarian" fortifications and the entire group of related issues[7]. Through their recently published volumes, Adrian A. Rusu[8] and Ioan M. Ţiplic[9] took a stand on the matter and nobody can deny their merits in re-opening discussions on the topic. In addition to the above, it is worth mentioning the new approach of Maxim Mordovin, who analyzes these fortifications from the point of view of the emergence and roughly synchronous evolution of three medieval kingdoms (Bohemia, Poland and Hungary)[10].

The first investigation of such earth fortifications in the area under analysis can be placed during the 17th and 18th centuries, when they were located on the first Austrian military maps and included in topographical surveys, such as the case of Vladimirescu. Nevertheless, the research of that period was not systematic. No significant progress was recorded during the Romantic and Positivist periods of the 19th century. The issue of their chronology remains to this day connected to the interpretation of the Anonymous Notary's chronicle. Contested by the Hungarian historiography, this source became the argumentative basis for one part of the Romanian historiography, connected to the existence of such fortified centres before the arrival of the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin[11].

As I will subsequently show, the attempt to confirm written sources through archaeology did not lead to expected results due to causes mainly related to the way in which each excavation was published. Despite the fact that the fortification in Vladimirescu was archaeologically researched, the exhaustive results have still not been published.

On the basis of the documentation preserved in the archive of the museum in Arad, I will attempt to present here, in a highly synthetic manner, the main discoveries connected to life inside the earth fortification in Vladimirescu, made during the six archaeological campaigns performed there (1975–1980).

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[5] RUSU 1971; PASCU 1972, p. 40–60; RUSU 1980; BÓNA 1998; RUSU, HUREZAN 1999; IAMBOR 2005; RUSU 2005; ŢIPLIC 2006.

[6] POPA 1991, p. 167–171.

[7] BÓNA 1998, p. 198.

[8] RUSU 2005, p. 80–89.

[9] ŢIPLIC 2006, p. 203–232.

[10] MORDOVIN 2016.

[11] Despite the fact that the bibliography referring to Anonymous' chronicle has enlarged considerably, it would have stood a higher chance of credibility if it were corroborated by other written sources.

On the basis of the documentation preserved in the archive of the museum in Arad, I will attempt to present here, in a highly synthetic manner, the main discoveries connected to life inside the earth fortification in Vladimirescu, made during the six archaeological campaigns performed there (1975–1980). The partial publication of results supported the perpetuation of two historiographical trends related to the monument's dating. Representatives of the first trend date the fortification to the 9th–11th centuries[12] and link it to the pre-state formations existing there before the arrival of the Hungarians, while members of the second trend place here the centre of the medieval county of Arad (during the 11th–13th centuries)[13]. Supporting or rejecting any of the two suggested datings without solid arguments would only perpetuate the uncertainty. For this reason, in the present study I only wish to present data connected to living inside and outside the fortification that might subsequently aid in the clearer chronological framing of the monument and of its building stages. To the same aim, the correlation of such data with funerary discoveries inside the fortification will be very useful, though I shall not discuss them here.

The first systematic excavation on the site "Cetate" in Vladimirescu started in the autumn of 1975. It seems that two young archaeologists employees of the Museum in Arad, M. Zdroba and M. Barbu initiated the excavations there under the direct coordination of K. Horedt, M. Rusu, and R. Heitel. The initiation of more extensive or smaller-scale investigations at other sites with medieval remains in the Mureș Valley (Vladimirescu – *Bazilică*, Frumușeni – *Fântâna Turcului*, Felnac – *Complexul Zootehnic*, etc.) is also owed to them. The research undertaken was probably part of an ambitious program of understanding the early medieval period. Unfortunately, the subsequent processing and capitalization of the results left much to be desired, one of the reasons being the preconceptions with which the research started, both in terms of the chronology of the finds and their attribution. The causes are largely known and we will not dwell on them here[14]. However, it is worth emphasizing the discoveries directly related to the earth fortification.

Even since the first archaeological campaign, the expressed goal was to establish the site's chronology and to identify its membership. Even if, apparently, a rigorous plan was followed, the results of the first two campaigns allowed their authors to establish the chronology of the entire site, but unfortunately it can be correlated with neither the archaeological contexts and materials discovered, nor later written sources. The sections performed on the eastern, northern, and southern sides allowed for the identification of the fortification system, with two building stages, while the remains of a necropolis were identified in the eastern half of the fortified precinct, out of which about 253 graves were excavated. The few coins discovered in graves, dated to the time of kings Peter, Andrew I, and Bela I, were good dating elements for the beginning of the necropolis in the first half of the 11th century.

[12] GLÜCK 1976, p. 78; BARBU, ZDROBA 1979; BARBU 1980; RUSU 1980, p. 166–167; MĂRGHITAN 1985, p. 143; BEJAN 1995, p. 119–120; COSMA 2002, p. 47–48, 52; IAMBOR 2005, p. 79; CRIȘAN 2006, p. 44.

[13] BÓNA 1998, p. 98–99; BENKŐ *et alii* 1998, p. 14–23; RUSU, HUREZAN 1999, p. 31; RUSU 2005, p. 95.

[14] See the critical notes on these aspects made by POPA 1991, and more recently by RUSU 2005, p. 84, 95.

The first contexts of living and the activities of people inhabiting the fortification were provided by discoveries made on the northern side of the fortification, more precisely outside it in sections Trench 2 and square B, where two ovens were found: one for cooking, placed inside a dwelling (square B) and two pottery kilns, westwards of another dwelling (in Trench 2). The entire recovered material can be dated on the basis of analogies, no sooner than the 11th century. The closest analogies for such ovens feature among older, but also more recent discoveries around the present-day city of Pecica, from where 25 such pottery kilns are known up to the present day[15].

In the first campaign, it seems that a single large section marked as Trench 1 (64 × 2 m) was traced from the eastern edge of the fortification to the west, to which a square marked as A was added. Although the original aim was to cut the entire area of the fortification through this section[16], and thus of the western side as well, this did not end up happening. The maximum depth reached was 1.80 m, and a substantial medieval layer was uncovered. Between meters 4 and 12 (see **Fig. 7/1**), a lens of yellow clay was discovered, which pertained to the earth wall of the fortification. No other elements of the wall (traces of wooden posts, stones, etc.) were discovered. We are only told that in the upper part of the wall, a burned layer was discovered, stronger in the northern profile, resulting from the burning of the fortress[17]. Apparently, the section did not cut the defence ditch, which is superimposed by a concrete road still in use. According to its researchers, the ditch was between 8–12 m wide, and it was more visible on the north and northwestern side of the fortification. Towards the western end of the section, roughly in the middle of the fortification, a square noted A was also traced. No other construction elements from the period of its active use were discovered here either. Immediately from the edge of the wall inwards at –0.80 m, grave pits were outlined. The total number of graves discovered in the two investigated areas amounted to 89, which, according to the authors, were subsequent to the fortification[18]. Stratigraphically, it is rather difficult to say whether these graves actually cut the wall or only part of it. Without having clear contexts for the finds, it is only said that an impressive number of fragments of small cauldrons were discovered over the whole investigated area. Without further clear stratigraphic details regarding the cauldron sherds, for which we can at least estimate a relative date, we learn that ceramic fragments dated to the 9th–10th centuries were discovered between meters 9–14 and 33–37[19]. Curious or not, even if they were of small scale, the excavations of the first campaign at Vladimirescu allowed the direct authors, probably under the guidance of those who indirectly supervised them, to draw clear-cut conclusions regarding the chronology of the fortification. It is dated based on the finds and stratigraphy (!) to the 9th–10th centuries, and was destroyed sometime in the early 11th century, when the first burials of an unknown

[15] MĂRGINEAN 2021, p. 242–247, fig. 1, Tab. 1.
[16] ZDROBA, BARBU 1976, p. 48.
[17] ZDROBA, BARBU 1976, p. 48.
[18] ZDROBA, BARBU 1976, p. 49.
[19] ZDROBA, BARBU 1976, p. 54.

– but presumably autochthonous and at the same time "peaceful" – population began to take place inside the enclosure[20].

The second archaeological campaign started in the spring of 1976 and from the outset aimed at sectioning the long sides of the fortification, namely the north and south sides. The new section was named Trench 2 (186 × 2 m). This time, the section went beyond the limits of the enclosure, both north and south. Immediately outside the fortification, on the north side, between meters 13 and 20 of section Trench 2, with a preserved 1 m baulk, a square noted B (7 × 3 m) was also traced. The results of this campaign were summarized in a short report published in the museum's journal[21]. Construction system elements of the earth wall with palisade were discovered on both the north and south sides. In a first phase, it seems that the sturdiness of the wall was ensured by beams (15–20 cm), arranged in a lattice, between which earth of various consistencies was rammed, probably taken from the defence ditch. The same situation was uncovered on the south side. The existence of a layer of burned and vitrified earth has been blamed on the burning and destruction of the fortification. The only dating elements were a few pottery sherds discovered under the beam lattice, all typologically and by analogy dated to the 9th–10th centuries. They all appear to have belonged to the same pot, decorated with lines and waves[22].

The reconstruction of the wall, apparently destroyed by fire, was rapid, because, as archaeologists have found, the overflows into the first defence ditch were very thin (3–5 cm). The second wall was taller and wider than the first, which it enveloped. At the point where it was cut, it was 12.75 m wide and the preserved height was 1.40 m. In the second phase, the system of latticed beams was abandoned and a palisade was built of only vertically placed beams, 0.30–0.40 m thick, arranged at unequal distances, but set at appreciable depths (at meters 40 of the Trench 1 section, one beam was almost 2 m high).

As for the defence ditches of the two phases, we only have the testimony of the two archaeologists, as the preserved documentation does not include those portions of the Trench 2 section profiles in which the defence ditch was dug[23]. Thus, the ditch of the first phase had a U-shaped bottom. It was found between meters 18 and 29 of section S 2, on the north side only. At meters 26.50, a post was found, set obliquely into the edge of the ditch, presumably from a line of posts, which probably constituted an additional obstacle to attackers. In the second phase, the ditch was apparently narrower and deeper (discovered between meters 21.50 and 25), and ended in a V-shape. The depth reached in the ditch exceeded 2.5 m. The same ditch was also found on the south side, between meters 139 and 146. The authors of the excavation did not notice several phases in the evolution of the trench, a fact which they put down to the overflow and disturbance caused by the waters of the Mureș. In this

[20] ZDROBA, BARBU 1976, p. 54.

[21] BARBU, ZDROBA 1977.

[22] BARBU, ZDROBA 1977, p. 20 (see illustration).

[23] It is quite possible that they did not even exist, because, as we have been able to ascertain in the analysis of this documentation, the profiles of the surveyed areas were only selectively made on certain portions.

campaign, too, graves were discovered along the entire length of the section of the fortification enclosure, bringing the total number to 155[24].

A black and white satellite image shows the location of the first three sections traced at Vladimirescu (**Fig. 3/1**). In the 1977 campaign[25], the investigation of the central-western space of the fortification was continued with a section called Trench 3 (118 × 2 m). Towards the western end of section Trench 3, a square, noted C (5 × 5 m), was also outlined, where the traces of a dwelling were revealed, excavated in its entirety and dated by the authors of the excavation as prior to the fortification (**Fig. 7/2**). By sectioning the wall and the ditch on the western side, it was possible to reveal the two phases of construction. In the defence ditch, the archaeologically sterile layer was not reached due to the high level of the water table. Archaeological material dating from the 11th–12th centuries was recovered from outside the defence ditch. Also, during this campaign, a section marked Trench 4 (36 × 2 m) was traced in the northwest corner of the fortification. It only concerned the fortification system; the ditch was not touched. Between meters 20.60 and 29.80 traces of beams arranged transversely were discovered, considered to belong to the first phase of the fortress. A last section, Trench 5 (36 × 2 m), was traced perpendicular to S 1, to the south, in order to delimit possible constructions that may have furnished the fortification. Only 30 tombs were discovered, to which the 25 in section Trench 3 can be added[26], bringing the total number of graves to over 200[27]. The conclusions of this campaign did not differ from those previously stated, related to the anteriority of the fortification in comparison with the necropolis and the surrounding settlement.

Having already outlined the evolutionary stages of the whole ensemble discovered at Vladimirescu, the 1978 campaign was aimed at furthering them. As a first step, a new section, marked Trench 6 (56 × 2 m), was traced, 15 m from and parallel to Trench 3. The stated aim was to reveal the fortification system on the west side, which was less relevant in section S 3. Towards the western end of the section, two more squares were traced on either side of section Trench 6. To the south, square D (5 × ? m) was traced between meters 9 and 14, with a 0.75 m preserved baulk. This square was traced in order to delimit a dwelling seen in the southern profile of the section. For the same reasons, square E (10.5 × 3 m) was traced to the north, between meters 9 and 19.5 of section Trench 6. Apparently, elements of the fortification system were only revealed within section Trench 6 and especially square E. These seem to overlap the dwelling discovered in square E, which led the authors of the excavation to argue their theory of the anteriority of the settlement from the 8th–9th centuries (!). Logically it would seem correct, but another scenario could just as logically be imagined, in which the dwelling is destroyed at the same time as the burned palisade. Without rushing to conclusions, we continue the presentation of this campaign. The second section of this campaign, marked Trench 7 (53 × 2 m), was traced in the NE square of the fortification, 15 m east of S 2, with the same stated aim of verifying the fortification system on the north side. Thus, the wall and the defence

[24] BARBU, ZDROBA 1977, p. 24, 27.

[25] M. Rusu and R. Heitel took part in this campaign.

[26] BARBU, ZDROBA 1978, p. 109–112.

[27] According to the planviews kept in the Arad museum's archive, the number is lower by approximately 10 graves than that estimated by the authors of the excavation.

ditch were sectioned once more. The results confirmed the stratigraphic situations discovered in Trench 2. Another 43 graves were also discovered in this section, for which unfortunately no documentation was preserved, thus the total number, as published by the excavation authors, reached 253 graves (**Fig. 5**)[28].

Only M. Rusu participated alongside the two archaeologists from Arad in the 1979 campaign. A single square, labelled F (13 × 10 m) was opened during the 1979 campaign, in the south-western corner of the fortification, located 10 m away from section Trench 6. The report prepared and published by M. Barbu suggests that the fortification system, consisting of transversal beams, overlaps another earlier dwelling (dated to the 8th–9th centuries on the basis of pottery fragments). A dwelling was identified inside the same surface, on its western side, this time dated to the 11th–12th centuries on the basis of small cauldrons' fragments, and the authors relate that it cut through the earthen rampart. Photographs or drawings supporting such hypotheses were unfortunately not preserved for these contexts[29]. One very likely faces the same situation as in the case of section Trench 6 and square E. In the absence of documentation, one cannot comment on the interpretations expressed by the author of the last published report[30].

Although another archaeological campaign took place in 1980, 1979 was in fact the peak of the excavations at Vladimirescu. In the last campaign, another section was certainly traced, noted Trench 8, about which we do not have much data, neither in terms of its location nor about what was discovered in it. Only a profile sketch has been preserved in the archive, which is irrelevant to be reproduced here. It is quite possible that this last section was made somewhere in the western area of the fortification, as no funerary finds are marked. Whatever the situation was, it seems that the site was no longer of interest, and its purpose had been served.

Beyond the preliminary interpretations and conclusions of the research's authors, the results of the six archaeological campaigns took out of anonymity an earth fortification scarcely mentioned in the available written sources. Unfortunately, the subsequent valorisation of these discoveries did not rise to the expectations, though this does not diminish the merits of the two archaeologists from Arad, M. Zdroba and M. Barbu.

One knows from a historical perspective that none of the sources mention the fortification in Vladimirescu in connection to the events during the time of Ahtum and even less during the time of Glad; we at least know that the first controlled and ruled over these territories. In order to ensure such control, it is very likely that Ahtum had fortified points erected in this area and that this angered king Stephen I. For the time being, in the absence of clearer evidence, all scenarios remain nevertheless irrelevant.

According to Bóna I., most earth fortifications were only built during the 11th century[31]. This is in fact the time when one can justify the need of the central power of the kingdom to establish power centres in its territory[32].

[28] BARBU, ZDROBA 1979, p. 190.
[29] BARBU 1980, p. 152–153.
[30] BARBU 1980, p. 156–158.
[31] BÓNA1998.
[32] NOVÁKI, SÁNDORFI 1981, p. 154–155.

Returning to the fortification in Vladimirescu, its dating before the middle of the 10th century on the basis of some pottery fragments discovered in the filling of the first rampart alone seems hard to believe. The existence of a settlement prior to the fortification cannot yet be proven on the basis of just some pottery fragments and certain contexts lacking clear documentation through conclusive ground plans and photographs. Even if one admits the anteriority of the necropolis inside the fortification and of the dwellings identified both inside and outside the stronghold, the dating cannot be lowered before the middle of the 10th century[33]. This statement stands even if one were only to take into consideration the fact that the rapid reconstruction of the fortification system in the first phase, placed sometime at the turn between the 9th and the 10th centuries would have been incapable of ensuring the fortifications' endurance for another almost 100 years without periodical repairs that would have left archaeological traces.

Despite all this, the historiography still perpetuates two trends, one dating the fortification to the 9th–11th centuries (especially the older Romanian historiography, but also some of the more recent) and the other placing here the castrum of the medieval county of Arad. Indifferent to how we might date it, the fortification's role as power centre in the area cannot be denied. Starting from this idea, it could have only been built and used in the framework of a well-established state entity or of one in the course of becoming established. As it is known, the creation of the royal county of Arad cannot be dated accurately, since it became a separate part of the larger and previously founded county of Cenad[34]. The mention of 15 households inside the fortification (*in castro Orodiensi sunt 15 mans-es*)[35] in 1131 might be connected to the archaeological discoveries made on the northern and western sides of the fortification, where specialists identified dwellings that according to shape and material can be dated to the wider interval of the 11th–13th centuries. It is very likely that a closer analysis of the material might reveal slightly different chronologies for some of the dwellings, i.e. we might reach earlier datings for some of them (maybe the end of the 10th century, certainly the 11th century – those discovered in squares C, E, D, and F) and less late for others (11th–12th centuries, maybe even the first half of the 13th century – see the dwelling discovered in square F and Trench 2).

One of the most important early events during which the fortification is mentioned relate to the kingdom's diet organized somewhere near the fortification of Orod by queen Helen, king Bela II's wife (1131–1141)[36]. It was then that queen Helen ordered the trial and execution of nobles guilty of having blinded her husband during the time of king Koloman. One knows that in 1177 the fortification's possessions were confirmed[37]. Thus, the *iobagiones* of the castrum in Arad were mentioned in 1213 (*iobagiones castri Orod*): Basu hotnog, Nuhu, Bayr, Belche, Kelemin, centurions, and other servants[38]. Other mentions of villages belonging to the fortification date

[33] RUSU 1980, p. 165–171.
[34] RUSU, HUREZAN 1999, p. 34.
[35] GYÖRFFY 1966, p. 170.
[36] *SRH* I, 1937, p. 447.
[37] GYÖRFFY 1966, p. 170–172.
[38] *DIR* I, 1951, p. 57.

to 1214, 1222, while the last mentions are from 1232[39]. The number of villages and possessions attached to the fortification was certainly larger than written documents allow us to grasp[40].

It seems that the presence of the prepositure and its rising importance were inversely proportional to that of the fortification located in its close proximity[41]. This might be just one of the causes, probably not the most important, leading to the latter's decline and eventual abandonment. In such conditions, it is very likely that by the time of the Tatar invasion (in 1241) the fortification had lost its initial functions and had been abandoned, reason for which the most important contemporary narrative source (Rogerius's *Carmen Miserabile*) does not mention it. Archaeologically as well, habitation inside and around the fortification did not continue beyond the 13th century.

The resumption of archaeological research involving a strategy based on complementary methods and analyses, in conjunction with the results already known, could shed light on the chronology and layout of this site. We have tried to take a first step by conducting non-invasive measurements. In 2022, a magnetometric survey was carried out on the entire surface of the fortification, allowing us to observe anomalies linked mainly to the fortification system of the wooden enclosure (**Fig. 6/1**)[42]. Unfortunately, the results concerning the built structures, both residential and ecclesiastical, are not clear, and thus, neither are the internal organisation and settled area of the castle.

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[40] RUSU 1980, p. 170–171.

[41] RUSU, HUREZAN 1999, p. 35; MĂRGINEAN 2016, p. 97–100.

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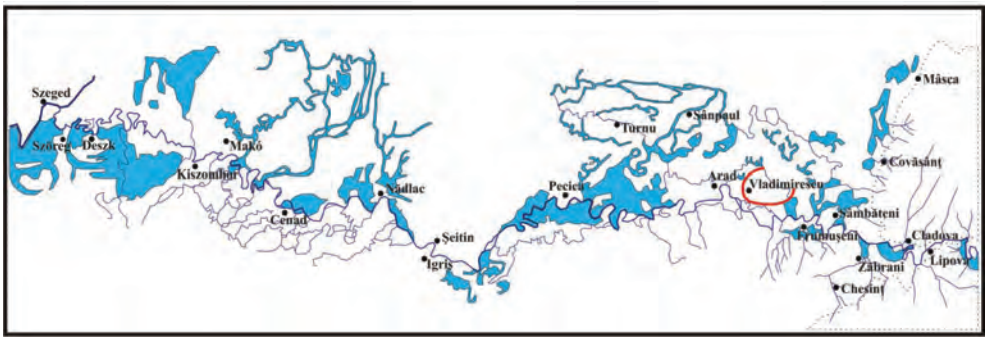


Fig. 1. Vladimirescu on a map with the marshy areas in the lower basin of Mureș.

Fig. 2. 1 – Location of archaeological sites around Vladimirescu (old Orod) on a map from 18th century; 2 – And on a map from 20th century.

Fig. 3. 1 – Satellite image from the excavation period (1975–1976) and the general plan of the excavations; 2 – Google Earth image with the approximate layout of the general excavation plan.

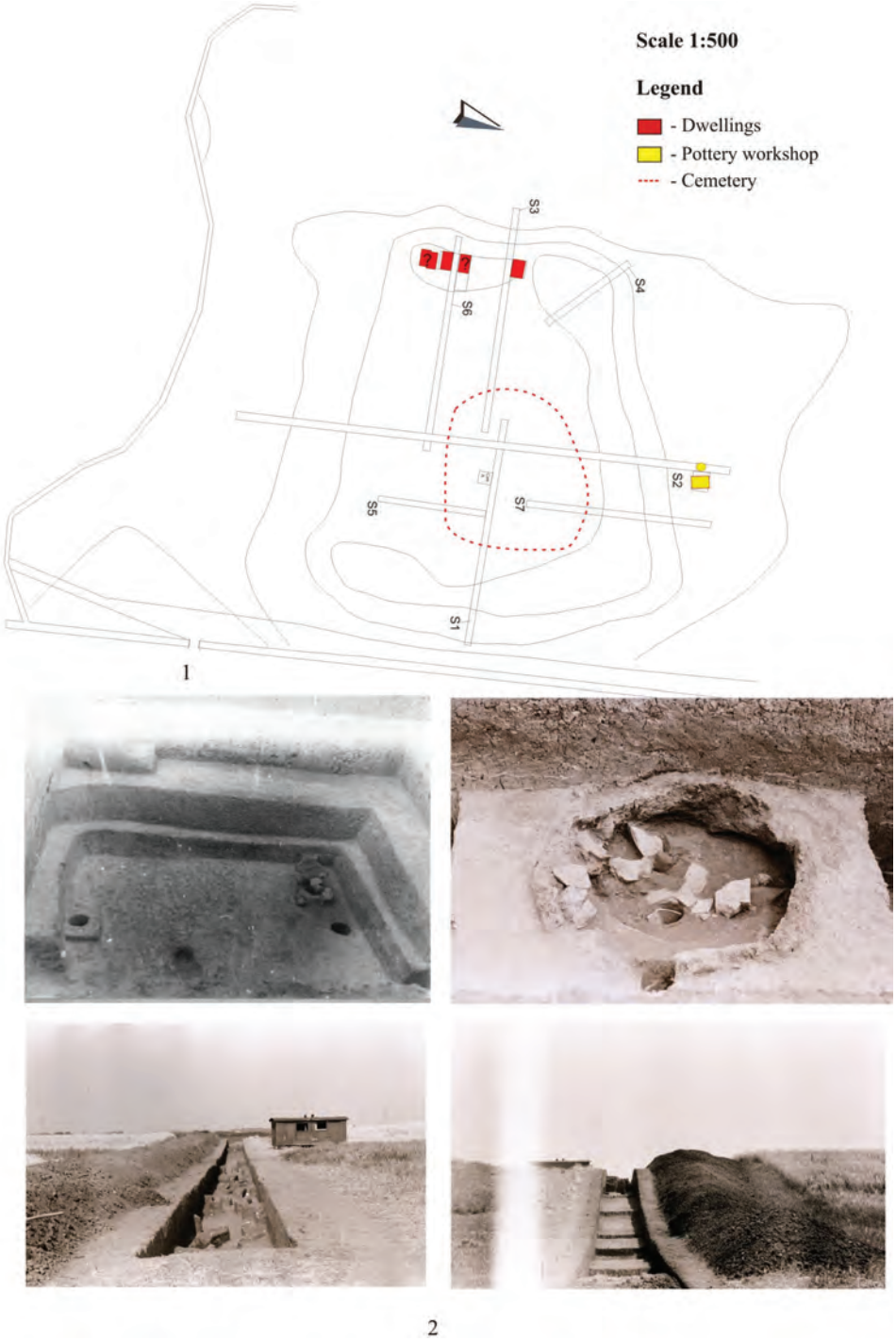
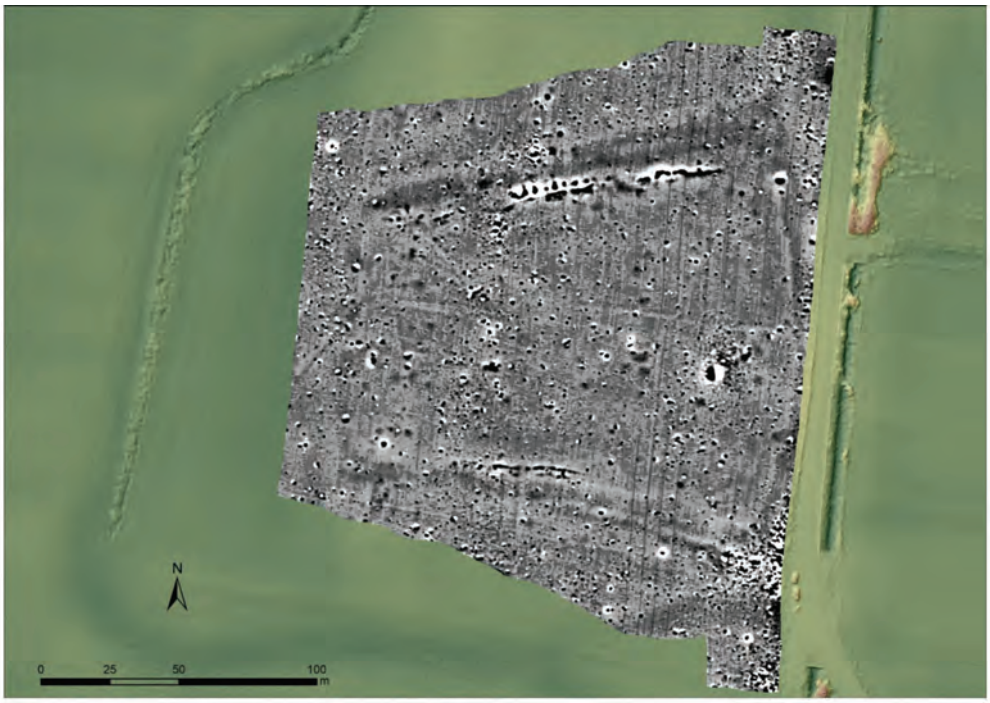


Fig. 4. General plan of the archaeological excavation and some photographs from the research (after ZDROBA, BARBU 1975–1980).

Fig. 5. Images of graves dug in the 1977 campaign (after ZDROBA, BARBU 1976).



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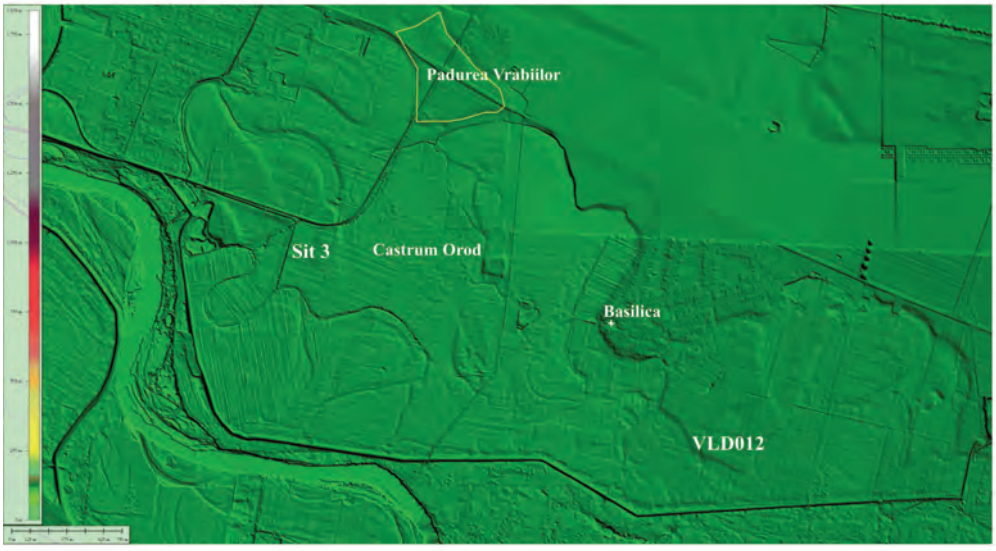

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Fig. 6. 1 – The plan of the fortification after the magnetometric measurements; 2 – Location of archaeological sites around Vladimirescu (old Orod) after a Lidar scan.

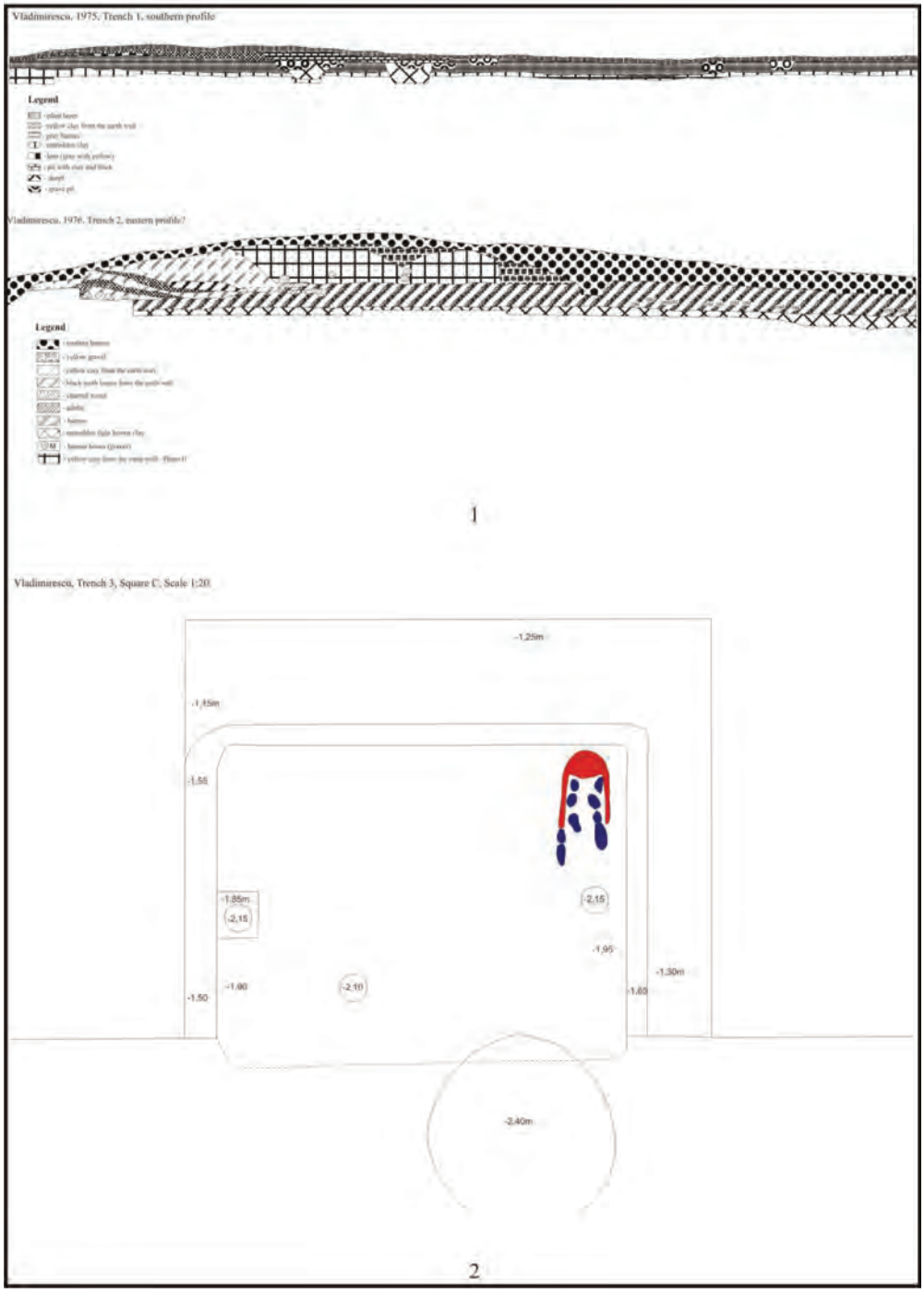

Fig. 7. 1 – Profiles of sections S1 and S2; 2 – Plan of the dwelling in cassette C (after ZDROBA, BARBU 1975–1976).

LA FORTERESSE DE « KARTAL KALÉ » (« LA FORTERESSE DE L'AIGLE ») DANS L'AGGLOMERATION URBAINE DU HAUT MOYEN AGE, PRÈS DU VILLAGE DE RUYNO, EN DOBROUDJA DU SUD

Georgi ATANASOV *

Keywords: *fortress, Kartal Kalé, Ruyno, ditch, rampart, pit house, southern Dobruja, Bulgaria.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *cetate, Kartal Kalé, Rujno, șanț, val, locuință adâncită, Dobrogea de sud, Bulgaria.*

Abstract: *The Kartal Kalé fortress is located in the border area between Dobruja and Ludogorie forest-steppe, on a naturally protected meander on the right bank of the Sinebir River, which dried up in the 18th century (Fig. 1–5).*

At the end of the 19th century, Karel Shkorpil made a detailed description and published the plan of the fortification (Fig. 2). In 1975, Rasho Rashev made several small sections. Between 2000 and 2004, systematic archaeological excavations were carried out, thanks to which the plan was refined (Fig. 6), including the chronology and especially the fortification.

Initially, in this naturally fortified place around the 5th century BC, an unfortified Thracian settlement arose which covered an area of about 0.4–0.5 ha. In 2002–2003, a small fortification (refuge – refugium) covering an area of about 0.17 ha was discovered in this naturally protected place, with a fortress wall about 70 m long and 1.50 m wide was constructed using quarry stones and white mortar, which blocked the north-western part of the meander from rock to rock (Fig. 5 and 8–9). Following the data provided by the coins and pottery, it was built around the second half of the 4th century AD, probably by the inhabitants of the neighbouring unfortified settlements. It was destroyed and abandoned before the middle of the 5th century, probably during the devastating Hun invasions in Dobruja.

Most probably at the beginning of the 10th century (not excluding also the end of the 9th century), the old Bulgarian population from the nearby unfortified settlements began the construction of a large fortress covering an area of about 48 decares. What is new in the research of the medieval fortification of Ruyno after K. Shkorpil and R. Rashev, is the partial re-use of the Late Antique gate with two towers at the isthmus, the double fortress wall on the southern slope, the presence of foundations in the erection of the walls, and pits were discovered which were used for mixing special clay (for construction) in front of the western wall with the rectangular towers (Fig. 5). The northern wall, with a length of 355 m, was built on

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the steepest – almost inaccessible – slope (Fig. 3 and 5). It was established that R. Rashev is right in his assumptions that it is thinner, because in this section it is 2.35 m wide and lies directly on the bedrock. The southern wall is 2.80 m wide (Fig. 5).

During the excavations in 2001, it turned out that initially it did not curve in a southerly direction, but followed an approximately straight line from the main north-eastern gate at the isthmus, to the south-western corner of the fortress (Fig. 5). The superstructure is 2.80–2.85 m wide, and the substructure is 2.95 m wide (Fig. 5, 12, 18 and 25). The foundation consists of a row of larger and better processed stones dug into about 0.25 m of sterile læss (Fig. 12 and 18). During our excavations we found that at a later stage a new wall was built in a southerly direction adjoined to the earlier southern wall.

The new southern wall (a kind of proteichisma*) is narrower (about 2.25 m) – there is no foundation with a plinth; it is laid directly on the existing terrain and is built of smaller quarry stones (Fig. 12). The destruction probably happened after a severe fire because many of the stones were burned and there is charcoal on the ground. When digging in the south-west corner of the fortress (Fig. 16) the researchers discovered the absence of a corner tower, and documented that the width of the western wall is about 3.60 m, while the southern one, like the other sections, is slightly thinner, about 2.90 m, and at an angle of 3.20 m.*

The researchers registered a foundation dug at a depth of 0.40 m – about 0.10 m of the medieval walking level and about 0.30 m in the sterile læss (Fig. 16). It is built of large semi-worked stones, and smaller stones were used for alignment. Thus, a kind of foundation is formed – a platform which protrudes in front of the inner wall as a banquet with a width of about 0.55–0.65 m, above which the superstructure of the wall begins. Here excavation registered that a severe fire had taken place, with remains of charcoal and ash which coincides in elevation with the first row of superstructure from the wall.

The western wall with tower № 4 and small passages south and north of it were partially studied (Fig. 18). The tower has a rectangular shape with dimensions of 6.05 × 5.50 m, touching the joint to the fortress wall (Fig. 5 and 18). The foundation of the wall and behind the tower is about 0.70 m and is dug into the compact chernozem, i.e. about 0.15 m in the medieval walking level and about 0.50 m in the sterile læss. At the outer face of the wall, 4 m north of the tower, a relatively well-worked stone block was found, on which is engraved the sign IYI (Fig. 19).

By deep sounding north of the tower it was uncovered that the fortress wall in this section is the strongest, as the width in the upper preserved part is about 3.60–3.90 m. There is a similar construction of large semi-processed quarry stones on both faces, and an emplecton of medium and small quarry stones packed with a "mortar" of yellow clay.

Particularly distinct is the relatively deep foundation at the inner face, starting with a plinth, 0.20 m wide. It was studied at a depth of 0.90 m from the plinth, reaching the bedrock (Fig. 14).

Above the walking level again the traces of a severe fire were registered, and under the damaged stones an encolpion cross dating back to the late 10th – the early 11th century, and an anonymous Byzantine follis *class A2 (1028–1034/1036) were found (Fig. 27). Remarkable, and met for the first time in the medieval fortress construction, is the narrowing of the foundation toward the bottom, registered in both sections, as a result of which it has acquired a trough-shaped form (Fig. 18, 24 and 25). It is possible that it is a construction mistake. In its height the wall is split, probably due to an earthquake. The ditch 5 m in front of the outer face of the western wall was dug along its entire length (Fig. 5, 22 and 23).*

There is a trench about 2 m from the uncovered terrain, passing through chernozem

and sterile læss (about 1.05 m) and is dug about 0.95 m into the limestone bedrock to reach an elevation of 164.47 m. A portion of the removed yellow-reddish læss has accumulated on the berm between the wall and the ditch with a thickness of 0.45–0.50 m, and another portion was poured in front of the ditch, thus forming a small shaft about 0.80 m high. In front of the ditch there is a series of nine unnatural round basin-shaped depressions dug into the layer, with a diameter of about 5–7 m (Fig. 5). One of them was fully studied and two neighbouring pits were partially studied (Fig. 23). It turned out to be an elliptical trough-shaped pit 3.60 × 3.10 m, dug up to 1.40 m, and filled with yellow-reddish clay.

Most likely, in these pits a kind of medieval "kalila" (a clay construction material) was mixed with water to make a kind of "clay mortar" to build the fortress wall. South of the fortress in the rock outcrop, two quarries for stone extraction were discovered.

We do not rule out that this construction was initiated and controlled by the central government, because for the first time in the southern and western walls semi-worked stones were found with carved and visible signs which could be seen from a greater distance, found so far only for the state centers Preslav, Pliska and Drastar. Indicative in this direction is especially the sign IYI, considered to be the insignia of the ruling Bulgarian royal family of Khan Krum from the beginning of the 9th to the end of the 10th century.

According to the small finds (jewellery, belt ornaments, and openwork lead medallions) and ceramics, the restoration of life can generally be determined by the late 9th – the early 10th century.

Especially for "Kartal Kalé" we have archaeological data for at least two destruction events accompanied by severe fires registered in front of the fortress walls and pit house. The first fire burst out in houses which contained pottery and finds from the 10th century, and in which there are no artefacts or pottery from the late 9th or 11th century – pit house Nos. 1–7, 9, 15 and 16. Severe fires were also registered in the pit house with pottery produced on a fast wheel, storage vessels and glass bracelets from the early 11th century (Nos. 11, 13–14, 16a–17, 19 and 20); and the three above-ground houses. They are associated with the first destruction of the fortress (Russian-Bulgarian-Byzantine war 968–971?), but soon after, life in the fortress certainly was restored.

There is evidence of restoration of the fortification and its possible expansion to the south. Apparently, a Byzantine garrison was not housed here after 971 or after 1000, because the main signs of such a presence are missing – a large number of Byzantine coins, seals of Byzantine dignitaries and a large amount of imported Byzantine pottery and mostly amphorae. Nevertheless, the fortress was rebuilt by the existing Old Bulgarian population under Byzantine administration after the end of the 10th century – the very beginning of the 11th century.

Although a small percentage compared to Drastar, Skala, Tsar Asen, Capidava and others, Byzantine pottery produced on a fast wheel, crosses and ornaments typical of the 11th century (including imports) and two folleis *class A2 (1028–1034/1036) were discovered in Ruyno, which suggests that the population was included on the periphery of the Byzantine economy and market. Probably the local population organized itself on the initiative of the governors of the Thrace and Dristra strategy created in 1000.*

Judging by the ceramic assemblage, which includes several fragments of Petcheneg pottery, and the two anonymous Byzantine folleis *class A2, as well as from the context of the results of studies of neighbouring fortresses and information from written sources, we should assume that the Kartal Kalé fortress and the whole Ruyno settlement was destroyed and abandoned during the Petcheneg invasion in 1036. Severe fires were registered in almost all*

dwellings inhabited in the early 11th century. Everywhere near the ruined fortress walls we document the traces of fire under the fallen stones of the superstructure, some of which were badly burned.

Here we will especially emphasize the anonymous Byzantine folles *class A2 (1028–1034/1036) (Fig. 27). It was found in front of the outer face of the western wall in a burnt layer covered with stones from the destruction of the fortress. The lack of a distinct cultural layer with Petcheneg pottery and ornaments, known from Drastar, Pliska, Skala, Tsar Asen, Vetren, Capidava,* Dinogetia-*Garvăn, and others, suggests that the nomads did not establish a longer camp here. The splitting, fan-shaped dissolution of the western wall, despite the foundation, is probably the result of a series of strong earthquakes recorded by Skylitzes, followed by drought and mass famine in 1037.*

As a result, the Old Bulgarian population abandoned the fortress forever (as well as the fortresses in the interior of southern Dobruja and the eastern Ludogorie region) and immigrated to the Balkan foreland, Danube towns and valleys in Ruse, Beli and Cherni Lom regions which were more protected from nomadic horsemen.

The Kartal Kalé fortress is the centre of a large settlement agglomeration with a total area of over 220 decares, which has no analogue in Dobruja and northern Bulgaria in the 10th century. Osmen Kartal Kalé fortress, it also includes:

1. A second fortress from the 10th century, located in the "Ayazmo" locality, 1.5 km north of Kartal Kalé (Fig. 4 and 30). The protected area with fortress walls is about 70 decares. The fortress walls are about 3.00 m wide, founded directly on the ground, in places in a cultural layer with Thracian ceramics. There are two towers on the east and south walls and one on the corner. All are rectangular with dimensions of 6 × 5.50 m, and in front of them there is an additional strengthening system without analogy. It has a total width of 29 m and includes two ditches, and between them a second wall with a thickness of 2.10 m.

2. The rock monastery. It is formed at a difficult-to-reach height in the rocky ridge on the left bank of the dry river, right next to the "Ayazmo" fortress (Fig. 30, 37 and 38). It consists of two parts – a real small monastery, skeet type, and a crypt, where monks are buried and reburied. The monastery includes three cells, an abbess and a church. For this purpose, natural caves were used, additionally cut and shaped. It dates back to the 10th century.

3. A suburb. Southwest of the Kartal Kalé fortress, next to the river itself, on an area of about 100 decares, the boundaries of a large suburb are outlined (Fig. 4). More than 150 visible depressions, apparently pit house, were found in the terrain (Fig. 39). In fact, during investigations under four of them, dwellings were found (No. 9–11 and 14), two of which with material from the 10th century and two with finds from the 11th century (No. 10, amendment 34, and No. 14). A production facility – a blacksmith's workshop – has been explored by the river bank (Fig. 40).

Rezumat: *Cetatea Kartal Kalé este situată în zona de graniță dintre Dobrogea și silvostepa Ludogorie, pe un meandru protejat natural de pe malul drept al râului Sinebir, care a secat în secolul al XVIII-lea (Fig. 1–5).*

La sfârșitul veacului al XIX-lea, Karel Shkorpil a făcut o descriere detaliată și a publicat planul fortificației (Fig. 2). În anul 1975, Rasho Rashev a efectuat mai multe secțiuni de dimensiuni mici. Între anii 2000 și 2004 au fost efectuate săpături arheologice sistematice, pe baza cărora au fost făcute precizări importante privind planul și cronologia fortificației.

Inițial, în acest loc fortificat natural, în jurul secolului al V-lea a.Chr., s-a fundat o așezare tracă neîntărită, care acoperea o suprafață de aproximativ 0,4–0,5 ha. În anii 2002–2003, aici a fost descoperită o mică fortificație de refugiu – refugium, *incluzând o suprafață*

de aproximativ 0,17 ha, o cetate cu un zid de aproximativ 70 m lungime și 1,50 m lățime, construit din pietre de carieră și mortar alb, care bloca partea nord-vestică a meandrului, de la stâncă la stâncă (Fig. 5, 8 și 9). Conform datelor oferite de monede și ceramică, aceasta a fost construită în jurul celei de-a doua jumătăți a secolului al IV-lea p.Chr., probabil de către locuitorii așezărilor nefortificate din apropiere. A fost distrusă și abandonată înainte de mijlocul veacului al V-lea, posibil în timpul invaziilor devastatoare ale hunilor în Dobrogea.

Cel mai probabil la începutul secolului al X-lea (fără a exclude și sfârșitul veacului al IX-lea), vechea populație bulgară din așezările nefortificate din apropiere a început construcția unei cetăți mari, care acoperea o suprafață de aproximativ 4,8 ha. Ceea ce este nou în cercetarea fortificației medievale de la Rujno, după investigațiile lui K. Shkorpil și R. Rashev, este reutilizarea parțială a porții antice târzii cu două turnuri la istm, zidul dublu al fortăreței de pe versantul sudic, prezența fundațiilor în construcția zidurilor și descoperirea, în partea frontală a zidului vestic, cel cu turnuri dreptunghiulare, a unor gropi care au fost folosite pentru obținerea unui lut special folosit pentru construcții (Fig. 5). Zidul nordic, cu o lungime de 355 m, a fost construit pe panta cea mai abruptă, aproape inaccesibilă (Fig. 3 și 5). S-a constatat că R. Rashev a presupus corect că acest zid este mai îngust, deoarece în secțiunea cercetată are 2,35 m lățime și se sprijină direct pe roca de bază. Zidul sudic are o lățime de 2,80 m (Fig. 5).

În timpul săpăturilor din anul 2001, s-a descoperit că inițial zidul nu se curba în direcția sudică, ci urma o linie aproximativ dreaptă de la poarta principală de nord-est (de la istm) până la colțul sud-vestic al cetății (Fig. 5). Suprastructura avea o lățime de 2,80–2,85 m, iar substructura o lățime de 2,95 m (Fig. 5, 12, 18 și 25). Fundația consta dintr-un rând de pietre mai mari și mai bine prelucrate, fiind săpată în aproximativ 0,25 m de loess steril (Fig. 12 și 18).

În timpul săpăturilor noastre, am constatat că, într-o etapă ulterioară, a fost construit un nou zid în direcția sudică, adiacent zidului sudic anterior. Noul zid sudic (un fel de proteichisma*) este mai îngust (aproximativ 2,25 m), nu are o fundație cu plintă, este așezat direct pe terenul existent și a fost construit din pietre de carieră mai mici (Fig. 12). Distrugerea s-a produs, probabil, după un incendiu puternic, deoarece multe dintre pietre au fost arse și există cărbune pe sol. Cu ocazia săpăturilor din colțul de sud-vest al cetății (Fig. 16), cercetătorii au constatat absența unui turn de colț și au documentat faptul că lățimea zidului vestic este de aproximativ 3,60 m, în timp ce cel sudic, ca și în cazul celorlalte tronsoane, este puțin mai îngust, de aproximativ 2,90 m, și descrie un unghi de 3,20 m.*

Cercetătorii au înregistrat o fundație săpată la o adâncime de 0,40 m – aproximativ 0,10 m sub nivelul de călcare medieval și circa 0,30 m în loessul steril (Fig. 16). Fundația este construită din pietre mari, semiprelucrate, pietre mai mici fiind folosite pentru aliniere. Astfel, se formează un fel de fundație-platformă în fața zidului interior, ca o bancă cu o lățime de aproximativ 0,55–0,65 m, deasupra căreia începe suprastructura zidului. Aici, săpăturile au înregistrat urmele unui incendiu puternic, cu resturi de cărbune și cenușă, care coincid cu nivelul primului rând al elevației zidului.

Au fost parțial studiate zidul de vest, cu turnul nr. 4, și mici pasaje la sud și la nord de acesta (Fig. 18). Turnul are formă dreptunghiulară, cu dimensiunile de 6,05 × 5,50 m, fiind adosat zidului cetății (Fig. 5 și 18). Fundația zidului din spatele turnului are aproximativ 0,70 m și este săpată în cernoziomul compact, adică aproximativ 0,15 m sub nivelul de călcare medieval și aproximativ 0,50 m în loessul steril. La fața exterioară a zidului, la 4 m nord de turn, a fost găsit un bloc de piatră relativ bine prelucrat, pe care este gravat semnul IYI (Fig. 19).

Prin sondaje adânci la nord de turn, s-a descoperit că, în acest segment, zidul cetății este cel mai solid, având o lățime de aproximativ 3,60–3,90 m în partea superioară păstrată. Construcția este similară celorlalte tronsoane, cu pietre mari, semiprelucrate pe ambele fețe, și un emplecton format din pietre de carieră medii și mici, legate cu lut galben. Deosebită este fundația relativ adâncă de la fața interioară, care începe cu un soclu de 0,20 m lățime. Aceasta a fost studiată până la o adâncime de 0,90 m de la soclu, ajungându-se la roca de bază (Fig. 14).

Deasupra nivelului de călcare au fost înregistrate urmele unui incendiu puternic, iar sub pietrele deteriorate s-au descoperit o cruce encolpion, datând de la sfârșitul secolului al X-lea – începutul secolului al XI-lea, și un follis *anonim bizantin clasa A–2 (1028–1034/1036) (Fig. 27). Remarcabilă, întâlnită pentru prima dată în construcția cetăților medievale, înregistrată în ambele secțiuni, este îngustarea fundației spre partea inferioară, ceea ce a făcut ca aceasta să capete o formă de jgheab (Fig. 18, 24 și 25). Este posibil să fie o greșeală de construcție. În elevație, zidul este fisurat, probabil din cauza unui cutremur. Șanțul, aflat la 5 m în fața părții exterioare a zidului vestic, a fost săpat pe întreaga sa lungime (Fig. 5, 22 și 23).*

Există un șanț la aproximativ 2 m de terenul neacoperit de construcții, care secționează straturile de cernoziom și loess (aproximativ 1,05 m) și este săpat la aproximativ 0,95 m în roca de calcar, pentru a atinge o înălțime totală de 164,47 m. O parte din loessul galben-roșiatic îndepărtat s-a acumulat pe berma dintre zid și șanț, într-un strat cu o grosime de 0,45–0,50 m, iar o altă parte a fost turnată în fața șanțului, formând astfel un mic val, de aproximativ 0,80 m înălțime. În fața șanțului se află o serie de nouă depresiuni rotunde, amenajate în formă de bazin, săpate în strat, cu un diametru de aproximativ 5–7 m (Fig. 5), dintre care două au fost parțial studiate și una a fost investigată integral (Fig. 23). S-a dovedit a fi o groapă elipsoidală, în formă de jgheab, de 3,60 × 3,10 m, săpată până la adâncimea de 1,40 m, umplută cu argilă galben-roșiatică.

Cel mai probabil, în aceste gropi a fost amestecat lutul cu apă, formând un fel de material de construcție (un tip de kalila *medievală), pentru a obține un „mortar de lut", utilizat la ridicarea zidului cetății. La sud de cetate, în aflorimentul de stâncă, au fost descoperite două cariere pentru extracția de piatră.*

Nu excludem posibilitatea ca această construcție să fi fost ridicată din inițiativa puterii centrale, deoarece, în componența zidurilor sudic și vestic, au fost găsite, pentru prima dată, pietre semiprelucrate cu semne sculptate și vizibile de la distanțe mai mari, întâlnite până acum doar în centrele statale de la Preslav, Pliska și Drăstăr. Sugestiv în această direcție este în special semnul IYI, considerat a fi însemnul familiei conducătoare bulgare a hanului Krum, de la începutul secolului al IX-lea până la sfârșitul secolului al X-lea.

Pe baza descoperirilor de obiecte mărunte (bijuterii, piese de centură, medalioane de plumb traforate) și ceramice, reluarea vieții poate fi în general datată la sfârșitul secolului al IX-lea – începutul secolului al X-lea. Pentru situl de la Kartal Kalé există, în mod special, date arheologice care indică cel puțin două evenimente distructive, însoțite de incendii puternice, înregistrate în fața zidurilor cetății și în locuințele adâncite (bordeie). Primul incendiu a afectat locuințe care conțineau ceramică și artefacte din secolul al X-lea, în care nu au fost găsite obiecte sau ceramică din perioada finală a veacului al IX-lea ori din secolul al XI-lea – locuințele adâncite nr. 1–7, 9, 15–16. Incendii severe au fost, de asemenea, înregistrate în locuințele semiîngropate, cu ceramică produsă pe o roată rapidă, vase de depozitare și brățări de sticlă de la începutul secolului al XI-lea (nr. 11, 13–14, 16a, 17, 19–20) și în cele trei locuințe de suprafață. Acestea sunt asociate cu prima distrugere a cetății (războiul

ruso-bulgaro-bizantin din anii 968–971?), dar, la scurt timp după aceea, viața în cetate a fost cu siguranță reluată.

Există dovezi de restaurare a fortificației și de posibilă extindere a acesteia spre sud. Nu se poate considera că o garnizoană bizantină ar fi fost găzduită aici după anul 971 sau după anul 1000, deoarece lipsesc principalele indicii ale unei astfel de prezențe – monede bizantine în număr mare, sigilii ale demnitarilor bizantini și o cantitate importantă de ceramică bizantină de import (în special amfore). Cu toate acestea, cetatea a fost reconstruită de populația bulgară veche trăitoare sub administrația bizantină, după sfârșitul secolului al X-lea, eventual la începutul veacului al XI-lea.

*Deși într-un procent mic, comparativ cu Drăstăr, Skala, Țar Asen, Capidava ș.a., la Rujno au fost descoperite ceramică bizantină produsă pe o roată rapidă, cruci și podoabe tipice secolului al XI-lea (inclusiv importuri) și două monede (*folleis*) clasa A–2 (1028–1034/1036), ceea ce sugerează că populația periferică era inclusă în economia și piața bizantină. Probabil că populația locală și-a organizat existența la inițiativa guvernatorilor strategiei Thracia și Dristra, creată în anul 1000.*

Judecând după ansamblul ceramicii, care include câteva fragmente de factură pecenegă, și după cele două monede bizantine anonime de tip follis *clasa A–2, precum și în contextul rezultatelor studiilor fortificațiilor învecinate și informațiilor din sursele scrise, putem presupune că cetatea Kartal Kalé și întreaga așezare Rujno au fost distruse și abandonate în timpul invaziei pecenegilor din anul 1036. Incendieri severe au fost înregistrate în aproape toate locuințele de la începutul secolului al XI-lea, precum și pretutindeni în apropierea zidurilor ruinate ale cetății, sub pietrele căzute ale suprastructurii, unele dintre acestea fiind arse puternic.*

Menționăm în mod special moneda bizantină anonimă de tip follis *clasa A–2 (1028–1034/1036) (Fig. 27), găsită în fața paramentului exterior al zidului vestic, într-un strat de arsură acoperit cu pietre provenite din distrugerea cetății. Lipsa unui strat cultural distinct, cu ceramică și artefacte pecenege, cunoscut la Drăstăr, Pliska, Skala, Țar Asen, Vetren, Capidava,* Dinogetia*-Garvăn și în alte situri, sugerează că nomazii nu și-au stabilit aici o tabără pe termen lung. Fisurarea și despicarea în formă de evantai a zidului vestic, în ciuda existenței fundației, este probabil rezultatul unei serii de cutremure puternice înregistrate de Skylitzes, urmate de secetă și foamete în masă în anul 1037.*

Drept urmare, populația bulgară veche a abandonat cetatea pentru totdeauna (precum și fortărețele din interiorul Dobrogei de sud și din regiunea Ludogoriei de Est) și a migrat în ținutul balcanic, în orașele de la Dunăre și în văile din regiunile Ruse, Beli și Cherni Lom, care erau mai protejate de atacurile călăreților nomazi.

Cetatea Kartal Kalé a fost centrul unei mari aglomerări de așezări, cu o suprafață totală de peste 22 ha, care nu are analogii în Dobrogea și nordul Bulgariei în secolul al X-lea. Cetatea Osmen Kartal Kalé include și:

1. <u>O a doua cetate</u>, din secolul al X-lea, situată în localitatea „Ayazmo", la 1,5 km nord de Kartal Kalé (Fig. 4 și 30). Zona protejată de zidurile cetății este de aproximativ 7 ha. Zidurile au aproximativ 3,00 m lățime, fiind ridicate direct pe sol, în unele locuri pe un strat cultural cu ceramică tracică. Există două turnuri pe zidurile de est și de sud și un al treilea, de colț. Toate sunt dreptunghiulare, cu dimensiuni de 6 × 5,50 m, iar în fața lor se află un sistem de întărire suplimentar, fără analogii cunoscute. Acesta are o lățime totală de 29 m și include două șanțuri, iar între ele există un al doilea zid, cu o lățime de 2,10 m.

2. <u>Mănăstirea rupestră</u>. Este amenajată la o înălțime greu accesibilă, în creasta stâncoasă de pe malul stâng al râului secat, chiar lângă cetatea „Ayazmo" (Fig. 30, 37 și 38).

Aceasta constă din două părți – o adevărată mănăstire mică, de tip schit, și o criptă, unde călugării erau îngropați și reînhumați. Mănăstirea include trei chilii, o stăreție și o biserică. În acest scop, au fost folosite peșteri naturale, suplimentar tăiate și modelate. Datează din secolul al X-lea.

3. O suburbie. La sud-vest de cetatea Kartal Kalé, lângă râul propriu-zis, pe o suprafață de aproximativ 10 ha, se conturează limitele unei suburbii mari (Fig. 4). În teren au fost înregistrate peste 150 de depresiuni vizibile – aparent o locuire semiîngropată, de tip bordei (Fig. 39). De altfel, în timpul investigării a patru dintre acestea, au fost găsite locuințe (nr. 9–11 și 14), dintre care două cu materiale din secolul al X-lea și două cu artefacte din veacul al XI-lea (nr. 10 – redenumit 34 și nr. 14). O zonă de producție – un atelier de fierar – a fost investigată pe malul râului (Fig. 40).

La forteresse « Kartal Kalé », près du village de Ruyno, municipalité de Dulovo, région de Silistra (**Fig. 1**), est connue, depuis la fin du XIX^e^ siècle, grâce à Karel Shkorpil. Il nous a laissé une brève description et un plan relativement précis (**Fig. 2**), publiés au début du XX^e^ siècle[1].

La forteresse se trouve à la frontière entre la Dobroudja et la Ludogorie, sur la rive droite du cours d'eau asséché de Sinebir (**Fig. 1**–4). L'ancienne rivière, dont les eaux ont disparu à la fin du XVIII^e^ et au début du XIX^e^ siècle, a la source dans les Balkans orientaux, traverse la plaine et se jette dans le Danube par le lac Srebarna. Pour cette raison, sa partie supérieure est appelée Srebrenitsa. Pendant des millions d'années, les eaux se sont lentement et inexorablement infiltrées dans les anciennes formations sarmates, créant des canyons pittoresques, des grottes et des formes rocheuses uniques. Au sud-est du village de Ruyno, la rivière prend la forme d'un méandre en forme de langue, creusant des gorges hautes de plus de 50 m dans les anciennes roches (**Fig. 2**–**4**). Sur cette élévation rocheuse naturellement protégée, d'une superficie de plus de 80 ares, la forteresse a été érigée, et en raison de son emplacement spécifique, elle a été appelée « Kartal Kalé » (« la forteresse de l'aigle »). Le méandre en forme de langue se rétrécit dans la partie nord-est, où il se connecte au plateau et forme un passage rocheux, large au début jusqu'à 10 m, et les falaises presque verticales atteignent une dénivellation de plus de 50 m – de l'altitude de 130 m (au-dessus du niveau de la mer) au niveau du cours d'eau asséché jusqu'à l'altitude de 181,20 m. D'après K. Shkorpil, c'est ici que se trouvait l'entrée principale de la forteresse.

Après le passage étroit, d'environ 25 m de long, il y a une expansion de l'élévation en forme de langue vers l'ouest-sud-ouest, la hauteur au-dessus du niveau de la mer commençant à descendre jusqu'à l'altitude de 155–160 m. Initialement, après le passage étroit, sur une distance d'environ 170 à 185 m, les rives nord et sud sont élevées, rocheuses, et l'accès à la hauteur est extrêmement difficile. Ensuite, en direction ouest, le terrain diminue progressivement, et, après environ 180 m la rive nord, et après environ 90 m la rive sud, devient plus doux et relativement plus accessible (**Fig. 3**–**5**). Cette configuration naturelle du terrain a créé une protection naturelle maximale, la forteresse documentée par K. Shkorpil suit ses contours, couvrant une surface d'environ 48 ares (**Fig. 2**). Le mur ouest protège l'accès vers la rivière à

[1] SHKORPIL 1905, p. 483.

l'endroit le plus vulnérable, où la dénivellation est la plus faible et la colline devient plus douce. Il est tracé depuis la limite de la dernière crête rocheuse sur le versant nord-est vers le sud, à l'altitude d'environ 160 m (**Fig. 5**). En raison d'un accès plus facile, cinq tours ont été érigées sur le mur ouest, relativement bien documentées par K. Shkorpil, la plus septentrionale étant au-dessus du sommet de ladite crête rocheuse. Le versant nord, mentionné précédemment, est plus élevé et rocheux, mais, malgré cela, un mur de fortification a été construit ici, de l'entrée du passage étroit jusqu'à la tour nord-ouest n° 1, avec une courbe vers le sud, imposée par les caractéristiques du terrain. Le versant sud-est, plus doux, est également renforcé, le mur, d'après K. Shkorpil, suivant la configuration du terrain avec une interruption vers le sud (contrairement à celle du mur nord), la trajectoire continuant jusqu'à l'entrée du passage. Contrairement au mur nord, selon K. Shkorpil, l'accès plus facile a nécessité l'érection de trois tours le long du front et du mur sud-est (**Fig. 2**), qui ne sont plus visibles aujourd'hui.

L'histoire des recherches

En 1975, Rasho Rashev a mené des recherches sur cette forteresse, en reprenant – avec des corrections mineures – le plan de K. Shkorpil et proposant une datation plus précise, dans la fourchette des IX^e^–XI^e^ siècles (**Fig. 6**)[2]. Ses fouilles comportaient un sondage dans la partie sud-ouest de la forteresse, par une tranchée de 27 m de longueur et 2 m de largeur, orientée est-ouest. La section a traversé le mur sud-est de la forteresse et, devant celui-ci, une petite douve et une partie de l'intérieur de la forteresse, où on a découvert une hutte. Comme K. Shkorpil, R. Rashev a identifié cinq tours au long du mur ouest, le plus renforcé, avec une douve devant. Cependant, il a également documenté une douve creusée devant la moitié ouest du mur sud, jusqu'à la coupure dans le mur de la forteresse vers le sud. Il estime approximativement la superficie totale à environ 50 ares, et la section, exposée du mur sud de la forteresse, a été préservée à une hauteur de 2 m et une largeur de 2,80 m. Les parements du mur sont construits par des pierres plus grandes, tandis que l'emplecton est constitué de petites pierres liées avec de l'argile. A l'avis de R. Rashev, le mur a été construit sans fondation, directement sur le terrain, avec une légère excavation de la première rangée de pierres à l'intérieur. Il a documenté à l'intérieur une pierre partiellement travaillée, avec un signe gravé, analogues aux celles inscrits sur les murs et les bâtiments des forteresses de Pliska et de Preslav, datés du IX^e^ siècle jusqu'au début du X^e^ siècle (**Fig. 7**). Il s'agit, selon R. Rashev, de l'unique signe découvert jusque-là sur des forteresses de ce type en Dobroudja et dans le nord-est de la Bulgarie. En outre, suivant K. Shkorpil, il a mentionné trois tours sur le mur sud, sans les indiquer sur le plan (**Fig. 6**), apparemment parce qu'il a eu des difficultés à les identifier sur le terrain. Il a supposé l'existence d'une deuxième entrée (sauf l'entrée centrale) près du tournant du mur, qui menait à une source près de la rivière, et d'une muraille de la forteresse également présente au nord, mais plus étroite en raison des falaises abruptes dans cette section. Lors de la fouille du sondage, il a enregistré également de la poterie thrace, datant de V^e^–III^e^ siècles av. J.-C.

La forteresse est également inclue dans la monographie de D. Rabovyanov (sa

[2] RASHEV 1982, p. 141–143.

thèse de doctorat, 2009), consacrée aux forteresses en pierre (en dehors des capitales Pliska, Preslav, Drastar, IX^{e}–XI^{e} siècles)[3]. Dans l'ensemble, il suit la description et la chronologie de R. Rashev, mais utilise également unes des corrections résulté de nos recherches archéologiques, publiées sous la forme de résumés des fouilles des années 2000–2003. Le livre a été écrit et imprimé avant la parution du notre première étude préliminaire sur les forteresses près de Ruyno[4], et cela l'a privé de la possibilité de commenter les nouvelles découvertes.

Au printemps de l'an 2000, la forêt séculaire à l'intérieur de la forteresse a été abattue, et une profonde tranchée a été prévue pour planter une nouvelle forêt. Cela a entraîné la mise en œuvre urgente de fouilles archéologiques de sauvetage, menées pendant les années 2000–2004[5]. En raison des ressources limitées et de la méthodologie pratiquées à la fin du XX^{e} siècle, on a décidé que les fouilles seraient des sondages à l'aide de tranchées tracées parallèlement, larges de 2 mètres – une méthodologie déjà utilisée avec succès pour fouiller la forteresse voisine de Skala[6] et (partiellement) celle près du village d'Okorsh[7] (**Fig. 1**).

Initialement, la Tranchée I a été tracée sur toute la longueur de la forteresse, du sud-ouest au nord-est, respectivement depuis le mur sud et la douve avec le remblai devant lui jusqu'à la porte nord, ainsi comme des sondages dans des points-clés du système de la forteresse, pour le clarifier davantage (**Fig. 5**). Ainsi, la porte centrale (nord-est) de la forteresse près du défilé, l'une des tours (n^{o} 4 selon la numérotation de K. Shkorpil), une partie du mur sud, l'angle sud-ouest et une partie du mur ouest, ainsi qu'un secteur du mur au nord de la tour n^{o} 4 ont été étudiés. Dans cet endroit, la Tranchée I a été prolongée vers le sud, une coupure a été faite dans le mur ouest, la douve et le remblai devant lui ont été étudiés, et des structures intéressantes, liées à sa construction, ont été explorées. La Tranchée I a été étendue vers le nord-est, pratiquement sur toute la longueur de la forteresse, en découvrant des dizaines de maisons (huttes) et de structures associées, puis une nouvelle fortification (un mur inconnu) (**Fig. 5, 8** et **9**). Par des sondages, de petits secteurs des murs nord et sud, une entrée inconnue dans la partie ouest du mur sud-est après le passage étroit, ont été étudiés. Onze huttes et structures ont été dégagées à l'intérieur de la forteresse, ainsi que dix autres huttes et installations de production dans la direction sud-ouest du village, près de la rivière (**Fig. 4**–**5**), constituant le sujet des articles préliminaires[8]. Cependant, ces découvertes, ainsi que l'importante quantité de céramique et des centaines petites trouvailles, contribuent à éclaircir la chronologie et les étapes de la construction de la forteresse. Malheureusement, après l'an 2003, la nouvelle direction de la municipalité de Dulovo, où les forteresses étudiées pendant la période 2000–2004, « Kartal Kalé » et « Ayazmo », se trouvent, près du village de Ruyno, a créé des obstacles difficilement à surmonter, ce qui a conduit à l'arrêt des fouilles.

[3] RABOVYANOV 2011, p. 167–168. Voir aussi notre critique – ATANASOV 2012, p. 123–131.

[4] ATANASOV *et alii* 2000, p. 97–107.

[5] ATANASOV *et alii* 2000, p. 97–107 ; ATANASOV 2007 ; ATANASOV 2014a, p. 551–580 ; ATANASOV, MARINOV 2018, p. 60–86.

[6] YOTOV, ATANASOV 1997.

[7] ATANASOV, YOTOV, MICHAILOV 2011, p. 220–239 ; ATANASOV, YOTOV 2023, p. 195–214.

[8] ATANASOV 2014a, p. 551–580 ; ATANASOV, MARINOV 2018, p. 60–86.

Cela n'a pas permis de mener à bien l'étude complète selon le plan préalablement élaboré. Celui-ci prévoyait que, après les sondages, des fouilles systématiques commenceraient avec des tranchées parallèles au premier sondage (I), sur une largeur de 3 m et une longueur de 2 m, permettant ainsi de suivre la stratigraphie horizontale et verticale sur environ 70% de la forteresse, et du village non fortifié au pied de celle-ci, ainsi que de la forteresse voisine d' « Ayazmo », située à seulement 1,5 km au nord-ouest (**Fig. 4** et **7**)[9]. Bien que les fouilles se soient limitées aux sondages, nous pensons qu'il est grand temps de les présenter, afin que les résultats soient à la disposition des spécialistes. Cela concerne principalement la fortification, pour laquelle les données collectées sont plus complètes et qui, malgré les similitudes avec les autres quelques 30 forteresses du type « Skala – Tzar Assen – Ruyno », présente des différences intéressantes et des innovations qui nécessitent des commentaires et une discussion.

Prédécesseurs – un établissement thrace, une forteresse-*refugium* de l'Antiquité tardive

K. Shkorpil nous a présenté « Kartal Kalé » comme une forteresse médiévale typique, tandis que R. Rashev a enregistré des fragments de céramique thrace du V^e^–III^e^ siècles av. J.-C., en évitant des généralisations à cet égard, car il avait principalement des impressions de ses tournées et des fouilles dans la partie sud-ouest. Lors de nos fouilles des années 2000–2002 dans la moitié sud de la fortification, malgré une superficie relativement grande creusée jusqu'au sol stérile, nous n'avons pas enregistré de céramique et d'artefacts antérieurs à la fin du IX^e^ et le début du X^e^ siècle. En 2003, cependant, lors de l'étude de la section nord-est, nous avons découvert une quantité beaucoup plus importante de céramique thrace, et pour la première fois, nous avons documenté une fine couche culturelle avec de la céramique du Bas-Empire Romain, des petites trouvailles et des monnaies du IV^e^ au V^e^ siècle après J.-C. La concentration de la céramique thrace et romaine tardive était la plus élevée entre la porte nord-est près du col et la partie sud de la première fouille, environ 50 m au sud d'elle (**Fig. 5, 8**). Lors des fouilles de l'an 2003, il s'est avéré qu'il protégeait du sud-ouest une petite fortification triangulaire de la fin de l'Antiquité, avec une superficie d'environ 1,7 are, située dans le coin nord-est de la forteresse médiévale. Une étude spéciale y a été consacrée[10], et nous présenterons donc les résultats d'une manière concise ici. La meilleure étude a été menée sur le mur sud-ouest de cette fortification (**Fig. 8–9**). Tracée à environ 80 m de l'entrée de la forteresse et bloquant l'élévation inaccessible d'un rocher à l'autre, cette partie de la fortification atteint une hauteur de 50 m à la couronne rocheuse. L'enceinte est polygonale, avec une longueur totale de 59 m, une largeur de 1,50 m, construite en pierres de taille moyenne semi-travaillées, jointes avec du mortier blanc (**Fig. 9**). Le mur est fondé sur une roche solide, qui, dans cette section, n'est qu'à 0,25–0,40 m du sol contemporain. Presque au milieu, devant le mur, à une distance de 3,50 m l'un de l'autre, deux pilastres rectangulaires ont été formés avec une longueur de

[9] RASHEV 1982, p. 143–144, tab. XLVIII/1 ; ATANASOV 2014a, p. 551–580 ; ATANASOV, MARINOV 2018, p. 74–86, tab. 59, 73.

[10] ATANASOV 2015, p. 217–226 ; ATANASOV 2016a, p. 225–346.

1,60 m, s'étendant de 0,40 m devant le rideau (**Fig. 8–9**). Ce mur, bien qu'il ne soit pas très puissant, protège la fortification du côté sud-ouest, le plus accessible. Lors des travaux de construction au cours du X^e^ siècle, les matériaux de construction de la fortification de l'Antiquité tardive ont été démontés et réutilisés dans la construction du nouveau système de fortification. Dans de nombreux endroits, les pierres ont été complètement extraites, et ailleurs, comme pour les pilastres, seules une ou exceptionnellement deux rangées, superposées à partir de la base du mur, ont été préservées.

Déjà lors de l'étude de la forteresse médiévale, nous avons remarqué une tour (plutôt un bastion dense) inhabituelle et disproportionnellement grande pour ce type de fortification du X^e^ siècle. Elle a une forme en « U », avec une longueur de 12 m, une largeur de 5,30 m à la face et de 7,40 m à la cassure du mur (**Fig. 8** et **10**). Il flanque le centre de l'entrée au passage de l'élévation naturellement protégée (**Fig. 8**). La tour (bastion) sud est presque entièrement détruite et a été démolie dans le ravin. L'entrée entre les deux tours a une largeur de 5,20 m. Contrairement à la construction des murs du X^e^ siècle, ici les deux premières rangées de pierres sont liées avec du mortier blanc, avec lequel les joints sont également enduits. Les blocs de pierre sont relativement bien travaillés, certains atteignant des dimensions de 0,85 × 0,55 × 0,36 m (**Fig. 10**). Ils sont fondés directement sur le rocher, qui est très incliné et est une cause de l'affaissement de la construction vers le ravin. Pour niveler le terrain fortement incliné du coin nord-est, des morceaux de briques de l'Antiquité tardive et des tessons de poterie thrace ont été insérés sous les pierres. Le terrain rocheux inégal et fortement incliné pourrait être l'une des raisons de l'érection de tours-bastions relativement grandes. Il est probable que lors de leur construction en hauteur, des briques de construction aient été utilisées, car environ 200 fragments de briques de l'Antiquité tardive, des *tegulae* et des *imbrices* ont été découverts à l'entrée. La céramique de construction a également été trouvée en quantités limitées autour du mur de la forteresse du sud-ouest. Compte tenu des dimensions exceptionnellement grandes des deux tours-bastions, nous n'excluons pas la possibilité qu'elles aient été fusionnées en une seule tour-porte massive, avec des dimensions de 15,80 × 7,40 m, qui ferme étroitement l'accès à la fortification de rocher à rocher (**Fig. 8** et **10**).

