

DEMNITSIKOS AND THE FORTRESS ON THE ISLAND PĂCUIUL LUI SOARE: LOCALISATION AND CHARACTER

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*On the occasion of the 100th anniversary
from the birth of Petre Diaconu*

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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 Păciuil 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 Păciuil 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 – Drăstâr – 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 mărturiile 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 Ialomîței: 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 settlements². 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 Svishtov³, 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 Subestkastu⁴. This is the basis for a number of Romanian scholars⁵, among which P. Diaconu⁶ and others before him to continue to situate it, albeit presumably, at Svishtov or Zimnitsa/Zimnicea⁷. 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. Ş. Năsturel tried twice to look for other solutions. At first, he identified Demnitsikos with the small Nikopol near Turnu Măgurele⁸, 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 wall⁹. Before him, another Romanian scientist – A. A. Bolşacov-Ghimpu – proposed his own solution on the place of Demnitsikos¹⁰. 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 opinion¹¹. According to G. Mănuclu-Adameşteanu however, this is unacceptable¹². 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 Izmail¹³. According to A. Madgearu, Demnitsikos/Demnitsek should be sought at Hârşova-*Carsium*¹⁴. Its location "on the lower reaches" of the Danube was also assumed by V. Pletnyov¹⁵.

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 Tutrakan¹⁶. V. Tăpkova-Zaimova expressed doubts about the possibility of the geographical names mentioned by Kinnamos being located decisively¹⁷. 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 localization¹⁸. 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 MĂNUCLU-ADAMEŞTEANU 2001a, p. 195–199; MĂNUCLU-ADAMEŞTEANU 2019, p. 77.

¹³ MĂNUCLU-ADAMEŞTEANU 2001a, p. 195–196; MĂNUCLU-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 Moldova¹⁹. G. Atanasov rejected the stated locations including Drastar, Păcuil 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 Isaccea²⁰. 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 1148²¹. 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 unsolved²³. 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 specimens 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. Batakliiev, notes P. Tivchev, G. Cankova-Petkova and G. Batakliiev; 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 credibility²⁸. 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 1148³⁰. 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 territory³¹.

Kinnamos's information about the events of 1148, and especially about Demnitsikos, sometimes causes reservations and even doubts about its credibility³². Recently, a Bulgarian philologist expressed the opinion that the Byzantine historian, using a similar account of Anna Komnene about events from 1114³³, had "composed" a narrative about a supposed march to the Danube in 1148³⁴. 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 Corfu³⁵. 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 Kinnamos, 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 Komnenos³⁶. 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 it³⁷. 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 "eulogically 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 campaigns³⁸. In this sense, the indicated search for special specimen (τὸ χρῆμα ζῶον) 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 Dobruja³⁹. 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 596⁴⁰. 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 Choniates⁴¹.

The impulsivity and ostentatious bravery of Manuel I also explain his action across the Danube in pursuit of the enemy retreating into Muntenia⁴². 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 Danube⁴³. 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 forests⁴⁵. 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 plain⁴⁸.

As a matter of fact, the Byzantine penetration in the lands beyond the water-courses described by the author had been much shallower, as some researchers have guessed⁴⁹. 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 movement⁵¹. 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 *dôlichos*, cf. SUIDAE LEXIKON 1854, p. 306.

from the west an island of the same name, as part of Balta Ialomiței⁵². 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 shoals⁵⁴. 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 Soare⁵⁵. 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 Ages⁵⁶. 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 hórós, 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 Corfu⁵⁸. 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 boats⁵⁹. 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 Danube⁶⁰. The other end of the pontoon had reached the eastern shore of Păcuilui 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 Danube⁶¹. 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 suggest⁶³. However, it is even more likely that it was located between the two endpoints – on Păcuilui lui Soare Island, where a team of Romanian archaeologists headed by P. Diaconu discovered an early-medieval fortress the size of a city⁶⁴. 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 I⁶⁶. In that connection, Kinnamos notes that the decision to continue the operation⁶⁷ 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 Demnitsikos⁶⁸.

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 Charsianites⁶⁹. In it is reported that the bishop had become a victim of “barbarians”, “a branch of the Scythians”, whom he also calls “*Paristrioi wolves*”. They “had abducted” him to a place which Tzetzes calls the “*valley (κοιλιάδα) 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 Danube⁷⁰. The identification of the attackers as “Paristriians” should be understood not as residents of the Paristrion area, or local bandits⁷¹, 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 Drastar⁷³. 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. Vilceanu, 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 time⁷⁴. But Drastar had quarters outside its fortifications⁷⁵, 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" (*frourion*). This gave reason to V. Gyuzelev, M. Bibikov, P. Ş. 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 together⁷⁶. 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 Năsturel⁷⁷. 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. Ş. 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. Batakliiev. 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 well⁸⁰.

The assumption by P. Ş. Năsturel and other authors⁸¹, 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. Ş. 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 *pînô* 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-ADAMEȘTEANU 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. Ş. Năsturel) former city and *frurion* Demnitsikos is identical to the white stone fortress on the island of Păcuilui 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 led⁸⁴.