Il est remarquable que, tant dans le coin sud-est et sud-ouest que lors de l'étude du mur ouest, adjacent à la tour, aucune trace indéniable du mur de la fin de l'Antiquité n'a été enregistrée. Cette caractéristique impose la formation d'au moins deux hypothèses. La première suppose que compte tenu de l'inaccessibilité naturelle de l'élévation du nord et du sud-ouest, et de l'accessibilité uniquement depuis l'est et l'ouest, seules ces approches étaient fortifiées. Ainsi, au sud, d'un rebord rocheux à l'autre, un mur a été érigé, et du nord-est au passage, deux puissantes tours-bastions ont été construites (**Fig. 6**), unies en hauteur dans une grande tour-porte. La deuxième hypothèse est peu probable. Cela suggère qu'il y avait des murs à l'est et à l'ouest, mais aucune trace n'en est visible.

La méthode de construction, les nombreux fragments de céramique domestique et de construction, ainsi que les monnaies (deux exemplaires de l'empereur Théodose I (379–395) et un de l'empereur Théodose II (daté entre 425 et 450), indiquent un refuge fortifié de l'Antiquité tardive pour la population locale, avec

une superficie de 1,7 ares. La mince couche culturelle, les quelques trouvailles et monnaies suggèrent une habitation de courte durée, de la seconde moitié du IVe siècle jusqu'au milieu du Ve siècle, lorsque la fortification a été détruite et abandonnée – probablement lors des invasions hunniques en Dobroudja d'après l'an 422, probablement en 434 ou 437[11].

La forteresse du haut Moyen Âge

Il n'est pas toujours clair dans quelle partie du nouveau mur de la forteresse du Xe siècle les matériaux du rempart tardo-antique démonté ont été intégrés. Dans le cas des piliers, on peut voir que les pierres sont préservées en une seule rangée. Dans la partie sud-ouest, où les études sur la fortification et les sondages ont été concentrées, les pierres, les tuiles et les briques enduites de blanc avec de la chaux n'ont pas été enregistrées, à l'exception de trois fragments de briques près du mur sud-ouest découverts à la limite de la Tranchée I. Ces matériaux de construction sont probablement réutilisés dans la partie nord-est, à proximité du mur tardo-antique, mais, dans ce secteur, des parties du mur médiéval n'ont pas été identifiées. La porte près du passage (**Fig. 5, 8** et **10**) est la seule zone où nous avons documenté la réutilisation et la rénovation d'un élément de la fortification tardo-antique, un fait que nous avons commenté en détail ci-dessus. En hauteur, les côtés de la tour ont été surélevés au-dessus de la deuxième rangée soudée avec des pierres légèrement plus petites et semi-traitées, dans la technique en moellons lutés d'argile. Nous supposons que tous les autres murs de la fortification tardo-antique ont été démontés et que les matériaux de construction ont été réutilisés dans l'édification de la partie nord-est de la forteresse du haut Moyen Âge, dont l'enceinte est presque 20 fois plus grande que celle de la fortification tardo-antique, atteignant environ 48 ares.

I. Le mur nord

Comme l'ont observé K. Shkorpil et R. Rashev, les murs nord et sud-est suivent approximativement la configuration du terrain. Le mur nord de la forteresse, d'une longueur de 355 m (y compris le petit mur tournant de 15 m), est érigé sur la pente la plus raide et pratiquement inaccessible (**Fig. 5**). Pour clarifier sa structure, la Tranchée I a été creusée approximativement au milieu, entre le point où l'angle nord-ouest de la forteresse tardo-antique s'élève et le tournant incliné vers le sud. L'hypothèse de R. Rashev, sur l'aspect plus mince de la fortification, s'avère correcte, car, dans cette section, la courtine a une largeur de 2,35 m. Environ 2,40 m des parements nord et sud du mur ont été dégagés, et dans cette section, le rempart repose directement sur le roc continental. Les deux rangées inférieures sont constituées par de pierres partiellement travaillées de grandes (environ 0,82 × 0,38 × 0,40 / 0,65 × 0,30 × 0,28 m) et moyennes (environ 0,25 × 0,20 × 0,18 m) tailles, liées avec de l'argile jaune (**Fig. 11**).

II. Le mur sud-est

Comme nous l'avons déjà précisé, la courtine a été étudiée par un sondage de R. Rashev, qui a enregistré une largeur de 2,80 m (**Fig. 5**) et a confirmé l'observation de K. Shkorpil (**Fig. 2** et **5**), selon laquelle, le mur fait un tournant vers le sud, après qu'il continue vers le nord-est jusqu'à la porte centrale. Cependant, au début du printemps de l'an 2001, après le nettoyage de la forêt précédemment coupée, nous

[11] HISTORIA 1984, p. 162 ; MITEVA 1989, p. 143–151.

avons découvert une élévation artificielle du terrain, parallèle au mur sud après le tournant, se poursuivant approximativement en ligne droite jusqu'à la porte, près de la section ouest de la piste sud. Cela a nécessité la mise en place du Sondage n° 2 (**Fig. 5**), qui a donné des résultats inattendus et a modifié les plans de ce secteur dressés par K. Shkorpil et R. Rashev.

Sondage n° 2. Il s'est avéré qu'à l'origine, le mur sud-est de la forteresse ne faisait pas un tournant vers le sud, mais se courbait très légèrement de la principale porte nord-est jusqu'au coin sud-ouest de la forteresse (**Fig. 5**). Dans cette section, la muraille est préservée en hauteur jusqu'à 2 m, et dans le Sondage n° 2, la superstructure a une largeur de 2,80 à 2,85 m, tandis que la substructure mesure 2,95 m (**Fig. 12–13**). La fondation se compose d'une rangée de pierres plus grandes et mieux travaillées, enfoncées d'environ 0,25 m dans le lœss stérile (**Fig. 12** – coupe B-B1, D-D1, **Fig. 14**). La banquette est d'environ 0,10 à 0,12 m, après que commence l'élévation, construite – dans les rangées inférieures – en moellons lutés d'argile. Le profil ouest dans le Sondage n° 2 (**Fig. 12** – coupe B-B1, **Fig. 14**) est très intéressant. Au-dessus du lœss stérile, dans lequel la base du mur est enfoncée, il y a une couche de terre noire d'une épaisseur d'environ 0,18 m, sans céramique ou artefacts. Cette couche documente le niveau médiéval du sol – c'est-à-dire le niveau du sol avant la construction du mur. Au-dessus de celle-là, près du mur, on trouve une couche de terre jaune, environ 0,15 m en épaisseur, également sans céramique ni artefacts, probablement accumulée par le lœss excavé lors de la fondation. En hauteur, une fine bande avec du charbon et des traces visibles de feu suivit, située à 0,20 m au-dessus de la banquette, et une deuxième couche de terre jaune, qui mesure environ 0,15 m en épaisseur près du mur. La couche suivante a une épaisseur de 0,50 à 0,80 m et est composée de terre noire mélangée, contenant de la céramique du haut Moyen Âge (X^{e} siècle), de petites pierres et d'autres impuretés. Au-dessus, une couche distincte d'environ 0,80 m près du mur, qui s'amincit vers l'intérieur, est saturée de débris du mur – des fragments de pierre mélangés avec de la terre noire et jaune. En haut se trouve la couche de sol noir contemporaine. L'incendie est clairement détecté dans la coupe que nous avons réalisé au long du sondage dans la moitié sud du mur de la forteresse du côté extérieur sur toute la largeur au-dessus de la deuxième rangée de pierres (**Fig. 12** – coupe C-C1, **Fig. 13**). Grâce à cette coupe, la structure du mur est bien visible. Les parements sont construits avec des pierres plus grandes, grossièrement travaillées (de 0,40 × 0,45 × 0,32 m à 0,82 × 0,45 × 0,38 m), tandis que l'emplissage est composé de pierres moyennes et petites liées d'argile.

Un autre détail important que nous avons constaté lors du sondage dans ce secteur est la relation entre le mur sud documenté et le mur au niveau du tournant, qui, à un angle d'environ 90 degrés, continue vers le sud et qui, selon les observations de K. Shkorpil et R. Rashev (**Fig. 2** et **5**), est fondé en même temps que les autres murs de la forteresse. Comme nous l'avons déjà mentionné, à première vue, il y a un mur adossé à l'ancienne muraille du sud, en présentant des différences tant dans la fondation, que dans la construction de l'élévation.

Tout d'abord, il est plus étroit (environ 2,25 m), il n'y a pas de fondation avec un socle, il est directement posé sur le terrain existant et construit avec des pierres plus petites (**Fig. 12** – coupe A-A1, **Fig. 13**). Le mur oriental de Ruyno a peut-être été détruit en raison de la forte pente du terrain au sud. Cela s'est probablement produit

après un incendie important, car de nombreuses pierres sont brûlées et il y a des charbons de bois sur le site. En dessous se trouve de la céramique du X^{e} siècle, mais il manque des fragments caractéristiques du XI^{e} siècle.

Sondage n^{o} 3. Un nouveau sondage (n^{o} 3) a été placé à 60 m au nord-est du Sondage n^{o} 2, où nous avons certainement documenté la direction et les paramètres du mur sud initial (**Fig. 5** et **15**). Le mur dans cette section est exposé sur une longueur de 2 m à l'intérieur et 2,50 m à l'extérieur. Il a une largeur de 2,80 m et est préservé à une hauteur d'environ 1 mètre, en deux rangées de pierres relativement grandes, grossièrement travaillées, des deux côtés liées par de l'argile jaune. Dans cette section, et en général dans la partie nord-est, le mur est fondé directement sur le rocher.

Sondage n^{o} 5 a été placé dans le secteur le plus à l'est du mur sud-est, où se trouve la connexion avec l'angle sud-ouest du mur des IV^{e}-V^{e} siècles (**Fig. 5**).

Malheureusement, un trou moderne perturbe la reproduction plus nette de la situation archéologique. On voit clairement comment l'extrémité sud du mur de l'Antiquité tardive a été détruite. Les pierres de parement ici sont également de plus grandes dimensions et mieux façonnées, et elles sont également posées directement sur le rocher.

Sondage n^{o} 4 a été réalisé à l'angle sud-ouest du rempart médiéval dans le but de vérifier si une tour d'angle manque vraiment, comme c'est le cas à l'angle nord-ouest, ou s'il y a une porte, car sur le terrain, on observe une interruption du mur (**Fig. 5** et **16**). Tout d'abord, il a été établi que la largeur du mur ouest est d'environ 3,60 m, tandis que le mur sud, similaire aux autres sections, est un peu plus étroit – environ 2,90 m, et à l'angle 3,20 m. Deuxièmement, il a été clairement établi qu'il n'y a pas de tour d'angle ni de porte. L'affaissement du terrain est dû à la destruction (d'une longueur de 5 à 8 m) de la superstructure jusqu'à la base (dans l'angle). Les profils sont illustratifs.

A. Profil dans la coupe du mur sud, à 2,10 m à l'est de l'angle interne du tournant du mur de la fortification (**Fig. 16** – coupe E-E1). Il y a un fondement composé par deux rangées de pierres partiellement taillées, enfoncé d'environ 0,40 m dans le sol jaune (mais ce n'est pas lœss stérile). Il est suivi d'un petit banquet d'environ 0,10 m, puis la superstructure continue vers le haut, construite de manière similaire aux autres secteurs étudiés du mur sud. Au-dessus du sol jaune, on trouve successivement des traces d'incendie, environ 0,30 m de terre noire, le niveau de circulation, recouvert d'une couche de débris provenant du mur effondré.

B. Le deuxième profil a été documenté à l'intérieur du tournant lui-même (**Fig. 16** – coupe F-F1). La stratigraphie est très intéressante ici. Nous avons enregistré un fondement enfoncé à une profondeur de 0,40 m – environ 0,10 m dans le niveau de circulation médiéval (sol noir) et environ 0,30 m dans le niveau de circulation, recouvert d'une couche de débris provenant du mur effondré. Il est composé de grandes pierres partiellement taillées, et des pierres plus petites ont été utilisées pour le nivellement. Ainsi, une sorte de plate-forme est formée, qui s'élève devant le parement intérieur du mur. C'est un banquet d'une largeur d'environ 0,55 à 0,65 m, au-dessus duquel commence l'élévation du mur. Une telle fondation de type plate-forme aussi large n'est pas connue dans d'autres fortifications du haut Moyen Âge (X^{e}–XI^{e} siècles). En hauteur au-dessus de lui, comme pour les autres profils autour

des murs de la forteresse, il y a une épaisse couche, d'environ 0,60 m, de terre jaune compactée est clairement visible près du mur. Au-dessus, grâce à la présence de charbon de bois et de cendres (épaisseur de 0,10 à 0,14 m), un incendie est clairement enregistré, dont le niveau coïncide avec la première rangée de la superstructure du mur, composée par de grandes pierres semi-traitées (environ 0,60 × 0,50 × 0,45 m). Au-dessus de cette première rangée, la superstructure du mur est complètement détruite, sur environ 5 m de longueur, créant avant les fouilles l'illusion d'une interruption ou d'une entrée dans cette section de la courtine (**Fig. 16**). Au-dessus du niveau incendié, se trouve une couche d'environ 0,25 m de terre noire, au-dessus de laquelle se trouvent les débris du mur – des pierres fines et plus grosses, et tout en haut la couche moderne de terre noire.

C. Le profil nord est également expressif (**Fig. 16** – coupe V–V1). Au-dessus du lœss stérile se trouve à nouveau une couche épaisse de terre jaune avec des impuretés, au-dessus de laquelle le niveau de l'incendie est clairement visible, suivi par une couche de terre noire recouvrant en hauteur les débris du mur, scellés par l'humus moderne.

III. Le mur occidental de la forteresse avec les tours

Avec le Sondage n° 4 au nord du coin sud-est de la forteresse, nous avons continué à découvrir le parement intérieur du mur ouest sur une longueur de 9,5 m et le parement extérieur sur une longueur de 2,25 m (**Fig. 5** et **16** – vue A-A1). Ici, le mur de la forteresse a une largeur d'environ 3,50 m (environ 0,50 m plus large que celui au sud de la saillie), avec les deux faces constituées de grosses pierres cassées liées par de l'argile, et le remplissage (l'emplecton) de pierres plus petites et moyennes. Cependant, il n'y a pas d'essai apparent d'alignement horizontal des rangées de pierres, du moins sur les parements extérieurs. Un sondage en profondeur a également été réalisé ici, révélant la stratigraphie et la structure suivantes (**Fig. 16** – coupe C-C1). Nous avons enregistré un fondement enfoncé à une profondeur de 0,98 m dans le niveau de circulation médiéval (une couche de terre noire d'une épaisseur d'environ 0,15 m) et dans le lœss jaune (environ 0,85 m), construit avec des pierres semi-traitées de taille moyenne et plus grande. Dans le lœss stérile, des pierres cassées sont disposées relativement densément sans joint visible. Cette plate-forme est enfoncée dans le lœss compact à une profondeur d'environ 0,70 m et a une largeur d'environ 0,55 à 0,60 m – approximativement la même que la largeur de la plate-forme décrite ci-dessus près du parement intérieur du mur sud au niveau de la saillie, mais elle est enfoncée un peu plus superficiellement. Au-dessus de la plate-forme, nous observons à nouveau le niveau médiéval de circulation (0,10–0,15 m de terre noire), suivi d'une couche de terre jaune compacte de 0,60 à 0,70 m le long du mur, puis du foyer au-dessus, des débris du mur composés de petites et moyennes pierres cassées, scellés par la terre noire contemporaine. Au-dessus du niveau de circulation médiéval, avec un léger retrait d'environ 0,08 m, commence la superstructure du mur, qui est préservée à une hauteur de 1,70 à 1,80 m dans cette section.

À environ 60 m de l'angle sud-est (Sondage n° 4) de la forteresse médiévale, la tour n° 4 a été étudiée, ainsi que de petites sections de mur au sud (environ 2 m) et au nord (1,5 m) de celle-ci (**Fig. 2, 5** et **18**). La tour a une forme rectangulaire avec des dimensions de 6,05 × 5,50 m, appliqué avec un joint sur le mur de la forteresse. La méthode de construction est similaire à celle du mur de la forteresse, avec

des parements aux grandes pierres cassées semi-traitées et l'emplecton de petites et moyennes pierres cassées, liées par de l'argile jaunâtre avec des traces de terre noire. La fondation a 0,40 m de profondeur et atteint le rocher. Dans ce secteur, la construction de la sous-structure est similaire à celle des autres sections, mais les fondations sont plus profondes, et la maçonnerie est en rangées alignées. Des petites différences dans la stratigraphie sont observées dans la coupe. La fondation du mur derrière la tour, d'une profondeur d'environ 0,65 m, est enfoncée dans le sol noir compact, soit environ 0,15 m dans le niveau médiéval de circulation, soit environ 0,50 m dans le lœss stérile. Ensuite, nous observons une couche dense de terre jaune compactée avec de petites impuretés (environ 0,40 m ici), sur laquelle se trouve la couche habituelle de débris du mur, scellée par le sol noir contemporain. La différence est que dans ce sondage, nous n'avons pas enregistré de traces de l'incendie sous les débris du mur. Ces traces ne sont pas non plus détectées à l'extérieur du mur, préservé à cette section à une hauteur d'environ 1,25 m. Cependant, sous les pierres tombées, nous avons documenté deux tessons céramiques confectionnés à la roue rapide, datés au XI^{e} siècle. Juste à l'extérieur du mur, à 4 m au nord de la tour n^{o} 4, à peu près au niveau du sol contemporain, une pierre relativement bien travaillée a été découverte, sur laquelle est gravé le signe « IYI ». La pierre mesure 0,32 m de hauteur, 0,30 m de largeur, 0,42 m d'épaisseur, et le signe « IYI », à une hauteur de 0,13 m, est gravé uniformément avec une largeur de 0,015 m (**Fig. 19**).

À 10 m vers le nord de la tour n^{o} 4, la Tranchée I traverse le mur de la forteresse (**Fig. 5**), exposant ainsi ses parements (intérieur et extérieur) sur une largeur de 2 m (**Fig. 20–21** – vue A-A1) et créant une coupe du mur de la forteresse (**Fig. 22–25**). Ensuite, la tranchée a été étendue vers l'ouest, traversant la douve devant le mur de la forteresse, une petite élévation de terre, et une structure devant celle-ci (**Fig. 22–23**). Le mur de la forteresse dans cette section est le plus massif, avec une largeur d'environ 3,60 à 3,90 m dans la partie la mieux préservée, construit avec de gros blocs semi-ouvrés des deux côtés et un emplecton de pierres moyennes et petites liés avec de l'argile jaune. Du côté interne, le mode de destruction du mur de la forteresse est clairement visible (**Fig. 21**). Environ 1 m devant le mur, une rangée de gros blocs semi-travaillés renversés a été enregistré (jusqu'à 0,55 × 0,40 × 0,35 m), probablement issus des rangées supérieures du mur (**Fig. 21** – coupe C-C1). Des blocs de tailles diverses sont tombés près du mur – probablement issus des rangs inférieurs (**Fig. 21** – coupe B-B1). Cette structure est particulièrement visible dans la coupe du mur de la forteresse (**Fig. 23–25**). Le fondement relativement profond du côté interne est particulièrement visible, avec un socle large de 0,20 m. Il a été étudié à une profondeur de 0,70 m depuis le niveau de circulation avant la construction de la forteresse et à 0,90 m depuis le socle, passant à travers une ancienne couche d'humus de 0,15 m, le lœss stérile de 0,40 m et atteignant l'argile jaune-brun et la roche mère érodée /continent/, dans laquelle il est enfoncé d'environ 0,05 m (**Fig. 24–25**). Au-dessus du socle, on observe une couche de terre jaune avec de petites impuretés, d'une épaisseur de 0,60 m, probablement accumulée à partir de la terre excavée pour les fondations et nivelée après la construction du mur. Au-dessus, on trouve le niveau du sol après la fin de la construction, marqué par une fine couche de terre noire et des traces évidentes d'un incendie intense, c'est-à-dire du charbon et de la cendre. En hauteur, on trouve les pierres tombées du mur détruit, dont certaines ont été

fortement brûlées. Une stratigraphie similaire est observée du côté externe du mur, dont la fondation est encastrée dans le substrat rocheux et l'argile brunâtre avec de petites couches de calcaire. En hauteur, on trouve du lœss stérile, du sol noir médiéval, de la terre jaune extraite lors de l'excavation de la douve. Au-dessus du lœss, un incendie intense a été enregistré, scellé par les débris du mur de la forteresse – des pierres tombées, certaines fortement brûlées. Sous celles-ci, une croix-*enkolpion* de la fin du X^e^ au début du XI^e^ siècle a été découverte (**Fig. 26**)[12] et une monnaie byzantine anonyme de la classe A2 (1028–1034/1036) (**Fig. 27**)[13]. Remarquable et rencontré pour la première fois dans la construction de forteresses médiévales, est le rétrécissement de la fondation vers le bas, enregistré dans les deux coupes, en résultant une forme de cuvette (**Fig. 18** et **23**–**25**). Si elle mesure 3,50 m de large au niveau du socle, elle mesure 2,68 m au fond. L'anomalie dans la largeur de la base et l'inclinaison de la superstructure du mur peut être attribuée à plusieurs facteurs. Il est possible que la largeur réelle de la base lors de la construction de cette section spécifique du mur ait été différente de celle enregistrée lors du nettoyage de la surface moderne, peut-être autour de 3,35 à 3,40 m au lieu de 3,60 à 3,90 m.

Plusieurs explications peuvent être envisagées pour cet écart d'environ 0,40 à 0,70 m. Il pourrait résulter de la forme spécifique du fondement en forme d'abreuvoir, qui aurait pu causer un rétrécissement de la base. Cependant, si cela était le cas, on pourrait s'attendre à ce que le mur penche vers l'intérieur, affectant l'ensemble de la superstructure, et non seulement le parement extérieur.

Une autre explication pourrait être liée au matériau de bassement, en particulier à l'accumulation d'une épaisse couche d'argile jaune extraite lors de l'excavation des fondations. Cette accumulation aurait pu agir comme un obstacle contre l'inclinaison du mur vers l'intérieur. La présence d'un socle, en particulier, pourrait avoir joué le rôle d'empêcher le mouvement du mur dans cette direction.

Il est également suggéré que des modifications ultérieures, telles que des réparations ou des interventions humaines après la construction initiale, pourraient avoir contribué à cet écart. Cependant, cela reste simplement une hypothèse dans le contexte actuel.

En fin de compte, une analyse approfondie des données géo archéologiques et des détails stratigraphiques de la zone, ainsi que des comparaisons avec d'autres parties de la forteresse, pourraient être nécessaires pour élucider davantage les raisons spécifiques de ces anomalies dans la construction du mur. Il est possible que la présence du socle, en particulier avec l'accumulation d'une épaisse couche d'argile jaune extraite lors de l'excavation des fondations, ait constitué un obstacle au mouvement du mur vers l'intérieur. Une explication potentielle de l'inclinaison du mur vers l'extérieur, créant une forme d'éventail, pourrait également être liée au grand angle de pente et à un séisme important, une question qui sera discutée plus en détail ci-dessous.

Il semble moins probable que la cause réside dans la méthode de construction,

[12] YOTOV, ATANASOV 1997, p. 95, tab. XVIII/320 ; ATANASOV 2016b, p. 296, fig. 88–89, tab. LXXI/316, 317, 322.

[13] Pour la chronologie des *folleis* byzantins, classes A2 et B, voir ATANASOV 1999, p. 33–53.

car les autres murs de la forteresse ont été construits de la même manière sans l'enregistrement d'une inclinaison similaire.

L'éventail observé dans la superstructure du mur dans cette section pourrait être le résultat d'une grande inclinaison et d'un fort tremblement de terre, que nous commenterons ci-dessous. Cette déviation de la construction initiale pourrait également être facilitée par l'erreur de construction liée au rétrécissement du fondement vers la base, agissant comme un facteur aggravant pour la fissuration du mur en cas de tremblement de terre.

La méthode de construction a été particulièrement bien observée dans la coupe du mur de la forteresse dans la zone de la Tranchée I (**Fig. 24–25**). Les deux faces du soubassement sont constituées par de pierres de taille moyenne, avec une meilleure qualité d'assemblage observée uniquement dans la rangée supérieure du banquet.

Il serait intéressant d'approfondir l'analyse géo archéologique et de comparer ces découvertes avec d'autres parties de la forteresse, pour mieux comprendre les facteurs qui ont contribué à cette inclinaison particulière du mur dans ce secteur spécifique. L'emplecton est principalement composé de petites pierres compactées (semblables à du feutre) et de pierres cassées de taille moyenne, liées par d'argile jaune, qui ne les entoure pas uniformément. Les deux parements de l'élévation de la muraille sont construits en pierre cassée relativement grande (dimensions enregistrées : 0,60 × 0,40 × 0,35 m) avec des surfaces grossièrement nivelées. Quatre rangées de pierres ont été préservées en hauteur, mais les tentatives de les aligner n'ont pas été menées à bien. L'intérieur a été façonné avec plus de soin, tandis que le parement extérieur pourrait pencher ultérieurement, en provocant des déplacements. L'emplecton diffère de celui utilisé dans la fondation. À côté des petites et moyennes pierres cassées, des pierres plus grandes ont également été utilisées, avec une tentative de les disposer verticalement pour aligner le noyau et les côtés du mur. L'argile jaune-rougeâtre a été utilisée plus abondamment, avec un remblayage dense de couches horizontales (une sorte de nivellement ?) sur environ 0,50 à 0,60 m.

IV. La douve et le remblai devant le mur ouest de la forteresse.

1. La douve. Pour renforcer la défense de cette section à risque, où l'accès au château est le plus facile, une douve a été creusée à 5 m devant le parement extérieur du mur ouest sur toute sa longueur (**Fig. 5** et **22–23**), visible actuellement sous la forme d'une dépression, avec une largeur de 8,5 m et une profondeur atteignant 1,95 à 2,10 m. Après la réalisation de la Tranchée I, ses dimensions et la stratigraphie du profil ont été clairement établies. Le niveau de construction était au-dessus du sol médiéval, composé de sol noir d'une épaisseur d'environ 0,30 à 0,50 m, à une altitude de 166,45 à 166,60 m au-dessus du niveau de la mer. La douve est creusée à environ 2 m dans le sol existant, traversant le sol noir et le lœss stérile (environ 1,05 m), et environ 0,95 m dans la roche calcaire, pour atteindre l'altitude de 164,47 m au-dessus du niveau de la mer. Une partie du lœss jaune-rougeâtre prélevé, avec une épaisseur de 0,45 à 0,50 m, a été empilée sur la berme entre le mur et la douve et une autre partie a été mise devant la douve, formant ainsi un petit remblai.

2. Le remblai. Il a été réalisé dans la séquence suivante – au-dessus du sol existant composé d'une couche de terre noire, environ 0,30 à 0,35 m de terre jaune a été déposée, extraite du lœss lors du creusement de la douve. Ensuite, environ 0,25 m d'argile brun clair contenant de petites concrétions pierreuses, extraites du fond de

la douve, a été ajouté. Ensuite, à nouveau environ 0,30 m de terre jaune, extraite de l'horizon supérieur du lœss, scellée par environ 0,35 m de terre noire contemporaine (**Fig. 22–23**). Sur ce fond, après la fin des opérations de creusement et de terrassement, le remblai avait une largeur à la base d'environ 4,5 m et était préservé jusqu'à une hauteur d'environ 1,10 m dès le sol contemporain. La douve avait une profondeur d'environ 2,25 m, une largeur dans la partie supérieure de 5,50 m, et son fond légèrement incurvé, taillé dans la roche, mesurait environ 1,55 m. Au fond même, quelques petites pierres ont été trouvées, ainsi que deux fragments de poterie du début de la période médiévale, l'un d'entre eux couvert d'engobe rouge. La douve a été comblée par un remplissage de 1,5 m d'épaisseur (entre 164,47 et 165,95 m de profondeur), selon l'ordre suivant : près du fond, il y a environ 0,20 m de terre jaune (arrachée de la berme et du remblai), suivi d'une couche d'environ 0,55 m de la terre noire, avec de petites pierres et un grand fragment d'une jarre de la fin du X^e^ – début du XI^e^ siècle. Il semble que la douve n'ait pas été nettoyée au XI^e^ siècle. En haut, on peut suivi une couche d'environ 0,75 m d'épaisseur, contenant le sol noir contemporain, presque sans impuretés.

3. Structures devant les douves associées à la fortification (« kalila »). Même avant les fouilles de l'an 2000, nous avions remarqué que presque devant toute la façade du mur ouest, à environ 15–20 m devant celui-ci et environ 8–10 m devant les douves, il y avait une série de neuf formations artificielles – des dépressions dans le sol, en forme d'un bassin circulaire, le diamètre d'environ 5 à 7 m (**Fig. 5**). Une de cette structures a été entièrement explorée et deux structures adjacentes ont été partiellement fouillées (**Fig. 21**). Il s'agit d'une fosse elliptique en forme d'auge, située à une altitude de 165,08 m, en mesurant 3,60 × 3,10 m, creusée à 1,40 m du terrain moderne dans le lœss stérile. La fosse était remplie d'argile jaunâtre-rougeâtre jusqu'à une profondeur d'environ 0,95 à 1,05 m et scellée par le sol noir moderne. En ethnographie, ces fosses pour préparer la pâte argileuse utilisée pour les moellons sont appelées « kalila » (**Fig. 23**). Dans les niveaux archéologiques plus élevés, de 0,40 à 0,60 m au-dessus du terrain moderne, nous avons retrouvé une dizaine de fragments de poteries, couvert d'engobe rouge (**Fig. 28**), datant de la première moitié du X^e^ siècle, et des ossements d'animaux. Dans les horizons inférieurs, jusqu'à environ 0,90 m au-dessus du fond de la tranchée, on a enregistré l'absence de poterie, d'ossements et de trouvailles. Le remplissage est formé uniquement d'argile jaune-rougeâtre. A côté, à 1,10 m au nord-ouest et à environ 1 m au sud-est, ont été tracées les limites de deux autres fosses, à une altitude de 165,38 m, plus petites, d'un diamètre d'environ 2,10 m, creusées à une moindre profondeur. Leur remplissage est similaire – environ 0,085 m d'argile jaune-rougeâtre sans aucune impureté. Très probablement, ces fosses ont été utilisées pour obtenir une sorte de « kalila » médiévale, l'argile mélangée avec de l'eau pour la construction du mur de la forteresse (les moellons). Il est possible que le lœss jaune extrait des douves ait été mélangé avec de l'eau dans les petites fosses et transféré après dans la grande fosse utilisée comme dépôt, d'où il a été extrait pour la construction du mur de la forteresse. Évidemment, les fosses ont fonctionné pendant la construction du mur, respectivement avant le creusement complet des douves.

V. Le mur sud de la forteresse, une construction additionnelle

Dans le Sondage n° 2, près du mur tournant, il a été constaté que le mur fixé

au joint, sans fondation enterrée, a une épaisseur de 2,20 à 2,25 m (échantillons nos 5, 12–13). Nous sommes en difficulté de reconstituer ce mur, car dans cette section, presque toute la courtine a été détruite, en restant visible seulement un renflement d'environ 1 mètre sur le sol. On distingue la première rangée de pierres de taille moyenne posées sur la couche de lœss et non sur la couche médiévale de terre noire. Apparemment, lors de la construction, la couche de terre noire a été enlevée et le mur repose sur du lœss solide. Les trois tours illustrées sur le plan de K. Shkorpil (nos VI, VII et VIII) (**Fig. 2**) ne sont plus visibles sur le terrain. C'est pourquoi nous avons fait le Sondage no 6, approximativement à l'emplacement où la tour VII est indiquée et à l'ouest de celle-ci (**Fig. 5**). Aucune trace de la tour n'a été identifiée, mais nous avons documenté une petite élévation à cet endroit, et, après le nettoyage du mur sud, on avait découvert une large porte d'environ 6 m de largeur. Ces dimensions ne sont pas précises, car le mur n'a pas de fondation et, avec une largeur d'environ 2 à 2,20 m, était mal préservé, presque « dispersé » sur le terrain. Il y avait des informations sur l'extraction de pierre à l'époque moderne pour la production de chaux, et c'est justement cette section, la plus accessible du mur de la forteresse, celle qui offre une telle matière première. Il n'est pas exclu que les pierres des éventuelles tours nos VI–VIII aient été extraites à cette époque, les détruisant à un tel point qu'elles n'ont pas été remarquées par R. Rashev en 1974, et aujourd'hui elles ne sont pas du tout visibles sur le terrain. Il est également possible que K. Shkorpil a été trompé par d'importants amoncellements de pierres dans cette section. Le chemin qui commence près de la rivière asséchée au XVIIIe siècle d'où les habitants tiraient de l'eau et atteint la porte sud est bien perceptible même aujourd'hui. Ensuite, il continue, par une élévation, dans la direction nord-est, jusqu'à la carrière de pierre (**Fig. 5**).

VI. Le remblai et la douve devant la section ouest du mur sud de la forteresse ont été étudiés et décrits par R. Rashev en 1974[14]. Selon lui, devant le mur, on peut voir une petite plate-forme inclinée (une berme). La douve a été creusée à environ 6 m devant le mur avec une profondeur maximale de 1,10 m, la terre excavée étant amassée devant lui sous la forme d'une petite levée de terre large de 5 à 6 m et haute de 0,60 à 0,80 m. Il présente des similitudes avec la douve devant le mur ouest avec les tours, mais aussi certaines différences, peut-être dictées par le terrain escarpé. Dans ce cas, ce qui est intéressant, c'est la raison par laquelle une douve d'une longueur de 107 m a été creusée dans ce terrain fortement incliné, mais seulement près du mur tournant (**Fig. 5**).

VII. Carrières d'extraction de pierre

La première carrière de pierre se trouve à environ 80 m au nord-est de la porte sud, menant jusqu'au lit asséchée de la rivière (**Fig. 5**). Le chemin vers la porte continue vers l'est et atteint des falaises abruptes, où on observe l'extraction de pierres par des rainures et par l'éclatement de la roche (**Fig. 29**).

La deuxième carrière a été enregistrée dans la corniche rocheuse au sud de la porte centrale, sous le passage (**Fig. 5**). Les pierres y étaient extraites de manière similaire.

[14] RASHEV 1981, p. 143–144.

Etapes de construction de la fortification

Initialement, vers le V^e siècle av. J.-C., un établissement thrace non fortifié est apparu sur cet endroit naturellement fortifié, qui occupait plus de 2 ares. Il est intéressant de comprendre pourquoi les Thraco-Gètes locaux ont choisi cet endroit naturellement protégé dans la région. La plus grande concentration de céramique thrace au nord-est coïncide presque avec les limites de la forteresse de la fin de l'époque romaine, mais au sud-ouest, elle s'étend en périphérie sur la pente sud. La céramique et une fine couche culturelle du V^e au III^e siècle av. J.-C. ont été documentées par R. Rashev dès 1974, lors de la fouille qu'il a menée.

En suivant les monnaies et la céramique de la seconde moitié du IV^e siècle av. J.-C., il est probable que les habitants des villages non fortifiés voisins ont érigé une petite fortification (un refuge) sur cet emplacement naturellement protégé (l'un des plus adaptés à cette fin en Dobroudja). Ils ont probablement construit une enceinte fortifiée, bloquant la partie nord-ouest du méandre de rocher avec une muraille. La fortification a été détruite et abandonnée avant le milieu du V^e siècle, probablement lors des invasions dévastatrices des Huns en Dobroudja.

Au début du X^e siècle (sinon même à la fin du IX^e siècle), la population protobulgare des villages non fortifiés des alentours commence la construction d'une grande forteresse. Il n'est pas exclu que cette construction ait été initiée et contrôlée par le pouvoir central, car pour la première fois, des pierres partiellement travaillées avec des signes incisés visibles à distance ont été découvertes dans les murs sud et ouest (non seulement des *graffiti* incisés avec une pointe fine). Ces signes sont similaires à ceux trouvés jusqu'à présent uniquement dans les centres de pouvoir étatiques comme ceux de Preslav, Pliska, Drastar (Silistra), près du village de Khan Krum et de Păcuiul lui Soare (actuellement en Roumanie). Un signe particulièrement significatif dans ce contexte est le symbole « IYI » (**Fig. 19**), considéré comme l'insigne de la famille dirigeante bulgare du khan Krum, du début du IX^e siècle jusqu'à la fin du X^e siècle[15]. Par ailleurs, contrairement aux autres forteresses de ce type, y compris les voisines telles que Ayazmo, Okorsh, Skała, etc., les murs de cette fortification reposent sur des fondations profondes, allant de 0,15 à environ 0,90 m au-dessous du niveau médiéval du sol, avec des sections atteignant la roche continentale dans les secteurs les plus accessibles à l'attaque, à l'ouest et au sud-ouest. Les parties où les murs reposent directement sur le roc (la moitié nord et est de la partie sud) sont solidement ancrées. Les murs de la forteresse ont une rare épaisseur, variant de 3,40 à 3,50 m du côté ouest (le plus exposé aux attaques) à environ 2,40 m du côté nord et sud-est (presque inaccessibles).

Les tours (plutôt des bastions massifs) de l'accessible côté ouest, sont rectangulaires et reliées par des joints au mur de la forteresse. Cependant, elles sont relativement plus grandes que celles des autres forteresses de ce type, mesurant environ 6,05 m sur 5,50 m. Elles sont disposées régulièrement à environ 42 à 45 m l'une de l'autre, ce qui les rend efficaces pour la défense. En effet, aucune tour n'est identifié le long des murs nord et sud (de la première étape), mais le terrain est si escarpé et principalement rocheux que leur fondation est presque impossible, et en pratique, ne semble pas nécessaire.

[15] ATANASOV 1992, p. 163–172.

Nous avons déjà commenté l'absence – difficile à expliquer – d'une tour dans l'angle sud-ouest de la forteresse (**Fig. 5**), notée par K. Shkorpil et R. Rashev (**Fig. 2** et **6**). De plus, cet endroit est plus facilement accessible et juste en face, les deux douves se rejoignent depuis le nord et l'est pour détourner les eaux vers le sud, d'où provient l'absence de remblai. Le Sondage n° 4, réalisé à cet endroit névralgique, a révélé que le constructeur a rencontré des problèmes avec le terrain, qui est ici plus fortement incliné par rapport aux terrains devant les autres tours. Pour cette raison, la base dans l'angle a été construite de manière différente des autres sections et n'a pas d'analogie dans ce type de forteresse. Une sorte de plate-forme a été placée dans le solide lœss, avec une largeur d'environ 4 m, qui se démarque comme un banquet d'environ 0,50 m à l'extérieur et à l'intérieur du mur. Malheureusement, elle n'a été identifiée que dans le sondage profond à l'angle, car l'interruption des recherches n'a pas permis de déterminer la longueur de cette fondation. Dans le sondage voisin jusqu'au lœss stérile près du mur, à 6,4 m vers le nord-est, elle n'a pas été enregistrée. Ainsi, à ce stade, nous supposons que cet élargissement inconnu dans une autre forteresse de ce type a été fait uniquement dans l'angle, car le terrain ici est plus incliné et ne supporterait pas les charges d'une tour massive. En outre, la stratigraphie suggère que ce secteur – le plus faible de la défense de la forteresse – a été percé par un ennemi qui a incendié la fortification. Peu de temps après, la section détruite a été reconstruite avec les pierres tombées, ce qui explique leur absence dans l'horizon incendié. Au-dessus, il y a une couche culturelle, suggérant une continuation de l'établissement. Ensuite, les pierres tombées réapparaissent avec des traces de charbon, suggérant une deuxième destruction de la fortification dans cette section, après laquelle la n'a pas été reconstruite.

Les fosses découvertes devant la douve, destinées à mélanger l'argile nécessaire à la construction des murailles, sont également sans analogue (**Fig. 5** et **23**). Étant donné leur emplacement devant la douve, la logique suggère qu'elles ont été creusées et utilisées à des fins spécifiques avant le creusement de la douve et l'élévation du remblai devant lui. Peut-être que lors du creusement de la tranchée pour les fondations, l'argile jaune a été remuée dans ces fosses (ou « kalila »), puis ramenée lors de la construction des fondations et des élévations du mur. Ensuite, la douve a été creusé, et la terre, en raison de sa grande quantité, a été amassée à la fois devant la face extérieure du mur, en formant une petite levée devant lui. En pratique, cela n'a pas de fonctions défensives en raison de sa faible hauteur, mais augmente artificiellement la profondeur de la douve.

Les paramètres similaires et la méthode de construction des murs ouest, sud et nord montrent que la forteresse a été érigée *a fundamentis* selon un plan préalable, conformément à la topographie du terrain. Apparemment, la ligne défensive initiale du sud-est suivait une ligne approximativement droite (plutôt légèrement courbée), reliant la porte centrale nord-est et l'angle sud-est de la forteresse. En effet, elle a été construite approximativement à l'horizontale, en descendant abruptement vers le sud-est. Apparemment, la construction de l'entière courtine sud a eu lieu simultanément, comme le montre la correspondance de la largeur des murs, de la manière de bâtir les fondations et les élévations, tant à l'ouest du passage (fouilles de R. Rashev et le secteur fortifié au sud-ouest de l'angle), que dans les deux Sondages (nos 2 et 3) pratiqués à l'est du passage. À un stade ultérieur, il semble que la forteresse a été

étendue vers le sud par 6 ares supplémentaires. Il n'est pas clair, du point de vue archéologique, le moment et la raison de cette extension du territoire protégé par des murailles. Dans tous les cas, il est peu probable que cela ait été fait pour agrandir la zone de construction résidentielle, car environ 40% de l'espace protégé (le tiers nord-est) reste non construit. De plus, le terrain de la nouvelle annexe du sud est fortement incliné et inadapté tant pour creuser des huttes que pour construire des habitations de surface. En réalité, les affaissements caractéristiques du terrain, qui marquent les emplacements des huttes sur la pente sud-ouest, ne sont pas présents ici, et sous la couche de sol noir actuelle, le terrain est principalement rocheux entre les deux murs du sud. C'est pourquoi nous supposons que le mur construit à environ 30 à 35 m devant le mur sud de la forteresse (**Fig. 5**) peut être considéré plutôt comme une réplique de la *proteichisma* du début de l'époque byzantine[16]. L'accès du sud est plus difficile en comparaison avec celui de l'ouest, mais plus facile par rapport à celui du nord. Étant donné l'impossibilité d'ériger des tours sur le terrain incliné, comme c'est le cas pour le mur ouest, un deuxième mur sera construit vers le sud, le long de l'horizontale, plus proche des escarpements rocheux difficiles d'accès. Dans ce contexte, la question qui se pose est pourquoi la douve devant le mur sud antérieur s'arrête justement au mur tournant, ajoutée plus tard, respectivement à la *proteichisma*, ajoutée plus tard, et ne continue pas le long du mur de la forteresse vers le nord-ouest ? Ainsi, on a l'impression que la douve dans cette section a été creusé après la construction de la *proteichisma* – c'est-à-dire qu'il n'a pas été creusé *a fundamenti*s, en parallèle avec la construction de la forteresse et l'excavation de la douve avec le remblai devant le mur ouest avec les tours. De plus, il est logique que si la douve a été creusée en même temps que la construction du mur sud, plus ancien, il devrait le suivre sur toute sa longueur, sur environ 400 m, plutôt que de s'arrêter à 105 m distance de son angle sud-ouest. Si nous examinons de plus près la topographie et nous familiarisons sur place avec l'endroit, nous constaterons que c'est précisément dans ce secteur, sur les 105 m en question, que le terrain est légèrement incliné et nécessite une protection supplémentaire, mais cette protection ne peut pas être assurée par des tours, comme le suggèrent les considérations ci-dessus. Quoi qu'il en soit, la question du moment quand la douve sud a été creusée reste en suspens. Il est plus probable que, après avoir érigé la forteresse, ses défenseurs aient rencontré des problèmes pour protéger le mur sud, après qu'ils ont creusé une douve sur le terrain plus incliné et le *proteichisma* dans la direction nord-est – c'est-à-dire que la douve au sud-ouest du mur tournant et le *proteichisma* ont été réalisés simultanément. L'épaisseur des murs, la manière de fondation et de la construction sont différents, certainement plus négligés par rapport aux autres murs de la forteresse. Nous avons déjà noté que dans l'angle sud-ouest (Sondage n° 4) et dans le virage (Sondage n° 2), nous avons documenté la destruction du mur sud par le feu, après qu'il a été reconstruit, car il y a une nouvelle construction au-dessus des zones incendiées. Après cet événement (la guerre russo-bulgare-byzantine de 968–971 ?), parallèlement à la reconstruction du mur de la forteresse, le *proteichisma* et la douve du mur tournant au coin sud-ouest de la forteresse pouvaient être construits. Cependant, nous n'avons pas d'indices archéologiques pour dater précisément cette

[16] OVCHAROV 1973, p. 11–23.

restructuration de la forteresse vers le sud. Sous les pierres tombées des murs, nous découvrons des fragments de céramique qui peuvent être datés généralement au X^e siècle, mais rien de plus.

L'idée que lors de la construction de la forteresse, et parallèlement aux douves devant le mur ouest, une autre petite douve ait également été creusé devant le mur sud, nous semble moins probable, mais pas totalement impossible.

La meilleure analogie (du point de vue topographique, planimétrique et constructive) pour le site de Ruyno est la forteresse près du village de Tzar Assen, édifiée pendant la première moitié du X^e siècle. Elle est similaire, en termes de surface (45 ares), de la qualité des éléments fortifiés (les cinq bastions rectangulaires uniformément répartis sur environ 90 m du côté le plus accessible), et enfin, avec la présence de fondations d'environ 0,60 m, qui font défaut dans les autres forteresses de ce type[17].

L'agglomération médiévale de Ruyno

La forteresse de « Kartal Kalé » est le centre de la plus grande agglomération urbaine du haut Moyen Âge en Dobroudja, qui n'a aucun analogue en termes de taille, de fortifications et d'organisation. Elle comporte deux forteresses d'une superficie totale d'environ 110 ares (42 ares pour « Kartal Kalé » et plus de 70 ares pour « Ayazmo »), un monastère rupestre et une grande zone urbaine non fortifiée, de plus de 110 ares. L'agglomération couvre une superficie totale d'environ 220 ares (**Fig. 4**).

La forteresse « Ayazmo » a été découverte et documentée par R. Rashev en 1974, à seulement 1,5 km au nord de « Kartal Kalé » (**Fig. 4** et **30**)[18]. Comme nous l'avons mentionné au début de l'article, la forteresse est située sur une élévation rocheuse en forme de promontoire sur la rive droite d'un cours d'eau, coupée dans les années 1950 par la ligne de chemin de fer Samuil – Dulovo – Silistra. Si l'altitude du lit de la rivière est de 125 m ici, le centre de l'ouvrage fortifié se situe à une altitude de 150 m, et sa moitié sud la plus élevée atteint 165 m (voir la **Fig. 30**). La superficie protégée est d'environ 70 ares, les murs entourant tout l'espace, y compris la pente ouest abrupte et rocheuse.

L'ouvrage fortifié est le plus facilement accessible depuis le sud et l'est, où R. Rashev a entrepris des sondages en 1973. Il constate que le mur a une largeur d'environ 3 m, fondé directement sur le sol, parfois dans une couche avec de la céramique thrace. Sur les courtines est et sud, il a enregistré trois tours, dont une d'angle. Les tours sont rectangulaires, les dimensions de 6 × 5,50 m, avec une structure de renforcement supplémentaire devant elles, d'une largeur totale de 29 m, en comprenant deux douves, avec un deuxième mur d'une épaisseur de 2,10 m entre eux. Le sondage que nous avons pratiqué sur le mur est, au nord de la tour n° 6 (**Fig. 30**–**32**), confirme ces observations, en particulier le fait que, contrairement à « Kartal Kalé », les murs de la forteresse ici n'ont pas de fondation, une pratique connue dans d'autres forteresses de ce type (Skała, Sredishte, Okorshe, etc.).

La céramique découverte lors des fouilles à Ayazmo est similaire en termes de

[17] RASHEV 1982, p. 131 ; DIMOVA 1993, p. 54–75 ; ATANASOV 2014b, p. 205–233.
[18] RASHEV 1982, p. 144.

chronologie et de distribution à celle de « Kartal Kalé ». Toutefois, le pourcentage de céramique grise-noire ici est plus élevé (**Fig. 33**), avec des jarres ornées de motifs incisés, datant de la fin du IX^e^ jusqu'au début du X^e^ siècle (**Fig. 34**), tandis que la céramique à la roue rapide (voir la **Fig. 35**) et les jarres (type amphore I) de la fin du X^e^ jusqu'au début du XI^e^ siècle sont représentées par des fragments isolés. Les bijoux et les objets cultuels datent principalement du X^e^ siècle. Une découverte importante est une croix processionnelle, presque entièrement préservée, trouvée dans la couche superficielle de la fouille près du mur ouest de la forteresse, datant du X^e^ siècle (**Fig. 36**)[19]. Malgré ces nuances mineures, on peut certainement affirmer que la forteresse « Ayazmo » a été construite approximativement à la même époque que celle de « Kartal Kalé » et que les deux fortifications ont fonctionné d'une manière synchronisée, en partageant un destin similaire pendant les événements de la fin du X^e^ siècle et des années 1030 – leur abandon par les habitants lors des invasions des Petchénègues pendant l'an 1036.

Le monastère rupestre

Était situé sur une hauteur difficilement accessible, dans la couronne rocheuse de la rive gauche du cours d'eau, juste en face de la forteresse « Ayazmo », avec laquelle il est en contact visuel direct (**Fig. 30, 36** et **37**)[20]. Il se compose de deux parties – un petit monastère proprement dit (de type ermitage) et une crypte où les moines sont inhumés et ré inhumés. Le petit monastère comporte trois cellules, une salle pour l'abbé et une église, pour la construction desquelles des grottes naturelles ont été utilisées, aménagées et remodelées. L'église est située au fond du complexe, comme un espace rectangulaire, avec les dimensions de 3,80 × 2 × 1,65 m. Sur le mur est, une niche d'autel voûtée a été soigneusement taillée, avec une largeur de 0,55 m, une profondeur de 0,25 m et une hauteur de 0,85 m. Au sud et à la proximité immédiate de l'église se trouve la cellule de l'abbé, et à l'ouest d'elle, vers l'entrée, trois autres cellules ont été aménagées. Dans la couronne rocheuse adjacente, une crypte a été aménagée. Il s'agit d'une pièce triangulaire, de 6,80 × 3,60 × 1,65 m, avec un sol nivelé et un plafond. Dans l'angle nord-ouest, une chambre funéraire a été soigneusement taillée, avec des dimensions de 1,90 × 0,45 × 0,65 m, avec une rainure sur le pourtour pour la couverture avec un couvercle. À l'entrée du coin nord-est de la pièce, une grande niche a également été soigneusement aménagée pour le ré inhumation des ossements des moines décédés avant. Il s'agit probablement d'une petite église, dérivée de la colonie de monastères rupestres du X^e^ siècle, située au long des rives de la rivière voisine, Kanagyol – Dristra[21].

La banlieue/le *suburbium* /le village au sud-ouest de « Kartal Kalé »

Lors d'une expédition au début du printemps de l'année 2001, sur la pente au sud-ouest de la forteresse, sur une superficie d'environ 100 ares, les limites d'une grande banlieue (*suburbium*) ont été déterminées. Cela s'étend jusqu'à la rivière (voir

[19] ATANASOV 2019, p. 207–208, fig. 15–16.
[20] ATANASOV 1991, p. 28–29, tab. I ; ATANASOV 2023, p. 236–237, cat. № V/94.
[21] ATANASOV 2023, p. 217–237, cat. № V/74–93.

la **Fig. 4**) et plus de 150 creux de forme de bassin ont été identifiés dans la zone – apparemment des trous de poteaux des habitations semi-enterrées (voir la **Fig. 39**). En effet, lors des sondages réalisés sur quatre d'entre eux, des habitations ont été découvertes (nos 9–11 et 14), dont deux avec du matériel archéologique datant du Xe siècle et deux avec des petites trouvailles appartenant au XIe siècle (no 10 – voir **Fig. 34** et no 14). Près de la rivière, une installation de production a été étudiée – un atelier pour le travail des métaux/du fer (no 12 – voir **Fig. 40**), encastré avec des murs en pierre, dans lequel deux bassins en pierre, une grande quantité de scories et deux crochets en fer ont été découverts. L'année suivante, des recherches ont révélé que le village des Xe–XIe siècles s'étendait au-delà de la rivière et occupait presque toute la langue en forme de méandre opposée à la forteresse, sur une surface d'environ 40 ares. Deux autres habitations du Xe siècle ont été étudiées ici – l'une près de la rivière (no 13) et l'autre sur la partie la plus élevée du monticule (no 19).

Si l'érection de ce type de forteresses en pierre blanche à l'intérieur de la Dobroudja et de la Ludogorie marque une conception du pouvoir central de Preslav (respectivement la deuxième résidence d'État à Drastar/Dristra – centre du comitat et de la cathédrale / patriarchie), sa réalisation est un oeuvre des habitants locaux sous la surveillance des hommes d'état mandatés. En particulier, dans la construction des forteresses près des villages de Ruyno et Tsar Assen, cette surveillance aurait été directe, car l'exécution est de meilleure qualité, et les symboles gravés sur les murs de la forteresse (en particulier le signe IYI) sont un autre argument en ce sens. Les forteresses de type « Skała – Tzar Assen – Ruyno » sont des centres régionaux militaires, administratives et religieux, et les vastes zones non construites à l'intérieur, de 30 à 50% de l'enceinte, suggèrent qu'il s'agit d'une décision délibérée afin de fournir un refuge pour la population des villages non fortifiés environnants en cas de péril.

Chronologie

Indéniablement, vers la fin du IVe siècle, dans la partie nord-est du méandre, la plus naturellement défendue et difficilement accessible, une petite fortification de la période du Bas-Empire Romain (*refugium*) a été construite. Selon la céramique et les artefacts, elle a été détruite et abandonnée au milieu du Ve siècle, probablement pendant les invasions hunniques.

Selon les petites trouvailles (bijoux, pièces de ceinture, médaillons en plomb avec des croix ajourées) et la céramique, la reprise de l'activité à cet endroit est généralement datée à la fin du IXe siècle ou au début du Xe siècle. Cependant, déterminer le point de départ exact est difficile. Pour déterminer le *terminus post quem* du début de l'occupation de cet endroit, plusieurs boucles d'oreilles en forme de grappe (**Fig. 41a-b**) peuvent être utilisées, dont l'apparition se situe après le milieu du IXe siècle, mais elles sont produites au moins jusqu'au milieu du Xe siècle[22]. Les nombreuses appliques en forme de cœur et les pièces de ceinture ont commencé à

[22] DJOROVICH-LUBINKOVICH 1951, p. 21–56 ; HRUBÝ 1955, p. 229, 285–290 ; SÓS 1973, p. 118, 120, pl. 18 ; VAŽAROVA 1976, p. 198, 208, 241, 286, 309, fig. 122, 128, 153, 178, 216 ; MAŠOV 1979, p. 38–39, fig. 6–8 ; MESTERHÁZY 1991, p. 148–151, fig. 3 ; FIEDLER 1992, p. 171–180 ; ATANASOV, GRIGOROV 2002–2003, p. 331–391.

être largement utilisées après le début du Xe siècle et ont été produites, en devenant très populaires, jusqu'à la fin de ce siècle. Il en va de même pour les médaillons en plomb avec des croix ajourées (**Fig. 41c-d**), dont la diffusion s'inscrit entre la seconde moitié du IXe siècle et le début du Xe siècle[23]. On remarque particulièrement l'accent une amulette en plomb du Xe siècle, avec une inscription cyrillique contre la maladie « *ТРЕСАВИЦА* » *(fièvre ?)*[24] (**Fig. 42**). En général, les petites trouvailles en métal coloré, qui ont une chronologie admise comme plus précise, entre la seconde moitié du IXe siècle et le milieu du Xe siècle, n'aident pas beaucoup à préciser la limite inférieure d'un contexte archéologique. La céramique n'est plus l'indicateur le plus fiable à cet égard. En effet, la présence de la céramique noire et grise avec des bandes lustrées (y compris des tessons avec un motif en treillis) (**Fig. 43**), de la céramique en argile bien purifiée avec une teinte jaune-rougeâtre, recouverte d'engobe, et des jarres confectionnés au tour lent, avec un décor incisé sur tout le corps (**Fig. 44**) suggèrent une occupation dès la fin du IXe siècle, mais de telles récipients (en tant que forme et décoration) continuent d'être présents sur des sites même après le début du Xe siècle. Dans ce contexte, sans pouvoir raffiner la chronologie, on peut préciser comme une limite inférieure les dernières décennies du IXe siècle – le début du Xe siècle. Il est remarquable cependant que des petites trouvailles et de la poterie caractéristiques des nécropoles païennes (de la période comprise entre le VIIIe siècle et le milieu du IXe siècle) fassent défaut. Une datation relativement précise pourrait être fournie par les monnaies, mais jusqu'à la fin du IXe siècle, elles font défaut, comme c'est d'ailleurs le cas pour la plupart des objets du Premier Royaume Bulgare. La plupart des archéologues bulgares, y compris nous-mêmes, ont généralement accepté, avec quelques nuances, que la construction des forteresses en pierre blanche de type « Skała – Tzar Assen – Ruyno » a eu lieu après la guerre difficile de Siméon le Grand contre les Magyars en 894–896. Il est devenu évident à ce moment-là que les fortifications en terre étaient une barrière facilement franchissable pour les envahisseurs. Donc elles ont été abandonnés et, le plus souvent, la construction des forteresses en pierre blanche de type « Skała – Tzar Assen – Ruyno » a recommencé en proximité. Les résultats archéologiques de l'étude de la forteresse de « Kartal Kalé », et en particulier des petites trouvailles et de la poterie, ne remettent pas sérieusement en question cette thèse, mais ils ne fournissent pas plus d'arguments absolus pour son imposition inconditionnelle. Il manque également des données sur la présence d'une colonie du haut Moyen Âge (VIIIe–Xe siècles), qui aurait été fortifiée à une étape ultérieure[25]. Si toutefois il y avait eu des fortifications avant l'invasion hongroise de 894, elles auraient laissé des traces archéologiques évidentes – des destructions et

[23] ATANASOV, DONCHEVA 2011, p. 93–114.

[24] ATANASOV 1991, p. 30–32, tab. VI.

[25] On suppose que ce modèle (un village non fortifié des VIIIe–IXe siècles devenu forteresse) a été documenté dans la forteresse du haut Moyen Âge près du village de Tzar Assen, situé à environ 30 km à l'est de Ruyno (DIMITROV 1980, p. 35–42 ; DIMOVA 1993, p. 54–75 ; DIMITROV 1994, p. 76–122). En termes de superficie et de fortification (présence de fondations sous les murs de la forteresse), il est le plus proche de « Kartal Kalé ». Cependant, après une inspection minutieuse des petites trouvailles et de l'ensemble céramique, nous constatons que la forteresse située à côté du village du Tzar Assen manque de types de céramiques et d'ornements pouvant être datés d'avant la fin du IXe siècle (ATANASOV 2014b, p. 205–233). Jusqu'à présent, la seule fortification en terre du IXe siècle, qui s'est transformée en une forteresse en pierre avec des tours/bastions rectangulaires, se

des incendies à la fin du IXe siècle, que nous n'avons pas enregistrées jusqu'à présent dans les fouilles de « Kartal Kalé » et de la forteresse voisine, d' « Ayazmo ». Au contraire, lors de l'étude approfondie de la forteresse près du village de Skała, les petites trouvailles et la poterie conduisent à une hypothèse raisonnable selon laquelle la forteresse a été construite au moins quelques décennies après les forteresses situées près des villages de Tsar Assen, Ruyno et Okorsh – c'est-à-dire vers le milieu du Xe siècle ou même avant. Cela signifie qu'il est exagéré de parler dur l'existence d'un système fortifiée unitaire de type « Skała – Tzar Assen – Ruyno » dans la courte période comprise entre la fin du IXe et le début du Xe siècle. Cependant, il existe un autre repère important à prendre en compte, ce sont les tours rectangulaires (bastions massifs), enregistrées à la fois dans les deux forteresses près du village de Ruyno et presque sans exception dans toutes les autres forteresses de type « Skała – Tzar Assen – Ruyno ». En effet, aucun type de tour différent n'a pas été identifié dans ces forteresses. Ils sont presque toujours construits en retrait par rapport au mur de la forteresse et ont des dimensions comprises entre 3 × 3 m et 6 × 6 m. Dans les anciens centres de l'État bulgare (comme Pliska, Preslav, Drastar, cela du village de Khan Krum daté au Xe siècle) on remarque l'absence de tours rectangulaires. Ils ont été imposés pour la première fois dans l'extension nord du centre du palais de Preslav, ajoutée après le début du Xe siècle, où des tours rectangulaires, d'environ 10 × 7,5 m, ont été étudiées – quatre sur le mur nord et une sur le mur est[26].

Il est certain que la plupart de la poterie découverte à « Kartal Kalé » (comme à Ruyno – Ayazmo, Okorsh, Tsar Assen, Huma, etc.) date du Xe siècle, période dans laquelle sont également encadrés plus de 90% des objets de parure et de port – boucles d'oreilles, bagues avec pentagrammes et oiseaux aquatiques, pièces de ceinture.

Pour « Kartal Kalé » en particulier, il y a des données archéologiques concernant au moins deux destructions, accompagnées par de violents incendies, comme attestent plusieurs maisons avec de la poterie et des trouvailles du Xe siècle, où il manque des artefacts et de la poterie de la fin du Xe au XIe siècle – huttes nos 1–2 (**Fig. 45**), 5–7, 9 et 15–16. Des incendies graves ont également été enregistrés dans les huttes nos 11, 13, 14, 16a, 17, 19, 20 et dans les trois maisons de surface, où on découvert de la céramique travaillée sur une roue rapide, des jarres et des bracelets en verre, datant du début du XIe siècle. La première destruction et les incendies (comme celui enregistré sur le mur sud de la forteresse, près du mur tournant), remontent à la fin du Xe siècle, après la reconstruction du rempart. Dans ce contexte, la hutte no 16/16a (**Fig. 46**) mérite une attention particulière a cause de ses deux phases – une en bas, avec des petites trouvailles du Xe siècle, et l'autre en haut, appartenant au XIe siècle. Dans la couche inférieure de la hutte no 16, datant du Xe siècle, le squelette d'un homme a été découvert, à l'orientation nord-est, pas enterré, mais simplement jeté dans la fosse de l'habitation. Deux individus ont également été découverts au-dessus du fond de la hutte no 15, contenant de la poterie et des matériaux archéologiques du Xe siècle. L'un des squelettes a été découvert dans le foyer en pierre et devant

trouve à environ 40 km au sud de « Kartal Kalé », sur la rive du même rivière Srebrenica, à côté du village d'Okorsh, région de Silistra (ATANASOV, YOTOV, MICHAILOV 2011, p. 220–239).

[26] OVCHAROV 1975, p. 102–118 ; DIMITROV 2012, p. 23–33.

celui-ci. Les jambes du deuxième squelette (appartenant à une jeune femme ?) se trouvent dans le coin sud-ouest d'une hutte, tandis que les ossements au-dessus du bassin et le crâne sont dispersés en direction du nord, à un niveau supérieur[27]. Les deux squelettes présentent des positions et des orientations atypiques pour les inhumations chrétiennes. Il semble que des enterrements réguliers n'aient pas eu lieu dans cet endroit, et les morts ont été ensevelis par les destructions des habitations.

Après la première destruction de la forteresse (lors de la guerre entre les armées russe, bulgare et byzantine de la période 968–971 ?), la vie a certainement repris. Nous avons noté des preuves de la restauration de la fortification et de son éventuel agrandissement vers le sud. Cependant, la preuve la plus solide de l'occupation après la fin du X^e^ siècle et au début du XI^e^ siècle réside dans les habitations de surface, avec des petites trouvailles – bracelets en verre (**Fig. 47**), une croix, une boucle d'oreille (**Fig. 48**) et deux bagues – et de la céramique du XI^e^ siècle (des pots avec une décoration incisée seulement près du col et notamment des fragments d'amphores et de pots fabriqués sur une roue rapide), étudiées lors du tracé de la Tranchée I, en particulier celles situées dans le secteur au-dessus des huttes n^os^ 1 et 7. Nous avons déjà mentionné que la hutte n^o^ 16 a deux niveaux d'occupation, datant au X^e^, respectivement au XI^e^ siècle (**Fig. 46**). Il convient de noter en particulier que seuls deux *folleis* byzantins anonymes de la classe A2 (1028–1034/1036) ont été découverts pendant les fouilles, et une *milliaresion* en argent coupée de Basile II – Constantin VIII (976–1025) est conservée au musée de la ville de Dulovo (**Fig. 49**). C'est évident qu'aucune garnison byzantine ne s'est installée ici ni après l'an 971, ni après l'an 1000, car les principaux indicateurs de leur présence manquent (un grand nombre de pièces byzantines (334 pièces ont été découvertes dans les forteresses le long de la route principale, comme à Skała[28], plus de 100 à Tsar Assen, tandis qu'à Ruyno seulement trois ont été documentées), des sceaux appartenant aux fonctionnaires byzantins et une grande quantité de céramique byzantine importée, surtout des amphores (à Skała, la céramique importée représente plus de 50%, à Tsar Assen environ 30%, tandis qu'à Ruyno, elle est à peine d'environ 7%). Malgré tout, la forteresse a été habitée également sous l'administration byzantine après la fin du X^e^ – le début du XI^e^ siècle.

Cela est catégoriquement attesté par les structures situées à l'intérieur de la forteresse, telles que les huttes n^o^ 16a et 17 et les trois habitations de surface, avec de la poterie à la roue lente et rapide, des fragments d'amphores, des bijoux, des croix-*enkolpion* et des bracelets en verre caractéristiques au XI^e^ siècle. Le fait qu'au XI^e^ siècle, il y ait des habitants également dans la zone suburbaine – huttes n^os^ 10–11 (**Fig. 50**) et 14 avec des artefacts du XI^e^ siècle – suggère que les zones propices à la construction de logements (la moitié sud-ouest) étaient densément peuplées, bien qu'il ne s'agisse pas nécessairement d'une stratification sociale. Bien que le pourcentage soit petit par rapport à des sites tels que Drastar, Skała, Tsar Assen, Păcuiul lui Soare, Vetren, Capidava, *Dinogetia*-Garvăn, etc. (principalement des forteresses le long de la route principale Preslav – Drastar et près du Danube), à Ruyno, de la poterie byzantine, des croix et des bijoux caractéristiques au XI^e^ siècle ont été découverts, y compris

[27] ATANASOV 2014a, p. 551–580, fig. 27.
[28] YOTOV, ATANASOV 1997, p. 126–192.

des importations. Cela suggère que la population était intégrée en tant que périphérie dans l'économie et le commerce byzantins. Et dans ces habitations, les pots à la roue lente avec des décorations incisées prédominent, qui, en termes de forme, de décoration et d'exécution, sont une continuation des traditions céramiques bulgares anciennes du IX^e^ au X^e^ siècle. Par conséquent, sans grand risque, on peut supposer que la population bulgare ancienne est revenue dans la forteresse après les troubles de la fin du X^e^ siècle et a reconstruit (peut-être même élargi vers le sud-est ?) les fortifications défensives construites autour le début du X^e^ siècle.

Le fait que les terres habitées à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur de la forteresse au cours du premier tiers du XI^e^ siècle, avec une légère réduction, soient presque les mêmes qu'au cours de la première moitié du XI^e^ siècle, suggère la possibilité que, en plus des habitants revenus à la fin du X^e^ siècle, la population ayant quitté pendant la guerre russo-bulgare-byzantine de 968–971 aurait peut-être attiré la population d'au moins sept villages non fortifiés des IX^e^ et X^e^ siècles autour des villages de Ruyno, Yarebitsa, Oven, Pravda, Dolets, Paysievo, et Vokil[29]. Ce processus de réorientation de la population bulgare vers l'intérieur de la Dobroudja et de la Ludogorie à la fin du X^e^ siècle, illustré par des nombreux villages non fortifiés et presque 30 forteresses en pierre du type « Skała – Tzar Assen – Ruyno », a été enregistré partout[30]. Cependant, la question de l'identité de l'initiateur de la reconstruction des fortifications à Ruyno et dans d'autres endroits de l'intérieur de la Dobroudja et de la Ludogorie reste ouverte. Il est logique que cette reconstruction ait été réalisé à Tsar Assen, Skała, Vetren, Păcuiul lui Soare, Nufăru, Capidava, *Dinogetia*-Garvăn, etc. par les garnisons byzantines établies définitivement près du Danube après l'an 1000, avec la participation de la population locale, sous la recommandation du pouvoir central, respectivement les stratèges byzantins à Drastar. La question de l'initiative derrière la reconstruction des fortifications à Ruyno – « Kartal Kalé » et probablement d'autres forteresses de la région (Ruyno – Ayazmo, Okorsh, Podles, etc.), où la présence de garnisons byzantines n'est pas documentée, demeure. Comme on a mentionné précédemment, ces sites ne présentent pas de marqueurs de la présence de garnisons et de l'administration byzantine du X^e^ siècle jusqu'en 1036, tels que des sceaux en plomb, un grand nombre de monnaies, de poteries et de bijoux byzantines. Il est probable que la population locale s'est organisée seule et sur l'initiative des *protospathaire*s de la stratégie créée en l'an 1000, Thrace et Dristra (plus tard élargie et renommée Paristrion) avec sa capitale Drastar[31], pour restaurer les fortifications. La motivation dans ce cas a été partagée à la fois par le pouvoir central romain et par la population locale, étant donné l'établissement constant des Petchenègues au nord du Danube dès le X^e^ siècle[32]. En se basant sur l'ensemble de la poterie, les quelques tessons céramiques du type petchenègue, une douzaine de petites trouvailles, les deux *folleis* byzantins anonymes de la classe A2, ainsi que sur le contexte des résultats des études des forteresses voisines et des informations des sources écrites, il faut

[29] ATANASOV, MARINOV 2018, p. 93–97, fig. 23.

[30] ATANASOV 2001, p. 185–214.

[31] Pour les controverses et opinions divergentes sur Paristrion, voir LITAVRIN 1987, p. 195–201 ; YORDANOV 1993, p. 117 et suiv. et la littérature citée là-bas ; MADGEARU 1999, p. 421–430 et la littérature citée là-bas.

[32] DIACONU 1970, p. 12–44.

admettre que la forteresse « Kartal Kalé » et l'ensemble de l'agglomération de Ruyno ont été détruites et abandonnées lors de l'invasion petchenègue de 1036[33]. Des incendies importants ont été enregistrés dans les huttes habitées au début du XI^e siècle, numéros 11, 13–14, 16a–17, 19–20, et les trois maisons de surface mentionnées ci-dessus. Les huttes n^os 10 et 14 dans la banlieue ont également été incendiées. Partout près des murs de la forteresse détruite, nous documentons un incendie intense sous les pierres effondrées de la superstructure, dont certaines sont fortement brûlées. Nous allons particulièrement souligner ici la présence de la monnaie – un *folles* byzantin anonyme de la classe A2 (1028–1034/1036) (**Fig. 27**) –, trouvée à l'extérieur de la face ouest dans une couche brûlée, recouverte de pierres de la destruction de la forteresse. Dans ce contexte, nous pouvons supposer que malgré l'absence de données sur une garnison byzantine constamment stationnée ici, la forteresse reconstruite au tout début du XI^e siècle (?) a été défendue par les habitants locaux et prise de force par les Petchenègues, qui l'ont détruite et incendiée. Nous supposons que la percée de la fortification était provoquée à son point le plus faible – l'angle sud-est, où aucune tour n'a pas été érigée (**Fig. 5** et **16**). L'absence d'un niveau culturel distinct, avec de la céramique du type petchenègue et des bijoux, connu à Drastar, Pliska, Skala, Tsar Assen, Odartsi, Vetren, Păcuiul lui Soare, Capidava, *Dinogetia*-Garvăn, etc., suggère que les nomades n'ont pas établi leur campement ici pendant une période prolongée. La fissuration et la dispersion en éventail du mur ouest, malgré la présence des fondations, sont probablement le résultat des forts tremblements de terre enregistrés par Skylitzès, suivis par des sécheresses et de la famine en masse de l'an 1037[34]. Une cause supplémentaire aurait pu être la perturbation de l'intégrité et de la structure du mur lors de la conquise de la fortification en 1036. En conséquence de ces événements, la population a abandonné définitivement la forteresse (ainsi que toutes les forteresses de l'intérieur de la Dobroudja du sud et de l'est de la Ludogorie) et a émigré vers des régions plus protégées contre les sécheresses et les cavaliers nomades, telles que les régions des Balkans, les villes du Danube et les vallées des rivières Provadiyska, Rusenski, Beli, et Cherni Lom)[35].

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[33] DIACONU 1970, p. 40–44 ; ATANASOV 1999, p. 33–53.

[34] GIBI 1965, p. 300–301.

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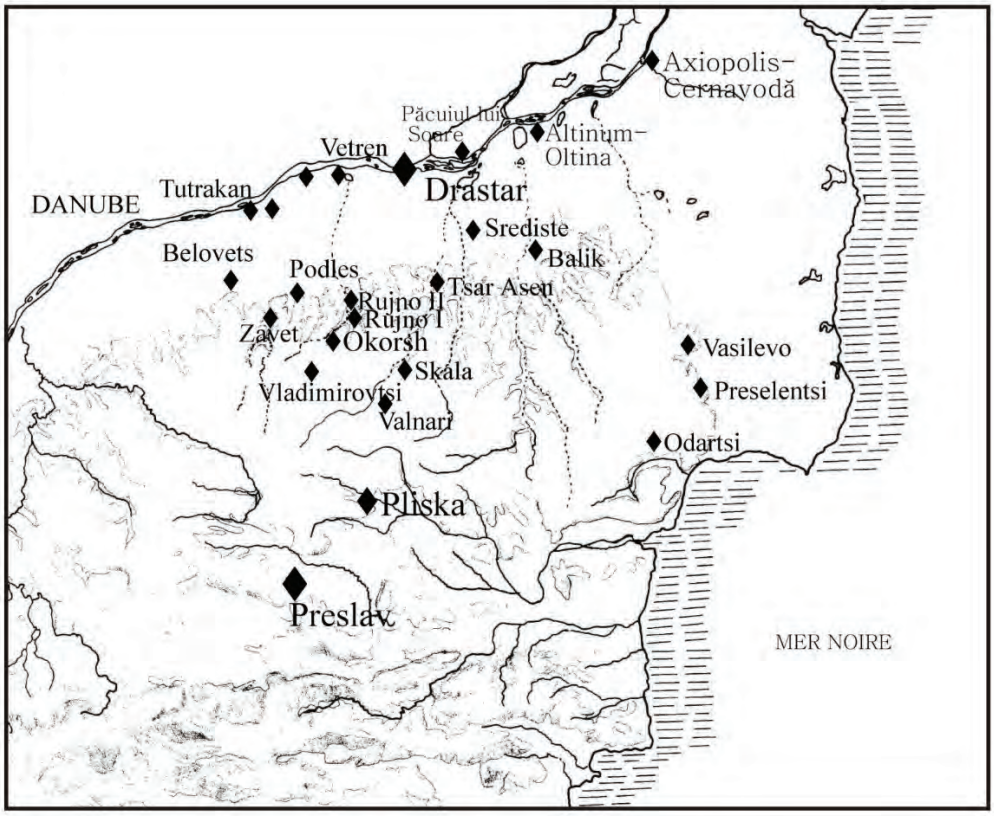

Fig. 1. Les forteresses du X^e^ – début du XI^e^ siècle en Dobroudja et dans le nord-est de la Bulgarie (d'après ATANASOV, MARINOV 2018, fig. 29).

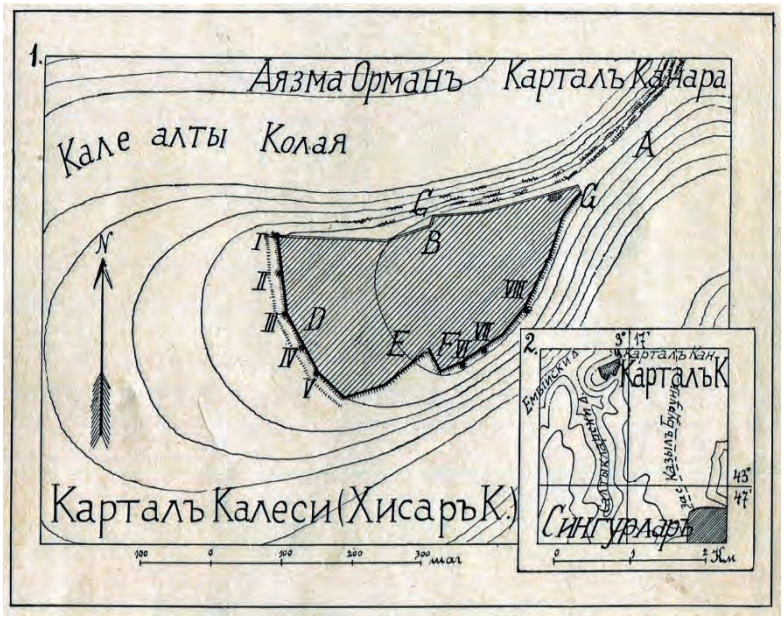

Fig. 2. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé », près du village de Ruyno, région de Silistra (d'après SHKORPIL 1905, p. 483).

Fig. 3. Le méandre de la rivière Sinebir (Srebrenitsa), sur lequel est située la forteresse « Kartal Kalé », près du village de Ruyno, région de Silistra (Google Maps).

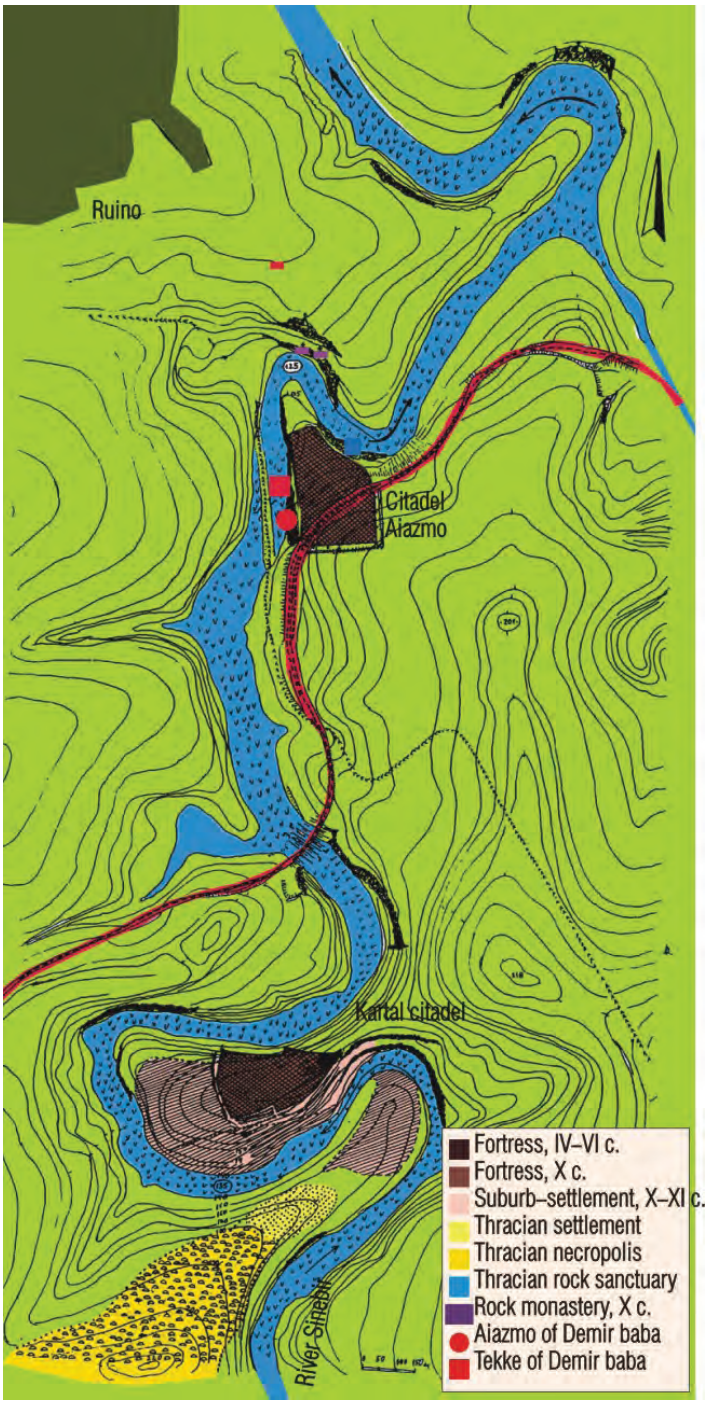

Fig. 4. L'agglomération de Ruyno au X^e^ siècle (d'après ATANASOV 2014a, fig. 4).

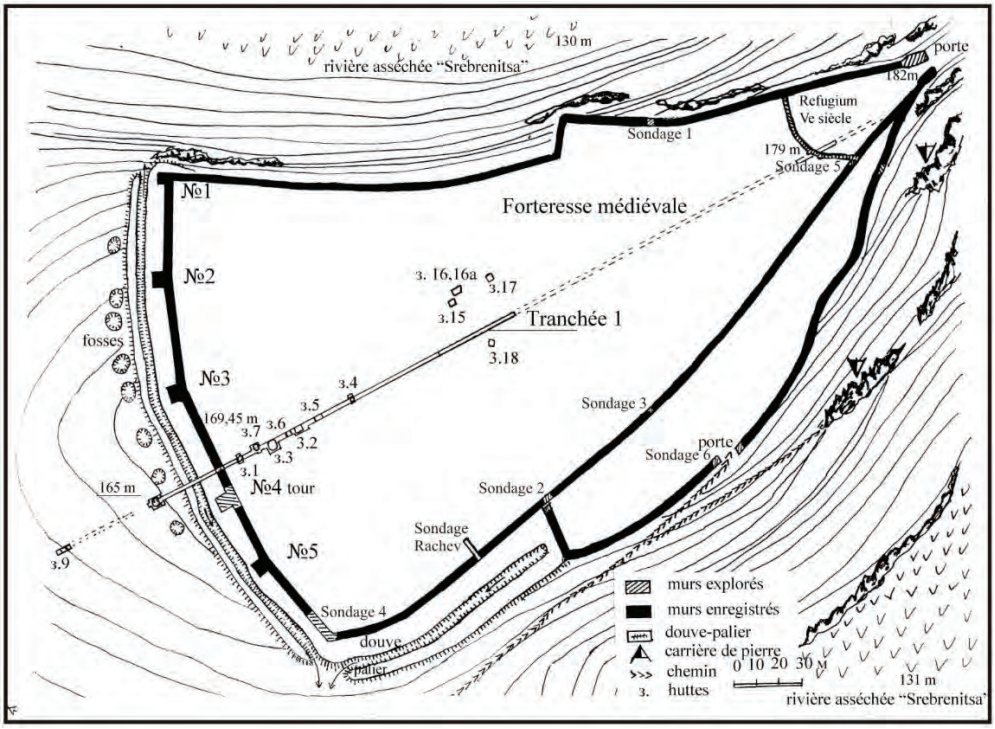

Fig. 5. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé », près du village de Ruyno, région de Silistra. Fouilles archéologiques des années 2000–2004 (d'après ATANASOV 2014a, fig. 8).

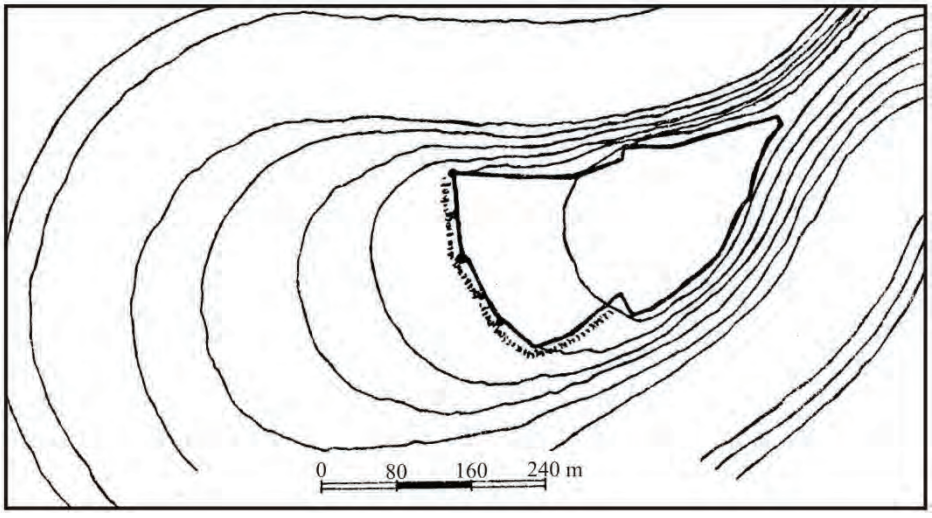

Fig. 6. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé », près du village de Ruyno, région de Silistra, X^{e}–XI^{e} siècles. Plan (d'après RASHEV 1982, tabl. XLVII/3).

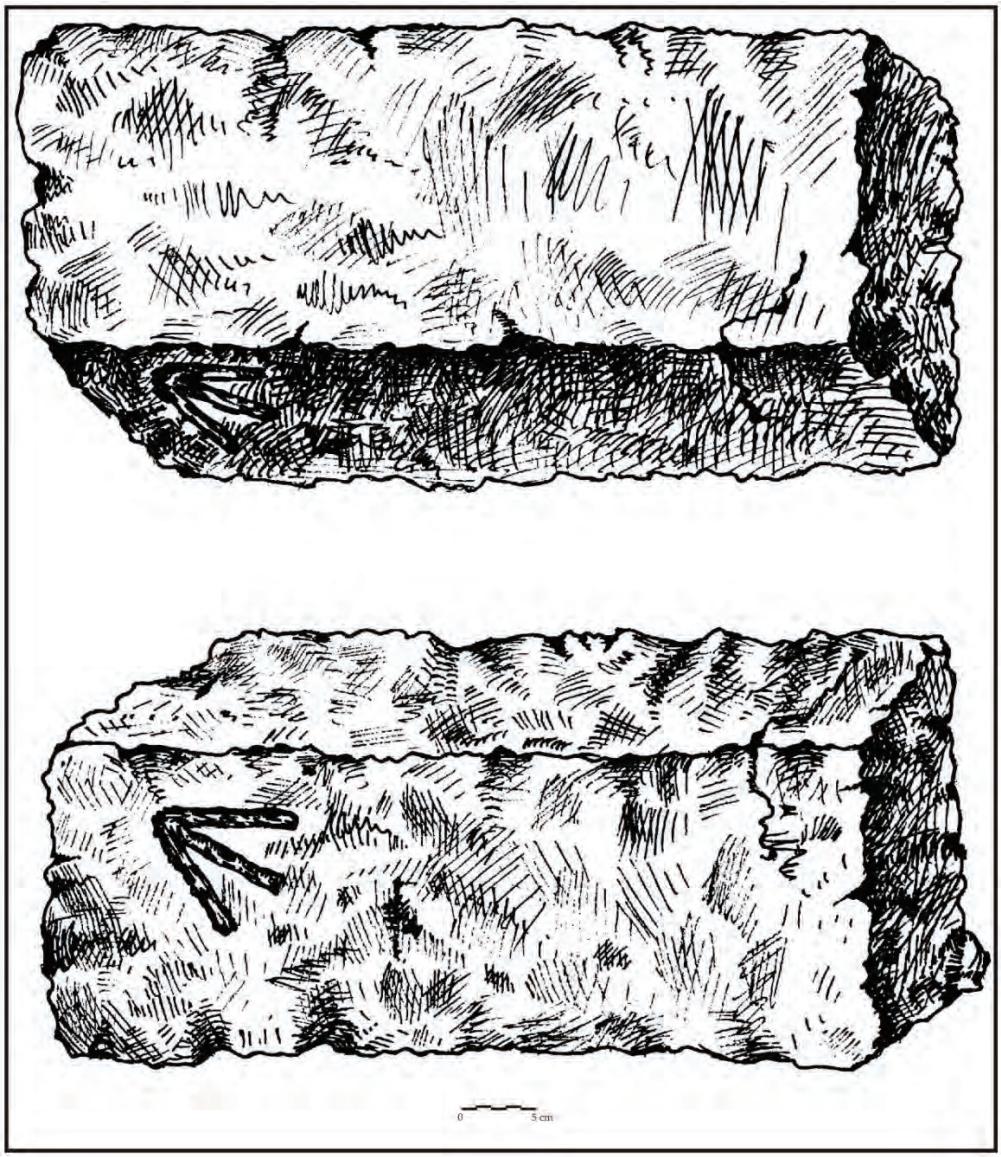

Fig. 7. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Bloc en pierre avec un ancien signe bulgare, découvert pendant la fouille de l'an 1974 (dessin par R. Rashev).

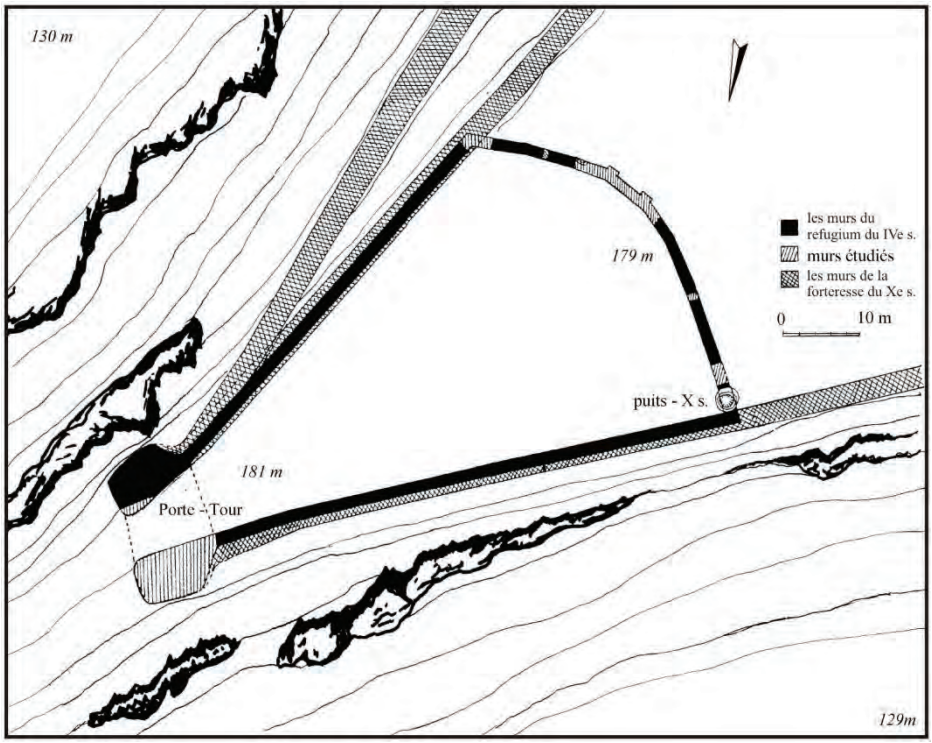

Fig. 8. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Plan d'une petite fortification (*refugium*) dans le coin nord-ouest de la fortification, deuxième moitié du IV^e^ – première moitié du V^e^ siècle (d'après ATANASOV 2015, fig. 7).

Fig. 9. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Le mur sud-ouest et le *refugium*, deuxième moitié du IV^e^ – première moitié du V^e^ siècle (photo par G. Atanasov).

Fig. 10. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». La tour nord de la porte antique (romaine tardive) et médiévale (photo par G. Atanasov).

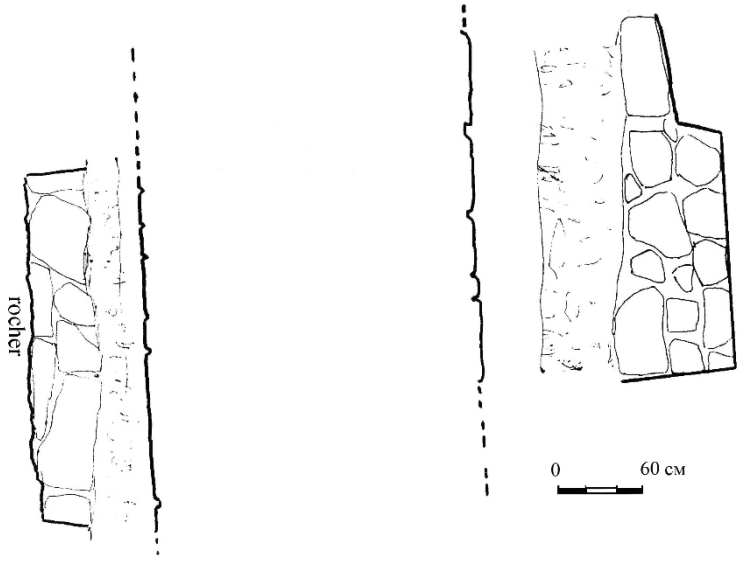

Fig. 11. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Tranchée n° 1. Plan et vues sur le mur nord (d'après ATANASOV 2014a, fig. 9).

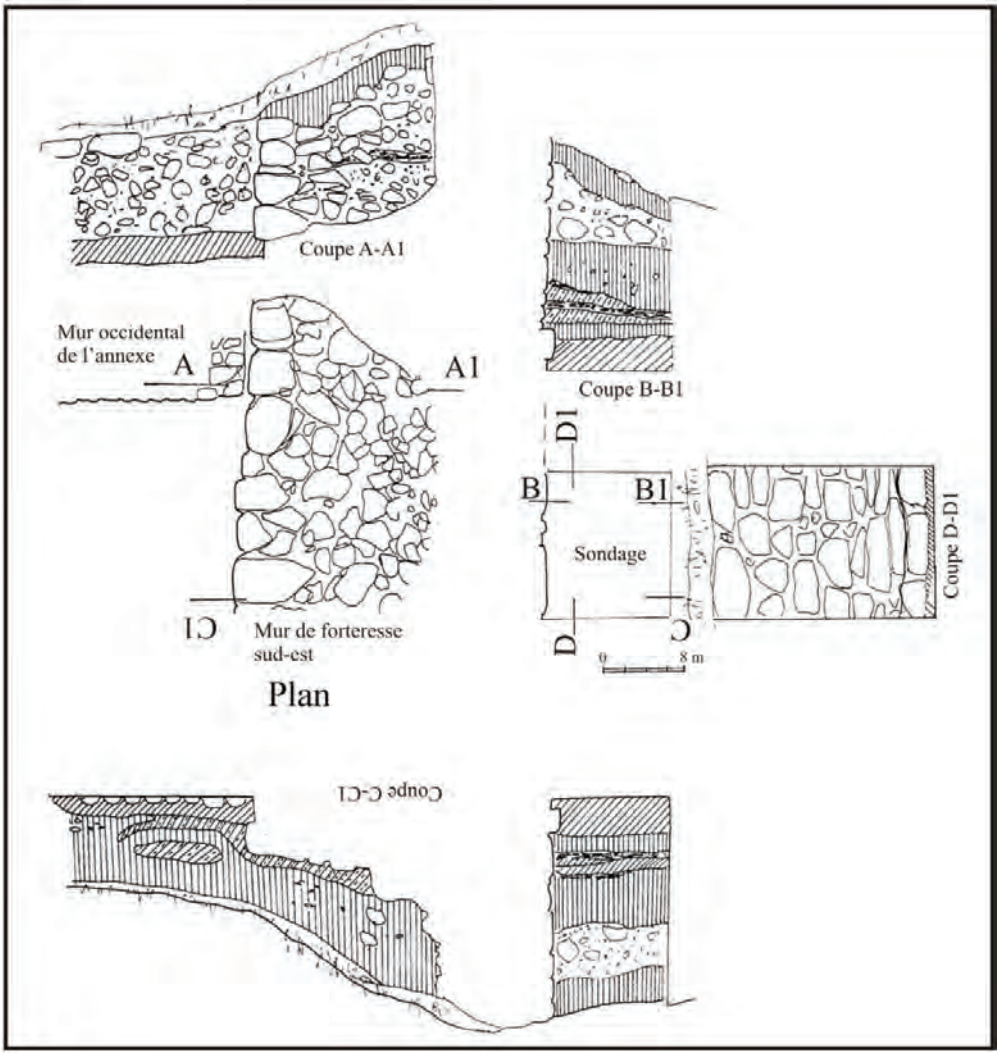

Fig. 12. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Sondage n° 2. Plan, coupes et vues au niveau du tournant du mur sud (d'après ATANASOV 2014a, fig. 19).

Fig. 13. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Sondage sur le mur sud (photo par G. Atanasov).

Fig. 14. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Sondage n° 2. Le parement intérieur du mur sud (photo par G. Atanasov).

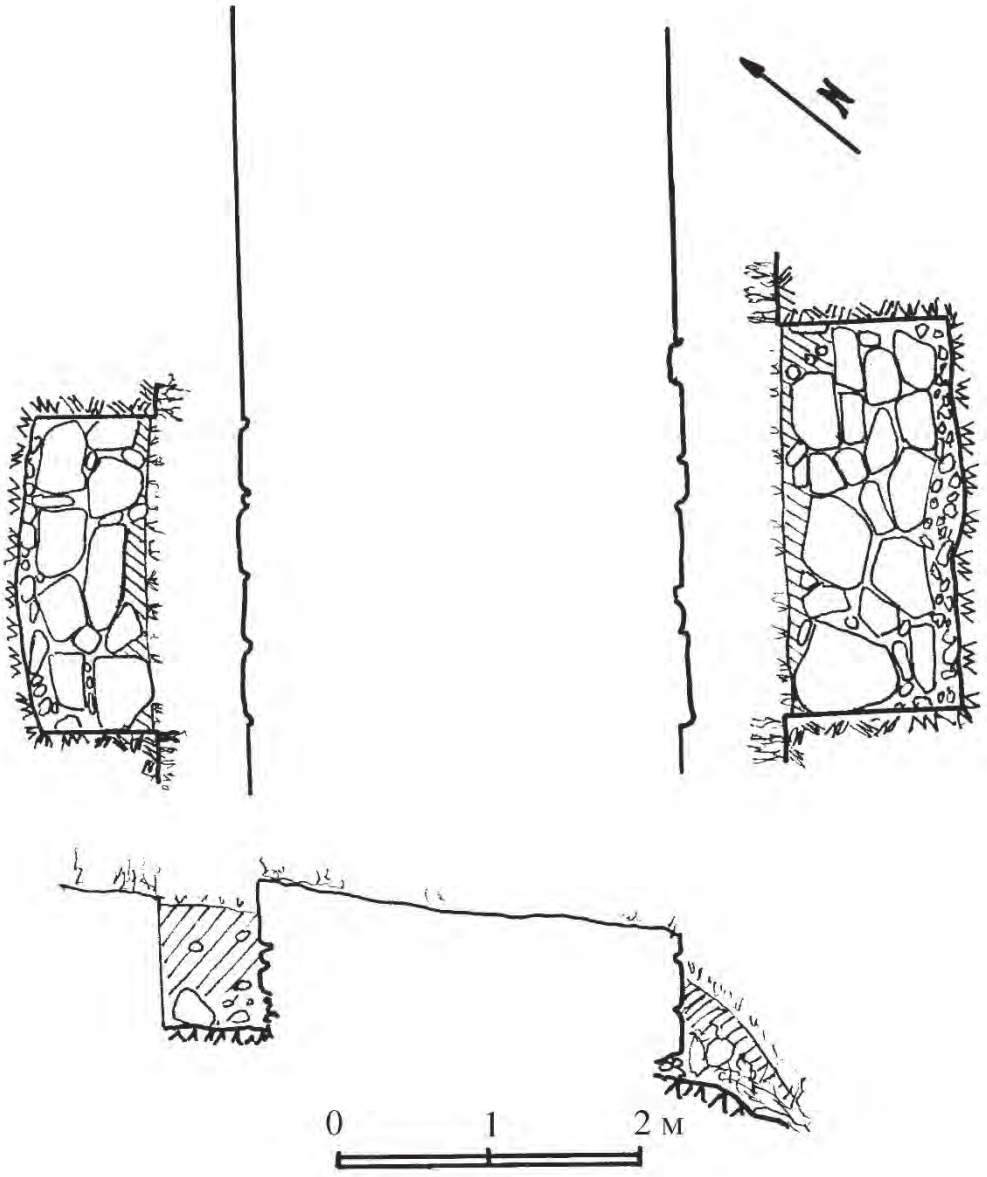

Fig. 15. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Sondage n° 3. Le mur sud (dessin par G. Atanasov).

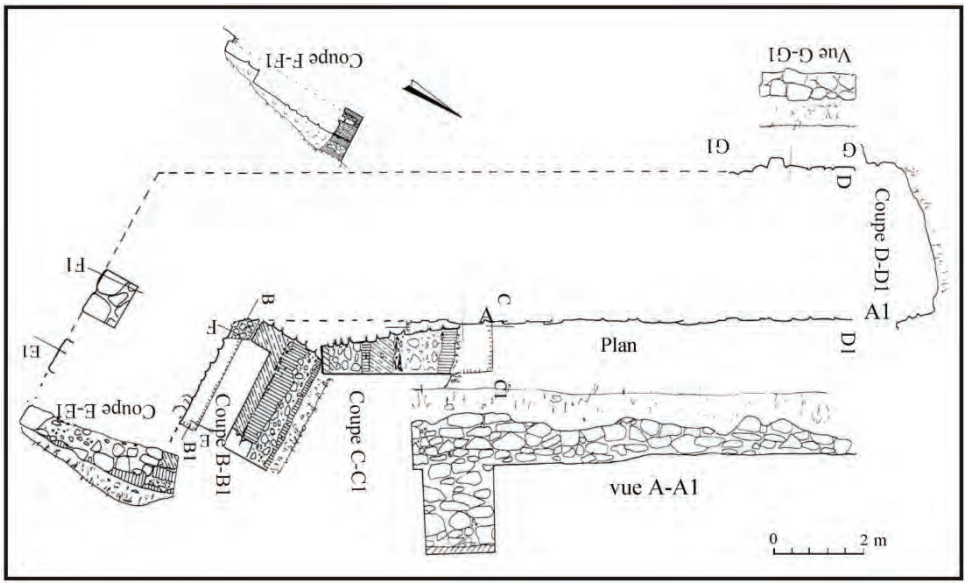

Fig. 16. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Sondage nº 4. Plan, profiles et vues du mur dans l'angle sud-est de la fortification (d'après ATANASOV 2014a, fig. 23).

Fig. 17. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Sondage nº 4. Le parement intérieur du mur (photo par G. Atanasov).

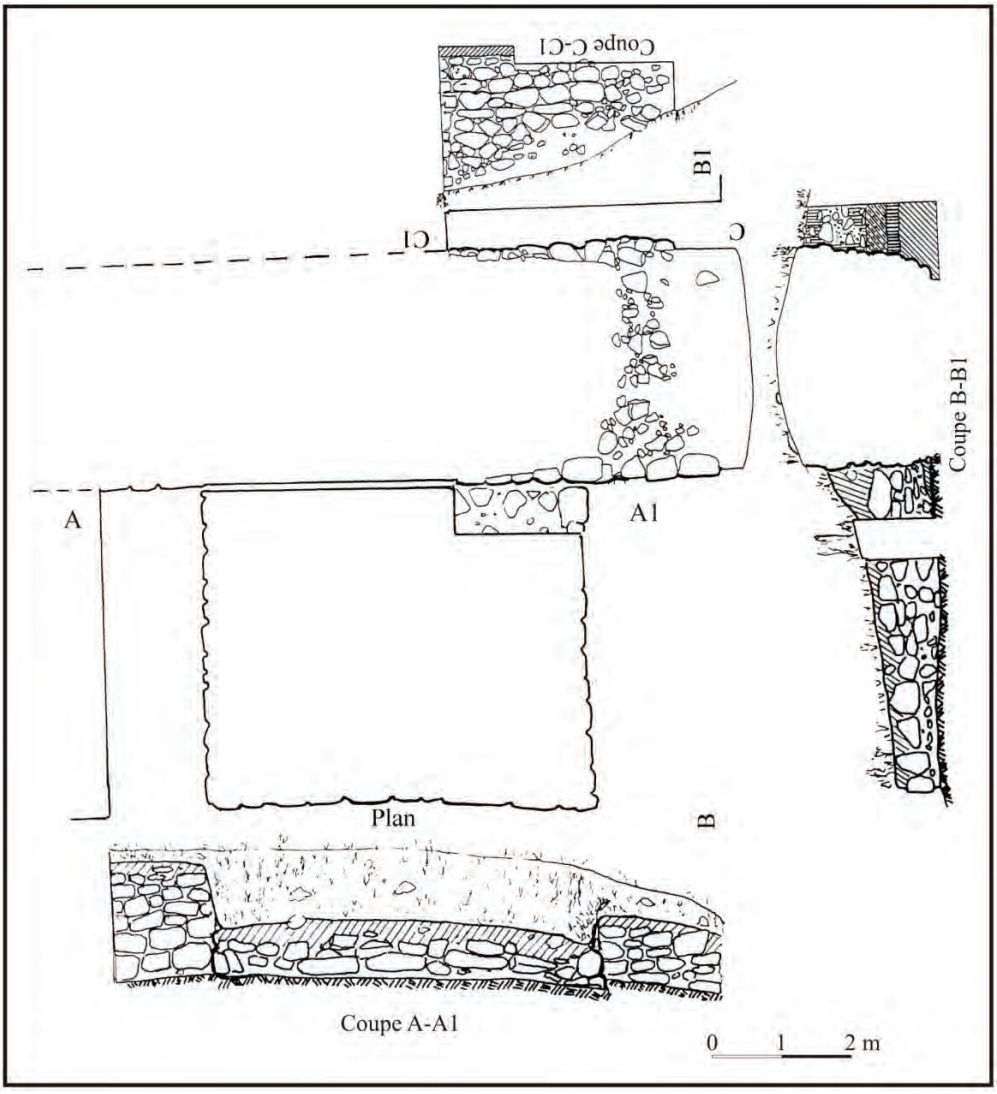

Fig. 18. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Plan, profiles et coupe de la tour n° 4 devant le mur ouest du X^e siècle (d'après ATANASOV 2014a, fig. 14).

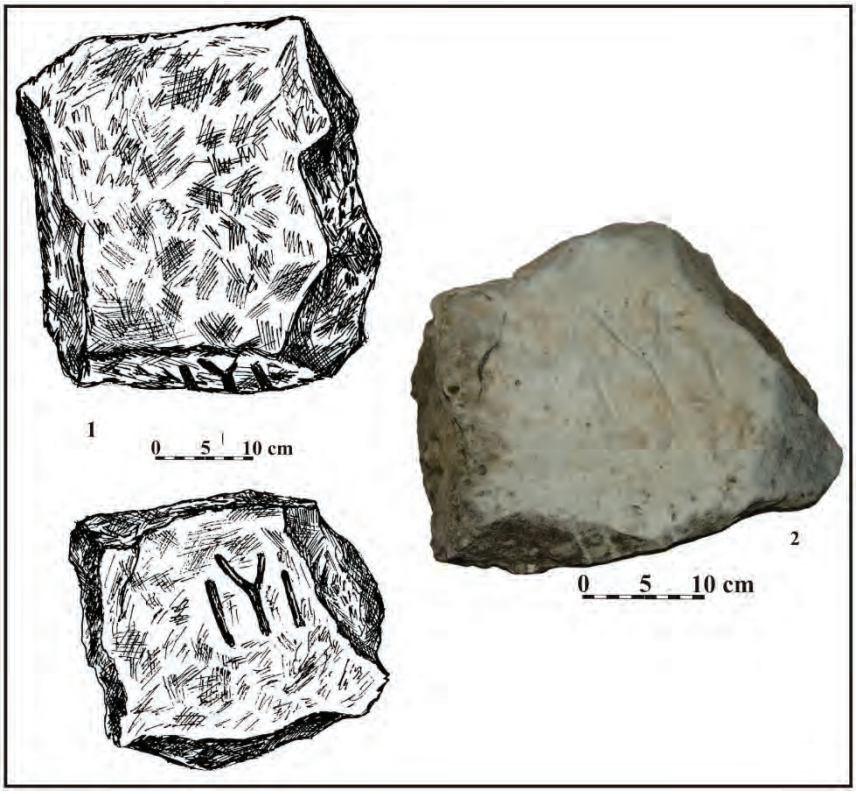

Fig. 19. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Bloc en pierre avec le signe IYI, découvert dans le mur, au nord de la tour nº 4 (photo et dessin par G. Atanasov).

Fig. 20. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Tranchée n° 1. Le parement intérieur du mur ouest, Xe siècle (photo par G. Atanasov).

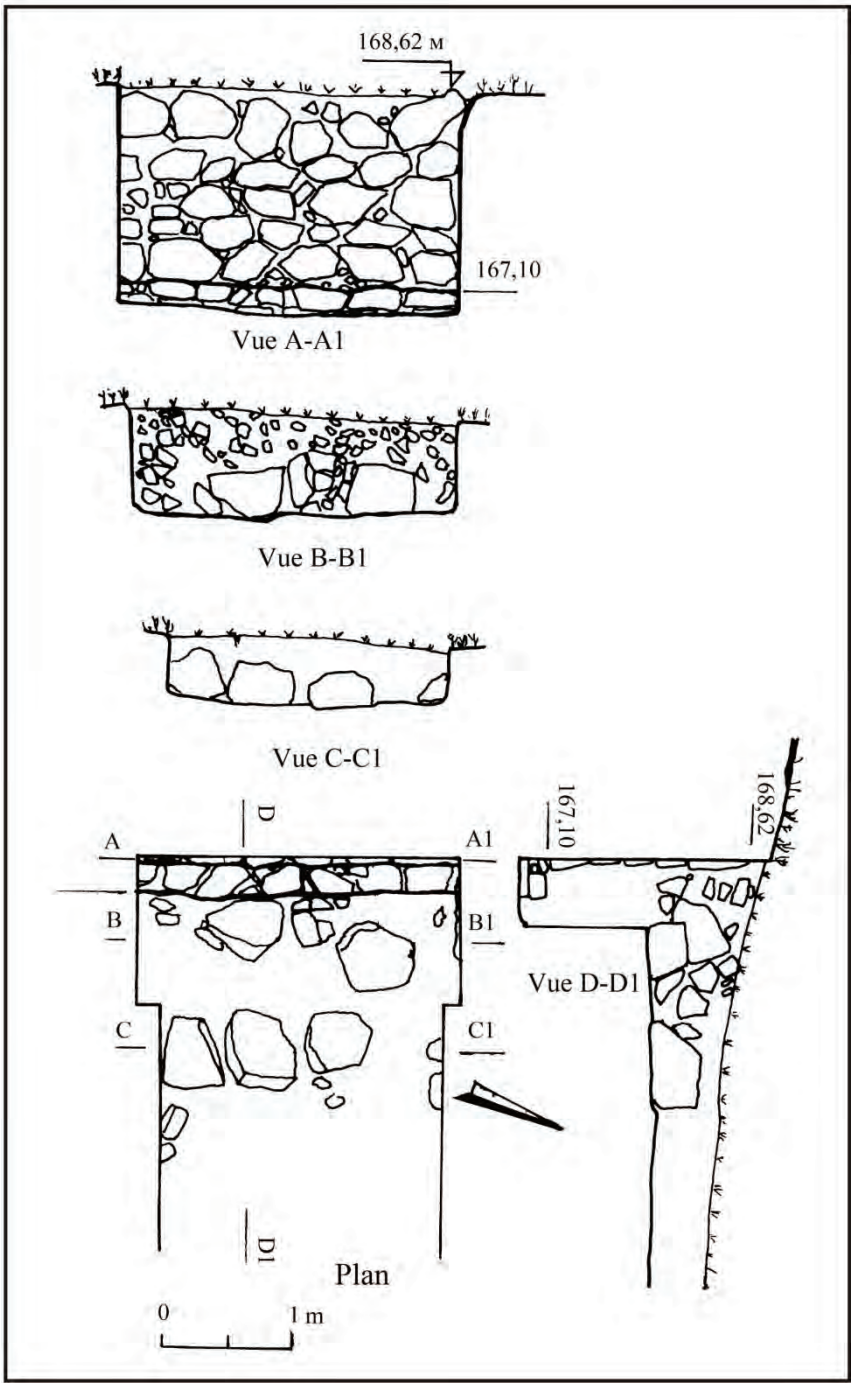

Fig. 21. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Tranchée n° 1. Plan, vue et profils du parement intérieur du mur ouest, X^e^ siècle (dessin par G. Atanasov).

Fig. 22. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Tranchée n° 1. Coupe de la douve, du remblai et des fosses destinées à la préparation de la pâte argileuse pour les moellons, devant le mur ouest (photo par G. Atanasov).

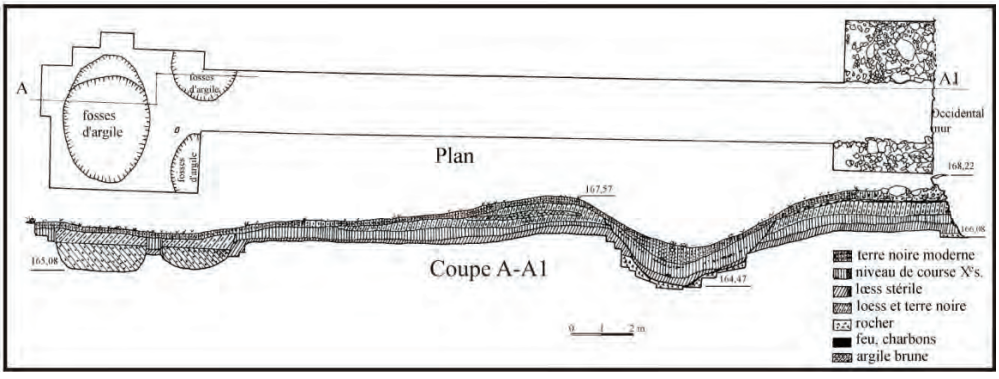

Fig. 23. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Tranchée n° 1. Dessin de la coupe, avec le profil de la douve, du remblai et des fosses, devant le mur ouest (d'après ATANASOV 2014a, fig. 11).

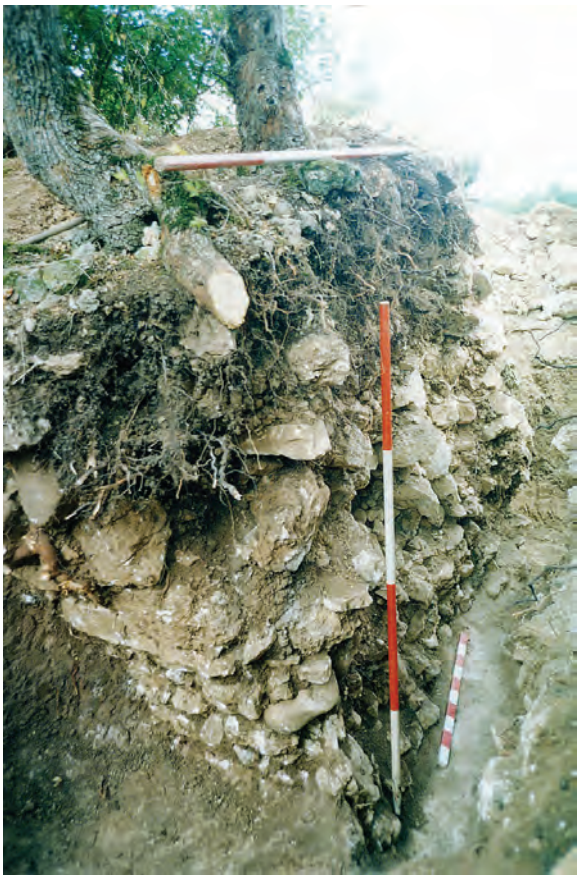

Fig. 24. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Tranchée nº 1. Coupe du mur ouest (photo par G. Atanasov).

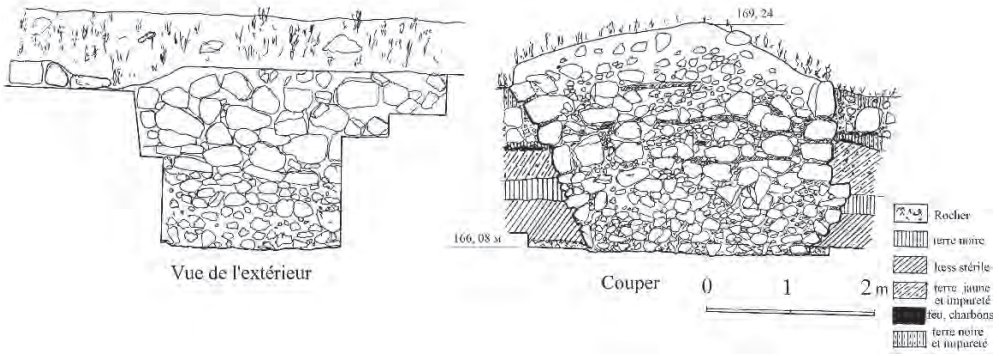

Fig. 25. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Tranchée nº 1. Dessin du côté externe et de la coupe du mur ouest (d'après ATANASOV 2014a, fig. 13).

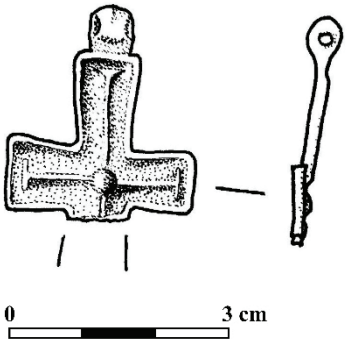

Fig. 26. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Tranchée n° 1. Croix-*enkolpion* devant le côté extérieur du mur ouest (dessin par E. Zlatev).

Fig. 27. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Tranchée n° 1. *Folles* byzantin anonyme, classe A2 (1028–1034/1036), devant le côté extérieur du mur ouest (photo par G. Atanasov).

Fig. 28. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Tessons céramiques avec engobe rouge, X^e^ siècle (photo par G. Atanasov).

Fig. 29. Carrière pour l'extraction de pierre au pied sud de la corniche rocheuse du « Kartal Kalé », non loin de la porte sud de la forteresse (photo par G. Atanasov).

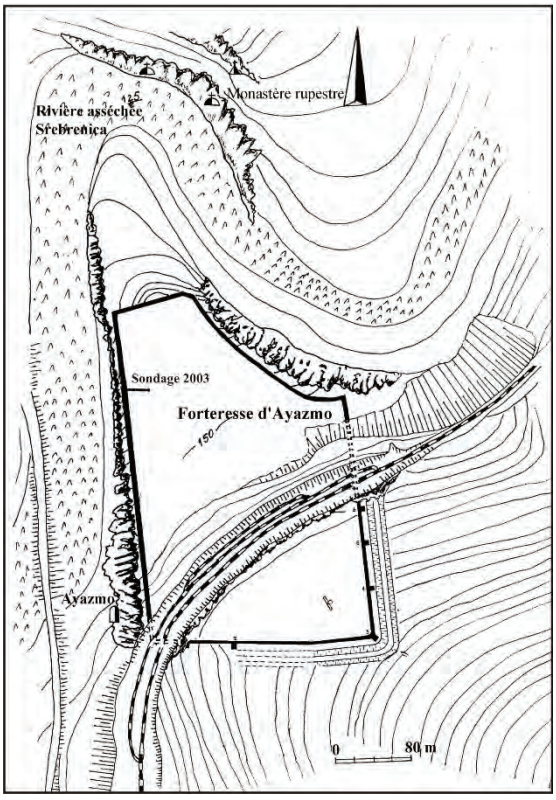

Fig. 30. Plan de la forteresse « Ayazmo » (d'après RASHEV 1982, tabl. XLVIII/1, avec des ajouts par ATANASOV 2014a, fig. 5).

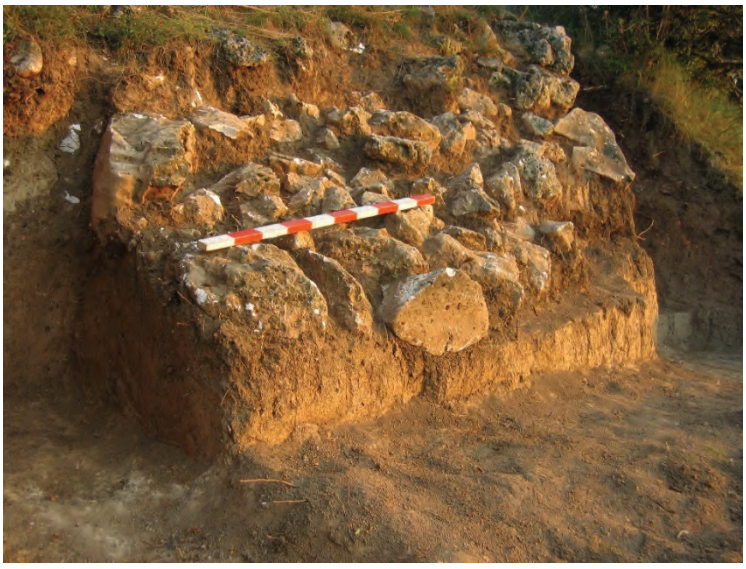

Fig. 31. La forteresse « Ayazmo ». Coupe du mur, la tour nº 6 (photo par G. Atanasov).

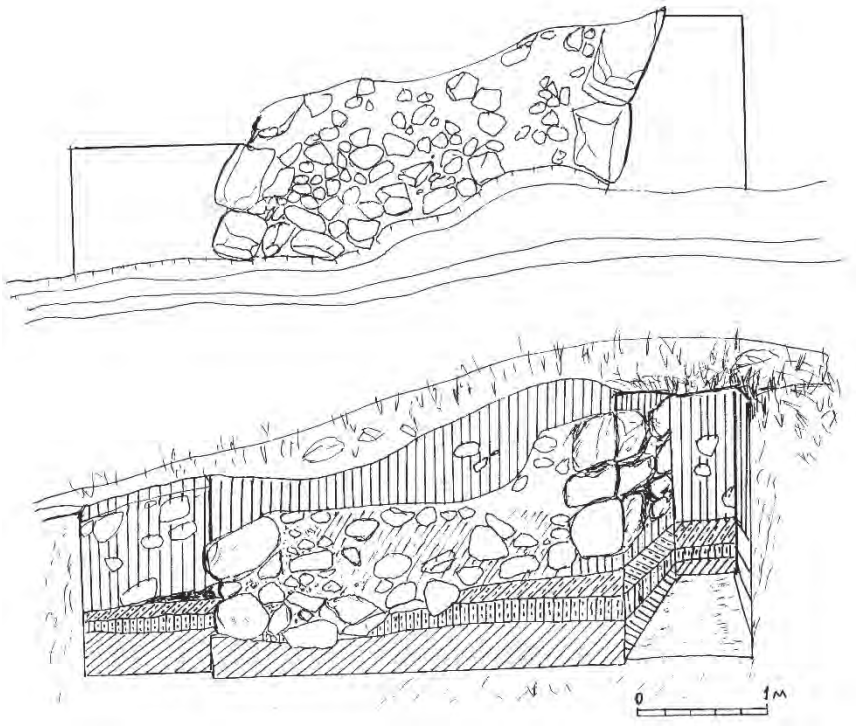

Fig. 32. La forteresse « Ayazmo ». Coupe du mur, la tour nº 6 (d'après ATANASOV 2014a, fig. 33).

Fig. 33. La forteresse « Ayazmo ». Poterie lustrée noire avec un motif décoratif en réseau, fin du IX^e – début du X^e siècle (photo par G. Atanasov).

Fig. 34. La forteresse « Ayazmo ». Poterie avec une décoration incisée sur tout le corps, fin du IX^e – début du X^e siècle (photo par G. Atanasov).

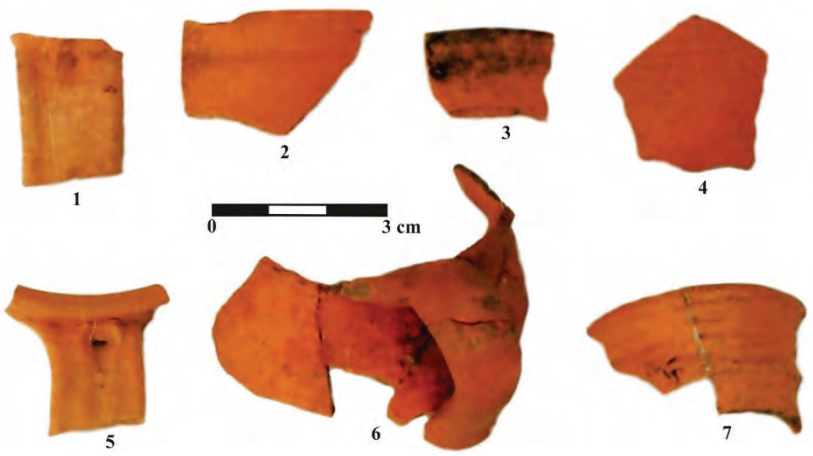

Fig. 35. La forteresse « Ayazmo ». Poterie rouge, début du XI^e siècle (photo par G. Atanasov).

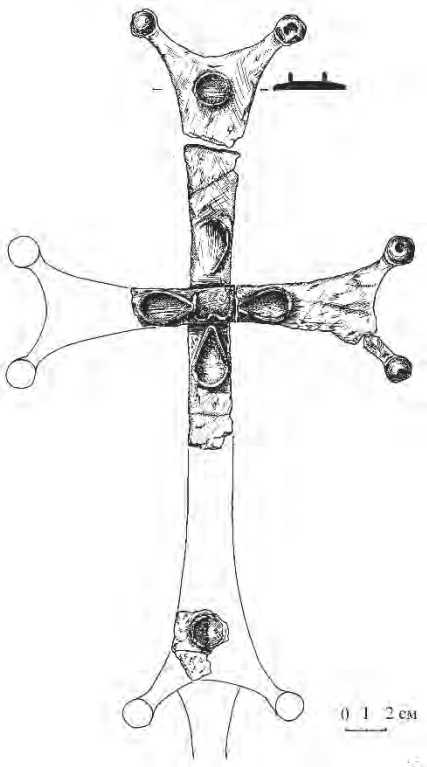

Fig. 36. La forteresse « Ayazmo ». Sondage de l'an 2003. Croix processionnelle, fin du X^e – début du XI^e siècle (d'après ATANASOV 2019, fig. 16).

Fig. 37. Le monastère rupestre du X^e siècle en face de la forteresse « Ayazmo » (photo par G. Atanasov).

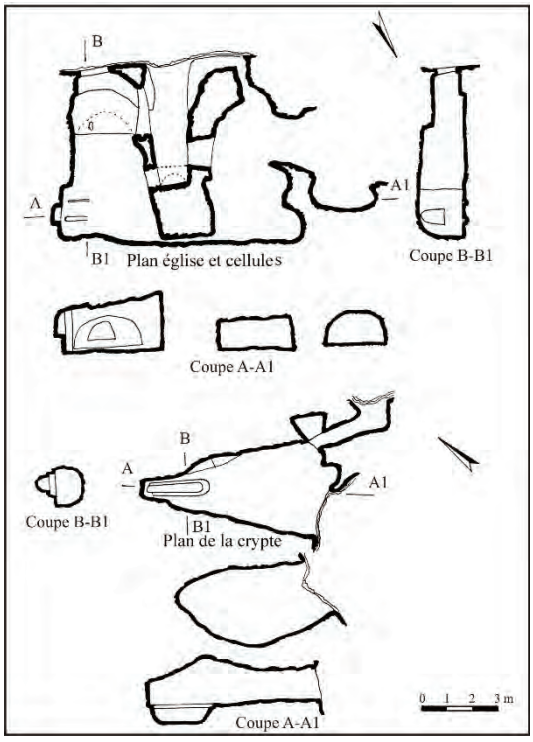

Fig. 38. Plan du monastère rupestre en face de la forteresse « Ayazmo » (d'après ATANASOV 2023, p. 236, n° V.94).

Fig. 39. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Une fosse d'une hutte médiévale au sud-ouest de la fortification (photo par N. Russev).

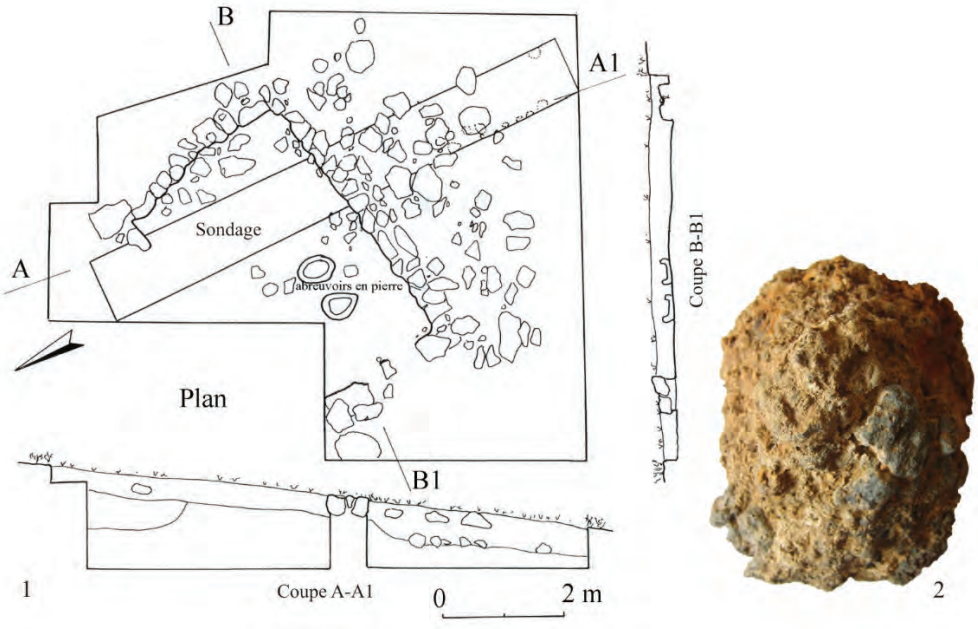

Fig. 40. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». 1 – Plan de l'atelier de forge au sud-ouest de la fortification ; 2 – des clous en fer (dessin et photo par. G. Atanasov).

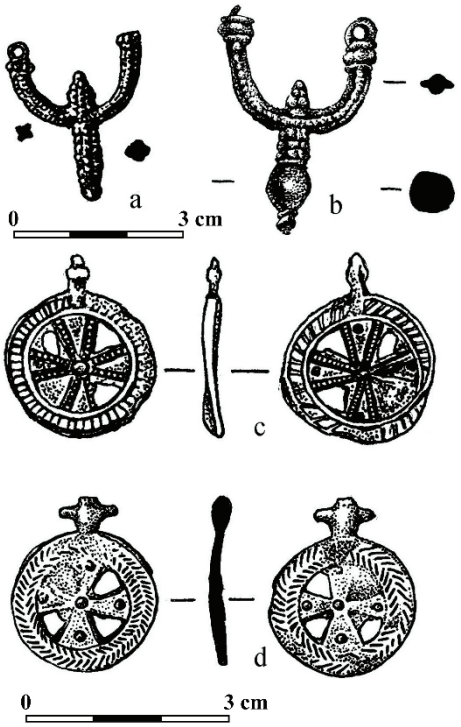

Fig. 41. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Boucles d'oreilles en forme de grappe (d'après ATANASOV, GRIGOROV 2002–2003, tabl. 5.4, 7.1) et médaillons en plomb avec des croix ajourées (fin du IX^{e} – début du X^{e} siècle) (d'après ATANASOV, DONCHEVA 2011, fig. 2/3, 3/4).

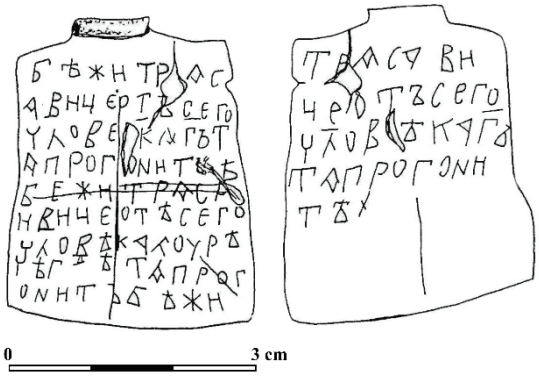

Fig. 42. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Amulette en plomb (X^{e} siècle) avec un texte cyrillique contre la maladie *„ТРЕСАВИЦА"/ fièvre ?* (d'après ATANASOV 1991, p. 30–32, tab. VI).

Fig. 43. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Céramique avec des bandes lustrées, début du X^e siècle (photo par G. Atanasov).

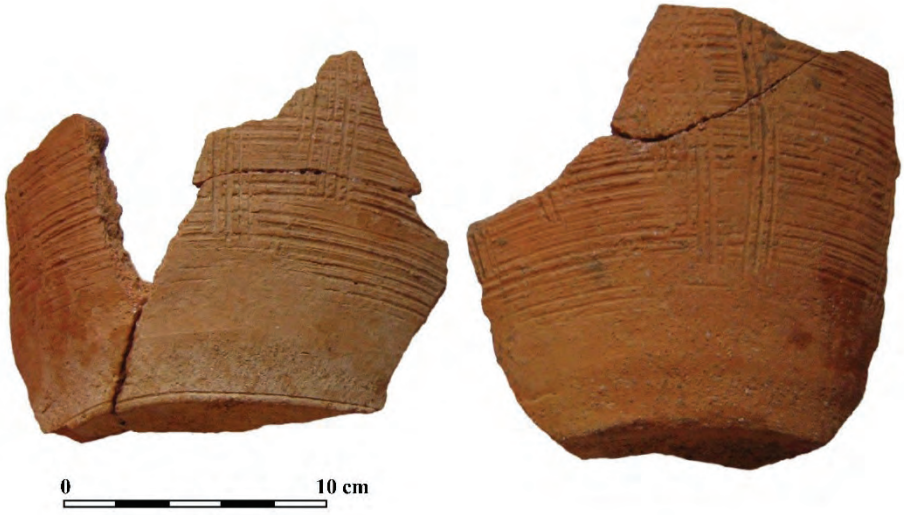

Fig. 44. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Céramique avec une décoration incisée, début du X^e siècle (photo par G. Atanasov).

Fig. 45. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Hutte n° 2, X^e siècle (photo par G. Atanasov).

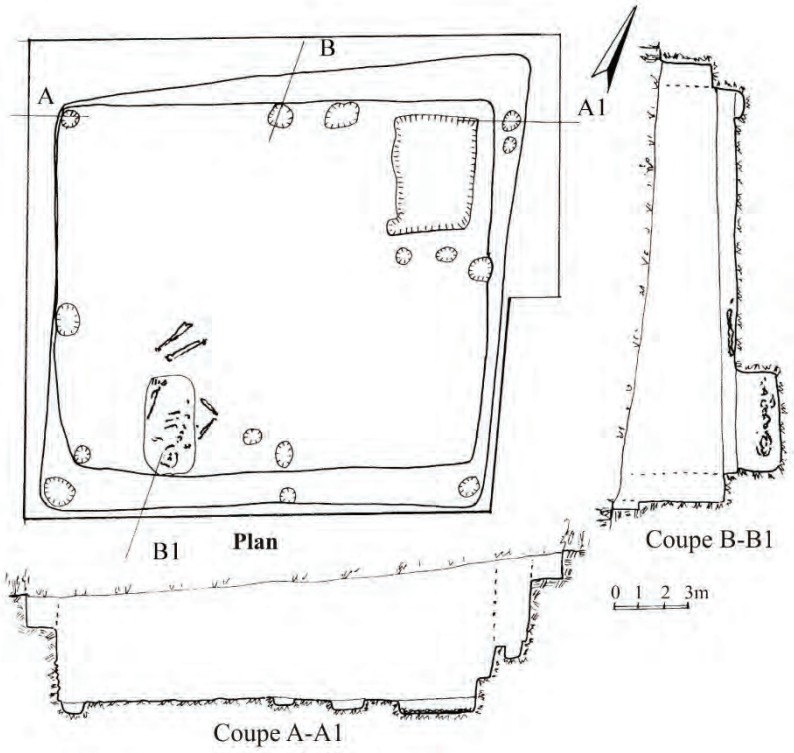

Fig. 46. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Hutte n° 16 (X^e siècle), superposée par la hutte n° 16a, début du XI^e siècle (d'après ATANASOV 2014a, fig. 26).

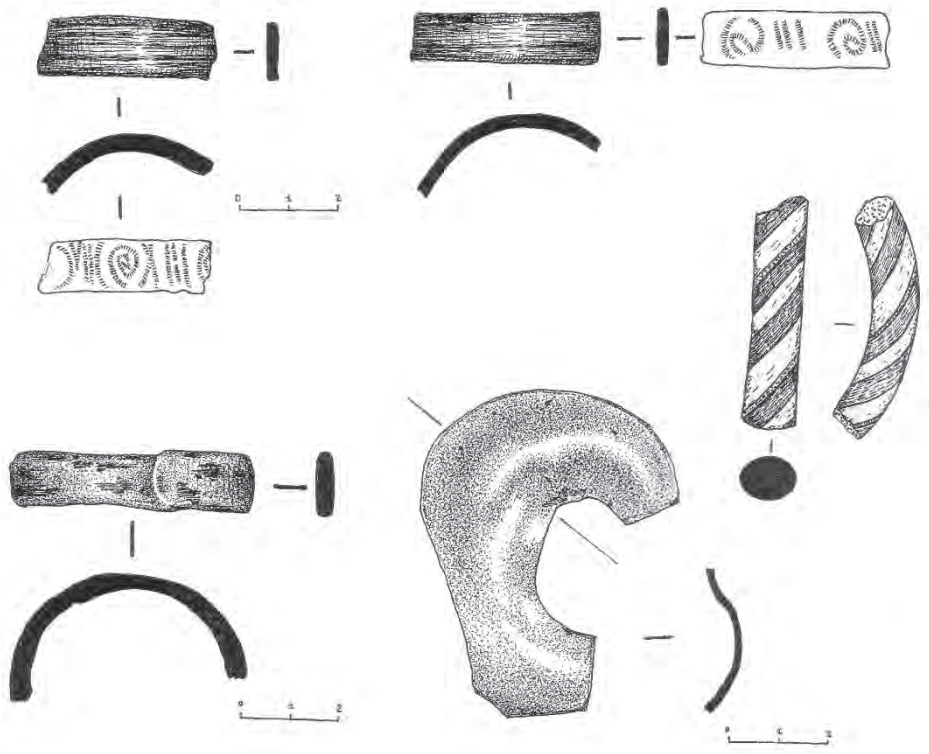

Fig. 47. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Bracelets en verre, début du XI^e siècle (dessin par D. Topal).

Fig. 48. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Boucle d'oreille, début du XI^e siècle (photo par G. Atanasov).

Fig. 49. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Monnaie en argent de Basile II – Constantin VIII (976–1025) (photo par G. Atanasov).

Fig. 50. La forteresse « Kartal Kalé ». Hutte n° 11, située dans la zone suburbaine, XI^e^ siècle (photo par G. Atanasov).

DEMNITSIKOS AND THE FORTRESS ON THE ISLAND PĂCUIUL LUI SOARE: LOCALISATION AND CHARACTER

Pavel GEORGIEV[*]

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary from the birth of Petre Diaconu

Keywords: *localisation, Lower Danube, John Kinnamos, Manuel Komnenos, Dorostol – Drastar, ford,* frurion*, wharf, Pechenegs, Cumans, oikonym, toponym.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *localizare, Dunărea de Jos, Ioan Kinnamos, Manuel Comnenul, Dorostol – Drăstăr, vad, fortificație, debarcader, pecenegi, cumani, oiconim, toponim.*

Abstract: *The location of Demnitsikos has been debated for more than one hundred and fifty years, with various solutions being offered: from Nikopol to Isaccea. The author considers that the Danube* frurion *mentioned only by John Kinnamos should have been located near Silistra (Dorostol – Drastar – Dristra) and identifies it with the island fortress Păcuiul lui Soare. At the base of this new solution is an analysis of Kinnamos account of Manuel I Komnenos' campaign in the spring of 1148 against Cumans across and beyond the Danube. Testimonies from other Byzantine authors were also added, in which the island fortress with a wharf for ships had been mentioned in the 11th and 12th centuries as being located on a ford that had long been used to cross the Danube and had also been sporadically used as a refuge for Pechenegs.*

On this basis, the author characterizes the fortress on the island as an important Byzantine barrier – dam for passage through the Danube arms, Borcea and Ostrov with their adjacent islands. The name Demnitsikos reflects the role of the frurion *with a wharf as an "island barrier-fortress" (démnitsikon) situated in the bed (démnion, lit. bed) of the great river.*

To verify this interpretation, the attested name of the fortress in the middle of the 15th century – Pecui is also taken into account. It is found to be Turkic, with a possible meaning: "Fortress/stronghold in a lowland/valley". It had been given by the late nomads living in the 11th–12th centuries in Ozolimna and Balta Ialomiței: Pechenegs, Oghuz and Cumans, as an alternative, but similar in meaning to the Greek – Demnitsikos. The depopulation of the island by the middle of the 15th century at the latest had led to the transformation of the Turkic-language oikonym into the Romanian-language toponym Păcuiul lui Soare. It is

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assumed that its second part – "lui soare" – "of the sun", seems to be a literal translation of an attribute – gün/kün (of the), which, according to the word order characteristic of Turkic languages, should come before the noun. Thus, the medieval oikonym can be reconstructed as "Kün-pecui" / "Fortress on the sunny side" and reflects the location of the fortress at the eastern end of the easternmost of the islands.

Rezumat: *Amplasarea Demnitsikos a fost dezbătută timp de mai bine de o sută cincizeci de ani, cu diverse soluții propuse: de la Nicopole la Isaccea. Autorul consideră că fortificația de pe Dunăre menționată doar de Ioan Kinnamos ar fi trebuit să fie localizată în apropierea Silistrei (Dorostol – Drăstăr – Dristra) și propune identificarea cu fortăreața de pe insula Păcuiul lui Soare. La baza acestei noi soluții se află o analiză a relatării lui Kinnamos despre campania lui Manuel I Comnenul, din primăvara anului 1148, împotriva cumanilor de peste și dincolo de Dunăre. Au fost adăugate și mărturii ale altor autori bizantini, în care fortăreața de pe insulă, cu un debarcader pentru nave, a fost menționată, în secolele al XI-lea și al XII-lea, ca fiind situată pe un vad care a fost folosit mult timp pentru traversarea Dunării și, de asemenea, ca fiind utilizată, sporadic, ca refugiu pentru pecenegi.*

Pe această bază, autorul caracterizează fortăreața de pe insulă ca fiind o importantă barieră bizantină – baraj de trecere prin brațele Dunării, Borcea și Ostrov, cu insulele lor adiacente. Numele Demnitsikos reflectă rolul de fortificație, cu un debarcader, ca o „fortăreață-barieră insulară" (démnitsikon) situată în albia (démnion, lit. pat) marelui fluviu.

Pentru a verifica această interpretare, se ia în considerare și numele atestat al fortăreței la mijlocul secolului al XV-lea – „Pecui". Se constată că este de origine turcică, cu o posibilă semnificație: „fortăreață/cetate într-o câmpie/vale". Acesta fusese dat de către nomazii târzii care trăiau în secolele XI–XII în Ozolimna și Balta Ialomiței: pecenegii, uzii și cumanii, ca o alternativă, dar similară ca sens cu cel grecesc – Demnitsikos. Depopularea insulei, până la mijlocul secolului al XV-lea cel târziu, a dus la transformarea oiconimului din limba turcică în toponimul din limba română „Păcuiul lui Soare". Se presupune că a doua parte a acestuia – „lui soare" – „al soarelui" –, este o traducere literală a unui atribut sau adjectiv atributiv – gün/kün (al), care, conform ordinii caracteristice a cuvintelor din limbile turcice, ar trebui să apară înaintea substantivului. Astfel, oiconimul medieval poate fi reconstruit drept Kün-pecui – „Fortăreața pe partea însorită" și reflectă localizarea fortificației în capătul răsăritean al celei mai estice dintre insule din zonă.

The Demnitsikos (Demnichik) case

The localization of the Danube *Frurion* Demnitsikos/Demnichik/Demnichek has a long history and an unclear outcome. This is due to its single mention by John Kinnamos (c. 1143 – c. 1185)[1]. He reported it in connection with events on the Lower Danube in the spring of 1148, but without precise indications of its location. At first, the researchers searched for the place, based on the similarity of the name Demnitsikos with names of modern settlements[2]. V. Tomashek and V. G. Vasilievski identify it with Zimnitsa/Zimnicea. However, the first publisher of Kinnamos's text – C. Grot – points out that the fortification was located on the right bank and should be identified with Svishtov[3], although al-Idrisi mentions it at the same time under

[1] IOANNIS CINNAMOS 1836, p. 95–97; GIBI 1968, p. 209, 226; BIBIKOV 1997, p. 50–51.

[2] ZLATARSKI 1972, p. 384–385, n. 2.

[3] See P. Diaconu's opinion related to the presence of toponymic doublets on both banks of the Danube in DIACONU 1978, p. 87.

the name Subestkastru[4]. This is the basis for a number of Romanian scholars[5], among which P. Diaconu[6] and others before him to continue to situate it, albeit presumably, at Svishtov or Zimnitsa/Zimnicea[7]. Their main argument is the mention by Kinnamos of what we believe to be a mock (see below) toponym Tenuorman, identified with the "Teleorman" in the western part of Muntenia. P. Ș. Năsturel tried twice to look for other solutions. At first, he identified Demnitsikos with the small Nikopol near Turnu Măgurele[8], but in 2004 he accepted that it should be looked for in the vicinity of Axiopolis and identified it with the nearby fortification of the Dubruja stone wall[9]. Before him, another Romanian scientist – A. A. Bolșacov-Ghimpu – proposed his own solution on the place of Demnitsikos[10]. According to him, this is the medieval name of *Dinogetia*-Garvăn, where the archaeological data and materials suggest habitation from the time of the Byzantine emperors John and Manuel Komnenos (1118–1180). From the Bulgarian side, P. Pavlov adheres to this opinion[11]. According to G. Mănucu-Adameşteanu however, this is unacceptable[12]. On the basis of the coin finds from the time of Manuel I, he proposed that the site of Demnitsikos should be sought around Isaccea and Izmail[13]. According to A. Madgearu, Demnitsikos/Demnitsek should be sought at Hârșova-*Carsium*[14]. Its location "on the lower reaches" of the Danube was also assumed by V. Pletnyov[15].

The Bulgarian researchers are more cautious. V. Zlatarski accepted that Demnitsikos may be a distortion of the name Glavinitsa, mentioned by Anna Komnene "not far from Drastar", and because of that he placed it near the city of Tutrakan[16]. V. Tăpkova-Zaimova expressed doubts about the possibility of the geographical names mentioned by Kinnamos being located decisively[17]. A. Kuzev in his turn accepted Demnitsikos as a fortress on the right bank of the Lower Danube (along with Glavinitsa, Vicina, etc.), but admitted that the data is insufficient even for its approximate localization[18]. P. Koledarov expressed the opinion that "Demenchik" (according to him a Pecheneg name) should be looked for "around the contemporary town of Măcin", without identifying it with any fortification and just because of

[4] NEDKOV 1960, p. 133–134.

[5] The Demnitsikos case is discussed in detail in: NĂSTUREL 1969; BARNEA 1971, p. 157–160; DIACONU 1978, p. 79–88, etc.

[6] DIACONU 1978, p. 79–80, 82–84, 86–88; DIACONU 1979.

[7] NĂSTUREL 2004, p. 525, n. 11.

[8] NĂSTUREL 1969, p. 171–175. The theory contradicted by Petre Diaconu (DIACONU 1978, p. 84, 87; NĂSTUREL 2004, p. 526 and n. 13).

[9] NĂSTUREL 2004, p. 521–534, especially p. 526–527.

[10] BOLŞACOV-GHIMPU 1967, p. 548; BOLŞACOV-GHIMPU 1973, p. 553, n. 1; the thesis adopted by Ion Barnea (BARNEA 1971, p. 160), but contradicted by Petre Diaconu (DIACONU 1978, p. 71, 87–88).

[11] PAVLOV 1992, p. 172, n. 28.

[12] MĂNUCU-ADAMEŞTEANU 2001a, p. 195–199; MĂNUCU-ADAMEŞTEANU 2019, p. 77.

[13] MĂNUCU-ADAMEŞTEANU 2001a, p. 195–196; MĂNUCU-ADAMEŞTEANU 2001b, p. 386; NĂSTUREL 2004, p. 525, n. 11.

[14] MADGEARU 2007, p. 126; VALERIEV 2014, p. 419, n. 39.

[15] PLETNYOV 2017, p. 396.

[16] ZLATARSKI 1972, p. 384–385, n. 2.

[17] TĂPKOVA-ZAIMOVA 1976, p. 105–106.

[18] KUZEV 1979, p. 30 and 39.

the presence there of a "place convenient for crossing the Danube" in the direction of Moldova[19]. G. Atanasov rejected the stated locations including Drastar, Păcuiul lui Soare, Vetren, Glavinitsa and others. He considers mainly the numismatic proof of habitation around the middle of the 12th century to be the leading evidence in the search for its location. From this point of view, he is inclined to place Demnitsikos at the important Danube ford Isaccea[20]. J. Valeriev also leans towards this opinion, but highlights the opinion of M. Bibikov about its identification with Dristra-Drastar in the light of the events from 1148[21]. I. Bozhilov also believes that Demnitsikos should be looked for "significantly further to the east" from its initial placement around Zimnicea and Svishtov and concluded that "a location acceptable to all can hardly be proposed"[22].

As it can be seen, despite the lengthy discussion, the question of Demnitsikos's location remains unsolved[23]. In our opinion, there is sufficient evidence in the written sources for its convincing resolution, but they must be carefully analyzed. The significance of this center for the historical geography of the area exceeds its own importance and this challenges us to new efforts and more concretely motivated solutions.

John Kinnamos's account of Demnitsikos (Demnichik)[24] is part of his narrative about the actions undertaken by the Byzantine emperor Manuel I Komnenos against the Sicilian conquerors on the island of Kerkyra (Corfu)[25].

Here is Kinnamos's text, according to the Bulgarian edition with our accents in bold: "*When the emperor was **already** in the vicinity of Philippopolis, a rumor reached him that a Scythian army had crossed the Istros, devastated, trampled and plundered everything, and at the same time **conquered a rather remarkable city**, **which is washed by the waters of the Istros.** Such was the rumor back then. And the emperor turned aside from his way and **approached the Istros**, after ordering ships to be brought from Byzantium through the city of Anchialo to the Istros. By the time the ships arrived, he had traversed **the stretches of desolate and long-uninhabited places there, pouncing upon large specimen in the herds of game**. While the emperor was engaged in this, he was informed that the Scythians, taking spoils from the Romans, **had just crossed the Istros not far off, pitched their tents, and encamped**. When he heard that, he immediately went to the river as fast as he could. There he found one of those boats which usually stand by the local shores, and are made of one tree, and ordered it to be brought to him. But the boatman was persistent. **On hearing the emperor call him, he said: 'If the emperor cared about our affairs, in short, Demnitsikos (**Δεμνίτζικος**) would never have been taken' (such was the name***

[19] KOLEDAROV 1989, p. 18, n. 76.

[20] ATANASOV 2007, p. 256–257.

[21] VALERIEV 2014, p. 420 sqq.

[22] BOZHLOV, GYUZELEV 2004, p. 162 and 182.

[23] M. Bibikov sees the reason for the unsatisfactory solutions in the shortened version of John Kinnamos's text, cf. BIBIKOV 1997, p. 108, n. 67.

[24] The oikonym Δεμνίτζικος is transcribed differently. Bulgarian and Russian scholars spell it Demnichik (Demnichek), and Western scholars spell it Demnitsikos or Demnitzikos. Here we adopt the transcription Demnitsikos as it is closer to its Greek spelling and pronunciation.

[25] GIBI 1968, p. 225–228, transl. S. Lishev and G. Batakliev, nots P. Tivchev, G. Cankova-Petkova and G. Batakliev; BIBIKOV 1997, p. 50–51 and 60.

***of the fortress which the Scythians took, as already said)**, nor the barbarians would freely plunder and carry off our property*".

After these words of the boatman, Manuel Komnenos swore to punish "*immediately*" the Cumans, who, however, were already on the other side of the Danube. He led a group of 500 men and crossed a river on a pontoon of boats which had been tied together (λέμβους)[26]. There he "***came upon two other navigable rivers***", which he crossed with the same boats, brought by being tied to the tails of the horses of the imperial troop. Beyond those, the Byzantines found the Cuman bivouac empty and continued their pursuit. Thus they penetrated "all the way to the mountain Tenihorm (not Tenuorman! – author's note), which rises near the borders of Tauroscythia". Catching up with them there, they entered into battle with them and "*many Romans covered themselves with glory, but above all - the emperor*"[27].

The question of the authenticity of the testimony

John Kinnamos had been the secretary of Manuel I Komnenos, but he had not been a participant in the campaign from 1148. He had used oral and written testimonies for his account, and this gives most researchers confidence in his credibility[28]. M. Bibikov for example, pointed to the letter of John Tzetzes(a) from the same year (about it, further down)[29]. Based on that, the Russian byzantologist attempted to localize the events from the spring of 1148[30]. According to him, the Cumans first penetrated "into the region of Dristra", which, according to the information in Tzetzes's letter from the same year, was "subject of ruin". This conclusion differs from the opinions that situate the events primarily in Northern Dobruja and the interior of Moesia. Y. Valeriev recently expressed his agreement with M. Bibikov. In support of the fact that the hostilities in 1148 began in the area of Dristra (Drastar), he cited archaeological and numismatic data and, on this basis, tried to outline the Cuman invasion from Muntenia towards the central part of present-day Bulgarian territory[31].

Kinnamos's information about the events of 1148, and especially about Demnitsikos, sometimes causes reservations and even doubts about its credibility[32]. Recently, a Bulgarian philologist expressed the opinion that the Byzantine historian, using a similar account of Anna Komnene about events from 1114[33], had "composed" a narrative about a supposed march to the Danube in 1148[34]. According to

[26] BIBIKOV 1997, p. 109 cites a text by Kinnamos in which he uses the term lembádia for vessels used to cross the Bosphorus; STAVROULAKI 2000, p. 24, fig. 3.