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 (*porhmeion*) near Dristra (Drastar) by water⁸⁵. 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 have hardly been the permanent seat of the Byzantine River fleet⁸⁶.

The location of Demnitsikos on the Island of Păcuilui 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 1048⁸⁷. 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 nisidi*). 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 Dristra⁸⁸ (**Fig. 1**). On it, in the words of Skylitzes, he "*fenced himself*" (*perikleisas*), feeling safe⁸⁹. 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: Orations, 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 arms⁹⁰. 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 foundation⁹¹. 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 Empire⁹². However, in the marshy bed⁹³ 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 towers⁹⁶. 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” (*perifráskas*) 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 (κρησφύγητον), 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-ADAMEȘTEANU 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 bathéias kai kremnoīs apotómos*)⁹⁷.

The existence in the 11th and 12th centuries⁹⁸ 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 971⁹⁹. 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 porthmeĩa*) 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 Păciuil 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 bank¹⁰². They had used the night during a summer storm, and it seems initially they had headed west¹⁰³, 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 Păciuil 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 Păciuil 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' ἐκάτερα 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 Islands¹⁰⁴.

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 it¹⁰⁵. 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 (ἡπείρου 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 πορθμείων 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 plokoûs isxuroûs*, 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 ropes¹⁰⁸. 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 too¹¹⁰. 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 hand¹¹³. Skylitzes describes it as a "very wide wall" (φραγμὸν) or προσβολὰς τῷ δέματι which had blocked the narrowness there¹¹⁴. 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 kai 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 structure¹¹⁷. 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 – *toũ Istrou tá parapótama*)¹¹⁹. Such a place, as we established, is the strait opposite the islands of Păcuilui 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 Drastar¹²⁰.

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. λιμὴν 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 preparation¹²³. 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 course¹²⁴. It is also assumed that this is the island in the Balta where Kegen's Pechenegs had initially settled¹²⁵. 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-ADAMEȘTEANU 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 Păcuil lui Soare Island fortress, i.e. Demnitsikos's¹²⁷. 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 Păcuil 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 Derwent 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 Păcuil 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 Păcuil 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 nature¹²⁸, besides everything else. In construction terminology, the term *déma*, *desmá* is equivalent to *desmós* and it means the materials by which masonry is connected, too¹²⁹. 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 Greece¹³¹. 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 port¹³². 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, Dmsh 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 "Derwent" 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 etymon¹³⁵. 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 location¹³⁸. 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 Komnenos¹³⁹.

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 tsar Samuel, bore the name Σκέλος (ὄ). 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 ἡγουν 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 Philippopolis¹⁴¹. However, it is not impossible that the final component in Démnitsikos had an independent meaning. Close in sound to **-tsikos** is, for example, the Armenian and Georgian term for "fortress" **-tsike** (Աλτζικέ) 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-language¹⁴³. 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 islands¹⁴⁴. 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 – $\nu\alpha\tilde{\nu}\varsigma$, (plural – "ship's loom"), or from its derivative forms ($\nu\eta\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$, $\nu\eta\acute{\iota}\varsigma$). We also cannot rule out the possibility that the root is the adjective $\nu\eta\grave{\iota}\tau\eta\varsigma$, "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 too¹⁴⁶. 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 character¹⁴⁷. They attribute similar origin to the nearby name Borcea¹⁴⁸. V. Beshevliev briefly states his opinion that the island name means “Sun scortch”¹⁴⁹. He arrived at this probably after accepting “Păcuiul” as derived from the Slavic word “scortch” 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 anthroponymy¹⁵⁴.

In such a case, the -ul suffix in the Romanian-language toponym "Păcuil" 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 road¹⁵⁵. 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 it¹⁵⁶. 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 – "Păcuil" –, 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" – "Păcuil" 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 DREVNATURSKIY 1969, p. 326.