[27] MORAVCSIK 1958 II, p. 324–328; FREIDENBERG 1959, p. 29; KAZHDAN 1963, p. 31–32; GIBI 1968, p. 209; ODB 1991, p. 1130; BIBIKOV 1997, p. 16 sqq.; LYUBARSKIY 2005, p. 99–109; KOZLOV 2012, p. 147–148 etc.

[28] BIBIKOV 1981, p. 117–120, n. 41 sqq.

[29] BIBIKOV 1976, p. 17–22.

[30] VALERIEV 2014, p. 418–421.

[31] In the summary work on the reign of Manuel I Komnenos, the campaign of 1148 is not noted at all, cf. MAGDALINO 1993, p. 53–54 and 174; NĂSTUREL 2004, p. 529, n. 22.

[32] KALOYANOV 2019, p. 22–23.

[33] GIBI 1971, p. 138–139.

[34] GIBI 1983, p. 11: Chon. Hist., p. 103: 21–104: 2.

Kaloyanov, this is the reason for the fruitless search for Demnitsikos, the two navigable rivers, as well as a mountain named Tenihorm.

We do not share this opinion, but we must admit that it raises questions about the textology of the source. Niketas Choniates had not really written about actions of Manuel I Komnenos beyond the Danube, but he had reported actions of his on the Danube, and in the context of his planned march towards the island of Corfu[35]. This is how Theodore Scoutariotes had presented the events of 1148, too. Researchers do not leave room for doubt on this information. Yacob Lyubarski, for example, after noting that Choniates had been about 20 years younger than Kynnamos, accepts A. Kazhdan's conclusion that he had been completely independent and had not been influenced by his immediate predecessor in his characterization of Manuel I Komnenos[36]. M. Bibikov, on the other hand, believes that Choniates had been familiar with Kinnamos's work, which had been unknown in the second half of the 12th century, and had taken advantage of it[37]. Regarding the episode surrounding Demnitsikos, Choniates seems to have had only shortened the details, as they seemed excessive to him, in view of his endeavour to present the qualities and the actions of the emperor in a more balanced (compared to Kinnamos) way.

Kinnamos's account presents details which show that it is based on real data, but had been "eulogerically embellished". Some doubt leaves his statement that, in connection with his diversion to the Danube, the emperor summoned ships from the capital, as the navy had at that time been sent to the Adriatic Sea. The description of their route to the mouth of the Danube allows us to assume that they were only transport vessels to transfer troops to the other side of the river. This leads to the conclusion that the landing had been planned as soon as the emperor learned that the Cumans "*also captured a rather remarkable city, which is washed by the waters of the Danube*".

The episode with the imperial hunt also seems credible. Firstly, because it is known that this had been a favorite activity of Manuel I Komnenos, including during military campaigns[38]. In this sense, the indicated search for special specimen (τι χρῆμα ζώων) among the herds of wild animals corresponds to the imperial passion and is another typical for the author "micro-episode", with which Kinnamos draws the image of his "hero". As for the area in which he had hunted, it can be identified with the present day Ludogorie and the southwestern part of Dobruja[39]. The presence of forests and riverbeds there suggests the habitation of large wild animals. The riches of the area in this regard had already been documented by Theophylactus Simocattes and Theophanes the Confessor, in connection with the campaign of the military leader Peter, brother of the emperor Maurice (582–602), against the Avars and Slavs in 596[40]. It is possible that it was these descriptions of hunting during a military campaign that prompted Kinnamos to present his hero as a successor to the famous general of the late 6th century. Manuel's desire to

[35] GIBI 1971, p. 226–227: Comp. chron., p. 230: 21–31.
[36] LYUBARSKIY 2005, p. 99.
[37] BIBIKOV 1997, p. 21 and 29.
[38] BIBIKOV 1997, p. 32 sqq.; LYUBARSKIY 2005, p. 100; GYUZELEV 2005, p. 36–37.
[39] GYUZELEV 1996, p. 87–108.
[40] GIBI 1959, p. 332–333; GIBI 1960, p. 249–250.

imitate the heroes from the past is one of his characteristic features, also pointed out explicitly by Niketas Choniates[41].

The impulsivity and ostentatious bravery of Manuel I also explain his action across the Danube in pursuit of the enemy retreating into Muntenia[42]. Kinnamos's account of this also seems to be influenced by texts about events from the end of the 6th century. Theophanes the Confessor, for example, tells a similar story, which could have inspired the 12th century author to present "his" emperor as a follower of the "Roman" generals in their fight against the barbarians beyond the Danube[43]. Kinnamos's account of this resembles, for example, those of Theophylactus Simocattes and Theophanes about the hiliarch Alexander, who pursued Slavs beyond the Danube, where he had to cross the "neighboring river" named Hilivakia (now Ialomița)[44].

The descriptions of the event from the end of the 6th century can be taken as a reference point to some extent, when clarifying the areas where Manuel I Komnenos headed in 1148. This seems to have been the Danube bank near Dristra – Drastar, opposite the lowland between the Buzău and Ialomița rivers. It is covered with lakes, marshes and mostly meadow vegetation, and the area of Ialomița is also rich in forests[45]. From the south – southwest it borders the Borcea arm of the Danube.

The most convenient place for landing from the right bank should be sought to the east of the line between the cities of Silistra (Bulgaria) and Călărași (Romania). The details in Kinnamos's text confirm the possibility that Manuel I had crossed the Istrum in this section. This suggests that he had planned his landing on the basis of the military experience from the time of Emperor Maurice.

The passage of the Cumans across the Danube had forced Manuel I to undertake its forcing before the arrival of the ships summoned for the purpose. An important consideration for the approximate location of the Imperial troops is their encampment "*at that same place and along the bank of the river*"[46]. The distance from there to the Danube bank had been very short, and this points to the possibility that the word is about the ford located just a few kilometers to the northeast, near the village of Ostrov (Romania)[47], which seems to have already been used to cross the Danube by the generals of Maurice.

Kinnamos only states that the emperor had found a single-hulled boat at this place, the owner of which reproached Manuel I about the fact that he had allowed the barbarians to take possession of Demnitsikos. The express mention by a local resident indicates that it had an important position and control capabilities, both when an enemy invaded the Empire and when they returned across the river. In

[41] LYUBARSKIY 2005, p. 107; VALERIEV 2014, n. 2.

[42] LYUBARSKIY 2005, p. 99–100.

[43] GIBI 1960, p. 246–247.

[44] GIBI 1959, p. 325–326; GIBI 1960, p. 251.

[45] CORBU 2013, p. 88–89, tabl. V and VI.

[46] From this it is understood that the camp was located near the Danube ford. In view of what has been said below, it is likely that it had been approximately at the site of the military camp of Alexios I Komnenos in 1088: at the mouth of the Dristra River in the Danube and on the shore of Lake Gârlița (= Lake Bugeac). According to Anna Komnene, it stood 24 stadia (about 5 km) from the Istros. Cf. GIBI 1971, p. 61: Alex., VII,3, p. 232; GEORGIEV 2002, p. 70.

[47] PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI, TALMAȚCHI 2013, p. 333–335.

other words, Demnitsikos had been located in a place accessible from both banks, which had been close to the place on the right bank where the emperor had met the boatman. There exactly Manuel I had ordered a sufficient number of boats to be gathered from the surrounding area to cross the course of the large and full-water river. The rapid completion of the task suggests that this coastline had such a resource. This suggests that near the ford in question there had been a large settlement with more than one dock for boats. Such a section of the Danube bank can be found near Dristra-Drastar **(Fig. 1)**.

The landing party had crossed the Istrum by the means of a pontoon bridge built from the assembled boats. Its arrangement gives indirect indications that the width of the water area here had not been large, and the current had not been particularly strong. After crossing, the detachment reached "*two other navigable rivers*". To cross those, the emperor had ordered "*his people*" to bring the boats (*lémbous*) from the pontoon. The speed and manner in which that had been carried out meant that the distance between the pontoon and the "rivers" on their way had not been great, and the terrain had been flat and flooded so that the boats could be pulled by riding horses.

Thus transported, the boats had been used as floating vessels (ἀκάτια). Further, the path of the detachment had been easier and "*passed by some oblong area and reached as far as 'Mount Tenihorm', which rises near the borders of Tauroscythia*". Thus translated and uncritically accepted, the passage creates the impression that the Byzantines had managed to penetrate deep into Muntenia. Therefore, most of the modern historians identify the "mountain" in question with the situated in the western part of the Wallachian plain, also called Teleorman plain[48].

As a matter of fact, the Byzantine penetration in the lands beyond the watercourses described by the author had been much shallower, as some researchers have guessed[49]. The short distance to the two "rivers" as well as the height with the abandoned Cuman bivouac suggests that they had been reached in less than a day. Therefore, we must assume that this part of Kinnamos's account describes the crossing of three separate arms of the Danube and the islands between them.

But then, how are we to explain the author's statement that the emperor had then reached a "*mountain*" named "*Tenihorm*"? In fact, the toponym is the result of a wrong translation that has confused researchers for several generations. M. Bibikov explicitly noted that this part of the text in the only manuscript that has reached us is damaged and quotes K. Groth, that there is a "grammatical failure of the expression", which requires a "connector"[50]. In our opinion, Kinnamos does not mention neither a proper name, nor the word "mountain". He only indicates that beyond the last of the rivers the emperor's men had "passed" by "*horón té tina dolichòn*", i.e. an area elongated in the direction of their movement[51]. In view of this, it is quite possible that that was the "island" enclosed between the main stream of the Danube ("Ostrov Arm" or "Old Danube", to the east) and its arm Borcea, which surrounds

[48] NĂSTUREL 2004, p. 533, n. 30 and 31; VALERIEV 2014, p. 421–422.
[49] BIBIKOV 1981, p. 119; BIBIKOV 1997, p. 110; NĂSTUREL 2004, p. 527–529, n. 19–21.
[50] BIBIKOV 1997, p. 110.
[51] For the meaning of the word *dólichos*, cf. SUIDAE LEXIKON 1854, p. 306.

from the west an island of the same name, as part of Balta Ialomiței[52]. A similar conclusion was reached by P. Ș. Năsturel, who considers that the military operation of Manuel I Komnenos began with the crossing of the Danube and its marshy arm Borcea (located west of the island Balta Borcea)[53]. The Romanian historian believes however that it advanced further to the east, near the modern city of Cernavodă (see below).

The width of Balta Borcei is about 6 km. Archaeological evidence indicates that the marshy island had been inhabited and had been a bridgehead for crossing from one bank of the Danube to the other. In the west, it starts after Călărași and ends after the mouth of the Ialomița River. The multitude of islands in the main channel there makes it easy to traverse the river valley by successive fords through the considerable shoals[54]. Such shoals exist also in the southwestern half of the river bed. This is exactly where the four islands called Păcui are located with the Plosca (the Danube itself) and Borcea arms wrapping around them (**Fig. 1**), of which only the one with the fortification is called Păcuiul lui Soare[55]. The explorations of Balta Borcei, conducted under the leadership of Ion Barnea, allow us to identify three directions for crossing to both banks of the Danube. They had been inhabited during different eras, including the early and high Middle Ages[56]. The middle route is opposite the northeastern tip of the easternmost of the islands, Păcuiul lui Soare, with the stone fortress placed there **(Fig. 2)**. In the eastern direction across the Danube Balta with a similar placement is a small island called *Podul de piatră* (*Podul lui Traian*). It is assumed that in Roman times it had supported a stone bridge that had led to Capidava. It is likely that in those times this route had been the main one for crossing the river, and the small island was a bridgehead for heading to Balta Borcei. In the Middle Ages, such had been the role of Păcuiul lui Soare Island, as the fortress built on it shows.

Let's go back to Kinnamos's expression *ténou hórmon*. It has nothing to do with the oronim Tele orman in the Wallachian lowlands, nor with the completely assumed Tenouhorm. With the word hóros, the historian noted just a "hill" or "elevation" from the so-called gridi in a "swampy, marshy area" (cf. *ténagos*) with the function of a "shelter" (*hórmos*)[57]. The proximity of "Tauroscythia" mentioned by Kinnamos is obviously mentioned as a goal not reached. It is precisely here that we can reasonably suspect the historian-panigerist in deliberate exaggeration of the depth of entering the "barbarian land". Using the testimony of older authors of similar military operations as foundation, he suggests that his hero had reached almost as far as Cumania itself. But for such a deep penetration, Manuel I Komnenos had not had sufficient military forces and, above all, time. After achieving an "easy" victory over the Cumans troops he had met, he had returned to his army to carry out his war

[52] VÎLCEANU 1967, p. 593 sqq.; COTEȚ 1967, p. 617 sqq.; STOYANOV 2000, p. 239–240.

[53] NĂSTUREL 2004, p. 528, n. 19 and 20. The work IORGA, MĂRCULEȚ 2018 was inaccessible for us.

[54] VALERIEV 2019, p. 149–150.

[55] See DIACONU, VÎLCEANU 1972, p. 12; DIACONU 1978, p. 32.

[56] BARNEA 1966, p. 155–161; OPRIȘ, RAȚIU 2016, pl. VIII/2.

[57] SUIDAE LEXIKON 1854, p. 786.

against the Normans on the island of Corfu[58]. According to Kinnamos, the emperor had reached the Adriatic coast "in time" where he had loaded his troops in the naval fleet that had arrived there.

In such case, the crossing of the Danube in 1148 started from a convenient place on the right bank, east of Dorostol-Drastar. It ended beyond the islands between the Plosca and Borcea arms, perhaps only a few kilometers from the left bank on the Danube. We can reconstruct the route as follows: 1. Crossing the main course of the river (now the "Ostrov" arm) on a bridge of boats[59]. The starting point here seems to have been at the foot of the Dervent Hill, as the river bed here is narrowest. The Turkic toponym means "passage", "traverse", actually a "passage" through something, and shows that the hill with the fortified settlement from the 10th–11th centuries had been a traditional place for crossing the Danube[60]. The other end of the pontoon had reached the eastern shore of Păcuiul lui Soare Island, probably near the fortress (**Fig. 1–2**); 2. The Byzantine detachment must have passed along its northern wall, dragging the boats tied to the horses to the southeastern shore of the next arm, the Plosca or Danube[61]. It is considered that it became essential for ships passage only between 1864 and 1900, and during the construction and existence of the fortress it had a secondary importance (**Fig. 3/A-B**). So, it should have been the first of the "two navigable rivers" crossed by navigation; 3. The second "river" is the Borcea arm (**Fig. 1**).

Kinnamos's account of a ford that had been comparatively easy to cross indicates that by the middle of the 12th century the Ostrov arm had already been of a secondary importance, and that the water in it probably even back then did not reach the wharf there. Main for navigation at that time, as now, had been the arm, which originally had passed in front of the western fortress wall. This raises the question whether the fortress did not also have a pier on the Plosca (Danube) arm?[62]

Demnitsikos should have been located on the described route across the river. If we adhere to the proposed reconstruction, it could have been located at the place from where Manuel I Komnenos started his raid across the Danube, or it could have been on the opposite bank, as some authors suggest[63]. However, it is even more likely that it was located between the two endpoints – on Păcuiul lui Soare Island, where a team of Romanian archaeologists headed by P. Diaconu discovered an early-medieval fortress the size of a city[64]. It is situated at the north-east end of the island at a point which immediately guards the narrowest parts of the two

[58] BIBIKOV 1997, p. 110–111.

[59] COTEȚ 1967, p. 617 sqq., fig. 3–4.

[60] DIACONU 1976, p. 409–410; MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2001a, p. 37–39, n. 225–235.

[61] DIACONU 1959, fig. 1. Here the arm is noted as „Dunai", i.e. Danube.

[62] MICHAILOV 1989, p. 14 sqq. The author assumes, with no evidence, that the wharf on the eastern fortress wall had been built additionally, since the fortress had been placed on the right bank of the river, and not on an island. According to him, the Ostrov arm appeared later and in this connection the wharf had been built there. Another Bulgarian scientist, G. Atanasov, also accepts that the wharf discovered during the excavations of P. Diaconu had been additionally built, referring to observations on its different construction, cf. ATANASOV 2020, p. 628–629.

[63] TĂPKOVA-ZAIMOVA 1976, p. 105–106.

[64] DIACONU, VÎLCEANU 1972, *passim*; DAMIAN 2020.

arms which enclose it (**Fig. 1–2**)[65]. Kinnamos mentions nothing of a fortress on the route of the Byzantine detachment, but this seems justified, since at that time it has been depopulated, and it had not been the ultimate goal for Manuel I[66]. In that connection, Kinnamos notes that the decision to continue the operation[67] had been taken after the detachment had passed the pontoon, i.e. when they had been at the fortress itself.

In all cases, it occupied a median placement and a key position when crossing the river bed, as was the one described by Kinnamos Demnitsikos[68].

An important guide for its even more certain localization is the indication by M. Bibikov about the place of the Cuman invasion in the early spring of 1148. Information about it is contained in one of the letters (No. 66) of John Tzetzes (c. 1110–1180), addressed to the Dorostol bishop Leo Charsianites[69]. In it is reported that the bishop had become a victim of "*barbarians*", "*a branch of the Scythians*", whom he also calls "*Parístrioi wolves*". They "*had abducted*" him to a place which Tzetzes calls the "*valley (κοιλάδα) of weeping*". About 40 years ago, A. Kazhdan specified that the letter in question had been written in 1148 or 1149, so the capture of the Dorostol pontific must have taken place during the Cuman invasion at that time on this side of the Danube[70]. The identification of the attackers as "Paristrians" should be understood not as residents of the Paristrion area, or local bandits[71], but as Cumans who inhabit the Paristrion/Paradounavon, i.e. the valley of the river Istros which has all the physico-geographical characteristics of the *koiláda*[72]. The military operation of Manuel I Komnenos had had a punitive nature against the same Cumans who captured, but later freed, the bishop. Therefore, Kinnamos does not seem to note this. However, we can assume that the events described by him took place not far from the seat of the bishop. So, the information from Tzetzes' letter confirms that Demnitsikos was in the vicinity of Dorostol-Drastar. This was already accepted by V. Gyuzelev, who even concluded that the "famous city" on the Danube, captured by the Cumans in 1148, was Drastar[73]. M. Bibikov also defends that theory. An opinion has also been expressed that the city had not

[65] COTEȚ 1967, p. 622.

[66] MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2017, p. 156, 204, 210, tab. I.

[67] Kinnamos's text here leaves the impression that in reaching the place in question Manuel I had reason to assume that the first task had been accomplished. The location of the island fortress there suggests that it came down to his promised quick subjugation of Demnitsikos.

[68] According to the Romanian geomorphologist P. Coteț and the archaeologist D. Vîlceanu, during the Middle Ages Păcuiul lui Soare island had been part of Balta Ialomiței and the fortress with a pier had been built on the left bank of the main and then navigable river arm (Ostrov). Thus, they tend to assume that the fortress had been located on the left bank of the Danube **(Fig. 3/A-B)**. In our country, R. Kostova is inclined to accept this (KOSTOVA 2007, p. 211). Sonar and geomorphological surveys offer a picture where the fortress is located between the arms Ostrov and Plosca (Danube), cf. CARAIVAN *et alii* 2016, p. 489 sqq., fig. 4 and 5 **(Fig. 2)**.

[69] GIBI 1980, p. 108: Leone, 94; ILIEV 2003, p. 22–23; ATANASOV 2007, p. 254–256; VALERIEV 2014, p. 420–421.

[70] KAZHDAN 1973, p. 289–290.

[71] ILIEV 2003, p. 22, n. 9; PLETNYOV 2017, p. 396.

[72] BIBIKOV 1981, p. 104–105.

[73] GYUZELEV 1996, p. 92.

captured at that time[74]. But Drastar had quarters outside its fortifications[75], so it is realistic that his bishop had been captured there or somewhere in his diocese, as G. Atanasov also thinks.

Kinnamos's take on Demnitsikos seems ambivalent. At first, he writes that the Cumans had captured a "quite remarkable city" (pólin aksían) and after that – only a "fortress" (*froúrion*). This gave reason to V. Gyuzelev, M. Bibikov, P. Ș. Năsturel, Y. Valeriev and others to assume that the words are about a different settlement. M. Bibikov even believes that Kinnamos's account that the fortress and the city are the same place "is probably due to an abbreviated text" and an attempt to artificially stitch it together[76]. However, this way researchers allow themselves to interfere with the source. It is better to stick to the text and accept the identification of the "*remarkable city*" in question with the "*frurion Demnitsikos*".

Other ambiguities arise from inaccuracies in translation. The characterization of the settlement captured by the Cumans in 1148 as a "city" was the subject of special attention and analysis by Petre Năsturel[77]. He believes that behind the expression "*pólin lógou aksían*" is hidden the name of Axiopolis, which in Greek means "the worthy city". In his new reading, the Romanian historian accepts that the expression in question meant "*une ville digne de ce nom*" and concludes that "to a Greek" it would mean "*la ville digne de son nom*", i.e. "*the worthy* (according to its name) *city*" – Axiopolis. P. Ș. Năsturel rightly points out the omission of the word "*lógou*" in the Bulgarian edition of the text. But this is not a sufficient reason to completely abandon the semantic translation of S. Lishev and G. Batakliev. Their omission seems to be taking into account Kinnamos's stipulation that he had been talking about "*a rather remarkable city*". But even so, the gap is there, and the semantic change remains unprotected. We must point out, however, that "*lógou*" (from *lógos*) means not only "name", but even more often – "word", "statement", "rumor", "lore" and others, including "preposition" and "stipulation"[78]. The ending – ou shows that it is a genitive form of the word, which is a part of an expression which states that something "apparently", "in words" can be called "a city". In such a case, Demnitsikos is "**seemingly (in words)** (= *dià lógou*) **worthy**" of the definition "city". The fact that Kinnamos further characterizes it only as a "*frurion*" shows that he himself doubted its qualities as a proper city. Here we should also note the possibility that the Byzantine author did not speak of the qualification "worthy" at all, since the adjective áksios also has other meanings, for example "***valuable***". M. Bibikov preferred to translate the word as "significant"[79]. In our opinion, the real significance of Demnitsikos in the middle of the 12th century had primarily, and perhaps entirely, in its strategic location and the opportunities to completely overview and control the movement along and through the bed of the great river. Judging by the rebuke of the local boatman to the emperor, the taken

[74] ATANASOV 2007, p. 256–257.
[75] GIBI 1968, p. 184; GEORGIEV 2002, p. 69 sqq.
[76] BIBIKOV 1997, p. 108.
[77] NĂSTUREL 2004, p. 522–523.
[78] SUIDAE LEXIKON 1854, p. 887.
[79] BIBIKOV 1997, p. 60.

by Cumans Demnitsik, i.e. the fortress on Păcuiul lui Soare Island, has ceased to perform those functions as well[80].

The assumption by P. Ș. Năsturel and other authors[81], that the Cuman invasion in 1148 was aimed at the region of Axiopolis, lacks foundation. The Romanian scientist realized this, and has not identified Demnitsikos with the well-known Axiopolis in Byzantium. According to him, Kinnamos made a mistake ("il y a confusion chez lui") and concluded that Axiopolis was "the city worthy by name" and Demnitsikos was a "fortress", located near the city of Axiopolis ("situé à proximité de la ville d`Axiopolis")[82]. Thus, he arrived at the idea that this had been the name of the first of the "forts" to the stone vallum, Cetatea Pătulului, which crosses the Dobruja starting from the south of Cernavodă to the Black Sea coast at Constanța (Kyustendzha). But this is debatable. Although the Cetatea Pătulului is located on a promontory on the right bank of the Danube, as the text unequivocally indicates that the *frurion* had been located on the Istrum itself, so far there is no indication of its functioning in the 12th century, nor has it been extensively archaeologically researched. In the translation of P. Ș. Năsturel: "laquelle se désaltère elle aussi aux ondes de l`Istros" ("who quenches his thirst on the waves of the Istros"), and in that of M. Bibikov: "*a significant city, which is fed by the streams of the Istrum*". The Greek text contains the conjunction *pínousan namátôn*. The verb form there does not mean that the city is "washed", nor that it is "watered" or "fed" by the waters of the river. Also, *namátôn* means "currents", not "waves". So, the author creates the image that Demnitsikos "drinks" currents (streams) of the great river. This suggests that Kinnamos used the verb *pïnô* in its figurative sense – "to swallow, to absorb". In the *Lexicon of Suda*, the word *náma* is explained as "drinking water", "flooded place" or "a place formed by alluvium"[83]. In Kinnamos's imagination, Demnitsikos appeared as a "living" being that "swallowed" the river currents. This is, of course, a literature technique applied by the Byzantine scholar. In reality, it is the opposite: a land surface located among the water currents had been "swallowed" by them. This creates the image of Demnitsikos's insular position in the river bed of the Danube. The picture of gradual erosion described by Kinnamos and the destruction of a significant part by the waters of the river had been found multiple times to be the reality for the white stone fortress on Păcuiul lui Soare Island. Its larger part (about 2/3) has long been destroyed by the current in the Plosca (Danube) arm, which has been increasing its speed since the Middle Ages. So, there cannot be the slightest doubt that the described by Kinnamos Demnitsikos can be located on a Danube Island near Dorostolon-Drastar and be identified with the only early medieval island fortress there.

[80] Numismatic data indicates that life in the fortress of the island had completely died down in the 12th century, cf. MĂNUCU-ADAMEŞTEANU 2017, p. 210, tab. I. Only one coin from the reign of Manuel I Komnenos has been found. Its presence we could explain easier with the events of 1148 rather than with regular life in it.

[81] KOSTOVA 2008, p. 275.

[82] NĂSTUREL 2004, p. 524 and 526.

[83] SUIDAE LEXIKON 1854, p. 732.

The island fortress on the Danube near Dorostol-Drastar in the sources from the 10th–12th centuries

Without any further hesitation, we can point out that the "enigmatic" (in the words of P. Ș. Năsturel) former city and *frurion* Demnitsikos is identical to the white stone fortress on the island of Păcuiul lui Soare. Its surviving part (about 1/3) was studied and largely revealed, thanks to the efforts of Petre Diaconu and the archaeological team he led[84].

This gives us the right to assume that it could be one of the islands near which in 1190, according to Niketas Choniates, ships from the Byzantine fleet stood (anchored?). They had been sent to guard the important ford (*porthmeĩon*) near Dristra (Drastar) by water[85]. The task of the Byzantine fleet then had been to prevent the Cumans as Bulgarian allies from crossing the Danube and heading towards Veliki Preslav and Veliko Tărnovo. We can only assume that the dilapidated fortress, remaining for a long time without a solid harbor(s) for ships, had been only the seat of a small garrison, but it could had hardly been the permanent seat of the Byzantine River fleet[86].

The location of Demnitsikos on the Island of Păcuiul lui Soare quite naturally raises the question whether it is one of the three *frurions* that, according to Skylitzes's testimony, had been granted to the Pecheneg chieftain Kegen by Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus (1042–1055) in 1048[87]. The chronicler explicitly states that after Kegen had been defeated by his fellow tribesman Tirach, he "*wandered through the swamps and sought salvation*". Thus he "*came to Dorostol*" (*pròs tò Doróstolon*) and from there had come into contact with the Byzantine governor Michael Akoluthos, who, by the emperor's instructions, had signed an agreement with the Pecheneg chief to become an ally. Thus, Kegen settled with "about 20.000" Pechenegs "*in a* (river-author's note) *islet*" *(en tini potamía nisídi)*. Most Romanian scholars rightly assume that the word is about the only island with a fortress, which is only 17–18 km from the provincial capital Dristra[88] **(Fig. 1)**. On it, in the words of Skylitzes, he "*fenced himself*" (*perikleísas*), feeling safe[89]. This fact, in itself, suggests that the small island had a serious defensive potential in case of a possible disembarkation from both banks of the river. For the more effective protection of the right bank, the emperor had also sent 100 triremes, which had had to patrol "*and prevent the Pechenegs*" (of Tirah) "*from crossing the river*". It is beyond doubt that the base of this fleet had been the harbor of the island fortress, of course, if it (they?) had been preserved and efficient at the time. In this situation, we should assume that the initial refuge of Tirah's, and then of Kegen's Pechenegs in the Danube marshes had been the island

[84] DIACONU, VÎLCEANU 1972; DIACONU, BARASCHI 1977.

[85] CANKOVA-PETKOVA 1981, p. 181–185 and especially 184, n. 15; GIBI 1983, p. 102: Orationes, 3–4; BOZHILOV 2017 II, p. 295, n. 33.

[86] MALAMUT 1981, p. 64–72.

[87] GIBI 1965, p. 313–314: Hist. comp., p. 581 sqq.

[88] MĂNUCU-ADAMEŞTEANU 2001b, p. 98–99. From that time is the largest amount of Byzantine coins found in the island fortress – 457, cf. MĂNUCU-ADAMEŞTEANU 2017, p. 204 sqq., tab. IA.

[89] PILIPCHUK 2018, p. 96.

between the Plosca (Danube) and Borcea arms[90]. The opinion that in 1048–1049 the patrician John Kegen had been allowed to organize within the Byzantine province of Paristrion the "archontate of Pechenegia" is not without foundation[91]. Its center had been the three *fruria* east of Dristra-Drastar, and the most important of them had been the one on the Island Păcuiul lui Soare.

About ten years later (in 1059), another Pecheneg chieftain named Selte "hid" again in the "Istros swamps", built his "*shelter*" with a "*steep rock*" and from there tried to attack the Empire[92]. However, in the marshy bed[93] of the Danube, there are no rock formations, so the conjunction apokrémno pétra should be identified with the fortress on Păcuiul lui Soare Island and above all with its "stone wharf" (*scála*), described by Skylitzes as a rock, hanging (over the Empire). The subsequent razing of the Pecheneg "*shelter*" there "*to the ground*" pointed out by Skylitzes proves that he is talking about the destruction of the fortress by the troops of Isaac I Komnenos (1057–1059). So, the fortress, really placed "*in front of the marshes*" of Borcea, in which Selte had settled, seems to have been characterized by means of the Latin term *scala*/σκάλα, adopted in Byzantium after the 5th century – "stairs, gangway of a ship" (literary – steps, pier for a ship made of stone)[94]. Such "steps" of stone blocks are present in the pier studied by P. Diaconu on Păcuiul lui Soare Island, positioned in front of the eastern fortress wall and with towers facing the nearby right bank of the Danube.

Michael Attaliates, who had been a direct participant in the Byzantine-Pecheneg wars under Roman IV (1068–1071), had also written about these events. He calls the "shelter" of Selte ἀπότομον πέτραν, i.e. "*a steep, vertically cut stone scála*"[95]. However, it is possible that the expression was ἀποτέμνον πέτραν, i.e. "the cut-off scaffolding (pier) " and thus the author emphasized its isolation from the bed (δέμνιον) of the river, as it is to this day. If this is the case, the testimonies of John Skylitzes and Michael Attaliates indicate that as early as 1059 the wharf on the Ostrov arm had in fact been unusable, although its σκάλα continued to tower over the Dobruja coast with the teeth of its towers[96]. Attaliates describes as a fortification the refuge of Selte too, which Isaac I had captured, since "*the emperor ... left a garrison headed by a strategist*", and Selte himself "*sank in a forest with his men*". It seems this condition

[90] GIBI 1965, p. 312–313: Hist. comp., 575–576. One of the manuscripts states that the "bogs and swamps" in which Tirach resided were "near Rodostolon", i.e. Dorostol.

[91] STEPANENKO 2009, p. 169–170.

[92] GIBI 1965, p. 329: Scyl. Hist. comp., II, 645,17 sqq.

[93] The Greek word for "bed" is δέμνιον (τό).

[94] ODB 1991, p. 1907–1908. Elsewhere Skylitzes uses for "pier", i.e. a wharf for ships, protected by encircling "barriers" (*perifráksas*) the combination *oxirotaten apóbasin and apobáthran*, which mean literally "a ladder for getting off a ship" or "for disembarking" as well as "place of departure" (GIBI 1965, p. 254). Sophocles' dictionary gives the meaning of scala/σκάλα as a landing-place, as well as wharf, pier, landing-place, cf. SOPHOKLES 1904, p. 991. For this meaning of the Greek σκέλια, SHAPOSHNIKOV 2007, p. 275. For its use as a type of a barrier fortification, see below note 131. With the combination apokrémno pétra Skylitzes seems to indicate the most essential part of the island refuge (κρησφύγετον), taking into account the use of the word "pétra" also for "stone teeth of a fortress wall".

[95] GIBI 1965, p. 174: Hist. 66, 20–68,14.

[96] The number of Byzantine coins under Constantine X Dukas (1059–1067) is 257, almost two times less than the number of those of Constantine IX. Not a single coin from the time of Isaac I Komnenos has been recorded. Cf. MĂNUCU-ADAMEŞTEANU 2017, p. 204 sqq., tab. IA.

of the former fortress with a quay for ships is what Skylitzes had had in mind, noting at the very beginning of the passage about Isaac I's war against the Pechenegs that they "came out of their holes". In those we should see the preserved parts of those fortresses that Kegen had previously received. A hint of this is contained in the description given by Michael Psellos about places close to the Empire where the Pechenegs "*sheltered*". He describes them as "*deep chasms (pits) and in steeply cut rocks*" (*fárangksi batheías kaì kremnoîs apotómos*)[97].

The existence in the 11th and 12th centuries[98] of an *frurion* island with a wharf near Dristra-Drastar shows that it had had the task of providing immediate control not so much over navigation on the river as over the relatively easy to cross (especially with the help of horses) the ford between the left and right banks of the Danube. The prime importance of this ford is also apparent in Leo the Deacon's account of the siege of Drastar by the troops of John Tzimiskes (969–976) in the summer of 971[99]. The "*fire-carrying triremes of the Romans together with the ships that carried food*" sent by him in advance had arrived after the encirclement of the Russian troops led by Svyatoslav. The warships had been tasked to sail "***by the shores of the Istros (and) guarded the places of passage (tà porthmeîa) from all sides***"[100]. The latter literally means "narrow" or "ford" and generally refers to the places nearest to Druster to cross the river. Tzimiskes, as Leo the Deacon points out, had feared that the besieged Russians could take a hidden exit and escape to their homeland through the fords in question. In June/July, the ford including the islands of Păcuiul lui Soare and Borcea and their shores had been particularly convenient to cross. John Zonaras also points out that the ships summoned by the emperor had had the task "*to guard the Istrum, so that the Russians do not escape*"[101].

The successful egress of a detachment of 2000 Russians to provide provisions for the besieged proves that, having embarked in their boats, despite of the guard from the river side, they had managed to reach the opposite bank[102]. They had used the night during a summer storm, and it seems initially they had headed west[103], but then the Russian fleet had headed for the other coast, so that it could relatively safely procure provisions, and only after that they had returned to the besieged city. This development of the action is supported by the message that, on their return, the Russians took advantage of the "tailwind (it seems northern?! – author's note) ". An exit of the Russian flotilla in the direction of the Păcuiul lui Soare islands is more than unlikely, since the ships of the Byzantine fleet would have been anchored there, and it had remained unnoticed by them. Because of this, the emperor "*held the captains of the fleet accountable because they did not sense the departure of the barbarians*

[97] GIBI 1965, p. 112: Chronogr. VII,68 II, p. 126.

[98] With the mention that at Păcuiul lui Soare no level datable to the 12th century was identified *in situ*, but the possibility that it existed in the part destroyed by the waters of the Danube cannot be excluded.

[99] GIBI 1964, p. 267 sqq.: Hist., IX,2.

[100] GIBI 1964, p. 270: IX,7.

[101] GIBI 1968, p. 182: Epit. Hist. libri XVIII, pp. 530 sqq.

[102] GIBI 1965, p. 269: Hist. comp.402–403; GIBI 1968, p. 183.

[103] In 1088 AD the supply train of the army of Alexius I Komnenos had also been positioned to the west of Dristra, in the direction of the Vetren fortress, see GIBI 1971, p. 63, n. 5.

from Dorostol". After this incident, they "*began to carefully watch both banks of the river*". Skylitzes's expression παρ᾽ ἑκάτερα ὄχθας should be translated: "on both sides of the shores" and this means that an imperial order required the fleet to watch the shores not only of the main channel opposite the city, but also the arms at the Păcuiul lui Soare Islands[104].

The chroniclers do not indicate the place where the Byzantine ships were anchored, but it is natural that they were close to the camp of the land troops, in the Ostrov arm. It seems improbable that the white-stone fortress with a wharf had already existed there, as Leo the Deacon and Skylitzes would have not failed to mention it[105]. In 971, Byzantine ships had been at temporary anchorages on both banks of this arm. Before retiring, Tzimiskes, as Skylitzes points out, "took care of the forts and cities along the river(s), leaving them with sufficient guards". Whether "guard" had also been left on the island of Păcuiul lui Soare cannot be said for sure, as Skylitzes's expression is too general.

This side of the ford to the east from Drastar had been described by Leo the Deacon in connection with the beginning of the Russian expansion against the Bulgarian state in 968. This is what he had written, as someone from the same time: "*When* (Svyatoslav – author's note) *crossed the Istrum and was getting ready to land on the shore* (ἠπείρου ἀπόβασιν, i.e. at a convenient place on the shore – author's note), *the Moesians* (= Bulgarians – author's note) *realised what was happening, gathered an army of about thirty thousand people and confronted him. The taurians* (the Russians – author's note) *however* ***rapidly disembarked their boats*** *and, with their shields extended forward,* ***began to kill the Moesians from all sides****. The Moesians, when they could not withstand even the first push,* ***turned to flight and ingloriously closed themselves in Dorostol (a strong Moesian*** (i.e. Bulgarian – author's note) ***fortress)*** "[106]. The Russian landing, as can be seen, had happened next to the strongly fortified Bulgarian city. The expression about the disembarking of the Russians from their ships deserves our attention. Leo the Deacon uses the combination: τῶν πορθμείον ἀποβάντες and this shows that the word is about disembarkation after crossing the ford. Judging by the landings of Magyars, Pechenegs, and Cumans on the right bank of the Danube that of the Russians in the summer of 968 should also have been made against the Păcuiul lui Soare Island. In this instance, as well as three years later, the author does not mention anything about a fortress (except the Dorostol fortress).

The exceptional importance of the ford opposite the island of Păcuiul lui Soare had been noted by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, in relation to the measures taken by the Bulgarian prince Symeon (893–927) to prevent the Magyars from landing on the Bulgarian coast of the Danube, by means of ships of the Byzantine fleet. For this purpose, Symeon "*built lésas, étoi plokoùs isxuroùs, so the Magyars could not cross over it*"[107]. According to the commentary of the cited edition of *DAI*, the word is about

[104] For the strategic importance of the Păcuiul lui Soare Islands during the siege of Dorostol-Druster, see the case with the Russian siege of the Silistra fortress during the war in 1828 in PAVLOV 1966, p. 59.

[105] Leo the Deacon notes that the Russian flotilla was based "*in front of the city wall, where the river Ister flows and washes one side of Dorostol*", see GIBI 1964, p. 267.

[106] GIBI 1964, p. 248: Hist. Comp., p. 77,2 sqq.

[107] GIBI 1964, p. 220, n. 4; BAGRYANORODNIY 1989, p. 238–239, n. 48.

woven "strong ropes", i.e. obstacles. For *plókon* in the *Suda Lexicon*, it is explained that is a *plégma* (*cratis*), i.e. something created by interlocking rods or ropes[108]. G. Litavrin believes that the word *lésas* denotes weaved products (Russian: канаты/ *kanaty*)[109], used by Constantine for obstacles against the entry of enemy ships, and according to Kekaumenos for coverings of war machines too[110]. In the comment of G. Cankova-Petkova and P. Tivchev about the word "*леса*/*lesa*" in the Bulgarian edition of Kekaumenos, it is stated that it is Slavic and means "rope"[111]. Kekaumenos also uses it to describe protective barriers made of interlocked rods as an additional element to an earthen or other type of fortification, called *dhema* (δέμα)[112]. Such, for example, was the Bulgarian barrier fortification in the Klyuchka gorge from the time of Tsar Samuel (996–1014). V. Zlatarski considers the "dhema" a "permanent barrier" in the form of a wall with locked entrances, but notes that there had also been temporary ones, built quickly and with materials at hand[113]. Skylitzes describes it as a "*very wide wall*" (φραγμὸν) or προσβολὰς τῷ δέματι which had blocked the narrowness there[114]. The continuator of Georgios Monachos points out that the barrier at the village of Kluch closed gorges "*in one place with walls (teíxous), in another with ropes and trees (metà euraías kaì ksúla) and made artificial ramparts (hantákia mehaniká)* "[115]. In connection with other events, Skylitzes also reports about a "*wooden barrier*" (δέμα ξύλινον), which had been built near Prilep by the military leader Manuel Ivats in 1040 to prevent the imperial troops from entering "into the interior of Bulgaria"[116].

It seems that the barrier structure on the Bulgarian coast during the Magyar invasion in 894 had also been built with trees tied with ropes. Part of the wooden barrier built in the summer of 811 in a pass in Stara Planina could have had a similar structure[117]. This suggests that the so-called *lorica*[118], a structure known in Roman times, has been adopted early and the Bulgarians had used it at least until the middle of the 11th century.

The barriers made from wood and rope on the Danube bank near Drastar had been built on a vulnerable for attack section of the bank, perhaps on the shores from there. In that sense, it is logical to assume that they had been built where the river course is divided into arms (at the Continuator of Georgios Monachos – t*oũ Istrou tá parapótama*)[119]. Such a place, as we established, is the strait opposite the islands of Păcuiul lui Soare and Borcea. In 894/5, the Magyars had been brought to the Bulgarian coast by Byzantine ships, right in front of the "*dhemas*" built by the Bulgarians. The necessary water depth for this purpose had been provided by the

[108] SUIDAE LEXIKON 1854, p. 864.
[109] FASMER 1986, p. 210.
[110] KEKAVMEN 1972, p. 178,15 and 442.
[111] GIBI 1971, p. 220, n. 4.
[112] KEKAVMEN 1972, p. 152,21, n. 246.
[113] ZLATARSKI 1971, p. 692, n. 54.
[114] GIBI 1965, p. 283–284, n. 5: II, p. 457–458; TOMOV 2015, p. 143–144, n. 4; MITREV 2015, p. 432–450.
[115] GIBI 1965, p. 155: G. Mon Cont.,VI,6.
[116] GIBI 1965, p. 306: Scyl. II, 533.
[117] GIBI 1961, p. 12–13.
[118] NAPOLI 1997, p. 21–22, 211, fig. 2.
[119] GIBI 1965, p. 154: G. Mon Cont., VI,4.

Ostrov arm of the river. Thus deployed, the Magyars had destroyed the barrier built there and managed to push out the Bulgarians, who sought refuge behind the walls of the nearby solid fortress of Drastar[120].

The so far neglected information about the river bank between Dorostol and Capidava is also provided by Anna Komnene in the first half of the 12th century. Describing the Danube coast adjacent to the "Hundred hills", she writes about a "Lake Ozolimna" (*Ozolimnen mólis*)[121]. There, in 1088, the Pechenegs, defeated by the Cumans of Tatush, who immediately before that destroyed the army of Alexios I Komnenos near Dorostol, saved themselves. The author searches for the etymology of the name of that "lake" (λίμνης), trying to explain it initially by means of the ethnic name given by the Oghuz who had "camped" on its shores two or three decades earlier. However, she assumes that Ozolimna is a name associated with the barbarians "*who came from all over the place*", and interprets it as "barbarian refuge". A role for this seems to be the explanation given by the late 10th century Suda author about the personal name Ozóles as "*ethnikon*" and the word *ózos* as *kládos*, i.e. "offshoot, offspring"[122], which can be interpreted as "foreign, heathen offspring". The fact that the Pechenegs found refuge here in 1088 too, shows that more likely the word is about a dry land with many lakes, swamps and river bays. The fact that the "*biggest and most beautiful rivers*" flowed into Ozolimna directs our attention to the Danube "Balta" starting immediately east of the current town of Călărași. In its "*largest and in diameter and perimeter*" lake, according to Anna Komnene, "*numerous large and cargo ships*" docked, and this leaves no doubt that a wharf, i.e. λιμήν had existed in Ozolimna. This word is also contained in the proper name from the combination Ὀζολίμνην μόλις. Along with the meaning of "port, bay", it also means "refuge, gathering place". The second word in it is derived from the Latin *mōlēs* and means a structure prepared with great effort: "pile, dam, rock", i.e. quay, or other military preparation[123]. In our case, it is obviously meant for a port facility in a water basin of sufficient depth, which is located in or near the Ozolimna in question. According to Anna Komnene, this had been a port for large ships with a solidly built quay and/or barrier. As we indicated above, the Byzantine authors before her had also written about such a facility, placing it on an island, positioned opposite the Dobruja bank and not far from Drastar.

Thus, Anna Komnene's text about the toponym Ozolimna indicates that it marks a vast marshy area in the Danube bed to the east of Dorostol. It has already been identified with the Borcea (borca) "island", which stretches tens of kilometers along its course[124]. It is also assumed that this is the island in the Balta where Kegen's Pechenegs had initially settled[125]. It is indeed located "above" the Hundred hills, i.e. to the north of nowadays Dobruja and Ludogorie. In addition, "*the largest and most beautiful rivers flow into it*", by which Anna Komnene means the left tributaries of the Danube, the largest of which is the Ialomița River. In this respect, they are without

120 ATANASOV 2019, p. 55–78.
121 GIBI 1971, p. 68–69: Alex. VII,5.
122 SUIDAE LEXIKON 1854, p. 759.
123 See note 94.
124 CONEA, DONAT 1958, p. 158; STOYANOV 2000, p. 240.
125 MĂNUCU-ADAMEŞTEANU 2001b, p. 98–99, n. 69.

competition, since the southern tributaries of the Danube have a negligible water flow. The most important thing here, at least for us, is that the Byzantine historian indicates there had been a wharf in Ozolimna, for the mooring of many and large ships. The author uses the combination κατὰ νότον[126] to describe its place in "Lake Ozolimna". Thus, she gives us orientation that the ships anchored here stood on its leeward side, i.e. south side. From this it is clear that she means the Ostrov arm of the Danube in general. In such a case, it is quite possible that the author means the wharf of the Păcuiul lui Soare Island fortress, i.e. Demnitsikos's[127]. At that time it had long been unusable, and probably for that reason the Byzantine writer points out that the ships there sailed in deep waters.

Based on the commentary regarding the on the sources, we can conclude that the Danube ford opposite the Păcuiul lui Soare Island fortress had been one of the most frequently used on the lower reaches of the river and that had been recorded (directly or indirectly) in the written sources between the 6th and 12th centuries. During the time of the First Bulgarian Kingdom, and also in the 11th–12th centuries, its route can be drawn with confidence between the Dervent Hill on the Ostrov arm and the western part of the Borcea arm. The middle part of it had passed through the easternmost of the Păcuiul lui Soare Island and the white stone fortress with wharf/wharves built there had served to monitor and control the ships sailing on the river, but mostly to control the crossing from one bank to the other. During the 11th and 12th centuries, this had been the usual route for the Pechenegs, Oghuz and Cumans to invade the territory of the Empire. For that purpose, they had used most often their horses or improvised floating devices such as skins, but also the local resource – single-hulled boats or larger ships. The first evidence of the construction of temporary barriers (dhems) to obstruct landing parties on the right bank there, is from the last decade of the 9th century, when they had been built by the initiative and with the capabilities of the Bulgarian state. About the *frurion* with wharf for ships, built on the Păcuiul lui Soare Island close to the Dobruja coast, we are informed by Byzantine sources only in the first half of the 11th century, and it can be identified with the "city in words" Demnitsikos, mentioned only by John Kinnamos.

The name Demnitsikos

As already stated, Demnitsikos is a hapax and it seems to be a composed made from two or three parts. The first of these is undoubtedly **Dem-**. It contains the root and the etymon. Everything seems to show that it derives from the aforementioned verb δέμω or from its derivatives, denoting solid constructions of a military-defensive nature[128], besides everything else. In construction terminology, the term *déma*, *desmá* is equivalent to *desmós* and it means the materials by which masonry is connected, too[129]. Along with this, "closed", "inaccessible" places are also designated this way, including barriers with protective functions. In such a case, the compound

[126] GIBI 1971, p. 68: Alex. VII,5, p. 241.

[127] About our localization of the wharf in Ozolimna at the nearby lake Oltina, see GEORGIEV 2006, p. 62–64, n. 47.

[128] SOPHOKLES 1904, p. 350; see for example in Procopius of Caesarea: GIBI 1960, p. 154 sqq.

[129] GINOUVÈS, MARTIN 1985, p. 108.

in the name should be used for a "body" (δέμας) with the character of a "barrier" (δέμα), which we should imagine as a masonry structure, since the verb δέμω is used for something "built through masonry"[130]. Such a "*dhéma*" was the barrier wall in the "Dhema Pass" at Thermopylae in Greece[131]. The toponym Demata in the Middle Ages (present-day Agios Nikolaos) meant the narrow strait between the waters of the lake (present-day Vulkaria) and the sea coast, northeast of the island Lefkas and south of Vonitsa port[132]. Similar to the actual name of the Danube island fortress is the proper name of another island used as a base for the Byzantine fleet in the Ionian Sea – Demenna, (Δέμεννα in the chronicle from Monemvasia, Dmnsh in al-Idrisi)[133].

The use of a name similar in meaning in the vicinity of the Păcuiul lui Soare fortress is evident to an extent through the meanings of the Turkic toponym "Dervent" given to the opposing hill (altitude 121.4 m). P. Diaconu rightly assumed about it, that it hides an ancient name, meaning a place to cross the Ostrov branch of the Danube. It is very likely that it is based on an Iranian-Turkic local name "darband", "derbend", which has other, similar meanings: a "narrowness through a passage or strait", inclusive a "narrow road" too, but also a "fortress" or a "barrier"[134]. In our case, the toponym seems to remind of an older name of this place, and it is not impossible that it derives from a similar in meaning Greek or Bulgarian name for a wooden or another type of "barrier".

For the second component of the name Demnitsikos, **-ni-**, we could assume that it is a suffix -niis to the etymon[135]. It is not impossible that it could be the ending part of the Greek word *démnion*, which means "bed"[136], as it seems to be used also in the sense of "lair". The rare Greek word νήιστα "nest"[137] seems to be appropriate in this case. However, in view of the topography of Demni(is) in the bed of the great river, it is justified to assume that the second part expressed rather its insular location[138]. In such a case Demni(is) or Demneít(is) can be interpreted as "Island Dem" (Island Barrier). Such an "island refuge" is what Skylitzes meant when he speaks of a "steep rock (cusp, undercut) " in which the Pecheneg chief Selte had hidden in 1059, and which had been destroyed by the troops of Isaac I Komnenos[139].

However, the oikonym given by Kinnamos could have had another form,

[130] Cf. δέμοιμι in: SUIDAE LEXIKON 1854, p. 265.

[131] KODER, HILD 1976, p. 109 and 273; CHERF 1984, p. 594 sqq., ill. 1 and 2. According to Skylitzes (p. 364 and 380) the Thermopylae barrier, reconstructed towards the end of the 10th century against the Bulgarians of tzar Samuel, bore the name Σκέλος (ὁ). Cf. GIBI 1965, p. 296, n. 4 it is stated that it was also used for the "Long walls" (τὰ μακρὰ σκέλη) between Athens and its port of Pireaus. See above note 94.

[132] PREISLER-KAPELLER 2013, p. 468–470, fig. 5–8.

[133] SOUSTAL 1981, p. 94 and 178–179; KISLINGER 1993, p. 43–52, n. 5–7 and 33.

[134] MURZAEV 1984, p. 170–171 and 176.

[135] See for example the name of the main island in Ionian Sea, Cephalonia: Κεφαλληνίας ἤγουν τὰ νησία (BAGRYANORODNIY 1989, p. 224–225 and 442; ODB 1991, p. 1122–1123).

[136] See note 93.

[137] FASMER 1986 I, p. 420, 527 and 547; FASMER 1987 IV, p. 690.

[138] Cf. νησαίος, νησιωτικός, νησιωτις, i.e. "insular": positioned on an island: town or pier (πέτρα).

[139] In view of the preserved to this day oikonym "Ostrov" in the immediate vicinity of the Păcuiul lui Soare Island, this solution seems to be better founded. See notes 94, 95 and 131.

for example Démnion, i.e. "The dem (construction) in the bed (of the river) ", or Demnaios (Demnaiás), which should be interpreted as "Ship dem"[140]. The presence of at least one dock for ships in front of the fortress walls of the island *frurion* Păcuiul lui Soare is a reason for this additional interpretation of the name Démnitsikos.

As for the third component of the oikonym **–tsikos**, it appears to be a diminutive suffix. An example of such is given by the local name Neutzikon (Neoútzikon), mentioned by Niketas Choniates in 1193, on the border between Adrianople and Philippopolis[141]. However, it is not impossible that the final component in Démnitzikos had an independent meaning. Close in sound to –tsikos is, for example, the Armenian and Georgian term for "fortress"–tsike (Ἀλτζίκέ) and –tsikhe[142].

Of course, the final solution to the questions surrounding the semantics of the name Demnitsikos is up to the specialists. The solutions we propose are based exclusively on the characteristics of an island fortress with one or more wharves in front of its walls. Either way, the name Demnitsikos seems like a linguistic "construct" that could have been "invented" by Kinnamos and "put" into the mouth of the local resident from his account of the events of 1148. However, we should not give up the possibility that the name was an authentic local name which the Byzantine historian borrowed from his informants.

We could look for a solution to this dilemma in the analysis of the undeniably local toponym for the island and the fortress that existed on it, that has reached us.

The modern name of the island: Păcuiul lui Soare

The question about the origin and meaning of the current name of the Danube islands east of Silistra and Călărași, remains unclear. P. Diaconu, for example, adopted and further developed the opinion of the Romanian scholar P. Papahagi from 1923 that "Păcui" derives from the Latin word *pecunium*, "cattle". To this, Diaconu adds that in the speech of the Romanian population from southwestern Dobruja "păcui", "pecui" denotes "a place for cattle which is not flooded" and thus he accepts the island name as Roman-language[143]. However, he does not exclude the possibility that the toponym appeared through the mediation of a Turkic-speaking population.

The island with the fortress had remained permanently uninhabited after the middle of the 15th century, and it seems to have received its current name in that period. In its current form, it appears only in the 19th century, referring not only to the island with the fortress, but also to the surrounding islands[144]. The nearest settlement – Ostrov/Ostrovo has a name of Slavic-Bulgarian origin and has existed

[140] In this situation, its middle part -ni- can be derived from the Greek sign for a ship's loom – ναῦς, (plural – "ship's loom"), or from its derivative forms (νηιάς, νηίς). We also cannot rule out the possibility that the root is the adjective νηΐτης, "ship's" (*dhem*).

[141] SOUSTAL 1991, p. 374 and 360–361; BORISOV 2016, p. 90.

[142] MURZAEV 1984, p. 603; YUZBASHYAN 1988, p. 127–130, 190; BAGRYANORODNIY 1989, p. 189–193, 414.

[143] DIACONU 1978, p. 32–33 and note 110; STOYANOV 2009, p. 238, n. 410.

[144] KUZEV 1977, p. 57 sqq.; KUZEV 1981, p. 196 sqq. On a map from 1864 Păcuiul lui Soare Island is marked with the name "Bociu", and the one to the northwest of it as "Tulchia mare" **(**see **Fig. 3/A-B)**.

for centuries on the right bank of the Danube and to the west of the island fortress (**Fig. 1**)[145]. Its semantics suggest that its predecessor seems to have had an insular location, but we still do not know for sure about its Greek or Old Bulgarian meaning equivalent.

The oldest document about the name of the fortress on the Danube Island is a Venetian map from 1450, where it is indicated on an island between Silistra and Tutrakan as a small tower and an inscription in Latin letters – "pecui". This is how it is indicated on Fra Mauro's map from 1458 too[146]. According to A. Kuzev, this is the medieval name of the fortress at least a hundred years before the middle of the 15th century. There can be no doubt, however, that then or in the following centuries this name had began to be pronounced by local residents or the surrounding population as "Pecuiul" or "Păcuiul", and already had been given to the island with the fortress, and also to the others nearby.

There are two opinions about the origin of the current island toponym Păcuiul lui Soare. As we have indicated, some Romanian scholars derive it from Latin and the Romanic languages. The onomastes I. Conea and I. Donat, however, group it together with toponyms and hydronyms with the suffix -(l)ui, which they consider to have a Pecheneg-Cuman character[147]. They attribute similar origin to the nearby name Borcea[148]. V. Beshevliev briefly states his opinion that the island name means "Sun scorch"[149]. He arrived at this probably after accepting "Păcuiul" as derived from the Slavic word "scorch" and "Soare" – for the Romanian adjective "sunny". Despite these attempts, we can agree even today with Al. Kuzev's opinion that "the origin and meaning of the name 'Păcuiul' are still unclear".

The thesis of its Turkic basis can be supported by new arguments. The Turkic adverb *pek* means "hard, tough"[150]. Its derivative in the Turkic language *päklik* means "firmness" and even in Turkic dialects it is used in the meaning of "fortress", "stronghold"[151]. Thus, it is obvious that the name "pecui" registered on maps from the 15th century is a marking of the medieval fortress located in the waters of the Danube. The first part of it undoubtedly derives from *päk* "fortress, stronghold", and the second *-ui* is also Turkic, as accepted by the Romanian scholars cited above. In Turkic languages, however, it is also an independent word meaning "slope, lowland, hollow" as well as "section of road"[152]. For this reason, we are inclined to think that the documented in the 15th century name "Pecui", has already been established in the Middle Ages, especially in the language of Turkic settlers in the region of the Danube Balta and the lower course of the Ialomița River. Historical sources clearly indicate that they had been inhabited or had been subject to frequent crossings by Pechenegs, Oghuz and Cumans. So, it would not be wrong to assume that the name "Pecui" for "the fortress in the Danube bed" had been given by them. By meaning,

[145] KANITZ 1995 III, p. 285 and 279.
[146] KUZEV 1977, p. 58–59, pl. III/1–2; ATLAS 2008, p. 71, Nr. I/12.
[147] CONEA, DONAT 1958, p. 143–151; STOYANOV 2009, p. 74–76.
[148] CONEA, DONAT 1958, p. 153–161; STOYANOV 2009, p. 76.
[149] BESHEVLIEV 1974, p. 3; BESHEVLIEV 1981, p. 146, n. 25.
[150] STOYANOV 2000, p. 271.
[151] MURZAEV 1984, p. 432.
[152] SEVORTYAN 1974, p. 428 sqq; MURZAEV 1984, p. 408–409, 575.

it is suitable for what is located on an island with an elevation above sea level of 11.3 m. With such physical and geographical characteristics is the entire marshy area of the Danube riverbed east of Călărași, which also bears a Turkic name: "Balta"[153]. As for the toponym Borcea ("borca"), it is associated with the Cuman anthroponymy[154].

In such a case, the -ul suffix in the Romanian-language toponym "Păcuiul" seems to reflect a semantically equivalent constituent in the preceding Turkic toponym, indicating that the word is about a "fortress in a valley/lowland" or situated on a road[155]. A similar concept in the Greek language was also used by John Tzetzes when he pointed to the place where the captured in 1148 bishop of Drastar was taken. He defines it as a "valley of weeping" (κλαυθμῶνος κοιλάδα). This is how the Greek author-erudite characterizes not only the Istros valley, but also Demnitsikos located in it[156]. This is directly supported by one of the above-mentioned possibilities for interpretation of the Greek name Demnitsikos (from δέμνιον, "bed" (of the river), as well as "lair" (of the Pechenegs)[157]. With its initial part - Dem- however, the name indicates that the word is about a "*dhema*" – type *frurion* located among the waters of the Danube.

In this sense, the attested in the middle of the 15th century Turkic name of the fortress – "Pecui" –, as well as its Romanian pronunciation – "Păcuiul" –, are not only topographical, but also a semantic adoption of the Greek name of the island fortress with a wharf/wharves for river ships recorded by Kinnamos in the 12th century.

The question that remains is whether the second part of the toponym preserved to this day: – "lui Soare" is also part of the medieval name of the island fortress, or is a Romanian-language addition to it. In the preserved local name it seems inseparably connected with "Pecui" – "Păcui" and has the character of an adjective meaning "of the sun" ("the sunny one"). In this sense, the modern toponym can be interpreted as the "**Sunny fortress/stronghold**". In such a case, the Turkic oikonym we are looking for can be reconstructed as: **G/Kün pecui**. In all probability, the Turkic name of the island fortress had been used at the same time as the Greek Demnitsikos, but gradually replaced it in the language of the prevailing local population. Relating only to the dilapidated stone fortress on the island, it should have sounded: "Pecui" or "Päkliq".

The location of the fortress at the eastern end of the easternmost of the shoal islands, east of Drastar, is a strong reason for such semantics of the oikonym. This way, the attribute "lui Soare" could reflect a Turkic concept with the meaning of *gün gey* (Turkic *güney*), "a side facing the Sun" (east, south)[158]. We cannot rule out consideration of the southern direction (*gün ortu*)[159], since the fortress and especially its wharf on the main in the Middle Ages Ostrov arm had been facing southeast. Moreover, according to Anna Komnene, the port in Ozolimna had been located on

[153] MURZAEV 1984, p. 70.
[154] STOYANOV 2006, p. 240, n. 235.
[155] SEVORTYAN 1974, p. 434–435.
[156] See notes 69–71.
[157] See notes 92 and 95.
[158] KONONOV 1978, p. 77–78, 86–87; MURZAEV 1984, p. 314 and 167.
[159] DREVNETURKSKIY 1969, p. 326.

its leeward i.e. southern, side[160]. This further feeds the possibility that the Romanian-language toponym for the fortress island "Păcuiul lui Soare" is a literal translation of an older name, namely "Fortress on the sunny side of the valley" (of the Danube). This solution also suggests another interpretation. It is expressed in the translation of the reconstructed *G/Kün pecui* as "The Bright (White) Fortress". In that case it seems to be close in meaning to the well-known Turkic name of the fortress Sarkel/Sharkel (rus. Белая Вежа/Belaja Vezha)[161].

There have been other opinions stated about the name of the fortress on the Danube Island Păcuiul lui Soare. Petre Diaconu launched and defended to the end the opinion that it is the Vicina mentioned by Anna Komnene. He even identified it with the city of the same name known in the 14th–15th centuries at one of the mouths of the Danube. Other authors, mainly Bulgarian, looked for other possibilities. Al. Kuzev and G. Atanasov proposed the name Glavinitsa for it. Before them, V. Beshevliev, D. Ovcharov and others stated that it could be the Danube "glorious" home of Khan Omurtag (814–831). In this regard, Al. Kuzev suggested that the island fortress should be identified with the mentioned at the end of the 9th century Mundraga fortress near Drastar. We will, however, dwell closely on these solutions in another study, after critically examining the question of the date of construction of the Demnitsikos fortress on the island of Păcuiul lui Soare.

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[160] See note 126.

[161] BAGRYANORODNIY 1989, p. 52–53, 170–175, 334 and 401.

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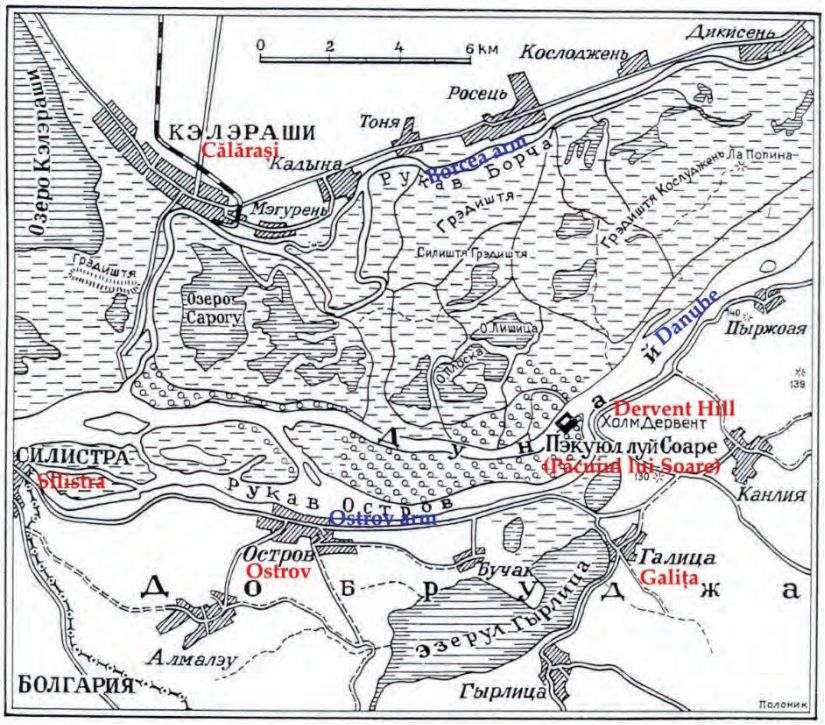
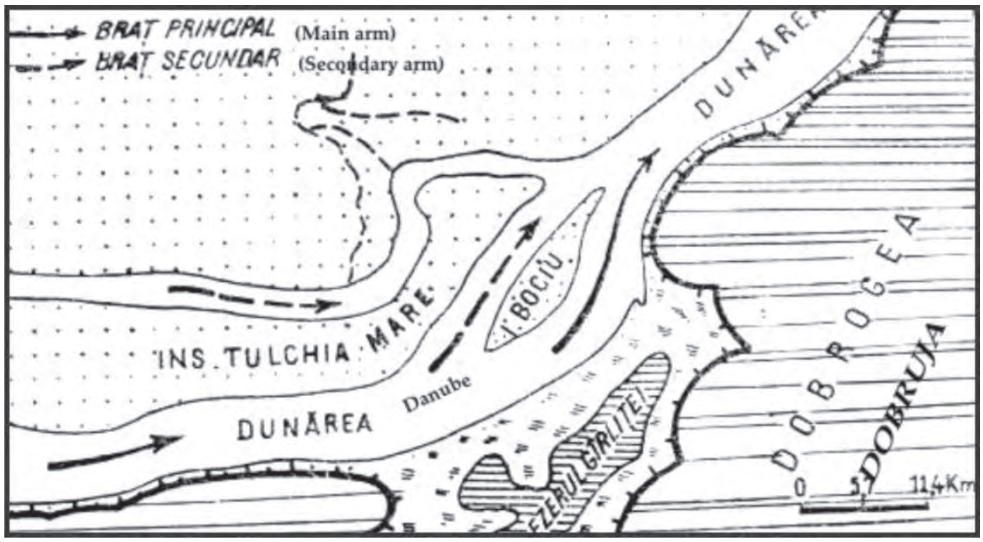
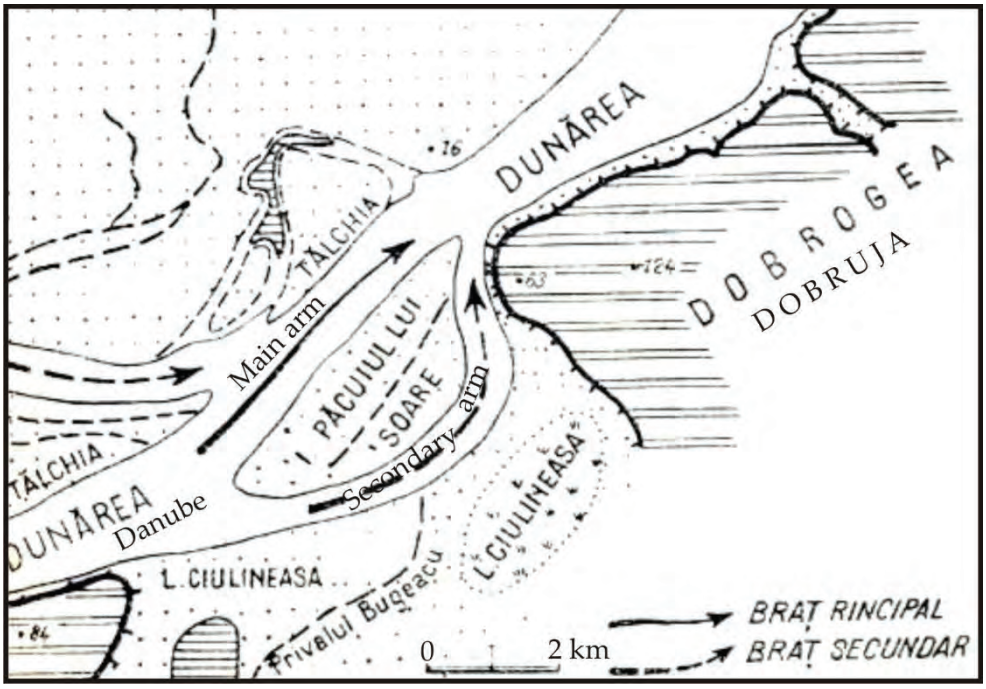


Fig. 1. The Păcuiul lui Soare Island and its environments (after DIACONU 1961, fig.1).

Fig. 2. Păcuiul lui Soare Island – Location of the Fortress. Digital Globe (after CARAIVAN *et alii* 2015–2016, fig. 1).



A



B

Fig. 3. Păcuiul lui Soare Island on the course of the Danube: A. After a map from 1864; B. After a map from 1900 (after COTEȚ 1967, fig. 3–4).

AGAIN ABOUT THE FOUNDING DATE OF THE FORTRESS AT PĂCUIUL LUI SOARE

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Keywords: *Byzantine Empire, John I Tzimiskes, Păcuiul lui Soare, fortress,* a fundamentis*, radiocarbon dating*.
Cuvinte-cheie: *Imperiul bizantin, Ioan I Tzimiskes, Păcuiul lui Soare, cetate,* a fundamentis*, datare radiocarbon*.

Abstract: *This contribution is prompted by the execution of a radiocarbon dating related to the archaeological site from the Middle Byzantine period on the island of Păcuiul lui Soare, which has been under investigation since 1956. The chronological framing also allows the (inevitably polemical) discussion of various viewpoints regarding the construction of the island fortress, either in the Roman/Roman-Byzantine era or during the period of the First Bulgarian State. The new theories can be contradicted by the old arguments, drawn from the specialized literature, concerning the construction of this fortification* a fundamentis *in the Middle Byzantine period, supported by multidisciplinary investigations, such as radiocarbon dating.*
Rezumat: *Contribuția de față a fost determinată de realizarea unor datări radiocarbon, referitoare la situl arheologic aparținând epocii medio-bizantine din insula Păcuiul lui Soare, cercetat începând din anul 1956. Încadrarea cronologică prilejuiește și abordarea (inevitabil polemică) a discuției privind exprimarea/reiterarea unor puncte de vedere despre edificarea, în epoca romană/romano-bizantină sau în perioada primului Țarat bulgar, a cetății*

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insulare. Noile teorii pot fi contrazise cu vechile argumente, preluate din literatura de specialitate, privind construirea acestei fortificații a fundamentis *în perioada medio-bizantină, susținută de investigațiile pluridisciplinare, precum datarea radiocarbon.*

An archaeological research project, initiated in 1956 by a team of Romanian archaeologists, coordinated by Petre Diaconu and continued until the second decade of the current millennium[1], led to the discovery and study of a fortification at the northeastern end of the Danube Island Păcuiul lui Soare. This island is located in the southwestern corner of Dobruja, about 12 km from Ostrov (Constanța County) and 20 km upstream from Silistra, splitting the waters of the Danube from the village of Ostrov to the front of Dervent hill.

The fortress, which likely had a trapezoidal or rectangular shape[2] and covered an area of approximately 4–5 hectares (of which only a part can be seen today[3], as the western area has been destroyed by the Danube waters), was considered by the authors of the systematic research[4] to be a naval base for the Byzantine fleet[5] (**Fig. 1**).

Data regarding the fortification[6]

The preserved portion of the Byzantine island fortress is bordered on the northeast side by an **enclosure wall**, visible for a length of 42 m, and on the southeast

[1] NESTOR, DIACONU 1959; DIACONU 1959; DIACONU 1961; DIACONU, POPA, ANGHELESCU 1962; POPA 1964; DIACONU 1966; DIACONU 1969; DIACONU 1971; DIACONU, VÎLCEANU 1972; DIACONU 1976a; DIACONU, BARASCHI 1977; BARASCHI 1987; DIACONU, CĂPĂȚÂNĂ 1988–1989; DIACONU 2000; DIACONU 2001; DIACONU, DAMIAN, VASILE 2001; DIACONU *et alii* 2003; DIACONU *et alii* 2004; DAMIAN 2005, p. 150–157; DAMIAN *et alii* 2007; DAMIAN *et alii* 2008; DAMIAN *et alii* 2013; DAMIAN 2020; DAMIAN 2021, p. 110–114, fig. 3–11, p. 120–121, fig. 25–29.

[2] DIACONU 1972, p. 47 and note 1.

[3] POPA 1964, p. 108 (one third); DIACONU 1969, p. 398; DIACONU 1971, p. 3 (one fifth); DIACONU 1972, p. 12, note 12 (one third/one fourth/one sixth).

[4] See *supra* note 1.

[5] For the role of a naval base held by the Byzantine fleet's fortification at Păcuiul lui Soare, see: NESTOR, DIACONU 1959, p. 588; DIACONU 1959; DIACONU, POPA, ANGHELESCU 1962, p. 713–716; VÎLCEANU 1963, p. 207–208; POPA 1964, p. 107; DIACONU 1965, p. 13; VÎLCEANU 1965, p. 291; DIACONU 1966, p. 368; POPA 1967, p. 271; DIACONU 1969, p. 398–400; POPA 1970, p. 569; DIACONU 1971, p. 5; DIACONU 1972, p. 24–25; DIACONU 1976a, p. 412; DIACONU 1976b, p. 940; DIACONU 1985; DAMIAN 2015, p. 230 and note 165. The citadel, in its primary form and initial function, lasted for a short time (DIACONU 1959, p. 654–656; DIACONU 1961, p. 602; DIACONU 1972, p. 51), from its construction, during the reign of John I Tzimiskes, until its probable decommissioning during the Bulgarian revolt. The Byzantine reconquest of northeastern Bulgaria and Dobruja in 1001 marked the settlement's transition to a guarded community by *stratiotai* (DIACONU 1969, p. 400).

[6] DIACONU 1961, p. 599–600; VÎLCEANU 1965; DIACONU 1966, p. 366–367; VÎLCEANU 1967, p. 593–605; DIACONU 1969, p. 398–399; POPA 1972, p. 27–29; DIACONU 1972, p. 36–38, 43, 45–51, 55–57; DIACONU, CĂPĂȚÎNĂ 1988–1989, p. 153, fig. 1/B; DIACONU, DAMIAN, VASILE 2001; DIACONU *et alii* 2003; DIACONU *et alii* 2004; DAMIAN *et alii* 2007; DAMIAN *et alii* 2008; DAMIAN *et alii* 2013; DAMIAN 2020, p. 272–277; DAMIAN 2021, p. 110–114, fig. 3–11, p. 120–121, fig. 25–29. Between 2000 and 2012, archaeological research was conducted to uncover elements of the construction system of the island fortification, with the aim of developing an architectural study to serve as the foundation for a conservation and enhancement project of the Byzantine monument.

side by another wall measuring 240 m in length, which includes a gate-tower and a port. The curtain wall, preserved to a height of 5–6 m and with a width ranging between 4.20 m and 6 m, was built using a system of steps (*crepidae*) arranged vertically on both faces of the wall in its lower half. It was constructed in the "blockwork" system with facings made of large, parallelepiped-shaped blocks, carefully fashioned and bonded with mortar composed of lime, sand, and river gravel, with the addition of crushed brick (waterproof mortar) to fill the joints. The core of the wall consisted of irregularly shaped or parallelepiped blocks, forming a compact mass of masonry, created by layering horizontal planes of stones bonded with mortar (**Fig. 2**). Given the sedimentary nature of the soil in which the foundations were to be laid, composed mainly of alluvial sand and at greater depths of dark bluish mud, the builders of the fortress opted to ensure the stability of the walls through a **wooden substructure**. This was identified in the area of the eastern wall's exterior facing, at the northeast corner of the gate tower's platform, at the junction area of the eastern curtain wall with the northern tower of the wharf, and in the southern sector. This substructure was composed of vertically placed oak piles, over which oak beams were laid in certain places, arranged longitudinally and transversely. Among the fortified exterior complexes, the **gate, towers, and port installation** are of the greatest interest. The **gate**, situated on the northeast side, appears in the form of a rectangular tower (14.70 × 10.50 m), paved with large stone slabs. It represents, in fact, a platform-foundation, with one or two stories and two entrances (an exterior one, of the cataract type, and a second, interior one, arranged within the thickness of the curtain wall, equipped with two leaves blocked by a wooden bar, whose ends entered niches arranged on the sides of the gate; in this area, the "beginnings" of a vault made of stone blocks have been preserved). Access to the upper floor was made via stone steps built into the curtain wall to the west of the gate (**Fig. 3**). The existence of another gate on the southern side of the fortress cannot be excluded. Other fortification elements include a tower with a semicircular side and a straight side, designed to form an obtuse angle with the curtain wall, meant to serve as an obstacle against the waters and especially the ice, ensuring their smooth sliding. There is also a semicircular stone tower located west of the fortress's main gate, the only one of its kind documented so far at Păcuiul lui Soare. The **port installation (wharf)**, located on the southeastern side of the fortress (since at the time of its construction, the navigable part of the Danube consisted of the Ostrov branch), is a 24-meter-long construction complex. It is represented by a series of stone platforms resembling a monumental staircase descending toward the water in steps, flanked by two rectangular towers and featuring an impressive entrance to the fortress, 4 m wide, with a gate made of two wooden leaves plated with iron. Both to the right and left of this entrance, within the width of the curtain wall, three openings (slots) were

During the 2000–2003 campaigns, the north gate and the southern sector of the fortress (which is usually submerged by the Danube waters) were investigated. In the 2004–2005 and 2007 campaigns, the northern part of the port installation with the adjacent tower was uncovered, and the connection between the eastern curtain wall and the northern tower wall of the port installation was explored. From 2006 to 2012, efforts focused on uncovering the southern part of the wharf and its entrance, investigating the southern tower that flanks it, which was only partially explored in the 1960s, and identifying the boundaries of the fortress in the southeastern corner.

arranged on each side, likely used for ropes to moor the ships (**Fig. 4**). Due to the sedimentation of sand, particularly in the last 200 years, possible annexes (berths, docks) are now covered by it. Opposite the port installations, inside the fortress, the ruins of a large building with an apse have been uncovered. Its southwest orientation and the absence of Christian vestiges led to the conclusion that it was not a place of worship; its purpose was likely related to the functioning of the wharf.

Data on the wooden substructure of the fortress[7]

Identified at multiple points through sections in the area of the curtain and fortification elements, but documented on the surface only in the southern sector of the fortification (**Fig. 5**), the wooden substructure represents an elaborate pile foundation system for the enclosure wall. The foundation was achieved both through oak stakes placed vertically (at small distances, in the bluish silt of the island, and fixed with small stones, overlaid with a layer of mortar on which the masonry blocks were placed), and through a network of oak beams arranged horizontally on two levels (at a distance of about 0.30–0.40 m, with vertical stakes with a circular cross-section inserted into rectangular holes, in a dowel system), between which hydraulic mortar was poured, overlaid with a mortar slab from which the enclosure wall itself was raised, currently destroyed by the Danube waters in the respective area (**Fig. 6–7**).

The wooden substructure of the fortress in the southern sector represents **the source of the sample extracted in 2021 and analysed in 2022 through radiocarbon dating**[8]. The chronological framing of this wooden substructure can implicitly ensure the dating of the moment of the fortification's construction.

Archaeological and historical data on the site of Păcuiul lui Soare. Issues of chronological and cultural classification

The fortress on the island of Păcuiul lui Soare was considered to have been built *a fundamentis* by the Byzantine Empire in the last quarter of the 10th century (shortly after 971, the moment of the confrontations between the troops of Emperor John I Tzimiskes and the Kievan forces under the leadership of Prince Sviatoslav, when the Constantinopolitan administration was reinstaled at the Lower Danube and the region was transformed into a Byzantine province, known in literary sources as the theme Paristrion or Paradounavon, with its capital at Dorostolon or Dristra,

[7] In this regard, we wish to draw attention not only to the constructive role of the wooden substructure of the fortress (VÎLCEANU 1965, p. 291–305; DIACONU, VÎLCEANU 1972, p. 27–29, 47–51, 55–57; DIACONU, DAMIAN, VASILE 2001, p. 170–172; DIACONU *et alii* 2004; DAMIAN *et alii* 2008; DAMIAN 2020, p. 273, fig. 3; DAMIAN 2021, p. 111, 114, fig. 11), but also to the additional potential for chronological framing offered by it through ^{14}C and dendrological analysis. In the case of the former, it could settle the debate – whether the structure belongs to the Roman/Romano-Byzantine period or the medieval era, whether referring to the 9th–10th centuries or what can be generically termed "the year 1000", and whether the commissioning political power was Bulgarian or Byzantine. As for the latter, the archaeological discoveries made in 2003 were followed by an attempt – unfortunately still unresolved – using dendrochronology to refine the timing of the Byzantine return to the Lower Danube (end of the 10th century *versus* the beginning of the 11th century).

[8] SIMION *et alii* 2022–2023, p. 289.

present-day Silistra). The chronological framing of the fortress's construction was thus based on archaeological and historical arguments.

The relationship between the fortification and habitation in the 10th–14th centuries, as well as the interpretation/reinterpretation of the issue of the fortification's functioning in certain periods[9], has been highlighted by a narrowing of the inhabited perimeter in the eastern half of the fortress[10]. The interventions refer both to the beginning of the 11th century and to the end of the 13th century – the beginning of the 14th century, with the construction of a new enclosure wall in the southern part of the fortress, over 2 m wide, made of irregularly shaped stones, small and medium in size, with parallelepiped blocks for the facing[11]. Starting from the early years of the 11th century, the fortress at Păcuiul lui Soare lost its primarily naval base character, with intense habitation developing behind the fortress walls, which lasted, with an interruption at the end of the 11th century[12] due to a fire caused by the Cuman invasion of 1094, until the first half of the 15th century[13], the moment of Dobruja's occupation by the Turks.

Based on the analysis of written and archaeological sources, the hypothesis was proposed that the famous Danubian locality of Vicina existed at Păcuiul lui Soare[14], an important commercial centre at the Lower Danube and the seat of a metropolis, which functioned until around 1359. Iakynth, the first metropolitan of Ungro-Wallachia, was also the last metropolitan of Vicina. Given the current state of preservation of the fortress, where much of its area has been engulfed by the waters of the Danube, the discovery of a metropolitan church is no longer feasible. The only material documents from Păcuiul lui Soare that are Christian in content and significance, which can be invoked in this context, are the numerous and varied crosses discovered[15].

[9] A review of the elements cited regarding the functionality/non-functionality of the Byzantine curtain wall in the case of the fortification at Păcuiul lui Soare during the 11th century and subsequent periods, with the referenced bibliography, can be found in DAMIAN 2020, p. 276–277 and notes 16–20. In our opinion, the explicit functional military role of the fortification at the time of its construction tends to shift as the role of the civilian settlement increases. We observe a change in the role of the curtain wall, with the focus moving from protection to demarcation/inclusion, as the fortification seems to take on a more symbolic character (militarily and politically), while still being evidently functional in terms of space occupation and utilisation for habitation.

[10] DIACONU, BARASCHI 1977, p. 31.

[11] POPA 1964, p. 108–109; DIACONU 1973; DIACONU, BARASCHI 1977, p. 11–14.

[12] DIACONU 1972, p. 54 and note 21; BARASCHI 1987.

[13] CUSTUREA 1982.

[14] One of the key arguments in Petre Diaconu's demonstration of identifying the site at Păcuiul lui Soare with Vicina (DIACONU 1970; DIACONU 1976a, p. 427–447; DIACONU 2001) is the Pisano-Amalfitan portolan, *Compasso da Navigare*, which mentions the toponym and hydronym *Vecina, flumen de Vecina vel de Danubio*, the river Vecina or the Danube, specifying the distance of 200 miles between the mouth of the Danube through the Aspera branch and that of Vecina. Converting these 200 Italian nautical miles into kilometers, with one Italian mile equaling 1734.32 m, results in 346.8 km, placing the island of Păcuiul lui Soare at km 356 from the mouth of the Sulina branch on the current navigation route (DIACONU 1981, p. 2316; DIACONU 2001, p. 176). See counterarguments in the more recent discussion by Alexandru MADGEARU (2016, especially p. 64–65), as revisited by Georgi ATANASOV (2018, p. 97–98).

[15] DIACONU 1976a, p. 445, fig. 12; see also MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2017b, p. 165–166.

Over time, the attribution of the initiative for constructing the fortress at the northeastern end of the Danube island Păcuiul lui Soare has been part of a polemic between Romanian and Bulgarian historiographies, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. Situated near the city of Silistra *(= Durostorum–Dristra/Dorostolon*), the capital of the Byzantine province of *Paristrion/Paradounavon*, and considered by Romanian historiography as a fortification built *a fundamentis* by the Byzantines in the last quarter of the 10th century[16] (i.e., in the absence of a prior contribution from the Roman and Romano-Byzantine rule, specific to Dobruja), it has long been the subject of controversies with representatives of Bulgarian archaeology, who argued that the First Bulgarian State was the commissioner of the fortress's construction[17].

A sensitive issue in a sensitive area: the idea of reestablishing the Byzantine frontier at the Danube at the crossroads of the 1st and 2nd millennia, in relation to aspects of power exercised by the medieval Bulgarian State, concerning a geographical region encompassing the southwestern corner of Romanian Dobruja and the northeastern part of present-day Bulgaria – in other words, a part of historical Dobruja in the mediaeval sense and a part of the former Southern Dobruja, including the Durostor district in the modern sense[18]. Numerous polemics related to the decisive authority in raising the island fortification, involving stratigraphic, ceramic, linguistic, and topographic arguments, faded at some point, being replaced in the 1970s and 1980s by another controversy. This new debate concerned the field of historical geography, specifically the identification of the famous and enigmatic locality of Vicina with the site on the island of Păcuiul lui Soare *versus*, generally speaking, the proposals opting for the Danube Delta region as a more suitable area for locating the city[19]. This time, the polemic was much broader – transcending the framework of a Romanian-Bulgarian regional confrontation on "Byzantine" grounds and the predominantly archaeological nature of the issue – and the problem remained largely open, extending into the next millennium[20].

The revisiting of the chronological and cultural affiliation of the site at Păcuiul lui Soare experienced a moment of revitalization in 2017, when a Romanian archaeologist and numismatist of the Middle Byzantine period, Gheorghe Mănucu-Adameșteanu, expressed the viewpoint that the construction of the fortress at

[16] For the *a fundamentis* Byzantine character of the fortress at Păcuiul lui Soare, see: NESTOR, DIACONU 1959, p. 588; DIACONU 1959, p. 653; VÎLCEANU 1963; POPA 1964, p. 107; DIACONU 1965, p. 13; VÎLCEANU 1965, p. 291, 300; DIACONU 1966, p. 367; CONDURACHI, BARNEA, DIACONU 1966, p. 7–9; POPA 1967, p. 271, 280–281, 291; DIACONU 1969, p. 398; DIACONU 1970, p. 287; POPA 1970, p. 569, 572, 577; DIACONU 1971; BARNEA 1971, p. 82; DIACONU 1972, p. 24; DIACONU 1976a, p. 412–417, with the previous bibliography; DIACONU 1976b, p. 940; BARASCHI 1991, p. 138; MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2001, p. 33–35; DAMIAN 2005, p. 143; MADGEARU 2007, p. 95; DAMIAN 2015, p. 230; DAMIAN 2020, p. 277–278, 280; DAMIAN 2021, p. 106, 110.

[17] See in this regard DIACONU 1972, p. 23 and note 1; DIACONU 1976b, p. 939–941, as well as a recent review of the views expressed by Bulgarian historiography at ATANASOV 2018, p. 77–78.

[18] DAMIAN 2020, p. 271–272.

[19] See in this regard DIACONU 1970; DIACONU 1976a; DIACONU 1981; DIACONU 1985.

[20] See reruns of the Vicina location problem file at DIACONU 2001, p. 175–176; MADGEARU 2016; MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2017a, p. 140–145, 151–152, 154–157, 162, 165; MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2017b, p. 169, 199; ATANASOV 2018, p. 97–99 (with reference to ATANASOV 1994); MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2019, p. 175–176, 201–202; DAMIAN 2020, p. 289–290.

Păcuiul lui Soare could be placed in the Romano-Byzantine period[21]. We do not intend to revisit the counterarguments presented in a relatively recent study[22], developed with the old arguments of archaeologists convincingly expressed since the beginning of the site's research, regarding the *a fundamentis* nature of the fortification's construction[23] (meaning in the absence of a prior contribution of Roman and Romano-Byzantine rule/civilization[24], specific to Dobruja[25]), as well as the results of investigations after 2000[26]. Instead, we aim to add another contribution to the dossier, which we became aware of later, namely that of Georgi Atanasov, who also pronounced against attributing the fortification at Păcuiul lui Soare to the Roman Empire[27]. However, the latest stance of the Bulgarian researcher regarding the fortification at Păcuiul lui Soare raises – again! – another issue, namely its belonging to the period of the late 9th century to the first half of the 10th century. This is based on a comprehensive review of all possible analogies suggested by the archaeological data provided by sites that constituted the major capitals of the Bulgarian State, Pliska and Preslav, as well as the early medieval fortifications in southern Dobruja, such as Skala, Tzar Asen, Ruyno, Okorsh[28]. Despite the seemingly exhaustive listing of data regarding the definition of the fortification at Păcuiul lui Soare in relation to those in northeastern Bulgaria (the structure of the curtain wall, the shape of the towers, the port installation, the ceramics, the appearance of the dwellings, the existence of incised marks on the stone blocks, a series of adornments, Cyrillic inscriptions, coin finds), Georgi Atanasov's study ignores a series of issues related to the interpretation of phenomena and the proportions of a material presence, not merely the simple presence or resemblance between complexes and artefacts from different sites.

In general, the arguments for considering a fortification as being built *a fundamentis* in the Middle Byzantine period[29] are provided by the presence of certain

[21] MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2017b, p. 130–142, with resumption in MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2018, part I, p. 141–147, 559, 565.

[22] DAMIAN 2020.

[23] See *supra* note 16.

[24] The elements belonging to the Roman/Romano-Byzantine era consist of scattered artefacts (ceramic materials, discoveries of clothing and monetary items, two glass denarii), undoubtedly documenting the existence of a settlement in the 6th century, probably considered a customs point. However, no *in situ* deposit or trace of a construction element from this period has been identified anywhere on the preserved/excavated surface of the island site. No occupational level dating to the Roman period has been identified in the fortification area, and all previous research, supported by stratigraphic evidence, has indicated that it is a foundational construction that does not overlay or intersect any archaeological reality attributable to this period (DIACONU 1972, p. 51–52 and notes 8–10, p. 187–188; DAMIAN 2005, p. 151 and notes 34–36).

[25] See DAMIAN 2020, p. 282 and note 67.

[26] Between 2000 and 2012, archaeological excavations aimed at uncovering elements of the construction system of the island fortification, covering areas of up to 750 sqm and reaching specific depths between 4 and 6 m, did not document any material or archaeological layer attributable to the Roman period (DIACONU, DAMIAN, VASILE 2001; DIACONU *et alii* 2003; DIACONU *et alii* 2004; DAMIAN *et alii* 2007; DAMIAN *et alii* 2008; DAMIAN *et alii* 2013; DAMIAN 2020, p. 282, note 65).

[27] ATANASOV 2018, p. 78–82, 94.

[28] ATANASOV 2018, p. 82–97.

[29] BARASCHI 1991, p. 138; MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2001, p. 33, 39, 45, 64; DAMIAN 2005, p. 143, 146; MADGEARU 2007, p. 89, 95; DAMIAN 2015, p. 232; MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2018, part I, p. 563; DAMIAN 2020, p. 277–278.

elements (such as the existence of a pre-fortification habitation level that the construction structures intersect, a situation not encountered on the island of Păcuiul lui Soare; coin finds belonging to the Macedonian dynasty period, particularly the interval of John I Tzimiskes – Basil II), and especially by the absence of others (*e.g.*, the exclusion of any constructive connection with a fortification from the Roman/Romano-Byzantine period, based on stratigraphic evidence and studies of the masonry). A special discussion was dedicated to the coin finds, which are considered, even in the case of a reduced presence, as arguments for the fortification's construction during the Middle Byzantine period. Coins issued during the reign of John I Tzimiskes[30] appear in sites whose restorations or beginnings are linked to the Byzantine reconquest of the Lower Danube area during the emperor's time[31], even if they are neither very numerous nor always discovered in completely clear contexts. Therefore, when these coin finds are associated with the presence of fortification and/or habitation elements, they can serve as chronological framing arguments, even if the stratigraphic context does not contain an irrefutable proof, such as the discovery of a coin on a constructive level.

Over time, in various studies published by the research team members of the site at Păcuiul lui Soare[32], and despite a total freedom of expression of divergent viewpoints, there has been a consensus regarding the moment of the fortification's construction, which is the Middle Byzantine period, specifically the era of John I Tzimiskes, with interventions around the year 1000 and in the 13th–14th centuries through the construction of walls marking a reduction in habitation. Regardless of the technique used for these interventions (dry walls or walls bonded with very low-quality mortar for blocking entrances through thresholds/elevating the level of the northern gate-tower and the landing stage, walls made of reused stones bonded with earth, the use of different types of mortar), they did not affect in any way the initial plan of the fortification or the aspect of a "unified whole" of this remarkable architectural achievement.

From a technical point of view, Gheorghe Mănucu-Adameșteanu considered that certain construction features of the fortress, such as the wooden substructions, the "blocking" system, and the use of waterproof mortar in the construction of the enclosure wall[33], as well as highlighting the uniqueness of the construction type at Păcuiul lui Soare during the Middle Byzantine period, its archaic character[34], and the analogies with fortification elements from other sites[35], could have led

[30] MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2018, part II, p. 103 (for the silver coin /*miliaresia*), p. 128–130 (for *folleis* class A 1).

[31] *Dinogetia*-Garvăn – 1 AE, *Noviodunum*-Isaccea – 7 AE, Nufăru – 2 AE, Capidava – 1 AE, *Axiopolis*-Cernavodă – 1 AE, *Tomis*-Constanța – 2 AR and 7 AE, *Carsium*-Hârșova – 1 AE, Dervent – 1 AR, Păcuiul lui Soare – 2 AR and 3 AE (MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2018, part I, p. 648–649, 652, 656–659, 743–746, 748–749, 751–752; part II, p. 103, 130).

[32] DIACONU 1959; DIACONU 1961; DIACONU, POPA, ANGHELESCU 1962; VÎLCEANU 1963; POPA 1964; DIACONU 1965; VÎLCEANU 1965; DIACONU 1966; POPA 1967, especially p. 280, note 7; VÎLCEANU 1967; DIACONU 1969; DIACONU 1970; POPA 1970; DIACONU 1971; DIACONU, VÎLCEANU 1972; DIACONU 1972; POPA 1972.

[33] VÎLCEANU 1965, p. 301–302.

[34] POPA 1967, p. 280–292; POPA 1972, p. 33.

[35] POPA 1967, p. 281–288; DIACONU 1985, p. 109; DIACONU 1994, p. 88–90.

to a typological classification in the Roman period[36]. All researchers of the Păcuiul lui Soare site emphasized the high-level construction technique, the skill of the Byzantine craftsmen in building on sand, adapting to the foundation soil quality using techniques of Roman origin, but with a universal value that cannot suggest evaluations regarding the ethnicity of the builders or the commissioners, but rather cultural continuities[37] and methods of adapting to the terrain's requirements, the demands of the era, and the expectations of the users. An argument in this regard is precisely the typological similarity between the fortress on Păcuiul lui Soare Island and the fortifications of the capitals of the First Bulgarian State, at Pliska and Preslav, as well as the one at Dristra, viewed through the lens of the fact that they are achievements due to Byzantine craftsmen and techniques[38]. A special role in this sense is held by the unparalleled port installation at Păcuiul lui Soare[39], an argument for the adaptation of construction techniques to land/environment conditions, the triumph of functionality, rather than a marker of political/ethnic identity. The same argument of functionality, coupled with the echo of a cultural continuity, is also expressed by the choice for stone-based dwellings[40]. Regarding the artefacts (ceramics, jewellery, coins) invoked by Georgi Atanasov in establishing a perfect analogy and advancing a closer chronological placement in the 9th–10th centuries, we believe that the proportion of the presence of certain categories at Păcuiul lui Soare in relation to the fortresses in northeastern Bulgaria is essential, namely the limited/restricted character in the case of the island site. The miniature Varangian axes[41] may not only indicate signs of the Kievan presence in the area, but also northern material presences determined by the relationship between the Byzantine imperial power and Viking mercenary troops. The inscription discovered at Păcuiul lui Soare (which contains the names *Savos, Traianos*, and *Demetrios*, rendered in the genitive, in Greek declension, judging by the script of the letters)[42], considered Cyrillic in the context of its re-edition[43], was initially published as being Middle Greek[44].

The historical and archaeological analysis allowed for the establishment of a relative chronology for the beginnings of the fortress at Păcuiul lui Soare, advancing several possible construction periods: hypothesis 1 – the Romano-Byzantine period (4th–7th centuries); hypothesis 2 – the period of the First Bulgarian State (late

[36] MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2017b, p. 141.

[37] See also POPA 1967, p. 289–290; THEODORESCU 1976, p. 118, fig. 117–120.

[38] POPA 1967, p. 285–288 and notes 31–41; MADGEARU 2007, p. 96.

[39] See, in this regard, ATANASOV 2018, p. 85–86; DAMIAN 2020, p. 287–288 and notes 93–99.

[40] See also DAMIAN 2015; PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2017, p. 211–219; DAMIAN 2021, p. 123–128, fig. 33–42.

[41] ATANASOV 2018, p. 93–94, fig. 19, with the previous bibliography.

[42] "...there is no doubt that the inscription dates from the 10th century; the letters were made by carving into stone (on a block likely originating from the enclosure wall of the Byzantine island fortress, discovered on the beach formed by the waters of the Danube within the fortification) using a chisel or a small knife, and the excavated space was filled with waterproof mortar containing a high amount of crushed brick, explaining the red color of the letters..." (DIACONU 2007, p. 161–163).

[43] PETOLESCU 2008, p. 173–175; see also ATANASOV 2018, p. 94, fig. 20, with a chronological setting at the beginning of the 10th century.

[44] DIACONU 2007.

9th century – first half of the 10th century, when, following several victories over the Byzantines, Tsar Simeon I achieved the maximum territorial expansion of his rule); hypothesis 3 – the return of Byzantine domination to the Lower Danube (the last quarter of the 10th century – early 11th century, during the reign of the Macedonian dynasty emperors, John I Tzimiskes and Basil II), with rich arguments both for and against each (see above).

Radiocarbon dating using the AMS method represents the first attempt at an **absolute chronology**, marking the most probable moment for the construction of the enclosure wall on the excavated portion. This enclosure wall, based on arguments brought forward by archaeological excavations conducted over more than 60 years, can be associated with the moment of raising the first stone constructions on Păcuiul lui Soare Island, a component of a strategically important fortress for the southern area of today's Dobruja region.

Premise

In 2021, a fragment was extracted from one of the discovered oak beams, part of the wooden substructure of the fortress (see above), which exhibited important conservation characteristics for dendrological, dendrochronological, and radiocarbon dating analysis. The fragment was sent to "Ștefan cel Mare" University in Suceava for dendrochronological analysis and to select the most representative sample for radiocarbon dating[45]. The primary analysis confirmed the wood species as oak. It also verified the good state of preservation and that the sequence of rings chosen for radiocarbon dating, from the fragment sent from the archaeological site in 2021, represents a portion from the last decades of the tree's life. Moreover, the initial dendrochronological dating attempts established that the rings from the beam fragment represent a growth period preceding the year 1080, the lower limit of the floating scale with which the Suceava team conducts such precise dating.

Hypotheses

Given the position on the tree trunk, the sequence of rings, and the placement below the lower limit of the dendrochronological scale from Suceava, the tree was cut before the year 1080. Because the moment of the tree's felling could be established with some accuracy, the sample selected for radiocarbon dating can provide greater precision as to when, exactly before the year 1080, the living tree was cut down.

Radiocarbon dating

The radiocarbon dating was carried out in 2022[46] at the RoAMS laboratory in "Horia Hulubei" National Institute for R&D in Physics and Nuclear Engineering Măgurele-Ilfov. The process involved the pre-treatment of the wood by purifying the holocellulose, graphitizing it to obtain intimate charcoal deposited on the iron catalyst (AMS target), and measuring the remaining carbon–14 in the wood after it

[45] MANNING, BIRCH 2022, p. 279–308.
[46] SIMION *et alii* 2022–2023, p. 289.

was cut, using AMS technique[47]. Through the programs associated with the processing of experimental data, the level of carbon–14 in the measured rings can be determined at the date before the tree was cut, thus providing the conventional radiocarbon age (CRA), meaning the time elapsed from the cutting until the measurement, with a certain degree of imprecision in the measurements; the values are indicated within parentheses[48] (**Fig. 8**). In the final sequence of analysis, machine years are calibrated into calibrated calendar years, which can be historically interpreted using the OxCal online program[49].

Absolute chronology

The histogram (**Fig. 8**) confirms that the main sub-intervals fall before the year 1080 AD, with the two analysis, preliminary dendrochronology and radiocarbon dating, supporting each other. It also establishes the lower limit of the interval in which the rings were alive and balanced with the carbon–14 levels in the air, namely the year 894 AD.

Based on the sample selected as representative of the tree's lifespan and the most probable moment of its felling, it can be said that this can be associated with the interval calAD 946–1048. The other sub-intervals cannot be excluded in terms of probability/statistics; however, it can be stated that, chronologically, the dominant interval best reflects not only the period during which the tree was alive but also the closest moment to when it was cut down, thus interrupting its balance with the carbon dioxide in the air, and "starting" the chronological clock showing the radiocarbon decay, determinable through AMS measurement.

Interpretations

The tree rings being attributed to the final decades of the tree's life, the sub-intervals can be interpreted as follows:

1. with a 9.3% probability, sometime between calAD 894–928 or in the immediate decades, the tree was felled and used in the foundation of the enclosure wall (historical hypothesis 2);

2. with a 76.1% probability, the event dated through the tree occurred between calAD 946–1048 and corresponds historically with hypothesis 3.

The two analysis exclude hypothesis 1 for the construction of the enclosure wall.

Conclusions

We consider it well-founded to assert that the radiocarbon dating and the preliminary dendrochronological analysis of the sample taken from the wooden substructure of the fortress on Păcuiul lui Soare Island, representative of the moment

[47] WACKER, CHRISTL, SYNAL 2010, p. 976–979; ADOLPHI *et alii* 2013, p 391–400; SAVA *et alii* 2019, p. 649–658.

[48] RAMSEY 1995, p. 425–430; REIMER *et alii* 2020, p. 725–757.

[49] OxCal v.4.4 program and calibration curve IntCal20, the online version generated by Radiocarbon Unit of the Oxford UK Laboratory: https://c14.arch.ox.ac.uk/oxcal.html.

the wall foundation was built, confirm the archaeological-historical analysis of the site, supporting the hypothesis that the fortress was built *a fundamentis* during the return of Byzantine dominion to the Lower Danube.

This conclusion can be nuanced in probabilistic terms, with approximately 10% representing the period of the First Bulgarian State (late 9th century – first half of the 10th century) and approximately 80% representing the return of Byzantine dominance to the Lower Danube (last quarter of the 10th century – early 11th century).

The fact that the two calibrated sub-intervals end at calAD 928 and begin at calAD 946 becomes a factor that distinguishes the radiocarbon results between these two historical events, with the majority weighting in favour of the Byzantine Empire.

In the 76.1% probability sub-interval (calAD 946–1048), there are two peaks around the calAD 977–1036 range (the most restrictive interval for attribution), which support the historical event of the tree's felling and the construction being raised in the last quarter of the 10th century.

The completion of the dendrochronological analysis and any further dating could provide decisive arguments in favour of this hypothesis.

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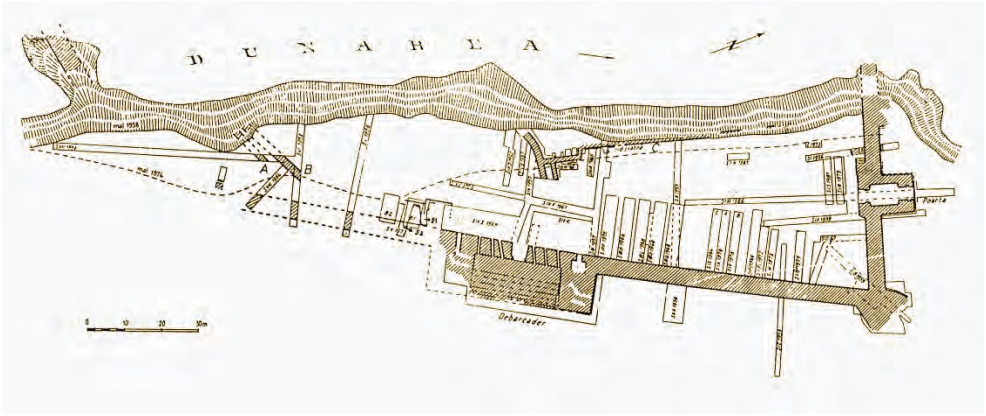

Fig. 1. Păcuiul lui Soare. Plan of the Byzantine fortification (after Baraschi 1987, fig. 1).

Fig. 2. Păcuiul lui Soare. The northern enclosure wall, destroyed by the waters of the Danube on the western side, 2000 campaign.

Fig. 3. Păcuiul lui Soare. The gate tower, 2000 campaign.

Fig. 4. Păcuiul lui Soare. The port installation, 2007 campaign.

Fig. 5. Păcuiul lui Soare. The southern sector, 2003 campaign.

Fig. 6. Păcuiul lui Soare. The southern sector, with the visible wooden substructure, 2003 campaign.

Fig. 7. Păcuiul lui Soare. The southern sector, with the visible wooden substructure, 2003 campaign.

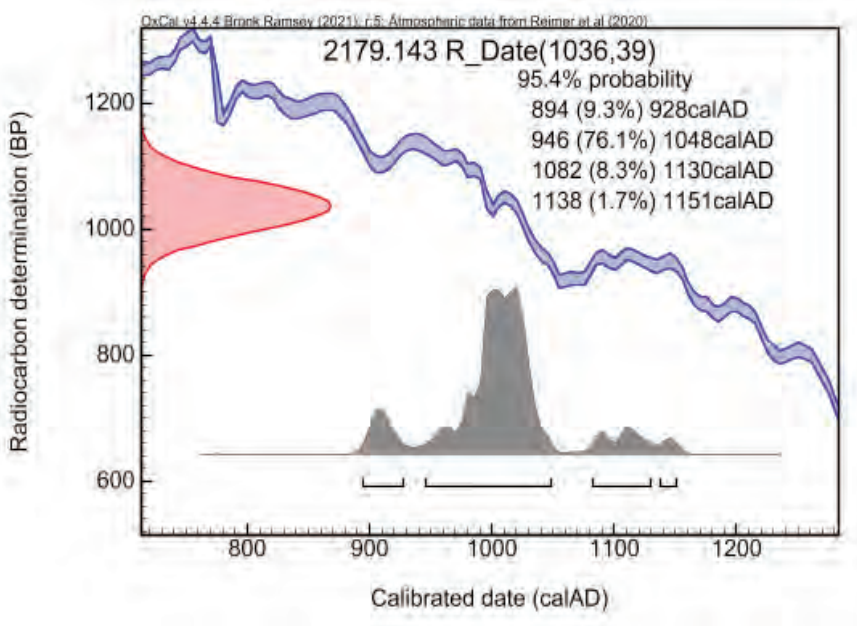

Fig. 8. The histogram obtained through radiocarbon dating for the wood sample from Păcuiul lui Soare, at the RoAMS laboratory in Romania.

A FORTRESS AT THE GATE OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE. THE SMALL PRECINCT FROM HÂRȘOVA

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Keywords: *fortification, material culture, end of 10th – 11th century, frontier, Byzantine Empire, Danube, Dobruja.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *fortificație, cultură materială, sfârșitul secolului al X-lea – veacul al XI-lea, frontieră, Imperiul bizantin, Dunăre, Dobrogea.*

Abstract: *In this study, the authors focus on a fortress built near one of the important crossing points over the Danube in the southeastern part of present-day Romania. It was constructed on the site of an earlier Roman fortress (called* Carsium*), of which only the highest and most naturally fortified area overlapped with the new structure. Its construction took place in the context of the return of the Byzantine administration to the territory bordered by the Danube and the Black Sea, known as Dobruja, after the events of 971, our work bringing archaeological evidence in this regard. The small Byzantine fortress, also known as the "small enclosure", had the role of overseeing the territories across the Danube to prevent the danger of potential attackers, controlling navigation and trade on the river, as well as serving as the "gateway" into Dobruja, represented by the nearby crossing point. Its existence was dictated and marked by its inclusion in the chain of fortifications that protected the Byzantine frontier along the Danube, going through periods of peace interspersed with conflicts. The fortress benefited from craft development and was included in the river and lands trade routes, all at the intensity of life characteristic of a fortress on the edge of an empire.*

Rezumat: *În această lucrare, autorii își îndreaptă atenția asupra unei cetăți edificate în apropierea unuia dintre locurile importante de trecere a Dunării, din sud-estul României de astăzi. Aceasta a fost construită pe locul unei foste cetăți romane (numită* Carsium*), din a cărei suprafață suprapunea doar zona cea mai înaltă și bine fortificată natural. Ridicarea ei s-a făcut în contextul revenirii administrației bizantine în teritoriul delimitat pe trei părți de apele Dunării și Mării Negre, cunoscut cu numele de Dobrogea, după evenimentele din 971, lucrarea noastră aducând dovezi arheologice în acest sens. Mica fortificație bizantină, numită și „incinta mică", avea rolul de a supraveghea teritoriile de peste Dunăre pentru a preîntâmpina pericolul potențialilor atacatori, precum și navigația și comerțul pe fluviu, constituind totodată, prin vadul din apropiere, „poarta" de intrare în Dobrogea. Existența*

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ei a fost dictată și marcată de „încartiruirea" în lanțul fortificațiilor care protejau frontiera bizantină de la Dunăre, cunoscând perioade de liniște care alternau cu cele de conflicte, beneficiind de dezvoltare meșteșugărească și includere pe rutele comerciale fluviale și terestre, toate la intensitatea caracteristică vieții unei cetăți de la marginea unui imperiu.

Introduction

In the second half of the 6th century, at the eastern end of the Lower Danube, daily life in the fortresses, cities, and settlements of the Istro-Pontic territory, located on the edge of the Byzantine Empire, was severely affected by repeated large-scale attacks from Avar-Slavic populations and the raids of the Kutrigurs. Their actions targeted both the fortifications on the right bank of the Danube, from where the Byzantine Danubian frontier was monitored and which they were supposed to protect the settlements within the province of Scythia. Almost all investigated fortifications along the Danube have revealed destruction layers, often accompanied by traces of fire, which are considered the effects of these incursions[1].

Among the targets of these populations, who had only recently reached the imperial frontier, was the fortress of *Carsium*, at Hârșova (Constanța County), built largely in a dominant position, difficult to access from the river side. Within the alignment of the Danubian *limes*, the fortress represented a strategic point, serving to monitor movements in the territories beyond the river and the navigation of ships along the Danube, as well as to guard the most important crossing point of the river[2] from Muntenia toward central Dobruja, at the present-day Giurgeni – Vadul Oii crossing, which at any moment could become a "gateway" for the enemy to enter the province's territory[3].

On the rocky promontory, which today preserves the ruins of a complex of fortifications, was built during the reign of Emperor Vespasianus (69–79)[4] or by order of Trajan (98–117)[5], a *castrum*[6], probably by the *Ala (Gallorum) Flaviana*[7], whose presence

[1] PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2020, p. 250–252.

[2] Expressively described by V. Pârvan as "the point where the Danube, after wandering through the marshes and channels of Ialomița and before dispersing into the marshes and channels of Brăila, gathers all its waters together for a moment at the mouth of the Ialomița", see PÂRVAN 1913, p. 478.

[3] ARICESCU 1971, p. 351–355; TALMAȚCHI 1997, p. 113–124; TALMAȚCHI, PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 1999, p. 31.

[4] ZAHARIADE, MUȘEȚEANU, CHIRIAC 1981, p. 259; NICOLAE 1995–1996, p. 137–138; CHIRIAC, NICOLAE, TALMAȚCHI 1998, p. 148; COVACEF, NICOLAE 2007, p. 178.

[5] PÂRVAN 1913, p. 480–489; PÂRVAN 1933, p. 162; ARICESCU 1971, p. 354; ARICESCU 1977, p. 55, 87, fig. 21.

[6] *Carsium,* the toponym of the *castrum* and later the fortress from the Roman period, is either of Thracian or Celtic origin. Under this name or in various forms, it is mentioned by *Ptolemaeus* in *Geographia,* in the *Tabula Peutingeriana,* the *Itinerarium Antonini,* by *Procopius of Caesarea,* and other sources. At different times, the presence of military units is recorded here, such as: *Ala II Hispanorum et Ar(a)uacorum (*attested by a milestone from the year 200 AD, indicating that it was repairing the nearby road*), Legio I Italica* at *Carsium (*its presence inferred from a stamped brick), and *Milites Scythici Carso (*soldiers recruited from provincial populations, attested in the *Notitia Dignitatum),* see ARICESCU 1977, p. 55–56, 80, 98, 117, 135, 174–175; BARNEA 1994, p. 258.

[7] CHIRIAC, NICOLAE, TALMAȚCHI 1998, p. 140, 145–149.

here is suggested by the discovery of several stamped *tegulae*[8]. Later, during the reign of Constantine the Great (306–337), a fortress with a much-expanded surface was erected, which was affected by the attacks of the Huns and likely came under their control in 434[9]. In the 6th century, during the reign of Emperor Justinian (527–565), the fortress underwent substantial reconstruction[10], and in the same period (in 536), it was placed among the 14 episcopal residences subordinated to the Metropolitan of Tomis[11].

Nearly two decades after the death of Emperor Justinian, daily life in the fortress of *Carsium* would enter a new stage, shaped by the political situation of the region at the turn of the centuries, during which, for about two to four decades, it experienced successive periods of rise and decline. The sporadic monetary discoveries seem to indicate that the fortress was affected by the Avar-Slavic attacks of 593–594; however, it later found the necessary resources for recovery[12], probably also as a consequence of the peace treaty concluded in 598, by which the Avars recognized the Danube as the boundary between them and the empire[13]. The discovery of two *hemifolles* from Phocas suggests a revival of the fortress and a certain continuity of economic life following the attacks at the end of the 6th century, likely lasting until the period of 609–619. Somehow overcoming all this disorder at the frontier, in the early decades of the 7th century[14], habitation at *Carsium* appears to have survived until the late 620s, as evidenced by the finding of a 1/ 2 *follis* from the year 629–630, while also maintaining contact with the Byzantine Empire[15].

The strong and repeated attacks by the aforementioned populations, the division of the Byzantine army across multiple fronts, and the general economic decline that affected the empire's peripheral provinces in the last decades of the 6th century were among the factors that led the administration in Constantinople to abandon the Danubian frontier and relinquish the Istro-Pontic territory in favour of the Avar-Slavs[16].

For the period between the 8th century and the third quarter of the 10th century, there is no evidence of habitation within the investigated areas of the ancient fortress or in its immediate vicinity. An open settlement, inhabited for approximately

[8] ZAHARIADE, MUȘEȚEANU, CHIRIAC 1981, p. 255, 259–260 and fig. 2; NICOLAE 1995–1996, p. 142, note 66, pl. I/6; CHIRIAC, NICOLAE, TALMAȚCHI 1998, p. 140, 147, note 14, pl. I/1–4 and pl. II/1.

[9] BARNEA 1968, p. 407; ARICESCU 1977, p. 169; BARNEA 1994, p. 258; BARNEA 2010a, p. 525.

[10] ARICESCU 1971, p. 352–354; BARNEA 1994, p. 258; STĂNICĂ, NICOLAE, CIOBANU 2021, p. 11; ȘOVA 2021, p. 58.

[11] HOLUBEANU 2020, p. 39–40.

[12] CUSTUREA 2019, p. 29.

[13] MADGEARU 2006, p. 154.

[14] In the frontier area, during the first decades of the 7th century, new conflicts arose between the Byzantine Empire and the Avaro-Slavic populations. In the first decade, the empire lost the segment of the *limes* between Novae and Iatrus but managed to retain large portions of the region of Scythia and Moesia Secunda, east of Iatrus. A new Byzantine-Avar treaty was concluded in 604. See MADGEARU 1997, p. 142; PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2020, p. 253–254.

[15] MADGEARU 2006, p. 157; CUSTUREA 2019, p. 29; STĂNICĂ, NICOLAE, CIOBANU 2021, p. 10.

[16] PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2020, p. 258.

two centuries, from the late 8th century until the 10th century, existed at the south-western edge of the present-day town of Hârșova, in the area known as "Abator"[17]. Here, about 1.2 km downstream from the fortress of *Carsium* and nearly 200 m from the Danube, during a preventive archaeological excavation conducted between September 2013 and May 2014, researchers investigated 52 dwellings, a probable workshop for processing bone material, 11 household ovens located between the dwellings (some with access pits), storage pits, household pits, and a single inhumation grave oriented west-east, which overlapped one of the dwellings[18]. Although they were aware of the area of the ancient fortress, as evidenced by the Roman paving slabs used in the construction of some fire installations, the founders of the open settlement preferred to establish it in a new location for reasons unknown[19].

The context of the restoration of the fortress of Hârșova

The reactivation of the strategic point at Hârșova and the construction of new walls on the rocky promontory were a consequence of a first stage of the belligerent events that unfolded in the Balkan Peninsula, over the course of over four decades, at the turn of the millenniums.

In the second half of the 10th century, during the final years of the reign of Tsar Peter of Bulgaria (927–969), relations between the Byzantines and the Bulgarians deteriorated. A long series of military conflicts began between the two Balkan powers, involving various allies, and culminating in 1018 with the end of the First Bulgarian State and the restoration of the Balkan region under the authority of Constantinople[20].

The final confrontations of this initial phase, which began in 967 and concluded

[17] PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI, TALMAȚCHI, BODOLICĂ 2015, p. 397–423.

[18] In the inventory of the dwellings, ceramic material is the most numerous. The vessels were shaped using both slow and fast wheel techniques, made from common and, more rarely, kaolinitic clay, fired in an oxidizing or reducing atmosphere, and decorated with either a polished finish or incision technique. Typologically, we mention the pot without handles and the bowl made from common clay; the pot without handles and the amphoroidal jug crafted from kaolinitic clay; the pot with and without handles, the jug with a trilobed mouth, the bucket, the bowl, and the storage vessel shaped from fine common clay. Alongside ceramics, other finds include bone objects (piercers, skates), stone tools (a chisel for bone processing, sharpening sandstones), clay artefacts (spindle whorls, sharpeners made from brick, and fishing net weights), as well as iron objects (arrowheads, knives, and nails), etc. See PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI, TALMAȚCHI, BODOLICĂ 2015.

[19] The open settlement was established in the lower half of a valley, in an area sheltered from cold winds, not far from the river's waters and under the protection of forests that covered the landscape to the west and northwest. In the upper part of the valley, towards the north, there were vast plains and pastures traversed by the Roman road that connected the fortifications along the Danube. The land on which the inhabitants built their dwellings—mostly sunken structures—was clean, free of ancient construction debris (as would have been the case at the site of the *Carsium* fortress), ensuring stable walls and allowing people to build wherever they wished. The Roman fortress, which likely still served as an occasional point of interest during raids, represented only a source of raw materials for the inhabitants of the open settlement. They probably retrieved paving slabs (tiles) from it, which were used for open hearths or for vaulted ovens, with similar slabs being found in the port area and near certain buildings. See PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2016, p. 123–130.

[20] OBOLENSKY 2002, p. 232; ZBUGHEA 2010, p. 330; PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2021, p. 23–25.

in 971, took place in the southwestern part of Dobruja and targeted the fortress of *Dorostolon* (modern-day Silistra), located on the right bank of the Danube. This stronghold became the refuge of the Rus' armies of former ally Sviatoslav (945–972), the knez of Kievan Rus', and was subjected to a gruelling siege lasting more than three months, both by land and from the river[21]. Six naval and land battles took place, along with bloody clashes between the besieged and the Byzantines, as the defenders attempted to break the encirclement[22]: *„...and the emperor, after a siege of 65 full days, in which he fought daily and without a moment of respite, decided that he must wear down the city both by siege and by starvation"*[23].

Knyaz Sviatoslav arrived at the Lower Danube as an ally of the Byzantine Empire, following the request made by Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (963–969), through the mediation of the *strategos* of Cherson, Kalokyros, and in exchange for substantial gifts (significant amounts of gold)[24]. Deploying his armies in the territory between the Danube and the Haemus Mountains, alongside his Pecheneg[25] and Hungarian[26] allies, he conquered several fortresses[27] in eastern Bulgaria, including the capital of the Bulgarian State, Preslav.

However, several factors led to changes in the plan devised by the Byzantine emperor, as Nikephoros II Phokas soon realized that his strategy of bringing the Kievan Rus' south of the Danube would not be favorable to the empire. In this regard, Sviatoslav received his first incentive during his discussions with Kalokyros, who, aiming for the imperial throne and seeking the support of the Rus' to obtain it, apparently suggested to the knyaz that he should keep the Bulgarian territories[28]. The ease with which the fortresses were conquered, the defection of certain Bulgarian aristocrats to the Rus' side, and the intensity of commercial traffic in the region, reflected by rich and diverse goods[29], were likely additional factors that convinced Sviatoslav to refuse to return the conquered territories to the Byzantine Empire, as per their prior agreement[30]. Moreover, at that time, the Kievan Rus' was in a process of consolidation, in which territorial expansionism played a significant role[31].

At this stage, the advance of the Rus' armies and the consolidation of their

[21] RĂDULESCU 1998, p. 174; ZBUGHEA 2010, p. 321–322.

[22] ZBUGHEA 2010, p. 323.

[23] Georgios Kedrenos, in FHDR III, p. 143 and also p. 137–143 for the fights from Dorostolon.

[24] Georgios Kedrenos, in FHDR III, p. 137; Ioannes Zonaras, in FHDR III, p. 213; MADGEARU 2013, p. 29–30; DAMIAN 2015, p. 215.

[25] About the Pechenegs, the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus recorded between the years 948–952 that they controlled the territories stretching between the opposite bank of Dorostolon and the fortress of Sarkel (Belaja Vezha, on the Don), with the Danube separating them from the territories of the First Bulgarian State, which were only half a day's journey away. The presence of the Pechenegs near the Danube in the mid–10th century is also attested by other narrative sources, such as: the anonymous Hebrew work Josippon; the notes of Liudprand of Cremona; the notes of the Jew Abraham Jakobsen (Ibrahim ben Yakub), etc., see SPINEI 2022, p. 170–171.

[26] SPINEI 2010, p. 278.

[27] "... Sviatoslav defeated the Bulgarians and seized 80 fortresses along the Danube", see Chronica Nestoris, in FHDR VII, p. 71.

[28] MADGEARU 2013, p. 29.

[29] See Chronica Nestoris, in FHDR VII, p. 73.

[30] MADGEARU 2013, p. 29; SPINEI 2022, p. 176.

[31] ZBUGHEA 2010, p. 321.

conquests were halted by the Pecheneg attack on the capital of the Rus' state. Taking advantage of Sviatoslav's absence, the Pechenegs attacked Kiev, an action likely inspired by Byzantine or Bulgarian diplomacy, forcing the knyaz to return home[32].

Seizing the opportunity created by Sviatoslav's withdrawal from the theater of operations, and realizing the strength of the Rus' armies as well as Sviatoslav's territorial ambitions, the Byzantine emperor Nikephoros II Phokas sought an alliance with Tsar Peter of Bulgaria and, in the first month of 969, prepared a military campaign for the Rus' return. However, the unexpected death of the tsar once again altered Byzantine plans. The new ruler of the Bulgarian state was proclaimed Boris II (969–971), the eldest son of Tsar Peter, who had previously been held hostage in Constantinople along with his brother[33].

After defeating the Pechenegs, Sviatoslav returned to the Lower Danube, but with his own strategy and a different vision for the Balkan region. In his absence, the Byzantine Empire had failed to assert its authority over the territories occupied prior to his return to Kiev. Even the massacre of a large portion of the allied Pecheneg cavalry, in a trap set by the Byzantines in 969, did not contribute significantly to changing the situation[34]. Upon his return to the Lower Danube, Sviatoslav captured the Bulgarian Tsar Boris II and, supported by those Bulgarians who had accepted his rule, launched fierce confrontations against the Byzantines[35]. These conflicts would culminate two years later, in 971, with the Byzantine victory at Dorostolon, the signing of a peace agreement with Emperor John I Tzimiskes (969–976), and the withdrawal of the Kievan forces from the Balkans[36].

The evolution of the Danubian-Pontic territory was largely influenced by the Russo—Bulgarian—Byzantine conflicts[37] and their aftermath, with Dobruja being among the territories over which the Byzantine Empire extended its authority in 971. For a period, the frontier, which had been abandoned in segments at the end of the 6th century and in the early decades of the 7th century, was restored along the Danube.

While still at Dorostolon, Emperor John I Tzimiskes initiated the military and administrative reorganization of the newly acquired territories located on the empire's frontier. Guards were dispatched to protect the fortresses near the city and along the Danube[38], commanders were appointed, and the territories were structured

[32] MADGEARU 2013, p. 30; SPINEI 2022, p. 176.

[33] BREZEANU 2004, p. 180.

[34] SPINEI 2010, p. 278.

[35] In the summer of 970, he reached the vicinity of Constantinople, but was defeated by the Byzantines at Arkadiopolis (modern Lule Burgas), see MADGEARU 2013, p. 30–31.

[36] BARNEA, ȘTEFĂNESCU 1971, p. 72–73; SPINEI 2009, p. 99; SPINEI 2010, p. 278.

[37] We mention the envoys coming from fortresses located north of the Danube and from Constantia (probably modern Constanța, on the coastal shore of Dobruja) to seek forgiveness from Emperor John I Tzimiskes for their wrongdoings and to surrender those fortresses. It is likely that they had provided assistance to Sviatoslav. See Georgios Kedrenos, in FHDR III, p. 141; Ioannes Zonaras, in FHDR III, p. 217; BARNEA, ȘTEFĂNESCU 1971, p. 73; ZBUGHEA 2010, p. 323–324; MADGEARU 2013, p. 31–34; DAMIAN 2015, p. 215–217.

[38] Georgios Kedrenos, in FHDR III, p. 140–143, and in the chronicle of Yahya-ibn-Said of Antioch, it is mentioned that Dorostolon and the surrounding fortresses, previously conquered by the Rus', came under Byzantine possession, and that the emperor appointed rulers for them at the

into administrative-military units, which would later undergo multiple modifications[39]. The organization of these new frontier possessions into small themes, governed by *strategoi* with broad military and civil prerogatives – responsible for defending the province, recruiting soldiers, maintaining fortifications, constructing new ones, building roads, preserving local order, managing administration, overseeing certain fiscal services, and handling religious disputes – was a commonly employed practice of the Byzantine Empire during the reigns of John I Tzimiskes and Basil II (976–1025)[40].

It is estimated that the administrative and military organization of Dobruja, following its reintegration into the empire's borders, was in alignment with the short-lived Theme Ioannoupolis and Dorostolon[41]. Later, the northern part of the Danubian-Pontic province became part of the Theme of Western Mesopotamia, while the southern part was included in the Theme of Dorostolon, with the likely boundary between the two being the Carasu Valley[42]. This administrative structure at the Danubian frontier of the empire underwent disruptions and changes in 986, when the Byzantine army was defeated by the forces of the Bulgarian *comitopuloi* Samuel (proclaimed tsar in 997). The territories that had been lost by the Bulgarians to the Byzantines in 971, including northeastern Bulgaria and southern Dobruja, were largely reconquered by the Bulgarians and remained under their control until 1001, when the Byzantine frontier on the Danube was re-established[43]. According to some interpretations, it is believed that the Danubian province into which the territory of Dobruja was integrated bore the name, at the beginning of the 11th century, of Theme Dorostolon (Dristra), the name Paradounavon (Paristrion) becoming more later part of the official titulature[44].

To secure and consolidate its rule over the newly conquered territories along and near the new frontier, as well as to provide protection for its provinces, the

end of the confrontations in this first phase, see BARNEA, ȘTEFĂNESCU 1971, p. 74; MADGEARU 2013, p. 34.

[39] MADGEARU 2013, p. 37–44, fig. 2, p. 52, fig. 3; DAMIAN 2015, p. 220–221.

[40] DAMIAN 2015, p. 221 and note 68.

[41] It is presumed that this lasted at most until Emperor John I Tzimiskes arrived in Constantinople, see DAMIAN 2015, p. 226.

[42] The administrative integration of the territories annexed after the conclusion of the Ruso–Bulgar–Byzantine conflicts is primarily based on *the Taktikon Scorialensis*, dated by Nikolas Oikonomides to the period 971–975, and the information provided by seals discovered at Preslav. See BARNEA, ȘTEFĂNESCU 1971, p. 74–76; SPINEI 2009, p. 101; MADGEARU 2013, p. 37–43 and note 163; DAMIAN 2015, p. 221–226, where multiple interpretations are presented, and note 73 with the bibliography on the subject.

[43] ZBUGHEA 2010, p. 330; MADGEARU 2013, p. 47–49; STĂNICĂ 2015, p. 70.

[44] MADGEARU 2013, p. 64, where it is mentioned that the name Dristra remained in use until the mid–11th century, and on p. 68, where it is assumed that Theme Dristra was replaced by Theme Paradounavon ("no doubt covering much of the same area") by Emperor Isaac I Komnenos (1057–1059) in 1059. It is also noted that, although some literary sources used the name Paristrion for the empire's Danubian province, the seals only bear the name Paradounavon (meaning "near the Danube"), leading to the conclusion that the official name of the province was Theme Paradounavon. Regarding the establishment of the theme and the use of the name Paradounavon, see also BARNEA, ȘTEFĂNESCU 1971, p. 76; ZBUGHEA 2010, p. 330; DAMIAN 2015, p. 228; STĂNICĂ 2015, p. 70; DAMIAN 2020, p. 285 and note 77; DAMIAN 2021, p. 106, etc.

Byzantine Empire focused its attention from the very beginning on the old fortifications along the right bank of the Danube. Recalling the successive repairs and constructions that had been initiated during the Dominate period and continued until the early 7th century, involving more than 40 fortifications[45], in the last quarter of the 10th century and the beginning of the 11th century, some Roman fortifications were cleaned and repaired, while others were built *a fundamentis*, creating strategic points of intervention and control. In this regard, extensive archaeological evidence has documented large-scale operations in several fortresses located between Dorostolon and the mouths of the Danube (**Fig 1**).

During this period, a fortress was built approximately 20 km downstream from Dorostolon, likely with a trapezoidal or rectangular shape, covering an area of approximately 4–5 hectares, located today at the northeastern end of the Danubian island Păcuiul lui Soare[46]. Based on the presence of a port facility (landing dock), it has been considered that the fortress primarily served as a naval base for the Byzantine fleet and played a crucial role in controlling access along the Danube towards the capital of the Byzantine province at the edge of the empire. Additionally, its location at one of the crossing points over the river assigned it the function of a border fortress, acting as a **c**heckpoint and defence post for the area[47].

Based on numismatic evidence, it is assumed that a rectangular stone fortification, surrounded by an earth rampart and ditch, was also constructed at this time on a high ground along the right bank of the Danube (Dervent Hill), situated opposite the island of Păcuiul lui Soare[48].

Downstream from Păcuiul lui Soare and south of the modern city of Cernavodă, at Cochirleni (Rasova), lies the stone fortress of Cetatea Pătulului (not yet archaeologically investigated), with an approximately pentagonal shape. It is generally attributed to the Macedonian dynasty era and is presumed to have been built over an ancient *castrum*[49].

The same period is also attributed to the smaller enclosure at Cernavodă-Hinog, located not far north of Cetatea Pătulului. The polygonal-shaped fortress, with walls 2 m thick, built from irregularly hewn rough stone, was constructed south of the ancient city of *Axiopolis*, on a naturally protected plateau[50].

In the Byzantine defence system of the new frontier, Capidava was also integrated. Archaeological research has revealed terrain levelling activities, the construction of an enclosure made of stones bonded with earth, which largely followed

[45] BARNEA 2010b, p. 538.

[46] VÎLCEANU 1963; DIACONU, VÎLCEANU 1972, p. 47; BARASCHI 1991a, p. 138; DAMIAN 2020, p. 271–272; DAMIAN 2021, p. 111–115, fig. 3–11, p. 121–122, fig. 25–29. The radiocarbon dating supports the construction of the fortress in the last quarter of the 10th century. See, in this volume, DAMIAN *et alii*, *Again about the founding date of the fortress at Păcuiul lui Soare*.

[47] DIACONU, VÎLCEANU 1972, p. 23.

[48] MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2001, p. 37–39; MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2017a, p. 89; MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2018, second part, p. 103, 658, 744.

[49] SCHUCHHARDT 1918, p. 60; DIACONU 1973–1975, p. 203; FLORESCU 1986, p. 173; MADGEARU 2013, p. 35; DAMIAN 2015, p. 55.

[50] BARNEA 1960, p. 76; BARNEA, ȘTEFĂNESCU 1971, p. 80; MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2001, p. 40–42; ȘOVA 2023, p. 163.

the ancient walls' layout, and the presence inside the fortress of building foundations with a distinct military character[51].

Under the new Byzantine administration, actions were undertaken at *Dinogetia*-Garvăn, including clearing and repairing the ancient walls and towers, removing rubble, levelling the ground for future constructions, recovering building materials for reuse, rebuilding and reinforcing the main gate of the fortress – located on the southern side – with a tower, and constructing barracks for the garrisons[52].

Some repairs for reuse are also presumed to have been carried out at the ancient fortresses of *Arrubium*-Măcin, *Troesmis*-Turcoaia (western enclosure), and *Beroe*-Piatra Frecăței. However, this assessment is based on the discovery of material specific to the 10th–11th centuries inside and near the Roman-Byzantine enclosures, rather than on direct observable evidence[53].

Near the most important Danube crossing in northern Dobruja, it has been observed that the walls of the ancient fortress of *Noviodunum*-Isaccea were repaired for the purpose of reusing the enclosure and installing Byzantine military forces before 979. Archaeological investigations have revealed that the inner wall, built from stone bonded with mortar and brick, was constructed on a level containing early medieval ceramic material, being attributed to the era of John I Tzimiskes[54].

During the Macedonian dynasty, another fortification equipped with a port was built *a fundamentis* at *Proslavița*-Nufăru, near the mouth of the Danube, approximately 12 km downstream from the modern city of Tulcea, on the right bank of the southern branch of the Danube Delta, Sf. Gheorghe. In the last quarter of the 10th century, a polygonal irregularly shaped enclosure with towers was erected here, covering an area of approximately 6 hectares, with walls measuring 2.60–2.70 m thick and preserved up to 3 m in height, along with a port facility[55]. Recent investigations in the *extra muros* area have revealed the presence of a lime kiln, indicating a zone designated for the preparation of materials for the construction of the walls, located about 50 m east of the enclosure[56].

Based on the discovery of a silver *miliaresion* coin, issued by Emperor Basil II, it is estimated that a Byzantine garrison was present, and that the ancient fortress of Mahmudia (former Salsovia) was reused[57], located downstream from Nufăru, also on the Sf. Gheorghe branch.

The placement of the new fortifications equipped with port facilities on the

[51] FLORESCU 1965, p. 22; FLORESCU, COVACEF 1988–1989, p. 240–244; CURSARU-HERLEA 2016, p. 48; OPRIȘ, DUCA 2016, p. 142–144.

[52] ȘTEFAN *et alii* 1967, p. 20, 30–31; MADGEARU 2013, p. 105–106; DAMIAN 2015, p. 229, 230; STĂNICĂ 2015, p. 71; ȘOVA 2023, p. 162.

[53] BARNEA, ȘTEFĂNESCU 1971, p. 80; DAMIAN 2015, p. 229; STĂNICĂ 2015, p. 71.

[54] BARNEA, ȘTEFĂNESCU 1971, p. 76; MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2001, p. 56–57; MADGEARU 2013, p. 104–105; STĂNICĂ 2015, p. 71.

[55] BARASCHI 1991b, p. 403; MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2001, p. 60–61; DAMIAN *et alii* 2007–2008, p. 107–112; DAMIAN *et alii* 2012, p. 177–184; MADGEARU 2013, p. 102–103; STĂNICĂ 2015, p. 164; DAMIAN 2021, p. 115–120, fig. 12–24, p. 122–123, fig. 30–32.

[56] DAMIAN *et alii* 2023, p. 602–605.

[57] MADGEARU 2013 p. 101–102, where it is also stated that the presence of silver coins of the *miliaresion* type, issued by Emperor John I Tzimiskes, is considered evidence of the presence of Byzantine garrisons, as these coins were distributed as military pay.

most navigable branch of the delta at that time (*Proslavița*-Nufăru fortress), as well as near Dorostolon (Păcuiul lui Soare fortress), highlights the important role assigned to them in the structure of the Lower Danube frontier. Furthermore, the strengthening of the frontier, through both the repair of Roman fortifications and the construction of new ones, demonstrates the attention paid by the Byzantine Empire to the reconquered territory[58].

The small enclosure from Hârșova

As previously mentioned, the beginnings of the medieval phase of the fortress at Hârșova were influenced by the political context described above. After the reconquest of Dobruja, the Byzantines quickly recognized the danger posed by the nearby ford (**Fig. 2/1**), as well as the strategic importance of the rocky promontory. Although it may have been a complex of lesser importance compared to those where the port fortresses guarding the northern and southern entrances to Dobruja were built (Nufăru and Păcuiul lui Soare), judging by the size of the enclosures constructed *a fundamentis* during this period, it was still significant enough to include a port installation and, probably, to be responsible for the central part of the frontier segment between Dorostolon (Silistra) and *Proslavița* (Nufăru).

Situated in the Dobrujan territory north of the Carasu Valley[59], the fortress at Hârșova was initially incorporated into the large Theme Ioannoupolis and Dorostolon, and later, after reorganization, into the Theme Western Mesopotamia. It is likely that it was not among the territories reconquered by the Bulgarians in 986, remaining continuously under Byzantine administration. Like the entire Danubian-Pontic region, at the beginning of the 11th century, the fortress at Hârșova was integrated into the Theme of Dorostolon (Dristra) or the Theme Paradounavon.

The Byzantine enclosure at Hârșova (**Fig. 2/2**), also known as the "small enclosure" due to its significantly smaller surface area compared to the Roman and late medieval enclosures, or the "upper fortress" because of its dominant position in contrast to the walls in the lower port area, referred to as the "lower fortress", has a quadrilateral layout with sides measuring approximately 76 m on the east, 86 m on the west, and 80 m on the north[60]. Since the *intra muros* perimeter on the Danube-facing side was naturally protected by a very high and steep rock (**Fig. 3/1**)[61], the southern part of the small enclosure, about 90 m in length, appears to have remained open, on the rocky plateau as no traces of a wall have been recorded so far[62]. The enclosure features massive towers at the corners and along the sides, with the best-preserved section of the wall located on the northern side, where its thickness varies between 3.70 m and 4.40 m, and its preserved height reaches approximately 7 m (**Fig. 3/2** and

[58] PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2021, p. 25.

[59] The present Danube – Black Sea Canal.

[60] CIOBANU 1970, p. 25; PANAIT *et alii* 1995–1996, p. 124; DAMIAN 2015, p. 229; PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2016, p. 131; ȘOVA 2023, p. 165.

[61] We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Gheorghe Stănescu for permission to publish the two postcards in Fig. 3, from his personal collection.

[62] On this side, access appeared to be blocked in the lower area, from the port, by a thick wall of approximately 3 m, preserved in a poor state and observed between the western peak and the Romano-Byzantine wall, cf. NICOLAE *et alii* 2022, p. 156; NICOLAE *et alii* 2023, p. 139, pl. I.

4–6). The outer surface of the walls was built using large, shaped parallelepiped blocks, separated by rows of bricks, while the *emplecton* consists of rocks of varying sizes mixed with hard mortar, combined with charcoal and fragments of broken brick. The walls and towers were reinforced with wooden ties placed both longitudinally and transversely, whose imprints are still visible in elevation (**Fig. 6/2**). Near the northwestern corner of the enclosure, in the northern wall, the traces of a secondary gate, 1.5 m wide, are still preserved[63].

In the context of a restoration, conservation, and cultural-touristic development project for the "*Carsium*-Hârșova Fortress" site, a preventive archaeological investigation was conducted between June and November 2020 on the promontory on the right bank of the Danube[64], located at the southeastern edge of the town. One of the works proposed within the ongoing project consists of the restoration of the tower located on the northern side of the small enclosure, known as the "Commander's Tower". This led to some of the archaeological research objectives focusing on: stratigraphically identifying the construction phase of the tower and the small enclosure to ensure historically accurate restoration; and highlighting their structure and foundations to assess the conservation state of the elements that were not previously visible.

The 2020 investigations (**Fig. 7/1**) revealed that the enclosure built upon the return of the Byzantine administration to Dobruja, known as the "small enclosure", has its northern wall and tower constructed on the bedrock, on the southern side, facing the Danube. The bedrock was encountered at a depth of 3.98 m near the tower[65] (**Fig. 7/2**), while on the northern side the archaeological excavation was halted at a higher level, without revealing its presence. To construct the enclosure and the tower, the terrain was prepared through levelling, observed in some excavation units up to approximately 2 m above the rock, which also incorporated and covered the walls of a Roman building (**Fig. 8/1**). This levelling was also documented on the northern side of the tower, between it and the enclosure located to its north, which is preserved in a poor state. The levelling consists of well-compacted yellow-brown soil containing numerous Roman ceramic fragments (dating to the 4th–6th centuries), as well as a smaller quantity of early medieval ceramics, which are datable to the second half of the 10th century[66].

According to the stratigraphy of the investigated *intra muros* area, the construction of the northern wall and tower dates to the early medieval period, specifically the last decades of the 10th century. This aligns with the moment of Dobruja's reintegration into the borders of the Byzantine Empire. The data regarding the construction of the small enclosure, obtained during the preventive archaeological research,

[63] CIOBANU 1970, p. 25; BARNEA, ȘTEFĂNESCU 1971, p. 80; PANAIT *et alii* 1995–1996, p. 124; TALMAȚCHI 1998, p. 169; MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2017b, p. 528–529, 599, pl. III; ȘOVA 2023, p. 165.

[64] TALMAȚCHI *et alii* 2021, p. 416–422.

[65] The depth is specified from the current walking level near the tower. Relative to the upper part of the plinth, the rock is located at –2.70 m, and relative to the upper part of the foundation at –2.40 m. As a precaution, we provide these data as well since we do not know if the project will affect the existing situation on the ground at the time the recordings are made.

[66] TALMAȚCHI *et alii* 2021, p. 416; ȘOVA 2023, p. 166.

confirmed the assertions of researchers Andrei Aricescu and Mihai Bucovală, who, following an archaeological excavation conducted in the 1960s, stated that "from excavations as well as from surface research, the existence of three enclosure walls can be observed, of which the tallest preserved one, enclosing the smallest area, has its foundation in a level containing 10th-century material". They concluded that this structure was built "during the reign of Emperor John I Tzimiskes"[67]. From the information provided by them, it is not clear whether the levelling observed and recorded by us was noticed by them or if and where they arrived at it. What is significant, however, is that this levelling includes ceramic material from the 10th century, more precisely from its second half, indicating the chronological moment when the terrain was prepared for constructing the small enclosure, that is, after the return of the Byzantine administration to Dobruja, post–971[68].

Regarding the construction technique of the walls, the 2020 research recorded the presence of holes at the lower part of the foundation, indicating the placement of wooden elements (square-section beams arranged longitudinally and transversally, measuring 0.15 × 0.15 m), similar to those observed in elevation, which served to reinforce the structure. In some of the remaining beam holes, evidence of additional strengthening measures was preserved (**Fig 8/2a-c**), consisting of iron reinforcements (bars and nails) that penetrated the wooden beam while also being anchored at one end into the masonry[69]. Both the northern tower and the wall exhibit the same construction technique (**Fig. 6/2**) and were built during the same period. Additionally, it was observed that the "Commander's Tower" preserves, on the Danube side (south), several steps made of large stone slabs and below the current walking level (**Fig. 4**).

For the construction of the Byzantine enclosure, materials were sourced relatively nearby. Likely, as in the Roman period, by the late 10th century, quarries in the areas of "Celea Mică" (located 4 km southeast of Hârșova), "Celea Mare" (situated 1.5 km south of the "Celea Mică" quarry, where early medieval ceramic fragments have been discovered[70], and "Celea Lac", known for its high-quality limestone[71], were exploited. Reused materials from ancient constructions were also incorporated into the wall facing, including two pieces of an architrave, a column shaft fragment, and other architectural elements[72]. As mentioned earlier, the construction of the new enclosure required prior site preparation, likely leading to the destruction of some ancient habitation evidence.

Another proposed work within the project focuses on the port area, located on the southern side at the base of the promontory, between two rocky outcrops (**Fig. 3/1** and **9/1**). For this location, the objectives of the archaeological research aimed at highlighting the substructure of the medieval wall and identifying its course in the section where it is no longer preserved in elevation; as well as uncovering the possible port installation of the fortress.

In the eastern half of the area flanked by rocky outcrops, systematic

[67] ARICESCU 1971, p. 351, 356.
[68] PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2024, p. 242.
[69] TALMAȚCHI *et alii* 2021, p. 416; ȘOVA 2023, p. 167, fig. 3/2–4.
[70] MORINTZ, ŞERBĂNESCU 1974, p. 47.
[71] TALMAȚCHI 1998, p. 166–170.
[72] PANAIT *et alii* 1995–1996, p. 124.

archaeological investigations in 2012 revealed the imprints of 18 postholes, with diameters ranging "from 8–10 cm to 15–20 cm", considered possible evidence of the port installation "used at the end of antiquity and the beginning of the Middle Ages"[73]. At that time, the possibility that the postholes originated from a potential pier, operational in the 11th–12th centuries, was not ruled out, nor was the likelihood that over time, the existence of a mooring platform would be archaeologically documented, as expected for a fortification located at a key frontier point. Additionally, some artefacts found within the enclosure, which arrived through trade from distant areas of the Byzantine Empire and the northern Black Sea, supported this hypothesis[74].

This possibility was confirmed during the preventive archaeological investigations in 2020 when, following our recommendations and insistence, the investigated perimeter in the port area was extended westward, where a mooring platform was identified[75]. Its construction method is reminiscent of the port installations of the fortresses at Păcuiul lui Soare and Nufăru[76].

The port installation was uncovered at –1.70 m from the current walking level. Rectangular limestone blocks (of varying dimensions, ranging from 0.40 × 0.40 × 0.10 m to 0.60 × 0.60 × 0.10 m), carefully worked on all visible faces and bonded with mortar, form the appearance of a platform, descending southward, towards the Danube, in multiple steps (**Fig. 9/2**). The steps facing the river are clearly distinguishable and match the width of the stone blocks. Two subsequent systematic archaeological campaigns facilitated the uncovering of the mooring platform, revealing a width of 5–6 m and a length of 16–17 m (noting that, on the eastern side, it was partially dismantled in the modern era to reuse the stones for constructions). The construction method, stratigraphy, and materials found here indicate that the structure was arranged in the 10th century[77], probably at the same time as or shortly after the erection of the Byzantine enclosure.

The Byzantine-period habitation at Hârșova initially developed under the protection of the small enclosure, in the central part of the plateau. Its development determined the expansion of the settlement around the walls, to the west, north and east. Over time, the small fortress on the Danubian frontier established connections with similar outposts and distant centres, emerging as a local hub of interest, with merchants and craftsmen. These progressive transformations gave the settlement a semi-urban character, of course with the specific features of a settlement located on the edge of an empire, a level of development reached by more fortifications located on the right bank of the river.

Before focusing on the habitation from the 10th–11th centuries, it is important to mention that in the area we investigated within the Byzantine fortification (section

[73] NICOLAE *et alii* 2013, p. 65–66.

[74] PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2011, p. 102–115; PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI, TALMAȚCHI 2013, p. 334, 338–339; PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2024, p. 253.

[75] TALMAȚCHI *et alii* 2021, p. 418.

[76] DIACONU, VÎLCEANU 1972, p. 38–40; DAMIAN *et alii* 2007–2008, p. 110; DAMIAN 2021, p. 121–123.

[77] TALMAȚCHI *et alii* 2021, p. 418; NICOLAE *et alii* 2022, p. 156; NICOLAE *et alii* 2023, p. 139.

SIA[78] and slightly on the eastern part of section SI), beneath the 18th-century occupation level, there is a habitation level dating from the first half of the 11th century. The absence of intermediate layers, characteristic of the chronological interval starting somewhere around the mid-11th century and extending until the 17th century[79], can be explained by possible land clearing actions carried out in preparation for new constructions, which followed unfavourable periods or were initiated by new administrations. A similar situation was previously presented in the context of the construction of the Byzantine enclosure.

Overall, within the small enclosure, both surface-built dwellings and deepened dwellings were recorded[80] (**Fig. 10**). The first type had stone foundations bound with earth, supporting a wooden upper structure that held the woven wattle walls, coated with yellow clay plaster, and a reed roof. The use of wood was evidenced by the presence of postholes (placed in the middle of the sides or at the corners) or by traces of burned beams. The surface dwellings investigated so far were single-room structures, with floors made of compacted yellow clay. In one of them, the entrance was marked on the western side by a worn stone slab. The hearth was positioned in the northeastern corner of the room or in the central-southern area, slightly toward the southwestern corner. For example, in Complex 1/2008, the hearth consisted of a structure made of reused Roman paving slabs, covered with a layer of fired clay, along with a remaining wall section built of stones and clay. In Complex 1/2010, the oven had an oval shape, with walls built of stone and fragmented bricks, over which a layer of yellow clay was applied. The oven mouth and the upper part of the walls, which sloped inward and had a rounded edge, were made of clay. The oven, measuring approximately 0.30 m in height and with an interior surface of 1.04 × 1.20 m, displayed two phases of use. In the secondary phase, it underwent a repair and an extension at the entrance. In the earlier phase, the hearth was built over a layer of small and medium-sized gravel, broken brick, and ceramic fragments, the latter sometimes arranged in two rows in height. In the later phase, the hearth was built over a layer of ceramics, small gravel, and yellow earth. Altogether, the hearth reached a thickness of 12.5 cm.

The deepened dwellings, located near the enclosure wall within the compacted yellow-brown earth levelling (mentioned above), had simple walls or were lined with stone and wood. Their upper structure was built in a manner relatively similar to the surface dwellings, as evidenced by the presence of postholes. These dwellings

[78] Section SIA, measuring 14 × 5 m, extends westward from the main section SI (oriented north-south, initiated by A. Aricescu and later continued by P. I. Panait and C. Nicolae). It is bordered to the north by the small enclosure and to the south by a medieval-period wall built after the 11th century. SIA holds particular importance in the research of the fortress at Hârșova, as it is located within the small enclosure in an area where the archaeological deposit reaches a height of 3.98 m. By comparison, in the southern part of the main section SI, towards the Danube, the rock appears at a depth of 0.40 m below the current walking level. See PANAIT *et alii* 1995–1996, p. 127.

[79] The continuity of habitation, in more or less developed forms, is evidenced by artefacts found within the fill of Ottoman-period pits or discovered in *extra muros* areas alongside waste evacuated from the fortress, but most importantly, by written sources.

[80] PANAIT *et alii* 1994, p. 31; PANAIT *et alii* 1995, p. 42; TALMAȚCHI 2009, p. 118; TALMAȚCHI 2011, p. 46; PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2016, p. 135; PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2024, p. 245, 248–249, fig. 3/2, fig. 5/1–4.

consisted of a single room, with a floor made of compacted yellow clay. Inside, they contained heating installations, consisting of ovens and open hearths. The ovens were built entirely of medium and large irregular stones, sometimes bound with earth, and were positioned in the southwestern or southeastern corner. In one particular case, in Complex 9/2020, the eastern and southern walls of the oven were formed by the intersection of two walls from a Roman building, which were then completed with a northern wall and an upper section. This oven was set deeper than the floor level of the dwelling, and access to it was provided by a sloping passage located on the southern side of the room (**Fig. 11/1**), descending alongside the Roman wall. Another stone-built oven, from Complex 2/2020, showed repairs to the hearth, with three successive layers visible in cross-section, and a slight shift towards the west. The middle hearth layer (second phase) was constructed from small stones, brick fragments, a few early medieval ceramic fragments with incised decoration, and three Roman ceramic fragments, over which a layer of yellow earth, now fired, was applied.

The open hearths, positioned in the western part of the room, either centrally or towards the southwestern corner, but at a certain distance from the walls, had a roughly circular shape and were delimited by stones (**Fig. 11/2**). In a single case, in Complex 3/2020, the open hearth had a rectangular shape and was elevated above the floor level. It was constructed as a feature made of small stones, brick fragments, and rare ceramic shards (mostly early medieval), over which a layer of clay was applied. The edges were made of stones bound with yellow earth. Both the interior part and the edges were raised above the floor level, by 0.12–0.14 m in the inner area, while the total height reached 0.22 m, giving it the appearance of a tray.