its leeward i.e. southern, side¹⁶⁰. 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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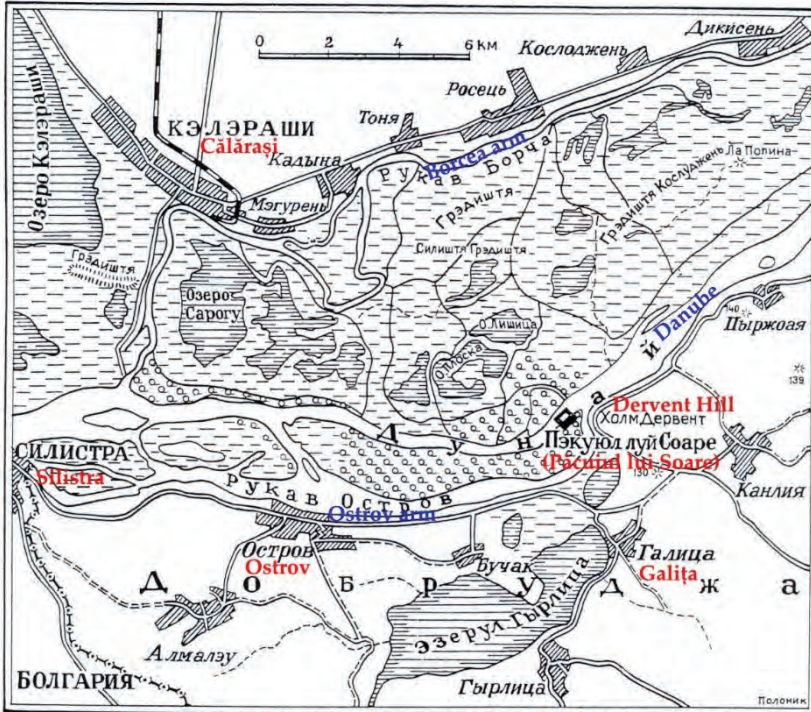
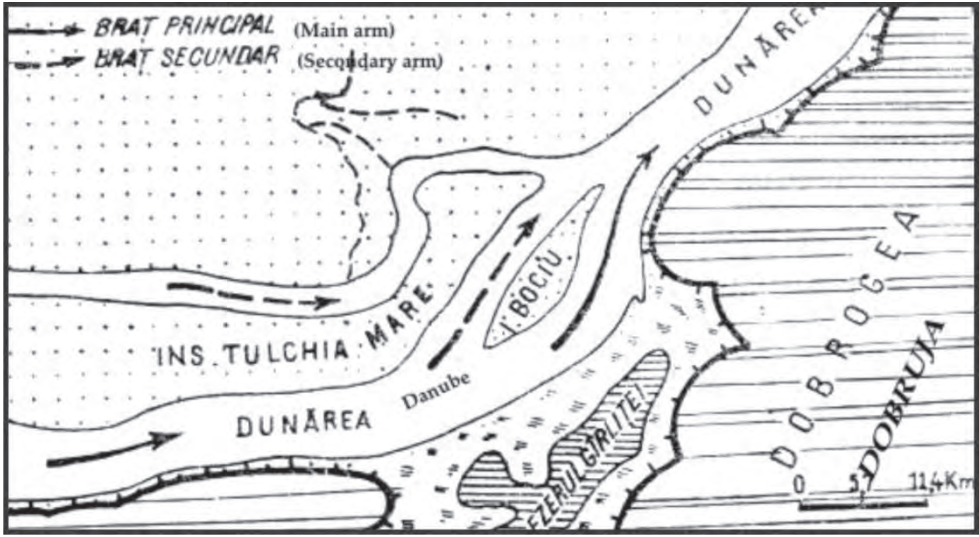


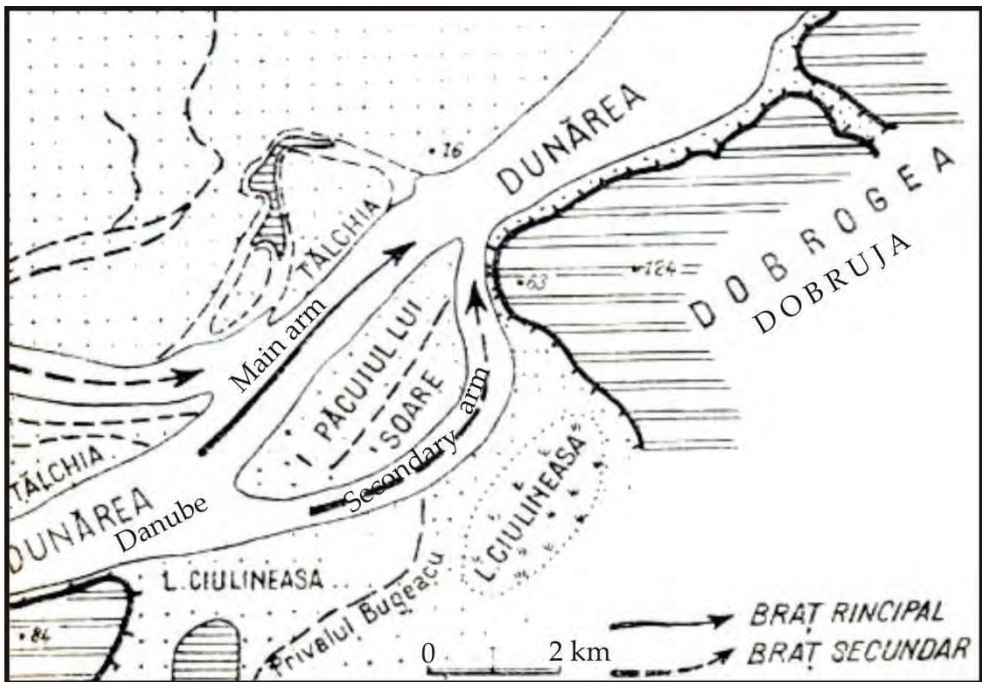
Fig. 1. The Păcuiul lui Soare Island and its environments (after DIACONU 1961, fig.1).



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).