Among the dwellings we researched in SIA, we will highlight three in particular, each of which can serve as a chronological landmark in the stratigraphic analysis of the investigated perimeter and contribute to the reconstruction of habitation from the Early Middle Ages.

In section SIA, which we began investigating in 2007[81], the first dwelling from the analysed period that emerged beneath the Ottoman layer was Complex 1/2008[82]. This structure was built at the medieval occupation level and became visible at a depth of 1.60 m[83], which is 0.20 m below the Ottoman layer. It was partially excavated, as its eastern section extended into section SI, which had been explored approximately 15 years earlier by Panait I. Panait and Aristide Ștefănescu. The preserved surface of the dwelling, delimited by a row of stones and postholes, measured 3.50 × 2.70 m. On the northern side, near the row of stones, and on the western side (where we assume the entrance was marked by a worn stone slab) as well as towards the southwestern corner, traces of burned beams from the upper structure of the dwelling were found, the longest beam measuring 1.74 m in length and having a thickness of 0.10–0.12 m. The yellow clay floor was cut in the northwestern corner by a pit from the Ottoman period. On the northeastern side, the fire installation, which has already been described above, was preserved.

The inventory of the dwelling was quite rich, including numerous ceramic

[81] TALMAȚCHI 2008, p. 151.

[82] TALMAȚCHI 2009, p. 118; PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2024, p. 245–248, fig. 3/2.

[83] This means approximately 0.25 m above the upper level of the plinth of the small enclosure wall.

fragments, a millstone, a truncated clay weight, spindle whorls made of bone and clay, and a Byzantine coin from the reign of Emperor Romanos III Argyros (1028–1034), Class B[84]. Noteworthy among the ceramics are vessels with micaceous engobe (golden) and olive glaze, spheroidal and piriform amphorae with collar, and vessels decorated with impressions made by a toothed wheel on the outer surface. Based on its inventory, Complex 1/2008 can be dated to the second quarter of the 11th century, representing, as mentioned above, the first dwelling identified beneath the Ottoman level.

At the southern limit of the SIA section, Complex 1/2020 was investigated, a deepened dwelling excavated in an early medieval level, above which is the wall that marking the southern boundary of the section (**Fig. 11/2**), contributing to its temporal framing. In relation to the walking level above the wall, the dwelling was identified at a depth of 0.90 m, with its floor at 1.38 m. Between its fill layer and the lower part of the wall, a 0.16–0.18 m thick layer was observed, consisting of loose, light brown-grey, containing bones, pieces of bricks, rare early medieval ceramic fragments, and a few Roman ones, which leads us to consider that it belongs to the Early Middle Ages. The excavated surface of the dwelling measured 3 × 1.58 m, extending under the profile towards the south, beneath a medieval wall built in a rudimentary technique, likely during the Ottoman period. The floor was brown-grey, made of compacted clay, with a thickness of 2.5–3 cm. Five postholes were recorded, some reinforced with stone or brick, placed towards the edges of the room (**Fig. 10/Cpl. 1**). The open hearth had an approximately circular shape, surrounded by stones, which were coated on the interior lower part with a clay layer up to 0.10 m in height.

The inventory of the dwelling includes early medieval ceramics, a fragmentary brick weight for a fishing net, a whetstone for sharpening metal objects, a bone awl, and faunal remains, among which burnt bones were identified.

Important in the analysed context is Complex 12/2020, a deepened dwelling excavated along the foundation of the enclosure wall, immediately east of the "Commander's Tower" (**Fig. 10/Cpl. 12**). From the current walking level, this feature was identified at a depth of 2.60 m, with its floor at 3.04–3.08 m[85]. It was dug into the compact levelling layer, which, as previously mentioned, was observed in some excavation units up to a height of approximately 2 m above the bedrock. Beneath the floor of the dwelling, which was 3–5 cm thick and made of compacted yellow-grey clay, the levelling layer was maintained, measuring approximately 0.90 m down to the bedrock. A simple calculation shows that Complex 12/2020 was excavated approximately 1.10 m into this layer. At the time of investigation, the fill layer of the dwelling was preserved to a height slightly exceeding 0.40 m, with its upper portion completely destroyed when Complex 3/2020 was arranged.

The excavated area of Complex 12/2020 measured 2.40 × 3.20 m, extending partially under the western profile. Near this profile, partially beneath it, there was a circular open hearth (visible over an area of 0.35 × 0.85 m), next to which, towards the south, lay two fragments of a grinding stone. In areas where the floor was not disturbed by the bottom of an Ottoman-period household pit (Pit 2/2009), the floor

[84] PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2011, p. 103–107.

[85] Relative to the upper part of the plinth of the wall, Complex 12/2020 was outlined at a depth of 1.32 m and has its floor at 1.76–1.80 m.

adhered to the foundation of the wall, rising slightly onto it. The layer of ash preserved on the floor, as well as nine parallel wooden traces[86], charred and found in the western part of the room, arranged perpendicular to the foundation of the wall, indicate that the dwelling was destroyed in a fire. From the ash layer, near the hearth and grinding stones, early medieval ceramic fragments and a circular stone with polished surfaces were recovered. Among the pottery fragments, there was the shoulder of a pot with an attached tubular handle and a rim with interior grooving. In Dobruja, these characteristics are found on pots from the last decades of the 10th century and the early decades of the 11th century[87], with these ceramic fragments providing a chronological indicator for dating the dwelling.

Beneath the floor of the dwelling, down to the bedrock, between the compacted levelling layer and the foundation of the wall, there was a space measuring 0.23–0.36 m in width, filled with compact brown soil. This fill contained a few Roman ceramic fragments and sporadic early medieval ones, and exhibited a slight slope toward the foundation. This space was destroyed in its upper part due to anthropic activities, but it remained well-defined and preserved beneath the floor of Complex 12/2020. The composition of the fill suggests that the space was filled simultaneously with the construction of the enclosure, for which a foundation trench was dug into the yellow-brown levelling layer, wider than the actual thickness of the future foundation. This may have been intentional, possibly to maintain full control over the outer surface of the structure and to facilitate successive elevation stages, allowing for the application of a protective plaster layer over the foundation, with yellow clay still preserved in some areas. Likely, after the plaster and clay dried, the space was filled to ensure stability, protection, and long-term durability. The later construction of the deepened dwelling did not interfere with this process, as its restricted surface area did not expose the foundation along its entire depth and was protected in its upper part.

For the chronological classification of the early medieval occupation levels preserved within the perimeter of section SIA, we have several reference points, as follows. The upper level, the first one beneath the Ottoman-period level, belongs to the first half of the 11th century. This classification is supported by the inventory of Complex 1/2008, which represents the first dwelling identified beneath the Ottoman level and can be dated to the second quarter of the 11th century. This has in its inventory a coin issued during the reign of Emperor Romanos III Argyros (1028–1034). Moreover, within the approximately 0.35 m-thick layer located between 0.25 m above the plinth (corresponding to the contour level of Complex 1/2008) and 0.10 m below its upper limit, four other coins were found, as follows: 2 anonymous *folleis* of class A2-A3 (A2 according to Ivaniševic, dated to 1010/1015–1020/1025, or A3 according to Metcalf, placed between 1015/1020 and ca. 1030), issues from the reigns of Basil II and Constantine VIII; 1 anonymous *follis* of class C, put into circulation during the reign of Emperor Michael IV (1034–1041); 1 anonymous *follis* of class D, issued during the reign of Emperor Constantine IX (1042–1055)[88].

[86] The area covered by these was 0.65 m in width and a maximum of 0.85 m in length. The width of the wooden elements varied between 4 cm and 5.5 cm.

[87] ȘTEFAN *et alii* 1967, p. 154–157, fig. 93/5, fig. 94/16.

[88] METCALF 1979, p. 55–60; IVANIŠEVIC 1989, p. 36–39; MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2017b, p. 521.

At approximately 0.60 m below the identification level of Complex 1/2008, Complex 1/2010 was discovered[89]. This complex was in use around the years 1010/1015 to ca. 1030 (or shortly after), and among its inventory is an anonymous *follis* of class A2-A3, variant 24[90], found embedded in the clay of the floor. Additionally, the finds include: a fragmentary iron knife, discovered in the fill of the oven; two 5th-century Roman coins, one of which was embedded in the clay of the oven wall; numerous ceramic fragments. From the fragments found within the layers on which the oven hearths were built, presented above, several vessels have been reconstructed. These were wheel-made at a slow speed, using common and kaolinitic clay, and were oxidation-fired. Their decorations include incised horizontal and wavy lines, as well as indentations made with a toothed wheel (**Fig. 12/1–2**).

According to the vertical stratigraphic analysis, this surface dwelling was identified approximately 0.15 m below the upper level of the foundation of the enclosure wall.

Unlike the previous two dwellings, Complex 12/2020 belongs to the early phase of habitation within the enclosure, with a key reference point being the ceramic material found in the ash layer on the floor. Although the quantity of ceramics was lower compared to Complex 1/2010, notable differences can still be observed between them, both in terms of composition (paste, decoration) and specific characteristics (tubular handle), which indicate an earlier phase. The stratigraphic position, including its overlap by Complex 3/2020, its excavation into the stable levelling layer, despite its proximity to the enclosure and the use of the foundation as the northern limit of the room, as well as the ceramic inventory, suggest that it functioned before Complex 1/2010, meaning before the years 1010–1015, thus beginning in the last decades of the 10th century. Its placement near the enclosure wall, but still far enough not to obstruct access to the tower, may have been due to its perception as a defensive feature in case of an attack or to the horizontal distribution of dwellings within the protected area.

A retrospective of the presented findings indicates that the early medieval habitation levels preserved within the *intra muros* area under investigation span from the last decades of the 10th to the mid–11th century. However, the discovery of sporadic monetary pieces[91] in the *extra muros* area, in other sections, or across the territory of the modern city, and a burned dwelling that preserved on its floor a hand-made pot without handles, presumed to belong to the final habitation level, suggests that habitation within and around the fortress persisted until the late 11th century. The latest coin found during archaeological research was an anonymous *follis* from Class I, issued during the reign of Emperor Nikephoros III (1078–1081)[92].

Based on the monetary discoveries, numerically reduced, the idea of a decline in habitation and a reduction in the importance of the centre on the Danubian limes

[89] PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2024, p. 248–249, fig. 5–6.

[90] METCALF 1979, p. 55–60; IVANIŠEVIC 1989, p. 36–39; MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2017b, p. 554–555.

[91] MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2017b, p. 539–540.

[92] PAPASIMA *et alii* 1997, p. 25; PAPASIMA, NICOLAE, TALMAȚCHI 1998, p. 27–28; MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2017b, p. 532.

during the second half of the 11th century[93] has been proposed. However, considering the situation recorded in SIA, where beneath the 18th-century level, a habitation level from the first half of the 11th century was identified (despite evidence of continuous habitation indicated by sporadic artefacts and monetary pieces, but especially supported by written sources[94]), we tend to believe that this "decline" was less influenced by historical factors and appears more pronounced due to the destruction of habitation levels from the second half of the century through land-clearing actions, up to a little above the base of the wall (approximately 0.30–0.50 m). In this case, the two dwellings found in the upper part of the early medieval habitation levels (Complex 1/2008 and Complex 1/2010) provide a chronological marker for the preservation of layers, not a real one regarding the end of early medieval habitation. Otherwise, this evolving break, spanning several centuries, stratigraphically recorded in the area on the plateau with the highest deposition, is difficult to argue.

Evidence of habitation from the Early Middle Ages has been recorded within the fortified area in sections SI and SII[95], as well as around the Byzantine enclosure, at the base of the promontory to the west and east, and in front of the walls to the northwest. On the western side, approximately 110 m from the enclosure, archaeological research has revealed several dwellings, including one with stone-lined walls and a horseshoe-shaped oven built from stones, along with several waste pits, attributed to the 10th–11th centuries[96]. Also on the western side, midway down the slope leading to the modern city's port, numerous early medieval ceramic fragments were uncovered during the investigation of some enclosures. However, these were found in secondary positions, having been deposited as a result of clearing activities within the fortress[97].

On the eastern side, approximately 50 m from the small enclosure, habitation dated to the 11th century and possible the beginning of the 12th century has been documented, consisting of dwellings with stone-built ovens and storage pits[98]. A craftsmen's quarter had also formed in this area, where a workshop for producing and repairing metal objects was identified. Based on its inventory, it appears to have been operational as early as the last quarter of the 10th century, though it may have continued into the early 11th century, likely contemporary with the construction of the small enclosure[99]. Additionally, two kilns for firing ceramics, dated to the second half of the 11th century[100], were discovered. Both the workshop and kilns were built into a massive deposit of redeposited soil, which had been accumulated by the fortress's inhabitants after clearing construction debris from within the enclosure. In

[93] MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2017b, p. 539–540.

[94] CIOBANU 1970; PANAIT *et alii* 1995–1996; PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI, TALMAȚCHI 1999; TALMAȚCHI, PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 1999; MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2017b, p. 540–541.

[95] PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2009, p. 426.

[96] DAMIAN *et alii* 1994, p. 31; DAMIAN *et alii* 1995, p. 41; DAMIAN, DAMIAN 1997, p. 234; DAMIAN *et alii* 1997, p. 26.

[97] COVACEF, NICOLAE, DUMITRU 2005, p. 170–171; COVACEF, NICOLAE 2007, p. 178–180.

[98] PANAIT *et alii* 1995–1996, p. 129.

[99] ȘOVA 2021, p. 61–62.

[100] PANAIT *et alii* 1995–1996, p. 129–133; PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2009, p. 429–433.

one of the layers cut by one of the ceramic kilns, an anonymous *follis* of Class E was found, issued during the first part of Emperor Constantine X's reign, specifically between 1059 and 1062/1063[101].

On the northwestern side, approximately 35 m from the wall of the Byzantine enclosure, a stratigraphic test trench partially investigated a dwelling attributed to the 11th century, based on its inventory, which includes two jugs[102].

In the inventory of early medieval dwellings and in the stratigraphic layer, the majority of the collected material is ceramic (**Fig. 12–14**), predominantly household vessels made on the slow and fast wheel, from common clay and kaolinitic clay, mostly oxidant-fired. The ceramics made from common clay paste are represented by the pot without handles, in various sizes, the pot with handles, the truncated-conical bowl with a thickened base, the bowl with a slightly profiled shoulder and straight neck, the lamp, and the cauldron. Vessels made from kaolinitic clay are well represented in discoveries and include the pot without handles, the pot with handles, bowls, and lamps. Very rarely, fragments of vessels decorated with red paint appear (a few fragments). A notable feature is the significant quantity of vessels decorated with impressions made with a toothed wheel (**Fig. 12/1–2** and **14/1–11, 14**), leading to the observation that Hârșova represents the southernmost centre of this period, where such discoveries hold a significant percentage. Alongside common ceramics, a smaller proportion of vessels were made mostly on the fast wheel, from a purified clay paste, fired oxidant or reductant. These typically have their outer surface covered with an olive glaze (sometimes featuring incised or applied decoration) (**Fig. 12/14–15**) or with micaceous engobe. Typologically, these include jugs of medium and small sizes, mugs, and cups, found in fragmentary condition. Amphoric material is also well represented, generally in fragmentary form, consisting of spheroidal and piriform amphorae with a collar[103].

The register of discoveries can be further supplemented with other ceramic objects (a glazed clay egg – **Fig. 15/1**, spindle whorls, fishing net weights), bronze items (small crosses, buckles, belt appliques and that were sewn onto fabrics – **Fig. 15/11–15**, rings, earrings, fishing hooks), bone and antler artefacts (handles for battle whips – **Fig. 15/10**, dagger hilts, simple or marked astragali with perforations, spindle whorls, awls), glass objects (bracelets – **Fig. 15/6–9**), stone artefacts (spindle whorls made of jasper – **Fig. 15/2–5**, millstones, whetstones for sharpening metals), iron objects (arrowheads, knives, nails), and coins[104]. All these finds provide insights into daily activities, the beliefs of the inhabitants, the fashion of the period, and evidence of trade exchange and the distribution area of certain product categories.

[101] PANAIT *et alii* 1995–1996, p. 133; MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2017b, p. 526.

[102] PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2017, p. 272–273, fig. 1/1.

[103] PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2011, p. 103–107; PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2017, p. 271–278.

[104] PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2011, p. 107; PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2016, p. 135–136, pl. V; MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2017b, p. 533–538; PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI 2024, p. 249–253.

Conclusions

The investigation of the small enclosure on the promontory of Hârșova has revealed that, near the Danube crossing point from the Wallachian Plain to Dobruja, serving as a gateway into the territories conquered in 971, the Byzantine Empire did not opt to repair the Roman fortress. Instead, it chose to undertake large-scale construction work, preceded by clearing and preparing the terrain. The construction *a fundamentis* of an enclosure, even if of smaller dimensions, along with the building of a landing stage, places this new fortification and its assigned territory among the strategically important objectives and zones of the empire. This demonstrates the significant role attributed to this border fortress, both from a military and an economic perspective.

Like most fortifications on the right bank of the Danube, the settlement gradually developed, acquiring a semi-urban character, while also facilitating the growth of craftsmanship and an active commercial life. The organization of a space dedicated to certain occupations emerges as a result of this evolution, highlighting the presence of specialized artisans. These craftsmen served the local market but could also meet the needs of inhabitants in the surrounding settlements, turning the small fortress into a centre of interest during that period. At the same time, trade played a key role in the economic activity carried out here, as evidenced by the discovery of products originating from workshops in the northern Black Sea region (a glazed clay egg, jasper spindle whorls) or from centres near Constantinople and the Balkan Peninsula (amphorae, micaceous engobe pottery, bronze objects, glass bracelets), as well as Byzantine coins from the 10th–11th centuries.

From the moment of its construction and throughout the period under study, the existence of the small fortress was dictated and shaped by its integration into the chain of fortifications protecting the Byzantine frontier along the Danube. It experienced periods of peace alternating with conflicts, benefiting from craftsmanship development and inclusion in both river and land trade routes, all within the dynamic reality of a fortress situated on the edge of an empire.

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Fig. 1. Fortifications located along the Byzantine frontier at the Danube where actions of clearing, repairing, and construction were recorded after 971: 1 – *Dorostolon*-Silistra (capital of the Theme Paradounavon); 2 – Păcuiul lui Soare; 3 – Dervent; 4 – Rasova; 5 – Cetatea Pătulului; 6 – *Axiopolis*-Cernavodă-Hinog; 7 – Capidava; 8 – *Carsium*-Hârșova; 9 – *Beroe*-Piatra Frecăței; 10 – *Troesmis*-Turcoaia; 11 – *Arrubium*-Măcin; 12 – *Dinogetia*-Garvăn; 13 – *Noviodunum*-Isaccea; 14 – *Proslaviţa*-Nufăru; 15 – *Salsovia*-Mahmudia. In red: enclosures raised *a fundamentis* that were equipped with port installations.

1

2

Fig. 2. 1 – Google Earth image of the Hârșova area marked with the fortress and the ford over the Danube (Giurgeni-Vadu Oii); 2 – Aerial image of Hârșova fortress marked with the small enclosure and harbour area (photo M. Stoian).

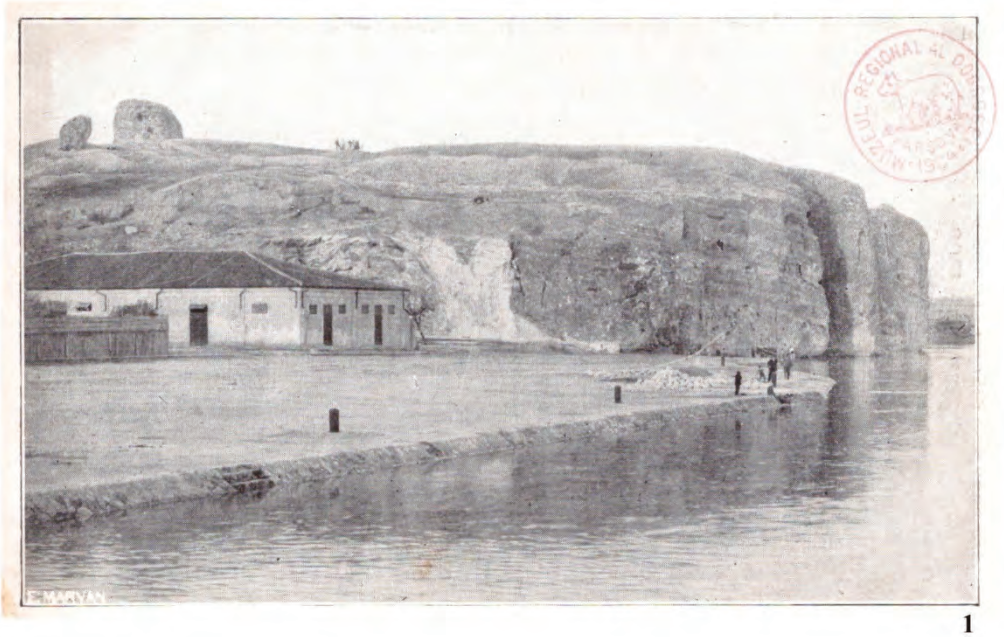

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Fig. 3. 1 – Hârșova, the rock with the Danube at its base, and the ruins of the fortress seen from the modern port (1908); 2 – "Commander's Tower" and ruins of the fortress on the rocky promontory (1913) (postcards from the collection of Dr. Eng. Gheorghe Stănescu).

Fig. 4. Aerial image of the southern part of the northern side of the small enclosure and the "Commander's Tower".

Fig. 5. Aerial image of the southern part of the northern side of the small enclosure and the "Commander's Tower", seen from the southeast.

Fig. 6. 1 – Aerial image of the northern part of the northern side of the small precinct and the "Commander's Tower"; 2 – Detail of the small precinct and the "Commander's Tower" where the same construction technique can be observed, indicating that they were built during the same period.

Fig. 7. 1 – Aerial view of the investigated perimeters to the south (SI, SIA, SIB) and north (S1N, S2N, S3N) of the northern side of the small (Byzantine) enclosure, in 2020; 2 – The foundation of the tower on the north side of the small precinct on the rock.

Fig. 8. 1 – Aerial image of the rock on which the northern side of the small precinct was built (from SIA), showing also the wall of the Roman building embedded in the foundation of the wall erected after 971; 2 – Detail of the Byzantine precinct foundation with the holes for the wooden beams marked in yellow and the iron reinforcements inside them (2 a-c), which served to strengthen the structure.

1

2

Fig. 9. 1 – The harbour area of the Hârșova fortress; 2 – The wharf.

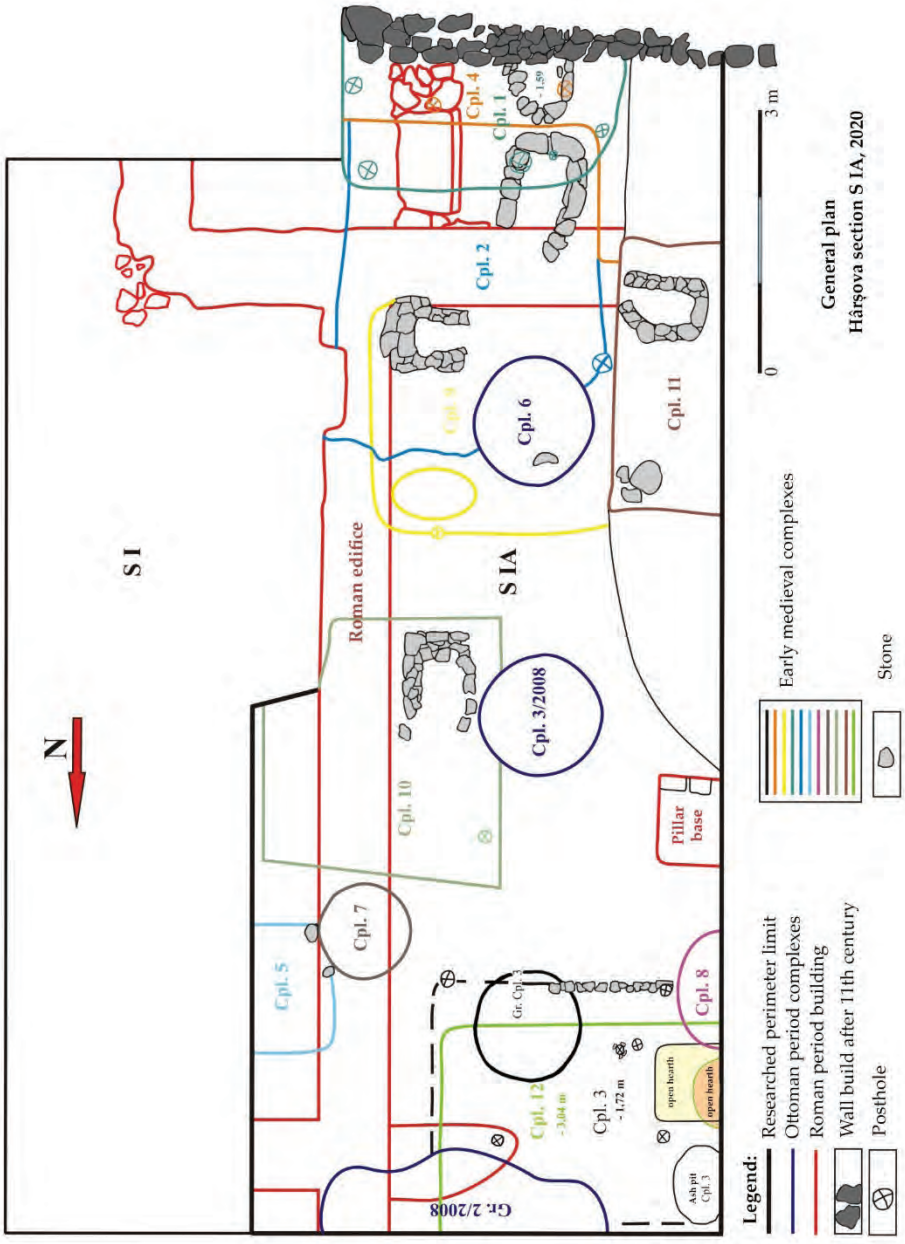

Fig. 10. Plan of section SIA (*intra muros*), with the majority of the complexes discovered in 2020.

Fig. 11. 1 – Ovens built of stones from Complexes 2/2020 and 9/2020, from SIA; 2 – The northern part of Complex 1/2020, an early medieval sunken dwelling above which lies the wall that marks the southern boundary of section SIA.

Fig. 12. Ceramics discovered in the Byzantine enclosure at Hârșova: pots without handles (1–2, 5), pots with handles (4, 9–10), lamps (3), bowls (6–8), glazed jugs (14–15), cauldrons (16–18) and potter's marks (11–13).

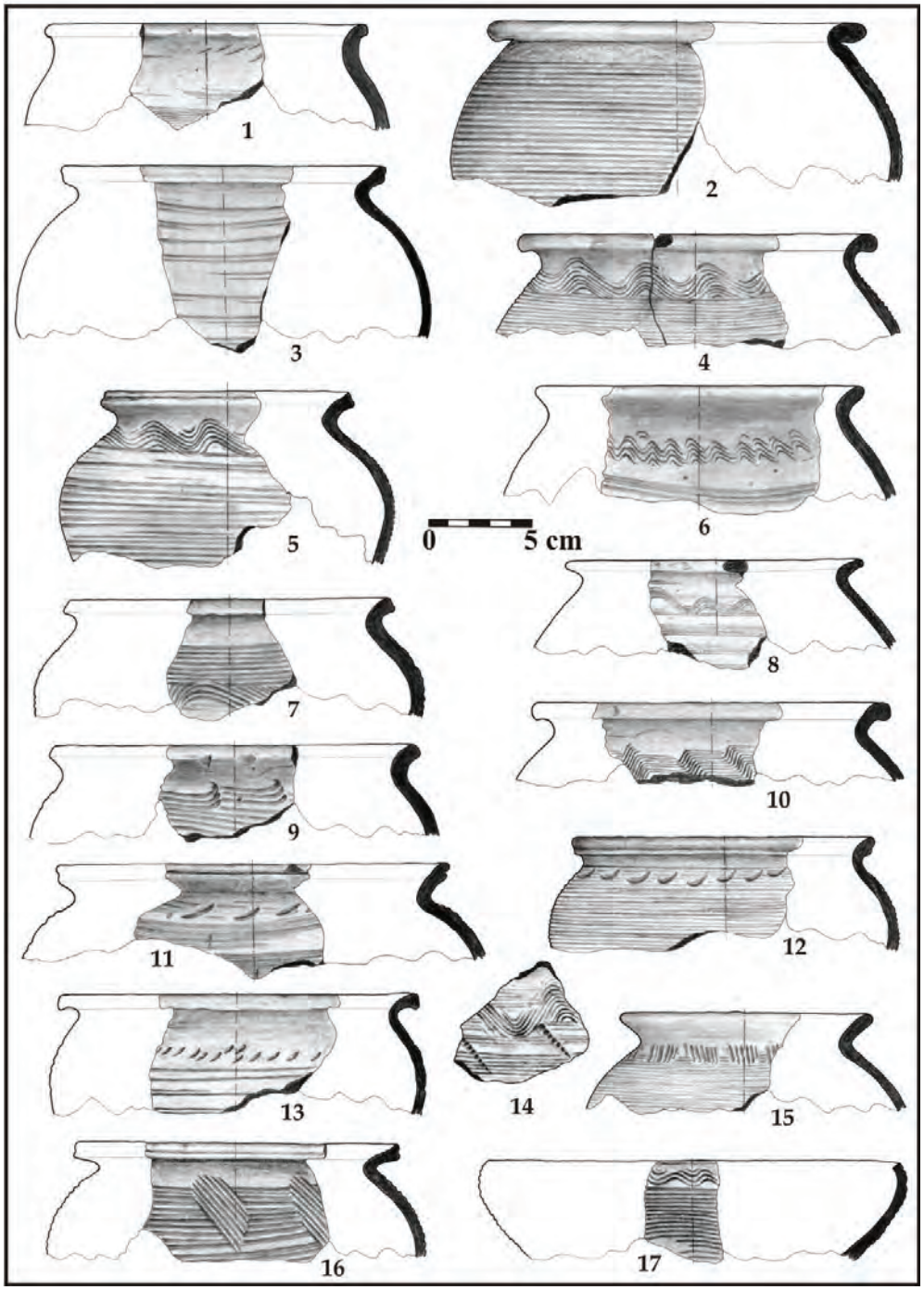

Fig. 13. Ceramics discovered in the Byzantine enclosure at Hârșova: pots without handles (1–16) and bowl (17).

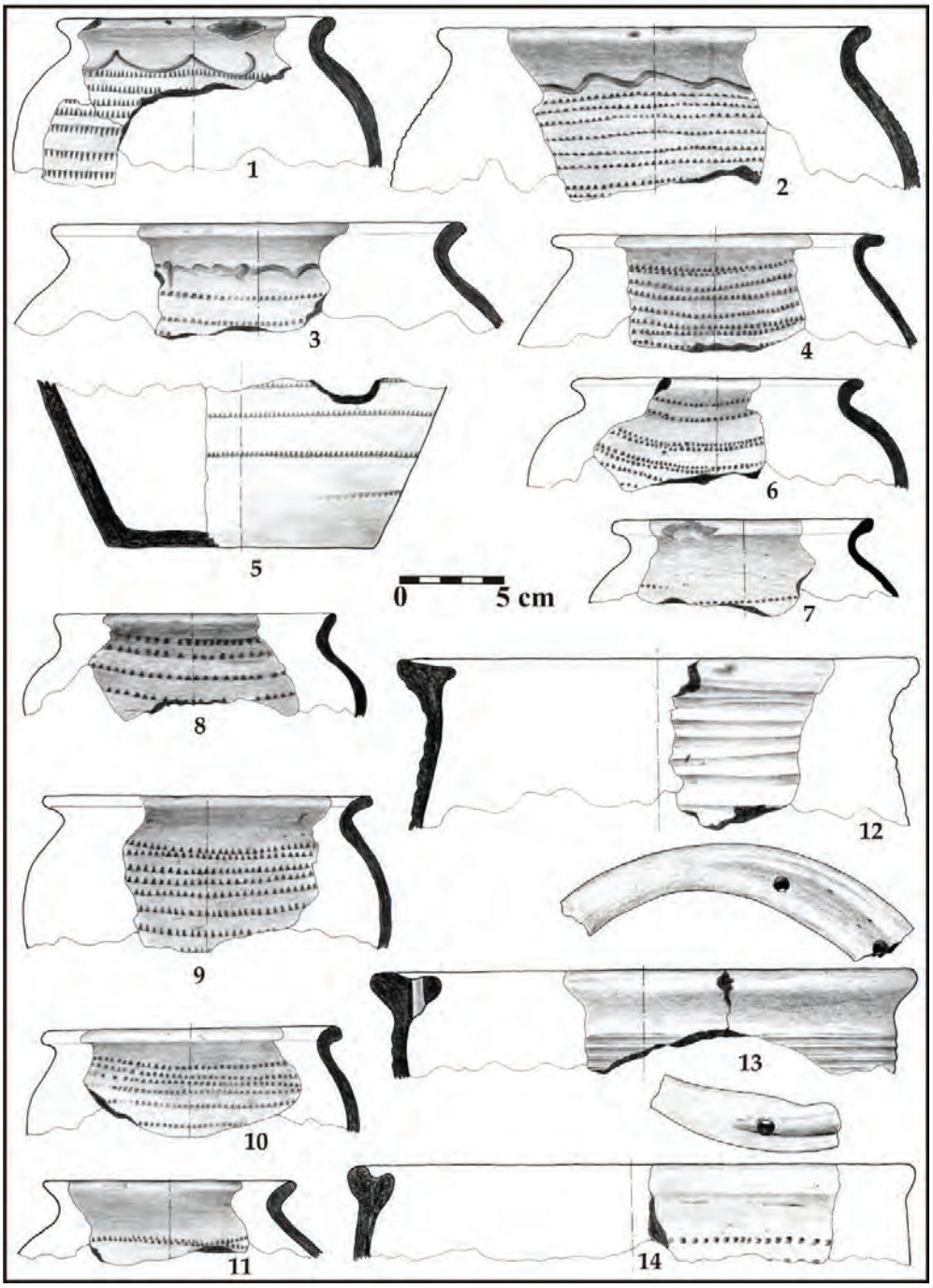

Fig. 14. Ceramics discovered in the Byzantine enclosure at Hârșova: pots without handles (1–11) and cauldrons (12–14).

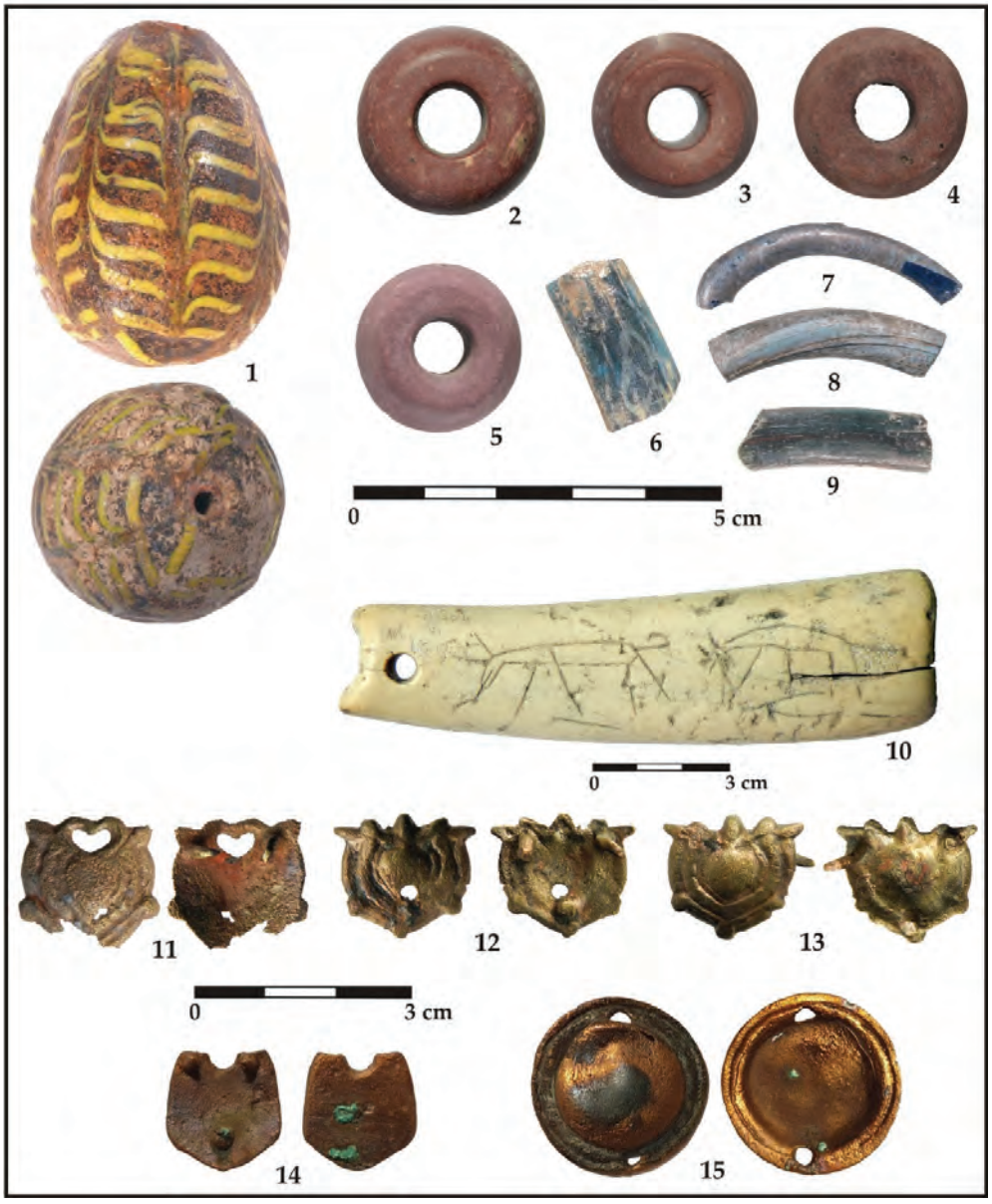

Fig. 15. Artefacts discovered in the Byzantine enclosure at Hârșova: glazed clay egg (1), spindle whorls made of jasper (2–5), glass bracelets (6–9), handle for battle whip (10), belt appliques (11–14) and that were sewn onto fabrics (15).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF LATE NOMADS DURING THE 11TH CENTURY IN THE REGION OF VARNA (BULGARIA)

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Keywords: *Pechenegs, fortress, Kastritsi, Petrich Kale, northeastern Bulgaria*.
Cuvinte-cheie: *pecenegi, fortărețe, Kastritsi, Petrich Kale, nord-estul Bulgariei*.

Abstract: *This article focuses on the traces of Late nomads' presence in two fortresses close to Varna: Kastritsi on the seashore, in the current government residence Evksinograd, and Petrich Kale, located at the end of the Avren plateau, near modern Devnya, the former Roman town Marcianopolis. The analysis includes specific finds that are indicative of the presence of a foreign population, interpreted in Bulgarian archaeology as Pecheneg. Their archaeological context outlines the diversity of relations between the local population and newly arrived nomads, which is not always restricted to conflicts and antagonism. The generally accepted idea of widespread devastation and subsequent settlement of the Pechenegs applies only to Varna. The tribes coming from the north show no interest in the abandoned Kastritsi fortress and probably stay here for a short time. The situation is more complicated at the fortress Petrich Kale, where the peaceful coexistence of the new population with the local inhabitants leads to the development of a mixed culture, which intertwines Bulgarian, Nomadic and Byzantine elements*.

Rezumat: *Acest articol se concentrează pe urmele prezenței nomazilor târzii în două fortărețe din apropierea orașului Varna: Kastritsi, aflată pe țărmul mării, în actuala reședință guvernamentală Evksinograd, și Petrich Kale, situată la capătul platoului Avren, lângă Devnya modernă, fostul oraș roman Marcianopolis. Analiza include descoperiri specifice care indică prezența unei populații străine, interpretată în arheologia bulgară ca fiind pecenegă. Contextul arheologic al acestor descoperiri conturează diversitatea relațiilor dintre populația locală și noii veniți, nomazi, relații care nu se limitează întotdeauna la conflicte și antagonism. Ideea general acceptată, a devastării pe scară largă și a stabilirii ulterioare a pecenegilor, se aplică doar în cazul Varnei. Triburile venite din nord nu arată interes pentru fortăreața abandonată Kastritsi și, probabil, rămân aici pentru o perioadă scurtă de timp. Situația este mai complicată la fortăreața Petrich Kale, unde coexistenta pașnică a noii populații cu aceea locală duce la dezvoltarea unei culturi mixte, care îmbină elemente bulgare, nomade și bizantine*.

The attempts to follow the traces of foreign ethnicities in local culture based on archaeological finds always involve the risk of inaccurate or even manipulative

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interpretation. This applies even more largely to nomadic tribes who resided for a relatively short historical period on the territory of present-day northeastern Bulgaria and left a small number of artefacts of disputable identification. However, with the information already known from a number of settlements with proven Pecheneg occupation in the 11th century, it is possible to distinguish a specific group of finds that provide evidence for the occasional presence or more durable habitation of late nomads in the Varna area. This article will focus on the traces of their residence in two fortresses close to Varna – Kastritsi on the seashore, in the current government residence Euksinograd and Petrich Kale – located at the end of the Avren plateau, near modern Devnya, the former Roman town Marcianopolis (**Fig. 1**).

Regarding Varna, data of Pecheneg population in the middle of the 11th century within the boundaries of the settlement that used to occupy the territory of the Roman Baths provide the excavations from the 1960s. During these surveys, in the area of the *palaestra*, several houses with early medieval assemblages involving vessels made on a slow potter's wheel and various bone objects were unearthed. Later, when analyzing the records in the field documentation and the coins from the old excavations, V. Yotov concluded that the discovered by D. Dimitrov and A. Kuzev burnt houses should be associated with the Pecheneg raids of 1048, 1051–1053, and their subsequent settlement within the fortress of Varna[1]. He supported this theory both by numismatic data and by the discovery of some typical finds for the nomads – an openwork leaf-shaped amulet, strap appliqués and other objects of "Russian" origin, which he assumed as imported here by the Pechenegs[2].

In contrast to Varna, it can be presumed that during the 11th century some foreign nomadic population resided only occasionally in vicinity of Kastritsi. Regular archaeological excavations carried out since 2004 indicate that the fortress was built in the 5th–6th centuries, most probably in connection with the large-scale fortification building campaign of the Emperor Justinian (527–565). The short Late Antique period of the stronghold ended in the early 7th century, and its abandonment after this period is associated with the Slavic-Avar raids along the Black Sea coast from 614–618[3]. At this stage, archaeological investigations do not give any reason to believe that the settlement was destroyed or burnt. There was rather a preventive withdrawal of the population to safer areas for habitation, taking all the valuables with them. Thus, at the present excavations, the dwellings appear to be emptied of inventory, and the latest coins from them – those of Emperor Flavius Phocas (602–610) and of Emperor Heraclius (610–641) of 614 – clearly mark the time of the events described[4].

For nearly seven centuries the fortress remained in ruins and like most of the fortified settlements in today's northeastern Bulgaria, life was restored here only in the second half of the 13th century. However, this hardly means that the old fortification was invisible to the population that inhabited the region of Varna in the 10th–12th centuries or to the nomadic tribes invading from the north. The reason for such a

[1] YOTOV 2004a, p. 320.

[2] YOTOV 2000, p. 242; YOTOV 2005, p. 143–146.

[3] PLETNYOV 2014, p. 51–52.

[4] Numismatic data in the field documentation from excavations in the period 2004–2020, identification of coins – Dr. Igor Lazarenko, Varna Regional Museum of History.

hypothesis gives some isolated finds, whose small quantity allows enlisting them here. These are mostly anonymous *folles*: four specimens of Class A2 (976–1028); four of Class B (1028–1041); three of Class E (1059–1067), and one of Class I (1078–1081)[5]. The aforementioned coins represent an insignificant percentage of the already thousands of numismatic materials from Kastritsi fortress, which in their main part date back to the 14th and early 15th century. Some of them are hoarded together with late antique coins; others are pierced and worn as medallions, perhaps because of Christ's image on the obverse[6].

To the small group of finds from the 10th and 11th centuries can be added a small horn with a drilled hole for hanging, probably to a strap (**Fig. 2/1**). Similar adornments are usually discovered Bulgarian early mediaeval sites, and their utilization is mainly explained with the military costume[7]. Two bone arrowheads also belong to the period preceding the new inhabitation of the fortress during the second half of the 13th century. One of them has a circular cross-section and a sleeve formed in the width of the blade (**Fig. 2/2**). This type is known from a number of settlements in Dobruja and is usually associated with the presence of late nomads[8]. The second arrowhead is flat, with a diamond-shaped blade and a long flat spike with a more roughly smoothed surface (**Fig. 2/3**). Among its few parallels is a bone point from the excavations of the early medieval settlement near the village of Durankulak on the Black Sea coast, with a chronology in the 9th–10th centuries[9]. The bone artefacts described here come from loose layers and cannot be linked to a specific archaeological context. The lack of a distinctive cultural layer from the 10th–11th centuries in Kastritsi indicates also the complete absence of pottery made on a slow potter's wheel characteristic of the early medieval period, or of representatives of imported Byzantine glazed table types and amphora tare common in the Black Sea region during the same period.

However, a 2006 discovery suggests that it is quite possible to assume a short-term presence of late nomads near the fortress. This is about a grave found about 150 m northeast outside the fortress walls, and described in the field documentation as number 4/2006[10]. The burial is of a man, laid in a rectangular pit shallowly dug into the marl, surrounded from the east by rubble stones (**Fig. 3**)[11].

The skeleton is in an upright position, orientated in the west-east axis, with the right arm folded towards the chest and the left arm on the waist. The burial pit destroys some older graves probably from the Late Antique necropolis of the fortress. It contains no inventory, but a horse's head, facing north is placed on the left side of the pelvis. This important detail points to analogies with some funerary

[5] Numismatic data from the field documentation from excavations in the period 2008–2020, identification of coins – Dr. Igor Lazarenko, Varna Regional Museum of History.

[6] PLETNYOV 2019, p. 179.

[7] DIMITROV 2009, p. 168–169, and cited literature therein.

[8] VITLYANOV 1996, p. 25, pl. I/c; YOTOV 2004b, p. 31, pl. XXV/386–388; RABAVYANOV 2015, p. 220, pl. 53/1371 and literature cited therein.

[9] YOTOV, 2004b, p. 31, pl. XXV/385.

[10] PLETNYOV *et alii* 2007, p. 566–567.

[11] Field diary of the excavations of Kastritsi fortress in 2006. Scientific archive of prof. V. Pletnyov, Varna Regional Museum of History.

practices that survived among the Pechenegs even after their Christianization. A good example in this respect is a series of graves from the necropolises of Odartsi, in which beside the remains of the deceased are set bones of various domestic animals, including of horses[12]. The association of the grave from Kastritsi with the nomadic tradition seems quite probable given the numerous written and archaeological records of Pecheneg raids in the territory of northeastern Bulgarian lands during the first half of the 11th century[13]. However, at this point, with no archaeological surveys outside the walls of the medieval fortress, it remains an isolated case and one plausible explanation for its discovery could be the passing of a foreign population nearby or its short-term occupation in the vicinities of the already abandoned late antique stronghold.

Unlike Kastritsi, the traces of the late nomadic inhabitation in the fortress Petrich Kale are far more clearly noticeable, and give reason to think that here – as at Varna, they settled for a longer period. Located on a hardly accessible rocky promontory above the Devnya Valley, the fortification was erected in the 3rd century as a strategic outpost related to the protection of the capital of Lower Moesia – Marcianopolis[14]. Until the early 7th century, the fortress was actively inhabited[15]. The subsequent barbarian invasions led to the depopulation of the entire region, including the stronghold above Marcianopolis. Unlike most old towns and fortresses, life resumed here in the mid–9th century. The information about the early medieval settlement is still scarce since the surveys held after 2014 have revealed a thin early medieval layer. It contains some typical of the second half of the 9th and 10th century artefacts amongst which are pots made on a slow wheel with incised decoration or with a greyish-black polished surface, jugs of light-coloured clay covered with red slip, specific types of belt decorations, and various bronze and glass adornments[16]. They are usually accompanied by coins of Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (913–959) and folles Class A1 from the reign of Emperor John I Tzimiskes (969–976)[17]. The relationship of the fortress with the capitals of the First Bulgarian Kingdom evidence lead seals of Prince Boris Michael (852–889), and Pisota – a 10th century official well known through some discoveries from Pliska and Veliki Preslav[18].

How the events from the beginning of the 11th century affected the material culture of Petrich Kale. Written sources abound with reports of Pecheneg raids in the 30s and 40s of the 11th century, which caused widespread destruction and abandonment of settlements in Dobruja region. Describing the latest defeat of the Byzantine army in 1048, John Skylitzes remarks that the Rector Nikephoros encamped in "a locality called Diakene, not far from the Hundred Hills"[19]. Bulgarian historiography

[12] DONCHEVA-PETKOVA 2005, p. 54, graves nos. 218, 374, 463, 500, 503, 505.

[13] PLETNYOV 2014, p. 151–165.

[14] MANOLOVA-VOYKOVA, LAZARENKO 2021, p. 353–354.

[15] MANOLOVA-VOYKOVA 2019, p. 94–98.

[16] PLETNYOV *et alii* 2015, p. 676; PLETNYOV *et alii* 2016, p. 722; PLETNYOV *et alii* 2017, p. 598; PLETNYOV *et alii* 2018, p. 529; MANOLOVA-VOYKOVA, LAZARENKO 2019, p. 505.

[17] Numismatic data in the field documentation from excavations in 2015, 2017 and 2018, identification of coins – Dr. Igor Lazarenko, Varna Regional Museum of History.

[18] LAZARENKO 2019, p. 539–560.

[19] GIBI 1965, p. 319–320.

usually associates the aforementioned Diakene with Devnya – the former Roman town Marcianopolis[20]. If we accept this identification, it should be presumed that the military collisions mentioned by John Skylitzes were conducted in the immediate vicinity of Petrich Kale. However, the fortress itself remained away from the clashes between the Byzantine army and the Pechenegs, and at this point, the excavations provide no evidence of significant destruction or large-scale burning in the early to mid–11th century. Numismatic data confirms field observations and indicates a continuous coin circulation including anonymous *folles* of Classes A1, A2, A3, B, C, D, E, G, I, K, *folles* of the Emperors Constantine X Doukas (1059–1067) and Michael VII Doukas (1071–1078)[21]. Along with those, a specific series of finds marks the infiltration of a new nomadic population that seems to have settled here in the mid–11th century and cohabited with the stronghold's residents. Arguments in favor of this hypothesis provided even the first excavations of the fortress in 1961, when several bone arrowheads were recorded (**Fig. 4/1, 3, 5, 6**).

In the same year, a fragment of a cauldron with "internal ears" was found in a dwelling (**Fig. 5/1**), the relation of which to the Pecheneg material culture south of the Danube is now securely established[22].

A supplement to the group of finds associated with the nomadic culture is another eloquent artefact – a bronze leaf-shaped amulet with six openwork cuts (**Fig. 4/8**), belonging to a small group of finds from settlements in present-day north-eastern Bulgaria, which clearly traces the waves of the Pecheneg raids in the 11th century[23].

The latest excavations of Petrich Kale resumed in 2014 raise once again the issue of the relationship between late nomadic tribes coming from the north and the local population. Several other bone arrowheads (**Fig 4/2, 4**) and a bone kisten (war-flail) with a longitudinal cylindrical hole for attaching an iron bracket (**Fig. 4/7**) come from the 11th and early 12th century layers. Another evidence of Pecheneg settlement in the fortress gives a fourth pit excavated in 2022, which at a depth of 1.85 m reaches the southeast corner of a monumental building constructed in the *opus mixtum*, probably from the Roman period of the stronghold[24]. When excavating the pit, an unsuccessful attempt was made to break the solid construction, after which the bottom was buried at a higher level than reached. The fill of the pit contains various contemporaneous artefacts, including a *follis* of Emperor Justin II (565–574) and a silver application from the same period. Indicative for the chronology of the pit are the rest of the finds – highly corroded iron plates, fragments of glass bracelets, a bone handle and two vessels dating back to the late 10th and early 11th century. One of them is an amphora (**Fig. 5/3**), which belongs to the most widespread tare type in the Black Sea region, known in the classifications of the middle Byzantine pottery as

[20] DUYCHEV 1972, p. 244–245.

[21] Numismatic data in the field documentation from excavations in 2014–2017, 2019 and 2021, identification of coins – Dr. Igor Lazarenko, Varna Regional Museum of History.

[22] DONCHEVA-PETKOVA 1971, p. 34–36; DIMITROV 1975, p. 37–42; DONCHEVA-PETKOVA 2003, p. 245.

[23] YOTOV 2000, p. 242–243 and literature cited therein; BONEV 2009, p. 178–181.

[24] MANOLOVA-VOYKOVA, LAZARENKO *in press*.

Type I after N. Günsenin[25]. The same vessels spread in the interior of the Bulgarian lands during the 10th and 11th centuries[26]. Along with the amphora, an almost completely preserved Pecheneg cauldron was found in the pit (**Fig. 5/2**).

Thus, the results of the archaeological investigations of Petrich Kale give reason to conclude that Pechenegs settled and lived here as a peaceful population. As already mentioned, no traces of crucial cataclysms or abandonment of the fortress at the time of the Pecheneg invasions have been found, at least so far. The dwellings of the 11th and 12th centuries are on-ground or semi-dugouts usually constructed on or between the remains of Late Antique walls. The cultural layers related with them contain pottery made on slow and fast wheels and a wide range of everyday household objects typical of the period in iron, bone, glass, and metal. The significant amount of Byzantine coins and a few fragments of imported Byzantine tableware proves the maintenance of commercial contacts with the port cities along the coast. Probably soon after the cessation of the military conflicts, towards the end of the 11th century, the fortress walls were partially renewed, through which life in the settlement was normalized and in the 12th century it became a small rich town on the road leading from seacoast to Veliki Preslav.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the discussed archaeological finds associated with the Pechenegs from the three nearby sites – Varna and the fortresses of Kastritsi and Petrich Kale outline the diversity of relations between the local population and newly arrived nomads, which turns out to be not always restricted to conflicts and antagonism. The generally accepted idea of widespread devastation and subsequent settlement of the Pechenegs applies only to Varna. They show no interest in the abandoned Kastritsi fortress and probably stay here for a short time. The situation is more complicated at Petrich Kale, where the peaceful coexistence of the new population with the local inhabitants leads to the development of a mixed culture, which intertwines Bulgarian, Nomadic and Byzantine elements.

Catalogue[27]

1. Horn with a hole drilled in the wide end for hanging. The surface is polished and decorated with five bands of shallowly incised, obliquely placed lines. L. 8.2 cm. Kastritsi, 2014, sq. XXV/19. RHM-Varna, Inv. no. IV 1014 (**Fig. 2/1**).

2. Bone arrowhead with circular cross-section, sleeve drilled into the width of the blade. L. 3.1 cm; d. sleeve 1.1 cm. Kastritsi, 2013, sq. XXV/16–17. RHM-Varna, Inv. no. IV 897 (**Fig. 2/2**).

3. Bone arrowhead with flat diamond-shaped blade, narrow neck with ring, long flat spike. Kastritsi, 2010, sq. XXIV/16. L. 11 cm, w. max. 2.5 cm. RHM-Varna, Inv. no. IV 532 (**Fig. 2/3**).

4. Bone arrowhead with circular cross-section, sleeve drilled into the width of the blade. L. 3 cm, d. sleeve 0.65 cm. Petrich Kale, 1961, sq. II–10, layer II. RHM-Varna, Field Inv. no. 8/1961 (**Fig. 4/1**).

[25] GÜNSENIN 1989, p. 269–271; GÜNSENIN 1990, p. 21–24.

[26] DONCHEVA-PETKOVA 1977, p. 100–102.

[27] Abbreviations used in the catalog: d. – diameter; h. – height; Inv. – inventory; L. – length; sq. – square; w. – width.

5. Bone arrowhead with circular cross-section, sleeve drilled into the width of the blade. L. 3.2 cm, d. sleeve 0.7 cm. Petrich Kale, 2021, sq. F9/2, floor level, near a hearth. RHM-Varna, Field Inv. no. 88/2021 (**Fig. 4/2**).
6. Bone arrowhead with circular cross-section, sleeve drilled into the width of the blade. L. 4.3 cm, d. sleeve 0.78 cm. Petrich Kale, 1961, Rock-cut structure, sq. XI/51–52. RHM-Varna, Field Inv. no. 243/1961 (**Fig. 4/3**).
7. Bone arrowhead with circular cross-section, sleeve drilled into the width of the blade. L. 4.1 cm, d. sleeve 0.95 cm. Petrich Kale, 2020, sq. F9/2, pit no. 16. RHM-Varna, Inv. no. IV 702 (**Fig. 4/4**).
8. Bone arrowhead with triangular shape, quadrangular cross-section and short spike. L. 3.5 cm, w. max 1.8 cm. Petrich Kale, 1962, found under the fortress ladder. RHM-Varna (**Fig. 4/5**).
9. Bone arrowhead with flat triangular shape and flat triangular spike. L. 7.7 cm, w. max 1.8 cm. Petrich Kale, 1961, sq. II–5. RHM-Varna, Field Inv. no. 35/1961 (**Fig. 4/6**).
10. Bone kisten (war-flail) with longitudinal hole for attaching an iron bracket. L. 4.8 cm, d. max. 4.6 cm, d. hole 0.9 cm. Petrich Kale, 2022, sq. E9/15, in adobe layer. RHM-Varna, Inv. no. IV 887 (**Fig. 4/7**).
11. Leaf-shaped bronze amulet with six openwork cuts, three of which are preserved. The obverse decorated with small grooves and incised lines. H. 5.8 cm, w. max. 4.8 cm. Petrich Kale, 1961, sq. II–18. RHM-Varna, Field Inv. no. 729/1961 (**Fig. 4/8**).
12. Cauldron, fragment. Made on a slow wheel of coarse gray-brownish fabric. The outer surface decorated with asymmetrically applied horizontal incised lines. D. 31 cm, h. preserved 6.5 cm. Petrich Kale, 1961, sq. XIII, house no. 63. RHM-Varna, Field Inv. no. 784/1961 (**Fig. 5/1**).
13. Cauldron, fragment. Made on a slow wheel of coarse light brownish fabric. The outer surface decorated with horizontal incised lines. D. 21 cm, h. 10 cm. Petrich Kale, 2022, sq. F8/23, pit no. 2/2022. RHM-Varna, Inv. no. IV 966 (**Fig. 5/2**).
14. Amphora made of orange-brown clay. Shoulders and body shallowly grooved. Upper part of the body covered with beige slip. On the shoulders – *dipinta* with red slip. H. 29,8 cm, d. rim 7,7/6,6 cm, d. max. 24 cm. Petrich Kale, 2022, sq. F8/23, pit no. 2/2022. RHM-Varna, Inv. no. IV 984 (**Fig. 5/3**).

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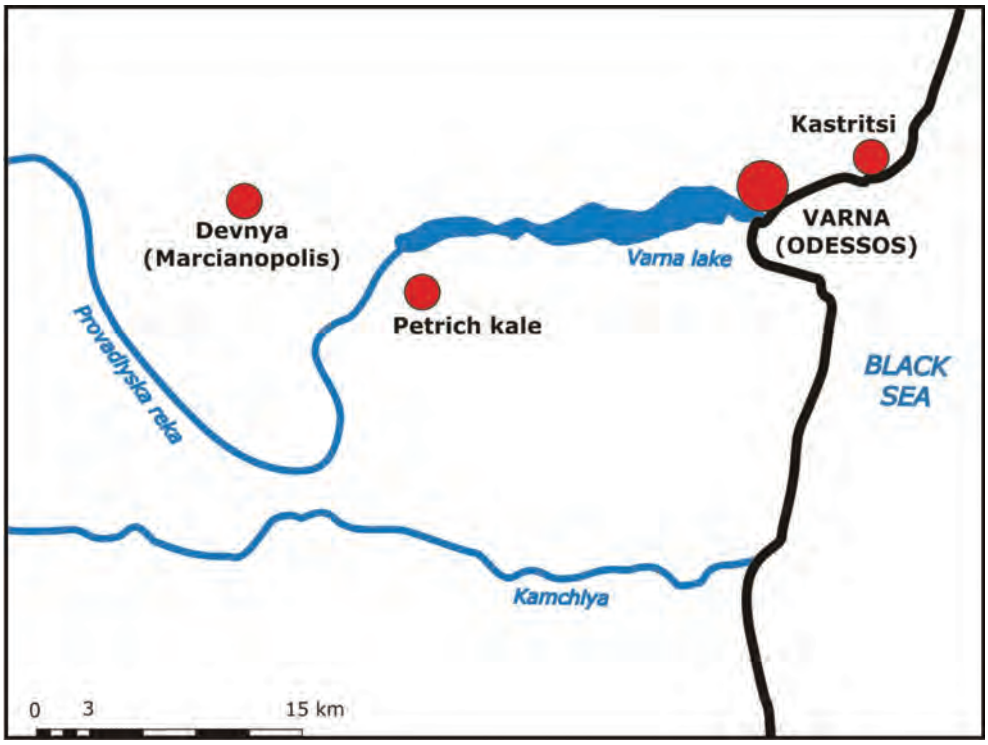

Fig. 1. Location of the fortresses Kastritsi and Petrich Kale.

Fig. 2. Bone artefacts from Kastritsi fortress.

Fig. 3. Grave no. 4/2006 from Kastritsi fortress.

Fig. 4. Artefacts of supposed nomadic origin from Petrich Kale fortress.

Fig. 5. Cauldrons and amphora from 11th century contexts of Petrich Kale.

THE EARLIEST DIRHAM FIND OF THE CARPATHIAN BASIN FROM THE TURN OF THE 9TH–10TH CENTURIES. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA AND THE CHRONOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE HUNGARIAN CONQUEST PERIOD

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Keywords: *Hungarian conquest period, 9th–10th centuries, dirham, Eastern Europe, trade, early Hungarian.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *perioada cuceririi maghiare, secolele IX–X, dirhem, Europa de Est, comerț, maghiar timpuriu.*

Abstract: *Among the 9th–10th centuries finds of the Carpathian Basin, the dirhams from the site at Jászfelsőszentgyörgy, beyond Zagyva River, are unique. According to specialised literature, this is the only known discovery of such a dirham from the Carpathian Basin. In fact, from a broader perspective, it is currently considered to be one of the oldest Abbasid coin in Central and Eastern Europe (Fig. 3–4). The so-called hacksilver finds from Eastern Europe show that the influx of Abbasid dirhams during the reign of al-Mutawakkil 'ala-Allāh (847–861) into the Khazar Khaganate and Russia was intense starting from the late 840s. In the 850s, the circulation of coins was largely composed of this type of dirham. There are known hoards where al-Mutawakkil's coins represent approximately half of the total assemblage. This type of coin remained in circulation until the late 860s, that is, throughout the entire D1 period, according to Vyacheslav S. Kulesov's chronology, i.e., between 845/850 and 865/870. In the subsequent period, D2 (865/870–895/900), they are also found in larger hoard assemblages that accumulated during the D1 period and ended in the D2 period (Fig. 4). In smaller assemblages, however, coins minted in the narrow period of the last third of the 9th century predominate, a fact that is also interesting from a Hungarian perspective. In assemblages dating from the first half of the 10th century, there are only a few isolated cases of al-Mutawakkil dirhams. These are known from the numerous Kozyanka and Rakovci*

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hoards in Belarus and the Murom hoard in Russia, although even there they are very rare. Therefore, after the 9th century, as far as we currently know, they only appear in large hoards. In assemblages dating from the second half of the 10th century, al-Mutawakkil dirhams are completely absent (Fig. 3–4).

The coin provides a firm terminus post quem date of 851, but its placement in the ground is likely later. For now, this seems probable, even though we now know of half a dozen early Hungarian burials in the Carpathian Basin which, according to radiocarbon dating and archaeological observations, were dug before the commonly accepted date of 895. This archaeological phenomenon is also consistent with written sources, which show that the Hungarian army appeared in the Carpathian Basin over several years starting from 862, where they participated as allies in the Carolingian-Moravian conflict. Additionally, in recent years, following archaeogenetic investigations, the grave of a Hungarian mercenary buried in the second half of the 9th century at Zalavár-Vársziget 8/2000 was uncovered. Therefore, the above data provide a theoretical possibility of dating the Jászfelsőszentgyörgy dirham to the late 9th century. At the same time, it was already known that the appearance of dirhams in the Carpathian Basin was clearly related to the early Hungarian period.

In conclusion, although we cannot determine the exact date of the Jászfelsőszentgyörgyi dirham due to the lack of context, we cannot exclude the possibility that it may have been in the ground as early as the late 9th century.

***Rezumat**: Printre descoperirile din secolele IX–X din Bazinul Carpatic, dirhemii din situl de la Jászfelsőszentgyörgy, dincolo de râul Zagyván, sunt unici. Conform literaturii de specialitate, aceasta este singura descoperire cunoscută a unui astfel de dirhem din Bazinul Carpatic. De fapt, dintr-o perspectivă mai largă, este considerată în prezent a fi una dintre cele mai vechi monede abbaside din Europa Centrală și de Est (Fig. 3–4). Așa-numitele descoperiri de argint din Europa de Est arată că afluxul de dirhemi abbasizi în timpul domniei lui al-Mutawakkil 'ala-Allāh (847–861), în Kaganatul Kazar și în Rusia Kieveană, a fost intens începând cu sfârșitul anilor 840. În anii 850, circulația monedelor era în mare parte compusă din acest tip de emisiuni. Se cunosc tezaure în care monedele al-Mutawakkil reprezintă aproximativ jumătate din componența totală. Acest tip de monedă a rămas în circulație până la sfârșitul anilor 860, adică pe parcursul întregii perioade D1, conform cronologiei lui Vyacheslav S. Kulesov, adică între 845/850 și 865/870. În perioada următoare, D2 (865/870–895/900), acestea se regăsesc și în ansamblurile mai mari de tezaure, care s-au acumulat în timpul perioadei D1 și s-au încheiat în perioada D2 (Fig. 4). În ansamblurile mai mici, însă, predomină monedele bătute în perioada restrânsă la ultima treime a secolului al IX-lea, fapt interesant și din perspectivă maghiară. În ansamblurile care datează din prima jumătate a secolului al X-lea există doar câteva cazuri izolate de dirhemi al-Mutawakkil. Acestea provin din numeroasele tezaure Kozyanka și Rakovci, din Belarus, și din tezaurul Murom, din Rusia, deși chiar și acolo sunt foarte rare. Prin urmare, după secolul al IX-lea, din câte știm în prezent, nu mai apar decât în tezaurele mari. În ansamblurile care datează din a doua jumătate a secolului al X-lea, dirhemii lui al-Mutawakkil lipsesc cu desăvârșire (Fig. 3–4).*

Moneda oferă o dată terminus post quem *fermă de 851, dar plasarea ei în pământ este posibil să fie mai târzie. Deocamdată, acest lucru pare probabil, chiar dacă acum cunoaștem o jumătate de duzină de înmormântări maghiare timpurii din Bazinul Carpatic care, conform datării radiocarbon și observațiilor arheologice, au fost practicate înainte de data de 895, care a fost acceptată în mod obișnuit. Acest fenomen arheologic este, de asemenea, în concordanță cu sursele scrise, care arată că armata maghiară a venit în Bazinul Carpatic de-a lungul mai multor ani, începând cu 862, unde a participat ca aliat în conflictul carolingiano-morav.*

În plus, în ultimii ani, în urma unor investigații arheogenetice, a fost evidențiat mormântul unui mercenar maghiar, înhumat în a doua jumătate a secolului al IX-lea în Zalavár-Vársziget, 8/2000. Prin urmare, datele de mai sus oferă o posibilitate teoretică de datare a dirhemului de la Jászfelsőszentgyörgy la sfârșitul secolului al IX-lea. În același timp, este deja cunoscut faptul că apariția dirhemilor în Bazinul Carpatic a fost în mod clar legată de perioada maghiară timpurie.

În concluzie, deși nu putem oferi datarea exactă a dirhemului de la Jászfelsőszentgyörgy, din cauza lipsei contextului, nu excludem faptul ca acesta să fi fost îngropat încă de la sfârșitul secolului al IX-lea.

Description of the site[1]

A pierced silver dirham from the site of Jászfelsőszentgyörgy, beyond the River Zagyva (**Fig. 1**) (Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok country, Hungary) was brought to the local Jász Museum around May 2020. To investigate the context of the find, the Jász Museum, together with the Pázmány Péter Catholic University and the Early Hungarian History Research Group of the HUN-REN Faculty of Science, executed a planned field survey of the site, which took place on 29 October 2020.

We opened five trial trenches in the area. The first was opened in an east-west direction on the highest sand hill of the area in a 4 × 12 m size but was empty. The second east-west trench followed about 80 m northeast of the first, again on the north side of a hill in a size of 4 × 12 m. The third section was launched 80 m northeast of the second and was oriented north-south measuring 6 × 14 m. The fourth and largest section was opened where the dirham emerged, 20 m east of section 3. This lay at the bottom of the hill, indicates that the coin had been brought to its place by ploughing. The fourth section was north-south oriented in an L-shape of 20 m length and 14 and 8 m width. The last and fifth trench was opened about 60 m southeast of section four and was oriented east-west measuring 2 × 10 m. During digging, we observed a topsoil thickness ranging from 40 to 80 cm. During the excavation, no Conquest period date archaeological objects were detected in the trenches, but metal detecting revealed an additional 10th century finds; a fragment of a bead-encrusted strap-end manufactured of a copper-based alloy. This made it likely that the last remains of a 10th century cemetery/site, destroyed by agricultural cultivation, were identified.

Finds descriptions

1. Abbasid *dirham* (**Fig. 1/2; Fig. 2**), the currency of Caliph al-Mutawakkil ʻalā Āllah, reigned from AH 232–247 (= 847–861). The dirham was minted in Samarra (Sura-man-ra) in AH 237 (= 851). The dirham has two holes in the upper part, which presumably indicate that it was worn or held fastened to some kind of material, perhaps textile. Ltsz.: 2021.8.1.1; N21.1.1 (Jász Museum).

2. A rectangular fragment of a cast, copper-based alloy, presumably a *strap-end* upper part (**Fig. 1/3**). The object is framed by a smooth, unarticulated pattern of bulging circles within the frame. In the centre is a bulging decoration consisting of

[1] The research was carried out in the framework of the PPKE-BTK-KUT–23–3 and the HUN-REN Early Hungarians Research Team: The interdisciplinary based research programme on early Hungarian history (2022–2026).

three triangles, inverted at their apexes, joined at the centre of the bezel by a double V-shaped element, also with its apex inwards. It is fixed at the back by a spike which is driven away. Dimensions: height: 1.2 cm; width: 1.8–1.9 cm; thickness: 0.15 cm. Item no. 2021.8.2.1 (Jász Museum).

Evaluation

Among 10th century artefacts from the Carpathian Basin, the dirham from the site of Jászfelsőszentgyörgy, the beyond Zagyva, is unique. According to existing secondary literature, this is the only dirham find of this type known from the territory[2]. In fact, from a broader perspective, it is currently one of the earliest Abbasid coin in East Central Europe (**Fig. 3–4**)[3].

The coin gives a firm *terminus post quem* date of 851 for the site, however, its deposition in the ground is probably later. For the time being, this seems the safest, even though we know by now half a dozen early Hungarian burials in the Carpathian Basin which, according to radiocarbon and archaeological observations, were dug before the commonly agreed date of "conquest", that is 895[4]. The appearance of this early coin paired with a Hungarian strap-end is also in line with written sources, which document that the parts of the Hungarian army appeared in the Carpathian Basin in several years from 862 onwards, where they participated as allies in a Carolingian-Moravian conflict[5]. Moreover, in recent years the grave of a (presumably) Hungarian mercenary buried in the second half of the 9th century has been found at Zalavár-Vársziget 8/2000[6]. The above data, therefore, provide a theoretical possibility for dating the dirham of Jászfelsőszentgyörgy to the end of the 9th century. At the same time, it has been widely accepted that the appearance of dirhams in the Carpathian Basin was clearly linked to the early Hungarian Conquest/Settlement period[7].

The identification of the dirham, and the evaluation of the coin type's

[2] Recently, an interesting theory has appeared, written by Erwin Gáll, on the distribution of dirhams in the Carpathian Basin and the direction of the 10th century campaigns (which were led by the occupiers in the north, northeast and east): "Based on the various intercontinental dirham distribution maps, we consider this phenomenon to be well interpretable: Northeastern Europe and Scandinavia formed an active, integrative part of the vast economic system that the world imperial activity of the Arab Caliphate had created. In our view, the Hungarian steppe state was also integrated into this system on some level, as an arm extended towards Europe. This also explains why the Hungarian steppe state did not lead a campaign to the north-east and east, but we do not exclude Arab economic interests in the realisation of the enterprise known as the conquest!" (GÁLL 2019, p. 97). Of course, the direct influence of Muslim economic circles on the politics of the early Hungarian ruling class is difficult, if not impossible, to prove. However, the theory itself is certainly interesting, and the perspective of looking at historical processes through the lenses of the contemporary global economic systems is useful.

[3] An Abbasid dirham minted under the reign of kalifa al-Mu´tazza in 867 AD known from the Lesser Carpathian Mountains from Moravian territories (Sväty Jur, Slovakia), see: VAVÁK 2019, p. 8.

[4] Cf. SOMOGYI, TÜRK 2023.

[5] MAKK 1998; BÁCSATYAI 2017.

[6] ÉVINGER 2022. On this issue, see also SZŐKE 2014; SZŐKE 2019.

[7] BÁLINT 1982; KOVÁCS 1989; KOVÁCS 2011.

distribution patterns in Eastern Europe were carried out by Suleman al-Halabi and Vyacheslav S. Kulesov numismatists (**Fig. 2–4**). This was supplemented with a study of the material composition of the dirham in Debrecen in the laboratory of the HUN-REN Nuclear Research Institute. It resulted in a remarkable silver content of about 99% (**Fig. 2/2**).

The key question about the dating value of coins is to determine how long it was in circulation between its issuing and deposition into the ground. Most recently, László Révész, in his monograph on the settlement history of the Carpathian Basin east of the Danube in the 10th and 11th centuries, summarised the latest results and current state of research on dating with coins[8]. The Jászfelsőszentgyörgy coin is a stray find, so unfortunately no find context or accompanying artefact can provide us with any further clues as to the exact date of deposition. We most agree with the assessment of Révész that it would be unrealistic to stretch a coin's *terminus post quem* dating period to (sometimes) a century and a half, whilst at the same time "we cannot objectively judge how long it took between the issue of the coin...and its placement in the ground"[9]. With the Jászfelsőszentgyörgy dirham, however, we have attempted to establish a more restrictive date, considering the evidence of early medieval dirham circulation in an Eastern European perspective (**Fig. 3–4**).

The so-called broken silver treasure finds from Eastern Europe illustrate that the influx of Abbasid dirhams from the reign of al-Mutawakkil into the Khazar Khaganate and the Rus was intense from the late 840s. In the 850s, coin circulation consisted mostly of this type. There are known hoards in which al-Mutawakkil's coins account for about half of the total assemblages. The type remained in circulation until the end of the 860s that is during the entire D1 period (845/850–865/870) according to Vyacheslav S. Kulesov's chronology[10]. In the next, namely D2 period (865/870–895/900), they are also found in the larger hoards which were accumulated during the D1 period and closed in D2 (**Fig. 4**). In the smaller hoards, however, coins, struck in the narrow period of the last third of the 9th century, predominate, a fact that is also interesting from a Hungarian perspective.

In hoards or other complexes dating from the first half of the 10th century, the dirhams of al-Mutawakkil largely disappear with only a few isolated exceptions. They are only known from the extensive hoards of Kozyanka and Rakovtsy in Belarus, and a few specimens came to light from the Murom hoard in Russia. After the 9th century, therefore, as far as we know at present, *they no longer occur* with the exception of a few larger hoards. In assemblages dating to the second half of the 10th century, the dirhams of al-Mutawakkil are absent (**Fig. 3–4**).

Accordingly, the dirham of Jászfelsőszentgyörgy most likely infiltrated Eastern Europe in the 850s, but more likely in the early 860s, which is roughly synchronous with the appearance of the Hungarian army in the Carpathian Basin. Based on Eastern European parallels, the chronology of artefact assemblages with such coins does not extend beyond the mid–10th century. However, in the light of the frequency of their appearance in 10th century contexts, it seems safer to assume that

[8] RÉVÉSZ 2020, p. 14–20, with further comprehensive literature.
[9] RÉVÉSZ 2020, p. 16.
[10] KULESHOV 2020.

the Jászfelsőszentgyörgy find was introduced into the Carpathian Basin in the last third of the 9th century.

According to numismatists, the appearance of these early dirhams in Eastern Europe most probably is due to intermediaries and is to be sought in a Khazar-Alan environment, a territory in close contact with the early Hungarians during the 9th century[11]. Thus, the coin probably arrived in the Carpathian Basin and in the region of present-day Jászfelsőszentgyörgy with the first generation of the conquerors. The chronology of this seems to pre-date the consensually accepted (historical) date of the conquest, that is 895. However, a written source also testifies that the army of the conquering Hungarians appeared in the Carpathian Basin as early as 862[12], and we know of individual, mainly isolated burials of armed men whose radiocarbon data indicate that the burials occurred before 895[13]. The written contemporary accounts of Hungarian and Kabar military involvement in Eastern Frankish territory (in 862, 891, 892, 894) and the archaeological data therefore suggest a Hungarian presence, even sporadic settlement, in the Carpathian Basin before 895. The trustworthiness of the source about the appearance of the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin at 862, is generally accepted among historians and is backed up by German, Slovak and Czech archaeologists[14]. All this sheds new light on the historical context and evaluation of the Jászfelsőszentgyörgy dirham find[15].

In a broader perspective, it is intriguing that dirhams appear in the territory of the modern Czech Republic only from the beginning of the 10th century. It should be stressed, however that we do not possess reliable data on the functioning of the trade route between Kiev and Prague until the mid–10th century. In the meantime, it is well-known that silver dirhams were widespread among the early Hungarians in the late 9th and during the 10th centuries, which they acquired from Central Asia, Khazaria and Volga-Bulgaria. These coins, together with finds of Caucasian snail remains, *taqueté* silk fragments[16], and South Sea ray and fish skins found in Hungarian graves, are evidence of former contacts of the conquering Hungarians with the Silk Roads[17]. This interpretation is increasingly supported by a parallel finds in the Caucasus[18]. However, after the middle of the 10th century, it is recorded in a written source (Ībrahīm ibn Ya`qūb, from 965) that to Prague "*Moslems, Jews, and Turks come there from the country of the Turks and bring goods and trade balances. Flour, tin, and various kinds of furs are exported from there*"[19]. Thus, a new interpretation

[11] KULESHOV 2020.

[12] BÁCSATYAI 2017; SZÁNTÓ 2018.

[13] LŐRINCZY, TÜRK 2015; TÜRK 2021; JANCSIK 2021, p. 18; SOMOGYI, TÜRK 2023; TÜRK *et alii* 2023, fig. 8.

[14] SCHULZE-DÖRRLAMM 2002; ŠALKOVSKÝ 2002; KOUŘIL 2003; KOUŘIL 2008; PROFANTOVÁ 2008; HOLESCÁK 2019.

[15] MAKK 1998. We would like to thank László Veszprémy, Kornél Szovák, Richárd Szántó and Dániel Bácsatyai for their expertise in the evaluation of the source data on Hungarians in 862 AD.

[16] BERTA *et alii* 2018.

[17] HARANGI, TÜRK 2023.

[18] ZÁGORHIDI CZIGÁNY, KENÉZ, TÜRK 2019.

[19] MISHIN 1996, p. 186. Szabolcs Polgár suggested that merchants from Hungary had probably appeared in Prague earlier (POLGÁR 2019, p. 47, 108–109, 280). He also assumed that "*the dirhams found in the Little Plain could also be linked to the Prague route.*" (POLGÁR 2019, p. 287).

linking the influx of dirhams into Bohemia before the 10th century to Hungarian involvement is possible. From the recent research of Vyacheslav S. Kulesov on the circulation of dirhams in Eastern Europe, it also becomes apparent that the Volga Bulgarian dirham imitations have spread already from the 930s onwards to the contemporary Rus'ian-Hungarian border region (present-day Slovakia and Poland)[20]. Most recently, Suleman al-Halabi, in his PhD thesis, processed the only known dirhem hoard of the Carpathian Basin from Huszt (now Khust in Ukraine): he came to the conclusion that although previously thought to contain 368 pieces[21], the hoard contained 373 dirham pieces after out of which he found 34 per cent to be of Volga Bulgarian imitation copies[22].

In the wider area of Jászfelsőszentgyörgy, beyond the Zagyva, dirhams are represented in significantly smaller numbers than western coins. Révész, in his previously mentioned monograph, made the following observations on the distribution of coins: from the north Hungarian region (including the Jászság), he identified four Muslim dirhams, three Byzantine coins and 29 Western coins, whilst from the Central Tisza region, two Muslim dirhams and four Western European coins are known. From the northern part of the Danube plain region, three Byzantine and nine Western coins but no Muslim dirhams are catalogued in his collection[23].

Conclusions

In conclusion, although we cannot give an exact date for the appearance of the dirham of al-Mutawakkil at Jászfelsőszentgyörgy due to a lack of context, we posit a probable date in the late 9th century. The dirham recovered from the site is a unique piece whose distribution in Eastern Europe in chronologically early contexts confirms our proposition, thus indicating Hungarian appearance in the Carpathian Basin before the date of the conquest of 895. However, it must be stressed once again that the artefact was unfortunately a stray find. It is hoped that the comprehensive authentication excavation planned by our working group at the site will provide new data for the evaluation of this rare and extremely important remain. Nevertheless, the trends of Eastern European dirham fluctuation and the picture painted by contemporary written accounts about the periodic involvement of the Hungarians in the affairs of the Carpathian Basin prior to the conquest already place the dirham find in an interpretable historical context.

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[20] For more on coins in Poland, see also ADAMCZYK 2020. For a general overview of coin circulation and trade in Eastern Europe, see: JANKOWIAK 2020.

[21] KOVÁCS, FOMIN 1987.

[22] HALABI 2023.

[23] RÉVÉSZ 2020, p. 296–297, 343, 362.

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Fig. 1. 1 – Location of the site Jászfelsőszentgyörgy, Zagyván túl; 2 – Dirham; 3 – Fragment of a strap-end.

Abbasid silver dirham. Founded in old Hungarian archaeological site (Jászfelsőszentgyörgy). al-Mutawakkil 'ala Allāh the 10th Abbasid caliph 232- 247 AH / 847- 861 AD. Minted in Surra Man Raƀa (SÁmarra). 237 AH/ 851 AD.

There is no God
except Allah
He is Alone
There is no partner to him
AbÛ ŶAbduallah

Marginal Legend:
بسم الله ضرب هذا الدرهم بسر من رأى سنة سبع وثلاثين ومائتين
In the name of God this dirham was struck in **Samarra** in the year two hundred and thirty-seven. (237) AH.

Allah
MuĬammad
is the Messenger of God
al-Mutawakkil Ŷala Allah

Marginal Legend:

Outer margin: ((From Qur'ān IX, 33))

محمد رسول الله أرسله بالهدى ودين الحق ليظهره على الدين كله ولو كره المشركون.
Muhammad is the messenger of God. He sent him with guidance and the true religions to reveal it to all religions even if the polytheists abhor it

Outer margin: ((From Qur'ān XXX, 4-5))

لله الامر من قبل ومن بعد يومئذ يفرح المؤمنون

with Allah is the decision, in the past and in the future: on that day shall the believers rejoice.

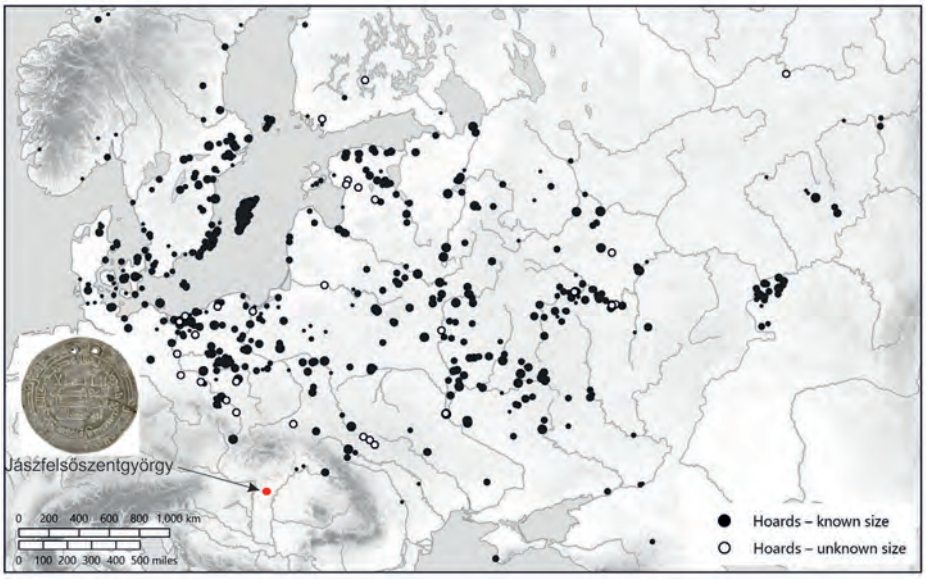
1

Coin Name	Mn(wt %)	Fe(wt %)	Ni(wt %)	Cu(wt %)	Zn(wt %)	Ag(wt %)	Au(wt %)	Hg(wt %)	Pb(wt %)	Bi (wt %)
Abbasid dirham	0.001	0.027	0.003	0.235	0.008	99.0	0.239	0.026	0.284	0.002

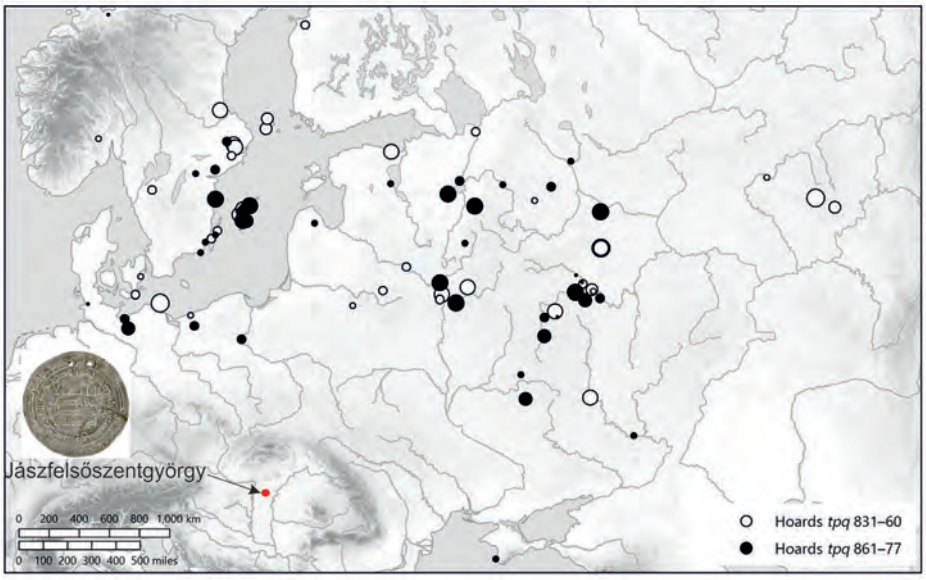
Archaeometry examination

2

Fig. 2. 1 – The dirham from Jászfelsőszentgyörgy: inscriptions and identifying; 2 – The metal composition of the dirham.



1

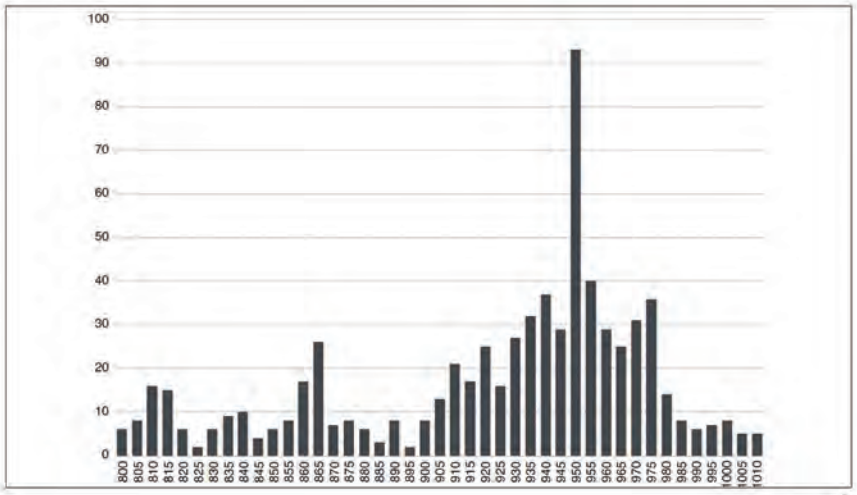


2

Fig. 3. 1 – Northern and eastern European dirham hoards with known find spots (after JANKOWIAK 2020, p. 107, Map 6/1); 2 – Northern and eastern European dirham hoards with *terminus post quem* between 831 and 877 (after JANKOWIAK 2020, p. 115, Map 6/3).

Stage	*Sub-stages*	*Approximate hoard dates*	*Time-span (years)*	*Caliphal coins circulating*	*Other types of coins found (dirhams unless otherwise stated)*
A		750s–80s	~ 30–5	*c.* 725–75	Sasanian (*drachms*) Umayyad Early Abbasid
B		780s–800s	~ 20–5	*c.* 775–800	Abbasid governors of Ifriqiyya Abbasid governors of Tabaristan
C[1]		800s–50	~ 40–5	*c.* 800–47 (end of al-Wathiq's rule)	Early Abbasid (Harun al-Rashid, al-Amin and al-Ma'mun)
	C1	800s–20s			Khazar imitations (2nd quarter of the ninth century; Stage C2 only)
	C2	830–40s			
D		850–905	~ 45–50	847–*c.* 892 (al-Mutawakkil's rule to the end of the Middle Abbasid period)	Middle Abbasid 'blank-flan' (i.e. not struck with die, or struck with worn die) dirhams Khazar imitations (2nd half of the ninth century) Saffarid / Banijurid coins (Stage D2 only)
	D1	850–70s			
	D2	880s–900s			
E		895–955	~ 50–5	*c.* 892–943 (reigns of Isma'il I, Ahmad II and Nasr II)	Early Volga Bulgar imitations Late Abbasid Saffarid Sajid Early Buyid (pre-945)
F		945–79	~ 25–30	*c.* 943–76 (opening stages of the late period; reigns of Nuh I, Abd al-Malik I and Mansur I)	Buyid (post-945) Volga Bulgar (including emirs Mika'il ibn Ja'far, Abdallah ibn Mikhail, Talib ibn Ahmad) Hamdanid Sallarid Late Wajihid (including those of Muhammad and Umar, sons of the dynasty's founder Yusuf ibn Wajih) Julandid

1



2

Fig. 4. 1 – Analysis of 18th century coins found in Kyivan Rus (after KULESHOV 2020, Table 8/5–8/6); 2 – *terminus post quem* data of the northern and eastern European dirham hoards (after JANKOWIAK 2020, p. 109, fig. 6/1).

ÁRPÁD-ERA COINS IN THE NECROPOLIS OF VĂLCANI[*]

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Keywords: *10th–11th centuries necropolis, Hungarian coins.*
Cuvinte-cheie: *necropolă secolele X–XI, monede maghiare.*

Abstract: The *early medieval burial sites near Vălcani have been discovered alongside other archaeological elements dating from the Neolithic era to the Modern Age. The funerary site from the 10th–11th centuries has been much more varied than the former ones and is the biggest one in Banat. The 197 graves uncovered here constitute the biggest funerary site in the western part of today's Romania. The majority of the graves are orientated – with minor differences – in the W-E direction, but in some cases we registered E-W orientations too. The arms of the deceased were primarily found in very heterogeneous positions. Burials with horses were documented in ten cases, in four other cases only the horse trappings were deposited in the burials (stirrups, bits, harness buckles). As food preparation, some parts of the animals were placed in the graves (probably sheep). The material culture, like the ritual practices, is very heterogeneous: jewellery was registered (earrings, lock rings, rings, bracelets), weapons (bows, quivers, arrowheads), horse trappings (pear and trapeze shaped stirrups, horse bits, harness buckles), tools (needle case, needle, strike-a-lights), coins (Arpadian-issues). Some aspects of the material culture have connections with the material culture of the Late Avar Age (for example the needle case). In this article we have analyzed the Arpadian coins issued in the 11th century found in the necropolis – Stephen I (1), Andrew I (2), Solomon (3), unidentified (1) – and their analogies in the area of Banat, but also in the region extending to the north, delimited by the Criș River. While they correspond to previous finds in cemeteries in which the most recent coins are from the reign of Solomon (1063–1074), similarly to those finds, they do not provide new answers to the*

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existing questions regarding the exact chronology or chronological sequence of the encountered monetary types of 11th century Hungarian coins.

Rezumat: *Siturile funerare medievale timpurii de lângă Vălcani au fost descoperite alături de alte elemente arheologice, care datează din neolitic până în epoca modernă. Situl funerar din secolele X–XI a fost mult mai variat decât cel anterior și este cel mai mare din Banat. Cele 197 de morminte descoperite aici constituie cel mai mare sit funerar din partea de vest a României de astăzi. Majoritatea mormintelor sunt orientate – cu mici diferențe – V-E, dar în unele cazuri am înregistrat și orientări E-V. Brațele defuncților au fost înregistrate în poziții foarte diferite. Înmormântările cu cai au fost documentate în zece cazuri, în alte patru situații fiind depuse în morminte doar elementele harnașamentului (scărițe, mânere, catarame de ham). Ca preparat alimentar, în morminte au fost depuse unele părți de animale (probabil ovi-caprine). Cultura materială, ca și practicile rituale, este foarte eterogenă: s-au înregistrat bijuterii (cercei, inele cheie, inele, brățări), arme (arcuri, tolbe, vârfuri de săgeți), accesorii pentru cai (etriere în formă de pară și trapez, zăbale, catarame de harnașament), unelte (tub de os pentru ac, ace de fier), monede (emisiuni arpadiene). Unele aspecte ale culturii materiale au legătură cu epoca avară târzie (de exemplu, tubul pentru ace). În acest articol, am analizat monedele arpadiene emise în secolul al XI-lea descoperite în necropolă – Ștefan I (1), Andrei I (2), Solomon (3), neidentificat (1) – și analogii ale acestora din zona Banatului, dar și din regiunea care se extinde spre nord, delimitată de râul Criș. Deși corespund unor descoperiri anterioare, din necropole în care cele mai recente monede sunt din timpul domniei lui Solomon (1063–1074), în mod similar descoperirilor respective, ele nu oferă răspunsuri noi la întrebările existente cu privire la cronologia exactă sau la succesiunea cronologică a tipurilor monetare întâlnite pe monedele maghiare din secolul al XI-lea.*

The opportunity of archaeological researches at Vălcani, Timiș County occurred with land development works through the mechanized levelling of a promontory, several graves having already been destroyed before the researches could have begun. Eventually, the works were stopped by the Timiș County Cultural Office, however, the land was partially damaged at the time.

The rescue operation was carried out in several stages. First, we managed to rescue the first graves (1–11) in the late autumn of 2019, which were heavily affected by the earthworks, with the bones basically unearthed, on the surface. In the summer of 2020, the research was carried out through 3–4 successive mechanized excavations on the same site together with the progressive research of the outlined tomb. As a result, the investigation revealed complexes from the Bronze-Age, the 7th century and the 10th–11th centuries[1].

The physical-geographic setting of the Vălcani site

The researched area is located 1.3 km southeast of the Aranca River, which in the past had countless meanders and backwaters that were periodically flooded. The landscape is a low, wet plain, with arising ridges and promontories with small differences in altitude from the flood zone[2]. The site is 2 km west of the present village (**Fig. 1**) and 600 m from the political border between Romania and Serbia.

[1] GÁLL, GINDELE, BLASKÓ 2023, p. 69–88.

[2] For a look at the geographical realities of the Banat area, see, for example, KÓKAI 2010, p. 17–36.

Road 59F, that leads from Vălcani to the Romanian-Serbian border, crosses a water regulation channel located about 500 m from the last houses of the village. Northwest of the bridge, about 200 m away, a ridge emerging from the flooded lowland was clearly visible.

In the first Austrian military topographical survey (1769–1772), a promontory is visible in the immediate eastern vicinity of the researched area, marked with the sign for a place of executions. This promontory, clearly visible in the 18th century, was probably just as clearly visible in the early Middle Ages, thus being destined to be a funerary site. This promontory is no longer illustrated on later maps, likely indicating that it was no longer used as an execution site and its purpose was changed to agricultural use, as shown by Austrian military surveys during the 19th century.

The funerary site from the 10th–11th centuries

The 10th–11th centuries necropolis (**Fig. 2**), compared to the 7th century funerary site with 36 graves, is much more extensive, with 197 graves. It is a necropolis in rows, which characterizes the funerary sites from the 10th–**11**th centuries[3]. The majority of the graves were oriented, with minor differences, W-E, while some others were oriented in the opposite direction, i.e. E-W[4]. The shape of the grave pits is rounded square (some larger ones: no. 52 was 74 × 250 cm), and in several cases we were able to record *a step next to the walls of the pit*, at a depth of 30–40 cm from the level of the grave. Regarding the position of the deceased in the graves, in addition to the usual position, we were able to record crouched positions or placed on the right or left side.

The main characteristic is the rather significant number of horse burials (graves no. 22, 27, 53, 54, 91, 107, 113, 122, 145 and 161, that is, 5.07% of the graves, however, the percentage would be much higher if we knew the exact number of graves dating from the *pagan* period of the necropolis), which integrate Vălcani into the horse burial phenomenon of the 10th and the first half of the 11th centuries, a nomadic cultural habitus.

Of the 197 burials, in approximately 29 cases, we find graves with richer inventories (graves no. 3, 11, 16, 21, 34, 80, 83, 84, 86, 95, 97, 111, 133, 146, 163, 172, 173, 186, 203, 205, 206, 222, 227, 240, 241, 244, 257 and 268), that is, 14% of the graves, while the other graves have poorer annexes or no grave goods at all. The main feature of these inventories are clothing items, mainly a significant amount of various jewellery, among which the inventories of graves no. 3 and 16 are noteworthy.

Several typical elements of material culture of the 10th–11th centuries were found in the investigated graves, including jewellery (earrings, lock rings, rings, bracelets), weapons (bows, quivers, arrowheads), harness elements, and tools (needle boxes, needles). In some cases, particularly in the graves with fewer goods, these are mixed with the elements of the previous era (tubes of hairpins, whip ends, or a shepherd's staff, respectively a famous item of the Avar era, the disentangling hook). Thus, by the nature of the inventory, it appears that in addition to the clear aspects of female and male material culture from the 10th century, the identification of aspects

[3] In this sense, see KOVÁCS 2013, p. 511–604, with bibliography.

[4] About the burials in the opposite direction from W–E, i.e. E–W, cf. GÁLL 2013, p. 597–601.

of material culture points out connections with the late Avar period (grave no. 207), posing many problems regarding the cultural origin(s) of the population buried at Vălcani.

The position of the coins in the graves

The early medieval cemetery contains seven coins discovered in six of the 197 investigated graves. They were distributed as follows: grave no. 38 – an unidentified half coin (**Fig. 3**); grave no. 97 – a coin from Stephen I (1000–1038), type H.1 (**Fig. 5/1**); grave no. 99 – a coin from Stephen I, type H.1 (**Fig. 4/99/1**); grave no. 176 – a coin from Andrew I (1046–1060) type. H.9 (**Fig. 3/176/1**); grave no. 78 – two coins from Solomon (1063–1074), one type H.15 and one type H.17 (**Fig. 4/78/1–2**); grave no. 90 – an H.17-type coin (**Fig. 4/90/1**).

The literature generally identifies the coins deposited in graves from the 11th–12th centuries are generally identified as funerary obols[5]; however, in the case of the Vălcani coins, the ritualistic role of some of them is seriously questioned. While in the case of the coins from graves no. 90, 99, and 176 their obol function is quite obvious, in graves no. 38 and 78, their positioning is difficult to explain, although we cannot exclude the possibility that they were moved as a result of disturbances. At the same time, the pierced medallion (the coin of Stephen I) can be considered as a jewel, along with the twisted gorget.

Table 1. The positions of the coins in the graves, respectively the issuer and their types.

No. 38	under the pelvic bone	?	Unidentified
No. 78/1	under the pelvic bone, next to the finger	Solomon (1063–1074)	*H17*
No. 78/2	under the pelvic bone, next to the finger	Solomon (1063–1074)	*H15*
No. 90	on the sternum	Solomon (1063–1074)	*H17 (?)*
No. 97	as a pierced medallion, in the mouth	Stephen I (1000–1038)	*H1*
No. 99	in the mouth	Stephen I (1000–1038)	*H1*
No. 176	in the mouth	Andrew I (1046–1060)	*H9*

Analogies of the coins in 10th–11th-centuries necropolises of nearby regions (Map 1)

The Vălcani necropolis is part of the 11th century grave finds in the area of the confluence of the Mureș, Tisa, and Aranca Rivers. Among the burial sites that underwent archaeological research, Hungarian coins from the 11th century were found in Banatsko Aranđelovo, Novi Kneževac municipality[6], Deszk[7], and Kiszombor[8]. On the basis of these discoveries, the analysis of analogies is geographically expanded in the southern direction in Banat, and in the northern direction, to the Criș River.

[5] About the discoveries of obols in the area of the Transylvanian Basin, the Crișana, Ierului, and Banat areas, cf. GÁLL 2013, p. 613–615, with bibliography.

[6] KOVÁCS 1992, p. 37–74.

[7] BÁLINT 1991, p. 218, no. 56.

[8] KÜRTI 2008.

Stephen I's coins provided a dating of the cemeteries at Hodoni[9] and Szentes-*Kistőke*[10], where these coins are the only ones to be found. In the researched region, they were also found in necropolises containing coins from later periods, such as those from Gerendás[11] (the most recent from Andrew I), Hódmezővásárhely-*Kopáncs*[12] (the most recent from Solomon), Csanytelek[13], and in Vărşand[14] – both with the most recent coins issued by Ladislaus I (1077–1095).

Andrew I's coins were found in the necropolises at Fábiánsebestyén[15] and Hódmezővásárhely-*Rárós*[16], Gerendás[17], and Pădureni[18]. In burial sites that have the most recent coins from Solomon, they are found at Szegvár[19] and Szentes-*Szentlászló*[20], and in burial sites with the latest coinage from Ladislaus I, at Csanytelek[21], Deszk[22], Kiszombor[23], Szentes-*Kaján*[24], Gyomaendrőd[25], and Vărșand[26].

In the burial sites at Hódmezővásárhely-*Kopáncs*[27], Szentes-*Szentlászló*[28], Szegvár[29], and at Elek[30], Solomon's coins are the most recent ones. Coins of the same king are found in six other burial sites where the most coins are issues of Ladislaus I, at Csanytelek[31], Hódmezővásárhely-*Barcirét*[32], Gyomaendrőd[33], Örménykút[34], Vărșand[35], and Banatsko Aranđelovo[36].

Both Andrew I's and Solomon's coins can also be found in necropolises where later issues, up to the 12th century, were also discovered such as those from Biharkeresztes[37] – with the most recent one from Coloman (1095–1116);

[9] BEJAN, MOGA 1979, p. 155–168; GÁLL 2013, p. 228–235, and Vol. II pl. 107/Gr. 2, gr. 4.
[10] FEHÉR, ÉRY, KRALOVÁNSZKY 1962, p. 73, no. 1012–1013.
[11] DIENES 1965, p. 136–174.
[12] PÁRDUCZ 1943, p. 183–192.
[13] SZÉLL 1941, p. 245–255.
[14] MEDGYESI 1995, p. 98–118; GÁLL 2013, p. 207–225.
[15] FEHÉR, ÉRY, KRALOVÁNSZKY 1962, p. 36, no. 308.
[16] FEHÉR, ÉRY, KRALOVÁNSZKY 1962, p. 41, no. 405.
[17] DIENES 1965, p. 136–174.
[18] GÁLL 2013, p. 478.
[19] BENDE, LŐRINCZY 1997, p. 201–285.
[20] SZÉLL 1941, p. 233–244.
[21] SZÉLL 1941, p. 245–255.
[22] BÁLINT 1991, p. 218, no. 56.
[23] KÜRTI 2008.
[24] FEHÉR, ÉRY, KRALOVÁNSZKY 1962, p. 73, no. 1009.
[25] MEDGYESI 2015, p. 63.
[26] ROSKA 1941, p. 45–61; MEDGYESI 1995, p. 98–118; GÁLL 2013, p. 207–225.
[27] PÁRDUCZ 1943, p. 183–192.
[28] SZÉLL 1941, p. 233–244.
[29] BENDE, LŐRINCZY 1997, p. 201–285.
[30] MEDGYESI 1996, p. 197–206.
[31] SZÉLL 1941, p. 245–255.
[32] BANNER 1937, p. 50–69.
[33] MEDGYESI 2015, p. 63.
[34] LISKA 1996, p. 175–208.
[35] ROSKA 1941, p. 45–61; MEDGYESI 1995, p. 98–118; GÁLL 2013, p. 207–225.
[36] KOVÁCS 1992, p. 37–74.
[37] MESTERHÁZY 1990, p. 50–57.

Magyarhomorog[38] – with the most recent one from Stephen II (1116–1131); Békés-*Povádzug*[39], – both having Béla II's (1131–1141) coinage as the most recent.

The presence of Stephen I, Andrew I, and Solomon's coins within the same necropolis was observed at Csanytelek[40] and Vărșand[41]. Outside the area, this simultaneous presence can be seen in necropolises dated later, such as Biharkeresztes[42], Magyarhomorog[43], and Hajdúdorog[44].

In addition to the discovery in grave no. 78 from Vălcani, which contains two coins from Solomon, in the analysed area, the simultaneous presence of several coins in a single grave can also be observed in the necropolises of Szentes-*Szentlászló*, Csanytelek, and Banatsko Aranđelovo. In these cases, Solomon's coin is found alongside an unidentified coin at Csanytelek[45] and alongside two coins of Ladislaus I at Banatsko Aranđelovo[46]. The association of two coins from the reign of Solomon is also confirmed in the necropolises near the northern bank of the Crișul Repede River, at Biharkeresztes[47], and at Magyarhomorog[48]. In light of coin couplings in the graves, while pre-Solomon issues co-occur with earlier issues, Solomon's coins co-occur only with later coins from Ladislaus I.

Within the settlement network from the 10th and 11th centuries in the micro-region south of the Aranca River – since the coins from Teremia Mică are unidentified – the Vălcani necropolis is the only one with a dateable coin. Among the burial sites that underwent archaeological research in the area of the Mureș–Tisa–Aranca Rivers, the majority do not contain coins, while those containing coins are dated later than the Vălcani cemetery, with coins from the reign of Ladislaus I.

The early medieval necropolis at Vălcani is congruent with other burial sites from the 10th and 11th centuries in the researched area that contain coins, thorough the simultaneous presence of Stephen I, Andrew I, Solomon coins. Just as in the case of the burial sites discussed above, at Vălcani, Solomon's coins are not simultaneously present alongside older coins in the same grave.

In regard of the numismatic material, the necropolis is consistent with the previous discoveries, but like these, it does not offer any new information regarding the question of the chronology of Arpadian monetary types from the 11th century.

[38] KOVÁCS 2006, p. 215–248.
[39] TROGMAYER 1962, p. 9–38.
[40] SZÉLL 1941, p. 245–255.
[41] ROSKA 1941, p. 45–61; MEDGYESI 1995, p. 98–118; GÁLL 2013, p. 207–225.
[42] MESTERHÁZY 1990, p. 50–57.
[43] KOVÁCS 2006, p. 215–248.
[44] AH 1996, p. 226–231.
[45] SZÉLL 1941, p. 246, grave no. 25.
[46] KOVÁCS 1992, p. 47, grave no. 2/1903.
[47] MESTERHÁZY 1990, p. 50, grave no. 95.
[48] KOVÁCS 2006, p. 20, graves no. 335 and no. 482. In grave 93, Solomon's coin is coupled with an unidentified coin.

Regarding the inventories in the graves

Even if the coins represent a definite *post-quem* term, it is also useful to analyse the other goods discovered in these graves. Of the six graves, in graves no. 97 and 99, other types of goods beside numismatic material have been identified.

Simple loop rings from grave no. 99 are very interesting, because in most cases these types of jewellery are associated with much earlier items, being dated to the 10th century[49]. At the same time, in our case, the identification of the coins discovered in the graves dates these simple loop rings (1a-b)[50] much later, in the second part of the 11th century.

In the case of the twisted torques made of bronze alloy, their dating is accepted in the second half or the end of the 10th century, but the massive-heavy ones can be dated to the 11th century[51] (**Fig. 6/5**). In the case of Vălcani, this earlier observation is reinforced by the dating of the coin and the discovery of the Kovács *3b*-type bracelet with zoomorphic decoration, previously dated exclusively to the beginning of the 11th century[52]. Therefore, the observation gains new support from grave no. 97 (**Fig. 5/3, Fig. 6/4**), dated by a pierced *H1* coin.

Conclusions

1. From a planimetric point of view, the graves with horses or with inventories of weapons, apart from grave no. 91, are not part of the group of graves dated with coins. In the current phase of the research, we can state that from the point of view of relative and absolute chronology, the graves with coins are the latest. At the same time, considering the significant number of elements specific to the second half of the 10th century (e.g.: trapezoidal stirrups[53]), the necropolis was probably in use from the second half of the 10th century (**Fig.** *2*).

2. For the relevance of dating the graves with coins, they certainly offer a clear *post-quem*, but no precision regarding the burial period. Thus, based on the planimetry of these burials, at the current stage of the research, it seems to us that they represent the last phase of the burials[54].

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[49] GÁLL 2013, p. 640–660.

[50] GÁLL 2013, p. 654–655.

[51] SZŐKE 1962, p. 92–94; GIESLER 1991, p. 116–120, pl. 53; KOVÁCS 1994, p. 115.

[52] KOVÁCS 1994, p. 131, Abb. 31/3b.

[53] GÁLL 2015, p. 373–377.

[54] In order to clarify these dilemmas, we are planning on carrying out radiocarbon analyses in the case of the dated coins (also).

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Fig. 1. The position of the archaeological site in the microregion: 1 – Today (Google Earth.com); 2 – On the First Military Survey map, 1782–1785 (maps.arcanum.com).

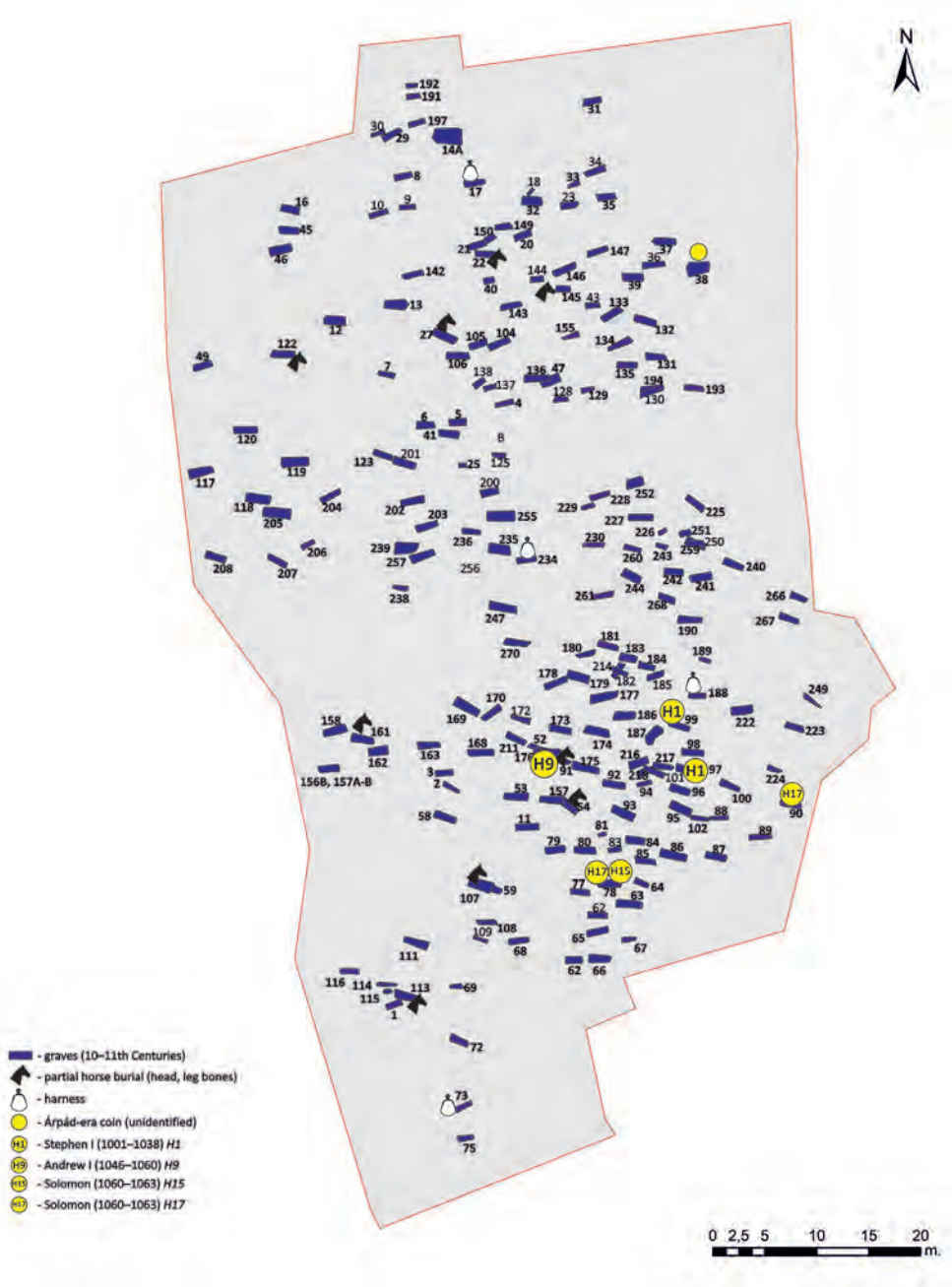


Fig. 2. Survey map of the 10th–11th-centuries funeral site.

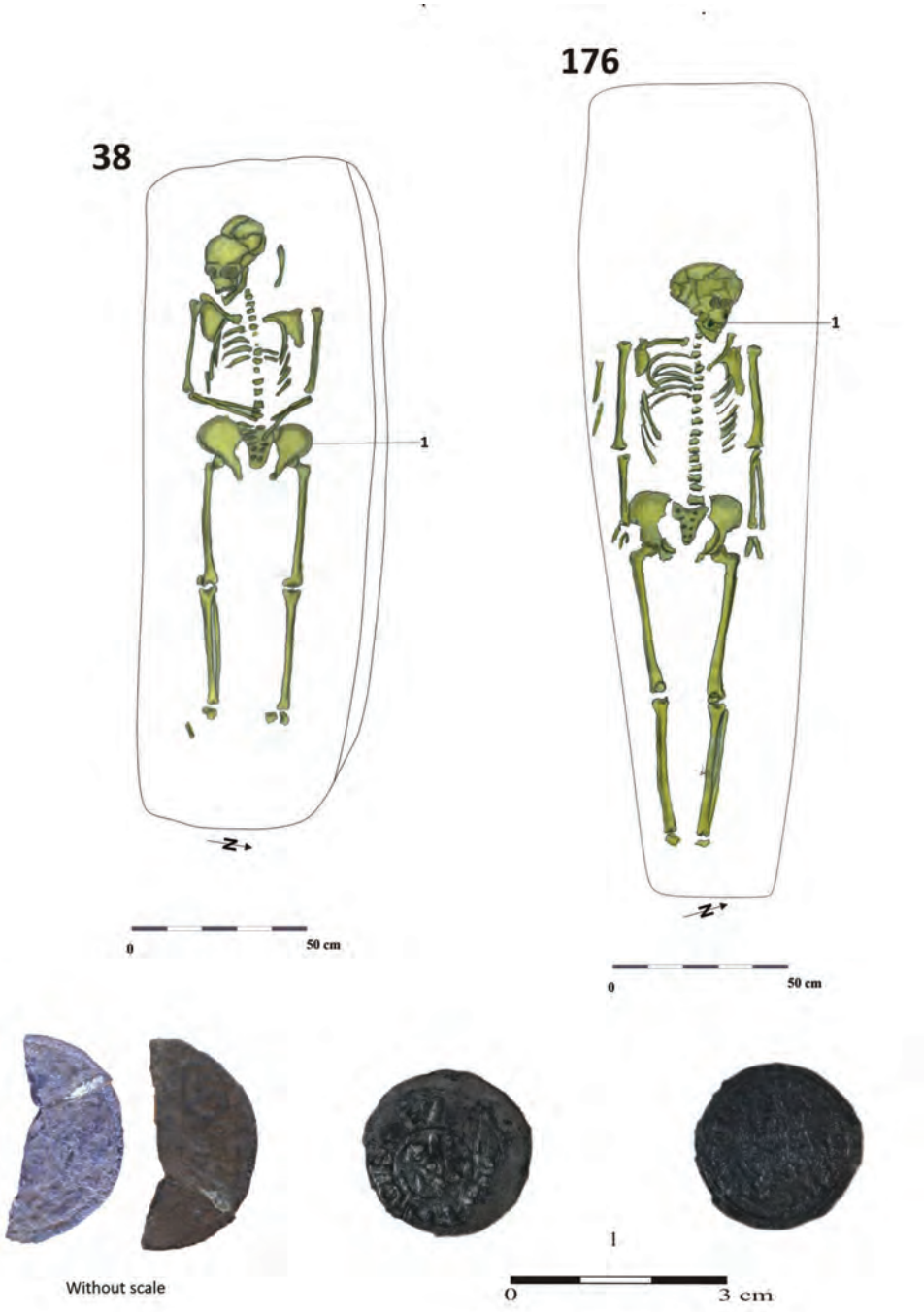


Fig. 3. Funerary inventory in graves nos. 38 and 176.

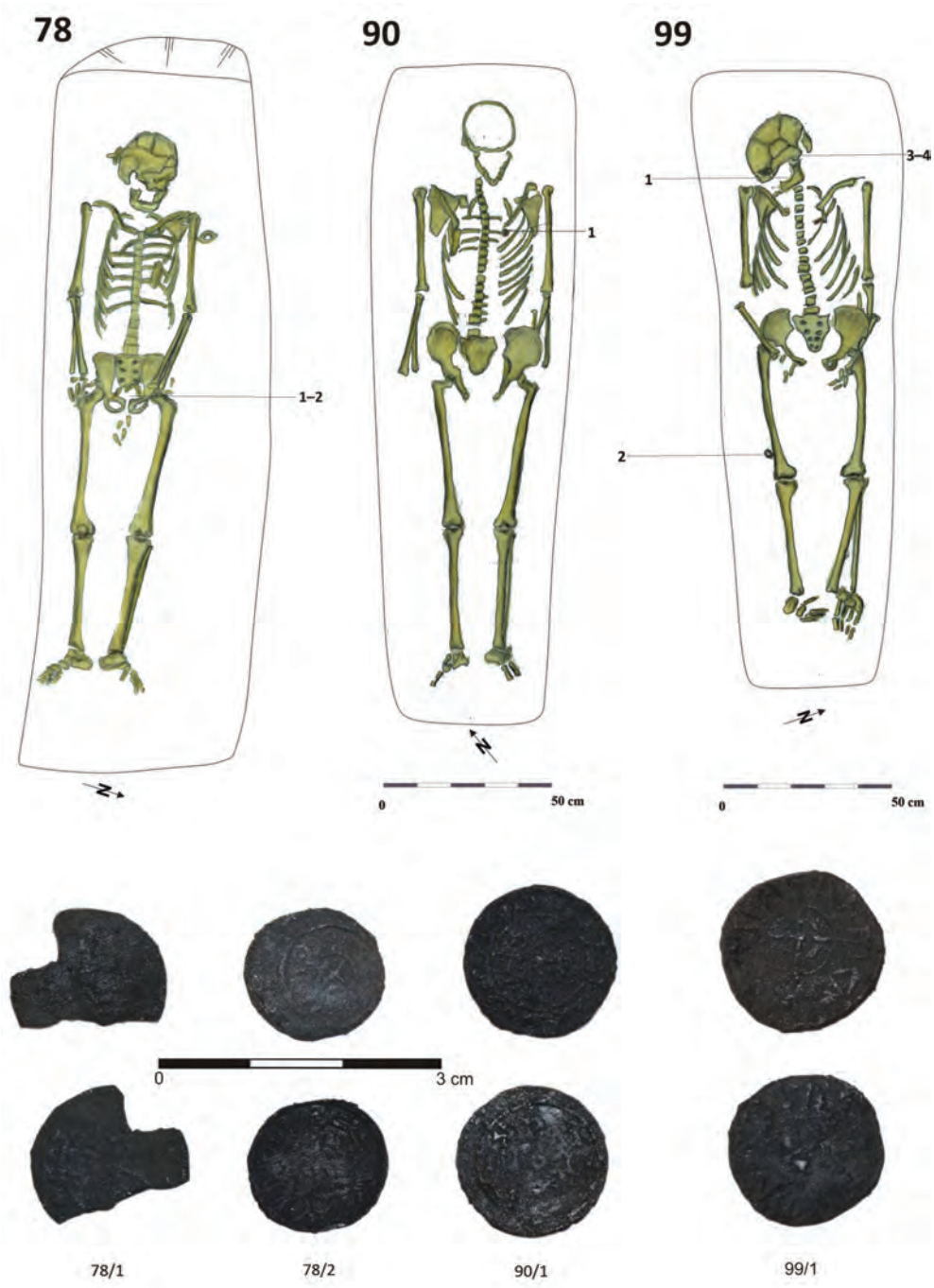


Fig. 4. Funerary inventory in graves nos. 78, 90 and 99.

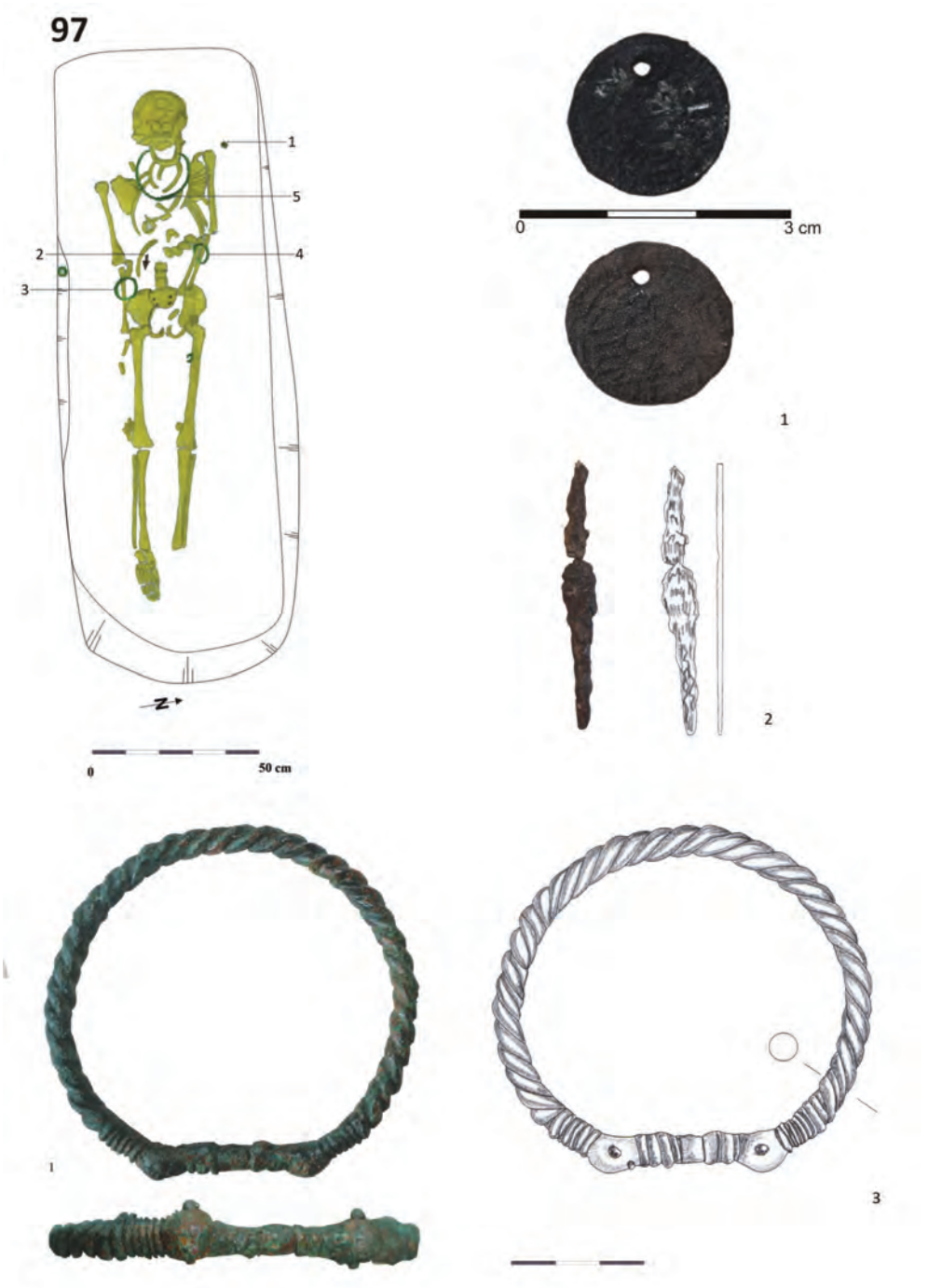


Fig. 5. Funerary inventory in grave no. 97.

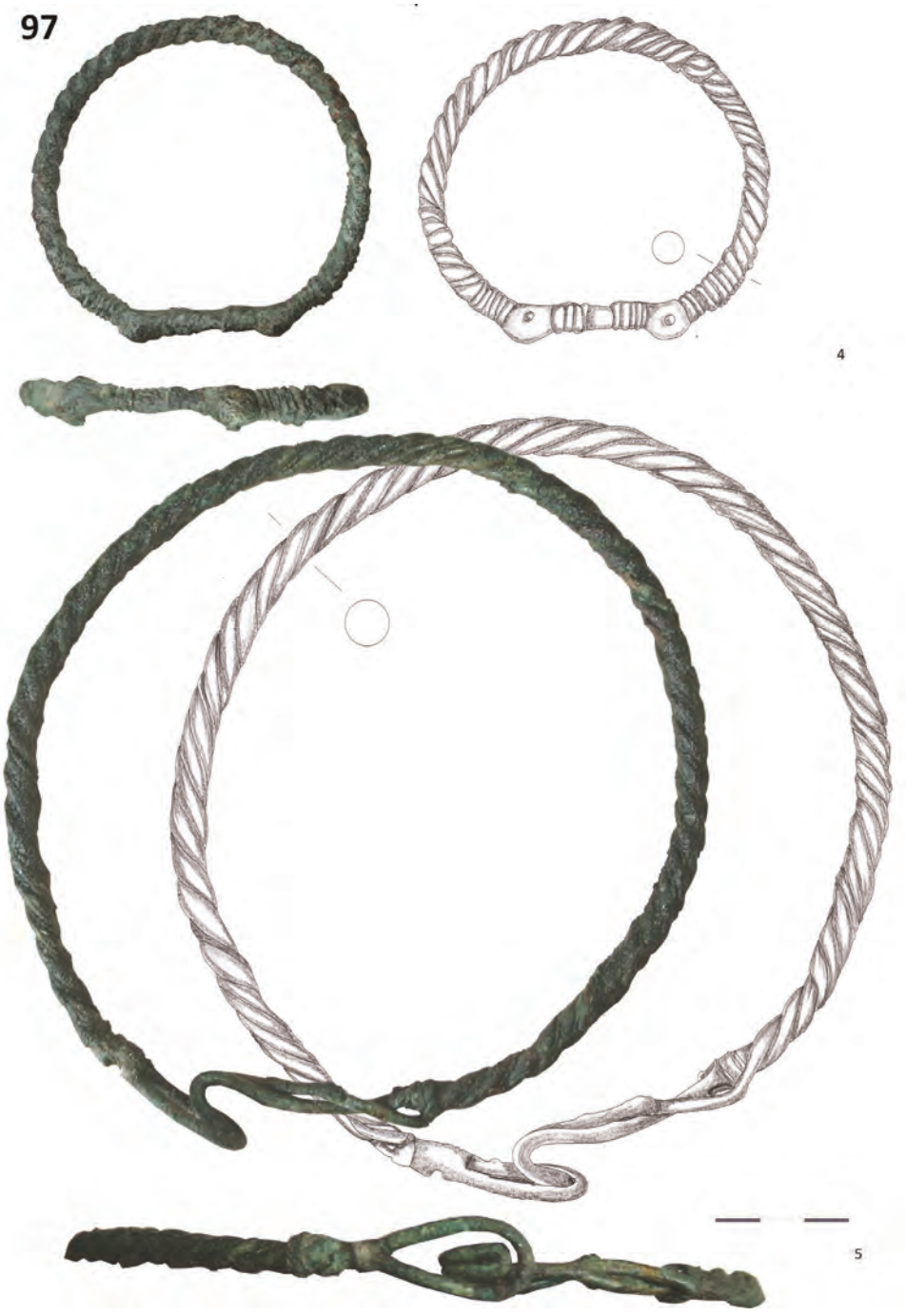
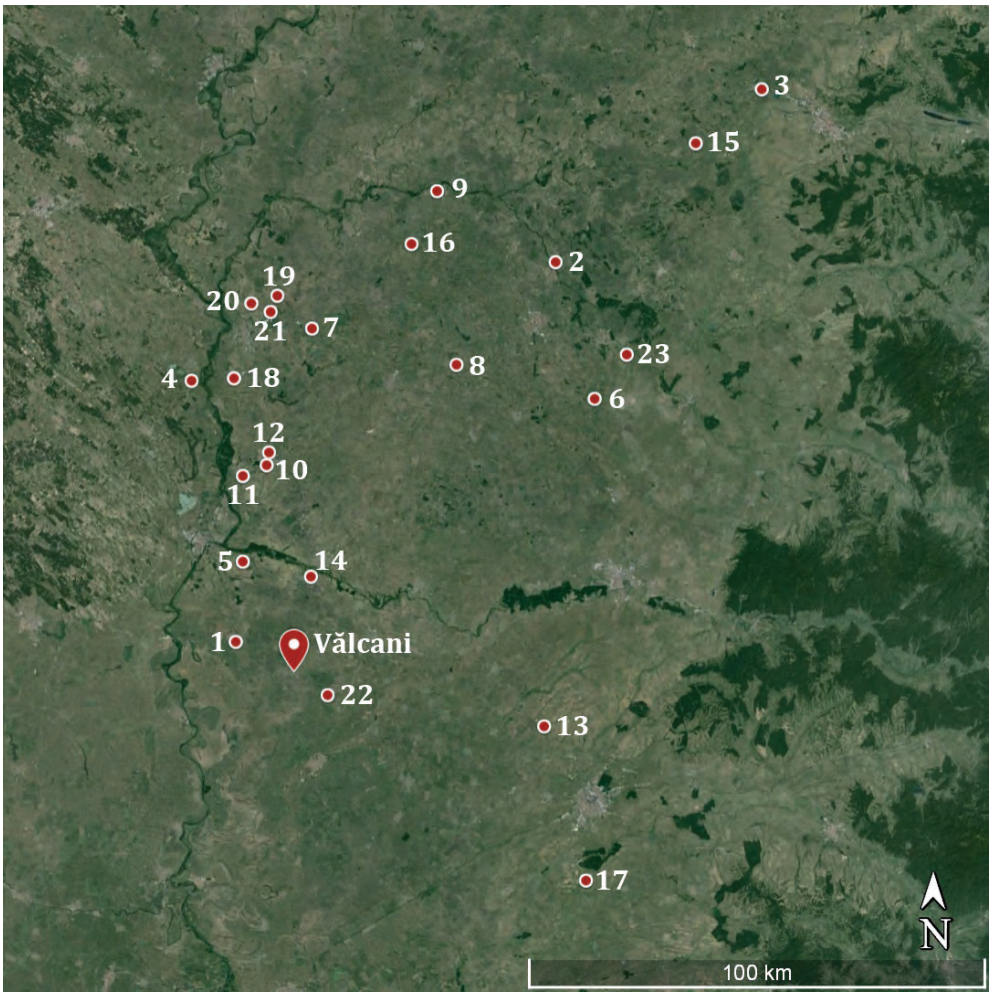


Fig. 6. Funerary inventory in grave no. 97.



Map 1. The list of the discoveries mentioned in the text: 1 – Banatsko Aranđelovo; 2 – Békés; 3 – Biharkeresztes; 4 – Csanytelek; 5 – Deszk; 6 – Elek; 7 – Fábiánsebestyén; 8 – Gerendás; 9 – Gyomaendrőd; 10 – Hódmezővásárhely-Barcirét; 11 – Hódmezővásárhely-Kopáncs; 12 – Hódmezővásárhely-Rárós; 13 – Hodoni; 14 – Kiszombor; 15 – Magyarhomorog; 16 – Örménykút; 17 – Pădureni; 18 – Szegvár; 19 – Szentes-Kaján; 20 – Szentes-Kistőke; 21 – Szentes-Szentlászló; 22 – Teremia Mică; 23 – Vărșand.

SOME DATA REGARDING SEVERAL COIN HOARDS FROM THE 10TH–11TH CENTURIES DISCOVERED IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS AT *TROPAEUM TRAIANI* – ADAMCLISI, CONSTANȚA COUNTY (SECTOR C, SOUTH DISTRICT)

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Keywords: folles, *hoards*, Tropaeum Traiani, *10th–11th centuries, Paradounavon*.
Cuvinte-cheie: folles, *tezaure*, Tropaeum Traiani, *secolele X–XI, Paradounavon*.

Abstract: *The authors present three coin hoards/deposits consisting of Byzantine bronze coins from the 10th–11th centuries. The first hoard is made up of four pieces found in a closed complex and may be associated with a Pecheneg raid in 1027. The other two, consisting of 61 and 11 coins (the latter found in a ceramic vessel), were hidden during the context of the Pecheneg raid of 1046/1048. By analyzing the coin finds from Adamclisi, both isolated coins and hoards, the authors note the existence of habitation in the area, numismatically evidenced, chronologically framed from the 9th to the 12th century.*

Rezumat: *Autorii prezintă trei tezaure/depozite monetare compuse din monede bizantine de bronz din secolele X–XI. Primul este alcătuit din patru piese găsite într-un complex închis și ar putea fi pus în legătură cu un raid peceneg din anul 1027. Celelalte două, compuse din 61, respectiv 11 piese (cel din urmă găsit într-un vas ceramic), au fost ascunse în contextul raidului peceneg din anii 1046/1048. Analizând descoperirile monetare de la Adamclisi, atât izolate, cât și tezaure, autorii constată existența unei locuiri în zonă, probată numismatic, încadrată cronologic din secolul al IX-lea până în veacul al XII-lea.*

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conducted several archaeological campaigns in the southern district of *Tropaeum Traiani* during the 1970s and 1980s[1]. These campaigns were limited in number and scope, focusing on uncovering the urban vestiges characteristic of the late Roman city. However, with the beginning of the 21st century, excavations resumed on a larger scale based on a detailed research plan aimed at revealing all urban aspects of Sector C (the southern district), along with the construction details and functional aspects of the second main street in the fortress (the *cardo* or *via principalis*). During these excavations, remains of buildings with varied construction details were found east and west of the *cardo*. The most imposing building was uncovered west of the *via principalis*, a *domus* adapted to the buildable space within the late Roman district characteristic of the 4th–6th centuries. This structure is situated south of the *basilica forensis* and not far from the city's south gate. It includes numerous interior rooms separated by earth-bonded walls, featuring an atrium, two perpendicular halls oriented north-south and west-east, entrances and exits on the outer sides, and interior spaces, among other elements[2]. Later, from the early medieval period, traces of communities typical of that era were observed, with numismatic discoveries among the archaeological finds. Besides isolated coins, three coin hoards or deposits were identified in 2020, 2021, and 2022 in the southeastern area of the mentioned building[3] (**Fig. 1**).

From the beginning of archaeological research at *Tropaeum Traiani* and the surrounding area, several coin hoards/deposits from various historical periods have been discovered. In 1908, a hoard of Byzantine coins with a *terminus post quem* of 587 was found[4]. Half a century later, another hoard appeared, containing Roman Republican and Imperial coins with a *terminus post quem* of 80 AD[5]. In 1968, a true hoard was uncovered, comprising over 1.500 Roman imperial denarii, hidden or lost in the early 3rd century[6]. In 1986, a new find was unearthed with a *terminus post quem* of 336[7], and a few years later, in 1993, another deposit emerged, with a *terminus post quem* of 594/5, related to an Avaro-Slavic raid in the province[8]. It is noteworthy that both the 1908 hoard and the latter one serve as evidence of the cessation of urban life at *Tropaeum Traiani*, as well as in other sites across Dobruja[9]. In 1999, a terrace near the fortress yielded a hoard of over 400 pieces dated to the 4th century, with a *terminus post quem* of 378, the year of the Roman disaster at Adrianople. A similar lot of coins appeared the following year, also in the *extra muros* area[10].

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[1] SCORPAN 1972, p. 349–372; SCORPAN 1974, p. 339–362; PANAITESCU 1979a, p. 197–204; PANAITESCU 1979b, p. 247–253; PANAITESCU 1983b, p. 230–238.

[2] TALMAȚCHI, ȘOVA 2015, p. 137–192; TALMAȚCHI, ȘOVA 2016, p. 173–192; TALMAȚCHI 2021, p. 502–507.

[3] TALMAȚCHI *et alii* 2021, p. 15–16; TALMAȚCHI *et alii* 2022, p. 17–18; TALMAȚCHI *et alii* 2023, p. 24–25.

[4] OCHEȘEANU 1997, p. 163–182.

[5] OCHEȘEANU 1988–1989, p. 91–97.

[6] BARNEA 2011.

[7] SÂMPETRU, NICOLAE 1996, p. 43–46.

[8] BOGDAN-CĂTĂNICIU, POENARU BORDEA 1996–1997, p. 85–95.

[9] This is the case of the settlements of *Troesmis, Halmyris, Carsium*, etc., cf. CUSTUREA 2019a, p. 16; TALMAȚCHI, CUSTUREA 2022, p. 107–108.

[10] VASILESCU, CUSTUREA, TALMAȚCHI 2015–2016, p. 213–256; CUSTUREA, TALMAȚCHI, VASILESCU 2016.

Without specific information on the year and exact location of the discovery, we know of a lot of 42 Bulgarian silver coins, including four pieces from Mircea the Elder, published in 1988[11]. There is a brief note from "Vasile Pârvan" Institute of Archaeology in Bucharest about a deposit of Bulgarian silver pieces, without further details. Another lot of 118 bronze pieces from the 4th century is mentioned only as a simple note, with no additional information[12]. In September 2021, a new deposit of 28 bronze coins dated to the 13th century was recovered from an area northwest of the late Roman and early Byzantine site[13]. Another recent deposit, discovered during archaeological research in sector C, southern district, behind the *basilica forensis*, in 2023, consists of bronze coins dated to the 6th century[14].

Finally, in recent years (2020, 2021, and 2022), three lots in closed-deposits were found during archaeological excavations: one consisting of 61 *folleis* (*terminus post quem* year 1046/1048), another of 4 *folleis* (*terminus post quem* year 1027), and the most recent of 11 *folleis* (*terminus post quem* 1046/1048), all connected to the Pecheneg invasions of the 11th century (**Fig. 2–4**). These are the subject of the current contribution and analysis of the situation at the Adamclisi site within the context of that century. Of course, they will also be connected to other isolated coin finds that have surfaced accidentally and in archaeological contexts over the years in the area[15]. Until recently, there was limited information regarding habitation in the area specifically during the 10th–11th centuries and even later[16].

To analyze the three coin lots, we have structured their compositions in the following tables, with the presentation organized by the year of discovery as follows.

Table 1. The hoard discovered in 2020, 61 AE (I), with a fragmentary bowl-type ceramic vessel.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
No. crt.	**Issuer**	**Class Type**	**Catalog Identification**	**No. exe.**	**Observations**
1	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 5	DOC III.2, p. 652.	3	
2	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 5 (or var. 24b)	DOC III.2, p. 652 (or p. 661).	1	
3	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 6	DOC III.2, p. 653.	1	
4	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 8	DOC III.2, p. 653.	1	
5	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 9	DOC III.2, p. 654.	1	
6	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 14 (or var. 22)	DOC III.2, p. 655 (or p. 658).	1	

[11] KUZEV 1988, p. 112.
[12] CUSTUREA, TALMAȚCHI 2011, p. 133–134.
[13] CUSTUREA, TALMAȚCHI 2022a.
[14] The unpublished discovery is being studied.
[15] CUSTUREA, TALMAȚCHI 2022b.
[16] PANAITESCU 1983a, p. 157–160; BARNEA *et alii* 1998, p. 2, point VII.

1	2	3	4	5	6
No. crt.	**Issuer**	**Class Type**	**Catalog Identification**	**No. exe.**	**Observations**
7	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 23	DOC III.2, p. 658.	1	
8	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 24	DOC III.2, p. 659.	6	
9	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 26	DOC III.2, p. 662.	2	
10	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 32	DOC III.2, p. 663.	1	
11	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 34	DOC III.2, p. 664.	1	
12	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 39	DOC III.2, p. 665.	5	
13	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 39 (or var. 40)	DOC III.2, p. 665 (or p. 666).	1	
14	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 40	DOC III.2, p. 666.	2	
15	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 40a	DOC III.2, p. 667.	2	
16	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 41	DOC III.2, p. 668.	1	
17	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 47	DOC III.2, p. 671.	2	
18	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var.?	DOC III.2, p. 650–674.	1	
19	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var.?	DOC III.2, p. 650–674.	1	Casting piece
20	Roman III	Class B	DOC III.2, p. 676.	8	
21	Roman III	Class B	DOC III.2, p. 676.	2	Double struck on revers
22	Roman III	Class B	DOC III.2, p. 676.	2	Overstruck on revers
23	Roman III	Class B	DOC III.2, p. 676.	4	Overstruck on Class A2
24	Mihail IV	Class C	DOC III.2, p. 681.	4	
25	Mihail IV	Class C	DOC III.2, p. 681.	3	Double struck on revers
26	Mihail IV	Class C	DOC III.2, p. 681.	2	Overstruck
27	Constantine IX	Class D	DOC III.2, p. 685.	1	
28	Constantine IX	Class D	DOC III.2, p. 685.	1	Double struck on revers
			TOTAL	**61 AE**	

Table 2. The hoard discovered in 2021, 4 AE (II), closed complex.

1	2	3	4	5	6
No. crt.	**Issuer**	**Class Type**	**Catalog Identification**	**No. exe.**	**Observations**
1	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 1a	DOC III.2, p. 650.	1	
2	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 24	DOC III.2, p. 659.	1	
3	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 24	DOC III.2, p. 659.	1	The piece is cast, the legend shows the barbarized letters
4	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 41	DOC III.2, p. 668.	1	
			TOTAL	**4 AE**	

Table 3. The hoard discovered in 2022, 11 AE (III).

1	2	3	4	5	6
No. crt.	**Issuer**	**Class Type**	**Catalog Identification**	**No. exe.**	**Observations**
1	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 5 (24b)	DOC III.2, p. 652/661.	3	
2	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 9	DOC III.2, p. 654.	1	
3	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 24	DOC III.2, p. 659.	1	Double struck on revers
4	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 40	DOC III.2, p. 666.	1	
5	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 40	DOC III.2, p. 666.	1	Double struck on revers
6	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 40	DOC III.2, p. 666.	1	Molded and perforated part
7	Basil II – Constantine VIII	Class A, var. 41	DOC III.2, p. 668.	1	
8	Roman III	Class B	DOC III.2, p. 676.	1	Double struck on revers
9	Constantine IX	Class D	DOC III.2, p. 685.	1	Casting piece
			TOTAL	**11 AE**	

At the beginning of the 11th century, the reestablishment of Byzantine administration at the Lower Danube created favorable conditions for the development of a monetary economy. For more than a generation, the province enjoyed sustained prosperity and reconstruction. For this century, 155 locations with isolated coin finds and 55 hoards or monetary deposits have been recorded, generally marking the directions of invaders' attacks[17]. The Pecheneg raid of 1027, not mentioned in contemporary documents but identified through coin discoveries, seems to have had

[17] CUSTUREA 2019b, p. 341–342.

a short-lived impact, affecting only certain areas in Paradounavon. Among the ten hoards hidden or lost likely due to this attack, three contain precious metal items — Obrochishche[18], Tvarditsa[19], and Valea Nucarilor[20] —, one is mixed (Durankulak)[21], and six contain copper coins — Adamclisi, Horia[22], Isaccea[23], Krapets[24], Odartsi[25], and Skala[26]. The invasion appears to have spread southward, though the Danube line was also affected. Regarding isolated finds, their series either halts or ceases entirely in sites such as Babadag[27], Cobadin[28], *Dinogetia*-Garvăn (Tulcea County)[29], and Valea Nucarilor[30].

The isolated finds indicate a continuity of monetary penetration until the mid–11th century, when the province became the site of Pecheneg raids in the years 1046–1048. The two hoards containing 61 *folles* and 11 *folles*, respectively, were hidden or buried due to these events. The fortress at Adamclisi and its surrounding area join other sites in a similar situation, such as *Dinogetia*-Garvăn [31] and Păcuiul lui Soare (with two deposits)[32]. At the same time, in 18 sites, there are interruptions or even a cessation of monetary circulation, as seen at Abrit[33], Babadag[34], Batovo[35], Bărăganu[36], Beștepe[37], Boiana(?)[38], Capidava[39], Cernavodă(?)[40], Chilia Veche[41], Cobadin[42], Dorobanțu[43], Enisala[44], Histria[45], Oltina[46], Ostrov (Constanța County) [47], Slava Rusă[48], Valea Teilor[49] and Valu lui Traian[50].

[18] PARUSHEV 1993, p. 164, no. 59.
[19] IVANOV 1995, p. 312, no. 11.
[20] MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2001, p. 212.
[21] IVANOV 1995, p. 312, no. 10.
[22] MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 1992, p. 51–52.
[23] MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU, POLL 2006, p. 435–439.
[24] IVANOV 1995, p. 312, no. 12.
[25] PARUSHEV 1999, p. 134, no. 913–919.
[26] YOTOV, ATANASOV 1998, p. 130.
[27] CUSTUREA 2000, p. 131, no. 125.
[28] CUSTUREA, ADAMESCU 2013, p. 492, 498, no. 23–30.
[29] MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2018, p. 649.
[30] CUSTUREA 2000, p. 156, no. 125.
[31] OBERLÄNDER-TÂRNOVEANU 2018, p. 78–105.
[32] MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2017b, p. 269–271, 278–279.
[33] PARUSHEV 2015, p. 120.
[34] CUSTUREA 2000, p. 131, no. 4.
[35] PARUSHEV 1993, p. 151, no. 12; PARUSHEV 2015, p. 121–122.
[36] CUSTUREA, ADAMESCU 2013, p. 497, no. 5–19.
[37] CUSTUREA 2000, p. 135, no. 10.
[38] PARUSHEV 1993, p. 153, no. 22–23.
[39] MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2017a, p. 450–470.
[40] CUSTUREA 2000, p. 135, no. 21.
[41] CUSTUREA 2000, p. 135, no. 22.
[42] CUSTUREA 2000, p. 136, no. 25; CUSTUREA, ADAMESCU 2013, p. 497–498, no. 20–30.
[43] CUSTUREA 2000, p. 138, no. 35.
[44] MĂNUCU-ADAMEȘTEANU 2016, p. 90–99.
[45] CUSTUREA 2000, p. 140, no. 47.
[46] CUSTUREA 2009, p. 618, no. 96–101 and the summary table.
[47] CUSTUREA 2000, p. 147, no. 72.
[48] CUSTUREA 2000, p. 153, no. 105.
[49] CUSTUREA 2000, p. 156, no. 126.
[50] CUSTUREA 2000, p. 157, no. 127; CUSTUREA, ADAMESCU 2013, p. 507, no. 224.

After the economic and social collapse of the province at the beginning of the 7th century[51], the resumption of habitation in the area is observed sometime during the 9th century, with evidence from two issues from Leo V and Basil I. The series of issues from Leo VI to Constantine IX suggests the presence of significant habitation in this territory, proven by a continuous coin series likely disrupted by the Pecheneg raids of 1046–1048. This set of coins, along with the hoards described above, situates the fortress at Adamclisi within the model of provincial monetary circulation[52]. After the mentioned major raid, monetary penetration resumes at a lower level; however, there remains a continuity of issuers for approximately a century, from Constantine X to Manuel I[53].

Through the discoveries presented here, the site at Adamclisi–*Tropaeum Traiani*, previously known for its importance from the 1st to the 7th centuries, now emerges as a significant point in the mid-Byzantine history of the Danubian-Pontic province, alongside those on the Danube line that have been known for several decades.

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[52] CUSTUREA 2000, p. 103–123.

[53] CUSTUREA, TALMAȚCHI 2022b.

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Fig. 1. Aerial view of the archaeological excavations in Sector C from the year 2023, indicating the locations where the 10th–11th centuries coin hoards were discovered.

Fig. 2. Group of Byzantine coins and the ceramic vessel fragment belonging to the hoard discovered in 2020.

Fig. 3. The four Byzantine coins discovered in a closed context (temporary dwelling with hearth) in 2021.

Fig. 4. The context of the discovery of the hoard composed of 11 Byzantine coins (2022).

PRELIMINARY DATA ON A MONETARY HOARD FROM A MEDIEVAL DWELLING (IAȘI – "GHICA-DANIEL HOUSE / ST. PETERSBURG HOTEL" ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE)

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Keywords: *Medieval and Modern times, archaeological site "Old Town Center-Princely Court" in Iași, "Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel", 15th–16th centuries, dwellings, medieval hoard (15th century), imitation after Venetian ducat, Genoese-Tatar and Golden Hoard coins.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *epoca medievală și modernă, situl arheologic „Centrul istoric-Curtea Domnească" din Iași, „Casa Ghica-Daniel/Hotel St. Petersburg", complexe de locuire din secolele XV–XVI, tezaur monetar (secolul al XV-lea), imitație ducat venețian, monede genovezo-tătare și Hoarda de Aur.*

Abstract: *During the preventive archaeological investigations from "Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel" point, from the archaeological site "Old Town Center-Princely Court" in Iași, were identified and investigated 199 complexes and archaeological contexts, dated in the Eneolithic, Middle Ages and Modern era. Thus, in this perimeter were found the stone structures corresponding to the fencing wall of the "Three Holy Hierarchs" monastery, most likely dated to the 17th century, to which was added the foundation of the northern wall of the secondary building belonging to the complex "Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel" (18th–19th centuries). These structures overlap and incorporate foundations and walls from the "Ghica Houses", which in turn overlap medieval complexes from the 15th–17th centuries, as well as some remains of Cucutenian complexes. During the archaeological excavations, no less than 14 habitation complexes have been identified. Among them, complex 94/96/108 can be dated on the basis of particularly rich archaeological material in the 15th–16th centuries. The most important discovery in this archaeological complex is the recovery* in situ *of a imitation after a Venetian ducat, next to a hoard of Genoese-Tatar coins (15th century), partially outlined in the following.*

Rezumat: *În timpul cercetărilor arheologice preventive din Iași, punctul „Casa Ghica-Daniel/Hotel St. Petersburg", situat în situl arheologic „Centrul istoric-Curtea domnească"*

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din Iași, au fost descoperite și investigate 199 de complexe și contexte arheologice, care se datează în Eneolitic, Evul Mediu și perioada modernă. Prin urmare, în acest perimetru a fost descoperită o structură realizată din piatră de calcar, care făcea parte din fundația zidului care delimita complexul monastic „Trei Ierarhi", care se poate data în secolul al XVII-lea, la care a fost adosată temelia peretelui nordic al unui corp de clădire care făcea parte din complexul „Casa Ghica-Daniel/Hotel St. Petersburg" (secolele XVIII–XIX). Aceste structuri din piatră au suprapus și distrus parțial complexe arheologice medievale, din veacurile XV–XVII, dar și complexe cucuteniene. În timpul acestor cercetări arheologice preventive au fost descoperite 14 complexe de locuire datând din perioada menționată. Dintre acestea, complexul 94/96/108 se poate data, pe baza materialului arheologic bogat (monede, ceramică, obiecte din metal, sticlă etc.), în secolele XV–XVI. Cea mai importantă descoperire o reprezintă însă recuperarea in situ a unei imitații de ducat venețian din aur, dar și a unui mic tezaur de monede genovezo-tătare și tătărăști (secolul al XV-lea).

Introduction

During the preventive archaeological researches carried out in the park located to the south and in the vicinity of the "Gheorghe Asachi" Primary School from Iași, in a perimeter bordered by the former Stern/Rosenstein House (to the west) and the Palat Street (to the east) (**Fig. 1/1–2**), a wide range of archaeological complexes, contexts and materials were uncovered, spanning from the Eneolithic to the 19th century[1]. The area covered by the preventive archaeological research is placed on the upper terrace of the Bahlui River, right in front of the Palace of Culture of Iași. The remains of the Princely Courts and the Administrative Palace, which formed the core of the medieval town, have been identified on this site. The cartographic records from the 18th–19th centuries indicate the "Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel"[2] at the end of the Stephen the Great Boulevard (the former "Uliţa Mare"), exactly in the boundaries of the site under the preventive archaeological research (**Fig. 1/1–2**).

The entire area was thoroughly investigated by opening 12 squares [abbreviated "cas." (in Romanian), numbered from 1 to 12], which have been aligned on the general plan, in order to provide the entire stratigraphic sequence (**Fig. 2**). Therefore, cas. nos. 1–8 covered the northern plane of the grid. In this way, two linear profiles were obtained (the northern and the southern one) equally valid for all the aforementioned squares. Those research units are spaced 1.0 m apart for the most efficient recording of all stratigraphic data. Cas. nos. 9–11 occupied the southern half of the perimeter, following the same goals. Thus, a 1.5 m wide and 66 m long continuous balk was preserved between the two working sectors, allowing the general stratigraphy of the site to be recorded.

Given the importance of the discoveries in the northern sector of the site, the 1.5 m wide profile separating the two sectors of the perimeter under investigation was maintained during the entire length of the work, in order to conserve the identified complexes as efficiently as possible and to support the uncovered foundation

[1] For a brief survey on the archaeological discoveries in this area see: BILAVSCHI, BACUMENCO-PÎRNĂU 2023, p. 365–406.

[2] On the history of these districts and buildings relevant to the city's modern history see: PĂUNEL 1939, p. 38–39; UNGUREANU 1968, p. 53–55; SIBECHI 1980, p. 399–401; BOTEZ, PRICOP 1989, p. 34–36; IFTIMI 2016, p. 115; IFTIMI, ICHIM 2016, p. 125–131; IFTIMI 2020, p. 43–46.

walls. The entire bank of remaining land will be fully excavated once the archaeological research will resume, as part of a project for the restoration and historical valorization of the discovered remains.

Overview of the archaeological context from cas. no. 2

The archaeological preventive research in this research unit resulted not only in the revealing of the foundation walls, but also in the revealing of some particularly intriguing complexes. Therefore, the foundation walls of the "St. Petersburg Hotel" (the building on the north side of the complex) were found beneath the vegetal layer. To a large extent, at this very moment, we believe that these structures represent the underground stone remains of the enclosure wall, fencing the monastic settlement of the "Three Holy Hierarchs" (**Fig. 3/1**), east-west oriented. The boundary wall of the complex was built of worked limestone with different sizes, tied with slaked lime mortar. The stone structure has been stiffened with oak beams, falling into the tie-rod reinforced masonry type. This remnant of the stone footing was found over a total length of about 23 m, with the foundation wall of the northerly body of the hotel on its north side. We believe that when the building's supporting structure was constructed, the enclosure wall was dismantled to the ground surface, in order to provide the adequate foundation width for the building, erected in the 19th century. The inner walls of the monastic complex are 0.75–0.84 m thick. Only about 0.40–0.50 m of the foundation's elevation (about 4–5 stone ashlars) were preserved, which stood on a light-grey compact earth layer, mixed with yellow clay and burned reddish-brown clay rubble.

In the same research unit, we also captured the foundation on the north side of the hotel building and a fragment of a retaining masonry, supporting a dividing wall between two rooms of the hotel building. The base walls of the hotel's building were made of primary processed limestone blocks of medium to large size, bound with yellowish lime mortar with a high proportion of sand. They are approximately 0.75–0.77 m wide. The footing slab was encountered at –2.35 m below, at the deepest point surveyed on the south side. However, the north side, with an initial thickness of only 0.30–0.40 m, was attached to the surrounding wall of the "Three Holy Hierarchs" monastery. In this way, the total thickness of the north foundations, added to the width of this wall with tie rods, amounts to 1.04–1.24 m. Its footing slab was traced at 2.10 m below. The eastern side of the foundation wall has a wide relieving arch (**Fig. 3/2**), with a maximum opening of about 3.40 m, and a height of 1.85 m, anchored in a thick layer (around 1.50 m) made of brown earth mixed with yellow soil and a lot of coal-burnt rubble and clay, from the potential fire-destroyed walls of a possible dwelling. In the northern profile, we investigated the stone footing of a discharge arch, which was, most probably, part of the load-bearing structure of the "Turkish Inn" or "Three Hierarchs Inn". The wall fragment (Cx. no. 40) was made of primary worked limestone blocks of medium to large size, tied with hydraulic lime mortar filled with coarse-grained sand. The wall was set between –0.54–3.05 m, having a trapezoid shape with a broad base at the top narrowing towards the lower area. Dimensions: $Weight_{top}$ = 2.35 m (max.) and $Weight_{bottom}$ = 1.40 m (max.); Height = 2.48 m, Thickness = 0.75 m. This masonry footing destroys the south side of a

possible dwelling complex (Cx. no. 150, captured between 1.15–2.73 m below) of rectangular shape with rounded corners. The pit was filled with dark grayish-dark earth, mixed with small lumps of yellow clay, as well as charcoal pigments of burned wood and reddish charred adobe. From its fill parts of some Cucutenian vessels were recovered (including a female idol; archaeological materials of Eneolithic origin, in a secondary position, embedded in the soil), together with pottery fragments dated to the 16th and 17th centuries, respectively from the 17th and 18th–19th centuries onwards. The preserved dimensions of the pit are 1.05/1.75 × 4.50 m.

The 15th–16th century dwelling complex

In this square, the foundations of the hotel building cut off to the north and east a dwelling complex, arguably dated, on the basis of the archaeological material recovered, in the later 15th and early 16th centuries (conventionally referred to as Cx. nos. 94/96/108, depending on the evolution of the archaeological status in this research unit) (**Figs. 4/1** and **5/1, 3**). Due to its relatively small dimensions [the surviving sizes of the complex are 2.05 m (up to the foundation masonry of the dividing wall between the rooms) / 4.4 m (up to the eastern profile of cas. 2) × 5.20 m (the southern side penetrates the witness between cas. no. 2 and cas. no. 9)] and the abundance of artefacts unearthed, including a monetary hoard and other numerous coins dated from the 15th–16th centuries, this complex could also represent the basement of an overground dwelling (**Figs. 4/1; 5** and **7**). At the same time, these remains might have belonged to the annex of a merchant's dwelling, given the abundance of archaeological material and, especially, the quantity and variety of the coins found *in situ*.

The eastern side of the complex was overlapped and partially destroyed by the excavation of the trench for the construction of the foundations supporting the inner partition wall of the hotel. If in the upper part (between –0.55 m and –1.10 m) the dwelling's pit was filled with dark brown and grayish-grey earth, mixed with a lot of reddish burnt clay and charcoal pigments (some Turkish and Russian coins from the 17th–18th centuries were also recovered from this segment) in the lower half (between –0.90/1.10 and –2.35 m below) a consistent layer of reddish-brown burnt adobe and mudstone from the walls of the house was found, together with fragments of charred wooden beams and planks. Many of these clay lumps bear the marks of the joists, rafters, beams or wattles, onto which they once were attached. The charred bits and fragments of carbonized wood come from the structure and floor of the house. Traces from the charred floorboards and beams of this complex were found on the floor of the house. At about 1.80 m from the south bank of the square, on the west side, the entrance to the dwelling was also encountered. Nevertheless, about 0.85 m north of the entrance, an annex to this complex, built with the same beams and wooden planks, was investigated (**Figs. 4/1** and **5/1, 3**). An appreciable amount of ash from the heavy combustion which destroyed the dwelling was discharged from the backfill and floor of the complex. The entrance (the access way, noted as Cx. no. 120) was lined with oak planks (thick boards), three of which are 50–65% preserved (two of them fixed in place, the third one was found in the middle of the complex, on the floor). The dimensions of the annex are 1.25 × 1.45 m (the west side

falls within the earth corridor between cas. nos. 2 and 3), while the dimensions of the entrance are 0.65 × 1.0 m. In the rubble-filling of the wooden walls lined with burned clay, as well as on the floor of the complex, a large number of particularly varied and precious artefacts were recovered, such as an imitation after a Venetian gold ducat, dated to the early 15th century (placed on the floor of the house) (**Figs. 5/2** and **7/1**); a hoard of Tatar and Genovese silver coins dating from the 15th century (122 pieces, contained in a dark-grey clay pouch, hidden between the two beams of the wooden floor of the house and its annex) (**Figs. 7/2–13** and **9/1, 3**). Also, from the collapse layer, other five groats and double groats from Iliaș/Alexander the 1st and Stephan the 3rd, plus two Hungarian denarii from the 15th–16th centuries, were recovered. Additionally, fragments or whole vessels of locally sourced earthenware kitchen pots of local origin were collected from the substantial layer of destruction with reddish burnt adobe and charcoal lenses. These belong to the category of unglazed and red-glazed pottery, dating to the 14th–15th and 16th centuries (the most relevant types are jugs, tall cups with trilobed mouths, potsherds, powder pots, drinking cups, disc-shaped footed cups, strainers and plates). Numerous sherds were also recovered from vessels belonging to the category of black and gray-brown earthenware with incised decoration of straight and veined lines, with oblique notched or spiral decoration on the lips, typical of the 14th and 15th–16th centuries. Several other fragments of a round-legged cast-iron mounting and decorative caps from a stove (15th–16th centuries), fragments of bronze objects (different types of hoops, a ring, a few small plates, a cross) and iron (a hoe, a padlock, spikes, nails, a hinge, other small remains from various objects or tools)[3], along with a considerable amount of animal bones were also unearthed from the same stratigraphic horizon.

In the vicinity and, most probably in connection with this complex, in cas. no. 3, between the sewer wall and the foundation of the inner dividing wall between rooms nos. 2–3 of the hotel, one can notice a consistent layer of brownish earth mixed with reddish-brown burnt clay lump rubble and charcoal intrusions of burnt wood, similar in composition to the above complex (**Fig. 6**). This layer, about 1.55 m thick, overlays a rectangular-shaped pit with circular corners (Cx. no. 102) (**Fig. 6/2**). The pit, rectangular in shape, was filled with dark earth, rich in charcoal, ashes and pieces of burnt reddish-colored mudstone. Round-footed mounting tiles, semi-tubular, bulb-shaped and hollow-lobed tiles with a pointed top (a specific feature of 15th century pottery) were extracted from the fill. From the walls of these tiles, large quantities of burnt slag, tar and fragments of charred wood were collected. The preserved dimensions of this complex are 0.92 × 1.80 m, the pit being intercepted at 2.35/2.40 m below. Once the excavations are resumed and the embankment walls are reinforced, the entire complex will be fully examined. Next to this complex, a circular pit (Cx. no. 113) was excavated, containing pottery sherds from the 14th–15th centuries. Near the base of the foundation, about 0.20 m away from the wall, two pillar hoes, with a diameter of 0.18–0.22 m, were also documented and recorded.

[3] The silver, bronze and iron materials are currently undergoing cleaning and restoration processes and will be published in its entirety, along with the rest of the artefacts discovered, in the full monograph of the site.

Coin finds from Cx. nos. 94/96/108. Preliminary data

During the preventive archaeological investigations conducted in the "Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel" point, a considerable number of numismatic discoveries were identified. At the moment, all the findings are still being processed for a complete restoration. The following presentation simply overviews, in a catalogue, a small part of the entire collected lot. We decided to disseminate these first coins examined, as they represent remarkable monetary discoveries, both for the city of Iași and for the entire region east of the Carpathians.

The earliest piece is an imitation after a Venetian ducat (**Cat. no. 1**), which we presume to have had its prototype in one of the coins minted for Antonio Venier, doge of Venice between 1382 and 1400. But it's worth stressing that the name of this doge is not legible on the observe of the coin (**Fig. 8/c**). Lacking any close analogies with other published issues, on the basis of legend matches with multiple obverse and reverse errors, the piece resembles, to some extent, the counterfeits made after Venier's *ducatii*. Still, a number of clues led us to believe that the coin is not an original issue.

First of all, the coin weighs only 2.16g, far less than the standard weight of 3.56g. In addition, the coin's bright yellowish-clear color may indicate that the gold alloy carries a smaller grade. Because of this, the XRF composition analysis for metallographic composition traced a significantly lowered purity of barely 66–67%[4]. In addition to these key elements, that prove that the piece clearly did not originate from its space of provenance, our issue displays a rudimentary workmanship (**Fig. 8/b**), stylized with clumsy lettering and mistakes (**Fig. 8/b-c**). At a closer glance, a clear lack of symmetry can be detected in the minted characters composing an almost fanciful formulation (**Fig. 8/c**).

A major feature on the iconography of the obverse are the three dots hovering above the saint's head (**Fig. 8/d**). Without another mintmark in the figure, such as a „S" (for Chios) or „P" (for Pera) placed just below the doge's knees, the three dots are believed to be a monetary mark for the city of Caffa[5]. Thus, it is believed that the so-called *lightweight ducatii*, unmarked or stamped with dot(s), only circulated in the areas around the western and northern Black Sea coast[6]. The diffusion of these coins in Moldavia was favored by the predominantly Pontic orientation of the economic relations of the Principality, during the first part of the Stephan's the Great reign[7].

Our catalogue also includes a small batch of the silver coin hoard, discovered in the same archaeological context as the imitation after the Venetian ducat. Out of the few coins so far restored (13 out of 122), the earliest piece is a Genoese-Tatar

[4] The measurements were carried out by Nicoleta Vornicu, at the Metropolitan Research Centre TABOR (Iași, Romania). The sampling was performed using an Innov X Systems Alpha Series X–ray fluorescence (XRF) spectrometer (produced in the USA). The device is equipped with a W-anode X–ray tube operating up to 35 kV and 100A. The fluorescence radiation, controlled by a minicomputer, is captured and analysed with a thermoelectrically cooled Si detector (PIN). For the spectrum data and semi-quantitative survey, the Analytical mode software was used for an exposure duration of 10 seconds. The examined spot size (both on observe and revers) is of 8 mm each.

[5] OBERLÄNDER-TÂRNOVEANU 2004, p. 71, 73–76.

[6] OBERLÄNDER-TÂRNOVEANU 2004, p. 75–76.

[7] OBERLÄNDER-TÂRNOVEANU 2004, p. 80.

akçe also struck at Caffa (**Cat. no. 2**). Although the coin is in a poor state of preservation, we can still distinguish the Genoese portal on the obverse and on the reverse a fragment of the Batu tamga, center-framed in a circular linear cartouche with the insignia of Ulug Muhammad.

Finally, the coins of the Golden Horde hold a special place within the numismatic artefacts (**Cat. nos. 3–14**). On the obverse of the dirhems we have captured fragments of the legend with the name of the issuers (Küchük Muhammad [**Cat. nos. 3–5**] and Sayyid Ahmad II [**Cat. nos. 6–14**]), passed, generally, in an inner linear circle. As for the reverse, the binary tamga can be seen, in the stylized form of the trident of Ghirai, founder of the Crimean Khanate and declared descendant of Gingis Han. We encountered three major mints: Orda Bazar (**Cat. nos. 3, 6–9**), Bek Bazar (**Cat. nos. 4–5, 12–13**), Haydar Bazar (**Cat. nos. 10–11**) and one case with no mint name (**Cat. no. 14**). In the historiography, the place of these workshops is unclear, but they were most probably placed in region of Crimea, near the Dnieper, in the present Herson area.

The numismatic evidence, only partially outlined here, spans the first half of the 15th century. It is chronologically in accordance with the other categories of the archaeological material recovered. Definitely, the forthcoming full publication of the entire hoard and all the coins unearthed during the archaeological research at the "Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel" point will provide further substantial details.

CATALOGUE OF THE COINS[8]

CITY OF CAFFA

Imitative issue

Antonio Venier (?) (1382–1400), ducat

1. AV (*fourrée*); 2.16 g; 6 h; 20 mm; v.g.p.;
Obv. ΛTЄOIЄTΛЄOTI – DV*X–SMV*Є*N*Є*TI*; Kneeling Doge, receiving a *vexillium* from Saint Mark (stylized); above the saint, a mark: ∴
Rv. *SITTXPRPO(?)ΛΛTQTV[...] – REGISSTЄ DV*ↃΛT; Christ in *mandorla*; on both sides nine stars: ☆☆☆☆ – ☆☆☆☆☆ (stylized)
Caffa / Black Sea coast unknown monetary workshop, 1382–1400 (?) (LUNARDI 1980, p. 305, CS12 var.; MAZARAKIS 1997, p. 894, no. 6 var.; OBERLÄNDER-TÂRNOVEANU 2004, p. 73–76);
"Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel" (Cas. no. 2; Cx. nos. 94/96/108 [from the floor of the dwelling to the NE –2,00 m below from the level of the South bank]); IA Iași pending inventory number.

[8] The following abbreviations were used: v.g.p. = very good preserved; g.p. = good preserved; p.p. = poorly preserved; v.p.p. = very poorly preserved; g = grams; m=meters; mm = millimetres; h = hour; obv. = obverse; rv. = reverse; AV = gold; AR = silver; var. = variant; inv. = inventory; no. = number; Cas. = archaeological square; Cx. = archaeological complex; IA Iași = Institute of Archaeology of Iași (Romanian Academy).

THE COIN HOARD[9]
CITY OF CAFFA
Genoese-Tatar issue
Ulug Muhammad (1421–1423; 1427–1445), akçe

2. AR; 0.83 g; 3 h (?); 15 mm; v.p.p.; slipped die (obv. & rv.); higly bented on the obv.
Obv. *Genoese portal framed by dots* (?) (all around arabic[?] illegible marks)
Rv. *Batu Tamga* (illegible; inside an inner linear circle; top of the tamga, part of the khan's name and title);
Caffa, 1427–1433 (LUNARDI 1980, p. 119, no. C68 var.);
"Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel" (Cas. no. 2; Cx. nos. 94/96/108 [–2.55 – 2.66 m]); IA Iași pending inventory number.

THE GOLDEN HORDE
The Great Hoard. Crimean Khanate
Küchük Muhammad (cca. 1435–1460), dirhem

3. AR; 0.46 g; 1 h; 14 × 13 mm; p.p.; slipped die (obv. & rv.);
Obv. *Muhammad* / *bin* / *Timur* (inside an inner linear circle; outside de circle, the title slightly visible)
Rv. *Gyraid Tamga* (stylized trident) *duri be Orda Bazar* (around the tamga, slightly visible);
Orda Bazar, 1431–1444 (SAGDEEVA 2005, p. 68, no. 595);
"Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel" (Cas. no. 2; Cx. nos. 94/96/108 [–2.55 – 2.66 m]); IA Iași pending inventory number.

4. AR; 0.63 g; 11 h; 15 × 14 mm; v.p.p.; slipped die (obv. & rv.);
Obv. *Muhammad* / *bin* / *Timur* (inside an inner linear circle; outside de circle, the title not fully visible)
Rv. *Gyraid Tamga* (stylized trident) *duri be Bek Bazar* (around the tamga, not fully visible);
Bek Bazar, 1433–1459 (REVA, LEONOV 2023, p. 157, pl. no. 8, nos. 22–24);
"Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel" (Cas. no. 2; Cx. nos. 94/96/108 [–2.55 – 2.66 m]); IA Iași pending inventory number.

5. AR; 0.63 g; 1 h; 15 × 14 mm; p.p.; slipped die (obv. & rv.);
Obv. *Muhammad* / *bin* / *Timur* (inside an inner linear circle; outside de circle, the title not fully visible)
Rv. *Gyraid Tamga* (stylized trident) *duri be Bek Bazar* (around the tamga, not fully visible visible);
Bek Bazar, 1433–1459 (REVA, LEONOV 2023, p. 159, pl. no. 10, nos. 36–38);
"Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel" (Cas. no. 2; Cx. nos. 94/96/108 [–2.55 – 2.66 m]); IA Iași pending inventory number.

[9] The following catalogue represents a partial overview of the numismatic material. In this way, we cover only 13 pieces out of 122 silver coins of the whole batch. Currently, the coins are undergoing cleaning and restoration processes and will be fully published, in the upcoming monograph of the site.

Sayyid Ahmad II (1439–1465), dirhem

6. AR; 0.62 g; 3 h; 14 mm; g.p.; slipped die (obv.);
Obv. *Seyyid* / *Ahmad* / *han* (inside an inner linear circle; outside de circle, the title)
Rv. *Gyraid Tamga* (stylized trident) *duri be Orda Bazar* (around the tamga, from left to right);
Orda Bazar, 1439–1465 (KHROMOV 2004, p. 43, no. 8.2);
"Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel" (Cas. no. 2; Cx. nos. 94/96/108 [–2.55 – 2.66 m]); IA Iași pending inventory number.

7. AR; 0.73 g; 2 h; 14 mm; p.p.; slipped die (obv. & rv.);
Obv. *Seyyid* / *Ahmad* / *han* (inside an inner linear circle, slightly visible)
Rv. *Gyraid Tamga* (stylized trident) *duri be Orda Bazar* (?) (around the tamga, from left to right, not fully visible visible);
Orda Bazar, 1439–1465 (KHROMOV 2004, p. 43, no. 8.2);
"Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel" (Cas. no. 2; Cx. nos. 94/96/108 [–2.55 – 2.66 m]); IA Iași pending inventory number.

8. AR; 0.62 g; 5 h; 14 mm; v.p.p.; slipped die (obv. & rv.);
Obv. *Seyyid* / *Ahmad* / *han* (inside an inner linear circle; outside de circle, the title not fully visible)
Rv. *Gyraid Tamga* (stylized trident) *duri be Orda Bazar* (?) (around the tamga, from left to right, not fully visible visible);
Orda Bazar (?), 1439–1465 (KHROMOV 2004, p. 43, no. 8.2);
"Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel" (Cas. no. 2; Cx. nos. 94/96/108 [–2.55 – 2.66 m]); IA Iași pending inventory number.

9. AR; 0.65 g; 4 h; 15.5 × 14 mm; p.p.; pierced (round); slipped die (obv. & rv.);
Obv. *Seyyid* / *Ahmad* / *han* (inside an inner linear circle; outside de circle, the title not fully visible)
Rv. *Gyraid Tamga* (stylized trident) *duri be Orda Bazar* (?) (around the tamga, from left to right, not fully visible visible);
Orda Bazar (?), 1439–1465 (KHROMOV 2004, p. 43, no. 8.1);
"Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel" (Cas. no. 2; Cx. nos. 94/96/108 [–2.55 – 2.66 m]); IA Iași pending inventory number

10. AR; 0.62 g; 6 h; 14 × 13 mm; v.p.p.; slipped die (obv. & rv.);
Obv. *Seyyid* / *Ahmad* / *han* (inside an inner linear circle, slightly visible; outside de circle, the title almost illegible)
Rv. *Gyraid Tamga* (stylized trident) *duri be Haydar Bazari* (at the bottom of tamga and around, slightly visible);
Haydar Bazar, 1439–1465 (ZAYONCHKOVSKIY, TISHKIN 2018, p. 77, fig. no. 4. SP2.4);
"Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel" (Cas. no. 2; Cx. nos. 94/96/108 [–2.55 – 2.66 m]); IA Iași pending inventory number.

11. AR; 0.70 g; 10 h; 16 × 15 mm; p.p.; slipped die (obv. & rv.);

Obv. *Seyyid* / *Ahmad* / *han* (inside an inner linear circle; outside de circle, the title)
Rv. *Gyraid Tamga* (stylized trident) *duri be Haydar Bazari* (at the bottom of tamga and around);
Haydar Bazar, 1439–1465 (ZAYONCHKOVSKIY, TISHKIN 2018, p. 77, fig. no. 4. SP2.2);
"Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel" (Cas. no. 2; Cx. nos. 94/96/108 [–2.55 – 2.66 m]); IA Iași pending inventory number.

12. AR; 0.72 g; 3 h; 15 × 14 mm; p.p.; slipped die (obv. & rv.);
Obv. *Seyyid* / *Ahmad* / *han* (inside an inner linear circle; outside de circle, the title)
Rv. *Gyraid Tamga* (stylized trident) *duri be Bek Bazar* (at the bottom of tamga and around);
Bek Bazar, 1439–1465 (ZAYONCHKOVSKIY 2022, p. 212, fig. no. 2. 1–2);
"Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel" (Cas. no. 2; Cx. nos. 94/96/108 [–2.55 – 2.66 m]); IA Iași pending inventory number.

13. AR; 0.66 g; 7 h; 15 mm; p.p.; slipped die (obv. & rv.);
Obv. *Seyyid* / *Ahmad* / *han* (inside an inner linear circle; outside de circle, the title)
Rv. *Gyraid Tamga* (stylized trident) *duri be Bek Bazar* (at the bottom of tamga and around);
Bek Bazar, 1439–1465 (ZAYONCHKOVSKIY 2022, p. 212, fig. no. 2. 1–2);
"Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel" (Cas. no. 2; Cx. nos. 94/96/108 [–2.55 – 2.66 m]); IA Iași pending inventory number.

14. AR; 0.71 g; 12 h (?); 16 × 15 mm; p.p.; slipped die (obv. & rv.);
Obv. *Seyyid* / *Ahmad* / *han* (inside an inner linear circle; outside de circle, the title the title not fully visible)
Rv. *Gyraid Tamga with Kalima* (stylized trident; *kalima* instead of mint name);
No mint, 1439–1465 (ALBUM 2011, p. 224, no. B2063);
"Ghica-Daniel House/St. Petersburg Hotel" (Cas. no. 2; Cx. nos. 94/96/108 [–2.55 – 2.66 m]); IA Iași pending inventory number.

Final remarks

Obviously, further investigations in this area and the full processing of the archaeological material, information and stratigraphic data could shed more light on this topic.

In addition to this complex, several other settlement structures dating back to the 17th century have been investigated, which have preserved in situ a large amount of archaeological material. At the same time, during these preventive archaeological researches, important architectural elements for the history of the medieval and modern city were also discovered, such as: a segment of the perimeter wall that most probably delimited the property of the "Three Holy Hierarchs" monastery and which, at one point, included the inn of this settlement, known as the "Turkish Inn"; attached to this wall, the ruins of the northern body of the "St. Petersburg Hotel" complex were identified, which, most probably, overlapped the Ghica family houses, with their household annexes, the corresponding sewage systems, building facilities, and so on; the foot of a stone relief arch that was part of the foundations of the "Turkish Inn".

These results are part of a whole series of other remarkable discoveries, valuable for the history of Iași, obtained during the rescue, preventive and systematic archaeological researches in the city, starting mainly in the 1950s of the 20th century and continuing uninterruptedly until today[10].

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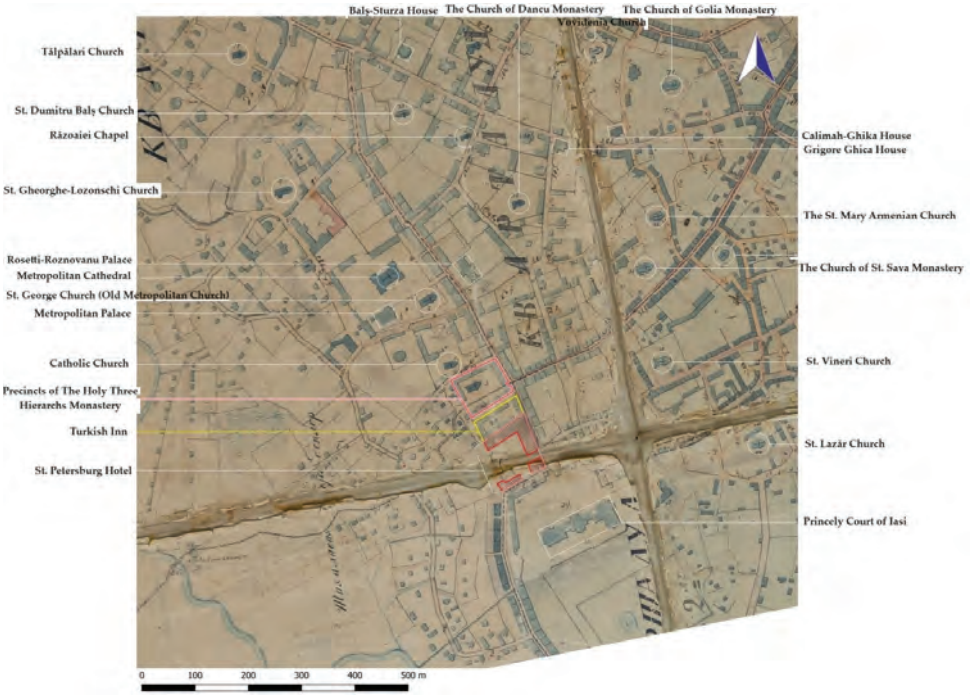

2

Fig. 1. 1 – Location of the perimeter of the archaeological research (source: Google Earth, 2023); 2 – The location of "Ghica-Daniel mansion" (the future "St. Petersburg Hotel") on the city plan of Iași (detail), drawn up by J. Raschek in 1844, mapping by C. Hriban.

Fig. 2. The plan of the archaeological research carried out in the area of the former "Ghica-Daniel mansion" – "St. Petersburg Hotel" (made by Marian Lie).

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Fig. 3. 1–2 Images of the finds in excavation 2, features 94/96/108 (stages of research); 2 – Relieving arch built into the foundation on the eastern side of the building.

Fig. 4. 1 – Habitation feature (Cx. 94/96/108) (detail); 2–5 Archaeological materials discovered *in situ*.

Fig. 5. 1, 3 – Habitation feature (Cx. 94/96/108) in final stage of research; 2 – Imitation of Venetian ducat uncovered *in situ* (after BILAVSCHI, BACUMENCO-PÎRNĂU 2023, pl. IX).

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Fig. 6. 1–2 Images of the finds in excavation 3, features Cx. 94–102 (stages of research).

Fig. 7. 1 – Imitation of Venetian ducat; 2 – Genoese-Tartar akçe. 3 – Dirhems issued by the khans of the Great Hoard, Crimean Khanate (all discovered in Cx. 94/96/108).

Fig. 8. a-d Details on the imitation of Venetian ducat (obverse): a – Three dots mark; b – Stylized representations; c – Ineligible legend details (fragment); d – Lack of mark under kneeling Doge.

Fig. 9. 1–5 Mediaeval clay vessels discovered in excavation 2, Cx. 94/96/108 (after BILAVSCHI, BACUMENCO-PÎRNĂU 2023, pl. XXIII).

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF (UN)SOLITUDE: PETRE DIACONU (1924–2007)

Oana DAMIAN[*]

Petre Diaconu[1] would have turned 100 years old this year[2], on October 6, according to the official date, which he rejected, along with the Libra zodiac sign, preferring, of course, his actual birthdate, September 17, and implicitly, the Virgo zodiac sign. However, if we were to be guided by the beautiful "story of the pig" in its autobiographical version[3], this animal is the "port-bonheur" that would have marked his existence, especially his professional life.

Petre Diaconu was a Dobrujan in the profound sense of the word, first through his birthplace, a Bulgarian village (Suneci/Svineci, Domușlar commune) near Silistra, an area that briefly became part of the Cadrilater (the former Durostor County) and the Romanian state, as well as through his mother's Bulgarian origins and his father's Romanian origins, claimed from the Muntenia region, which perhaps also

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[1] Although the current volume is thematic, dedicated to a generous subject, *Fortresses, Cities, and Settlements. Everyday Life at the Edge of Empires (7th–13th centuries)*, its editors considered this evocation, through its content and references, to be a comprehensive reference to some of the themes addressed. We are grateful to them for the generosity of their thought.

[2] Petre DIACONU (October 6, 1924 – April 3, 2007), *Curriculum vitae*, in the section *In memoriam Petre Diaconu*, SCIVA 59–60 (2008–2009), p. 263–265. For evocations of Petre Diaconu's personality, see: Niculae CONOVICI, *Petre Diaconu à 70 ans*, Dacia N.S. 40–42 (1994–1996), p. 473–498; Mihai IRIMIA, *Petre Diaconu la 80 de ani*, Pontica 37–38 (2004–2005), p. 557–574, and *Petre Diaconu (1924–2007)*, Pontica 40 (2007), p. 681–684; Radu HARHOIU, *Amintiri despre Petre Diaconu*, SCIVA 59–60 (2008–2009), p. 267–270; Oana DAMIAN, *Petre Diaconu așa cum l-am văzut eu*, SCIVA 59–60 (2008–2009), p. 271–272; Eugen S. TEODOR, *Vasul ceramic cu inscripție de la Capidava*, in *Capodopere din patrimoniul Muzeului Național de Istorie a României*, București, 2021, p. 23–29. Additionally, there is the collection of studies Ionel CÂNDEA, Valeriu SÎRBU, Marian NEAGU (eds.), *Prinos lui Petre Diaconu la 80 de ani*, Brăila, 2004, with a presentation in SCIVA 54–56 (2003–2005), p. 447–450, reflecting the extent to which Petre Diaconu's concerns found continuation/reflection in historiography. A doctoral thesis dedicated to the life and work of Petre Diaconu was defended in 2012 by Marian Trandafir, under the scientific coordination of Sever Dumitrașcu, at the University of Oradea, part of which is found, in a revised and expanded form, in the series of testimonies gathered in the volume Marian TRANDAFIR, Oana DAMIAN (eds.), *Amintiri despre Petre Diaconu [Memories of Petre Diaconu]*, Brăila, 2018.

[3] Petre DIACONU, *Autobiografie*, in: Marian TRANDAFIR, Oana DAMIAN (eds.), *Amintiri despre Petre Diaconu*, Brăila, 2018, p. 11–15.

explains his connection to the capital, mediated by the Călărași interlude immediately after 1940.

Petre Diaconu was a Dobrujan, especially through his profound professional and spiritual attachment to this special region of Romania, with its openness to the Balkan world. His wife, Aurelia Diaconu, who accompanied him for over half a century, confessed that nothing could replace the magnetism of the Dobrujan territory for him, the privileged space within it being, of course, Păcuiul lui Soare[4].

A quick review of his professional career, in relation to the evolution of Byzantine archaeology, helps us recognize the overwhelming extent to which Petre Diaconu is both a founder and a leading representative of this field. There are chapters of this type of archaeology that Petre Diaconu laid the foundations for, some that he changed or merely completed, and others that he reoriented through his extraordinary professional intuitions, which were demonstrable and later demonstrated by his successors in the profession and field. He was concerned, by his own admission, with archaeology, history, historical geography, paleodemography, toponymy, Christian archaeology, numismatics, and Byzantine sigillography, with specified scientific contributions[5], a fact amply reflected by his impressive list of works[6].

His work is permeated by the idea of the permanence of Roman civilization's tradition and the definition of the particularities of Byzantine rule in the Lower Danube region during the 6th–12th centuries[7], extending to the identification, based on archaeological data and especially numismatic evidence (issues of Ioan Terter), of the existence of a Byzantine-coloured state formation in the southwestern corner of Dobruja at the end of the 14th century, known as "Țara Dristrei" ("The country or the land of Dristra"), unknown until his demonstration[8].

[4] Aurelia DIACONU, *Interviuri și evocări*, in: Marian TRANDAFIR, Oana DAMIAN (eds.), *Amintiri despre Petre Diaconu*, Brăila, 2018, p. 46–47.

[5] Petre DIACONU, *Curriculum vitae*, in: Marian TRANDAFIR, Oana DAMIAN (eds.), *Amintiri despre Petre Diaconu*, Brăila, 2018, p. 17–20.

[6] See the last version of the list of his works in: Marian TRANDAFIR, Oana DAMIAN (eds.), *Amintiri despre Petre Diaconu*, Brăila, 2018, p. 21–39. For his studies, see also the collection Petre DIACONU, *Recenzii şi discuţii arheologice [Archaeological reviews and discussions]*, I, CCDJ 12 (1994).

[7] Petre DIACONU, *Quelques problèmes de la période comprise entre le VII^e siècle et le commencement du X^e (Dobroudja)*, Dacia N.S. 18 (1974), p. 289–293; *La Dobroudja et Byzance à l'époque de la génèse du peuple roumain (VII^e–X^e siècles)*, Pontica 14 (1981), p. 217–220; *A propos de la culture matérielle byzantine du Bas Danube aux X^e–XII^e siècles*, in: *Actes du XVe Congrès International d'Etudes Byzantines*, Athènes, 1980, p. 97–102; *Sur la présence des byzantins au Bas-Danube (IX^e–XIV^e siècles)*, RESEE 32/3–4 (1994), p. 367–373; *Vasile Apokapes şi Nikiphor Botaneiates – katepani la Dunărea de Jos [Basile Apokapès et Nikephore Botaniates – katepans au Bas-Danube]*, SCIV 20/3 (1969), p. 437–451; *Despre situaţia politică la Dunărea de Jos în secolul al XII-lea [Sur la situation politique au Bas-Danube au XII^e siècle]*, SCIVA 27/3 (1976), p. 293–307; *Despre organizarea administrativ-militară a regiunii Dunării de Jos în vremea lui Ioan Tzimiskes (Contribuţii pe marginea articolului: Sigiliile lui Leon Sarakinopulos de la Preslavul Mare) [Über die administrativ-militärische Organisation der Gebiete an der Unteren Donau in der Zeit Ioan Tsimiskes (Beiträge zum Aufsatz Iv. Iordanov, Die Siegel des Leon Sarakinopulos vom Grossen Preslav)]*, SCIVA 37/2 (1986), p. 168–178; *Despre organizarea ecleziastică a regiunii Dunării de Jos (ultima treime a secolului X–secolul XII)*, Studii Teologice 1 (1990), p. 103–120 = *Sur l'organisation écclésiastique dans la région du Bas-Danube (derniers tiers du X^e siècle–XII^e siècle)*, ÉBPB 2 (1991), p. 73–89; *Points de vue sur l'organisation écclésiastique au Bas-Danube (X^e–XI^e siècles)*, Dacia N.S. 38–39 (1994–1995), p. 449–452.

[8] Petre DIACONU, *O formaţiune statală la Dunărea de Jos: Ţara Dristriei [A state formation in the*

Trained as a field archaeologist in the school of the great Roman-Byzantine fortifications of Capidava and *Dinogetia*–Garvăn[9], under the guidance of Professors Grigore Florescu and Gheorghe Ștefan, to whom he bore a pious memory, he initially had the opportunity, under the patronage of scholar Ion Nestor, to develop his own research in the southwestern corner of Dobruja as an employee of the National Museum of Antiquities, which became the Institute of Archaeology in 1956, his lifelong workplace. This was complemented by wonderful collaborations with dear and nearby museum institutions: the Museum of National History and Archaeology in Constanța, the Museum of the Lower Danube in Călărași, and the Brăila Museum.

The idea of Byzantine military creations *a fundamentis* at the Lower Danube, at the border between the first and second millennia, in which the star was the insular fortress Păcuiul lui Soare[10], despite the efforts of many representatives of the scientific community to define it as either a Romano-Byzantine or Bulgarian creation, was argued and re-argued over time, following in the footsteps of Petre Diaconu[11], including with data provided by the interdisciplinarity of the third millennium[12]. Additionally, the idea of constructing Byzantine fortifications during the reconquest of the Lower Danube area by the emperors of the Macedonian dynasty was extended

Lower Danube: the Land of Dristria], in: *Documente noi descoperite şi informaţii arheologice*, Bucureşti, 1977, p. 37–40; *O formațiune statală la Dunărea de Jos la sfârșitul secolului al XIV-lea necunoscută până în prezent [Une formation étatique du Bas-Danube à la fin du XIV*e *siècle ignorée jusqu'à présent]*, SCIVA 29/2 (1978), p. 185–201; *Contribuție la cunoașterea monedelor lui Ioan Terter, despotul Țării Dristrei [Contribution to the knowledge of the coins of Ioan Terter, despot of the Land of Dristra]*, CN 3 (1980), p. 73–76.

[9] See in this sense also the series of archaeological reports to which he was a part, in: Marian TRANDAFIR, Oana DAMIAN (eds.), *Amintiri despre Petre Diaconu*, Brăila, 2018, p. 30–32; as well as the contribution to the first monographic volume about the Capidava site (Grigore FLORESCU, Radu FLORESCU, Petre DIACONU, *Capidava, I*, Bucureşti, 1958).

[10] Petre DIACONU, Dumitru VÎLCEANU, *Păcuiul lui Soare, I, Aşezarea bizantină*, Bucureşti, 1972; Petre DIACONU, *Păcuiul lui Soare–Vicina*, Byzantina 8 (1976), p. 409–447, fig. 47–58; Petre DIACONU, Silvia BARASCHI, *Păcuiul lui Soare, II, Aşezarea medievală (secolele XIII–XV)*, Bucureşti, 1977, with all previous bibliography. See also a sentimental characterization regarding research in this archaeological site: Oana DAMIAN, Gheorghe Alexandru NICULESCU, Andrei MĂGUREANU, *50 de ani de cercetări arheologice în siturile de la Târgşoru Vechi și Păcuiul lui Soare [50 années de recherches archéologiques dans les sites de Târgşoru Vechi et Păcuiul lui Soare]*, SCIVA 58/1–2 (2007), p. 177–181.

[11] See Oana DAMIAN, *Din nou despre cetatea de la Păcuiul lui Soare [De nouveau sur la fortification de Păcuiul lui Soare]*, SCIVA 71/3–4 (2020), p. 271–296, with all previous bibliography, mainly focused on the contributions of Petre Diaconu, but also those of his closest collaborators in the study of the site, Radu Popa, Dumitru Vîlceanu and Silvia Baraschi.

[12] See Corina Anca SIMION, Elena Alexandra ISPAS, Maria Loredana MARIN, Alexandru Răzvan PETRE ("Horia Hulubei" National Institute for Research and Development in Physics and Nuclear Engineering), Adrian IONIȚĂ, Oana DAMIAN ("Vasile Pârvan" Institute of Archaeology), Cătălin ROIBU (Faculty of History and Geography, "Ştefan cel Mare" University, Suceava), Ruxandra NEMȚEANU (Individual architecture office "Ruxandra Nemţeanu", Bucureşti), *Multidisciplinaritate în determinarea vechimii materialelor arheologice din lemn [Multidisciplinarity in determining the age of archaeological wooden materials]*, in: L. Oța, *Sesiunea de comunicări științifice a Institutului de Arheologie „Vasile Pârvan" [Annual Scientific Communications Session, "Metodă, teorie și practică în arheologia contemporană", of "Vasile Pârvan" Institute of Archaeology, organized in collaboration with the Romanian Academy Library – Numismatic Cabinet and the Bucharest Municipal Museum, 5–7 april 2023]*, SCIVA 73–74 (2022–2023), p. 289.

through the research of another similar site discovered at the mouth of the Danube in the late 1970s, whose investigation continues[13].

Aspects of the Roman origin of the material culture of the Proto-Romanians, as well as of the populations living in Dobruja[14], an area of special interest to all empires (Roman, Byzantine, Golden Horde, Ottoman), have often involved cultural and chronological reattributions of certain objectives[15]. This concern with deciphering origins was demonstrated in special contexts, from the antiquated character of the architecture of the fortress at Păcuiul lui Soare to that of the unique Byzantine inscription discovered on the territory of Romanian Dobruja, originating from the walls of the same insular fortress[16].

Beyond approaching certain historical realities from an archaeological perspective, such as the relationships of ancient Turkic populations (Pechenegs, Oghuz, Cumans) with Byzantium[17], and tangentially, the impact of the Golden Horde on

[13] Silvia BARASCHI, *Sur la topographie ponto-danubienne au Moyen Age. I. Proslavitza*, RRH 28, 1–2 (1989), p. 52–68 = *Unele probleme despre Proslavița*, Peuce 10 (1991), p. 399–409; Oana DAMIAN, *Considerații asupra cercetării arheologice într-un sit suprapus de o așezare modernă. Studiu de caz: Nufăru, jud. Tulcea [Some remarks about the archaeological research in a site overlapped by a modern village. Case study: Nufăru, Tulcea County]*, SCIVA 68/1–4 (2017), p. 161–190.

[14] See assessments of the origins of some early medieval practices: Petre DIACONU, *Din nou despre originea practicii mărcilor de olar [De nouveau sur l'origine de la pratique des estampilles de potier]*, Pontica 25 (1992), p. 355–358, found in remote areas, such as France; or considerations regarding the ceramics of the area Petre DIACONU, *Quelques considérations sur la céramique peinte du Bas Danube*, in: *Les Slaves et le monde méditerranéen aux VI^e–XI^e siècles,* Sofia, 1973, p. 209–213.

[15] See Petre Diaconu's references to a series of archaeological complexes that he dealt with tangentially, but in an inspired and clarifying manner: Murfatlar [*Câteva observații în legătură cu complexul arheologic de la Murfatlar (Basarabi)*, Mitropolia Olteniei 11–12 (1968), p. 937–946 (in collaboration with Petre Șt. NĂSTUREL) = *Quelques observations sur le complèxe archéologique de Murfatlar (Basarabi)*, Dacia N.S. 13 (1969), p. 443–456; *De nouveau au sujet du monument rupestre de Murfatlar*, RRH 27/1–2 (1988), p. 123–126; *Tradiții daco-romane în monumentul rupestru de la Basarabi (jud. Constanța) [Des traditions daco-romaines dans le monument rupestre de Basarabi, dép. de Constanța]*, Symposia Thracologica 7 (1989), p. 430–431]; Cernavodă [*Cariera de piatră din secolul al X-lea de la Cernavodă [A Cernavodă: une carrière de pierre du X^e siècle]*, Pontica 13 (1980), p.185–195 = *Recenzii și discuții arheologice*, CCDJ 12 (1994), p. 43–52]; *Dinogetia*-Garvăn [*Despre datarea nivelului „locuințelor incendiate" de la Dinogetia–Garvăn (jud. Tulcea) [Sur la datation de l'horizon des «habitations incendiées» de Dinogetia–Garvăn (dép. de Tulcea)]*, SCIVA 26/3 (1975), p. 387–394, chronological reclassification later confirmed by archaeological research conducted at the Byzantine site within the locality of Nufăru, Tulcea County]; Niculițel [*Despre data pătimirii lui Zoticos, Attalos, Kamasis și Philippos [Sur la datation du martirage de Zoticos, Attalos, Kamasis et Philippos]*, SCIVA 24/4 (1973), p. 633–642; *Despre datarea „circumvalației" și a „bisericii treflate" de la Niculițel [A propos de la datation du «vallum circulaire» et de «l'église tréflée» de Niculițel]*, SCIV 23/2 (1972), p. 307–319; *Din nou despre încadrarea cronologică a valului și mănăstirii de la Niculițel [De nouveau sur la datation du vallum et de la monastère de Niculițel]*, SCIVA 26/1 (1975), p. 101–106].

[16] Petre DIACONU, *O inscripție de la Păcuiul lui Soare [Une inscription de Păcuiul lui Soare]*, SCIVA 58/2 (2007), p. 161–163.

[17] See Petre DIACONU, *Les Petchénègues au Bas-Danube*, Bucarest, 1970; *The Petchenegs on the Lower Danube*, in: Miron CONSTANTINESCU, Ştefan PASCU, Petre DIACONU (eds.), *Relations between autochthonous population and the migratory populations on the territory of Romania*, Bucureşti, 1975, p. 235–240; *Les Coumans au Bas-Danube aux XI^e et XII^e siècles*, Bucarest, 1978; *A propos de l'invasion coumane de 1148*, ÉBPB 1 (1979), p. 19–27; *Realități politice la Dunărea de Jos: români, bizantini, bulgari, pecenegi [Des realités politiques au Bas-Danube: Roumains, Byzantins, Bulgars, Petchénègues]*, Revista de Istorie 34/6 (1981), p. 1111–1133; *Cumanii şi originea familiei lui Dobrotiță [Les Coumans et l'origine de*

the area[18], Petre Diaconu was concerned with the genesis and unity of old Romanian material culture in the Carpatho-Balkan space, a fact asserted and demonstrated since the 1960s–1970s: the Dridu-type material culture reflects, in its fully constituted forms, not the ethnic character of a human community, but its degree of socio-economic development[19], a thesis to which subsequent archaeological research has brought solid arguments.

The issue of the trans-Dobrujan linear fortifications[20], with all the implications related to the geopolitical and cultural significance of the identity of the commissioning power and the authors of the project's implementation, fixed in chronological frameworks articulated through small-scale but correctly interpreted interventions in the soil, could be clarified through extensive archaeological research, many

la famille de Dobrotiţa], Revista istorică 5/3–4 (1994), p. 283–288; *Despre unele antroponime de origine cumană [Sur quelques anthroponymes d'origine coumane]*, Analele Brăilei S.N. 2 (1996), p. 569–571. See also leaning towards the archaeological record: *Cu privire la problema căldărilor de lut în epoca feudală timpurie (sec. X–XIII) [Sur les chaudrons en argile de la haute époque féodale (X^e–XIII^e siècles)]*, SCIV 7/3–4 (1956), p. 421–439; *K voprossu o glineanîh kotlah na territorii RNR*, Dacia N.S. 8 (1964), p. 249–264; *Din nou despre căldările de lut [De nouveau sur les chaudrons en argile]*, CCDJ 12 (1994), p. 155–168; *Un mormînt de călăreţ nomad din secolele XI–XII descoperit la Moviliţa (r. Urziceni, reg. Bucureşti) [Tombe d'un cavalier nomade des XI^e–XII^e siècles découverte à Moviliţa (district d'Urziceni, région de Bucarest)]*, SCIV 18/1 (1967), p. 135–140 (in collaboration with Gheorghe DIACONU).

[18] Petre DIACONU, *Despre căderea Vecinei sub tătari [About the conquer of Vecina by the Tartars]*, in: *Pe drumul credinţei*, Rives Eaton Road – USA, 1995, p. 67–76 = *Almanah bisericesc*, Episcopia Sloboziei şi Călăraşilor, 1996, p. 108–111.

[19] See in this regard, Petre DIACONU, *Problema originii ceramicii Dridu [Le problème de l'origine de la céramique Dridu]*, in: Petre DIACONU, Dumitru VÎLCEANU, *Păcuiul lui Soare*, I, Bucureşti, 1972, p. 121–129. Also, see *Réalités archéologiques et considérations historiques*, RRH 5/3 (1966), p. 485–493 = *Realităţi arheologice şi consideraţii istorice (O lucrare despre culturile materiale de la Dunărea de Jos în sec. VII–X)*, CCDJ 12 (1994), p. 9–17; *Extension du premier état bulgare au nord du Danube (VIII^e–X^e siècles). La culture matérielle*, Etudes Balkaniques 1 (1985), p. 107–113; *Notes sur la culture matérielle de Dobroudja (VII^e–X^e siècles)*, Istros 5 (1987), p. 213–215; *Sur l'histoire de la Dobroudja au Moyen Age* (*Dobrudža. Etudes éthno-culturelles*, Sofia, 1987, 238 p.), Dacia N.S. 32/1–2 (1988), p. 175–193 = *Despre istoria Dobrogei în Evul mediu timpuriu* (*Dobrudja. Etudes éthno-culturelles*, Sofia, 1987, 238 p.), CCDJ 12 (1994), p. 81–106. In relation to this perspective, see also the invocation of the unified nature of the funerary phenomenon identified both north and south of the Danube in the latter part of the first millennium (Petre DIACONU, *Sur les nécropoles danubiennes (VI^e–X^e siècles)*, Dacia N.S. 37 (1993), p. 291–300 = *Problemele necropolelor de la Dunărea de Jos din sec. VI–IX în viziunea lui Uwe Fiedler* (reviewal at Uwe Fiedler, *Studien zu Gräberfeldern des 6. bis. 9 Jahrhunderts an der unteren Donau, Bonn, 1992*), CCDJ 12 (1994), p. 121–135.

[20] Petre DIACONU, *Despre datarea valului de piatră din Dobrogea şi localizarea evenimentelor din Nota toparhului grec [De la datation du mur en pierre de la Dobroudja et de la localisation des événements dont il s'agit dans la Note du Toparque grec]*, Studii. Revista de Istorie 15/5 (1962), p. 1215–1235; *Zur Frage der Datierung des Steinwälles in der Dobrudscha und die Lokalisierung der im Berichte des griechischen Toparchen geschilderten Ereignisse*, Dacia N.S. 6 (1962), p. 317–335; *Din nou despre valul de piatră din Dobrogea şi Nota toparhului grec (Partea I) [De nouveau sur le vallum en pierre de la Dobroudja et la Note du Toparque grec]*, SCIV 16/1 (1965), p. 189–199; *Din nou despre datarea „valului de piatră" din Dobrogea şi Nota toparhului grec (Partea a II-a) [De nouveau sur la datation du vallum en pierre de la Dobroudja et la Note du Toparque grec]*, SCIV 16/2 (1965), p. 383–394; *„Alte precizări în legătură cu valul de piatră din Dobrogea şi însemnările toparhului bizantin". Cronică*, SCIV 19/2 (1968), p. 357–369; *Cîteva consideraţii în legătură cu valurile din Dobrogea [Quelques considérations sur les vallums de la Dobroudja]*, Pontica 5 (1972), p. 373–378; *Date noi privind „Valul mare de pămînt" din Dobrogea [Des nouvelles données sur le Grand vallum en terre de la Dobroudja]*, Peuce 4 (1973–1975), p. 199–209.

carried out in the first decades of the third millennium, in the context of large infrastructure projects[21].

Petre Diaconu was passionate about literary sources and everything he could extract more convincingly from the combination of written[22] and unwritten (archaeological) arguments[23]. Under these conditions, he directed his attention to artefacts (such as ceramics, jewellery, and clothing items), regardless of how spectacular[24] or minor/banal they might have seemed, as evident from his numerous notes and studies[25], as

[21] See the review of the issue at Oana DAMIAN, *Bizanțul la Dunărea de Jos (secolele VII–X) [Byzantium al the Lower Danube (7th–10th centuries)*, Brăila, 2015, p. 47–91. For *the big earth vallum and stone vallum*, see, especially, the research from the campaigns 2011–2012 (Oana DAMIAN, Mihai VASILE, Eugen PARASCHIV-GRIGORE, Andra SAMSON, Ioana PARASCHIV-GRIGORE, Daniel ENE, Florentin MUNTEANU, Constantin HAITĂ, *Valul mare de pământ. Cercetare arheologică preventivă pe Autostrada 2 București – Constanța, tronsonul Cernavodă – Medgidia, km 150+000–159+150, zona localității Făclia, com. Saligny, jud. Constanța*, CA 21 (2014), p. 291–326; Traian CLIANTE, Cristina TALMAȚCHI, Gabriel TALMAȚCHI, Tiberiu POTÂRNICHE, Liviu LUNGU, Vitalie BODOLICĂ, Constantin ȘOVA, Andrei HEROIU, Sebastian DOBROTĂ, Octavian MITROI, Dan VASILESCU, Marius LASCU, Ștefan GEORGESCU, Răzvan PETCU, Radu PETCU, *Valu lui Traian, com. Valu lui Traian, jud. Constanța (Autostrada Medgidia – Constanța), km 197+700–198+700*, CCA. Campania 2011, București, 2012, p. 294–295, no. 175; Cristina PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI, *About an Early Medieval Settlement in the South of Ancient Tomis*, Konštantinove listy 11/1 (2018), p. 3–15; Cristina PARASCHIV-TALMAȚCHI, *Again about an Early Medieval linear fortification in Dobrudja. The stone vallum*, Preslav 8 (2019), p. 381–402; and, more recent, Cristina TALMAȚCHI, Constantin ȘOVA, Bogdan Andrei CHIRILOAIE, Laura GHEORGHIU, Ioana DONCU, Claudiu LĂZĂRICĂ, *Medgidia, jud. Constanța. Punct: Valul de piatră – în extravilanul mun. Medgidia și UAT Poarta Albă, jud. Constanța (la nord de cariera ROMCIM)*, CCA. Campania 2023, Bucureşti – Târgu Mureș, 2024, p. 579–580; Constantin BĂJENARU, Cătălin NOPCEA, Ingrid PETCU-LEVEI, Marius LASCU, Ștefan GEORGESCU, Oana GRIGORUȚĂ, Ioana RUSU, Laura GHEORGHIU, Manuela MĂIȚĂ, Adrian IRIMIA, Ștefan PALAMIUC, Alin GHEORGHE, Venera Georgiana DONE, Daniel BARBU, Andreea PREDA, Adina BRATOSIN, Ana GEORGESCU-HAMAT, Daniel VASILESCU, *Constanța, jud. Constanța, Castrul XXV (Tocilescu) al valului de piatră. Punct: str. Caraiman, nr. 32*, CCA. Campania 2023, Bucureşti – Târgu Mureș, 2024, p. 540–554.

[22] See his volumes on Pechenegs and Cumans, as well as other contributions, including: *Une information de Skylitzès-Cédrénos à la lumière de l'archéologie*, RESEE 7/1 (1969), p. 43–49; *Les rives du Danube à la lumière de quelques passages de la chronique de Skylitzès*, RESEE 14/2 (1976), p. 311–316; *Kili și expediția lui Umur-beg*, Peuce 9 (1984), p. 389–394 = *Kili et l'expédition d'Umur-beg*, RESEE 21/1 (1983), p. 23–29; *Originea numelui Dobrogea [L'origine du nom Dobroudja]*, Buletinul Bibliotecii Române. Studii și documente românești S.N. 17 (21), Freiburg, 1992/1993, p. 233–240; *Numele Dobrogei într-o nouă sursă literară [Le nom de la Dobroudja dans une nouvelle source littéraire]*, Istros 7 (1994), p. 357–358.

[23] See, in this regard, the contributions concerning the Ciurel culture and the Slavic world: Petre DIACONU, *Cui aparține cultura Ciurel [Who does the Ciurel Culture belong to?]*, Ialomița 3 (2000), p. 58–60; Petre DIACONU, *Din nou despre slavi la Dunărea de Jos [De nouveau sur les Slaves au Bas-Danube]*, Istros 11 (2004), p. 353–356.

[24] For example, Petre DIACONU, *Boucle d'oreille en croissant découverte à Păcuiul lui Soare*, RESEE 12/3 (1974), p. 395–396.

[25] In SCIV 9/2 (1958), p. 445–449; SCIV 10/2 (1959), p. 487–490; SCIV 10/2 (1959), p. 491–497; SCIV 11/1 (1960), p. 177–178; SCIV 13/2 (1962), p. 447–449; Biserica Ortodoxă Română 81/5–6 (1963), p. 546–557; SCN 4 (1968), p. 277–278; RM 5 (1968), p. 348–351; SCIV 23/3 (1972), p. 459–462; SCIVA 25/2 (1974), p. 289–294; Pontica 7 (1974), p. 387–394; Muzeul Național 1 (1974), p. 207–208; Ialomița 1 (1977), p. 80–82; Pontica 15 (1982), p. 263–267; SCIVA 34/3 (1983), p. 290–293; Pontica 17 (1984), p. 157–167; CCDJ 1 (1985), p. 87–92; CCDJ 3–4 (1987), p. 113–114; CCDJ 3–4 (1987), p. 115–121; SCIVA 42/1–2 (1991), p. 81–84; Istros 6 (1992), p 271–272; Istros 7 (1994), p. 349–351.

well as from the monographic chapters dedicated to them[26], following a special interest in ethnography. Supporting him in this endeavour was an assumed and declared passion for detective work, reflected in his attraction to detective novels, which he considered very useful intellectual training for an archaeologist concerned with reconstructing the past. His attention to archaeological objects also extended to monetary[27] and sigillographic[28] aspects of the Lower Danube region, with his contributions adding prestige to those of specialized numismatics and sigillographers.

Historical geography was one of Petre Diaconu's particular concerns[29]. Even though it did not enjoy majority acceptance within the intellectual community, the identity he proposed between the famous locality of Vicina and the site at Păcuiul lui Soare remains one of the most coherent, well-argued, and at the same time, most alluring theories in the field[30].

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[26] *Capidava, I*, p. 211–226, 233–236, 245–247; *Păcuiul lui Soare, I*, p. 131–162; *Păcuiul lui Soare, II*, p. 33–48, 116–133.

[27] See Petre Diaconu's studies on Byzantine numismatic finds in general: *S-au emis monede în Dobrogea bizantină (secolele X–XII)? [Were coins cast in the Byzantine Dobroudja of the 10th–12th centuries?]*, SCIVA 32/3 (1981), p. 407–412; *Câteva probleme privitoare la monedele de aramă din sudul Dobrogei în ultima treime a sec. XIV [Einige Fragen zu den Bronzenen Münzen aud der SüdDobrudscha aus dem Letzten Drittel des XIV. Jhs.*], SCIVA 38/2 (1987), p.142–158); the chapter regarding the Byzantine coins discovered in the Capidava site (Grigore FLORESCU, Radu FLORESCU, Petre DIACONU, *Capidava, I*, București, 1958, p. 238–244); or the studies regarding the numismatic discoveries from Păcuiul lui Soare, Romano-Byzantine glass weights for the solidi [*Un pond din epoca romano-bizantină, descoperit la Păcuiul lui Soare*, SCIV 12/2 (1961), p. 403–405; *Un dénéral monétiforme trouvé à Păcuiul lui Soare*, RESEE 19/3 (1981), p. 485–488]; coins, isolated and hoarded [in: Arheologija-Sofia 5/1 (1963), p. 41–42; Izvestija-Sofia 26 (1963), p. 249–256; SCIV 15/1 (1964), p. 143–147; SCN 6 (1975), p. 247; Muzeul Național 3 (1976), p. 235–239; CN 3 (1980), p. 73–76; BSNR 77–79/131–133 (1983–1985), p. 433–436]; tools in the category weighting [*Cîntare pentru verificat greutatea perperilor de Vicina*, SCN 6 (1975), p. 243–245], up to the numismatic argument used in its highest form, to demonstrate the existence of a political formation (see *supra*, note 8).

[28] Petre DIACONU, *Un sigiliu de plumb al lui Alexie I Comnenul descoperit la Păcuiul lui Soare [Un sceau en plomb d'Alexios I Comnène découvert à Păcuiul lui Soare]*, SCN 4 (1968), p. 249–251; *Un alt sigiliu al lui Constantin VII şi Zoe [Une autre sigile du Constantin VII et Zoé découvert à Durostorum]*, CCDJ 5–7 (1988–1989), p. 175–177; *Contribution à la connaissance de l'histoire de la Dobroudja en base de quelques sceaux*, Dacia N.S. 36 (1992), p. 179–185; *Un alt sigiliu al lui Constantin Theodorokanos [Un autre sceau de Constantin Theodorokanos]*, Pontica 25 (1992), p. 359–361; *Câteva considerații privind sigiliile lui Ioan Malesis [Quelques considérations sur les sceaux du stratège Ioan Malesis]*, Istros 7 (1994), p. 355–356.

[29] Petre DIACONU: *La géographie historique du territoire roumain dans la région du Bas Danube aux VIIIe–Xe siècles telle qu'elle se dégage des sources byzantines*, Bulletin d'Information et de coordination (Athènes – Paris) 8 (1975/1976), p. 100–103; *Autour de la localisation de la Petite Preslav*, RESEE 3/1–2 (1965), p. 37–56; *Le problème de la localisation de l'Onglos*, Dacia N.S. 14 (1970), p. 325–334 = *Despre localizarea Onglos-ului?*, Peuce 2 (1971), p. 191–203; *Unde trebuie căutat Onglos? [Où faut-il chercher Onglos?]*, Istros 7 (1994), p. 359–361; *În căutarea Dafnei*, Pontica 4 (1971), p. 311–318; *Sur l'emplacement de l'ancienne Daphne*, Studia Balcanica 10 (1975), p. 87–93; *Note de lector (II). Unul sau două Tomis-uri în bazinul Mării Negre [Un ou deux Tomi dans le bassin de la Mer Noir]*, Istros 7 (1994), p. 353–355; *Unde se afla orașul Theodoropol?*, Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie "A. D. Xenopol" 24/1 (1987), p. 142–158; *De nouveau à propos de Presthlavitza*, Südost Forschungen 46 (1987), p. 279–293; *Kilia et Licostomo ou Kilia = Licostomo?*, RRH 25/4 (1986), p. 301–317; *Un faux problème de géographie historique – Kilia et Licostomo*, Il Mar Nero 2 (1995–1996), p. 235–266; *Carbona, Cavarna, la Contrée de Carvouna*, Dacia N.S. 37 (1993), p. 301–305.

[30] Petre DIACONU, *Despre localizarea Vicinei [Autour de la localisation de Vicina]*, Pontica 3

He was also interested in etymology and the relationship with ancient populations[31]. A formidable polemicist[32], not always justified[33], but demonstrating a remarkable and insightful finesse in argumentation, sometimes imbued with a playful spirit, Petre Diaconu was concerned with everything related to archaeology, including aspects of prehistory and protohistory, with a focus on the Roman and post-Roman epochs. He also expressed himself in the field of popular literature through contributions that appeared in the 1990s in the pages of the magazine "Tomis"[34], concentrated capsules of information and historical interpretation, written with absolute rigor but also with real accessibility.

(1970), p. 275–295; *Păcuiul lui Soare–Vicina*, Byzantina 8 (1976), p. 409–447, fig. 47–58; *Iarăși despre localizarea Vicinei [De nouveau sur la localisation de Vicina]*, Revista de Istorie 34/12 (1981), p. 2311–2316; *Puncte de vedere privind cetatea de la Păcuiul lui Soare*, CCDJ 1 (1985), p. 107–112; *Unde a fost Vicina?*, in *Contribuții istorice și etimologice*, Aalborg, 2001, p. 172–176.

[31] Petre DIACONU, *Câteva considerații pe marginea unor toponimice din dreapta Dunării de Jos (zona Ostrov – Cochirleni) [Quelques considerations en marge de certains toponymes dur la droite du Bas-Danube (zone de Ostrov – Cochirleni)]*, Pontica 10 (1977), p. 59–63; *Tempus, templum, tâmplă*, CCDJ 18 (2001), p. 38–40.

[32] To mention just one of the written testimonies of this propensity, see the series *Istoria Dobrogei în unele lucrări străine recente*, I–VI, appeared in: Revista de Istorie 29/6 (1976), p. 935–941; Revista de Istorie 30/10 (1977), p. 1893–1900; Revista de Istorie 33/2 (1980), p. 353–361; Revista de Istorie 33/4 (1980), p. 767–771; Revista de Istorie 34/9 (1981), p. 1747–1753; Revista de Istorie 36/7 (1983), p. 723–728). As well as the well over 100 reviews and bibliographic notes (see the list in: Marian TRANDAFIR, Oana DAMIAN (eds.), *Amintiri despre Petre Diaconu*, Brăila, 2018, p. 32–39), some of these with real study value: *Artă creștină sau mărturii creștine (*Ion BARNEA, *Arta creștină în Romînia, Vol. I (secolele III–VI*), București, 1979, 280 p., 118 pl. and *Vol. II (secolele VII–XIII)*, București, 1981, 238 p., 102 pl.), in Pontica 14 (1981), p. 371–378 = in *Recenzii și discuții arheologice*, I, CCDJ 12 (1994), p. 71–80; *Despre unele probleme arheologice ale cetății de la Adamclisi* (Alexandru BARNEA, Ion BARNEA, Ioana BOGDAN CĂTĂNICIU, Monica MĂRGINEANU-CÂRSTOIU, Gheorghe PAPUC, *Tropaeum Traiani*, I, *Cetatea*, București, 1979, 258 p., in Dacia N.S. 24 (1980), p. 386–391 = in *Recenzii și discuții arheologice*, I, CCDJ 12 (1994), 61–70; *Despre Sacidava și „stratigrafia" ei [A propos de Sacidava et de sa «stratigraphie»]*, SCIVA 31 (1980), p. 123–130 = in *Recenzii și discuții arheologice*, I, CCDJ 12 (1994), p. 53–59; Maria COMȘA, *Cultura materială veche românească (Așezările din secolele VIII–X de la Bucov-Ploiești*), București, 1978, 182 p., in SCIVA 30/3 (1979), p. 469–475 = *Două așezări românești de la răscrucea dintre sec. XII și sec. XIII la Bucov (jud. Prahova)?* (Maria COMȘA, *Cultura materială veche românească (Așezările din secolele VIII–X de la Bucov-Ploiești*), București, 1978, 182 p., in *Recenzii și discuții arheologice*, I, CCDJ 12 (1994), p. 33–43.

[33] Aurelia DIACONU, *Interviuri și evocări*, in: Marian TRANDAFIR, Oana DAMIAN (eds.), *Amintiri despre Petre Diaconu*, Brăila, 2018, p. 48. See also Petre Diaconu's conviction, often expressed in discussions and in the preface of the volume *Recenzii și discuții arheologice*, I, CCDJ 12 (1994): "...I have never claimed that all my solutions should be taken as absolute truths. Nor could I proceed as such, as long as I am convinced that we, archaeologists, err ten times more than other researchers. Why? For the simple reason that in our endeavour, we necessarily operate with subjective criteria for assessing archaeological facts. For instance, in the field of stratigraphy and typology...".

[34] See, for example, Petre DIACONU, *Fapte arheologice, interpretări istorice*, Tomis 27 (1992), no. 1, p. 13; no. 2, p. 13; no. 4, p. 12; no. 7, p. 14; Tomis 28 (1993), no. 4, p. 13; Tomis 30 (1995), no. 5, p.13; *Sfârşitul epocii bronzului şi începutul epocii fierului la Dunărea de Jos*, Tomis 27 (1992), no. 3, p.13 and 15; *Veteranus, Veterinon, Vetrina (Vetren)*, Tomis 29 (1994), no. 4, p. 13; *Schiță a istoriei grecilor din Dobrogea veacurilor de mijloc*, Tomis 32 (1997), no. 8, p. 13 and 15; no. 9, p.13; *Despoteia lui Sviatoslav*, Tomis 28 (1993), no. 7, p. 13–14; *Date noi despre biserica Dobrogei în sec. X–XI*, Tomis 28 (1993), no. 8–9, p. 13; *Unele date despre așezămintele monahale din Dobrogea, la începutul evului mediu*, Tomis 31(1996) no. 7–8, p. 13; *Sigiliile, sursă istorică de primă mână*, Tomis 32 (1997), no. 3, p. 13; *Originea numelui*

Always in the service of preserving and enhancing the Byzantine heritage, to which he was a senior figure[35] in his insular fortress, Păcuiul lui Soare[36], Petre Diaconu remains among us, "with thoughts for those of tomorrow", through his written work and the testimonies about his personality from those who knew him[37]. And he certainly has the right to a final statement: "As for me, I would be entirely satisfied if, at the last hour of my life, I were convinced that two-thirds of what I have crafted would remain useful to those in the future"[38].

Dobrogea, Tomis 27 (1992), no. 11, p. 1, 13; *Despre numele Mării Negre*, Tomis 31 (1996), no. 1, p. 1 and 13; *Nu toate schimbările de toponimie sunt binevenite*, Tomis 33 (1998), no. 4, p. 13.

[35] See the contribution of the late Marian Neagu, an archaeologist of the Neolithic period from the Lower Danube, and a passionate lover of the Danubian island with Byzantine influences (Marian NEAGU, *Petre Diaconu – patronul spiritual al Dunării de Jos*, in: Ionel CÂNDEA, Valeriu SÎRBU, Marian NEAGU (eds.), *Prinos lui Petre Diaconu la 80 de ani*, Brăila, 2004, p. XXXIII–XXXIV).

[36] An inspiring and shaping space for other destinies as well, as testified by another great archaeologist of Dobruja, educated in the school of Păcuiul lui Soare, but renowned in the field of Latène archaeology and amphora stamps, the late Niculae Conovici (see *Păcuiul lui Soare, Petre Diaconu şi viaţa mea*, in: Ionel CÂNDEA, Valeriu SÎRBU, Marian NEAGU (eds.), *Prinos lui Petre Diaconu la 80 de ani*, Brăila, 2004, p. XXXV–XXXVII).

[37] I cannot help by mentioning here the interview conducted by Silvia ILIESCU, *Secolul XX văzut de un arheolog: Petre Diaconu, https.:/www.rador.ro>ROMANIA, Istorie orală* or the pages dedicated to the character, inspired by the same Petre Diaconu, from a novel by Ana Blandiana, *Sertarul cu aplauze*, emblematic for the comunist era. Referring to this "...bizarre archaeologist, tightly wrapped as if in a protective garment in his profession..." (Ana BLANDIANA, *Sertarul cu aplauze*, Bucureşti, 1992, p. 48), the writer precisely sensed the extent to which archaeology could be, in those times, a superb form of escapism, into the past and... even into the fantastic... See also Ana BLANDIANA (in: Marian TRANDAFIR, Oana DAMIAN (eds.), *Amintiri despre Petre Diaconu*, Brăila, 2018, p. 175–177), where she quotes "...a page from the book in which [he, ed.] continues to exist...". But, returning to the real person, Petre, and his wife, Aurelia, equally a novel character, Ana Blandiana noted in her journal: "Saint Peter and Paul, the day when the Diaconu family visits us (at Comana, ed.) every year... We are not exactly friends, but there is something between us that I like and find moving, perhaps my book in which they are heroes. In any case, they are strange people who cultivate their eccentricities. And we, the 'normal' ones, we also cultivate them. We are fascinated and touched by their honesty, unusual, abnormal. They belong to a disappearing category that never had many representatives, and that is why each of their characteristics is precious and worthy of study and respect" (Ana BLANDIANA, *Mai-mult-ca-trecutul. Jurnal. 31 august 1988 – 12 decembrie 1989*, Bucureşti, 2023, p. 412).

[38] Petre DIACONU, *Prefaţă*, in *Recenzii şi discuţii arheologice*, I, CCDJ 12 (1994), p. 7.

Fig. 1. Petre Diaconu, on the Ostrov arm, on the way to Păcuiul lui Soare Island, the 1960s.

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Fig. 2. Petre Diaconu, portrayed as god Istros, archaeological base Dervent, 1964 (1); in Dobruja, 1968 (2).

Fig. 3. Petre Diaconu, with the actor Toma Caragiu and the base guard at Dervent, Florea Pașalău.

Fig. 4. Petre Diaconu, at the Institute of Archaeology (Bucharest), 1977.

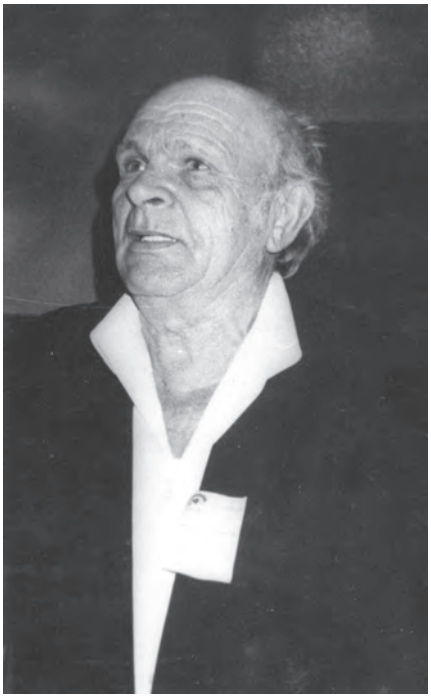
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Fig. 5. Petre Diaconu, in years '90 (1) and at Caliacra Cape, 1993 (2).

Fig. 6. Petre Diaconu and Păcuiul lui Soare Island, 1992.

Fig. 7. Petre Diaconu, with Lucian Tomitanul and Adrian Rădulescu, Museum of National History and Archaeology, Constanța, 1994.

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Fig. 8. Petre Diaconu, *Pontica* Session of the Museum of National History and Archaeology, Constanța, 1994 (1–2).

Fig. 9. Petre Diaconu, in the fortress of Păcuiul lui Soare, 2000.

Fig. 10. Petre Diaconu, in the exhibition dedicated to him, the Museum of the Lower Danube, Călărași, 2004.

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Fig. 11. Petre Diaconu, in the city of his adolescence, Silistra (1) and at Dervent Monastery, together with the abbot Andrei Tudor, 2004 (2).

Fig. 12. Petre Diaconu, with Aurelia Diaconu and the fortress of Păcuiul lui Soare (in the form of a cake), Călărași, 2004.

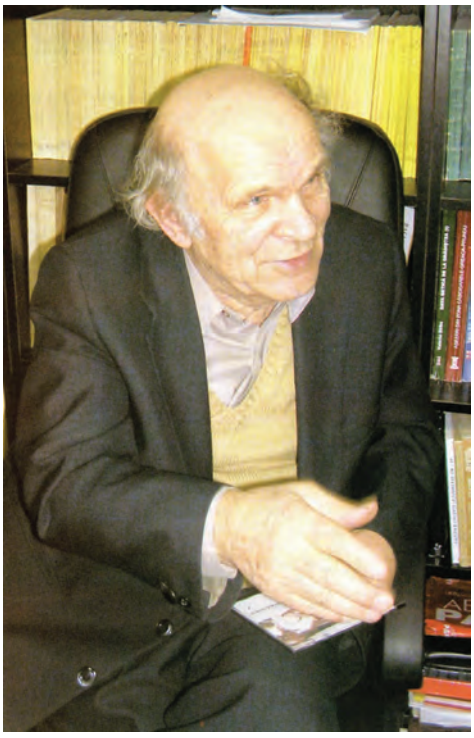

Fig. 13. Petre Diaconu, at Brăila Museum, 2004.

Fig. 14. Aurelia and Petre Diaconu, at the Lower Danube Museum, Călărași, on the way to Dervent, 2006.

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